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LIQUID MODERNITY AND REEVALUATION OF MARX¹

Abstract: The former Eastern Block countries are experiencing a post-Communist, the Third World ones – a postcolonial and the ones from the First World – a postindustrial development. And yet we all, in one way or another, co-exist in the post-modern world. The problem of post-capitalist perspective revives the interest in Marx’s theoretical heritage. Is there a reason to speak of the “Phoenix effect”. The liquid society contains a historical filter that sifts out some, and adds new value to other of Marx’s theses.

Key-words: Marx, marxism, historical filter, postmarxism.

The “Phoenix effect”

1883 – Karl Marx died. The same year the magazine “Die Neue Zeit” started publication as a theoretical platform for his European followers. An international Marxists community was born. A set of ideas designated by Marx’s name became a fact and a factor in the ideological and political life of the old continent. It seems like in a classical play: “Marx is dead. Long live Marxism!” But then on the plot got twisted and was increasingly losing its semblance to traditional narratives.

Just one year after Engels’s death (1895) one of the co-founders of the school doubted its sense. Bernstein was so close to the “General” that he was bestowed the honor to scatter his ashes into the sea. Now in a series of articles he turned to ashes the very doctrine. The fin de siècle was underway. The 20th century was yet to come. In the perspective of the new century what the “good old Ede” saw was not a collapse but a stabilization of capitalism, not chances of revolutionary strategy but only a reformist practice. There was no final goal... It would take as many as 60 years to go from “Die Voraussetzungen” (1899) to the end in Bad Godesberg (1959) when German Social Democratic Party (finally) officially and fully abandoned the Marxism. Such was the power of Marxist momentum. Initially the party’s authorities distanced themselves from, criticized and condemned the first revisionist. But the revision was done.

(As if) the confirmation came quickly. In 1914, the European proletarians who were supposed to unite according to the famous appeal did exactly the opposite: they

¹ The paper was presented at the International scientific conference “Tradition, Modernization, Identities 3: Dialogue of cultures and partnership of civilizations in the Balkans” organized by Centre for Sociological Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš.

put on army uniforms and entered an unprecedented bloody battle under the banner of “their own” bourgeoisie. The war was given the green light by the decision of the leading (and still Marxist) Social Democratic Party to vote for the war credits. It turned out that the acknowledged leader of Orthodox Marxism, the editor-in-chief of “Die Neue Zeit” was unable to give an unambiguous answer to the question of whether to say “yes” or “no” to the war budget. This was the climax of helplessness. “Marxism is dead... Long live the revisionism!”

(As if) the refutation also came quickly. The red flag did not go to the dustbin of history. It was taken up by radical revolutionaries. And the great call rang again, even louder. The war rehabilitated the revolutionary prospects. A grandiose social experiment started in Russia with versatile (and quite odd) consequences. The end goal became everything, the every-day life became nothing... A new formula started to be forged: “Revisionism is dead. Long live Marxism-Leninism!”

The refutation was now refuted not that quickly. More than 70 years passed before it became ruthlessly clear: Marxism-Leninism rustled and was gone. It was not only Lenin that was mummified but the doctrine itself. What remained was an ideological complex serving a deeply repressive system.

In 1989, the system collapsed. The same year “Actuel Marx” magazine started publication. The fin de millénaire was underway. The millennium’s greatest thinker was declared to be... Marx.

“Marxism-Leninism is dead... Long live Marx!”

The wheel is come full circle.

With one important reservation: an extra helping of paradoxes also remains enclosed in it.

“Marxism-Leninism”, the deadly enemy of “Revisionism” is also... revisionism. On the left unlike the one on the right. Adaptation to new historical conditions does not just pushes on, it obliges to reconsider, interpret and supplement. And the lack of adaptation is a refusal of the spirit of the doctrine. In this sense the “revisionism” is inevitable. In 20th century Marxism got pluralized. A number of “Marxisms” were born. How many?

“The fall of the Berlin wall, followed by the end of the USSR, introduced into the phase of thousands of Marxisms...” (Tosel, 2008).

Undoubtedly, Marx has inspired the greatest number of “-isms.” And, at the same time, the greatest number of critics, including some quite fierce. This is next paradox: the greatest recognition as the “thinker of the millennium” was bestowed to an author who is quite denied. It is true that none of his works went unnoticed. Franz Mehring wrote about the artistic talent of Marx with the reservation that the muse of poetry failed to leave her gifts next to his cradle. This did not stop the poetic attempts of the enamored young man from being translated and published as a separate volume, not in the USSR but in the USA. At the same time, the biggest achievement of Marx, *Capital* has been subjected to countless examinations and merciless criticism.

A closing paradox. In the 20th century, there were talks about “Marxism after Marx” (McLellan, 1979), now there are talks about “Marx after Marxism”

(Rockmore, 2002) and even “Marx against Marxism” (Межуев, 2007). The return to Marx gave birth to the terms “alter-Marxism” (Bidet et G. Dumenil, 2007) – “another Marxism for another world”, and “post-Marxism” (Bidet and S. Kouvelakis, 2008). If the circle (or, more precisely, the spiral) is presented as a line, it will be:

“Marx – Marxism – Marxisms – Marx after Marxism – post-Marxism”.

Post-Marxism is Marx’s meeting with the new millennium.

“Post-” fixes both the starting point and the push away from it. To weigh that correlation and its well-foundedness, we should consider a couple of things: the challenge of the past millennium, Marx’s response, the challenge of the first century of the new millennium.

The Historical Filter

Franz Mehring noted a characteristic feature of the vision of Marx and Engels:

“The farther their glance penetrated into the future, the nearer it appeared to be. This much may be said: without this shadow there could have been no light. It was a psychological phenomenon which Lessing had already noticed in those human beings who cast accurate glances into the future: “That for which nature requires thousands of years, must ripen in the moment of their existence.”” (Меринг, 1957:204).

Marx’s “telescopic glance” was subjected to a merciless check, especially after the theoretical transfer of the far future into the near was continued by the practical manipulation with the “bright future.” The temporal scope is both the classical Marxism’s greatest power and Achilles’ heel. The “telescopic glance” is accompanied by underestimating of things that are quite important in the near perspective. Critics focused their attention on these vulnerable points. Enough time has elapsed in order that we can strike a new balance of Marx’s far-sightedness.

The main criterion is the variable balances: *Capitalism – post-capitalism; National – global; State – civil society; Working time – leisure time; Alienation – self-realization; Ideology – supra-ideological thinking; Prehistory – actual history.*

Some false predictions have passed through the historical filter. Not even one proletarian revolution did happen in the capitalist center. The globalization achieved in the 19th century turned out to be quite overestimated, the anti-systematic approach in the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions turned out to be wrongly judged, the potential of rural communism – quite underestimated and for all of these reasons the possibility to combine a quasi-Jacobin dictatorship with a quasi-primitive communism has remained underestimated.

The attempt full of pathos and violence to overjump the level of productive powers and force them so that they reach a society of the future, was ultimately reduced to catching-up development of capitalist semi-periphery and periphery. The “mutant socialism” flowed through the filter of history and, with it, the mobilizing functions attributed to “Marxism-Leninism.” Together with that the practical discrediting of “Marxism-Leninism” confirmed the fundamental theoretical summary: “No social

order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.” (Marx/Engels. *Collected Works*, 1975-2005:29). The formation of global capitalism must be completed so that conditions for post-capitalist development can be set up.

Some of Marx’s theses need updating and reconsideration; this is valid even for the labor theory of value. Others have become an implicit part of contemporary manner of thinking. Marx’s presence is embodied in terms such as “capitalism,” “globalization,” “alienation,” “leisure time,” “self-realization.” It is impossible to take these terms out of today’s debates, neither can Marx’s name be amputated from their development.

Capitalism. The term “capitalism” is not only held by the “filter” but also “make a career” that can be traced by comparing the different editions of the *British Encyclopedia* in 19th and 20th centuries. For a long period it was used exclusively by Marxists and critics of the system. Today it is a part of the vocabulary of its defenders as well. It has been used by prominent Western politicians, Conservatives such as Margaret Thatcher and Nicolas Sarkozy, Democrats such as Barack Obama, liberal businessmen such as George Soros and scientists of various fields: economists, sociologists, futurologists, including classical authors such as Werner Sombart and Max Weber. This concept was developed and promoted by Marx and his followers. It embodies the thesis of the structural role of economic relations in society. If one adds that for Marx crises are immanently inherent in capitalism it becomes clear why it was precisely his name that came in the foreground under the conditions of a “capitalism of catastrophes.” Quite characteristic are the debates on the topic “Capitalism doesn’t work”.

The movement of contemporary capitalism toward a historical limit, insufficiently clear and with many options, finds its expression in a number of different phenomena and provokes discussions in which Marx’s followers find a place.

Globalization. Marx fixed a cardinal transition: “history becomes world history.” A constantly emphasized defect of classical Marxism is that national formation and, hence, nationalism were underestimated. National consolidation took place in the 19th century simultaneously with the development toward a world society. Marx gave priority to the international tendency, both as a theoretician and a practitioner. He co-authored with Engels the program of the first European political organizations. The First International was the first not only in the history of workers’ movement but of its kind. The underestimation of national formation became a heavy burden for the Marxists in 20th century.

In 21st century, one can see clearly enough that social development gets towards a supra-national level. Historical context is not unambiguous. The nation-state, the dominant form of social organization of the modern times is subjected to double pressure: not only “from above”, from the supranational, but also “from below”, from the sub-national level. The intertwining of belated processes gave birth

to the term “glocalization.” There are also some belated processes of ethnic national formation that have not been overcome. Nevertheless, the priority of globalization as seen by Marx with such profound insight becomes reality, even if after a long period of time. The intermediate unit – between national and international – became the regionalization.

Civil Society. Hegel is the great thinker who struck the philosophical and historical balance of the events of the Modern Age and attached categorical significance to “civil society.” However, above it he placed the state. Marx made the next move: it is civil society that determines the state and not the other way round; “this civil society is the true source and theatre of all history” (Marx/Engels. *Collected Works*, 1975-2005:5). For Marx the priority of civil society had not only philosophical and sociological but also a prognostic political sense.

The thesis of Marx and Engels about the “withering away of the state” seemed almost eccentric against the background of 20th-century history. For various reasons and in a different ideological context (liberal-democratic, fascist, social democratic, communist, national revolutionary) the past century extended the functions and increased the power of the state. However, tarring with the same brush might reveal polar opposites. In totalitarian context, the state “swallows” the civil society. In democratic context, the state, by entering economic and social life, traces out the road to the future merger with the society. If, on the one hand, the state is “burdened” with civil functions, on the other hand, the society “unburdens” the state by talking away some functions from it. “Withering away” seems an odd term until we realize that what is at hand is a historical process of de-statisation that is observable and commented in our present.

Let us have a look around. Today most young people lead family life that until yesterday was mandatorily regulated by the state. This function of the state is withering away, it can legitimize the family life of two individuals but only if they want it to. Marx’s predictions about the withering away of the state are supported, and inspired, by the experience of the Paris Commune. Today the long-term policy of the European Union is to transfer powers from the state to municipalities. A variety of social functions of the state in the field of education, healthcare, social security, even law enforcement (private prisons!) can be, and are actually, taken up by companies, foundations, associations, or in a word, by civil society.

Of course, one should not forget that the process is running under the dominance of the global capital and the consequences of it are not unambiguous. It would be an irony of history if it turns out that the neo-liberal line (the market “eating up” the state)² traces the path towards “socialism of civil society.”

Polarization. Among the most contested fundamental principles in Marx’s economic analysis is the tendency to polarization of society that includes differentiation of middle classes, absolute and relative impoverishment of the proletariat. These conclusions were

² Jacques Attali forecasts that “not later than 2050 a slow disintegration of states, among them some of more than thousand years old, will start” and warns that global market will undermine democracy (Атали, 2009:152-156).

criticized by Bernstein and his conclusions were confirmed by the further development of the capitalist center that is called the “golden billion” today. The neo-liberal practice over the past decades threw dramatic light on the growing polarization in the world as a whole: poverty in the Third Worlds increases in both relative and absolute terms. The distance between the “golden billion” and the “hungry billion” is becoming dramatic. In the developed countries themselves, the Occupy movement emerged, probably unexpectedly for many, whose slogan is “99 percent against 1 percent.” The slogan itself and its popularity speak enough of a polarization brought to the extreme. Ljubisa Mitrovic convincingly argued the actual division of present-day world. (Митрович, 2010)

Immanuel Wallerstein directed the attention to four points of the topicality of Marxism and one of them is polarization.

Consumerism. Terms such as “society of high mass consumption,” “consumerism,” “shopping therapy,” “shopping mania,” “hyper-consumption” have entered both the everyday and the scientific language. A “Consumerist Manifesto” was published and as if its very title marks the historical distance from the “Communist Manifesto.” Consumption (in the capitalist center) is a large-scale fact from which theoretical conclusions are being drawn. Of course, there are enough reasons to do so, provided that the “aggregate consumer” has available what the “aggregate producer” delivers and, ultimately, it comes to different roles of almost overlapping communities.

An entire epoch lies between mid 19th-century worker’s hypo-consumption and hyper-consumption. What is much more essential is that the tendency toward bilogization observed by Marx on the low levels of penury also appears on the high levels of luxury.³

The distinction between “**to have**” and “**to be**”, between consumption and self-realization, is the basis of Marx’s axiology.

“Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have [*haben*] it – when it exists for us as capital, or when we it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc. – in short, when it is *used*.” (Marx/Engels. Collected Works, 1975-2005:3)

Leisure Time. Nowadays, it is not difficult to assess Marx’s conclusion-prediction of: “But to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time, whose powerful effectiveness is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production” (Marx-Engels. Gesamtausgabe, 1981: 581). Marx revealed the depth of this contradiction: capital simultaneously creates leisure time and hypostasizes labor time.

If we come back again to our present we will also see that: leisure time as a structural factor has social consequences which the present-day capitalist society can not cope with. Freeing up time increases the opportunities for creative work but also

³ “Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions.” (Marx/Engels. Collected Works, 1975-2005:3).

for destructive influences on the social man, especially on young generations.

Knowledge. Marx clearly defined the perspective of a radical change in the social role of knowledge. Today this perspective can be seen not by “telescope” but by naked eye. It was given its proper name: a “knowledge society.” The consequences also become apparent. The change to the role of knowledge is a sign of the expanding and increasingly important field of *creative* labor. It is about the change of the dominant: from reproductive to creative contents of activity. A fundamental conclusion can be drawn from here:

“The formation of man who has creative, cultural potential, abilities to innovate, becomes, on the one hand, the main task, and, on the other, a primary means for the progress of the world based on creative activity. Hence is the task for individual’s free and all-round development as formulated by Marx 150 years ago as a super-task for the society that overcomes the contradictions of capitalism, the contradictions of the entire history.” (Бузгалин и Колганов, 2009:46)

The advance of science and educational revolution are paradoxically intertwined with the resurgence of superstitions and “moronization” of the population precisely by means of the achievements of new technologies and the mass media spreading information (and disinformation).

Alienation. A key concept by which Marx set up a new world-view and which he used as a methodological leverage in economic studies. The fact that in the post-war years an intellectual and public discussion unfolded on the “threads that break off” is symptomatic. What was underlining for that interest was not the promotion of the “young Marx” but quite on the contrary: the topic’s actualization provided an opportunity to bring Marx up to date.

The third wave, globalization, the knowledge society have changed and continue to change a lot of things. But the topic has not faded, it acquires new dimensions. Some powerful dehumanization processes are underway simultaneously with technological advances. The open world market globalizes pseudo-needs, pseudo-values, social pathology – criminal organizations, trafficking in narcotic drugs and humans. The global network is a huge accomplishment but it serves to exchange not only information and artistic valuable but also anti-values, cultural ersatzes, pedophilia, virtual murders, sexual violence... The very problem of alienation is being globalized and this becomes a new starting point.

In the Marxists *Vulgata* the productive forces are reduced to material means of production. The critical Marxism is more precise: the main productive force is the man himself. Alienation manifests and deepens the contradiction of productive forces and social relations.

“If classical Marxism grew on the basis of a study of contradictions, limits and objectively possible ways to sublimate capitalism the post-Soviet school of critical Marxism grows on the basis of the study of contradictions, limits and objectively possible ways to sublimate the world of alienation as a whole (the “realm of necessity”).” (Бузгалин и Колганов, 2009:31)

The overcoming of alienation actualizes the problems of critical thinking and social activity.

Critical thinking. The word “critique” is contained in the title or subtitle of the main works in Marx’s creative path. The critique itself is understood not just as a polemics with some views or others but more deeply – as studying and overcoming of the methodological premises of such views. Undoubtedly, this is a continuation of the line to which Immanuel Kant directed the German idealism. Marx’s method can be characterized with some main points.

Historicism: social realities, including ones that seem “natural” and “eternal”, are variables. The history of a thing also contains its “self-criticism.”

Decommodification: under the conditions of market economy things are turned into forms of social relations.

Ideological criticism: the (class) positions in social system create a specific distortion of consciousness. The perceiving of group interests as universal is an objectively determined illusion.

In the 19th century the new ideological complexes, such as conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, were still in a process of formation. Paternalism has not been outlived. Marx’s vision of supra-ideological future seems like a political mirage. In the 20th century the ideologization reached its climax and “swallowed”, without managing to assimilate, the heritage of Marx himself. But the process is not unequivocal. Sociology of knowledge and critical theory have emerged. The great mobilizing ideas (social, national, religious) are discredited by extreme realizations (Stalinism, Nazism, Fundamentalism). The over-ideologization causes an ideological allergy of a kind. Postmodernism refutes the “big narratives.” The one-sided thought embodied in sexism, racism, classism and agism, which was legitimate in the 19th century, which led to large-scale excesses in the 20th century, has become unacceptable and objectionable, and prosecutable in some cases, in the 21st century. The topic of the day is the next move. Global problems demand a *supra-ideological type of thinking*, solutions based on the common interests of men from all over the world. Now it comes not to a philosophical vision but to a tangible need of government. At the same time some ideological attitudes based on private interests – of states and regions, of social classes, of economic, religious, ethnic and other groups – keep on reproducing. Ideological ersatzes emerge. The end of ideology is being discussed, but also of the birth of “imageology.” From the high theory we land upon a global intellectual problem.

Will the road from ideologized thinking to universal wisdom be walked over? It could be but there are no guarantees.

“Actual history”. The metaphorical terms “prehistory” and “actual history” are key concepts in Marx’s theory.⁴ It may seem strange to characterize the advance civilization of the 19th century as “prehistory.” However, there could hardly be a convincing objection if we put it this way: the (global) “prehistory” of gender equality

⁴ Hegel used these terms but in different meaning. “Peoples may have had a long life without a state [...]. This *prehistory* lies outside our purpose, irrespective of whether an actual history followed it or whether the peoples in question never finally succeeded in forming themselves into states” (Xeren, 1996:171). For Hegel the decisive factor of actual history is the state. For Marx the actual history will be marked by the withering away of the state. The two concepts are based on two different philosophies of freedom.

has not been completed. Even more, this can be continued. Today's international treaties are not more than "prehistory" of universal disarmament. Present-day system of international organizations and group coordination of leading countries are just a "prehistory" of a world government. The subject of "actual history" is mankind and the central figure of the future society is the "free individual." "The solution of the riddle of history" (Marx, 1844) comes by the end of "prehistory" (Marx, 1859) and means that "man's own social organisation, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action" (Engels, 1877).⁵

Apologists and critics of Marxism alike pass over a fundamental circumstance: the main categories of historical materialism describe a "prehistory". "Base" and "superstructure" are historical terms. They have a "bottom" limit: it was necessary to get to certain stage of development of production so that the productive relations could impose their structural influence and transform the social organization dominated by the natural bonds of kinship. They also have an "upper" limit: the ceiling of "historical social formation." The "social being–social consciousness" relation is also a historical variable.⁶ It follows from that that Marx's cardinal prediction calls for, in case that it is confirmed, a sublation of his theory by one that is more general, which will describe both the "prehistory" and the "actual history."

What is increasingly important in the beginning of the 21st century is: will the "actual history" be reached in the Marx's sense? According to the "thinker of the millennium" the highway of development is the horizontation of social relations that starts by destroying the system of personal (vertical) dependencies, continues by a system of (horizontal) dependence on things and ends by emancipation from that dependency as well. Human rights advanced to rights of sexual minorities and animal rights, the end of slavery and colonial dependence, the emancipation of women, the modern political democracy, welfare and social mobility can be viewed as steps on the road to the "realm of freedom." To that one should also add the ontological tendencies: "demassification" of industrial society, "individualization" as a new type of relation of the individual and the social group, impact of culture that goes beyond, and undermines the regulative possibilities of the law of value.

At the same time the counter-arguments can not be underestimated. The global world is still made up of worlds of internal contradictions. The regionalization is a logical step towards a mondialization but also a potential clash of "continental plates" of a kind.

The end of "prehistory" (in Marx's sense) has a clear alternative: an "end of history" (in the traditional sense). And not only conditionally as far as we should

⁵ In the spirit of Marx's philosophical and anthropological hypothesis (1844) Engels forecast: "Then for the first time man, in a certain sense, is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones." (Marx/Engels. Collected Works, 1975-2005:25)

⁶ The dogmatists from the Soviet school diligently avoided commenting on Engels's thoughts which, in a sense, rehabilitate historical idealism: "The notion that *the ideas and conceptions of people create their conditions of life*, and not the other way round is contradicted by all past history... Only in the more or less distant future can this notion become a reality..." (Marx/Engels. Collected Works, 1975-2005:25)

not expect new (utopian) steps towards the future but also literally, physically. We are used to nuclear balance but it is far from being guaranteed: the possibility of political extremists or “private” terrorist organizations getting their hands on nuclear weapons grows even bigger and at the same time new space weapons are under development. A leading American political scientist in his large-scale geopolitical vision of the next 100 years (Форман, 2009) predicted a space war in the middle of the century between the USA (supported by Poland) and Japan (supported by Turkey) and another one in the end of the century between the USA and Mexico...

Francis Fukuyama, who gained world-wide fame by his thesis that liberal democracy and market economy are the final point of evolutionary development (the “end of history”; Фукуяма, 1993), later warned of the risks posed by the biotechnologies of our “post-human” future. “The ultimate question raised by biotechnology is: What will happen to political rights once we are able to, in effect, breed some people with saddles on their backs, and others with boots and spurs?” (Фукуяма, 2002). This is a rhetorical question. The concept of “political rights” will lose sense. The super-system will take on its completed form. What will ensue is a capitalist dystopia, something like a termite mound with happy termites. The happiness of people born with saddles on their backs will be again provided by biotechnologies...

“The decline of the realm of necessity”, a conclusion that sums up the studies of contemporary Marxists, is polyvalent and does not necessarily mean a new dawn.

Historical optimism is an integral part of the spirit of Marx’s theory of society. It was subjected to violent manipulation and turned into an uncontrollable apology of state optimism. Marx’s point of view has nothing to do with the commonplace world “optimism” ridiculed at the time by Voltaire, the commonplace optimism stating that “all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.” Marx’s historical optimism is: (1) rational. i.e. it proceeds not from the simple faith that the world of tomorrow could be better than today’s but from arguments of the scientific knowledge of objective social laws; (2) includes the conclusion of the multi-optional nature of history, of the possibility of regressive movements and more or less continuous standstill in different fields of social life; (3) active – the realization of one option or another in historical development depends on the degree of participation in social life, on social initiative and activity. Participation retains its value even under the conditions of stagnation or regressive movement. (This is the sense of paradoxical formulation made by Gramsci under the conditions of triumphant fascism: “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will”.)

The historical filter retains Marx’s definition: the actual, common history of people of each century presents them as “both the authors and the actors of their own drama.” The new act of historical drama directs the attention to new and adequate forms of participation that take into account the lessons from both hyperactivity and passivity.

In each of the key theoretical balances the highlights in Marx’s far-sightedness – *post-capitalism, civil society, polarization, leisure time, alienation, self-realization, supra-ideological thinking, actual history* – give sufficient food for thought.

The Challenge of the New Millennium

Marx made a post mortem trip around the world. Now he returns in his homeland, the highly-developed West. “Mutant socialism” passed through the filter of history. But together with it the global political situation has also changed.

“What happened?” An appropriate sociological question for the secrets of Bulgarian transition. It could be summarized: what happened in the world after 1989?

Two things stand out in the framework of the topic.

- The limitations of “communism”, its groundlessness, even in a limited part of the world, were bared.
- The limitations of liberalism, its lack of prospects in the global world are becoming apparent.

There is a conspicuous analogy with Marx’s time when the restrictions of both the Revolution and the Restoration became prominent.

Ecology introduces us to the *multi-layer nature of the problems* facing the global world, the series of “essences” on political, sociological and philosophical and anthropological levels.

Are present-day governments able to agree upon specific issues such as the carbon dioxide emissions?

Can a level of awareness of the common global interests of mankind enabling coordination and steady regulation of the relationship with nature be reached?

Can the species of *Homo sapiens* control their own society?

We can hear warnings about the importance of the global alternative from various parties.

“This crisis will not be resolved until 2050 when one of the two opposing trends will win over: either a genuine democracy will be established, or slavery.” (Immanuel Wallerstein, American sociologist).

“In the great movement of time which we call human history, we must ask ourselves the question, “Where are we, and where is our road leading to?” in the hope that through an understanding of the growths and declines, of the successes and failures of cultures, we will acquire some clues that will lead us to the right direction in our time.” (Takdir Alisjahbana, Indonesian philosopher).

Mankind is reaching a key, turning point in its history: this is Marx’s starting point.

In the 20th century it was the 19th-century thinker-revolutionary that was extensively exploited. In the 21st century the theoretician of global transition, the thinker of the millennium, comes to the fore.

- * Marx can be measured by the scale of the current political biases to an increasingly lesser degree.
- * Sociology cannot abandon Marx’s heritage, it is embedded into the foundations of modern sociology, unavoidable in political economy, essential in political science.
- * Even to a lesser degree can sociology be restricted to classical Marxism. The very Marxist paradigm can only be updated in interaction with the achievements of other scientific schools.

- * The fate of “state socialism” is not a refutation of Marxism, despite the role it has played for its emergence.
- * The fundamental need of a scientific synthesis of philosophy, anthropology, general theory of history, sociology, political economy, political science and futurology that has scientific and theoretical and scientific and applied aspects cannot be disputed even if we assume that Marx’s attempt was unsuccessful.
- * Such a synthesis that could be called “post-Marxism of the 21st century” does not exist. There are prolegomena, methodological premises, development of sociology in various schools, which are, in most cases, competitors of Marxism.
- * The general philosophical and anthropological hypothesis that is underlying for Marx’s doctrine is yet to be demonstrated or refuted.
- * The move forward after Marx could be expected to be a “sublation” (aufheben) in the deep sense of the German idealism, i.e. preservation of achievements, negation and building into a higher level at the same time.
- * The 21st-century challenge is not towards Marx and his ideological heirs, it is towards contemporary science and contemporary human community.

According to Jacques Bidet, one of the leading followers of Marx recently: “Marxism does indeed supply interpretative perspectives for the great changes – social, political, cultural, anthropological – that are underway.” (Bidet, J. and S. Kouvelakis, 2008:6)

Jonathan Wolf, professor from London is more distanced. In the end of his book *Why Read Marx Today?* He summarizes: “Marx’s grandest theories are not substantiated. But he is not to be abandoned. His writings are among the most powerful in the Western intellectual tradition, and, true or false, they are to be appreciated and admired. But further, he does say many true and inspiring things. His work is full of insight and illumination. We have found many such assessment examples. Marx remains the most profound and acute critic of capitalism, even as it exists today. I said at the outset: we may have no confidence in his solutions to the problems he identifies, but this does not make the problems go away.” (Wolf, 2003:125-126)

The past century made us witnesses to several things.

Communists *failed* with Marx.

Socialists *abandoned* Marx.

Liberals *attacked* Marx.

It could turn out that all of them were wrong, in one way or another.

“The thinker of the millennium” reserved his right to laugh last although, let us not forget it, the irony of history already affected him.

He liked to remind the phrase-mongers: “Here is Rhodes, jump here! Here is the rose, dance here!”

The global world is his Rhodes.

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ФЛУИДНА МОДЕРНОСТ И ПОНОВНО ВРЕДНОВАЊЕ МАРКСА

Резиме: Државе бившег Источног блока пролазе кроз посткомунистички развој, државе Трећег свата – кроз постколонијални, државе Првог свата – кроз постиндустријски развој. А сви ми, на један или други начин, коегзистирамо у постмодерном свету. Јасније је од чега се одгурујемо, него ли куда идемо. Проблем посткапиталистичке перспективе оживљава

интересовање за Марксово теоријско наслеђе. Да ли постоји разлог да говоримо о „ефекту Феникса“? Флуидно друштво (liquid society) садржи историјски филтер, који одбацује неке Марксове тезе, а другима придаје нове вредности.

Кључне речи: Маркс, марксизам, историјски филтер, постмарксизам.