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**Origins of permanent revolution theory: the formation of Marxism as a tradition (1865-1895) and 'the first Trotsky'. Introductory dimensions**

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## Abstract

Investigating the period of emergence of Marxism as a tradition between 1865 and 1895, this work examines some key questions elucidating Trotsky's theoretical developments during the first decade of the XXth century. Emphasizing the role of such authors like Plekhanov, Johann Baptists von Schweitzer, Lenin and Zetkin in the developing of a 'Classical Marxism' that served as the foundation of the first formulation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, it treats three introductory dimensions of this larger problematic: primitive communism and its feminist implications, the debate on the relations between the productive forces and the relations of production, and the first apprehensions of Marx's economic mature works.

Key Words: Marxism-Trotsky-Permanent Revolution-Relations of Production-Productive Forces-Primitive communism theory-Feminism-Capital

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## Introduction

The theory of permanent revolution is a foundational core not only of Trotsky and his followers, but of Marxism itself. The document were Marx and Engels develop more systematically its implications -the known Address of March of 1850 of the Communist League- was for them not an 'original' and 'particular' political program devised only for concrete circumstances, but a whole synthesis of their political development until 1851<sup>1</sup>.

The universality of the theory for them also implied an international conception of the revolution, that is to say, its formulation was not conceived for making the revolution in just one backward country, but to combine fruitfully the whole forces of the international workers' movement within an uneven transnational revolutionary process that could well start in one particular country, but, if it was to be successful, needed to expand internationally. That is why the *March Address of 1850* was followed by a conscious effort to expand the Communist League and forge a Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists, which based itself on the acceptance of both the necessity of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and of the 'permanent revolution'<sup>2</sup>.

The other members of this Universal Society -aside from the Communist League- were the 'left factions' of the Chartists in England, and Blanqui and his followers in France. The combination of an international revolutionary process that included Germany, France and England through the workings of these three political components was the aim of the last *Address of the Communist League*, written in June of 1850.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be found in the following letters: Marx to Engels. 13 July 1851 and Engels to Marx. About 20 July 1851, MECW v38, pp384 Line4-7 and pp393 Paragraph 3, Lines1-5

<sup>2</sup> This can be found in the first paragraph of "Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists" written by Marx and Engels in April of 1850 (although only published in 1926). See MECW v10, pp614. The translation the of this passage in the MECW version of Lawrence and Wishart replaces the term 'permanence' by 'continual'. Nonetheless the German original document explicitly includes the expression 'Revolution in Permanenz'. See 'Karl Marx • Friedrich Engels Werke•Band 7, pp553. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim zk der sed, Dietz verlag Berlin 1960'.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the theory of permanent revolution was not only a political document proper of a circumscribed period of the work of Marx and Engels (a mere 'youthful phase'), but considered valid by Marx's companion even after the Moor's death in 1885, when he regarded useful to republish both Addresses as an *Annex* to the reissue of *Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne*<sup>3</sup>.

Traditionally associated with the figure of Trotsky and Trotskyism, since the emergence of the New Left in the 60's of the past century there have been efforts to ascribe the main origin of the theory of permanent revolution not to Russian sources, but to authors of other countries from which Trotsky had first taken it, and only after this developed it further. While both non-Trotskyist and the Trotskyist-Guevarist intellectuals point to a main source in the work of the Italian Antonio Labriola (Rowney in 1977 for the first and Lowy for the latter in 2006), the more serious effort to date has been performed by Gaido and Day in 2009, who argue that a huge figure on the forging and development of the theory of permanent revolution was the German theoretician of the SPD Karl Kautsky (Rowney, 1977; Lowy, 2006; Gaido and Day, 2009). Taking its cue from the main codification of the theory elaborated by Trotsky in 1930, both alternatives focus on the period of the first Russian Revolution of 1905 -although the time frame varies in its extension-, the years that saw the origin of a theory that would gain mass practical force after April 1917 (Lenin's April thesis when Trotsky argues that the Bolshevik leader adopts in a full sense the theory of permanent revolution). This work shares the pointer formulated by Trotsky and accepted by Gaido-Day, Lowy, Roney, etc: for an understanding of the theory of permanent revolution it is necessary to focus on such a period, but it must be framed in a way that permits the incorporation of the whole theoretical problematic involved. That is why Roney's alternative (1898-1907) or Gaido's and Day's (1902-1907) do not seem adequate enough for us. In the course of this analysis we will show and explain why it is best to focus on the period 1902-1911. We will take this period as a comparative measure to show that the theory of permanent revolution is bound with the forging of Marxism as a theoretical tradition between 1865 and 1895 and for this reason the intent of ascribing its origin to such outside sources as Labriola and Kautsky is not correct. It is not that that the development and application of the theory permanent revolution was a national or specific feature of Russia or even the personality of Trotsky. In fact, as a universal theory of revolution it had the opportunity to develop itself in other places, but it was the theoretical

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<sup>3</sup> See the following letters: Engels to Schlüter. 16 June 1885 and Engels to Schlüter and 9 October 1885, that can be found in MECW v48, pp305 Paragraph 2 and pp332, Lines 3-8

form taken by 'Marxism' in places outside Russia that inhibited its flourishing. We do not deny that there were some particular features of the objective conditions of Russia that helped to overcome some major impasses that inhibited the development and application of the theory, but these must not be sought where most authors seek them. It was not so much that Russia was a 'backward country', but that some universal and general problems found there more acute expression, and for this reason the task of overcoming them both in theory and in practice was placed with much more urgency if Marxism was to be developed<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> In the following we will develop only 3 introductory dimensions -for a question of space- of a problematic within which we have discovered at least 5 other that must be dealt with if it is to be treated systematically (see our Conclusion).

## I. Primitive communism and feminism

One of the first things that strikes the eye when studying Trotsky's works between 1902 and 1911 is the main absence of a core historical starting point of almost all the 'Marxist' parties that composed the Second International: the primitive communism thesis. This 'omission' is not of merely of anecdotic importance but has two principal implications that explain why Trotsky was able to develop the permanent revolution theory as he did within the years that concern us. To fully comprehend the first of these implications it is going to be necessary to expand on the origins of the formulation of the 'primitive communism thesis' as it was developed by Engels.

Exposed by Marx's companion only after the latter's death in the work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (May 1884, 1891) and based on Moor's notes and drafts when studying the works of Lubbock, Maine, Phear, Morgan and Kovalevsky, the same was developed at a time when the dominance of 'Marxism' within the modern socialist movement was far from being achieved. Marx and Engels works' were just 'one' influence within the 'first mass workers party' that developed within the confines of Germany under leadership of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht (the SPD). The mass distribution of their works and their imperishable anchoring within the world workers' movement was still not a naturalized fact. A fact that proves this is not only the reluctance of Liebknecht to publish Engels articles that went to composed the *Anti-Duhring* in 1877-1878 (and when he did published them it was in a manner that did not satisfied Engels), but also the harsh reception that both Marx's critique of the Gotha Programme of 1875 and Marx's and Engels' *September Address of 1879* got inside the SPD (the first one only published in 1891 in Kautsky's *Neue Zeit*, the second one only published in 1924 by Ryazanov). In this context, Engels' work of 1884 was an attempt to create the necessary space for the mass reception of his and Marx's works within the emerging modern socialist workers' movement. This attempt required to co-opt one of the members of the petty-bourgeois tendency that came to be known as the Zurich trio, Eduard Bernstein. That is why the Engels' book was the more closely inspected by the father of revisionism<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> See the 'Introduction' to 'Marx's Ethnological Notebooks', written by Lawrence Krader and published in 1972, especially the note 147, pp388.



The fact that the Bernstein prior to his 'revisionist thesis' developed from 1896 was not an orthodox Marxist is a thesis than can be demonstrated with detail; the main thing to remark at this point is that Engels' book that codified the primitive communism theory was developed under the close influence of an Eduard Bernstein that four years earlier intended to transform the SPD almost in a middle class party (see *September Address of 1879* of Marx and Engels). For the purpose of this study the core issue is that when Engels developed his 1884 theory he revised the main thesis he had developed in *Anti-Duhring*: that classes were not a mere product of external violence or coercion, but a natural and immanent product of certain production relations within a particular society. For the Engels of 1884 the primitive communism thesis forced him to import the 'classes from the outside' (they would be only a product of external war or spoliation -of slaves and goods-) and the surplus product merely tended to 'appear' without any organic relation with the underlying production relations. This operation was bound with a renewed emphasis on the 'division of labour' as an overarching concept that explained the whole human history, a thesis that Marx and Engels had developed in the *German Ideology* (1845-1846), just prior to Marx's ground breaking emphasis on the relations of production in his critique of Proudhon's work (*Misery of Philosophy*, 1846-1847). The Engels of 1884 regressed to that previous stage of development and debilitated the central thesis of the *Communist Manifesto* ('the whole history is the history of the class struggles'): for him now the classes were of a more abnormal nature, non-existent in vast parts of the world as it was in the XIXth century, while coexisting with communist remnants (as in Russia).

It is important to bear in mind that notwithstanding what Engels thought of his work of 1884 (nothing that has survived can vouch for him being conscious of making a revision of what he exposed in the *Anti-Duhring*), the fact is that Marx's notes from which Engels developed his book do take another approach at this core question that deals with the historical formation of the classes, which for him are born immanently through the organization of social functions and conquest only plays in this process a secondary role of trigger or accelerator<sup>6</sup>.

Engels 'regression' of 1884 coincided with a particular tactical period that he along with Marx conceived and applied roughly between 1877 and 1885. Within those years both tended to side with the Russian populists that fetishized the peasant commune ('Mir' or

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<sup>6</sup> See the 'Introduction' to 'Marx's Ethnological Notebooks', written by Lawrence Krader and published in 1972, the pages 14-15 (Last and First paragraphs).

'Obschina'), and at least conceived the possibility of a revolution based on the latter as a blockage of the Czarist reaction that would allow space for the workers' revolution within the Western and Central part of Europe. That this conception was of a tactical nature and conceived for a contingent European situation, is demonstrated by the fact that from the 1850s both Marx and Engels treated with derision and scorn the same 'populist Russian myth' (e.g. they celebrated Flerovsky's discovery of an emerging working class in 1869, Engels stressed the development of capitalism in Russia in 1875 against the populist-Blanquist Tkachov, etc), and by the same Engels who revised this stance from 1886 as he got acquainted with Plekhanov's works. Engels' work of 1884 did not only developed a theory that suited the interests of the Russian populists, but that also legitimized a common sense thesis that played with the Rousseauian themes of the 'good savage' and the existence of a 'golden past', that therefore conceived the class struggle as only a modern and abnormal phenomenon (a kind of transitional society waiting to be transformed back into a more natural or normal form). Examples of the latter thesis were Laveleye's *De la propriété et de ses formes primitives* (1874) or Hyndman's *The historical basis of socialism in England* (1883). This way, Engels legitimized a particular formation of 'Marxism' that allowed the conception that classes and class conflict were not a natural or normal form of state of human society. Indeed, the dominant parties within the Second International operated emphatically with the primitive communism thesis, a term that actually Engels did not coined (he uses only one time the term 'old communism' in his 1884 writing) and that was enthroned by Kautsky in the case of SPD, and Lafargue for the 'French Marxists' (in reality Guesdists). Already in 1885 Kautsky published an article that was specifically devised to justify a political alliance to which was central the primitive communism thesis under the gloss of communist remnants (the 'old good savage'):

*"For us this phenomenon is not a question of natural science but of social science. Capitalism dissolves the old form of the family and thus creates the woman question; It destroys the old peasant and petty-bourgeois mode of operation and thus creates the artisan and agricultural question; he creates an ever-increasing army of wage-proletarians, which he congregates in a few industrial centers, and thus creates the workers' question; finally, wherever he comes into contact with primitive peoples through the means of the colonies, he dissolves their primitive communism, thus creating the question of extinction of the natives, the question of Indians, and similar questions. The Indian question is a part of the great social question. In and of itself detached from the same, it cannot be solved"* (Kautsky, 1885c, p116 , own translation)

This same substantive core is then applied by Kautsky to the other end of the world when he published his article 'Chinese railways and the European proletariat' one year later. In it, Kautsky not only dismisses factual information provided by an author called I.A. Plath that would put into question the primitive communism thesis, but also conceives communist remnants that just coexist with other forms of production (there is no organic relation as is required for any dialectical analysis that works with the uneven and combined development thesis) but are the key for understanding the Chinese people's soul.

*"It seems to us by no means accidental or as a mystical quality of the Chinese 'people's soul' (Volksseele), but a testimony that the village community in China plays the same role in popular life, as in Russia or India..." (Kautsky, 1886b, p536, own translation)*

Kautsky would crystallize these developments in his first major Marxist work in which he summarizes Capital, published in 1887 and then republished in 1903. 'The Economic Doctrines' of Karl Marx was a work that Kautsky wrote with Bernstein, and it was the first time when the 'primitive communism thesis' was explicitly and emphatically attached and organically linked with the mature economic theory of Marx (in Capital I Marx makes comparisons with Asiatic formations which in no case he considers a 'locus' of 'equalitarian virtue'). For Kautsky, primitive communism would be one more epochal mode of production, which he conceives in such an unsystematic way that he compares it with the progressive features of the Third State (he quotes *Hunting Grounds of the Great West*, of R.I. Dodge) and/or with the virtue of a peasant patriarchal mode of production (that presents remnants in places such as India).

The other dominant 'Marxist' party within the Second International was represented by the French Guesdists, lead theoretically by Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue. If already in his article of 1886 *Matriarchy, Study on the origins of the family* he strongly defended the primitive communism thesis, it was only in 1890 when he codified it in major work and devoted to it a whole section. In *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization*, Lafargue leans both to Russian populism *Obschina* and the more general communist remnants argument, even quoting approvingly a Haxthausen that stated emphatically the inexistence of a proletariat in Russia<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See the paragraph 43 of the second section in the third chapter of Lafargue's 'The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization', published in 1890.

During the formation of Marxism as a tradition the two main sources that first fed the whole world with modern socialism were in fact the French Guesdists along with German and Austrian members of the SPD. The other main influence during this period (roughly between 1880-1895) were the Belgian socialists, but their socialism never had an explicit Marxist foundation, as its main theorists were not avowed Marxists (de Paepe, Anseele, Volders -only towards the end of the examined period appeared Vandervelde that tried to base himself more consciously on a Marxist tradition (but failed in the attempt as we will see below)-). From the SPD drank a first modern Austrian socialist like Karl Renner, and was able to develop a decadent Fourierist historical conception that strangely merged with evolutionist and gradualist notions. For him the golden past was a reality and coincided with birth of the State, a State that did not emerge as a product of class conflict, but from the unity of the people against the foreign enemy. In the world he was living in there were 'communist remnants' for example within such savages like the Maoris, that lived a 'dignified existence' because they had not lost the 'sense of right' that capitalism had spoiled for the rest of humanity. Renner's 'originality' (or extreme eclecticism) can be seen in the fact that for him even the ideals of the Great French revolution were only a crucial residue that primitive communism had inherited to the modern world:

*"It may be striking that the delirium of liberty, equality, and fraternity was preached at a time when slavery was a privately-run, law-clad state institute. That was not a ground in which such a thought germ could develop. The origin also seems to me to lie in a quite different time, namely, in that dreadful advantage in which the people's community was held together by no other than kinship, in which the community was based on personal relationships, in the period of gentile organization, in history one preached that doctrine less than one did. We received it by the way of tradition, and it became an empty phrase in our economic system" (Renner, 1894, p143, own translation)*

Another original version of the thesis of primitive communism was developed by the founder of Rumanian Marxism<sup>8</sup>, Dobrogeanu-Gherea who would sum up all his theoretical developments from 1883 to 1910 in a major work published the latter year (Neo-serfdom) where he exposes what he calls the 'law of development of backward countries'. Already in 1884 Dobrogeanu-Gherea found no problem in uniting Marx with Laveleye and discovering the strange fact that within the primitive community the Ricardian law of value could have been a reality:

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<sup>8</sup> If you discard Subko-Kodreanu, that developed its socialism within 1875-1878 as one can see in the article *Reports on the progress of the socialist movement-Slavic countries and Orient: IV. Romania*, published by Axelrod in 1881.

*"Is it true that 'value' is defined by labor? In a primitive commune, where a man, making a meal more than necessary, changes it on a neighbor's or a neighbor's coat, this exchange is done by the work of the citation includes the table and the coat. This work is an individual work. In this commune, the definition of Ricardo would be entirely true"* (Dobrogeanu-Gherea,1976:vol 1, p.99-100, own translation)

Even Italian modern socialism based itself on the primitive communism thesis, and the supposed father of the permanent revolution Antonio Labriola (if we follow Lowy and Rowney), was no exception in this field: he even hailed Morgan as legitimate continuator of Rousseau<sup>9</sup>.

The whole of this first Marxist tradition was effectively overcome by the main influence on Trotsky's, Georgy Plekhanov. The interesting issue here is that Plekhanov actually embraced the primitive communism thesis during his first populist years, before being a Marxist (or when he was in a phase of transition, only *becoming* a Marxist). In a avowed populist work of 1880 the father of Russian Marxism discusses works of the same Kovalevsky that Marx studied<sup>10</sup>, and attempts to refute the latter main thesis: that classes develop and form themselves through an internal mechanism, that they are not a product of external influences. For the Plekhanov of 1880 classes were a product of conquest:

*"Thus, we do not see a significant difference between the 'spontaneous' causes of the disintegration of collectivism that we have considered so far and those negative influences on it that the author himself does not hesitate to classify as external, 'artificial.' None of them, in our opinion, has any connection with the internal organization of the community, and therefore the destruction of collectivism caused by their combined action cannot be attributed to economic necessity. The power of the elders and the formation of the upper classes are a product, by their foregoing reasons, of conquest. The emergence and growth of them is conditioned by the natural inequality of rights between conquerors and conquered, and military hierarchical organization within the ruling tribe. To the same category of external influences should be attributed and the destructive effect of developing industry."* (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 1, p99-100, own translation)

This thesis is emphatically rejected by the same Plekhanov once he becomes a Marxist, a transformation (or development through contradictions) that, although has its roots in the years prior to 1885, it only becomes 'conscious' and 'mature' the latter year. This year his

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<sup>9</sup> See the article of Antonio Labriola *In Memory of the Communist Manifesto*, first published in 1895.

<sup>10</sup> The works of Kovalevsky that Plekhanov discusses are *On the Disintegration of Communal Landholding in the Canton of Vaadt* of 1876 and *Communal land ownership, the causes, the course and the consequences of its decomposition* of 1879. The second one was studied by Marx if we follow Krader's *Marx's Ethnological Notebooks*.

break with the populist conceptions becomes complete and radically based (rooted in different principles), as can be seen by anyone who reads the groundbreaking work *Our Differences*. This major work coincided with a *Foreword* in which Plekhanov develops a series of theses that sum up the Marxist conception and the core points by which it distinguishes itself from the populist notions. After quoting three paragraphs from Kovalevsky's *Communal land ownership, the causes, the course and the consequences of its decomposition* (1879) in which the author characterizes its conception on the problematic at stake, Plekhanov writes:

*"2. We ask the reader not to forget what was said at the end of the previous note. Primitive communism is disintegrating due to its own imperfection. Violence and deceit only accelerate the course of things that is inevitable for purely economic reasons"* (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 2, p394-395, own translation)

Immediately after this he backs his assertion with a lengthy quote from the *Anti-Duhring*<sup>11</sup>. This rejection of 'conquest' as core notion necessary to explain the whole development of mankind would play a major role in Plekhanov's mature works, especially when he addresses in an explicit form the essence of the classes, their formation and development. In *Essays on the History of Materialism*, a book he wrote in German in 1893 but only published in 1896 he linked this conception of classes as being based exclusively and essentially on conquest to a metaphysical materialism developed during the Enlightenment by d'Holbach and Helvetius, that would inform the works of the first formulations of a (still undeveloped) 'class struggle theory' by the French historians Thierry, Mignet and Guizot.

At this point of our study it is important to stress the fact that this development of Plekhanov was unique during the process of formation of Marxism. It was not present in any other of the 'first Marxists'. The same permitted him to overcome a major revision that Engels was forced to make in his 1884 work and that was organically bound with the primitive communism thesis. We are referring to Engels Preface, where he opens up space to conceive that in the development of mankind as a species, the determinant instance has

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<sup>11</sup> We present here the following quote provided by the same Plekhanov: "*Even if we exclude any possibility of robbery, violence and deception, if we assume that any private property was originally based on the personal labor of its owner and then all the further time only equal values were exchanged for equal, then, nevertheless, with the further development of production and exchange, we must come to the modern capitalist mode of production, to monopolize the productive means and means of subsistence in the hands of one small class, to squeeze another, which constitutes the vast majority of the class to the position of the proletarians deprived of all property, etc*". (see the second edition of the Library of Contemporary Socialism, 'The Development of Scientific Socialism, Fr. Engels' pages 57-58-) (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 2, p394-395, own translation)

not always been material production, but that specially during the communism of primitive times biological reproduction of human beings was the core basis that explained the development of mankind. Indeed, for the Plekhanov of *The Development of the Monist View of History* (1895), the passage of the Preface where Engels suggests such a thesis - and that had been remarked by the Russian historian of the French revolution Kareyev-, is dismissed as being only a minor reference to the period in which our species was not yet 'historical', but only 'natural' (a field in which Marxism as a historical materialistic theory does not have to deal with)<sup>12</sup>. This way of dealing with the impasse was a temporary ad-hoc response, but the essential points to be remembered here are twofold. First, that even Engels showed some doubts regarding the primitive communism thesis, as is shown by his appreciation of the first works of Heinrich Cunow<sup>13</sup>, and his letter to Lafargue of the 3rd of April of 1895<sup>14</sup>. This doubts of Engels were grounded on actual facts, as the same Heinrich Cunow would show at length during his life. Firstly, by explicitly addressing Engels revision of historical materialism exposed in the Preface to his 1884 book in series of articles published in the *Neue Zeit* in 1898 entitled *The economic basis of matriarchy* and secondly defetichizing primitive communism in two series of articles published in the *Neue Zeit* during 1921 and 1922 (*Primitive communism in the light of ethnological research* and *Primitive communism*).

At the beginning of this section we spoke of two principal implications that the omission of the primitive communism thesis had for the development of Trotsky's conceptions during 1901-1913. Having explained the first of these, let us pass to the second one, feminism. As it known, that golden age of humanity that Engels and the first 'Marxists' conceived was intrinsically vinculated with a particular position of women within society, a position of prestige and honor that contrasted with women's subordinated position within every class society. According to this, for the overcoming of class society it was necessary not only a revolution that would emancipate the working class from economic exploitation, but also free women (in general) from oppression. Although the Engels of 1884 never adopted this political implications of the 'primitive communism thesis' (his political program regarding

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<sup>12</sup> See the lengthy book of Plekhanov *The Development of the Monist View of History* published in 1895, specially Chapter V, the 7 first lines of paragraph 48.

<sup>13</sup> Additions to his 1884's work in the edition of 1891, and his letters to Kautsky of 5th of March of 1892 and the 9th of January of 1894. While Engels was still alive Cunow wrote a major work to refute the thesis that the Inca Empire retained and developed primitive communism traits entitled *The Peruvian kinship system and the indigenous communities of the Incas* and published in 1890-1)

<sup>14</sup> Engels wrote to Lafargue on the 3rd of April of 1895: "As for the material itself, the main point of criticism is in the chapter on tribal communism. There you lay too much emphasis, I think, on the form in which that phase has been maintained up to our own times, in France, and on the form of its dissolution in that country" (MECW v50, p488)

the woman remains surprisingly unchanged), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in fact lent a heavy theoretical weight to the developments that the worker's leader of the SPD, August Bebel had presented on the issue from 1875 onwards. We stress this date because the core propositions formulated in Bebel's classic 'Woman under socialism' published for the first time in 1879, were already present in an *Annex* to *The True Form of Christianity*, a work published in February of 1878 but, as Bebel remarks in his introduction, written in 1875. Entitled *On the current position of women*, Bebel's *Annex* (that should be noted was written before Morgan published *Ancient Society* in 1877, the main basis of Engels' work of 1884) is not only attached to a work that speaks positively of the formulations of the French radical Ives Guyot to develop a new formulation of the backward aspects of Weitling's original communism of the 1840s (the need root communism in Christianity), but is also emphatic in its analogy between the relation of tyranny and dependency that women experience within the marriage contract and the proletarian's relations to the bourgeois masters. For Bebel, the experience of gender domination (*Geschlechtsherrschaft*) is even worse than class domination, and that leads him to particular political conclusions:

*"Two classes of contemporary society have a great interest in contributing to the achievement of this goal: the proletarians and the women...The proletarian woman is spiritually much nearer to the wife of the bourgeois or the aristocrat than the male proletarian is to the men of those classes' On the current and future position of women" (Bebel, 1878, p41-42, own translation)*

This same thesis would be developed by Bebel at length in his major work published in 1879, a work that had more than thirty editions during the author's lifetime (it must be noted that its substantive theses were never modified in anyway) and that had a major influence within the context of the Second International and the formation of Marxism.

That when Engels lent theoretical weight to Bebel's thesis in 1884 he was crystallizing a regression of the same scientific research program that he developed with Marx since the mid 1840s, can be shown mainly by two major reasons.

In the first place, Engels was 'forgetting' the deep reasons that stood behind the first major break between him and Marx and what must rightly be called the first developed expression of 'revolutionary citizenism'<sup>15</sup>. In 1847 he and Marx opposed the German

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<sup>15</sup> The term 'citizenism' is a neologism. For an example, see: <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/americans-first/>



radical Karl Heinzen, who rejected the existence of classes in Germany (especially the opposition between the bourgeois and the proletariat) but nevertheless called for a major revolution that would overthrow kings, emperors and princes. The unity of the citizens was what led Heinzen on a road that permitted him to develop one of the first systematic versions of feminism, already in 1852. In *On the rights and position of women* (republished and extended in 1870), Heinzen criticizes the despotism of kings and men, harmonizing the revolutionary struggle of the European continent against all monarchies with the radical North-American tradition that sought the extension of rights for (bourgeois) women. Through a morally-based framework Heinzen combined the bourgeois revolutionary traditions with the reform desires of some bourgeois strata (that did not want anything else than more participation), showing indirectly how both were internally compatible (because they share the same social class foundation). If Heinzen's rejection of the class struggle between citizens led him -one can almost say, *directly*-to feminism after the revolutions of 1848, the embracing and development of this same class struggle (between the bourgeois and the working class), the insistence on its determinant nature for all societies, was what led Marx and Engels to conceive the necessity of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the 'permanent essence' of the coming revolution.

The second major development that Engels was forgetting when lending weight to Bebel's lucubrations, was the recent history of the last major political endeavor that he and Marx forged. We are talking about the history of the First International, it's necessary 'becoming' through conflict and contradiction. Aside from the central conflict with Bakunin and his followers that led to the final rupture of the Association and its demise, the conflict with the feminists based on New York was also present. Friederich Albert Sorge, the 'Marxist conscience' at the time, regarded feminism as one of the factors that led to the abandonment of a class-based-line of the promising National Labor Union (NLU) and also to the suppression of healthy similar tendencies within the international at the beginning of the 1870s<sup>16</sup>.

Notwithstanding these previous developments, Bebel's views were hegemonic within the emerging modern socialist movement. Along with Lafarge's views expressed in *Matriarchy, Study on the origins of the family* (1886) and *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization* (1890), they not only informed the analysis of the first Bernstein

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<sup>16</sup>See the series of articles *The Workers' Movement in the United States 1866-1876*, published by Sorge in the *Neue Zeit* in 1892. In the first article read pages 5-6, in the third, pages 1-3, in the fourth, pages 1-3 and specially in the fifth, pages 7-8.

to the extent that for him the 'bourgeois women's movement' was progressive if it did not overstepped its limits as he explains in 'Indemnification and worker protection' (1891), but also many of the socialist currents that were developing in other countries. The founding programs of Romanian, Italian and Argentinean socialist parties enshrined Bebel's conception as part of their principles, with the latter Party even serializing the whole of Bebel's work in *La Vanguardia* in 1894-1895<sup>17</sup>. Regarding the Austrians, again we can refer to the already quoted work of Renner, in which Bebel's thesis is formulated as pertaining to a double exploitation situation and framed within particularly conservative notions. The socialists of the United States, too, were in line with the others, as is proved by Debs article *Equality of men and women* of March 1894<sup>18</sup> and the fact that it was Daniel de Leon who translated and wrote an appraising Preface for Bebel's *Woman and Socialism* edition of 1903.

But there were criticisms of the hegemony of the 'feminist' position. Inside the Italians we could mention two articles by Kuliscioff of 1892 (*Feminine candidatures, Sentimentality in the Women's Question*) and for short articles in *La lotta di classe (Women and the socialist party* -1-10-1892, *The real cause of the woman* -2-10-1893-, *Bourgeoisie and Feminine proletariat* -28-4-1894-, *The feminist question before socialism* -20-10-1894). In the case of the English, there existed the somewhat misguided critique of Belfort Bax, who to some degree made a perfect inversion of the feminist thesis and argued that it was men that were socially disadvantaged and not women<sup>19</sup>.

More interesting for us are three criticisms that were made against feminism within the emerging world socialist movement, because all of them were organically linked with the development of Trotsky's theoretical concerns between 1901 and 1913. In this endeavor we will proceed somewhat systematically.

Firstly, it is important to stress the fact that the woman's question was linked with political ruptures that divided the modern socialist movement. One such case was what occurred within the Bulgarian Workers Social-Democratic Party. Born under the lead of Dimitar

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<sup>17</sup> For the Romanians, see the work *What do Romanian socialists want?* published in 1886 in which Gherea adopts Bebel's position and attaches a minor correction in a footnote. For the Italians, see the Program of the Lega Socialista Milanese published in the journal *Critica Sociale* in 1891.

<sup>18</sup> At the time Debs was not an avowed socialist, but just becoming one. His final conversion would be after his time in jail in 1895-6.

<sup>19</sup> See the following articles by Bax: *Some Heterodox Notes on the Women Question* (Jul 1887), *No Misogyny But True Equality* (Oct 1887), *Equality, Not Privilege* (Aug 1893), *The Woman Question* (Jul 1895), *Bebel's Woman and Socialism* (Aug 1895), *The Everlasting Female Again!* (Nov 1895)

Blagoev, a Marxist that organised the St Petersburg working class during the mid 1880s and organizationally applied the principles developed by Plekhanov in *Our Differences*, the Bulgarian Workers Social-Democratic Party initiated its activities in 1891. Always under the influence of the Russian Marxists, the Bulgarians at first modeled their program on the Belgian one of 1885, but already in 1892 the federalist implications of this first attempt were abandoned for the more centralist notions exposed in the German Erfurt Program of 1889-1891. Nevertheless, the party itself was created through a sort of compromise between Blagoev's supporters and the only half-way socialist followers of Yanko Sakazov, a compromise that would explode at the turn of the century and express itself organizationally in 1903. Although the split between the 'broad socialists' and the Tesnyaks ('narrow' in Bulgarian) was traced by Blagoev to two main differences that were already present before 1895 and that for matter of space we cannot treat here, there were other not frontline issues that expressed basic discrepancies. One of this was the woman's question. Blagoev relates the conflict that arose sometime between 1894 and 1898 (before the Fourth Congress of the Party on 1898) that confronted his right-hand Georgiev with Sakazov, and specially emphasizes that the latter supported his wife's transformation of an important women workers' organization in Sofia into a 'middle class general women's association'<sup>20</sup>.

The second criticism that can be found within the emerging socialist movement was developed by Clara Zetkin. Always on the left of the SPD and the International, Zetkin made her international debut at the founding congress of the latter in 1889. In the meetings held in Paris during the month of July, our author presented the report entitled *The Workers' and Women's Issues of the Present*. After a fleeting reference to primitive communism, Zetkin develops an analysis that intends to draw out the woman's question from the domestic field of interpersonal relations. Although using a somewhat feminist terminology ('double oppression', 'double exploitation', 'human being of a second class', 'rights discourse', etc), she stresses how the specificity of the bourgeois mode of production (its dynamic drive that always expands production) makes domestic endeavors ever more superfluous and at the same time binds a particular kind of woman to the social production of goods. Because of this -and even though she tends to conceive the necessary social transformation as mere adaptation of the superstructure to the base-, she is able to center her analysis around the distinction between the woman of the upper ten-thousand (a mere 'luxury animal' that fills her time with banal things), the petty-bourgeois figure

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<sup>20</sup>See the lengthy book of Blagoev *Essays on the history of socialism in Bulgaria*, published originally in 1906, and search for Part IV, Chapter 4, section 1, Paragraphs 5-10, of pages 202-204.

(proletarianized at its impoverished base and merging with the bourgeois on the upper end) and the woman worker. For Zetkin, while the woman of the high bourgeois delegates her household chores (specially the education of the children) -does not have real domestic problems-, and the petty-bourgeois woman is of a somewhat reactionary type, the worker woman has shown herself more advanced organizationally, even though she had no time or means for the care of her children. That is why she emphasizes on the need for the socialist parties to focus all their efforts on the last type, a quest that has to operate with the notion that the woman's problem is mainly economic (middle-class women societies only bring minor advances) and for that reason the demand to abolish women's work (very present still) must be eliminated from the socialist movement. Taking this stance at her international baptism, Zetkin recuperated without knowing it, germs already present at the birth of the modern socialist German Party but suppressed by its hegemonic wing lead by Bebel and Liebknecht. Indeed, Johann Baptist von Schweitzer, condemned in the most harsh terms by the latter two between 1865 and 1870, put the emphasis on the organization of the woman worker<sup>21</sup>.

The principles laid down by Zetkin in 1889 were not just mere words, but incarnated themselves on her party work, as she developed them more fully. That is why in January 1893 she entitled an article 'Sign of the dawn' to hail the class awakening of the wives of the coal miners of the Saar employed by the Prussian State. During the strike of mid 1892 they had been at the forefront in meetings and supporting tasks, putting a stop to a common behavior of women until that moment within the workers' movement -they held back the strikers because they were closer to household issues and felt more the lack of bread-, within a fight that confronted arbitrarily imposed new work rules and a reduction of the piece wages by half. Although the strike was imposed by the objective circumstances and did not had much possibilities of achieving its aims (also because it was lead by a non-political organization of lawyers), for Zetkin its defeat should have had positive consequences if it was considered as a starting point from which draw lessons to better plan the next fights. A second example of how Zetkin's program chart of 1889 was developed during the following years, is when she assessed the participation of women during the election campaign during the first half of 1893. For her this moment marked the political awakening of women in Germany, it was a practical critique of the caricature according to which women were extremely religious beings only dedicated to household chores. But this political awakening was not of all women in general:

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<sup>21</sup> Read J.B von Schweitzer article *But it moves!*, written in May 1867, search paragraphs 35 to 38.

*"However, it was not the women of the bourgeoisie who were so fond of themselves as 'German women' who proved that large sections of the German women's world have grown to political maturity. It was not the bourgeois women's rights activists (Frauenrechtlerinnen) who considered themselves the champions (Vorkämpferinnen) of the empowerment (Befähigung) and the rights (rechts) of the female sex par excellence, but who in reality are only the advocates of the interests of bourgeois women. It was simple, plain, unlearned and 'women worker,' (Arbeiterinnen) the workers' wives, the proletarian women richly laden with misery and toil, who showed that even the German women's world, which is considered to be particularly backward, awakens to the awareness of their new social tasks, that they are interested in public affairs and understand that she has been able to fight for great goals and to sacrifice" (Zetkin, 1957, p22, own translation)*

For our member of the SPD the women workers had had a salient role during the election campaign, actively participating in assemblies and meetings organised to fight against militarization. Taking this fight as a point of political departure they had started to question capitalism itself, a mode of production that inhibited them from feeding their own children not because not enough was produced but due to the fact the resources were monopolized by the ruling class. Indeed, all this showed that there was a marked difference between the social interests and their political expression by middle class women or by the woman that had a working class condition (not only the woman that actually worked, but also the wife, mother or sister of a male worker)<sup>22</sup>. And the important thing was that this woman was received within the quarters of the SPD as an equal with male workers in the field of the class struggle. Not only the woman worker that labored weaving with needles, or the shy manual industrial type were equalized within the Party as comrades, but also the woman that worked as salaried vendor and even the spouses, daughters and mothers of male workers that did not work themselves but shared with the latter and a defined 'class condition'. With her participation in the political life, the worker woman had shown herself more advanced than middle class women that had much more educational means at her disposal. This contrast was intrinsically bound with a rejection of the 'particularism' that distinguished the bourgeois women's movement:

*"By repressing and giving up particular demands (besonderer Forderungen) and petty intrigues (Quertreibereien), by wholeheartedly entering the general movement (allgemeine Bewegung), they have demonstrated that they are politically mature (politisch reif), that they grasp (überschauen) and understand (verstehen) the political situation, and subordinate (unterzuordnen) their special interests (Sonderinteressen) to general interests (allgemeinen Interessen)" (ibid, p29 , own translation)*

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<sup>22</sup> See the article *The German women comrades (Genossinnen) in the election campaign*, published by Zetkin in July 1893, and search in its second paragraph 2, lines 4 to16.

A third example that shows the development and application of Zetkin class-based preoccupation with women, is her assessment of the incorporation of the 'arbeiterinnen' to the employment situations themselves. In this respect, the member of the SPD details in 'Women's work and trade union organization' (Nov 1893) how the rate of growth of women that entered the labour force was even greater than the rate of their male comrades. Despite this fact, the wages of women were half (and sometimes even just a third) of what the male worker earned. Nevertheless, the solution to this problem was not in abolishing women's work, but in fighting a ruling class that was just a 10% of the population. In this struggle the unification of male and women workers in the point of production was crucial, something that would progress hugely if the unionization of women was undertaken not by just a few members of the unions, but by all of them. It was necessary to be aware of the specific problems that inhibited women from joining unions (situations of demoralization, lack of solidarity, prejudices, shyness, fear of the tyrant master, the material lack of time, etc), but in this crucial task of unionization no effort should be spared.

We will give one last example of this second materialist criticism of the feminist perspective that arose during the beginnings of the Second International. The same is crucial for it shows us how the conceptions of Zetkin were not hegemonic within her party, an organization that was forged by Bebel's conception on the woman issue. During mid 1894, 22 organizations that fought for the rights of women had made a 'humble petition' to the Emperor that urged him to abolish prostitution because it affected all women and society in general. This conglomeration of associations had again addressed the Emperor at the beginning of the 1895, petitioning for securing the right of assembly and organization for 'all parties and classes of the population'. The fact of the matter is that this last petition was being propagandized by the Vorwarts (main newspaper of the Party since the end of 1890, edited by Wilhelm Liebknecht), despite the fact that the SPD had already presented a draft of a law project in parliament that argued in favor of these rights for both women *and men*. For Zetkin the line taken by the journal was extremely misguided, because it was bourgeois according to its social provenance, form of conceptualization, method of presentation and social outlook<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Read the article *The women's rights petition, the right of association and assembly of the female sex*, its paragraphs 9 and 10 that was published by Zetkin in January 1895.

The 'error' of the Vorwarts was not a minor one, also because it failed to examine the real reasons that were behind the petition and only confided on the 'good intentions' of her authors. By acting this way, the journal directed by Liebknecht legitimized the power of the Emperor over the parliament and lent air to Bonapartist tendencies that filled the political camp at the time. Zetkin argued that endorsing the mentioned petition even on tactical grounds -she rhetorically asked 'why always the tactical concessions were made to bourgeois women and not to the woman worker'- was not a wise decision because what was at stake was not a problem related with particular persons, but a question of principles. Having the petition been framed through particular ethicist conceptions, the action of Liebknecht lent support for an 'ethicist tendency' that already was infecting the party with bourgeois notions from many other sides. And even though the workers in fact had made petitions to the Emperor during past times, in this case the situation was different for the propagandizing of the mentioned petition amounted to wanted to be educated by middle-class organisations:

*"We thank you for this instruction, but we do not need it...The version of the petition, as well as the procedure of its authors, is characteristic of the conception of bourgeois women and their relationship to the proletarian women's world. One is humanitarian enough to do something for the 'poorer sisters' under some circumstances; one is smart enough to accept their manual and tensioning services under all circumstances, but cooperate with them as equal power factors, yes, 'work' together, that is quite something other"* (**ibid, p53-68, own translation**)

This conflict ended with a Vorwarts that to some extent accepted Zetkin's criticism (the endorsing of the petition was revised), but not after Liebknecht journal stressed the fact that fighting with the bourgeois democrats in general was a tactical issue and that the party could be forced to a similar way of action in the future. That Zetkin's view was not hegemonic within the SPD could explain why she needed to stress that the bourgeois women's movement was indeed progressive at the end of her exchange with the Vorwarts (when the whole of her article argued in the other sense), and also to the lack of development that this minority position forced the correct positions of Zetkin on the issue.

That Zetkin's perspective was not a new road that departed from the Marxist official notions, is demonstrated by Engels renderings on the woman's question after 1884. Firstly, let us remember that even in his 1884 book Engels did not endorse the political position of Bebel to the full extent. That is why on the second edition of *The origin of the family, property and the State* of 1891 he made additions and corrections to the original version that tended to de-emphasize the positive features of primitive communism and its feminist

implications. Finally, also in his letters Engels made harsh criticisms of the bourgeois women's movement. Not only in his comments on the woman's question and its political implications in England and France in his letter to Gertrud Guillaume-Schack of 5 July 1885, but also in his criticism of 'feminist careerists' that abounded within Swedish middle class society and tried to legitimized themselves citing Ibsen's plays (Engels to Paul Ernst 5 June 1890) or of the inflated and arrogant crowd of middle class feminists in the United States (Engels to Friedrich Adolph Sorge. 6 January 1892). That is why it no surprise that 'The General' wrote to Viktor Adler on the 28th of January of 1895 to let him know how pleased he was with Zetkin's 1895 criticism of the Vorwarts and ended his letter writing: Bravo Clara! He even expressed this kind of criticisms to the very Bebel that to the end of his life upheld his feminists leaning that were forged in 1875<sup>24</sup>.

Both criticisms of the feminist standpoint that we have outlined here, are vinculated with the development of the theory of permanent revolution by Trotsky during his first years. To understand this, is firstly necessary to accept the fact that Trotsky was indeed formed as a Marxist by reading and studying Plekhanov's works. So, it is no coincidence that both the whole of Plekhanov's works between 1878 and 1895 and the whole of Trotsky's works between 1901 and 1913, there are no feminist suggestions. Indeed, in a text that delineates the core notions of his Marxism that we have already quoted, Plekhanov insists on treating the woman's issue from a class stand point concerning himself with the high percentage of women that composed the English working class and how this phenomenon was reproduced within the working class of Russia in different locations<sup>25</sup>. Likewise the only reference of Trotsky to the woman's question stresses a similar phenomenon in 1911:

*"In the five years that have elapsed since 1905, a new workers' generation has risen, almost unaffected by the revolution. The use of more submissive female labor has grown on a huge scale. By the beginning of this year, in large industrial centers alone, the number of women workers exceeded 545,000. Textile and tobacco factories, sugar, brick and even cement factories are systematically displacing male labor by women. The number of women in the factory proletariat has already exceeded 30%. Hundreds of thousands, millions of peasants...Only economic growth — and not fleeting, but serious — can turn all this huge and heterogeneous human material into a homogeneous mass, conscious of itself and acting as a revolutionary class...Already now, strikes cover the most backward workers, and women, according to the recall of the*

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<sup>24</sup>See Engels letter to Bebel of 29 of September of 1891, published in v49 of the MECW, and search the page248, paragraph 2, lines 1-9

<sup>25</sup> He quotes 'Female factory labor', 'Bulletin of Industry', April 1884, p. 4-5, of Janzhul, for the first case and 'Factory life of the Vladimir Gubernia, Report of the factory inspector for the years 1882-83 over the employment of young workers of the Vladimir district', PA Peskov, St. Petersburg, 1882, pp. 6 and 22, for the second, in his 'Foreword and notes to the brochure What Do Social Democrats Want' (Plekhanov, 1885)



*Council of Manufacturers of the Central District, are taking an 'active part' in strikes...the era of class education, organizational development - the era of gathering forces" (Trotsky, 1926:v4, in Iskra Research, own translation)*

So, we can argue with confidence that the third criticism of the feminist position came from Russian Marxism, and one of the reasons that explains that it developed to become the sharpest one indeed on the hands of Kollontai<sup>26</sup>, is explained by the same Zetkin in an article that she published in 1888. Always acquainted with developments occurring in Russia, the member of the SPD details in 'The Russian women students' how in Russia the woman had acquired more rights and how her social position was substantially better than in any other country of Europe. Within the context of a class society, this betterment of the 'woman's position', of course had been only for middle class and high class individuals. But this signified that the woman's question had been pretty much solved for the propertied, so the first Russian Marxists did not had to confront a problem that trespassed the classes and devise a special notion like 'oppression' to bind together women of the propertied layers with the woman worker, but only to focus on exploitation as a class question and the problems that it brought to the female side of the exploited class. Finally, it must be highlighted that the relation between the Bulgarian Marxism of Blagoev and Trotsky's views, is explained not only by the fact the first organized the proletariat of St Petersburg applying Plekhanov's views expressed in *Our differences* during the mid 1880s, but also reaffirmed by the very same Trotsky, who was more than conscious of the fact the Bulgarian Marxism had since its inception followed every turn and twist that occurred within the Russian Marxist movement<sup>27</sup>. So, if the Russians did not required a conscious break with the opportunists dimensions of feminism because their own social structure allowed them to focus only exploitation, the Bulgarians formed under the wing of the Russians lived under a different social structure<sup>28</sup> and were forced to make an issue of the woman's question when undertaking their own break with the broad socialists of Yanko Sakazov if they wanted to maintain the theoretical conquests (emphasis on exploitation) that their relation with the Russians Marxists had given to them.

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<sup>26</sup> Read Kollontai's brochure *The Social Basis of the Women's Question*, published in 1908, specially paragraph 19.

<sup>27</sup> Read Trotsky's *The Bulgarian and Serbian Social Democracy* of 1910, focus on its last paragraph.

<sup>28</sup> The Bulgarians speak a language very similar to the Russian, but they were historically subordinated to the Turks for many long centuries (their 'emancipation' was conquered partially on 1879, and then more fully in 1885).

## II. Of a Materialist conception of history, or on the contradiction between relations of production and productive forces

One of the distinctive features of the theory of permanent revolution as developed by Trotsky between 1902 and 1911, is a characteristic break with the historical conceptions that were hegemonic within the Second International at the time. If the latter understood the history of mankind as gradual process of evolution determined by the progress of the productive forces, Trotsky was able to conceive the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Russia of 1905, only by questioning the first assessment and putting the emphasis on the relations of production. To arrive at this conception, Trotsky followed a particular itinerary, and when it was finally anchored and rooted in his overall theoretical notions, the same allowed him to draw specific political conclusions of equally original rank.

The first station of Trotsky's particular itinerary, can be distinguish already in April 1902, when he wrote the article 'About Gleb Uspensky' under Lenin's editorship for the Iskra journal. In this short piece, Lev Davidovich suggests some thoughts that contain an important germ of his later conceptions. He criticizes Uspensky's (a quite known populist fiction writer that had died on March of 1902) naive view of the peasant life that went 'from nature to psyche' without giving its due place to social determinants:

*"Nature, as is known, is generally 'not in itself' an economic phenomenon, but Ouspensky derives the psyche of a peasant from his direct dependence on nature, including rain and lack of rain...This, according to Ouspensky, is explained solely by the nature of agricultural production. The rain, in that measure, is only given the power to form a peasant soul, in which he positively or negatively figures in agriculture, contributing to or interfering with agricultural work on historically technical grounds"* (Trotsky, 1926:v20, in Iskra Research, own translation)

In the process of developing this thoughts Trotsky consigns the orthodox conception of historical materialism, according to which the main issue regarding social evolution is the degree of man's power over nature, and that this degree was determined by the level of development of the productive forces. But, even though assessing this orthodox view as the most correct one available at the time, he stresses the fact that its legitimate theoretical place is mainly at an abstract level, that when one wanted to make concrete analyses the objective reality forced the attention on the social form adopted by the technology:

*"With respect to the direction in which it is known under the name of populism, this question must necessarily be presented in two forms: 1) in the abstract logic: what is the attitude of the writer towards technology in general, the technique, as a instrument of power of social man over nature, and 2) in concrete historical: what is the attitude of the writer to the technique in the social form in which the equipment of the last historical period has evolved. Of course, now all too clear that the practical importance is only the second question" (ibid, , own translation)*

This insistence of the social form adopted by technology already pointed to a criticism of the conceptions that view social development as determined by the instrument of labour, without taking due account of the fact that this same instrument of labour was a product of social relations.

A second moment that shows us how Trotsky developed his original notions on the classic Marxist contradiction between relations of production and productive forces, can be seen at the time when he opposed somewhat sharply the conceptions that Lenin formulated within the years 1902-4. If already in *Report of the Siberian delegation* Trotsky condemned Lenin's followers for not being able to fruitfully combine the economic and political dimensions involved in the struggle of the proletariat against the property owners, already in *Our Political tasks* (1904) he develops at length his differences with the political line taken by Lenin and his followers. Bronstein's position is framed pointing to the insufficiency of any analysis that centers its attention exclusively on the division of labour, and unconsciously reproduces the qualitative leap the very Marx and Engels made (or experienced) between 1846 and 1847 (the 'division of labour' was a central concept on the German Ideology, while this same emphasis is criticised by Marx to Proudhon on Misery of Philosophy, an opposition that allows him to develop the notion of relations of production). Unconsciously reproducing the trajectory experienced by the Moor between 1846 and 1847, Trotsky criticizes Lenin's conception of the Party developed in *What is to be done?* (1902) and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904), according to which the socialist political organization must be forged taking as a model the workshop<sup>29</sup>.

Indeed, the systematic developer of the theory of permanent revolution, first considers the possibility that Lenin's analogy is based on the acritical praising of the relations pertaining to one form of capitalist relations, the one proper to the sphere of manufacture. Quoting *What is to be done?* he complains that Lenin's arguments resemble the bourgeois

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<sup>29</sup> See Trotsky's book *Our Political tasks* of 1904, its third part. In the latter, search Section *The division of labor*, and pay attention to paragraph 6, Lines 4-8.

revolutionary Abbe Sieyés who wanted exclusive confidence on a center of leadership that had no proper responsibilities towards its social or political base. This organizational mode viewed the tasks of the party mass base as mere technical functions, without involving it fully on political tasks and decisions. Regarding this criticism of Trotsky we will like to emphasize four main points. First, that Bronstein explicitly rejects an interpretation of his criticism as one being based on a bourgeois questioning of specialization like the one developed by the Kadete Neo-Kantian Schmoller (a questioning taken afterwards by Max Weber, one of pillars of Modern Sociology). No, Trotsky's views are explicitly based on Marx, as he quotes more than one time Capital to oppose Lenin's formulations. Secondly, Lev Davidovich is openly dismissing that his opposition can be put into question because it makes a mere fetish of democratic procedures<sup>30</sup>.

So Trotsky was not making a liberal critique that condemned the principle of centralization of tasks, but of the particular form of centralization that Lenin proposed, because for Bronstein it carried the danger of debilitating the Party itself and making it incapable of fruitful initiative and action. On a third place, we want to stress how Trotsky questioned the adialectical theoretical dualisms that the need for political maneuvers forced on Lenin. If on *What is to be Done* Vladimir Illich enthroned the intelligentsia and its role over the proletariat, two years later (*One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*) the same Lenin was having the factory proletariat giving lessons of discipline to the intelligentsia derived from its social position on the workshop or the factory. Fourthly, and crucial for our purposes, Trotsky's insistence on getting inside of the work process and not naturalizing it leads him to mark that class consciousness does not derive directly from the specific relations found within the factory or workshop as determined by the instruments of production, but through a fight that recognized that the very organization of the work-process was trespassed by the class struggle, that its particular organization expressed the will of the ruling class to subordinate its class enemy at the point of production:

*"Without fear of betraying my 'bourgeois intellectual psychology,' I affirm first-of-all that the conditions which impel the proletariat into concerted, collective struggle, are not to be found in the factory but in the general social conditions of its existence; and further, that the objective conditions and the conscious discipline of political action, there is a long road of struggle, errors, education – not the 'school of the factory' but the school of political life...But factory discipline is as little identical with political, revolutionary discipline of the proletariat as capitalism is to socialism...The task of Social Democracy is*

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<sup>30</sup> Read *Our Political tasks* of Trotsky, part III, the Section entitled *Democratism*, Paragraph 13, Lines 4 to 9.

*precisely to rouse up the proletariat against this discipline, which replaces the work of human thought with the rhythm of physical movements...Such discipline does not yet exist in the Russian proletariat; the factory and the machine give it this quality much less spontaneously than union disputes or conflicts....The barracks regime could never be the regime of our Party, no more than the factory could be its model" (Trotsky, 1904, in Marxists)*

Trotsky's criticism of the organic adialectical dualism between 'nature and psychology' and the 'class' and non-mere 'technical' nature of the capitalist work process, led him to a definite and to some extent original theory of revolution. Remembering the Paris Commune of 1871, Bronstein sustains four main thesis on December of 1905. First, that the Paris endeavor was not defeated because of a lack of development of the productive forces. Second, that both the 1871 uprising and the events of Russian Revolution of 1905 proved that 'social development' had objective nature not only regarding the strict economic conditions, but that its laws were precisely expressed through social and political processes that were themselves objective. All this meant that the class struggle itself was subject to objective laws of development and was not a mere product of the will of individuals or even organizations. Thirdly, that these objective laws of development of the class struggle force on organizations to act within circumstances that they did not create. One of such circumstances was a revolutionary situation like the one that had occurred in 1905. In that context, to refuse to act, to retire to mere propaganda activities because one sensed that there were not possibilities for a victory, was a treachery of historical materialism itself. In fact, history was showing that there were not objective points that must have been passed before undertaking the tasks of conquering state power once socialism was made an objectively advantageous system. That is why in the fourth place, legitimizing inactivity by arguing the lack of development of the productive forces functioned as a mere academic 'economic materialism':

*"The proletariat grows and becomes strong together with the growth of capitalism. In this sense, growth of capitalism is also the development of the proletariat in the direction of its own dictatorship. However, the day and the hour when power will pass into the hands of the working class do not directly depend upon the level of the productive forces, but rather upon the relations of class struggle, the international situation, and finally, upon a number of subjective factors that include tradition, initiative, and readiness for the fight" (Trotsky, 1970, p12)*

These notions, that already point to the more mature form of Trotsky's thinking (here we already passed the mere 'itinerary'), acquire full shape in *Results and Prospects*, a pamphlet first publish in 1906 in the book *Our Revolution* along with other works, and then again by

itself in 1919 once the working class had conquered power in Russian soil. Firstly, Lev Davidovich remarks in the first section of this writing, that when one adopts the theoretical position that emphasizes the determinant nature of the degree of development of the productive forces, one is forced to characterize Russia as a backward and primitive country. But for Trotsky that was a one-sided utilization of historical materialism as a method of analysis. That is why, secondly, he stresses the fact that a materialist analysis must not conceive socialism as system that emerges out of a most 'developed' country and then expands beyond its borders, or as a type of society that only became necessary after the current system had shown itself essentially decadent to the point that it expelled parasitism from all its pores. No, for Trotsky socialism was objectively possible when two determinants prove to be present historically. On the one hand, that economic measures of collectivization already advance the growth of the productive forces when compared with the previous state of society. On this respect, the fact was that John Bellers had already proved this possibility for the England of 1696, Fourier to some extent for the Europe of the first half the XIXth Century and Atlanticus for Germany just a few years before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1905. On the other hand, the mere state of the productive forces did not spelled through the actual possibility of making the transition to a socialist economy; for this to happen what was necessary was a particular state of the social relations of production that formed and agent capable under the current concrete circumstances of carrying through the collectivization measures. The fact was that the Russian Revolution had proved that that agent was an actuality, was indeed emerging through a worldwide process. To prove this theoretically, Trotsky develops a third point taking as a legitimizing tool a passage of a writing of the Red Pope (Karl Kautsky), to criticize an unilateral interpretation of Marx's thought. That Kautsky's work<sup>31</sup> praised without any criticism a work of the same Schmoller from which Bronstein had delimited himself just two years earlier (remember *Our Political Tasks*) and was also intended to legitimize a populist Lavrovian political line for the Russian situation (the intelligentsia as a vanguard), for Trotsky were minor points if it served him to refute the claim of some economic materialists that understood the relation between classes as a direct and lineal and used as a theoretical cover a particular writing of Marx published in the New York Tribune that articulated the lessons to be learned from the German Revolution of 1848-9<sup>32</sup>:

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<sup>31</sup> Read Kautsky's *The American Worker*, published in *Neue Zeit* in 1906.

<sup>32</sup> In reality, Trotsky is mistaken and the quote he presents in *Result and Prospects* was not written by Marx, but by Engels in 'Revolution and counterrevolution in Germany' (Aug 1851-Sept 1852) if one follows the MECW edition of Lawrence and Wishart.

*"This quotation is probably familiar to the reader, for it has been considerably abused... 'Like master, like man.' If the capitalist bourgeoisie is not strong enough to take power, they argue, then it is still less possible to establish a workers' democracy, i.e., the political domination of the proletariat.... Marxism is above all a method of analysis – not analysis of texts, but analysis of social relations... There is no doubt that the numbers, the concentration, the culture and the political importance of the industrial proletariat depend on the extent to which capitalist industry is developed. But this dependence is not direct. Between the productive forces of a country and the political strength of its classes there cut across at any given moment various social and political factors of a national and international character, and these displace and even sometimes completely alter the political expression of economic relations"*  
**(Trotsky, 1906, in Marxists)**

This third dimension that Trotsky added to his criticism of the Marxists that stressed on the determinant nature of the productive forces and their degree of development, is relevant because it tells us that that the capitalist process of development is not a uniform one, and that, as a transnational phenomenon it includes situations and conjunctures where the form taken by the two fundamental classes (bourgeois and proletariat) is determined through an 'accumulation of contradictions' that shape specific relations of production producing the political and social hegemony of the subordinated and exploited class. That such situation had emerged in Russia during 1905 was evident for Trotsky, but by itself it not meant that Russia was a 'blessed people', not only because such a situation had emerged before (for example, with the Paris Commune of 1871) and could arise again in other places, but specially because the hegemony that such a situation accorded to the exploited class was a transient one, and only could proved lasting if the revolutionary process was extended internationally and combined with other points where the working class emerged as a leading social and political actor. Indeed, the fourth dimension that Trotsky's adds to his criticisms of the determinant nature of the productive forces is a rejection of any national emphasis. Both the state of the productive forces and the development of the revolutionary process are stressed by a Bronstein that refers to his previous writings (the same *35 years after -1871-1906* of December of 1905 and the *Introduction to the Speech by Lassalle* of July of 1905) in order to criticize conceptions of a national socialism of the type developed by Atlanticus.

Trotsky's rejection on the determinant nature of the productive forces is shown in two other writings. If in *Prospects for the further development of the revolution* (12 Sept 1906), an article published in the book *In Defense of the Party* (January 1907) Bronstein stresses the fact that he had arrived at his notion of 'uninterrupted revolution' only 'from an analysis of

socio-political relations', in *1905* (a book published originally in German for first time in October 1909) he sums up the content of its Introduction without mentioning the 'state of the productive forces', but, along with many other features (Czarism, Russian capitalism, agrarian structure and social classes) prefers to emphasize 'production forms and relations'. Accordingly, his whole characterization of the Russian social formation refers mainly to 'relations' (how in the 1880s this country combined 'semi-serf relations' with 'capitalist relations', how the 'modern social relations of the capitalist city' were part of the 'economic relations and social contradictions' of the whole Russia, etc). If indeed within this whole text there are some references to the productive forces<sup>33</sup>, Lev Davidovich binds the central feature of the capitalist mode of production (its fundamental classes) with the relations of production. Firstly, when he assesses the implications of the 1848 for Germany<sup>34</sup>; secondly, to substantiate the fact that the determinant nature of the proletariat in Russia was a feature derived from 'strategic' and 'qualitative' and not mere 'statistic' weight<sup>35</sup>; and, thirdly, that is why he asserted on a more general vein:

*"But, conversely, if we want to grasp a political process – in this case, the revolution – as a whole, we must be capable of seeing, behind the motley of parties and programs, behind the perfidy and greed of some and the courage and idealism of others, the proper outlines of the social classes whose roots lie deep within the relations of production and whose flowers blossom in the highest spheres of ideology" (Trotsky, 1909, in Marxists)*

This emphasis of Trotsky on the determinant nature of the relations of production was what allowed him to develop a particular understanding of the Russian social formation between December 1909 and January 1911, one that emphatically opposed catastrophic assessments of the state of the Russian economy. For writers such as Cherevanin and Finn-Enotaevsky, the possibility of industrial expansion was in reality an impossibility and was denied. The underlying theoretical judgment of this characterizations was a need to keep Marxist revolutionary optimism alive, a thing that could only be done if capitalism was conceived as a decadent social system that could not anymore develop the productive forces. If, indeed capitalism proved that it could develop the productive forces, then reaction had already conquered the field of struggle and there was not any possibility for the revolution to happen. Already in *'Waiting for the industrial recovery'*, Bronstein calls this characterizations as 'nonsense', without losing sight of the fact that the Russian economy

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<sup>33</sup> Some examples in Trotsky's book *1905* published in 1909 can be found in p12 (lines 5-6), p15 (lines 1-3), p17 (lines 19-20), p27 (lines 11-14)

<sup>34</sup> Search the page 39, lines 18-19 of Trotsky's *1905*

<sup>35</sup> Read page 34, lines 4-7 of *1905* of Trotsky



had been on a state of crisis from 1899 onwards. Firstly began under the influence of a downward international trend, this state of crisis could not benefit from the upward airs that flowed from outside of Russia from 1903, mainly because of a situation war (between Russia and China) and revolution (begun in 1905). And, when the revolutionary period had closed its first opening in 1907 (the counter-revolution had triumphed), the world economy showed signs of an emerging financial crisis (first on the United States in October of that year, then in Europe). So, the Russian proletariat had experienced its worst years from mid 1908 to mid 1909, beaten politically and suffering from an economic hardship reinforced by the international conditions. That is why the industrial recovery that Trotsky was already recognizing in December 1909, was not a phenomenon favorable to reaction:

*"If the industrial expansion could split the proletariat, creating among it the 'strong' and 'weak', like the law of November 9 in the peasantry, then so, social democracy would have something to fear. But this will not achieve any recovery. On the contrary. Revitalizing industry will unite the workers and lead them through the great school of economic struggle. It is only on the basis of industrial flourishing that the flourishing of trade unions is conceivable. The crisis of the last two years has not only not revolutionized the workers, on the contrary, has separated them and killed them in faith in themselves and in their own strength. And in opposition to this, industrial growth will again show the workers that the whole machine of the modern economy and the state depends on them as a productive class. During the upswing, especially in its first period, when the market seems capable of expanding without end..." (Trotsky, 1926:v4, in Iskra Research, own translation)*

Of course, Trotsky was not arguing that the industrial recovery was going to last very long (just a few years); in criticizing the emphasis put on 'stagnation' derived from an unilateral emphasis on the state of the productive forces, he never denied the cyclical nature of capitalism and its recurring crisis. He foresaw that the industrial recovery would bring in a few years a new slump, and that itself would prepare and strengthen the working class for the new revolutionary situation. His opposition was to a characterization of capitalism as a system in 'permanent crisis', decadent and parasitic. In this assessment he was not merely articulating 'wishful thinking', but drawing lessons from recent Russian experience. Indeed, the huge industrial expansion of the second half of 1890s had prepared the Russian working class for the revolutionary battles that commenced in 1903, and allowed the RSDLP to grow alongside a class whose energies and militancy proved to be almost unparalleled. So, recent past history proved socialism and working class militancy were not blocked by economic growth.

These ideas of Trotsky were not a mere passing suggestion, but a firm and sustained perspective formulated without abandoning the permanent revolution theory. Bronstein repeated them in *Towards an upswing* (September 1910), a writing in which he did not expect a immediate crash, but that did not mean that economic growth would mechanically combine itself with a smashing of the workers' movement. A first phase of growth after almost a decade of crisis was not to be compromised by the capitalists by a brutal repression of the political and economic organizations of the proletariat. To that prospect, was to be added the fact that the new laws pertaining the agrarian sector, would further the break the peasantry in between landless workers and an emerging peasant bourgeoisie, replenishing the ranks of the exploited with new rural components. Lev Davidovich develops the same themes even as late as in *The situation in the country and our tasks* (January 1911), an article in which he stresses that to base all hopes on stagnation was not a feature characteristic of the Marxist method, but of the 'populists' with which the Marxists had necessarily broken to carry further their analysis. The authors that stressed stagnation and saw in capitalism only decadence, in reality were unable to make concrete analysis: not every upswing brought negative consequences for the proletariat and the socialist cause, but this happened only when some circumstances were indeed present (for example, if the industrial recovery emerged immediately after a period of political activity and militancy of the proletariat -in Russia this was not the case, because economic growth emerged at least two years after the counterrevolution had consolidated itself-). So, for Trotsky the hopes of the proletariat and its parties were bound with a period of economic growth that would permit the unification of their forces.

Interestingly enough, Trotsky's forecasts proved to be correct, and a period of economic growth went along with an upsurge of working class militancy. The ascending cycle of strikes between 1912 and 1914 actually permitted the deep rooting of the Bolsheviks on a wide conscious strata of workers, and to some extent explains the possibility of their actions in 1917. Finally, it must be remarked that it is the same Trotsky that vindicates these last three articles that we have mentioned here in Volume IV (*Before historical milestone. Political chronicle*) of the Russian edition of his Complete Works published in 1926. In this vindication, Trotsky stresses the fact that his critical position regarding the characterization of a state of permanent crisis, decadence and stagnation, was not a mere youthful thesis valid for a particular period or phase that the bourgeois mode of production experienced in the past, but of such a general nature that he was forced to make similar arguments at the beginning of the 1920s.

Having outlined with some detail Trotsky's criticism of the positions that put the emphasis on the determinant nature of the productive forces, let us now expand at length on where the origins of Bronstein's developments lie during the period of formation of Marxism as a tradition.

The hegemonic tendencies within modern socialism at the time of the formation of Marxism as a tradition were indeed focused on the determinant nature of the productive forces. If regarding 'feminism' the Germans had the lead and best formulated the conceptions overcome by the Russian Marxists that gave birth to the systematic exposition of the theory of permanent revolution by Trotsky, in the case of the problematic that underlay the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production, the French Guesdists formulated with more precision the perspective with which Bronstein would break. Within the Guesdists, Gabriel Deville was the one that gave a definite form to a kind of Marxism that gave unilateral emphasis to the productive forces. If already in *Overview of Scientific Socialism* (1883) one can distinguish significant germs of that emphasis (and the same could be said of the otherwise refreshing *Public services and Socialism* of Guesde, written and published between 1883 and 1885), it is in a series of lectures that he gave in 1884, entitled *The evolution of capital*, that the idea is expressed at length, with precision and even 'repetitiveness'. Deville starts by pointing that it was the development of the productive forces that made the capitalist mode of production a historical necessity, because it was their movement that determined the character of the relations of production and in turn this signified that the whole superstructure must correspond to a base defined by the productive forces. So, for Deville human history had to be viewed as the development of the productive forces and bourgeois society as a mere phase in that development. With classes 'defined' by the productive forces, the mechanism that explained the change from one mode of production to another was not the class conflict that occurred in midst of a revolutionary situation, but the growth of the forces of production that could not be contained by specific property forms. This particular theoretical framework<sup>36</sup>, is what allows our author to conceive the modern bourgeois mode of production as the only epochal mode that has a dynamic drive, as the only one that expands the productive forces. This dynamic expansion, in turn, produces a process of lineal concentration which leads to crisis. That is to say, for our French author the cyclical

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<sup>36</sup> "Social relations depend on the rules according to which men earn their living, and vary with these rules which, in turn, are determined by the state of the productive forces" (Deville, 1884e, p7)

crisis of bourgeois society derive directly from an expansion of the productive forces that cannot be absorbed by the current state of the market<sup>37</sup>. All of this produced a state of society in which the productive forces already had a communist or socialist character, and the only task of the 'Marxists' was to change the individual mode of appropriation and adapt it with the already collective nature of the work process. This conflict between great industry and the mere form of appropriation<sup>38</sup> is what made the socialist solution divest itself of its utopian character, and not its particular emphasis on a particular form of class struggle that confronted not only exploiters and dominated or oppressed (e.g. feudal proprietors vs. oppressed capitalists) but an exploiting ruling class with a exploited working class. This particular form of socialism of the collectivist Guesdists, made them conceive socialism as fulfilling the long term interests of the bourgeois:

*"The bourgeoisie, which admits very well when it comes to the feudal regime by its overthrow, that the forms of appropriation are not eternal, that they are modified with the material conditions of the production, does not admit it any more than within the capitalist system: as long as it benefits from this system, it must not disappear, and it must benefit her in perpetuity. She does not understand that she has only advantages to gain if she withdraws, from a transformation which will put an end to social anarchy, with its crashes and bankruptcies; she is incapable of sacrificing the appearance of immediate interests to the wise foresight of her real interests. In fact, her clumsily selfish way of looking, and her particular desire to keep that which seems good to her, cannot influence the progress of things" (Deville, 1884e, p7, own translation)*

And the way by which Deville defined the modern bourgeois, as a caste proprietor that already did not undertake any function within the work process, made him understand that the vanguard of the proletariat was in the hands of what was in reality only a fraction of the bourgeois exploiters:

*"At the same time as the organization of work adapted to the way of being 'the productive forces, dismisses the caste proprietor, and is the signal of its historical end, it binds the workers, instilling in them the notion of their community of interests, It leads them to group together, constitutes them in a class more and more conscious of the situation, disciplines their methodically arranged masses in each industrial establishment, and shapes among them an intellectual elite, to which the supervision and direction of the enterprises are incumbent" (ibid, p12, own translation)*

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<sup>37</sup> A kind of subconsumism that is combined with the determinant nature of the productive forces.

<sup>38</sup> That is rooted in an unilateral reading of Engels Anti-Duhring, specially based on the shortened version of this writing published in 1880 in French as 'Socialism: utopic and scientific'. It forgets that before Engels codifies the contradiction between the 'mode of production' and the 'mode of appropriation' he has expanded at length on the class and exploitative nature of the relations of production within the work process itself. But, by eliminating these crucial developments, the Guesdists (a particularly good expression of what collectivism as a social current meant -other expressions could be found in Belgian and Italian socialism-), made seem that the only task of the socialists was a change in the forms of distribution, because production in its essentials was already communist or socialist. In the case of English first modern socialists, the book 'Socialism from the root up' of Bax and Morris uses this 'collectivism' as an explanatory pillar.

In consequence, socialism meant only to permit a normal development to the productive forces, a process that should allow the blossoming of the social tendencies that pertain to the essence of the current organization of the work process. This preservation of the productive forces is even framed within a conception that works with a biological analogy between the human body and the technical properties of the productive forces<sup>39</sup>

Similar ideas to the already exposed were developed by Deville in *Philosophy and Socialism* (1886), an article that adds up a degree of unsystematic developments, because if on the one hand our author understands that the bourgeois mode of production is the only historical phase that presents a dynamic character, on the other he speaks of evolution as the gradual development of the productive forces. To this logical contradictions (not dialectical contradictions included in the nature of reality itself) one arrives if one wants to characterize essential features of reality without explicitly centering the analysis on the class struggle as an objective process and even tries to transform social revolution in social reform<sup>40</sup>. But Deville was not alone within the French collectivists in sustaining this type of propositions, he just merely expressed with more care and detail a shared framework. For instance, one can see Lafargue affirm that not the working class, but machines were the ones that would overthrow capitalism<sup>41</sup>, or that the mere discovery of advanced weapons was what produced the demise of feudalism<sup>42</sup>. Guesde too, emphasized on the conflict between mode of production and form of appropriation treating as a technical progressive advance the organization of the work-process (*Collectivism*, 1894), and even expressed in parliament that socialism would come merely because of the current existence of advanced machines<sup>43</sup>.

Though the French Marxists were who better expressed the shortcomings of such a narrow and one-sided conception of historical materialism, they were not alone at the time. The Germans, as the hegemonic socialist tendency then, also worked their political proposals with the same underlying theoretical base. For example, the theoretical articles and the appeals of Bebel within parliament between 1881 and 1893 were all rooted in a

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<sup>39</sup> Read part V, paragraph 47, Lines 4 to 8 of Deville's work of 1884 that we have already cited.

<sup>40</sup> See Deville's article *Philosophy and socialism*, Part II, specially its last paragraph

<sup>41</sup> Read Lafargue's *The Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilization*, the last Paragraph of Part V.

<sup>42</sup> Focus on the 20th paragraph of the third part of Lafargue's 1895 article *Idealism and materialism in the conception of history*.

<sup>43</sup> Read Guesde speech *Communal freedom and collectivism*, of Nov 20, 1894 in page 150 of *Quatre ans de lutte de classe a la Chambre, 1893-1898*, published in 1901.

catastrophic perspective that predicated socialism only from the particular state of the productive forces<sup>44</sup>. If in *Appeal by the Social-Democratic Group to the Second Reichstag Election under the Social Chamber* (October 28, 1884) he urged all who wanted social reform to vote and rally with SPD if they wanted to avoid a social catastrophe, and then in *State wage regulation and the social reformist aspirations of the present* (1884) he even explicitly stated that anyone who wanted reform was already a socialist, this was because he wanted to avoid a storm within a 'state of permanent crisis':

*"Those who hope for improvement and gradual adjustment in the so-called natural way, who believe that this period of stagnation and overcrowding of the market will again be followed by a period of vigorous upswing and great need, are mistaken. The crisis is permanent. The means of production in all the civilized countries have been so enormously increased in the last decade, the technique of the production process has been so thoroughly perfected...Not improvement, but further deterioration of the general situation is to be expected with certainty" (Bebel, 1886, p135, own translation)*

But Bebel was not a particular or peculiar expression within the SPD, Kautsky also operated with an equal theoretical framework. If already during his Malthusian-socialist period he tried to merge both terms of the equation around the nucleus of social reform and this forced him to conceive socialism as question of distribution that depended emphatically on the state of the productive forces<sup>45</sup>, his mature work of 1893-4 maintains invariable this perspective. Indeed, in *Capitalism of the end of the Century*, an article in which he deals with a long treatise of Rudolf Meyer, shows us a Kautsky that welcomes into the *Neue Zeit* one of the key figures of catholic socialism (Meyer had published his first article in the journal in 1891), explaining how his conception of capitalism as system that abolished competition by monopolies and already introduced planned production led him to a common catastrophic perspective shared with the socialists:

*"R. Meyer is a Conservative through and through. He stands on a fundamentally different ground from social democracy and deviates from it in a number of highly important points. His thoughts on social development are quite different from those of Karl Marx. It is all the more remarkable that he,*

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<sup>44</sup> See the following texts: *Appeal of the Social Democratic Group for the First Reichstag Election under the Socialist Law* (Oct 27, 1881), *Appeal by the Social-Democratic Group to the Second Reichstag Election under the Social Chamber* (Oct 28, 1884), *State wage regulation and the social reformist aspirations of the present* (Bebel, 1884), *The production of mines, salt works and huts in the German Reich for the year 1884* (Bebel, 1886), *The Papacy and the Social Movement* (Bebel, 1886), *Germany, Russia and the Oriental Question* (Bebel, 1886), *For the 21st of February!* (Feb 1887), *The Austrian Trade Inspection in 1889* (Bebel, 1890), *The International Workers Congress in Brussels* (Bebel, 1891), *The tactics of the party* (Bebel, Oct 1891), *The activity of the German Reichstag from 1890-1893* (Bebel, end of 1892), *An international congress for the 8 hours* (Bebel, 1893), *The May Day and its meaning* (Bebel, 1893)

<sup>45</sup> Read the antepenultimate paragraph of Ch IV of Kautsky's 1880 book *The influence of population growth on the progress of society*.

*against his will and with the highest reluctance, but from the need; to come to a conclusion that is not materially different from what Marx has come to, to the realization that the collapse (Zusammenbruch) of today's society is inexorably approaching" (Kautsky, 1894, p598, own translation)<sup>46</sup>*

Within the German party itself, one of the reasons why the left faction of the Jungen could not overcome Kautsky's and Bebel's influence on the party and died as a tendency at a young age, was indeed that, theoretically, they could not break with the dominant notions of the Marxism of their time precisely regarding the problematic of the productive forces. If Gerhard Krause is already emphatic in stressing the fact the history of humanity is determined by one principle, one principle discovered only by Marx in the 'productive forces' and that acts with the necessity of a natural law<sup>47</sup>, even a more refined theoretician as Paul Kampffmeyer speaks at length of how production technology (in the abstract, without bearing in mind its social character) determines the hours, pace and division of the tasks within the factory. Quoting Wilhelm Schulz's *The movement of Production* (1843) he shows how he can only conceive socialism as a civic republic in which the machines will be slaves of humans liberated from work<sup>48</sup>. This Aristotelian notion of socialism, reproduced by Marcuse for the New Left in the mid of the last century, spells its mechanical emphasis on the productive forces, with its blindness to the necessity of transforming the relations of production to constitute a 'communist society' that Marx defined having in mind the natural impossibility of 'abolishing work' as a 'rational association of equal and free producers'. Indeed, Marx and Engels only spoke of abolishing wage labour: 'abolishing labour' would implicate a superhuman conception of socialism, due to the fact that what defines us as a species is 'labour'.

If German and French socialism were marked by a strong emphasis on the determinant nature of the productive forces, not only the hegemonic expressions of the advancing world modern socialism adopted this notions. The Belgians, to some extent the third ones in influence between 1885 and 1895, even when they tended to adopt the Marxist label under the lead of Vandervelde, conceived the necessity of socialism only by characterizing bourgeois society as a decrepit formation. Indeed, Vandervelde published a work entitled

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<sup>46</sup> We have not read this last work of Meyer, but only Kautsky's article on it. Nevertheless, what strikes us is the rapid change of the first author's conceptions (or its unsystematic nature), because less than 20 years earlier he dubbed capitalism and the class struggle as only beginning to emerge (see 'The emancipation of the Fourth Estate' of Rudolf Meyer, first published in 1874)

<sup>47</sup> Read Gerhard Krause's work *The development of the view of history until Karl Marx* of 1891. Krause was part of the Jungen, and published his writings at the time under the editorship of Max Schippel in the Berliner Arbeiter-Bibliothek

<sup>48</sup> See Kampffmeyer's work *Is Socialism compatible with human nature?* published in 1891.

*The decadence of capitalism* in 1892, whose notions informed its later writings until 1895. This work, as *Course on industrial evolution* (1893) and *Collectivism* (1894) develops the notion that capitalism is no longer a legitimate type of society because its ruling class does not fulfill any useful functions while 'competition degenerates into monopoly'<sup>49</sup>. This framework exposed in 1892 is what in turn led Vandervelde to develop one of the first systematic theories of socialism based on biological analogies in *Parasitism: organic and social* (1895). The emphasis on the productive forces carried him in this work written with the biologist Massart, to consider the work process of a class society (capitalism) as a natural and technical reality whose functions were badly performed by some agents who therefore were in need of expulsion. This adialectical rejection of the immanent process that underlies social reality, was indeed a legitimization of the practical endeavors of Belgian socialism as a whole, a socialism strongly based on a net of cooperatives that already before 1895 was avowedly reformist<sup>50</sup>.

If the three major tendencies of modern socialism were together in their blindness towards the importance of the relations of production, first 'Marxists' of other countries were in no better understanding. Firstly, the Dutch, cradle of left communism, were formed by the supposed orthodox Marxist Frank van der Goes, after the Dutch Marxist Domela Nieuwenhuis developed his notions in the direction of anarchism already in 1895. Theoretical father of such Marxists as Pannekoek and Gorter, Frank van der Goes, publishes an extremely moderate writing in June of 1891 entitled *What the socialists do not want*. Its starting point already signals the blindness of its author towards the importance of production relations, mainly because the main obstacle to socialism at the time for him was the insufficiency of the quantity of products, a lack that did not permit a better distribution of the goods. As with Vandervelde, van der Goes would develop this principles to present later a systematic exposition of socialism based on biological analogies (*Organic development of society. Socialist study*, 1894), an exposition that would not derail his march towards an avowedly opportunist course only a few years later. Secondly, within the Romanians, the first Marxist theoretician of what the XXth century would know as

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<sup>49</sup> This notion that there is a phase in a type of society when exploitation is legitimate and other in which it is not, is alien to both Marxism and the theory of permanent revolution. Is not only that Trotsky did not predicated the necessity of socialist revolution on the decrepit state of bourgeois society within the years of 1901 and 1913, but also that Marx rooted his March Address of 1850 on a Communist Manifesto that is not ashamed of portraying the nature of the bourgeois class in heroic tones.

<sup>50</sup> For examples of this see: Manifesto and electoral program of De Paepe (June 1884), Universal suffrage and the political capacity of the working class (De Paepe, 1890), The people and universal suffrage (Jean Volders, 1890). For a more general view of the reformist nature of Belgian socialism within this period, see the article *An aspect of reformism- the Belgian Workers' Party and its liberal connection' (1889-1894)* published in 1974 by Mommen.



'thirdworldism', Dobrogeanu-Gherea, understood *The materialist Conception of History* (1892) under a sociological framework that merely opposed 'society' to the 'individual' (class conflict was for him of a derived nature), a structure that led him to conceive the determinant nature of the labour instrument an essential factor within the economic forces. The third example that we are going to mention, is important because it stresses the fact that to find the roots of Trotsky's conceptions is not a easy task that merely encompasses isolating the 'left trends' within the emerging modern world socialism. Indeed, Daniel de Leon, an important figure of that 'left', developed notions that were alien and could not have served to Trotsky or anyone to elaborate systematic theory of permanent revolution. Is not only that de Leon embraced a-critically Bebel's conception on the woman's issue as we have already mentioned above, but also that what Trotsky viewed as 'factory despotism' that must be fought if class consciousness was to develop, for the member of the Socialist Party in the United States was a harmonic reality that both the political organization of the proletariat and the future society should imitate<sup>51</sup>.

We have reserved a special place to a last expression of the emerging modern socialism that could have not have been a theoretical base of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. We are referring to Antonio Labriola, an author that we have already mentioned in this writing, which is considered by both Rowney and Lowy a true root of Bronstein's developments during the first decade of the XXth century. The main reason this authors present to substantiate their case is the fact that Trotsky made two scant references to Labriola in his biography published in 1930. Even if one wanted to criticize these authors in their own terms (make an immanent criticism), what Trotsky says about Labriola in this scant references could not allow any serious author to draw the conclusion that his thought had its origins on the latter. Firstly, Trotsky tell us that when he read Labriola *Essays on Historical Materialism* he himself was still 'comparatively ignorant of the basic literature of the Marxists'. So, any judgment he could have made after reading Labriola could not have had 'Marxist weight'. A second thing to bear in mind is that Trotsky himself writes that Labriola was 'helpless' in politics in the same sentences in which he tells that Labriola had mastered materialist dialectics. Then, one of the key developments by which Trotsky explains the differences between his positions and those that were hegemonic within the Second International after the leading members of the latter had already supported the national war drives of their own bourgeoisies, that strategy (derived from theory) could not be dissociated with tactics, was a key feature of Labriola.

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<sup>51</sup> Read Daniel de Leon's *Reform or revolution*, in the Section *Government 'The State*, the paragraphs 17 to 19

Finally, what Trotsky says he took from Labriola at the time ('ideas do not fall from the sky'), he expressly stress he would find better formulated later in Marx and Engels and writers such as Plekhanov and Mehring<sup>52</sup>. Aside from this immanent criticisms of the propositions formulated by Roney and Lowy, here we want to stress that the very historical conceptions with which Labriola worked could not have founded any theory of permanent revolution. During his socialist but still not avowedly Marxist period, Labriola published the writing *The problems of the philosophy of history* (1887), in which he develops an idealist position based on Buckle (that would had overcame Darwin) filled with notions of progress akin to the Illustrated of the XVIIIth century, with the aim of explaining the 'collective soul of the people' through theoretical devises that spuriously distinguish between natural sciences and human sciences (like the historicists and Neo-Kantians), conceives the capitalist mode of production only through the opposition between 'society and individual' (no class struggle), etc. This socialist but no yet Marxist Labriola then concretizes this ideas in *About the popular school* (1888), a text in which he models his practical proposals on the 'advanced democracies' (not only the United States or Switzerland, but he even included in this monarchical countries like Germany and England), at the same time fetishizing the national culture that needed to take its own specific path on education (a path that the Italian people had already started to take in a progressive way under the lead of enlightened bourgeois democrats). This type of thoughts were not just product of a time when Labriola was already a socialist but not still a Marxist, but take a define form when he expressly adopts a (according to his notions) Marxist standpoint. For us this 'Marxistization' is relevant specially because in the context of a writing that rejects all the political and programmatic notions developed by Marx in the Communist Manifesto and dubs them as outdated (particularly outdated for him is any notion of revolution that contains within itself the idea of insurrection) he emphatically and repeatedly replaces the 'revolutionary class struggle' for the 'revolt of the productive forces'<sup>53</sup>.

If Guesdists, Kautsky, Bebel, de Leon, Dobrogeanu-Gherea, van der Goes, Vandervelde and Labriola are blind to the importance of the relations of production, where did Trotsky learned his 'special' kind of Marxism? Was it just a 'new left' trend within the Second

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<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Plekhanov writes at least 5 years before Labriola's essays: '*And if the reader abandons his prejudice against us, he will believe, when we tell him that we are not only out of decency, but also deeply convinced, never neglected ideas. We only think that ideas do not fall from the sky, but grow out of the conditions of social life...*' (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 3, p259, own translation)

<sup>53</sup>In Labriola's *In Memory of the Communist Manifesto* see Ch1, paragraph 35 (Lines 3-8), paragraph 56 (last 4 lines) and paragraph 88 (lines 4-5).

International? No, it had roots and these were very clearly marked. To understand where were these roots we will expand on some important issues with a certain extension in the following paragraphs.

The first thing that needs to be clear is that the underlying theoretical conceptions of the position that is blind to the importance of the relations of production are indeed present in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* of Engels. This should not surprise a theoretically alert individual: theoretical *conceptions* are not mere isolated elements joined together somewhat arbitrarily, but compose theoretical *systems* whose parts are organically vinculated. So, that a writing that conceives the origin of classes in a non-immanent manner to substantiate the existence of 'primitive communism' has the same theoretical base of the positions that 'pass over' the relations of production indeed should not strike as odd to anyone. Let us proceed. The Engels of 1884 based himself principally on the evolutionist ethnologist Henry Lewis Morgan and from the latter he derives the emphasis on 'property' and 'civilization', concepts that are not at all emphasized in *Anti-Duhring*. This concepts are part of a conception of classes that explain their origin and functioning by 'conquest' (that is, an external and not organical or internal relation), a thing that is not less true because Engels does not use emphatically the term 'conquest' in his 1884 work. Is this theoretical framework that inhibits him to put due emphasis on relations production, and it is this framework that was overcome by Plekhanov in 1885.

To see with more clarity Plekhanov's theoretical breakthrough (that in reality only develops further the Marxist positions of *Misery of Philosophy* and *Anti-Duhring*) we need to turn to some writings of this author from the beginning of the 1890s. This is because we can appreciate the true essence of it only when our author decides to present systematically and at length the implications of the materialist conception of history. In *Essays on the history of materialism*, a book we have already mention and that was written in 1893 in German but only published in 1896, the father of Russian Marxism enquires into the difference between previous forms of materialism and the Marxist form, and is led to the conclusion that the first ones are characterized essentially by a metaphysical approach, born and developed by authors such as d'Holbach and Helvetius. The specificity of the latter method is that it cannot understand nature as *moving* mater, a theoretical base that leads to a particular apprehension of the social field, to a real blindness regarding its own specificity as a field by its own right. If 'civil life' is conceptualized as a 'moral' based on the direct natural sensations of each individual and this in turn produces an 'opinion' that

creates 'legislation', at the same time the Illustrated conceive 'legislation' as creating morals. A contradiction that understands social life either as natural and interested field, or as a product of directly conscious acts renewed at every time. It is this metaphysical materialism the historians of the French revolution of the first half of the XIXth century take to analyze social life. Thierry, Mignet and Guizot due indeed set to some extent the germs of the theory of the class struggle, but are incapable of developing it because they could not break with the metaphysical materialism they had inherited from the past century. For them history is explained only by 'conquests' ('directly conscious acts renewed every time'), precisely because for them the social field is defined juridically only as 'property'. For Plekhanov, the overcoming of this perspective was possible only when Marx and Engels addressed the same themes but using a dialectical approach. If Darwin had broke the essentially static notions of nature used by the metaphysical materialists of the XVIIIth century, Hegel conceived the social field not as natural one determined by the sensations of each individual or as composed by 'directly conscious acts renewed every time', but as a field in its own right, with its own laws of development that passed above the heads of the actors themselves. Indeed, it was this 'rational nucleus' that Marx and Engels took and that enable them, according to Plekhanov, to single out the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, and within it the importance of the latter<sup>54</sup>.

The Plekhanov of 1893 was merely systematizing a perspective on which he had been working for more than 10 years, a view that permitted him to overcome the populist notions with emphatic clarity in 1885. Indeed, the extended, precise and lucid characterization of the Russian social formation he makes in 'Our Differences' set aside the stress on 'conquest' and 'property' and gave due importance to relations of production:

*"It is time for us to have the courage to say that in this field not only the immediate future but the present of our country, too, belongs to capitalism. All the conditions of exchange, all the production relations are increasingly shaping in a manner favourable to capitalism"* (Plekhanov, 1885, in **Marxists, own translation**)

But, as is known, a fact of the matter is that Plekhanov did not support Trotsky's position in the Russian Revolution of 1905 and made explicit his differences with the theory of permanent revolution. One of the reasons that explains the changing perspective of the

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<sup>54</sup> Read Plekhanov's *Essays on the History of Materialism*, Part III (Cont'd), Paragraph 2, 13 (lines 2-8) and 17.

father Russian Marxism -we will be detailing others in the subsequent pages-, is precisely in how a correct historical conception cannot crystallize fully and lastingly in concrete concepts. A special case of this general problem, is precisely found in Plekhanov's lack of *defined emphasis* on the production relations until 1895. Although he was able to write exquisite passages questioning that the Marxist method should not be confounded with the 'historical' (Neo-Kantian) or the 'evolutionist' frameworks because their gradualist and antirevolutionary implications denied the centrality of a dialectical method that had its center on the class struggle<sup>55</sup>, Plekhanov already in 1889 was laying down the germs of a perspective that regressed to positions that were not qualitatively different from the hegemonic ones defended in the context of the emergence of modern socialism. Indeed, in 'Civilization and the great historical rivers' Plekhanov hails Metchnikoff historico-geographical investigations replacing a conception that put the emphasis on classes and modes of production as historical phases of humanity, with a framework that puts emphasis on the determinant role of geographical conditions on the development of discrete 'peoples' which almost seem to represent different modes of production<sup>56</sup>. The Marxist approach that overcame Russian nationalism in 1885 by refuting the notion that their country was 'outside of Europe', is replaced here by a proto-developmental rendering that lends weight to what later would evolve to become one of the extreme variants of the positions that put emphasis on the determinant nature of the productive forces (natural or geographical determinism). This germ already set in 1889 is what explains how such an otherwise brilliant (and classic) work of Plekhanov as *The Development of the Monist View of History* (1895) can assert that 'the whole existence of the Australian savage depends on his boomerang, just as the whole existence of modern Britain depends on her machines', or that 'since that time it has become first of all the history of the perfecting of his artificial organs, the growth of his productive forces, and even that 'it is equally unnecessary to repeat that, at these earlier stages too, the state of the productive forces had a decisive influence on the social relations of men'.

But, against any notion that understands Plekhanov's thought as a conception that from its inception developed emphatic and unilateral stageist notions alien to any formulation of the theory of permanent revolution, we contend here that Plekhanov's core theoretical notions were taken and further developed (once he himself was beginning to abandon them to some extent) by the first Lenin. Indeed, if Trotsky based important dimensions of his

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<sup>55</sup> From the articles about Chernyshevsky, published in the Social Democrat for 1890-1892 Plekhanov, 1892. Part III, Paragraphs 3-5.

<sup>56</sup> Read *Civilization and the great historical rivers* of Plekhanov of 1889, the paragraphs 3 to 5.

theory on Plekhanov's first writings, this was because the best features of the latter incarnated definitely, extensively and precisely on Lenin's first works. Regarding the problematic contradiction between forces of production and productive relations, let us firstly oppose Lenin's 1893 perspective to the fetish that the dominant notions within the emerging modern socialism -from Lafargue to the Jungen Kampffmeyer- made of 'machines':

*"It has already been said that the peasants of the bottom economic groups are forced to sell their labour-power; the members of the top groups, on the contrary, have to buy it, for the workers in their own families are inadequate for the cultivation of their large crop areas. We must now dwell in greater detail on this important fact. Postnikov apparently does not class it under the 'new economic developments in peasant life' (at least, he does not mention it in his preface, where he sums up the results of his work), but it is deserving of far more attention than the introduction of machines or the extension of cropping by the well-to-do peasants" (Lenin, 1960:v1, p42)*

In second place, it is important to stress the fact that Lenin outlines the importance of the relations of production not breaking with Marx's matures works and referencing himself on some young Marx of more idealist and humanist vein, but precisely basing on *Capital* and Plekhanov's first works (specially *Our Differences*). In the context of underlining the epistemological and conceptual premises of the Marxist method (that Lenin calls the 'skeleton of *Capital*') against Mikhailovsky's populist view, Vladimir Illich explains the importance of the notion of 'laws of development', a concept that rejects the spurious subjectivist radical division between 'society' and 'nature', and with it any notion of 'society in general' and the concomitant 'rights discourse'. 'Laws of development' were central for the 'skeleton of Capital', and not only because they singled out an 'economic formation of society' (that Lenin sometimes calls 'social formation') conceived as an 'epochal' and not 'particular' entity and left aside any notion of capitalism as an abnormal/exceptional kind of society (a notion akin to that developed many authors within the emerging modern socialism, from Hyndman to Kautsky), but because it forced the theoretician to abandon any normativism, voluntarism and moralism. A second core concept that Lenin singles out in 1894 within the skeleton of the Marxist method he discovers it in the *Preface* of Marx quoted by Plekhanov in 1895 (even in the same passages), a *Preface* that for him should not be understood as legitimizing a framework that puts unilateral emphasis on the productive forces:

*"By what means did Marx arrive at this basic idea? He did so by singling out the economic sphere from the various spheres of social life, by singling out production relations from all social relations as being basic, primary, determining all other relations" (ibid, p138)*

For Lenin, Marx's 1859 emphasis on relations of production was a 'stroke of genius', a hypothesis 'which first created the possibility of a strictly scientific approach to historical and social problems'. This scientific premise was completely alien to the emphasis of sociologists on the superstructure of society and their rationalist and consensualist approach that merely developed notions derived from Rousseau. No, the emphasis on relations of production develops a form of materialism that did not reject the rational nucleus of Darwin's thesis regarding the status of nature, but at the same time differed essentially from the materialist conception of the Illustrated of the second half of the XVIIIth century. For the Vladimir Illich of 1894, the relations of production were almost exactly what they were for the Trotsky of 1905:

*"Materialism provided an absolutely objective criterion by singling out 'production relations' as the structure of society, and by making it possible to apply to these relations that general scientific criterion of recurrence whose applicability to sociology the subjectivists denied. So long as they confined themselves to ideological social relations (i.e., such as, before taking shape, pass through man's consciousness\*) they could not observe recurrence and regularity in the social phenomena of the various countries, and their science was at best only a description of these phenomena, a collection of raw material. The analysis of material social relations (i.e., of those that take shape without passing through man's consciousness: when exchanging products men enter into production relations without even realising that there is a social relation of production here)" (ibid, p140)*

The stroke of genius that implied the emphasis on the relations of production was vinctuated with the fact it enabled the concrete analysis of particular situations through the working of concrete concepts, without falling into any particularism or making the theoretician loose his grip on the laws of development. The objective nature of the relations of production also allowed an immanentist conception of the origin of classes and class struggle, leaving aside any external thesis that could enthroned 'property' and 'conquest':

*"He took one of the social-economic formations— the system of commodity production...This analysis is confined exclusively to production relations between members of society: without ever resorting to features outside the sphere of these production relations for an explanation, Marx makes it possible to discern how the commodity organisation of social economy develops, how it becomes transformed into capitalist organisation, creating antagonistic classes (antagonistic within the bounds of production relations), the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, how it develops the productivity of social labour, and thereby introduces an element that becomes irreconcilably contradictory to the foundations of this capitalist organisation itself" (ibid, 141)*

Lenin's emphasis on the determinant nature of the relations of production was rooted not only on the skeleton of *Capital*, but referred to the substantive content of Marx's opera prima itself. For Vladimir Illich, *Capital* worked with the notion of laws of development and this permitted the overcoming of a notion of society as composed of individuals bound mechanically, an analysis that while it was not guilty of 'everythingism', it was fruitful and led to so much new discoveries because its concretization through the notion of relations of production implied an analysis of the economic field that based itself on the class struggle and was conscious of the specific role played by the superstructure:

*"Such is the skeleton of Capital. The whole point, however, is that Marx did not content himself with this skeleton, that he did not confine himself to 'economic theory' in the ordinary sense of the term, that, while explaining the structure and development of the given formation of society exclusively through production relations, he nevertheless everywhere and incessantly scrutinised the superstructure corresponding to these production relations and clothed the skeleton in flesh and blood. The reason Capital has enjoyed such tremendous success is that this book by a 'German economist' showed the whole capitalist social formation to the reader as a living thing—with its everyday aspects, with the actual social manifestation of the class antagonism inherent in production relations, with the bourgeois political superstructure that protects the rule of the capitalist class, with the bourgeois ideas of liberty, equality and so forth, with the bourgeois family relationships" (ibid, p141)*

In overcoming the blindness of the hegemonic tendencies of the emerging modern socialism at the time, Lenin is rigorous enough to point that Marx's was not a dogma but a research program that required development and refers particularly to the need of applying it to other previous modes of production. This latter were called by Vladimir Illich 'social formations' and were specially distinct if compared with 'peoples' ' or 'societies', an emphasis by which he overcame Plekhanov's misguided national-populist suggestions of 1889 that we mentioned above<sup>57</sup>. Finally, it is important to stress that the first Lenin that is not blind towards the essential nature of the relations of production, defends the thesis that a particular expression of the scientific character of Marxism as a research program that required development was Engels own understanding of *The German Ideology* in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886) -'The finished portion [of this work] consists of an exposition of the materialist conception of history which proves only how incomplete our knowledge of economic history still was at that time'- and how this incompleteness was greatly overcome by Marx's *Misery of Philosophy* -the theoretical base of the Communist Manifesto according to Lenin and Engels-. That the *Misery of Philosophy* studied by Lenin puts the accent on 'relations of production' and the by Engels

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<sup>57</sup> Read Lenin's *What the 'friends of the people' are...*in LCW, v1 p142, Paragraph 2, Lines 3 to 8.



dismissed *German Ideology* -that was not read by Lenin (only published completely in 1932)-, does not know such a concept (it enthrones the 'division of labour' and uses repeatedly the notion of 'verkehr'), must show us where in Marx and Engels work one must seek the roots of the Marxism that gave birth to the theory of permanent revolution codified in 1850, and that was further developed during the first Russian Revolution by Trotsky.

One final note regarding the origin of Trotsky's critique of the undue emphasis on the productive forces we will like to make, is that the same not only bases itself on Plekhanov's breakthrough that overcame Engels' misguided suggestions developed in his 1884 book and its development by Lenin between 1893 and 1895, but also -at least to some extent- on the contentions developed by Mehring in 1893. The latter, that had joined the SPD in 1891 at a later age after spending 20 years outside of it, writes an interesting article in 1893 (*On Historical materialism*) which, as Lenin 1894, defines the Marxist method against sociology, opposing the expression of this 'science' in the persons of leading 'Kadetists' (Brentano, Wagner), 'positivists' (Herbert Spencer) and 'Neo-Kantian subjectivists' (a Hermann Barth that enthrones a radical distinction between 'society' and 'nature'). It is this delimitation that permits him, in the context of a work that quotes Marx's Preface of 1859, the *Afterword of Capital I* that stresses 'dialectics' (January 1873), the *Communist Manifesto* (whose political conclusions he does not reject as the Labriola of 1895) and Engels' letter to him of September 28 of 1892, to question both natural-geographical determinism (to which Plekhanov's leans to in 1889)<sup>58</sup> and technological determinism (very marked on the Kampffmeyer of 1891)<sup>59</sup> by stressing (following Engels) that the economy was determinant only on the last instance.

The roots of Trotsky's emphasis on the relations of production has been discovered in the works of the first Plekhanov, the first Lenin and the Mehring that had just joined the SPD. That the first is repeatedly quoted by Trotsky as his basis during the first formulation of the theory of permanent revolution ('the Russian Revolution will triumph as workers' revolution or it will not triumph at all'), while the second is singled as a main influence when this theory is codified at a mature age (*The Permanent revolution*, 1930) and the third supports the Russian revolutionaries during the first and the second Russian revolutions (Kautsky only gives them a qualified support regarding the first Russian Revolution), is not a mere coincidence.

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<sup>58</sup> Read *On Historical Materialism* by Mehring published in 1893, in Part III, Paragraph 34 Lines 1 to 7.

<sup>59</sup> See the already quoted article of Mehring, its Part II, Paragraph 11, Lines 12 to 17.

### III. On the historical reception of Capital and its more correct apprehension

We have demonstrated in the previous pages of this work that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was based mainly on the first Plekhanov, and how the latter's contributions were taken by the first Lenin. This was not because of a national peculiarity attached to Russian soil, but mainly due to the fact the other expressions of emerging socialism that were walking through a similar path, were suppressed or marginalized by the hegemonic brand of modern socialism that affirmed itself between 1865 and 1895 (this is what partly happened to the Jungen in Germany, to Engelmann in Hungary, to some extent to the Tesnyaks in Bulgaria, to Schweitzer, Mehring and Zetkin in Germany, etc). In this last part of our work we will show that the overcoming of the 'primitive communism' thesis and its feminist derivations, that the theoretical conquest implied in going beyond the mere emphasis on the productive forces, were both based on a particularly Marxist working of the mature writings of the Moor and specially of *Capital*. To do this, in what follows we will deal with some extension with the different readings of Marx's *Capital* that were made by the emerging modern socialism between 1865 and 1895.

Firstly, we will elaborate on what we dub as 'false alternatives', to only later explain where were the more correct renderings regarding the mature works of Marx and Engels.

The first 'interpretation' of *Capital* that we consider here was developed by Nikolai Zieber (or Sieber). Mentioned in good terms by Marx in his *Afterword* of January 1873 to *Capital I*, this Russian that was born and taught in what is today Ukraine, in our times is presented as a real Marxist alternative when one deals with the first readings of *Capital* by authors such as James D. White and Paul Zarembka (White, 2009; White, 2011; Zarembka, 2012). There are several reasons that make us reject this judgment of both current Marxists that we will list here. Firstly, Trotsky himself tells us that the first appreciative apprehensions of *Capital* by Russian authors at the beginning of the 1870s were not truly Marxist ones, but essentially determined by a populist political bias that considered the fundamental role of the working class not as pillar in their elaborations, as he wrote in his 1936' work *The young Lenin*. If this was especially true in the case of the Pyotr Lavrov for our part we can say that it was still valid for Zieber. He not only objected to some extent to Engels criticism of Duhring -that we have shown was crucial for Plekhanov's overcoming of the regression implied in '*The Origin of...*'-, but was also capable of breaking with the populist

stress on the 'development of history by jumps' only by adopting an explicit evolutionist and naturalist framework. And, even after he was already a 'learned Marxist', his interests in the populist conceptions were maintained and expressed themselves in works such as *Essays on primitive economic culture* (1883) and *Law and political economy* (1884). This populist dimensions -that were never contrasted practically because Zieber was never active politically-, can be traced to a fundamental wrong position: his rejection of dialectics. This rejection of dialectics led him to dismiss real theoretical dimensions and work with emphatically empiricist notions:

*"...the entire corpus of Marx's investigations clearly shows that real relations, in his opinion, precede abstract ones, and act as the root and the raison d'être of the latter. But in the given case, he leaves reality aside, and although he returns to it later, the reader nevertheless is unable to free himself from the idea that for Marx it is the abstractions of use-value and exchange-value, and not the phenomena, of which they are more or less successful labels that are the real point.... In any event, the investigation of real relations ought to have preceded the analysis of abstractions, and not followed it. (p. 165)" (Zieber, 1874 in Zarembka 2012, p7)*

The dualisms between which Zieber stood and never overcame (evolutionism or ahistorical jumps), were indeed intrinsically bound with his rejections of dialectics: indeed, Plekhanov was capable of breaking with populism and evolutionism only by grasping the dialectical method, as can be seen in Plekhanov's brilliant work on Cernychevsky of 1892. That both the White and the Zarembka that reference themselves on Zieber as an alternative to Plekhanov and dialectics, at the same time argue in favor of populist notions (for them Marx's letters of 1877 and to Zasulich in 1881 were strategical documents that demonstrate the Moor embracing Russian populism and not just tactical politics that considered the popular Russian revolution necessary solely to block the Czarist onslaught on a socialist proletarian revolution that would began in Germany or France), cannot be then a surprise for anyone. Zarembka, specially, has no trouble with Zieber subconsumist crises notions, because he himself operates with a similar framework taken from the polish Keynesian Michael Kalecki.

A second grasping of Marx's Capital we like to deal with, is the one that Johann Most codified in 1876. Most, a worker one time member of the SPD that turned to Anarquism at the end of 1870s or the beginning of the 1880s, wrote a work that was not only extensively revised by Marx regarding specific economic terminology (due to numerous errors in this

respect)<sup>60</sup>, but also used abundant populist phrasing ('democratically vulgar' according to the editor of the version of this work we were able to study) -repeating the Kriege of 1846 he emphasized on passion and heart, stressed the need for popular self-government, conceived the existence of a golden past epoch not that behind in time, etc-. More importantly regarding the nature of Capital, in his work he is incapable of really grasping the accumulation drive inherent within bourgeois society and its capitalist agent:

*"This absolute enrichment drive, the passionate hunt for the exchange value, is common to the capitalist with the treasurer, but while the treasurer is only the crazy capitalist, the capitalist is the clever treasurer. The tendency is most striking: buy, to sell more expensive, in trade capital, but industrial capital as well has the same tendency"* (**Johann Most, 1876, in Marxists, own translation**)

This (failed) economic criteria were what led him to a characterization that aristocratized the class enemy and lightly conceived that the socialist revolution would need to deal just with a few kings and nobles<sup>61</sup> (like Heinzen also understood). In its turn this was predicated on theses that adialectically unilateralized some tendencies of the capitalist mode of production, understanding its development without any complexity and through a simple uniform unfolding<sup>62</sup>. Consequently, for him a fatalist evolutionism combined with idealist proto-Marcusian notions that put guilt on the workers themselves ('they let themselves be exploited because they are ignorant'), always avoiding sharp class terminology and preferring more 'social' formulae.

A third writer we would like to list as a false alternative, is Cesar de Paepe. Though never a Marxist, the Belgian was indeed a crucial figure in the emerging modern socialism and has been appreciatively treated by G.D.H Cole in a *History of the Second International* that is fairly sympathetic to Trotsky himself (G. D. H. Cole, 1963). As we have already noted, the Belgians were the third major tendency within the Second International during its first years, and had an extensive socialist history with roots that went as early as the Revolution of 1830<sup>63</sup>. Part of this tradition and with influence on Dutch and French emerging modern socialism, de Paepe dealt with economic issues with less systematicity due to the fact that

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<sup>60</sup> Marx ended disassociating himself from any connection with Mosts work. See Marx's letter to Sorge of June 14th of 1876.

<sup>61</sup> For Marx the growth of productivity after the first class societies did not make the ruling class an 'ever smaller part of population'. See Capital I of Marx, its Part V, page 513 of the corresponding MECW volume.

<sup>62</sup> See Most' work *Capital and labor. Popular excerpt from 'The Capital' by Marx*, Ch 7, Paragraph 21.

<sup>63</sup> Marx himself confronted the Belgian brand of socialism in the person of Adolf Bartels in 1847, a character which he likened with the bourgeois humanism that Anacharsis Clootz developed during the Great French Revolution as one can see in his *Remarks on the Article by M. Adolphe Bartels* of December 1847.

his social status did not enabled him to free himself from work to fully dedicate to study and organization. Nevertheless, when he did treat these subjects his elaborations were not able to really grasp the laws of motion of bourgeois society through a working of Marx's discoveries. Already in 1875 he adopts and explicit distributionalist framework:

*"The question of what should be the share of labor and capital in the distribution of social benefits, is the most important object of the economic questions. It is a question that lies in the heart of all the differences between the bourgeois economists"* (De Paepe, 1875, p18-19, own translation)

In this work, our Belgian socialist stands out due to his lack of distinction between 'proletarian socialism' and 'bourgeois socialism', an imperishable theoretical conquest that Marx had already codified when publishing the Communist Manifesto in 1847-8. Even over-representing bourgeois socialism, de Paepe deals lightly with crucial economic issues, not only putting an equal sign between Marx and Lassalle<sup>64</sup>, but defining 'capital' and 'labour' basing on a lessened understanding of a classical political economy that puts an equal sign between Adam Smith and Bastiat (a Bastiat that was already sharply criticized even by a Lassalle of 1864 that did not read Capital but only 'Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy'). Through this framework, our Belgian stresses political conclusions that went no further than the Proletarian-Ricardianism of the 1820-1830s (cooperativism, the blindness to the need of eliminating commodity exchange when enthronizing a 'bank of the people', etc).

This economic perspective of de Paepe was not a passing one, but on the contrary, its enduring qualities were shown in the fact that this Belgian socialist developed them more fully in an article that he published in the Zukunft journal in 1878. That de Paepe selected this journal for his publication is not a minor issue, because the latter was the main publication of the avowedly moderate wing of the SPD that gave birth to such groupings as the Zurich Trio (that we have already mention Marx and Engels criticized in the most harsh terms in September 1879). *Investigations on the basic principles of the social economy*, an extended series of articles published in German (we assume de Paepe wrote this version because we do not know of the existence of any original version in French), coins and codifies, as its title makes clear, an entirely new field: social economy. Abounding on terms such as 'working people' and 'social movement', our writer not only

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<sup>64</sup> An identification that was a popular coin until Engels manages to publish Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program in 1891, but that nevertheless was not omnipresent, as the works of JB von Schweitzer probe for the later 1860s, and Plekhanov for the second half of the 1880s.

avoids sharply defined class terms, but even lowers 'socialism' to merely the 'social'. This theoretical position went well with political propositions that explicitly denied the necessity of revolutionary violence when addressing the passage to socialism, based themselves on a 'popular will' that only needed to complete the democratic conquests already present within the normal functioning of bourgeois society and selected for recommendation the father of French possibilism Malon. In their turn, these political leanings rooted themselves on an understanding that put on a high hierarchy sociology itself as a science: de Paepe treats at length Comte's propositions which for him are truly valid, notwithstanding their positivist dimensions. So, for our author the economy is just a subsection of society -an even one within which production is not marked as determinant, but as only one instance on the same terms as exchange-, a society he understands in Comtist terms (proto-functionalism, evolutionism, the law of three stages, not having any problem with explicit rejection of politics by Comte, etc). The 'sociologism' of de Paepe shows itself even in a more marked way, when he explicitly embraces an idealist 'epistemology' and roots it on Douai, a theoretical core notion that could explain his extreme political eclecticism which avowedly tries to unite in one field progressists and communists from the most varied type -from Mably to the proletarian Ricardianist Gray, passing through the German Kadetists- under the common denominator of natural right and the Aufklärung tradition.

Concerning concrete political proposals, the economic views of Cesar de Paepe, expressed themselves later on an explicit and acritical defense of a crass form of 'statism'. Indeed, in *The property of the mines* (1880), our author emphatically embraces the need for State property of the mines, not as a 'transitional measure that would bring an acceleration of the class struggle', but because it: i) eliminated from the debate the labour issue and its relation with property questions; ii) permitted the unity of individualists and communists; iii) would be a service for the very owners (that would be paid for getting rid of a supposed burden); iv) already exists in the most varied (class -based) countries (monarchical States such as England and Germany, 'colonial' countries such as Brazil, Asiatic nations as Russia, etc); v) allows to reference ourselves on a particular phase of the Great French Revolution (even before the Jacobin power, on 1791).

A fourth 'false alternative' when assessing the first apprehensions of *Capital*, can be found in the works of the Dutch Domela Nieuwenhuis. A priest that converted to socialism at the end of the 1870s, Nieuwenhuis is a lesser known figure that really needs more attention,

because as a founder of modern socialism in Holland he was well versed on Marx and Engels writings, preceding the figure of a Frank van der Goes whose orthodox Marxist titles (stressed by Bourrinet) need a more thorough review. Nieuwenhuis expands on the economic bearings of his socialism already in a work of 1880, when he already adopts an explicit distributionalist perspective not that different from the one we have already seen in de Paepe:

*"If the table is badly provided and the people are starving, then this is certainly not a favorable circumstance that pleases the people with each other, while, conversely, everything goes well with a well-to-do restaurant, it awakens in the guests a pleasant mood. This also applies to the meal of life. Do all occupants have to have the same amount? Not by any means, but each must have a sufficient portion according to his needs. Someone who gets up from the table, will not envy a man on whose table much more food has been served, but if he does not have enough himself, then that is a reason to watch with envy at who not only has enough, but more than enough" (Nieuwenhuis, 1880, p2, own translation)*

The Nieuwenhuis of 1880 bases himself on Schaffle, a key and core author of the German Kadetist tradition, and from him takes his starting point in the family cell, to develop emphatic organicist notions that adapt without trouble with explicit 'State Socialist' political positions (for our Dutch the public sphere within bourgeois society is already a index of emerging socialism in actual reality). That is why it should not be any surprise that his socialism means only 'to widened the participation of the workers in the privileges that the bourgeois already has' and a mere 'abolishing of poverty'. This conceptions, already worked through a distributionalist perception, make Nieuwenhuis embrace the conception of value developed by Schaffle in 1875 (*The quintessence of socialism*) that combines a vulgar version of classical economy with proto-Jevonian notions:

*"By cost is meant that they cause an expenditure of labor and capital, whereby the expenditure of capital can be regarded as a consequence of pre-issued labor, so finally on the expenditure of labor. How does this differ from Marx, who calls capital: 'dead labor, which is made alive by the absorption of living labor?' The result of this subjective reflex or the exchange equivalent is the 'price'. The price is not the average of the social minimum of costs and the social maximum of value for use, but it is determined by the strength of the desire, the special use valuation of the last purchaser. The usefulness of an object depends partly on the properties of the substance, partly on the needs of the value-determining subject" (ibid, p10, own translation)*

This notions on value are the ones that make the founder of Dutch modern socialism believe that 'it' only would exist and could be measured on a socialist economy<sup>65</sup>, a thesis that Engels criticizes to Rodbertus and Menger in 1885 and 1886<sup>66</sup>. In fact, the Socialism of Nieuwenhuis/Schaffle has no trouble on maintaining competition and the same division of labour of class society, a socialism that becomes a solution for workers and capitalists ('both are disadvantaged within bourgeois society', 'the individual capitalist has no responsibility regarding the situation of the worker but only the system has'), mainly because it would signify more 'order' against 'anarchy'. Developing this conception, our Dutch author reveals his empiricism when stressing his annoyance with the excessive debate and differences within the field of the economists ('they should first consent on a few definitions'). And even if Nieuwenhuis differentiates himself from Schaffle to some extent (has doubts on the latter's proposals that are near to what we understand as a 'Bank of the people', does not rule out violence as a necessity when characterizing social transformation), he does embrace the main lines of the Kadetist characterization of bourgeois society (a peculiar feudalization were there are only criticisms to monopoly, parasitism, plutocracy, disproportionality, etc). This can explain his long references to Friederich Albert Lange<sup>67</sup>, his legitimizing of the need for order with the conservative Kadetist Schmoller, his acritical pairing of Marx with Rodbertus and specially his emphatic stageism<sup>68</sup>.

It was this Nieuwenhuis that sought Marx's approval to publish one of the first Summaries of *Capital* in 1881<sup>69</sup>. A work republished in German in 1889, it was read by Marx and there are left some scant lines of his assessment. If from these not much can be concluded (Marx questions some references to sociology by Nieuwenhuis and other issues related with the difference between exchange value and use value), it is important to notice that the same lack of differentiation between usury and capital accumulation can be noted in it that we already saw in Most (capitalism would be only generalized usury), as well as misplaced examples (the worker at some point is exemplified with a doctor, an operation that tends to confound 'work' with 'service') and a notion of capital as mere 'thing' and not as a 'relation' (workers would have the right to 'capital').

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<sup>65</sup> Search Nieuwenhuis' *Capitalism and socialism*, paragraph 85.

<sup>66</sup> See the following works of Engels: *Marx and Rodbertus. Preface to the First German Edition of The Poverty of Philosophy by Karl Marx* (1884-1885), *Preface to Capital II* (1885), *Lawyers' Socialism* (1886)

<sup>67</sup> A pretty known academic socialist within his time, that some have as the first Kadetist. He wrote *ArbeiterFrage* in 1865, a work centered not in the 'class struggle' but in the 'struggle for existence'. Bernstein wrote approvingly of this author in his wrongly characterized orthodox period, as we can see in his *Neue Zeit* article *In tribute to Friedrich Albert Lange* of 1892.

<sup>68</sup> Read *Capitalism and socialism* of Nieuwenhuis, paragraph 107.

<sup>69</sup> Read Marx's letters to Nieuwenhuis June 27, 1880 and February 22, 1881. The title of Nieuwenhuis work was: *Capital and work- a condensed representation of the Marxian doctrine* (1881).



The Nieuwenhuis that already studied Capital and publish a somewhat official Summary in 1881, wrote an article two years later that hailed Emile de Laveleye as an 'unconscious socialist' in a socialist journal edited by the Possibilist Malon. In it, our Dutch not only celebrates the image of socialism of a Leroy Beaulieu that would be criticized by Engels via Lafargue just one year later, but continues to base his socialism on Schaffle. To this author now is added John Stuart Mill (the later English Fabians root themselves on him), within an economic understanding that cannot break with the thematic of the 'factors of production' (no emphasis on 'relations') and has no problem in legitimizing his proposals with the figure of Henry George (who at the time was not even a socialist, and was never a Marxist). Nieuwenhuis' conception of capitalism is founded on a critique based on natural right, a thing that makes him maintain the peculiar feudalization of bourgeois society he has inherited from Schaffle, and proposes a transformation whose bourgeois implications are not that hidden (he intends to 'universalize property', puts undue emphasis on the elimination of inheritance -a political proposal that Marx criticizes to Bakunin within the context of the International and that had its roots on the utopian socialism of Saint-Simon-). For our Dutch author, society would be a mere organism that needed to be cured, a cure that needed to be focused on the consumption of the masses (something Nieuwenhuis takes from Sismondi) and base itself on a 'social movement' that was dear to the Possibilist Malon and his enthroning of surplus as a mere theft:

*"The capitalists are therefore not savers who deserve our praise by their work, their skill, their activity; but as Malon calls them in his Manual of Social Economy, 'parasites that if they do not steal passers-by on the routese make work for their exclusive benefit hundreds and thousands of men"* (Nieuwenhuis, 1883, p506, own translation)

This understanding of capitalist economy by Nieuwenhuis was based on an enduring conception that maintained itself even while our author was radicalized at the beginning of the 1890s. Characterizing capitalism as a system subject to uniform, lineal and simple laws, it forecasted the rapid disappearance of the 'middle class', and because of this emphasized the oppression inherent in plunder (for example, the importance of a critique of taxes) without distinguishing it from class exploitation. All this was the fundament of an emphatic alliance between petty-bourgeois and workers:

*"And yet the petty bourgeoisie is often hostile to the workers! Incomprehensibly stupid. Or do you not see that if the workmen do well, the number of buyers in your stores will also increase? There is no purchasing power among the working people due to the low wages..."* (Nieuwenhuis, 1891, p3, own translation)

To grasp the class nature of this perspective is interesting to notice that one of the first reformists within the emerging modern socialism such as Eduard Anseele worked with a very similar framework during the same period that Nieuwenhuis positioned himself on the left of the Second International. For the Anseele of 1890, the exploited subject was the people and not the workers, in the context of an analysis that put the emphasis on consumption, the mere contrast between rich and poor, the oppression that worker and petty-bourgeois suffered, the struggle for existence (no struggle of classes), and situates 'dependency' ('afhankelijkheid') in a central place almost effacing 'exploitation'. All this to cement an alliance between the worker and the petty-bourgeois based on the sensible nature of the first, because, in the end, both were 'producers':

*"Peasant, small tradesman and workman are the three categories of people who produce all wealth and they do not have to bow to anything or to anyone. They create everything or bring all of this to the consumers; they are the pivot on which the world revolves, they also have to sway over that world...and all the possessions, which are in the hands of the rich, must come into the hands of the government, which, in their turn, by universal suffrage, must be in the hands of producers" (Anseele, 1890, p30, own translation)*

This same notions were somewhat hegemonic within emerging modern socialism, and in its cradle were nourished by the founder of the principal party of the Second International, Wilhelm Liebknecht. Indeed he uses them on a crucial writing of 1870 to treat the agrarian question<sup>70</sup>.

Finally, we want to remark that the 'radicalization' of a Nieuwenhuis that lead him outside the waters of Marxism (he went towards a kind of Anarquism), his incapability of articulating a real alternative to Kautsky's brand of Marxism, was based -at least in part- on this kind of failure to really understand Marx's theory of value, base of his characterization of the capitalist mode of production. Thus, Engels' dividing line of 1884-5 between Marx's theory of value and Rodbertus' notions, a key in the whole economic debate between 1870 and 1895 -that we will treat more fully in the reminding of this section-, for the radical Anarquist Nieuwenhuis was non-existent<sup>71</sup>

A fifth false path when assessing the reception of *Capital* and Marx's mature economic work within the context of the formation of the Marxist tradition, is the rendering made by

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<sup>70</sup> "...the French parcel maker plucking for his creditor, like the English agricultural laborer for the tenant and landlord' (Liebknecht, 1870, in Gutenberg). Or: 'The exploitation of labor by capital, as we have seen, is no less general and intense than in the field of agriculture the field of industry - in the form of mortgage debts and usury interest for small farmers...' (ibid)

<sup>71</sup> Read Nieuwenhuis *Libertarian Socialism and Authoritarian Socialism* of 1895, in *Le Socialisme en danger* p167, Paragraph 2, Lines 1to14 and p210-211, Last and First Paragraphs.

Dobrogeanu-Gherea in the mid 1880s. Gherea, the founder of Romanian modern socialism and an author we have already mentioned in this work, devised a particular interesting assessment in this field because he wrote a work that propounded itself as an explicit defense of Marx against his critics. In it we want firstly to stress there are some formulations that constitute a 'Marxist advancement' considering the context in which was written, such as good distinction between price, value, and exchange value; a criticism of a subjective theory of value to which we have already seen Nieuwenhuis leans to; a refutation of Laveleye theory that value is created by a mere overpricing at the level of circulation; a rejection of Dunoyer's notions on value that made appear the worker just as capitalist without capital. To this progressive elements, Dobrogeanu-Gherea adds positive dimensions already developed by Lassalle (that the latter formulated based on Marx), like a criticism of Bastiat theory of services or the questioning of a notion of capital as a mere 'thing' through references to Marx's *Wage labour and capital* of 1849. All this, within a framework that stressed some progressive Marxist dimensions such as dialectics, the long list of economic classics that precede Marx's formulation of the theory of value (Petty, Boisguillebert, Quesnay, etc), the inconsistencies of Adam Smith theory of value (something that our author might have gotten from chapter X of the *Anti-Duhring*, actually written by Marx), the questioning of Proudhon's emphasis on society being based on mere theft (that he could have taken from Marx's *On Proudhon* of 1865) and the rejection of the Malthusian theory of population based on Marx's *Capital*.

Notwithstanding all these positive features, the main lines of Dobrogeanu-Gherea's economic conception were not a fruitful base for anyone who wanted to develop Marxism in its theoretical and practical dimensions. This is because it not only conceived a 'primitive communism' phase that operates with 'direct exchange of labour-values' (as we have already mentioned earlier), but due to even more fundamental issues. Gherea's conception fails to adopt a class stand point (for him, what blocks the scholars understanding of the laws of motion of society are mere caste interests), and this leads him to place himself in the camp of the 'social economy' (maybe influenced by de Paepe, but we are not certain of this filiation), a second field that emerged opposed to bourgeois harmonic theories after the demise of Ricardo. As de Paepe, Dobrogeanu-Gherea marks as a central feature of the 'social economy' its evolutionism, adding his own conception of modern society as based on conflict. What is more, the social economy school is defined by a mere triple completion of Ricardo:

*"While the social school admits the theory of rent, although with some modifications, giving it a totally scientific form, as Rodbertus did.*

*While the social school admits in principle Ricardo's theory of value, making it more plausible and eventually leading to logical consequences, as did a more logical and learned than Ricardo, a more brilliant head than the brilliant English, we talk about Karl Marx.*

*While the social school admits Ricardo's law of wages, making only all the logical and moral deductions, as Lassalle did.*

*Harmonious bourgeois school does not admit either the law of rent, nor the value nor the iron law of wages" (Dobrogeanu-Gherea,1976:vol 1, p.74-75, own translation)*

That this pairing of Marx with Lassalle and Rodbertus operates a lessening of the true value of Marx's economic discoveries, is also shown in the explicit assertion of Gherea that the Moor's specific contribution is not so much his theory of value, but his criticism of bourgeois society as a historical and transient phase of humanity. This eclecticism of the founder of Romanian modern socialism regarding the theory of value is what leads him not only to distinguish a line of continuity between the social economy and the Proletarian Ricardians of the 1820-1830s (with whom Engels would draw an emphatic line of qualitative distinction just a year later in 1885 within the context of his criticisms of Rodbertus) but to assess the land issue in such a way that a defence of Ricardo theory of rent against the criticisms of Carey is transformed in a vindication of Henry George and John Stuart Mill elaborations based on a framework that eschews the class standpoint and prefers to refer to the 'social question'. All this shortcomings of our author in the end can be traced to a non-Marxist theory of history whose object of explanation (or its problematic) is not the modes of production and their functioning through the class struggle, but a theory of exchange:

*"The exchange (schimbul), he wants to say, is the economic factor that puts people in a relationship with each other. The exchange between people can take place in various faces and over the ages has taken various forms. The exchange in today's society is characterized by the fact that it is done through free competition. I have seen in the past what he wants to say about competition in the exchange of goods and, at the same time, I have seen that competition also governs the relations between masters and workers, deciding the price of labor. Competition is therefore the result of today's economic relations" (ibid, p98, own translation)*

It is this conception that also makes Dobrogeanu-Gherea confound surplus-labour and surplus value...

*"The plusvalue (Plusvaloarea) is not produced by the bourgeoisie today's ruling class. In every historical epoch, when there are dominant classes and subordinated classes, the first ones squeezed (stors) the value of the latter, our times are characterized only by the form under which the plus value is*

*squeezed (stoarce). In the days of slavery, it was seen that the owners of robes squeezed over the value of the slaves, but it would appear that then the slave's product was worthwhile, which is not true at all. The servant, producing a great value, consumes a part, and only what remains is the profit; only the social relations of slavery make all the work of the servant seem like free work as a value" (ibid, 124-125, own translation)*

...an error that fails to distinguish in history phases subject to distinct laws of motion and because of this leads to gradualist notions regarding the development of mankind as a species (a gradualism that is a mere concretization of Gherea's emphatic evolutionism).

As de Paepe, Gherea had a profound rooting in the emerging modern sociology and has extensive theoretical discussions with Hebert Spencer<sup>72</sup>. This filiation is what explains a failed epistemological conception that merely distinguished between the inductive and the deductive method to select the first approach, an epistemological conception that informs an economic notion that proves incapable of relating in a dialectical way absolute and relative surplus value. And it is this mechanical conception that makes the founder of Romanian Marxism to formulate a theory of crisis that enthrones the sphere of circulation, be it by stressing the 'disproportionality' dimension or the 'international exchange' feature.

In the final analysis, Gherea's socialism was based on an form of extreme eclecticism, that had no trouble with founding the political proposal of the nationalization of the soil on Henry George's elaborations, but also, and specially, regards Rodbertus as a pillar of the modern economic theories that make valid and legitimate the socialist alternative. Indeed, for him Rodbertus ground-rent theory was not only correct, but compatible with the one developed by Ricardo, as was the first' conception of relative social inequality, a conception that views the workers as a passive subject than cannot wrest any concessions from the exploiters through class struggle (for Rodbertus the increase in productivity must always and invariably lead to an increase in relative social inequality)<sup>73</sup>. This understanding of social inequality is what makes Gherea reference himself on the work of a Hyndman that conceived the existence of a golden past for the England of the end of feudalism in 1883 (a work we have already mentioned). In the end, the founder of modern Romanian socialism confounds the latter with a mere preoccupation with the 'social', and that is why he has no problem on 'discovering' a 'socialist rent theory' shared by John Stuart

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<sup>72</sup> See for example the work *Slavery and socialism. A critique of Herbert Spencer*, published by Dobrogeanu-Gherea between 1884 and 1886.

<sup>73</sup> A position that was opposed by Marx not only before the development of his mature theory of value in *Wage labour and capital* (1849), but also when his theory was already almost fully developed in *Wage, Price and Profit* (1865).

Mill, Rodbertus and Marx, approvingly quote leading German Kadetists as Adolph Wagner and Adolf Held, or even base his own understanding of the abolition of slavery in the United States in the works of Achille Loria (an Italian that was in no case a Marxist criticized by Engels in the *Introduction* of the *Third Volume of Capital* in 1894, and that we will mention below).

The main tendencies of the emerging modern socialism -the French and the German- also produced their own understanding of Marx's mature works, but these too were not real Marxist alternatives on which Trotsky could base his theory of permanent revolution. Let us review in the following the French proposals that to our understanding constituted a sixth false alternative regarding this issues.

Gabriel Deville, a French Guesdist that we have already mention in this work wrote one of the two main Summaries of Capital during the period of the formation of Marxism as a tradition -taking as a measure the diffusion of the work-. *The people's Marx*, a title given to it the in the English version -the French original version speaks only of a Summary of Capital-, is a work that, although intended to closely follow Marx's *Capital I*, does not really fulfill the task it sets to itself. This assessment of Deville's work is not only a judgment based on our own study of this work, but also a judgment that the very Engels expressed in his letters, and not in a passing way. If already in his letter of the 19th of September of 1883 Engels tells Laura Lafargue that Deville's Summary needs much revising, he develops a bit this judgment in a letter to the latter of the 8th October of the same year. And he expresses this doubts not only to French interlocutors, but also to Kautsky in a letter of the 9th of January of 1884, detailing that Deville fails when he treats the historico-descriptive parts, lacks a good understanding of the capitalist phases and universalizes theses that are more restricted (then decontextualizing their true nature). That this assessment was not a passing one, is shown in the fact that Engels emphatically rejects the proposition that Deville's Summary be translated to German (letter to Laura Lafarge of the 17th of January of 1886) and repeats his judgment that Deville 'universalizes and because of this decontextualizes Marx's theses' to Turati on a letter of the 16th of June of 1893.

For our part, we distinguish more than a few misgivings on Deville's 'Conspectus'. On a more general level, he not only puts an equal sign between 'humanity' and 'working class', but conceives utopian socialism erasing from it every bourgeois dimension that Engels

stresses on *Anti-Duhring* (for Deville, the mistake of the utopians was only that they tried to imagine a new society in an idealist manner, and not that they appealed to the propertied classes and conceived the working class as mere suffering paupers in need of help from above)<sup>74</sup>. As Gherea, de Paepe and Zieber, Deville also adopts an evolutionist position, a stand that at the same time that makes him blind to the possibility of periods of regression and barbarism (a possibility Marx and Engels did consider in the Communist Manifesto), forces a conception of socialist revolution not as qualitative break, but as mere completion (or reproduction on a bigger scale) of the economic mechanism that within bourgeois society expropriates the smaller capitals and concentrates wealth in a few hands. And all this is particularly suited to fit Deville's collectivist notions that (as we have already seen above in a previous section) centered on the notion of appropriation.

Regarding more specific economic phenomena, to us Deville not only seems to expose a confusion between 'barter' and 'commodity exchange'<sup>75</sup>, but more worryingly a gradualist and historicist view of the process of commodification that sidesteps the crucial fact of a human history composed of modes of production subject to different laws of motion and trespassed by specific forms of class struggle<sup>76</sup>:

These historicist notions even make Deville conceive the actual existence of a merchant mode of production, and fit well within a circulationalist framework for which modern economic crisis are mere product of the subconsumption of the masses. This emphasis on circulation also forces our author to a peculiar kind of dualism for which the money economy is 'artificial' and the capitalist mode of production has not 'natural' foundation<sup>77</sup>. This notion of capitalism as mere 'money economy' is what also permits Deville to replace the scientific term 'capitalist' with the notion of 'plutocrat' in more than one crucial passage of his Summary. This operation not only fails to distinguish between the capitalist as an

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<sup>74</sup> Engels *Anti-Duhring* is precise in distinguishing, not only the proletarian communist variants (Babeuf and the tradition that stemmed from him and extended to the 1840s) from the utopists, but also of differentiating between the main three utopians the one who was nearer to the working class in his practice and conceptions, and signaling Robert Owen in this role. That in his book of 1884 ('The Origin...') he pretty much forgets this assessment and vindicates the figure of Fourier, is indicative of the changes that must be distinguished occur if we compare the *Anti-Duhring* with his 1884 book. This referencing on Fourier of 1884 in a work that codifies the primitive communism thesis, coincides with the fact that Fourier's notions were based on a theory of decadence derived from Rousseau (who, as we know expounds the 'good savage' thesis)

<sup>75</sup> See Deville's *The People's Marx* of 1883, Ch I, Part I, Paragraph 3

<sup>76</sup> Read *The People's Marx* of Deville, Ch II: 'Exchange', Section 'The Exchange-Relations Involves Necessarily the Money-Form, Paragraphs 2 to 3.

<sup>77</sup> '*This relation has no natural foundation. Neither is it a social relation common to all periods of history. And the special characteristic of the capitalist period...*' (Deville, 1883 in Marxists). Maybe Engels was questioning this kind of assertions when he detects a peculiar vein of Weitlingianism on some Deville's previous works (See Engels to Marx. 22 December 1882)

structural agent with a defined function (the capitalist drive to accumulate by reinvesting the surplus) and a mere monopolizer of money, but also characterizes capitalism as mere form of government that the writers of antiquity already distinguished<sup>78</sup>. Other crucial terminological change that Deville makes in his rendition of *Capital* is one that permits him to treat the capitalist work process as one that is not trespassed by the class struggle and each of its functions is technical and necessary, in which there are not exploitative functions covered by specific agents fulfilling particular tasks. Deville manages to do all this by just removing the term 'subordinated' from an important passage he quotes from *Capital*:

*"In order to work productively, it is no longer necessary to perform manual labor directly. It is enough to be an organ of the collective laborer and to perform some one of its functions. But this is not the special characteristic of productive labor under the capitalist system" (Deville, 1883, in Marxists)*<sup>79</sup>

Regarding the characterization of capitalism as mode of production, Deville abounds in terminology that legitimizes the peculiar Guesdist notions that 'feudalize' bourgeois society and conceive the future revolution as a mere new reproduction of the Great French Revolution (Guesde speaks repeatedly of the need to make a workers' 89', conceives the working class as fourth state, and signals the aims of the future revolution as the mere true fulfillment of democratic bourgeois promises - for example, he seeks the 'universalization of property'-). Examples of this operation in Deville are the replacing of the term 'wage-slave' of *Capital* by the expression 'wage-serf', as well as the rendering of the Danubian example by which Marx illustrates different modes of exploitation within the context of the production of commodities, as an illustration that distinguishes between a feudal type of society and a bourgeois type of society. All this synthesis a strange conception of capitalism as a 'decadent-feudal-money-society'<sup>80</sup>. It is this conception that also allows our author to understand the surplus by which the ruling class sustains itself much in the manner of a Nieuwenhuis, Anseele and Liebknecht, as a mere theft. In this operation, calling the ruling ones as mere 'vampires' on a repeated basis (Marx does use the term on *Capital*, but mainly to depict the process of primitive accumulation) fits just as well. This

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<sup>78</sup> There are various examples of this operation within Deville's Summary. One example can be seen in Ch 6, paragraph 3 of *The People's Marx*.

<sup>79</sup> *Capital's* passage reads: 'In order to labour productively, it is no longer necessary for you to do manual work yourself; enough, if you are an organ of the collective labourer, and perform one of its subordinate functions' (Marx, 1996[1867], p510)

<sup>80</sup> Maybe it is this characterization that makes Deville associate centralization of capital with stagnation, when Marx's conception is exactly the opposite (centralization and concentration are lever of growth and development of productivity), as Engels showed later when he publish *Capital III* in 1894.



subjectivist and voluntarist understanding of the surplus also leads to unwanted dualisms: for Deville the capitalists also need to be exculpated, because, for him, they are mere alienated machines of an structural and objective mechanism.

Respecting the specific *relation* between classes, Deville's summary does not center his analysis on the notion of class struggle, and all the emphasis that Marx puts on this process to depict the lengthening and shortening of the working day in chapter X of *Capital*, is transformed in this Summary in mere 'conflicts' that center on 'abuse' and are best treated by a 'rights discourse'. Deville omits the class struggle from below that determines the value of the labour power, and works with an 'economicist notion' that does not require the political sphere (the State) as a necessary feature when characterizing the fixing of the working day, wages and working conditions.

What Deville leaves out when summarizing *Capital*, is no less important. He not only omits any reference to the complexities of different forms of exploitation that for Marx appeared as structural features of the capitalist mode of production (cottage system, truck system, semi-proletarianization, etc), but also any criticism that *Capital* makes of classical political economy (when Deville mentions the classical political economists, it is only to award them praise and treat them as an authority). Even more significant is the fact that Lafarge's companion does not treat in any way the numerous references to the growth of the organic composition of capital and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall that already in *Capital I* one can find, and that compose a major problematic outlined to be solved later (as Engels shows when publishing *Volume III of Capital* in 1894). Finally, on a more political level, it is important to mention that Deville also leaves out the quote from the *Manifesto* that Marx consigns at the end of *Capital*, whose role is to emphasize the reactionary role of the middle class when it acts as bourgeois social agent<sup>81</sup>.

To conclude our assessment of this sixth misguided interpretation of *Capital* than can be found within emerging modern socialism, let us put it into the more general context of Guesdism as a current. Firstly, it must be noted that for Guesde too exploitation was a notion pertaining mainly to circulation that did not touch essentially the work process

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<sup>81</sup> *'The lower middle classes, the small manufacturers, the shopkeepers, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class ... they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history'* (Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels, Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, London, 184) (Marx, 1996[1867], p751)

within the factory<sup>82</sup>. Secondly, that Lafarge too worked with circulationist notions, as is proved by Engels' insistence that the first follow his instructions in writing an article against the French economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu in 1884<sup>83</sup>.

The other hegemonic tendency within emerging modern socialism, the German one, also did not developed an interpretation of the mature economic works of Marx that was fruitful enough to be the base of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. We have already seen above how Liebknecht confounded the plunder of the small producer with the exploitation of the worker. In what follows we will show why Kautsky's economic understanding must be considered as a false path in this matter.

*The economic doctrines of Karl Marx* could be regarded as the most known and read 'synthesis' of *Capital* during the second international period<sup>84</sup>. Published for the first time in 1887 and written along with Bernstein, Kautsky takes in its introduction a range of failed points of departure. He not only omits the existence of Johann Most conspectus to falsely present his own work as the first German Summary of Capital, but also praises highly Deville's previous endeavour in the matter, in the context of a extremely subjectivist notion of his own 'scientific' work which he compares with the 'particularity' of painter's opus. Regarding its objective public, Kautsky's hopes mark a sharp contrast with Marx's own satisfaction with the 'worker's public' that Capital had managed to conquer<sup>85</sup>:

*"The purpose of presentation is primarily to make known to those who do not have either time or means of studying Capital; but the author hopes that his portrayal may also facilitate the study of many who possess capital (Kapital besitzen), and that it will at last induce many people to read the original work of which they have either made a false impression, or from their study of the difficulties of the first section" (Kautsky, 1887, in Marxists)*

Even more importantly, Kautsky's object of explanation operates an emphatic equalization between 'society' and 'nation', precluding an understanding of the capitalist mode of production as an international system:

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<sup>82</sup>See pages7-8 of Guesde's 1883 book *Public Services and Socialism*.

<sup>83</sup> Engels to Paul Lafargue. 11 August 1884, MECW v47, pp180 Paragraph 4. An article that Lafarge did write, but in which he failed to follow with systematicity Engels directions (see *Theory of the plus-value of Karl Marx and the criticism from Mr Paul Leroy-Beaulieu*, an article published by Lafargue in Aug 1884)

<sup>84</sup> The Preface of 1892 of the work tells us that Swedish, Polish and Czech socialist were formed in Marxist economics by this book almost exclusively.

<sup>85</sup> See the Afterword to Capital I of January 1873, than can be found in the MECW, v35, p13, Paragraph 2.

*"It is commonly believed that the national economy is a field of knowledge which everyone can understand nothing, nothing at all, without the slightest prior knowledge. But it is a science, and one of the most difficult, for there is scarcely any other structure as complex as society" (ibid)*

After having pin down Kautsky's objective public and object of explanation, let us remark how this work of 1887 is not for him a product of youthful phase that was overcome later when having reached a mature view of the matter, but is expressly vindicated by him in his *Preface* to the editions of both 1892 and 1903. If in 1892 Kautsky does not deem necessary to make any modification despite the fact that between those 5 years much of relevance had happened (the publication of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in 1891, Engels' *Second Preface* to the *Housing question* that criticized the reformist tendency within the SPD, the foundation of the Second International<sup>86</sup>, the emergence of the Jungen as a radical tendency within the SPD, etc), in 1903 he does not seem to think that a necessary revision was in order (for example recognizing the fact that the book was written in collaboration with a Bernstein that developed his revisionism only 9 years after), but our author even legitimizes his work stating that the very Engels had given to him his approval regarding it (a legitimization that deforms Engels real opinion of Kautsky's work)<sup>87</sup>.

In terms of method, Kautsky work emphasizes on the comparative one, which goes well with a perspective that is informed by an empiricism of some kind. Accordingly, one must not be surprised if dialectics are not considered relevant while immanent explanations are not stressed, but on the contrary, our author works with the sociological minimum of 'interaction' (plurality of causal factors with no determinant instance)<sup>88</sup>.

The historical view developed by the SPD theoretician also does not accord with a truly Marxist assessment, and not only because for him plunder is considered almost like a mode of production on its own<sup>89</sup>, but because of a naturalist, gradualist and historicist notion of the development of the law of value<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Kautsky in his *Preface* of 1892 conceives the International as a mere 'spiritual union', discarding the necessity of material ties and centralization of decisions.

<sup>87</sup> In his letter of the 13th of September to Laura Lafargue, Engels writes that Kautsky's manuscript had to be revised by him, and that this revision was much required. After the publication of Kautsky's work, Engels tells Danielson in a letter of the 5th of January of 1888, that Kautsky's writing 'is not bad, although not always quite correct'.

<sup>88</sup> An approach that Plekhanov masterfully rejects in *The Development of the Monist View of History* of 1895.

<sup>89</sup> 'It may be pointed out in passing that an alteration in the means of production – the substitution of firearms for bows and arrows – involves a change in the mode of distribution' (**Kautsky, 1887, in Marxists**)

<sup>90</sup> See Kautsky's work of 1887, Part I, Ch1, Section 1, Paragraphs 25-26, Section 4, Paragraph 5 and the only Footnote of the Section.

If for Kautsky history is not the development of the class struggle within the context of different epochal modes of production subject to distinct laws, but the natural extension of the process of commodification, then it should not surprise anyone that for him the theoretical device used by Marx in *Section I* of *Capital* to understand the exchange of commodities within bourgeois society is transformed in the historical existence of what almost amounts to simple commodity 'mode' of production<sup>91</sup>. It also must not be a surprise his excessive insistence in the use of 'commodity fetishism' to explain the theory of value, as well his peculiar notion that the 'social' is decisively constituted in the sphere of circulation<sup>92</sup>.

Regarding more specific economic matters, Kautsky's writing of 1887 expounds a notion that considers that monopoly absolutely annuls competition and somewhat suspends the operation of the law value. What is more, Bernstein's companion affirms that the theory of value of Marx is not intended to predict (or calculate) concrete prices, but is content with just underlining the deep causes of economic phenomena<sup>93</sup>.

When the writer of the later *Erfurt Programme* deals specifically with the workers, he fails to make an emphatic distinction between 'labour' and 'labour power' and bases with some lightness on *Wage Labour and Capital* of Marx, a work where this distinction is not yet made by the Moor (Engels stresses the problematic already in 1885 in his *Preface* to *Capital II* but is more emphatic regarding *Wage Labour and Capital* in his *Introduction* to the work of 1891). And, when indeed Kautsky's uses the notion of labour power he occupies it ahistorically, as a concept whose use is valid not only within the capitalist mode of production but also within precapitalist forms of society. Secondly, contrary to Marx's known first paragraphs of *Chapter X* of *Capital I* when he 'makes the worker talk', Kautsky can only see the labourer from above as a suffering pauper a mere 'thing' equal to any other commodity.

Addressing the nature of the ruling class, our writer repeats Deville's structural exculpation of the individual capitalist as a being that also suffers from the evils of the system. It is at this point that, while Marx decides to quote his own *Manifesto* to characterize the middle class as reactionary social agent our author dismisses this quote just like Deville, and in

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<sup>91</sup> Read *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx* of 1887, Part I, Ch1, (1), Paragraph 27.

<sup>92</sup> For Marx the social is constituted first and foremost in production. See the *Introduction* to *Grundrisse* of Aug 1857, *The method of political economy* in *Grundrisse* of 1857 and *Part I, Chapter I, Section 4* of *Capital I*.

<sup>93</sup> Check Kautsky's work on the economics of Marx of 1887, Part II, Ch 4, Paragraphs 46 to 48.

turn prefers to referentiate himself on Rodbertus (a Rodbertus with whom Engels had delimited Marx's theory of value in 1885, a delimitation that was repeated by the same Kautsky in 1885 in a diluted way):

*"Even Rodbertus declared that, as directors of production, the capitalists were officials of society and entitled to receive a salary. But as the capitalist only causes use values to be produced because he cannot obtain possession of values in any other manner, the direction of production is for him nothing but a necessary evil, which he only undertakes because it is inseparably connected with the breeding-properties of his capital" (ibid)*

Concerning the relation between these fundamental classes, our author explicitly denies the necessity of characterizing it as one mired by struggle and fight, and omits almost all references to Marx's brilliant pages of *Chapter X* of *Capital* (that treat the length the working day as an issue of contention between the two classes). In the scant comments that Kautsky has on the matter of the length of the working day, he does not mention the struggle of the workers from below to shorten it, but considers the latter as a product of the action of a State and a bourgeois class that merely recognize its social duties. Indeed, for our Austrian author is the development of capitalism and the national example what generalizes the shortening of the working day, a shortening whose concretization in the republican Switzerland he hails unabashedly (a celebration that must not surprise us, because for Kautsky the shortening of the working day is not an accelerator of the class struggle, but a social reform that promotes harmonic development).

When treating the laws of motion of bourgeois society, Karl Kautsky also sees them as simple unilinear determinants, and eliminates the complexity inherent in the process of development of the capitalist mode of production. For him, anything that is not great industry is a mere remnant of a past economy, something that merely survives within the context of a society that tends fatally to be composed of a great industry in which relative surplus value prevails, and the latter without having any connection with absolute surplus value<sup>94</sup>.

After stressing a characterization of capitalist concentration and centralization as a lineal and simple process, Kautsky deals with the last part of *Capital* in which Marx treats the process of primitive accumulation. Being a central process that marks the origin of the

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<sup>94</sup>Revise the work of Kautsky of 1887 that we have already quoted, Part II, Ch VII, Paragraphs 13 to 15. Marx shows repeatedly in *Capital* how relative surplus value engenders by itself absolute surplus value, as well as how great industry engenders by itself different forms of enterprise like domestic industry, manufactory, simple cooperation, simple commodity production, etc..

capitalist mode of production beyond any emphasis on commodification, one must not be surprised if Kautsky's failed interpretation of Capital needs to find excuses for not treating the concretization of this process for the case Germany. According to Kautsky, there was not any data concerning this matter available at the time (he makes just a few additions on this subject on the editions of 1892 and 1903 of this work), while the existence of the series of articles *Small contributions to the history of the original accumulation of capital in Germany* by Paul Kampffmeyer -published in 1888 in the very *Neue Zeit* edited by Kautsky-, in reality tells that what we are really looking at is the materialization of Kautsky's theoretical blindness towards a crucial process for apprehending the distinction between epochal modes of production, a blindness effectively related with our author's view of history as a mere gradual process of commodification. Accordingly, the scant references to this process in this work published for the first time in 1887 look at it through the lenses of the small proprietor and regard the emergence of a modern working class as a social step down, a disgrace.

Finally, it is necessary to remark that Kautsky too enthrones the contradiction between production and appropriation like the collectivist Guesdists, a device that serves him in this case to efface the working class as a revolutionary subject and consign the transition to socialism as mere question of the development of 'society', a society that merely needs to 'adapt' its current individual mode of appropriation to an already almost 'socialist' mode of production.

Before passing to more progressive and fruitful renderings of Capital's content, let us briefly review two other countries where the discussion on the labour theory of value by authors vinculated with emerging Marxist tradition also concretized.

In the Italian case, we can distinguish who may be regarded as the founder of modern Italian socialism, Filippo Turati. He already recognizes the eclectic Achille Loria as an unconscious socialist and tries to discover this author's positive influences in the work of E. Lepetit in his article *On Socialism, by E. Lepetit; bibliography* published in the *Critica Sociale* on 1891. In doing this, Turati does not have any problem with the organicist and functionalist tinges that Lepetit borrows from Loria, which indeed serve him to frame a moral critique of the bourgeois that opposes the virtues of collectivism against mere individualism, which in their turn permit a derived notion of the crisis under the capitalist mode production that understands it as based merely on speculation and subconsumption.

For his part, Leonida Bissolati, who until 1895 stood on the left of the Italian Socialist Party (born in Milan in 1891) and is known as the translator of Kautsky's first socialist non-Marxist work (*The influence of population growth on the progress of society*, 1880), also recognizes the value of Loria's contributions in an article he published in 1892. The latter's conception that the excess of population is based on the mere lack of free land, for Bissolati would be a notion that walks through the right path from Henry George to Marx. Indeed, Bissolati's arrows are only preserved for the bourgeois economist Carey, mainly because he explicitly stands within a socialist camp that includes without major qualitative differences Cernychevsky, Godwin, Loria, Kautsky and Marx. In line with this, even 12 years later Bissolati continues to consider Kautsky's work of 1880, whose main object was the conciliation between socialists and Malthusians, as an advancement. That is why it should not surprise us that for him the Lassallean 'full proceeds of labour' are the socialist goal par excellence, within a context that recognizes Rodbertus without any doubt as socialist economic authority:

*"...argumentation of Rodbertus (which is then the general statement of socialism) that pauperism and the excess population are, in the current stage of civilization, children of the economic system: and therefore we need to remove this from the foundations, so to be attributed to the worker the fruit of his work..."* **(Bissolati, 1892, p247, own translation)**

The problem with the Italian's economic conception, was that when this misguided suggestions exposed by leading members of the Party that were not specialized in economics passed into the hands of members that did have this specialization, all its non-Marxist implications were reunited and exposed to the light of the day. This was the case with Antonio Graziadei, whose circulatory economics specially reject a socialism based on a labour theory of value:

*"I am far from believing that the law of value, a simple phenomenon of circulation, constitutes the primordial cell of the economic organism, and that the theory on the value of Marx is therefore essential to the great body of socialist doctrine. But it is beyond doubt that a system, which wants to be complete, always harms the fact that even a single part of it, whatever its importance, does not correspond to the truth. If we can prove that the Marx value theory is wrong, the socialist economy, by eliminating it on its own, while on the one hand it will demonstrate the impartiality that a scientific school, even if it turns science into action, must never forget on the other hand, both his main discoveries are independent of a law of value, to assume a safer development and in time to sprout, from his rejuvenated trunk"* **(Graziadei, 1894, p295, own translation)**

Again, it was the influence of Loria that informed Graziadei's economic notions, an influence that made the first conceive 'value' as mere a 'exchange value' always equal to itself and expanding gradually since antiquity. It was in line with these thoughts that Graziadei also hailed Loria's solution of the 'problem of the transformation' in his article *The theories of the value of Karl Marx and Achille Loria (Critica Sociale, 1894)*. As we know, Loria's solution (the use of more machines in the work process produces a fictitious surplus profit) was proved wrong by the very Engels in his *Preface to Capital III* published also in 1894.

Another specialist like Arturo Labriola, who joined the Socialist Party in 1894 and already stood on the left of the party (he would develop this radicalization towards 'revolutionary syndicalism' within the lapse of a few years), emphatically affirms that economics must center its analysis on the relations of distribution, hailing Loria's theory of value that puts banks as feudal ruling entities over industry within a process that gradually would dry up the source of profit and give birth in this way to socialism

*"It is precisely this theory, and the way in which it was formulated by that powerful genius of Achille Loria, the discovery of the economic use of an unproductive capital, which in capitalist society performed the most decisive function of this organism. When the economic analysis came to the conclusion that the interest perceived by capital is a part, and certainly not the smallest part, of the profit of the production...In the bank, in the credit in a word... Thus unproductive capital is almost the feudal lord of the productive capital...It is only with this theory that the extremely low level of profits can be explained, in a time of highly developed industrial progress. Of course it can defer the day of the end with a thousand pathological processes; but when the profit has fallen to a minimum of zero, then the arrest of capitalist production is a very obvious fact to be expected." (Arturo Labriola, 1894, p44, own translation)*

All these Italian authors had to modify their views after the publication by Engels of *Capital III*, whose Preface criticized in the most harsh terms Loria's solution of the transformation problem and the economics that was at its base. This criticism was indeed received in different forms by the Italians, with some making as they never based themselves emphatically on Loria (like Arturo Labriola in his 1895 article *Marx's posthumous conclusions on the theory of value*, and others like Turati, who indeed recognize that Engels last economic testament did in fact left them as Party in a pretty awkward position.



Finally, Lowy's and Rowney's favorite -Antonio Labriola- for his part does not present a viable Marxist alternative to his companions fixity with Loria. In a work that was already part of his Marxist period, our author not only interprets the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production as one that legitimizes a distributional approach<sup>95</sup>, but more importantly conceives the proletarian Ricardians Bray and Thompson as almost modern socialists, which in turn was in line with an understanding of *Capital* not as a qualitative break with classical economics, but as 'the last great book of bourgeois economics' (Labriola, 1895).

Regarding the English, two main figures were more explicitly related with the formation of Marxism as a tradition. In the case of Henry Hyndman, who converted to socialism in 1881 with the publication of *England for all* -a book to whose publication Marx objected because according to him the author had taken important parts of the analysis developed in *Capital* without mentioning the latter's authorship and even deforming central theses of it- and never declared himself as a Marxist (cutting our history in 1895), we are content to refer to a work in which the author deals explicitly with Marx's theory of value<sup>96</sup>. For the Hyndman of 1889, classical political economy coincides in some points with Marx's analysis, which for its part had proved itself as predictive in an absolute sense. The way Hyndman illustrates this assertion, telling us that the course of French history since 1852 had been forecasted almost to its last details by Marx in the *18th of Brumaire*, shows us an author that does not consider class struggle as an objective factor and the possibility of it to be influenced by classes and organizations, a failure Marx detects also in Proudhon as we read in the *2nd Preface of 18th of Brumaire* of 1869. Secondly, and in line with previous shortcoming, Hyndman fails to adopt a class standpoint, and he prefers societal, developmentalist and industrial terminology to precise concepts such as modes of production and class struggle. In third place, regarding more specific economic problems, our English author as Kautsky before him, also conceives the 'social' mainly as something pertaining to the sphere of circulation and not of production. Fourthly, he concretizes his adialectical perspective based on a conception of 'prediction' as absolute, with an almost necessary dualism that considers value, its nature, measure and unity of measure through an extremely relativistic basis. That is why, in sixth place, he reproduces Nieuwenhuis

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<sup>95</sup> *It is by this road that Owen became a communist and he is the first who became so in the environment created by modern industry. The antithesis rests entirely on the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of distribution' (Antonio Labriola, 1895, in Marxists)*

<sup>96</sup> We have dealt extensively with Hyndman's first works comparing them with the contributions of Marx and Engels in 'Clase o pueblo- una crítica científica desde el marxismo', cap VII, pp 704-744 (a book written in Spanish).

error (criticized by Engels to Menger in 1886) when asserting that the true operation of the law of value would function only under socialism<sup>97</sup>.

If the socialist but non-Marxist Hyndman fails in this way to adopt a fertile version of Marx's mature economic formulations, a more promising Belfort Bax (he broke with Hyndman's opportunist course for a couple of years because of the latter opportunist behavior to unite with Morris, Aveling and Eleanor Marx in the Socialist League during the mid 1880s, Engels had more hopes on his development contrasting him with Hyndman, he was learned regarding the crucial Great French Revolution, etc), also does not present us a more fecund alternative regarding the matter. He explicitly addresses economic matters early on in his career, to never again examine these systematically if we break our history in 1895, in an article published in 1881. In it Bax gets near the wrong notion that the worker lives out of his own labour, while failing (as Most before him) to distinguish between 'accumulation' and 'usury'<sup>98</sup>.

Consequently, exploitation for him is conceived in the same manner as Nieuwenhuis, Anseele and others as mere 'theft', a subjectivist deviation that does not fail to fall in its structuralist opposite (Bax characterizes bourgeois society as a 'huge brigandage' to purge of any responsibility out of the individual capitalist regarding exploitation), and that also is organically linked with a conception that sees from above the workers as mere (passive) victims that are spoliated<sup>99</sup> and not producer agents that fight back independently against exploitation. To this understanding is added some terminology akin to the 'rights discourse' as well as a simple and linear notion of the capitalist concentration process, all this within a political perspective in which the main dividing line is not a class, socialist or communist one, but between the 'friends of progress' and the ones that are not<sup>100</sup>.

As a tenth historical possibility when assessing the interpretations of *Capital* we will present the views of the only Jungen that deals more systematically with Marx's theory of value. For us, the work of Paul Fischer constitutes somewhat of a transitional writing that tries to emancipate from the leading (failed) apprehensions of Marx's mature work until

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<sup>97</sup> Check Hyndman's article of 1889 *Marx's Theory of Value*, paragraph 17, Lines 1-8.

<sup>98</sup> Revise Bax's article of Dec 1881 *Leaders of Modern Thought XXIII. – Karl Marx*, Part II Paragraph 1, Lines 4-9

<sup>99</sup> 'A large portion of *Das Kapital* is devoted to an exposure of that most hideous vampire of the social life of the 19th century, the factory system. Nothing could well be more pathetic than the picture drawn in clear outline by Dr. Marx of the sufferings of the wretched victims annually sacrificed in hecatombs at the shrine of so-called industrial progress' (Bax, 1881, in Marxists)

<sup>100</sup> The failure of Bax to adopt a truly Marxist standpoint was in part related with his never abandoned Kantian theoretical starting points.

1895 but is not capable of fully breaking with the essential determinants of the latter. The progressive features that makes us signal Fischer's contribution of 1889 as step up compared to Kautsky dominant interpretation within the SPD, are his brilliantly exposed dialectical approach that informs an explicit relationist conception of reality (leaving out atomist or elementarist perspectives), his criticisms of leading Kadetists like Adolph Wagner and Adolph Held and his questioning of political proposals vinculated with Lassalle (the socialist objective as achieving the full proceeds of labour) and the proletarian Ricardians (Bank of the people and the like). Notwithstanding this positive features, Fischer fails to break with the hegemonic conception regarding to crucial issues, Firstly, he tends to embrace Kautsky's notion of history as a process of commodification and not of class struggle within defined epochal modes of production<sup>101</sup>, and secondly, within the context of a correct criticism of the notion that the law of value would only express itself fully under socialism (that we already saw stems from the Schaffle of 1875 and is repeated by Nieuwenhuis and Hyndman), Fischer concedes a crucial point uniting in one complex the law of value of Marx and Ricardo, failing to distinguish emphatically between classical political economy and a Marxist theory of value.

*"Because they imagine that a theory of value can be of direct influence on the development of society, they immediately presuppose in Marx the same imagination. Placing its own vulgar-economical conception as a yardstick for Marx's theory, they fall into the colossal error of holding value theory not only as the starting-point of its critique of bourgeois economy, but also as the basis of its socialist demands. So you totally misjudge the role that the theory of value plays.*

*An observation of the facts, however, is no comprehension, no explanation of the same. It was therefore a question of finding the laws to which all those phenomena are subjected, to clarify the context that loops in open and hidden threads around society, determines all their movements and expressions.*

*But while Ricardo regarded it as an eternal natural law of all human society, Marx recognized that it was only the basic law of a historically determined epoch of it, namely, the present one, that, with some substantial modifications of Ricardo's formulation, it is now fully effective, and offers the key to the understanding of the economic phenomena of contemporary society. Mind you gentlemen Pros. Schäfte, Sybel, Kleinwächter, Held rc: today's society! The Ricardo-Marx Law of Value has long been in effect!" (Fischer, 1896 [1889], p34, own translation)*

After having dealt at length with the most various interpretations of Marx's mature work until 1895 that we judge as misguided alternatives, let us pass to examine what we consider

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<sup>101</sup> Read Fischer's 1889 (1896) work *Marx's theory of value*, Part II, Paragraph 29.

fruitful developments that in themselves were able to function as solid economic basis of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

To fully grasp the significance of the first fertile articulation of the Moor's theory of value within the context of emerging modern socialism, and its relation with the 'first Trotsky' developments, it is important to put this matter in the context of the distinctions we have already made in the other sections of this work. Firstly we distinguished three main roots that explain Trotsky's delimitation respecting primitive communism and feminism and had no problems in tracing their vinculation within each other and with the latter: Plekhanov was repeatedly referred by the same Trotsky as the father of his revolutionary conception since 1905 -'the revolution in Russia will triumph as a workers' revolution or it will not triumph at all'-; Blagoev and the Tesnyaks developed closely following every turn of the Russian Marxists since 1885 -and were indeed the socialist tendency in Bulgary that supported the 1917 conquest of power by a working class that followed the path signaled by Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution since 1905-; Zetkin was close to the Russian Marxists since the beginning<sup>102</sup>, stood always on the left of the Second International and supported the 1917 conquest of power joining the communist party to remain a leading member of it until her death. Secondly we were capable of signaling the 'first Plekhanov' and the further development of his ideas by the 'first Lenin' as a basis for Trotsky's insistence on the importance of the relations of production -while at the same time consigning very briefly how Mehring's view of historical materialism had some not minor lines in common with the proposals of the first Lenin. It is in this context that in this third final section we will outline an important dimension of what we dub as the *historiographical component of Mehring's inheritance to the theory of permanent revolution*. As we have already mentioned before, Franz Mehring joined the SPD in 1891 after almost 20 years of individual political existence. Within this time Mehring was no mere 'bourgeois democrat' but already well versed on socialist theory and the political debates that surrounded it. He had written not only a 'socialist reply' to Treitschke in 1875 that had not minor Lassalleian tinges, but in his criticism of the SPD of 1877 was able to precisely distinguish between the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans, pointing to the close relation between the firsts and bourgeois democrats of a populist vein such as Sonneman and the more marked working class base of the second ones. Indeed, it was this tradition that Mehring brought in and further developed when he joined the Party in 1891. Already

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<sup>102</sup> Read the *Preface* by the Editor to v3 of Plekhanov's complete works, written by Ryazanov in December 1922.

in 1896 he commenced to publish a *History of the SPD* that in effect marked a break with the self-conception of the Party until that time, mainly because it was the first time that its beginnings during the 1860s were characterized in a way that did not blindly or unconsciously followed the assessment of the leaders of the Eisenachers Bebel and Liebknecht. On the contrary, Mehring stressed on the important and progressive role the latter's opponent, Johann Baptist von Schweitzer. Here we maintain that Mehring's vindication of Schweitzer, which in actual fact prove as a lasting one (after his *History of the SPD* he published a precise and documented compilation of the latter's works in 1912 - that was introduced by a extensive Preface, full of notes and comments-), was not a mere historiographical oddity with which our author indulged himself, but was organically linked with an specific and defined theoretical framework. A theoretical perspective that not only included more known facts (that he was the first to explicitly oppose Bernstein's revisionism, that he defended the perspective permanent revolution in 1905, that he sided with the October Revolution, that he emphatically opposed Neo-Kantianism and its opportunist consequences within the socialist movement, etc), but also less known ones (he was the first to recoup the method of the transitional demand and the distinction between the bourgeois and the proletarian revolution within the SPD), to which we must add a particular understanding of the history of the first steps of the SPD in the context of Marxism as a tradition, centered around the figure of Schweitzer.

Johann Baptist von Schweitzer's *Review of Capital* in 1868 was indeed a precious one and Marx knew it as he told Engels on March 1868:

*"At the same time, I am sending you the Schweitzer, which please return to me after use. A few lines from Meissner, in which he notifies me of his stupidity in informing Schweitzer that he should not cont inue with his extracts until, have stated my views. Quelle bêtise!". I immediately attempted to redress things. Whatever secondary motives Schweitzer may have (e.g. to annoy old Hatzfeldt, etc.), one thing must be admitted. Although he makes a mistake here and there, he has studied the stuff really hard, and knows where the cent res of gravity lie. Such a 'base consciousness' is still preferable to the 'honest consciousness' of a Heinzen or the 'noble consciousness' of a Wilhelmchen. Hegel forgot to list idleness as an essential element of 'noble-minded consciousness'." (Marx, 1987:vol2 [1868], p. 556)*

Let us dwell on the road that Schweitzer traveled and made him able to write such a review. Firstly, it is important to stress that the Lassallean nature of our author must be understand only on a very qualified basis. Indeed, Schweitzer had an individual and distinct development in relation to Lassalle since the beginning, as can anyone assess by a comparison of first's and the second's evaluation regarding the possibilities of unification

of Germany in 1859-60. While Lassalle deviated strongly towards Prussianism and Marx criticized him in very harsh terms (he even said that Lassalle had put himself outside of the Party by his deviation)<sup>103</sup>, Schweitzer not only published a work criticizing Marx's main opponent on the issue, Carl Vogt (*Refutation of Carl Vogt's Studies on the Present Situation of Europe*, 1859) but developed a revolutionary immanentist position on it in *'The only way to unity. A contribution to the discussion of the national question'*, even though at the time he was not even a convinced socialist and worked with idealist conceptions. Secondly, it is significant to note that Schweitzer's rapprochement to Lassalle did not import a mere unconscious acknowledging of the latter's leading political and theoretical role. The writing that seals this relationship, the novel *Lucinde oder Kapital und Arbeit* that Schweitzer published with a dedication to Lassalle in 1863-4, already took the best aspects of the latter's works and set germs that would theoretically blossom the following years. On the one hand, Schweitzer has an entire chapter dedicated to the conditions of living of a workers' family (Chapter III), in which he not only criticizes emphatically the democratic forms of exploitation under republican governments and good citizens through the mouth of a worker, but treats the workers' drama of unemployment and the reduction of the working day considering even the possibility of a general strike (a possibility the characters of the novel finally reject -compare this with Lassalle's emphatic aversion to strikes-). On the other hand, Schweitzer presents a whole Chapter (number VII) that condemns in harsh terms the activities of a small capitalist, a character he opposes to the worker emphatically. Although Schweitzer's small capitalist is represented by an usurer Jew, the important thing for us is that he separates without any hesitation petty-bourgeois and worker, while at the time Liebknecht and Bebel worked with a perspective that united both subjects under the label of 'people' (that they maintained well into the 1880s -even its later abandonment by them was more of a 'terminological' than of a 'strategical' nature-) and Lassalle preferred to use the concept 'fourth state' that in more than one occasion served him to include in one entity workers and petty-bourgeois. For the Schweitzer of 1863-4, 'worker' and 'petty-bourgeois' (small capitalists) were not merely separated subjects (one 'exploited' the other 'oppressed'), but he opposed them in a relation of in which one's power strengthened at the same time the other's weakened. It was this emphatic distinction that explains Schweitzer's vitality during the next few years, his closeness with the movement of the working class, and the possibility of grasping correctly the essence of Marx's *Capital*.

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<sup>103</sup> See the following letters: Marx to Engels. 18 May 1859, Marx to Engels. 7 June 1859, Marx to Engels. 10 June 1859, Marx to Engels. 14 July 1859, Marx to Lassalle. 22 November 1859 and Marx's work *Herr Vogt* of 1860.

While immediately after the death of Lassalle, Schweitzer publishes a short eulogy of the latter written in strong populist terms and develops for a couple of months a kind of Prussian deviation (very minor compared to the Lassalle of 1859-60 or with Lassalle's dealings with Bismarck before his death), already in an article of March 25, 1866 he opposes that the 'Worker's Party' that was inheritor of Lassalle<sup>104</sup> strikes an alliance with the bourgeois democratic party that went by the name of People's Party and was led by a Johann Jacoby with which Liebknecht was close. Schweitzer frames his opposition not only retrieving the more class-based suggestions of Lassalle in the *Open Letter Reply* of April 1862, but also quoting both the *Communist Manifesto* and Engels' work *The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers' Party*<sup>105</sup>. This progressive Marxist delimitation was then redeveloped by Schweitzer in an article of the 8th of June of 1866, when he assesses the Volks-Zeitung proposals regarding credits and loans. In it, despite the fact that our author ends up supporting small credit as a relief for the worker in a time of distress, he frames the matter through a Marxist standpoint that opposes the unity of small and big capital to the unity of the workers:

*"As a result, one might now believe that the workers would be disadvantaged by those funds. But this is wrong again. We need not assure that the exploitation of labor by capital (whether large or small capital) is not to our taste..." (von Schweitzer, 1912, p139-140, own translation)*

Later on in his Reichstag speech of October 10, 1867 (*About freedom of interest and usury*) he would develop this notions and emphasize that his support of credit for the workers in a time of distress was not based on an strategical alliance between petty-bourgeois and worker, but mainly because the law and the available data did not permit to make the distinction between the small employers that used productive credit to further exploit wage labour, from the workers who used consumptive credit merely with aim of surviving. To better stress this perspective Schweitzer clarifies that for him the concentration of capital (expropriation of small capital by big capital through competition) was not a malady (as was at the time for Jacoby and Liebknecht, whose concerns were focused on the sufferings

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<sup>104</sup> The German Workers' Association was not found by Lassalle as is usually asserted, but by Otto Dammer (see *History of the Worker Agitation of Ferdinand Lassalle*, written by Bernhard Becker in 1874). Some of its leading worker members were also not merely 'naive spontaneous material' but had extensive political history (Vahlteich and Fritzsche were both Weitlingians already in the 1840s, as Bernstein mentions in his series of articles *A moral critic and his critical morality* published in the SozialDemokrat between January 21 and February 12 of 1886)

<sup>105</sup> All references to Schweitzer's articles in this and the following paragraphs are taken from Mehring's compilation of 1912 ('Political speeches and essays by JB von Schweitzer', 1912)

of the petty-bourgeois), but a progressive and positive feature that furthered the growth of the workers' ranks through the process of proletarianization.

Schweitzer antagonistic separation of worker and petty-bourgeois was not only ahead of Nieuwenhuis and Anseele perspectives developed decades later (and that lead them to misguided notions regarding the nature of the surplus and of exploitation), but develop in such a way that permitted him to overcome the distributionalist framework that was very much present in the economic interpretations we have seen permeated the period of formation of Marxism as a tradition. Especially when Jacoby's People's Party 'social drives' were becoming more acute and disembodying in some form of socialism, at time when most opportunists show themselves in their true nature by 'painting the bourgeois parties left-courses in socialist colors', Johann Baptist Schweitzer was unique in his opposition to the bourgeois essence he discovered was contained in Jacoby's socialism:

*"So again: Fort with this halfness! We do not want a fair 'distribution of the return between capital and work,' and we do not want to 'restrict the abuses of capital,' but we want a radical formation of society from its foundations; we want the abolition of the antithesis of 'capital and work,' ...a state of production in which Work forms the determining element in state and society"*  
**(J.B. von Schweitzer, 1912, p241, own translation)**

Before we pass to Schweitzer's review of Marx's *Capital*, is important to mark he maintained the aspects we have highlighted here both in his practical work in Parliament and in his writings. For example, in *The dead Schulze and the living Lassalle* (1868), our author stresses his criticism of the distributionalist perspective, and frames it in a way that overcomes the mere individual criticism of the particular capitalist (taking elements derived from the *Bastiat-Schulze* of Lassalle he conceives classes as total entities and stresses that their opposition must not be only to abuses). He even tries to overcome the perspective of 'the surplus as mere theft' that tended to prevail during the period of formation of Marxism, by using 'permanentist terms':

*"For, you see, this hundred thousand Thaler-Griff, as criminal as it is, is always just a theft 'in detail', and however big the sum may be, it's always just a single theft. But the 'rise of national wealth' - but that, Mr. Schulze, is the 'big' thief, the Theft in Permanence (Diebstahl in Permanenz)"*  
**(von Schweitzer, 1868, p39, own translation)**

Mehring himself praised the role of Schweitzer in parliament (as he did with his criticism of Jacoby's distributionalist populism), contrasting it with Liebknecht demagogic anti-parliamentarism of 1869, and emphasizing not only our author's well formulated position



on the reduction of the working day, but also how he searched for Marx's theoretical advice in economic matters such as the taxation of industry and its effects on the working class. Marx and Engels' letters also prove that during this time, while they were personally closer to Liebknecht and very far from Schweitzer, strategically were nearer to the latter<sup>106</sup>.

After trying to publish a theoretical economic work in 1867 whose intended objective public was indeed 'the worker on foot' but that was censored and prohibited by the government<sup>107</sup>, Schweitzer wrote his review of *Capital* in a series of articles published in his *SozialDemokrat* between January and May of 1868 and that afterwards were reunited under the title *Das Werk von Karl Marx*. This review, that Marx preferred to Liebknecht petty-bourgeois honest dilettantism (to 'the 'noble consciousness' of a Wilhelmchen'), is important, firstly, because it shows us a theoretical consciousness that is capable of going beyond personal and subjective issues to discover the essence of a problematic (Schweitzer tells us in its first paragraphs that despite the personal conflicts he had had during the last years with Karl Marx, he is forced to recognize that *Capital* is the first book to provide a scientific basis for socialism). Secondly, against the later condemnations of *Capital* for its abstruse language, Schweitzer affirms that the complexity of Marx's terminology is not a 'mystifying device', but it derives from the intricacies of the subject treated by him, from the complex nature of reality itself. In third place, our 'Lassalleian' emphatically recognizes that within the economy, Marx's new scientific analysis is rooted on the determinant nature of 'production' (not the 'distribution' that was dear to de Paepe, Nieuwenhuis, Arturo and Antonio Labriola, etc). Indeed, the Moor's emphasis on the mode of production is what for Schweitzer leads him to a 'universal characterization' that leaves out any identification of the first with 'national economies' as it was later for Kautsky (our

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<sup>106</sup> This debate can be found in the following letters exchanged between Marx and Engels: Marx to Engels. 7 December 1867, Marx to Kugelmann. 17 March 1868, Marx to Engels. 23 March 1868, Marx to Engels. 4 May 1868, Engels to Marx. 22 May 1868, Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann. 11 July 1868, Marx to Kugelmann. 5 December 1868, Marx to Engels. 29 March 1869, Engels to Marx, 7 May 1869, Engels to Elisabeth Engels. 1 July 1869, Marx to Engels. 3 July 1869, Engels to Kugelmann. 10 July 1869, Engels to Marx. 21 July 1869, Marx to Engels. 22 July 1869, Marx to Engels. 30 October 1869, Marx to Engels. 6 November 1869, Engels to Marx. 9 November 1869

<sup>107</sup> 'Capital profit and wage labour' (Schweitzer, 1867). This writing is interesting mainly due to two facts. First, its prohibition gives the lie to the repeated slanders of Bebel and Liebknecht that Schweitzer was in league with the Emperor and the Prussian Junkers (a slander that arose only because Schweitzer dubbed the bourgeois and not the 'feudal' Prussian Junkers as the central enemy of the working class). Secondly, its structure and whole argument was based on an emphatic and radical criticism of bourgeois society from a class-based standpoint rooted on natural right. While the major hegemonic tendencies within the emerging modern socialism that gave form to Marxism as a tradition based themselves on natural right in a naturalized and mainly unconscious way, Schweitzer's conscious and systematic use of this root precisely led him to discover its limits and open its gaze to a new framework that permitted him to study *Capital* under a new light and thus formulate its first valuable interpretation. Indeed, Marx's *Capital* and theory of value are not based on natural right, as Jukka Gronow asserted in 1986 (*On the Formation of Marxism*) in a work that spuriously amalgamates Kautsky's views with the theoretical contributions of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

author remarks that *Capital* is intended to show how in Germany the same laws of movement that Marx exemplified with England are an actuality). Fourthly, and crucial, Schweitzer stresses the qualitative difference between classical political economists (essentially Ricardo) and Marx's rendition. Differing from Antonio Labriola, Deville, Dobrogeanu-Gherea and others, our reviewer of *Capital* distinguishes between value as substance, measure and form to point that Ricardo's developments were unblocked by Marx's new treatment of the form of value. Thus, for Schweitzer the new socialist science conformed an 'economy of the working class' (not of the 'people' dear to Liebknecht or the 'fourth state' preferred by Lassalle and afterwards Guesde) that, although basing itself on classical political economy, it indeed overcomes and breaks with the latter. The distinction between Ricardo and Marx for Schweitzer is best expressed in their different conception of commodities and money, a contrast that has direct political consequences:

*"As a second point we want to emphasize how on this basis all petty-bourgeois socialism becomes impossibility. All petty-bourgeois socialism, in fact, amounts to money-making for the purpose of eliminating the inconveniences and grievances which arise from the fact that all commodities, except money, are not immediately interchangeable, and is based on the illusion that either a society of commodity producers can afford money or at least she could arbitrarily declare laws to the money. If one has gained an insight into the lowest basis of this contemporary society with Marx, it has also been seen that hops and malt are lost in this present society of commodity producers and that a radical cure must occur in which production becomes directly social."* **(von Schweitzer, 1877-8 [1868], p168, own translation)**

This separation between the 'economy of the working class' and 'petty-bourgeois socialism' with which Schweitzer more than hints to Marx's criticism of proposals of the type of those that emphasize in a 'Bank of the people' and that were first elaborated by the proletarian Ricardians (we saw above that both de Paepe and Antonio Labriola were near the latter, and how a progressive dimension of the analysis of Paul Fischer of 1889 was the emphasis he put on this criticism), is what in turn permits our reviewer of *Capital* to stress the fact that the law of value was not being violated constantly within bourgeois society and would be only fully active under socialism, but that it was an structural actuality not based on arbitrary theft at the level of circulation:

*"The author proves with crystal clear precision that the reason cannot be circulation. Of course, one can buy a commodity below its value and then sell it above its value; but then, at both the purchase and the sale, he has enriched himself at the expense of the other commodity owners (the seller and the buyer). This is not the normal case. It is assumed that the real case exists; that no one over-benefits the other, but each acts in accordance with the law of value that dominates contemporary society. In a word, it is supposed that the capitalist pays the goods he buys to*

*their full value, and that he does not receive more than his full value for the goods he sells (...) It is a bitter, a cruel law of value, which in this modern society of capitalist production, like all commodities, as well as labor, dominates. The existing law, the laws of states stand on the side of the capitalists. The capitalist can still depress salaries under the necessity of life; only then does he commit a violation of the basic law of capitalist production. The monstrosity lies in the fact that, even without such an injury, he is able to exploit the labor power of the propertyless as a man with rights according to the existing institutions of the state and of society."* (**ibid, p170, own translation**)

The latter fifth major distinction that we signal as crucial in Schweitzer's review of *Capital* is what in turn allows him to stress what we recognize as a sixth principal feature that Marx was able to single out regarding the nature of bourgeois society. If for Kautsky the latter's essence was in great industry and relative surplus value, for the Marx of Schweitzer, the essence of the capitalist mode of production was indeed on 'absolute surplus value', a feature that permits him not to confound mere industrialization with the fundamental relational basis of bourgeois society. On seventh place, our reviewer differs from Kautsky when stressing the fact that the cause of shortening of the working day must be sought in the class struggle from below of the workers against the capitalists, in the context of a work process that must not be conceived as of a mere technical nature (Schweitzer hints to the notion that it is trespassed by the class struggle). The eighth dimension that we single out in the review here assessed, finds its concretization on our author's important differentiation between the classical economical concepts of 'fix and circulating capital', and Marx's 'constant and variable capital'. This distinction is what allows him to single out the related 'problem of the transformation' (a whole problematic towards which Deville proved to be blind in 1883):

*"This law contradicts the appearance. Everybody knows that those branches of business which use much constant and less variable capital have no less 'benefit' that those in which the opposite relationship is found. The author will clarify this point in a later (not yet published) part of his work"* (**ibid, p186, own translation**)

All these dimensions that we have distinguished in Schweitzer's review of *Capital* are crowned politically in the end with a last maxim that explicitly separate the 'economy of the working class' from any 'left turn of capital'<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup>"We do not want the capital nonsense to the right, nor the capital ripples to the left (Wir wollen weder die Kapital-Flausen nach rechts, noch die Kapital- Flausen nach links)" (**von Schweitzer, 1877-8 [1868], p192, own translation**)

The review we have treated here was assessed by Marx not only in the letter we have already quoted, but its importance is signaled because the famous letter that Marx wrote to Kugelmann on the 11th of July of 1868, a letter Lenin recoups in his own *Preface to the Russian Translation of Karl Marx's Letters to Dr. Kugelmann* of February 5 of 1907 to explain the essence of the theory of value of Marx, was written discussing Schweitzer's review<sup>109</sup>.

The fact of the matter, nonetheless, was that Schweitzer's efforts were suppressed and his legacy largely forgotten until Mehring retrieve almost 30 years later. In this suppression of what was a first sound rendition of Marx's mature work<sup>110</sup>, the leaders of the Eisenachers Bebel and Liebknecht played a major role, to the point that within the Party founded in Gotha in 1875 that united Lassalleans and Eisenachers, Schweitzer was continuously slandered as 'an overcame phase of rude and crass class-based form of socialism', an accusation of which Marx and Engels were indeed aware of and that did not satisfied them<sup>111</sup>.

The second major fertile apprehension of the essence of Marx's mature work that permitted Trotsky's formulation of the theory of permanent revolution, was formulated by Plekhanov. We single out the latter in particular, because it was not just the whole trio of the founders of the 'Emancipation Labour Group' that set the basis of a form of Marxism that first allowed the development of Lenin's first works and then Trotsky's first elaborations, as Taylor and Harding seemed to have argued in 1983<sup>112</sup>. For starters, Ryazanov is clear in emphasizing that when the trio broke with populism 1883, Akselrod's work on the intelligentsia found no opposition in the populists ranks, while Plekhanov's 'Socialism and the political struggle' encountered steep resistance within them<sup>113</sup>. These differences at the birth of Russian Marxism then expressed themselves in other dimensions that make

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<sup>109</sup> 'I would not advise reprinting Schweitzer's articles, though Schweitzer has made a good job of them for his paper', said Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann on July 11, 1868. See MECW v43, 1988, p69.

<sup>110</sup> That indeed was based on a whole theoretical framework that differed from both Lassalle's tradition and the Eisenachers' conceptions. For example, Schweitzer's interpretation of the law of value must have been related with the fact that he conceived the working class not as a passive subject, but as an active one that fought back and resisted the conditions of exploitation: indeed, at a time when the Eisenachers only stressed on cooperatives and the Lassalleans were alien to strikes, Schweitzer lead the German Worker's Association on a course that permitted the foundation of unions based on the class struggle principle.

<sup>111</sup> See Circular Letter. of Marx and Engels, written on 17-18 September of 1879. See MECW v24, 1989, p263.

<sup>112</sup> See the anthology *Marxism in Russia- Key Documents 1879-1906*, published by Taylor and Harding in 1983, pages 16-17 of their Introduction.

<sup>113</sup> Check the *Preface* to v2 of Plekhanov's complete works written by Ryazanov in November of 1922.

difficult for us to single Axelrod as a base for Trotsky<sup>114</sup>. Regarding Zasulich, the very Trotsky relates how her populist beginnings left in her an enduring strategic conception that lasted to the end of her life<sup>115</sup>. So, we single out Plekhanov, and in this judgment we are in good company. Indeed, Ryazanov tells us that he was not a mere repeater of others' dogmas, but an original and independent developer of the scientific research program that Marxism supposed. While Kautsky was still a Malthusian, the father of Russian Marxism (that was never an ardent Bakuninist like Axelrod) is influenced both by Zieber and the French Guesdists, and develops the economic bases of his socialism by the very first explicit delimitation between Marx's theory and Rodbertus elaborations, which the same Ryazanov stresses can be found in *New directions in the field of political economy* and *Economic theory of Karl Rodbertus - Yagetsov*, both of the beginning of the 1880s<sup>116</sup>.

Let us examine both works that Ryazanov marks as 'original and independent Marxist points of departure'. The first thing to notice in the first work mentioned by him, is that it is framed as a critique of the *New Directions* that emerged within economic theory at the time. While Kautsky was trying to conciliate socialism with Malthusianism and Ghera look positively the new concern with the 'social' of the economists and academics in general, Plekhanov distinguishes between them and the socialism he espoused. Discussing the concretization of the *New Directions* on German and French soil, he stresses how the latter were blocked in their development by the same qualitative barrier that made Ricardo incapable of grasping the true nature of bourgeois society:

*"The irrelevance of the relationship of classical economists to the fate of the working class can sometimes seem simply incredible for a modern reader...Indeed, the true meaning and significance of capitalism remained 'lettre close' for the classical economists. The interests of the workers they continued to associate with the increase of 'people's wealth' and in this increase they saw the only way to heal public disasters...."* (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 1, p170-171, own translation)

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<sup>114</sup> While Plekhanov stressed on the need to break with the intelligentsia and was emphatic about in 1889 (see *Preface to the speech of Alekseev*), Axelrod did not concur fully with this perspective (see *The Tasks of the Worker Intelligentsia in Russia* of 1893). Likewise, when Plekhanov had already characterized Russia a fully functioning capitalist country and left out any Asiatic remnant as relevant to explain its current development (read *Pessimism as a reflection of economic reality*, published by Plekhanov in 1895), Axelrod in 1893 was stressing the semifeudal nature of Germany in *The German Socialist Party and its tactics*. Trotsky himself was conscious of the differences that could be found between the Marxism of Axelrod and the Marxism of Plekhanov (he distinguishes between them emphatically in his article *Masaryk about Russian Marxism* of June 1914)

<sup>115</sup> See Trotsky's *Lenin* of 1925, its Part I, Paragraph 41, Lines 5 to 10

<sup>116</sup> Read the Paragraphs 46 to 48 of Ryazanov's November 1922 *General Preface* to Plekhanov's Complete Works.

Secondly, Plekhanov recognizes the foundation of some of the *New Directions* in the works of Friederich List, an author whose theory of stages that tried to explain the industrialization of discrete countries by singling out as determinant their foreign exchange policies<sup>117</sup>, as 'very superficial and one-sided'. On third place, after criticizing the German Rosher of the 'Historical School' and questioning the merits of John Stuart Mill ('a mere eclectic that was blind to the importance of the working class and its first great historical appearance with the insurrection of June 1848 in Paris'), Plekhanov develops with some length a theoretical rejection of both Laveleye's contributions (that we have seen was dear to Gherea and Nieuwenhuis) and Brentano's elaborations (a Kadetist that had great influence on the conception of the unions of the Eisenachers at the beginning of the 1870s as Rudolf Meyer shows in his book of 1874 'The emancipation of the Fourth State'). For Plekhanov, both authors could not develop sound economic theories because they merely wanted to 'reform' bourgeois society and not transform it from its basis. Finally, it is important to remark that while the Plekhanov of November 1881 still dubbed Rodbertus as a progressive figure against the Kadetists ('the last great Ricardian that was the revenge of bourgeois society against itself as expressed by the failed Kadetists'), he already rejects Schaffle's 1875 criticism of Marx's theory of value that was well received at the time by such later Anarquists like Nieuwenhuis:

*"So, for example, he wondered how 'such an intelligent man as Rodbertus' could accept Ricardo's theory...Herman Resler is also much upset by the theory of value of Ricardo-Marx...Even the most outstanding of all social kadetes, Schaffle, does not agree with the view taken in the classical economy and Marx's complementary view of this subject. In his view, the exchange value of anything is determined not only by the quantity of labor necessary for its production, but also by the value of its use, which it has at any given time for the bidder (Gebrauchswertschätzung)." (ibid, p208, own translation)*

If in November of 1881 Plekhanov still considered Rodbertus a sound base of the new kind of socialism he was developing, already in 1883 he would elaborate a clear delimitation regarding the latter. Compared to Kautsky's critique of 1884 (that puts Rodbertus 'as a companion in our socialist field'), Plekhanov's assessment of the work of the German economist is indeed a good antecedent of Engels' criticisms of the latter in 1885. Without treating Rodbertus as mere 'dead dog' and recognizing his value as the last classical economist, the father of Russian Marxism begins questioning the method of the first. For him, Rodbertus' insistence on comparing current society with an ideal type still non-

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<sup>117</sup> Read Part III, Paragraphs 14 to 17 of *New directions in the field of political economy*, published by Plekhanov in Nov 1881.

existent, is what led him to a perspective that failed to really explain the actual relations, but was only capable of describing features in the context of a more or less idealistic and legalistic picture. Secondly, if the Plekhanov 1881 had delimited from the stageism of List, in 1883 he criticizes its extreme form in the hands of a Rodbertus that indeed was a socialist, but dubbed socialism as a very far away horizon<sup>118</sup>. In third place, our Russian questions the intention of the German of rising above the interests of the classes in conflict, a misguided and impossible endeavor that in the case of Rodbertus only leads him to propose an alliance of the working class with the landowners against the bourgeois. Fourthly, concerning Rodbertus' general historical conceptions, it is important to notice that Plekhanov rejects them setting the germ of his Marxist historical view of *Essays on the History of Materialism* that questioned the emphasis put on conquest and mere property (not production)<sup>119</sup>.

Even more important was that for Plekhanov the emphasis on 'conquest' was related to a whole theoretical conception that in Rodbertus made him unable to view the workers as an autonomous and independent subject, but only as mere paupers to be helped (or dreaded) from above, a perspective whose lack of immanentism was evident<sup>120</sup>. In fifth place, it is proper to mention here that this historical view of Rodbertus was organically linked with an economic assessment that, in working with an epistemology that the later Mehring could have dubbed with reason as Neo-Kantian, proved incapable of really grasping the relation between use value and exchange value. Indeed, Plekhanov recognizes this in passages that are very similar to Marx's *Notes on Adolf Wagner* of 1881:

*"But the recognition of labor as the sole source of the material wealth of society did not prevent Rodbertus, like many other economists, from some ambiguity in the notion of exchange value....Rodbertus refused to accurately define concepts of exchange and use value.*

....

*In fact, in the sense of Rodbertus's definition, the flint ax and the skin of the savage beast are the same 'capital in the logical sense of the word', like cotton paper and steam machines of the modern manufacturer.*

...

*Rodbertus' attempt to establish a distinction between historical and logical categories is no more than a failed attempt to understand and formulate the feature of the commodity mode of production, thanks to which 'the social relations of people are in the form of the social relation of things.'* (**ibid, p345-351, own translation**)

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<sup>118</sup> Read Plekhanov's 1882-3 work on Rodbertus, Part XII, the last paragraph.

<sup>119</sup> Check Part XIII, Paragraphs 7 to 9 of Plekhanov's work on Rodbertus.

<sup>120</sup> Revise *Economic theory of Karl Rodbertus - Yagetsov* of 1882-3 by Plekhanov, Part XIII, Paragraphs 14 to 15

This epistemology that informs such economic formulations, also leads Rodbertus to emphasize on a Sismondian notion of modern crisis that stressed in the determinant nature of the subconsumption of the masses. Regarding this matter, Plekhanov proves to be the first and maybe 'unique' in criticizing such a perspective -that we show had conquered vast influence within the field of the emerging modern socialism-. Leaning heavily on Engels' *Anti-Duhring*, the father of Russian Marxism is emphatic in stressing that subconsumption was a feature that also existed in prior societies, that in the midst of modern bourgeois society it only was of a derived nature<sup>121</sup>. After this sixth feature we have distinguished within Plekhanov's analysis of Rodbertus work, it is important to remark in seventh place, that Rodbertus very original theory of ground rent is treated at length and finally rejected by the Russian, a theory that for the Gherea of 1884 was as sound as Marx's historical criticism of capitalism. Finally, as a ninth dimension, is of relevance to point out too that Plekhanov's masterful criticism of the proposals of the Russian populists in 1885 (that already show him as acquainted with Marx's criticism of 1859 of the proletarian Ricardians and their proposals of a Bank of the people), were already set in their fundamentals 2 years earlier in his criticisms of Rodbertus theory of 'working money'<sup>122</sup>.

This long and detailed criticism of Rodbertus' work was indeed what made possible that already in 1885, a year in which the break with populism acquires qualitative dimensions, the author of *Our differences* outlines the two main sources that explain the development of the Marxist Party and the working class during the Russia of the 1890s. On the one hand and on a more theoretical side of the question, he set the germs of the main thesis Lenin defends against the populist economic analysis through the whole 1890s, a populist formulation that only concretized a particular form of subconsumptionism:

*"8. The important role attributed here to the industrial development of America and, in particular, of Australia, should surprise those of the Russian readers who adhere to the economic theory of Mr. VV...The monopoly of England was destroyed by the appearance on the world market of France and Germany, and now the monopoly of Western Europe is undermined by the competition of America, Australia and even India, which, of course, will lead to a sharpening of the mutual relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Europe. We see from this that Mr. VV's theory is not at all confirmed by the actual course of events. V V. thinks that, once gaining dominance in the world market, more industrialized countries finally close access to it for less developed countries and thereby push the latter to the path of social reform...The facts show the opposite. They tell us that less developed countries do not stand in*

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<sup>121</sup> Focus on Part XV, Paragraphs 1 to 3 of Plekhanov's work on Rodbertus.

<sup>122</sup> Center the attention on Part XVII, Paragraph 2 of Plekhanov's treatise on Rodbertus.



*one place, but gradually clear their way to the world market and by their competition push the more developed countries onto the path of a social revolution that will be accomplished by the proletariat, which has recognized its class task, resting on its own forces and seizing political power in their own hands." (Plekhanov, 1922:vol 2, p399, own translation)*

On the other hand, the Plekhanov of 1885 selects the economic writing that would form and educate the advance vanguard of the working class during the 1890s, a pretty unknown work by the short lived polish Marxist S. Dikhstein<sup>123</sup>. Thus, while the Russian populists were reading Kautsky's *Doctrines of Karl Marx* in 1888 (see *Bibliographic Notes from the Social-Democrat*, Plekhanov, Geneva, 1888), Plekhanov was still recommending to the workers the study of a short but valuable writing of a Polish that did not had any 'weight' within the emerging modern socialism in 1891<sup>124</sup>. The author that had first delimited modern socialism from Rodbertus must had had good reasons for this choice, and Dikhstein's work indeed formed in the 1890s the Marxist cadres that were crucial during the Russian Revolution of 1905 -the environment under which Trotsky formulated systematically his theory of permanent revolution-. That is why we do not consider futile to examine Dikhstein's work in what follows.

The very name of the work of Dikhstein first published in 1881, 3 years before the author's death, '*Who lives from what*', is a brilliant synthesis of an explanation of Marx's theory of value framed as a criticism of 'petty-bourgeois socialism'. Dikhstein, who indeed 'talks to the workers' in a very straightforward manner (not like Kautsky that hoped to reach the possessors of capital), centers his analysis on a criticism of the assertion that 'everyone lives from their work'. This criticism serves him 'upwards', to question the notion that 'we are all workers' and make plain the difference between the activities of people like ministers and priests and the labour of the workers. In turn, this maxim helps him 'downwards' to question the conceptions of the petty producer that imagines that all men organize their own labour and because of this must receive an adequate reward. No, for Dikhstein, the labour of the workers that moves society, is *social labour not autonomously organized* and because of this they do not live from *their* labour, but merely maintain their lives through labour. To show even more clearly what he means, our polish author even demonstrates how impossible is that the expropriated workers rent a workshop and start production by themselves ('where would they get the means for that?'). It is this framework

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<sup>123</sup> Read the *Preface to the pamphlet Who lives what* By S. Dikhstein, published by Plekhanov in March 1885, focus on Paragraph 9.

<sup>124</sup> Read the 1891' article *Annual world workers holiday (праздник)* of Plekhanov.

that in turn permits Dikhstein to overcome the blindness we have shown the Guesdists had regarding the division of labour within the factory (that was not trespassed by the class struggle for them and already had pretty much a 'communist nature'), and thus stress the Marxist notion of 'factory despotism':

*"It is after all working in a factory, working with a master (majstra) is not yet bondage. Whether a journeyman or factory worker is always free, they work with whom they like and as long as they like it, and no one has the right to command them.*

*We know, we know this freedom. We know how the foreman (majstra) prepares journeymen, we know how thousands of workers in the factory must bow and bend before a scribe. Do they ever laugh out loud, rudeness to answer rudeness? Will they talk with a louder word when the producer pays them, or if something breaks up from weekly profit? They will never dare, because they are slaves, they know that if a whip manufacturer does not stand above them, then there is a hunger above them, more terrible than a whip."* (Dikhstein, [1881] 2006, p5-6, own translation)

If in third place the author explains in a very simple and correct way the difference between 'labour' and 'labour power'<sup>125</sup>, as a fourth feature we must mention how he repeatedly unites the 'small employer' with 'big boss' and shows how both are part of an alien class of exploiters<sup>126</sup>. Indeed, this fourth dimension is part of precise notions regarding the class structure of bourgeois society, that not only emphasizes that both the creditor and the landlord (rural and urban) sustain themselves from the surplus produced by the worker, but also the whole apparatus of the State has its roots in the labour of the working class. Indeed, as a fifth dimension, we want to remark that the polish author stresses a fact to which both Deville and Kautsky are mainly blind -that State power is crucial to maintain and reproduce the capitalist relations of production:

*"When the workers come together, make arrangements and demand that the manufacturer raise the labor wage, the government will always send the military, the gendarmerie, so that the 'rebellious' may be appeased"* (ibid, p12, own translation)

The state is not only necessary to repress striking workers, but also to conduct wars representing the interests of national capitals, wars that sometimes are merely devised to deviate the emerging outbreaks of a domestic working class. Regarding the positive functions of the State, for our author the universities that it finances are not mere neutral places, but serve only to educate the sons of the bourgeois.

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<sup>125</sup> Read Part IV, Paragraphs 23-24 of Szymon Dickstein's Who lives from what?, published for the first time in 1881.

<sup>126</sup> For examples of this, read Part V, Paragraph 20 of Dikhstein's already quoted work.

On sixth place, is important to note that Dikhstein's notion of exploitation differs from the one formulated by Guesde, mainly because it does not have its center on the appropriation of resources at the level of circulation (unequal exchange), but encompasses the relation of production within the factory between the worker and the boss or the ones that fulfill exploitation functions<sup>127</sup>. This notion of exploitation also informs our author's view of the laws of motion of capitalist society: for him capitalist concentration is, as for Schweitzer, a progressive phenomenon because it augments the social power of the working class, and not something to be condemned adopting the position of the expropriated small capitalists (if anything must be lamented in this situation is the unemployment of the workers' that the bankruptcy of the small employer supposes).

All this dimensions permit our author to draw sharp political consequences: he rejects any notion of a Bank of the people, land redistribution and all references to a previous golden past (for him the past was mainly marked by class struggle and exploitation). Referencing himself on the 'worker dates' of 1830, June 1848 and 1871, Dikhstein leaves aside any notion that is 'society in general' which is transforming itself (contrary to Kautsky), and makes graphic that the aim to be sought must be a workers' government, an aim whose 'mechanic of achievement' must be qualitatively different from any previous national revolution:

*"How to take these factories and this land, how to do it?*

*- It's your business. You should handle this.*

*When formerly it was about freeing the homeland from slavery, when it was about expelling the enemy from the country, then you were asked, the workers, for help and that is why you could ask: 'Free your homeland, expel the enemy.*

*Okay, but how? '*

*Today - it is all about your own case, about the matter of your families, your brothers, and you have to be able to handle your own business." (ibid, p17, own translation)<sup>128</sup>*

Finally, we must mention that the version that we manage to get of Dikhstein work came with an Annex of the author (which we do not know if it was always reproduced and was common to the version the Russian workers and the worker organizers got in the 1890s), that details the international context of the workers' struggle (against any national notion of

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<sup>127</sup> If for Guesde autonomous producer groups that compete in the market still retain the essence of exploitation, for Dikhstein a similar situation is no virtuous one, but not for this reason he dubs it as retaining that essence. See Part I, Paragraphs 9-10 of Who lives from what?

<sup>128</sup> Trotsky too formulates for the first time his theory of permanent revolution opposing the workers' revolution to any national revolution. He does this in 'Introduction to Ferdinand Lassalle's Speech to the jury' (Trotsky, Jul 1905), where he recoups a letter of Lassalle to Marx of 1849 in which the first says something similar (although Lassalle contrasts the 'revolution that intends to solve the social question' with the 'national revolution')

capitalism 'a la Kautsky'), references itself on the First International and is capable of distinguishing the gradualist tendencies prevalent in the German SPD.

The third and last fruitful apprehension of Marx's mature work that served as an economic base to Trotsky's later development of theory of permanent revolution, can be found in Lenin's first works. Taking advantage of the groundbreaking formulations of the Plekhanov of the 1880s, the father of the later Bolshevik tendency, presents a unique analyses alien to almost every other economic conception developed within the emerging modern socialism. Even though Lenin has been treated almost as a 'dead dog' by various modern Marxists that only center their analyses on an unilateral and somewhat misguided reading of his classic writing on Imperialism of 1916 (in which Vladimir Illich would have shown himself as a mere vulgar economist of the type of John Hobson), here we argue that the first writings of Lenin constitute a masterful expression the essence of Marx's economic contentions. In this judgment we rely not only on a Trotsky that tells us how when he first met Lenin the first thing the latter did was examine him on his grasping of *Capital's* economics (*Lenin, Trotsky, 1925*), or in a Krupskaya that relates how everyone was amazed by the young Lenin's handling of Capital and Marx's mature economic works (*How Lenin Studied Marx', Krupskaya, 1933*), but in the late Trotsky himself, that is emphatic in pointing how important was the study of Capital for the first Lenin and his Marxist formation (*The Young Lenin, Trotsky, 1936*).

Already in what was his first Marxist work, Vladimir Illich not only delimitates himself from 'vulgar economists' that do not distinguish if in a country prevail or not the laws of the capitalist market, but further develops correct germs set first by Schweitzer and then by Plekhanov. If the von Schweitzer had explicitly distinguished between the logics that constituted in the one hand the 'small capitalist' and on the other the 'worker', while Plekhanov had stressed that one could not explain the laws of societies centering on mere 'conquest', Lenin in 1893 explicitly differentiates between 'spoliation' (plunder) and 'class exploitation':

*"Farming is here conducted not only to satisfy the requirements of the family itself, but also to obtain some surplus, an income with which to improve buildings, acquire machines and buy additional land. This is quite a natural desire, and there is nothing reprehensible about it, for in itself it contains no elements of kulakism." [There are no elements of kulakism here, it is true; but there undoubtedly are elements of exploitation: by renting land far in excess of their requirements, the prosperous peasants deprive the poor of land needed for their subsistence; by enlarging their farms they need extra hands and resort to hiring labour.] 'But some of the Zemstvo statisticians, evidently regarding such manifestations in peasant life as something illegitimate, try to belittle*

*their importance and to prove that it is chiefly the need for food that drives the peasant to rent land" (Lenin, 1960:v1, p27-28)*

By tracing that emphatic line, Lenin articulated a form of Marxism that overcame almost every other socialist tendency at the time (from Nieuwenhuis to Anseele, passing through Bax, Hyndman, etc), because all of the centered their analyses on a conception of 'the surplus as mere theft'. That Lenin's distinction was not a passing one but fulfilled a central role in his first elaborations, one can see in the fact that he repeats and develops it a few months later to criticize notions that spuriously minorized the bourgeois class<sup>129</sup>, then 1 year after he stresses on it to argue that exploitation was a objective and structural fact<sup>130</sup> and in 1895 he returns to it explain that classes emerge immanently and not by external spoliation<sup>131</sup>.

Lenin's second Marxist work, *On the so-called market question*, is also of importance to us. Written as a discussion of a text of Krasin and extensively circulated within the Marxist workers' circles of St Petersburg and other cities, it centers its argument on a criticism of what one can today rightly name as Krasin circulationist subconsumptionist core thesis. The latter sustained that capitalism could not develop properly in Russia because of a lack of external markets. As we have seen, this emphasis on markets and circulation was at the root of almost every other socialist tendency at the time (from Bebel's catastrophism to Arturo Labriola's Lorianism, passing through Lafarge's leanings towards Leroy-Beaulieu), and by systematically criticizing the particular Russian expression of this general conception Lenin was indeed developing further the breakthrough that Plekhanov had already made in 1885. Relying heavily on Marx's analyses of *Capital II*, Lenin not only remarks that simple reproduction was only a theoretical device that Marx had used to better comprehend the capitalist mode of production and not descriptive actuality, that capital could not exist without accumulation and expanded reproduction. In developing this idea our author points to a problematic to which Deville was blind in 1883, one year before Engels deals with it at length (publication of *Capital III* in 1894):

*"We thus see that growth in the production of means of production as means of production is the most rapid, then comes the production of means of production as means of consumption, and the slowest rate of growth is in the production of means of consumption. That conclusion could have been arrived*

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<sup>129</sup> See the page 114 (lines 29-36 plus Footnote \*\*) of LCW, v1.

<sup>130</sup> See the page 245, lines 28-34 of *What the 'Friends of the People' are...* published in the first volumen of Lenin's complete Works. We note too that Lenin did not equalized 'capitalist' with 'plutocrat' as Deville did emphatically in 1883, but that there were the populists that he criticized in this book of 1894, who centered the question on the 'plutocracy'. Lenin writes in it: '*Otechestvenniye Zapiski. In No. 2 of that magazine, 1872, in the article 'The Plutocracy and Its Basis,' we read the following...*' (ibid, p 250)

<sup>131</sup> Read *The economic content of narodism and the criticism of it in Mr. Struve's book*, published in Lenin, 1894-1895 (LCW, v1, pp359, Paragraph 4)

*at, without Marx's investigation in Volume II of Capital, on the basis of the law that constant capital tends to grow faster than variable: the proposition that means of production grow faster is merely a paraphrase of this law as applied to social production as a whole" (ibid, p87)*

If the Lenin of 1893 already discovered the importance of tendency of the organic composition of capital to grow in *Capital I*, this was because he had made a thorough reading of the latter and had not treated it as a mere 'dogma'. Indeed, in his work of October of 1893, he develops a scientific criticism of Krasin's theses, and shows how they cannot explain how the economy is commodified or where do the capitalists that develop the latter process come from. Krasin was unable to see capitalism for what it was because he only conceived demand and markets as something that was generated by wages, an error Marx had proved in *Capital II* stemmed from Adam Smith's ambiguities. No, there also existed (and had an essential role) the market of means of production, that relied on a productive expenditure of the surplus by the capitalists. In the end, Lenin argued -with Marx- that capitalist production was able to create its own markets and did not depend on any 'external factors'<sup>132</sup>. This emphatic immanentism on which Lenin stressed, did not implied that for the latter capitalist development was a gradual, self-contained and harmonic process. On the one hand, because he questioned Krasin's spurious antecedent of Aglietta's XXth century distinction between intensive and extensive accumulation<sup>133</sup>. On the other, and crucial, due to the fact that Vladimir Illich rejected any identification ('a la Kautsky') of capitalist development with national economies:

*"All that has been said by no means implies the rejection of the proposition that a capitalist nation cannot exist without foreign markets... the larger the scale of production, and the wider the circle of consumers it is calculated to serve, the more violent are the fluctuations...that when bourgeois production has reached a high degree of development it can no longer keep within the limits of the national state: competition compels the capitalists to keep on expanding production and to seek foreign markets for the mass sale of their products. Obviously, the fact that a capitalist nation must have foreign markets just as little violates the law that the market is a simple expression of the social division of labour under commodity economy and, consequently, that it can grow as infinitely as the division of labour, as crises violate the law of value" (ibid, p101-102)*

Finally, we want to stress that these economic conceptions of Lenin were organically linked with a view that emphatically rejected the consideration of the working class as a passive subject to be helped from above, a view that led him to reject Lassalle's iron law of

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<sup>132</sup> An argument he repeats when criticizing Struve in 1895 in *The economic content of Narodism and the criticism of it in Mr. Struve's book* (LCW, v1, 1960, pp 497)

<sup>133</sup> As can be seen in *On the so-called 'market question* (LCW, v1, 1960 pp105, Footnote \*)

wages in a progressive way<sup>134</sup>, and that was very conscious to the fact that the objective public of Marx's mature formulations was not to be sought ('a la Kautsky') in progressive bourgeois:

*"Mr. Mikhailovsky says: 'Marx did not have this particular circle of readers' (workers) 'in view, but expected something from men of science too.' That is absolutely untrue. Marx understood very well how little impartiality and scientific criticism he could expect from the bourgeois scientists and in the Afterword to the second edition of Capital he expressed himself very definitely on this score" (ibid, p161)*

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<sup>134</sup> See On the so-called 'market question', (LCW, v1,1960, p106, Paragraph 2). Lassalle's iron law was somewhat abandoned by the SPD with the Erfurt Program of 1889-1891, but that was made to justify (for example) Bernstein's position of 1890-1 that dubbed possible almost limitless wage increases under the capitalism of great industry without a union practice based on the class struggle (See the series *On the question of the iron wage law* of 1890-1891)

## Conclusion

In this work we have shown how the theory of permanent revolution of the 'first Trotsky' had specific roots that were not present in the hegemonic tendencies of modern socialism within the period of the formation of Marxism as a tradition.

Firstly, we demonstrated that it was necessary to account for the inexistence of the 'primitive communism' in Trotsky's writings of the period 1902-1911, and explained that this omission was a progressive feature only found on a Plekhanov that had to overcome his own previous conceptions to develop it. This development required an analysis that broke with the Engels of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* of 1884, and needed to retrieve the essence of the Marxist formulations better expressed in *Misery of Philosophy* and *Anti-Duhring* to carry them further. The overcoming of the regression implied in Engels 1884 book, supposed both a recuperation of an immanent conception regarding the origin of classes, and a rejection of the feminist conceptions that were attached to the primitive communism thesis. Regarding the latter, we discovered that such a rejection was developed principally in Russia (due to the theoretical conquests achieved by Plekhanov and also a material development of the Russian social formation that favored the first), but also had expressions in Germany (through a somewhat marginalized Zetkin that had strong links with the Russians since her political birth) and Bulgaria (via Blagoev and his conflicts with Yanko Sakazov). This delimitation with a feminism that had major influence in emerging modern socialism through figures like Bebel, was not an arbitrary outgrowth but also required a recuperation of similar process that Marx and Engels had first with Heinzen, and later Sorge within the First International.

On second place, this work expanded on Trotsky's peculiar emphasis on the importance of the relations of production, within the context of the contradiction of the latter with the productive forces. It was stressed that such an emphasis was not common within the context of the emerging modern socialism, and that led to specific political theses. On the one hand, that the conquest of power by the working class was not automatically dependent of the state of the productive forces (relations of production and the class struggle inherently linked with them had objective laws within which the political organizer could not merely ignore the objective tasks that were set by material reality). On the other, that the permanent revolution was not predicated on emphatic stagnation theories: for it the development of the productive forces was not a disgrace that ruled out



the possibility of overcoming of a capitalism whose theoretical and practical rejection was not based on functionalist, catastrophic or decadentist assessments of the economy. The roots of this elaborations within the emerging modern socialism were bound with specific historical conceptions. Notions that tried to explain history by mere 'conquest' were only systematically surpassed by a Plekhanov that further develop formulations already stressed by Engels in *Anti-Duhring*, and carried further in an emphatic manner by the works of the first Lenin. All other alternatives, be them of the 'orthodox' Guesdist Deville, or the somewhat heterodox Vandervelde, failed to stress on the importance of the relations of production.

Finally, we develop at length the different apprehensions of Marx's mature work within the years 1865-1895, to show how of the many versions available (including the influential works of Deville and Kautsky), only three were good enough to serve as a groundwork for Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The first of these was elaborated by Johann Baptist von Schweitzer during 1860s, a slandered and forgotten figure that was retrieve 30 and 40 years later by a Franz Mehring that was effectively linked with the elaboration of the permanent revolution theory by Trotsky since 1905. The second coincided with a Plekhanov that was absolute pioneer in delimitating Marx's theory of value from Rodbertus' elaborations, a differentiation that led the first to, both question the emphasis that every other 'Marxist' at the time put on the sphere of circulation (a theory of crisis based on the subconsumption of the masses) and stressed on the need that the workers were formed by theoretically adequate but not pedagogical rendition's of Marx's economic theories (Plekhanov's rescue of Dikhstein's short writing for the Russian workers' of the 1890s). Lastly, we showed how Plekhanov's conceptions found a unique application with Lenin's first works, economic efforts that were further develop and carried forward by a Marxist that took its starting point the crucial distinction between exploitation and mere plunder.

The three dimensions we have outlined in this work must be seen only as 'introductory' because they were conceived as a part of a larger whole composed of at least five other crucial themes. From the different characterizations of the distinct social formations (e.g. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution blossoms on the basis of Plekhanov's rejection to characterize Russia as a mere backward Asiatic country, a theme develop by Dobrogeanu-Gherea as founder of Romanian Marxism that led the peculiar 'peasant catching' of the latter), to Bronstein's rupture of the bourgeois minimum program that Bebel and

Liebkecht modeled on Jacoby, Rittinghausen and Heinzen (he breaks with the emphasis on the people's army and the direct government of the people), passing through Lev Davidovich systematization of the logic of development of the class struggle ('transitional demands' and 'mechanic of the revolution' that he inherits from Plekhanov and Mehring) to disembody in a particular historical referencing with past revolutions (Trotsky's emphasis on a critique of bourgeois Jacobinism of the Great French Revolution that draws on Marx and Engels original distinctions, his rupture with Liebkecht apologetic appraisal of bourgeois democrats such as the Robert Blum of 1848, his particular conception of the Paris Commune, etc)...our work should be viewed as an introduction to all such issues that to be treated need a wider space this time we could not afford.

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