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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVES

IN THIS ISSUE

We begin this time with an article-length review — really, an extended– consideration — of the new book, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, by our long-time S&S colleague, Alan Shandro. Shandro's work is the culmination of years of study. From the title, readers might assume that this is yet another work of scholarly exegesis, of interest mainly to specialists. Author Paul Blackledge shows, however, that it contains a highly convincing case for Lenin as having achieved a vital synthesis, one that transcends attempts to reduce his thinking and political practice to the then-orthodox Marxism of the Second International, on the one hand; or to an anti-theoretical authoritarian elitism (the mainstream academic view), on the other. The implications for the present-day left in all of our countries, and for its need to find a creative path between reformism and sectarianism as we face the challenges of a resurgent neoliberalized capitalism, give Blackledge's study, and Shandro's book, a high current relevance.

We are pleased to present a study of the current state of world political economy, from the standpoint of a Marxist researcher in a country that has been inserted into the hierarchy of capitalist states in the position identified by the author as "integrated periphery." Annamária Artner, of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences ("Is Catching Up Possible? The Example of Central and Eastern Europe"), provides a close analysis of the situation facing countries such as Hungary as they grapple with the demise of the socialist bloc and their entry into subordinate positions within the international capitalist "division of labor." Dr. Artner uses a Marxist framework but also incorporates themes and insights from the world-systems literature. Far from the rosy ideology of "transition" to "free-market" economies, she concludes that the prerequisites for the peripheral countries' catching up to the advanced centers include a "conscious policy that builds on the common efforts of people," and thus points beyond the limited framework of capitalist politics.

Christopher Gunderson's "Autonomous Marxist Interpretations of the Zapatista Uprising: A Critique" addresses the work of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, Harry Cleaver and John Holloway, all of whom have written extensively on the 1994 uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas and its aftermath. The Zapatistas shook the world with their militant and transformative ideology and organization, which chart a path to social transformation in the Americas (and, possibly, elsewhere as well). Some left writings on this movement, however, have, according to Gunderson, over-emphasized its assault on hierarchical and disciplined forms of organization and its embrace of horizontalism and autonomy. Given the close relation between the evolving dominant social order and the structures and procedures of the left insurgencies that emerge to combat it, a close study of the Zapatista experience suggests that there is more continuity with the worldwide left than is seen in the analyses of the movement's main interpreters, and that its distinctive autonomous components have much more to do with adapting to new "hybrid" features of global capitalism than with neo-anarchist preferences.

Our Communications section in this issue centers on the old but enduring problem of interpretation of the historical role of Joseph Stalin, and the associated issue of the "Stalinism" concept, which has been a core component in the thinking of some parts of the left. Beginning with the latter, discussion in the S&S Editorial Board, where diverse views are present, has resulted in a Symposium, "Is the Term 'Stalinism' Valid and Useful for Marxist Analysis?" Participation in this first round has been limited to members of the Editorial Board, but we anticipate (indeed, hope!) that many readers of S&S will be prodded by this controversy into sending us their own takes on the matter, and we would like to see the Communications section expand to accommodate a wide-ranging discussion. One thing should be clear: this is *not* — despite what some readers, particularly younger ones, may initially feel — an old, outdated issue from the 20th century, with no relevance to our own times! Our thanks to Paul Mishler for his work in pulling this together.

We are glad to be able to present Grover Furr's critical commentary on Gerald Meyer's article, "Joseph Stalin: Revisionist Biography," which appeared in our Special Issue on "The Russian Revolution: One Century Later" (October 2017). Furr is well known for his resolute defense of Stalin and his rejection of the entire *corpus* of literature, from both the capitalist mainstream and the left, depicting Stalin as an authoritarian and repressive figure, and one who was guilty of major crimes against humanity. Furr argues, to the contrary, that almost all of these claims, from the Khrushchev "revelations" to the mountains of establishment scholarly works on the subject, are false. We need to be clear: the great majority of the S&S Editorial Board and Manuscript Collective do not accept Furr's position. The (same) majority, however, do feel that our journal is an appropriate place for that position to be aired, and are happy to see it appear for that reason.

Furr's critique is followed by Gerald Meyer's response, which usefully points to his (Meyer's) specific purposes in tracing recent changes in the tone of Western mainstream historiography, of Stalin and the USSR. Meyer raises the question: does Furr succeed in applying the evidentiary criteria he advocates to his own work? The controversy will undoubtedly sharpen our sense of these criteria, and the role of Marxist categories and understanding in the shaping of those criteria; that alone makes the exercise worthwhile. Again, we invite readers to contribute to what we hope will become an ongoing debate.

We conclude with a Review Article on the advent of a new online version of the collected work of Raya Dunayevskaya, the principal founder of Marxist–Humanism. The author, Eugene Gogol, was one of Dunayevskaya's secretaries in the 1980s, and has been an active proponent of the Marxist–Humanist position, which has roots in the Johnson–Forest Tendency within the Trotskyist movement but subsequently moved in quite different directions. Dunayevskaya contributed originally to thinking about the nature of the Soviet Union, the importance of Hegel within Marxism, the dialectic of philosphy and organization, and much more. In keeping with our ecumenical approach to left theory, philosophy and politics — more than usually evident in this issue — we are pleased to make this presentation of *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection* available to our readers.

FROM OUR (E-)MAILBOX

A contributor to our book review section recently wrote: "I must admit that I've never had a book review subjected to *four* separate readings, and I am in awe of the amount of volunteers you are able to muster for such a process . . ."

Well, thanks. We do *try* to get many readings of work, including reviews, submitted to us, in the undoubtedly valid belief that wide participation enhances both the scientific and the democratic (*i.e.*, Marxist) qualities of the process — and the product. At the same time, one might wonder: can there be too much of a good thing? Our editorial readers (this writer included!) can occasionally go overboard with detailed suggestions and critiques, losing the forest for the trees. Another reviewer complains: "Hey, folks, it's only a book review!" It all comes down to the problem of finding the right balance (dialectical synthesis?): On one side, avoid demanding of our reviewers that they come up with the Ultimate Book Review every time. On the other, keep in mind that authors of books will not be happy to read evaluations of their considerable efforts that took shape as "only" a book review!

MARXISM IN OUR TIME

Notes from the Editor

KARL MARX AT 200: THE TIME FRAME FOR AN ACHIEVEMENT VARIES DIRECTLY WITH ITS MAGNITUDE

With all appropriate skepticism about round-number anniversaries in tow, I will nevertheless try to say something adequate about this magnificent bicentennial anniversary that does not repeat all that has already been written, and spoken, about the world-historic impact of Karl Heinrich Marx, born 200 years ago in Trier, Germany, on May 5, 1818.

We are in a time like the 1850s in Europe, when capital appears triumphant; so much so in fact that it seems to define, effortlessly, the very terms of the social debate. Marxism, in fact, took its mature form in the studies undertaken by Marx in that decade, beginning with *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* in 1852 and culminating with the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in 1859 — one of the works that presaged Marx's most definitive statement of his critique of capitalism and political economy, *Capital*, published in 1867.[1] In *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx studies the deterioration of the French Revolution — an almost intrinsic dynamic wherein the early proletarian energy mobilized to overthrow the *ancien regime* was systematically sapped and transformed into restored monarchy and aristocratic domination, as the successive stages of restoration took on varied "republican" forms, leading to the farcical *coup* of the great Napoleon's nephew, Louis Bonaparte, in 1851.[2] With monarchies and tyrannies soundly in place throughout Europe following the great rebellions of 1847–48, and the continent's bedraggled revolutionaries clinging to life in exile in London, Marx (and Engels, his comrade in what must be a historically unique example of life-long intellectual partnership) set to work: the great working-class emancipation could not be achieved, they now realized, without serious and systematic integration of their movement with science, in the form of political economy and (what would come to be called) historical materialism, the general theory of social evolution. To grasp the ruptural moments, you had to study the object of revolutionary attention — bourgeois society, or capitalism — in its *normal* modes of operation. You had to *explain* capitalism's successes, its periods of stable growth and predominance, if you wanted to understand its periodic crises, and facilitate its overthrow and transcendence. You needed, to use a modern casual form of expression, to "be in it for the long haul."

Well, just how long is the "long haul"? Here we are, 170 years later, watching capitalism expand into hitherto pristine areas of the world; seeing the early-socialist experiments of the 20th century derailed, and retrograde oligarchic/"kleptocratic" social formations emerge in their place; witnessing new financial forms of imperialism, even as class differentiation and accumulation of wealth proceed in the global south, complicating the old distinction between "first" and "third" worlds; and experiencing systematic attacks, in the name of deregulation and "free trade," against the social and legal protections, for both working people and the environment, that were built up *via* intense progressive struggles and movements over recent decades. How easy would it be, in the face of the endless refutations of

1 See "Marx's *Capital* at 150 Years: The Celebration Afterglow" (Editorial Perspectives), *Science & Society,* April 2018.

2 See "The Legacy of the Eighteenth Brumaire" (Editorial Perspectives), *Science & Society,* Winter 2002–2003.

Marx — proclamations of the boundless capacity of capitalism to adapt, the co-optation and absorption of subaltern class action and political capacity, and the inevitable TINA ("there is no alternative") — to conclude that history is indeed over, that Marx's vision has reached the end of its usefulness. Could it be that the dark tunnels of the European 1850s and the worldwide neoliberal post-1990s are in fact two connected branches of a single dark tunnel, without end? In this view, periods of turbulent social advance, from 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871, 1917, the 1930s and 1949 to the upsurges of the 1960s, appear as momentary interruptions in an otherwise one-way story of decline, or entrapment. All this would, indeed, render Marx into a profound but ultimately tragic thinker, whose birth 200 years ago will therefore recede in importance as the world moves on.

At this point I am tempted to cite, as counter-evidence, the massive and seemingly unresolvable crises currently mounting in the capitalist world: the tension and instability resulting from unprecedented polarization and extremes of wealth and poverty; the mounting crisis potential in the excess productive capacity relative to demand, built up in China and elsewhere; the deep legitimation crisis provoked by the financialization of politics, wherein the very political sovereignty of entire countries is undermined by financial power and the burden of debt; and failure of capitalist ruling classes to exercise political leadership over regions in the world where lawlessness, warlordism, banditry and anarchy increasingly prevail.

The information technology revolution creates new opportunities for enhancement of creative labor, and for overcoming the alienation of mass standardized production associated with the classic industrial revolutions. Under present-day political conditions, however, IT has also enabled capitalists to fragment workplaces and render precarious entire strata of intellectual labor (the "M-Turk" economy[3]). "De-industrialization" — which, to be sure, affects only certain parts of the world economy — also seems to refute Marx's predictions of working-class unification and empowerment. All of this, however, can be seen differently: given the objective need, the 21st-century proletariat is challenged, where necessary, to advance in organization and consciousness without the spontaneous assistance of large-scale factory production, unified residential neighborhoods, cultural symbols such as common styles of dress, language, etc., into the abstract social force that it has always been, potentially. Present-day universalization of communication, and of cultural experience, are a profound solvent of the national, ethnic, racial, religious and gender divisions upon which capitalism, in its politically

3 See the powerful portrait of Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) online work platform, on which "legions of click-slaves toil away . . . for less than minimum wage" (Jeff Howe, as quoted in Maria Ivanova, "The Great Recession," *Science & Society*, July 2013, 294–314).

ascendant phases, has relied for ideological control. The ever-clearer need for principled and coordinated approaches to global warming and ecological crisis, in the context of present-day trends in world population and popular expectations, also flies in the face of capitalist possessive individualism and structural greed. Much more could be said about the interconnected sites of crisis, and the ever-more-pressing need for transcendence of capitalism — and all of this *massively* re-confirms Marx's general vision, at the 200th anniversary of his birth.

But the same point can be made a different way. What is the appropriate time frame for evaluating Marx's legacy? We may note that his work challenges not only capitalism, but also the entire epoch of class-antagonistic, exploitative social formations: "The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production. . . . This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of society to a close" (Marx, in the "Preface" to the 1859 *Contribution*). One thinks here about the culmination of thousands of years of recorded history, indeed almost the entirety of that history, and the projected entry into a qualitatively new historic phase of human life, rendered (perhaps inadequately?) by the concepts "socialism" and "communism."

I am advancing, as indicated by this essay's title, a new theory of relativity! (Obviously joking here, of course, at least in part.) The theory asserts that the appropriate time frame for judging a contribution to human thought and practice — in the present case, the work of Marx, in its entirety, as evaluated at the moment of his 200th birthday — is *relative* to the immensity of its project; indeed it is directly proportional to the latter. And Marx's world view projects a moment, *roughly* the present, as standing between *millennia* of past human experience, and an open future awash with possibility. The enormous past consists of the totality of our "prehistory" — the time before now — in which people lived, worked, suffered, suffocated under diverse regimes of exploitation and died in numerous wars, but also created, dreamed, rebelled, and conjured up vast new creations and possibilities.

Here is where relativity applies: in the light of the profundity of the vision, and of the projected transformation, *the appropriate time frame must be sufficiently long*. Putting this simply: given what Marx accomplished — or laid the foundations for accomplishing — 200 years are a mere flash in the pan! Since Marx came among us, we have been able to begin the most powerful collective human project imaginable: building the political, scientific and cultural capacities of the world's working classes — the plural, class*es*, is necessary, to emphasize still-important national and cultural differentiations — into a force powerful enough to challenge the rule of capital; to envision and then to create an alternative communist world of democracy, equality, participation, ennoblement, and unfettered human development. And also, in necessary connection with all this, to save the planet itself, together with its diverse living inhabitants.

This is a huge undertaking, and it faces enormous obstacles — due both to its inherent complexity and unprecedented challenges, and to the systematic efforts of capitalist ruling classes to oppose and undermine it, using all of the levers of economic and cultural hegemony, and ultimately political power and military force, available to them. We have our work cut out for us.

Time, of course, is not linear, and herein lies the answer to those who would use it to postpone revolution and, in effect, eternalize the present. Decades, as in that old mysterious "quote" from Lenin, can sometimes be compressed into weeks; and so, presumably, centuries can be compressed into decades, or years into days (see "Editorial Perspectives," S&S, July 2013, p. 286). While the current "failure" of the working classes in many parts of the capitalist world to evolve into a contending force cannot be used as an excuse to dispense with Marx, neither is there any warrant for assuming that this slow and tortuous path of evolution will persist indefinitely.

So, in this regard 200 years is not the eternity it sometimes seems to be. The best applications of the Marxist science and critical practice of human emancipation lie in the future, and near future.

Happy Birthday, Karl!

D. L.

ERRATUM

In the article "Societal Selection and Historical Materialism" (*Science & Society*, Vol. 82, No. 3, 335–359, 2018), the author's name was misspelled. The correct name is Luke Lattanzi-Silveus. We regret the error. The online version has been updated.