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This paper is one in a series by the author on the "Philosophical and Humanistic Thought of Russia since 1950". Earlier papers distributed by the Council in the series were, New Sects: The Varieties of Religious-Philosophical Consciousness in Russia, 1970s - 1980s (April 5, 1993); The Significance of Russian Philosophy (July 14, 1993); The Origins and Meaning of Russian Postmodernism (July 16, 1993); The Russian Philosophy of National Spirit: Conservatism and Traditionalism (July 11, 1994); and From Anti-Socialism to Anti-semitism: Igor Shafarevich (August 9, 1994);
Mikhail Epstein

An Abstract of the Chapter, "Vicissitudes of Soviet Marxism"

The five sections of this chapter, presented below, describe the initial and final stages in the post-WWII evolution of Soviet Marxism. One principal vector of change was the infusion of nationalism into Marxism, undertaken first by Stalin in his work on linguistics, where the class categories of traditional Marxism were abolished in favor of a notion of national unity, as exemplified in the integrity of national language. This tendency resurfaced in the 1980's, with the increasing rapprochement of official Marxism and grass-roots, nativist ideology, which later grew into a political alliance of communists and neo-fascists. Another revisionist tendency, toward the humanization of Marxism, emerged in the mid-1950's with the publication of Marx's earlier Philosophical-Economical Manuscripts, and found expression in the writings of Evald Ilyenkov, Genrikh Batishchev, and Iakov Mil'ner-Irinin. This tendency suffered a severe political blow with the 1968 failure of the Czechoslovakian attempt to build a "socialism with a human face," which revealed the incompatibility of humanism and Marxism.

Three new approaches to Marxism emerge in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The first is an attempt to revitalize and modify Marxism in the wake of the failure of the Soviet communist project. This version of post-communist Marxism, exemplified in the work of Sergei Platonov, proposes the purification of Marxism from its Leninist and especially Stalinist modifications and the incorporation of new realities, such as the persistent success of capitalist economics. The second approach identifies Leninism and Stalinism as valid interpretations of a Marxism that must therefore be held responsible for all of communism's crimes against humanity. This version, developed in the writings of Alexander Jakovlev, the Secretary of Ideology in Gorbachev's Politbureau, involves the radical criticism of Marxism as a non-scientific and anti-humanist theory which, with its all-inclusive determinism, underestimates the sovereignty of consciousness, reducing personality to a function of social circumstances. The third approach, which can be called post-Marxist communism (as distinct from the post-communist Marxism of the first approach), glorifies the religious aspects of communism, which were abandoned by classical Marxism in favor of a quasi-scientific materialism. This position, articulated in the works of Sergei Kurginian, promotes a renewal of communism as a religious doctrine encompassing the deepest insights of many Eastern and Western faiths and
opposing itself to the soulless hedonism and consumerism of capitalist civilization.

Whether it is abandoned or revitalized, Marxism is no longer active in post-
Soviet Russia as a materialist interpretation of history or a doctrine of class struggle.
On the contemporary scene, what is sometimes identified as Marxism or
communism is, in fact, an eclectic mixture of metaphysical and nationalist views
extolling the mystic values of collectivism and opposing an immoral Western
individualism.
Chapter One. VICISSITUDES OF MARXISM.
*1. Late Joseph Stalin: from “Class” to “Nationality.”
*2. The Renaissance of Early Marx. The Philosophy of Communism. From “Class” to “Humankind.”
7. Marxist History of Philosophy. The Critique of Western and Bourgeois Philosophy.

Marxism was firmly established as the official Soviet ideology in 1922, with the exile of the most outstanding non-Marxist thinkers, like Berdiaev, Struve, Lossky, and the suppression of all non-Marxist philosophical associations and periodicals. The program for the integration of Marxist philosophy with State politics was outlined in Lenin's article, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism" (March, 1922) published in one of the first issues of the journal, Under the Banner of Marxism. Lenin's program called for the alliance of Marxist philosophy with the natural sciences and insisted on the collaborative criticism of bourgeois idealism and religion. Lenin's death in 1924 prompted a reassessment of Marxism on the basis of Lenin's philosophical supplements, whereby "Leninism" came to be understood as the next and highest stage of Marxism, as the "Marxism of the epoch of the proletarian revolution and the construction of communism."

Lenin's main contribution to philosophy consisted of two works: the book, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (1908), and the so-called Philosophical Notebooks, a collection of marginalia (written between 1914-1915 and published posthumously in 1929-1930) to Hegel's treatises, The Science of Logic and The History of Philosophy, including a short draft entitled, "Towards the Question of Dialectics." Since the philosophy of Marxism is dialectical materialism, Lenin was concerned

*Included in this paper.
with elaborating the two parts of this conception: in the book, Lenin defends materialism against "physical idealism" and neo-Kantian revisions of the Marxist doctrine popular among Bolsheviks at the turn of the century; in his marginalia, he pays tribute to dialectics as the component of Marxism adopted from Hegel. The relationship between the two constituents of dialectical materialism became the most dramatic theoretical topic of the 20's, when free discussion of philosophical issues was still permitted. Soviet Marxists divided themselves into two camps: "mechanists," headed by Bukharin, prioritized the materialistic component of Marxism, while "dialecticians," headed by Deborin, emphasized Marx's Hegelian legacy. By the end of the decade, "dialecticians" seemed to have gained the upper hand, especially after the publication of Engels' unfinished treatise, The Dialectics of Nature (1925), and Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks, which gave authoritative arguments for the criticism of mechanist materialism. However, in 1930/31, the ideological organs of the Communist Party, under the leadership of Stalin, interfered in the debate and condemned the "dialecticians" as "Menshevik idealists." 1

This strategy was characteristic for Stalin (1879-1953): he would take a stand between two opposing camps and denounce both of them for perverting authentic Marxism. In politics, Stalin fostered the establishment of a central dogma ("the general party line") by this method of "divide and conquer," which allowed him to amputate left and right extremities, which he deemed "Trotskyist and Bukharinist counter-revolutionary deviations." This strategy of totalitarian synthesis was also used in philosophy, where extremes of "bourgeois mechanistism" and "Menshevik idealism" were rejected for the sake of a unified doctrine that excluded any further debate. The most authoritative product of this synthesis was contributed anonymously by Stalin as a chapter, "On Dialectical and Historical Materialism," included in A Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) (1938), a book which became the ideological catechism of Stalin's epoch.

Stalin begins the presentation of dialectical materialism with dialectics, opposing it to bourgeois metaphysics, and ends with materialism, opposing it to bourgeois idealism. He is careful to maintain the balance between the two components. Although dialectics is presented first, which to the Soviet mind suggests categorical priority, the symmetry is restored by placing more emphasis on materialism in the subsequent exposition, since the second part of the chapter is devoted exclusively to historical materialism, which by its name and nature is more materialistic than dialectical. The core concept of historical materialism is that all historical phenomena can be attributed as primary or secondary—constituting the
economic basis or the political and ideological superstructure. Though the relationship between basis and superstructure presupposes dialectical interaction, the principal determination comes from the basis, thus giving priority to a materialist interpretation of history.

Thus, if in 1922 all movements competing with Marxist philosophy were banished from the USSR, beginning in 1930, the same fate befell all movements competing within Marxist philosophy. For twenty years (1930-50), dialectical materialism functioned as an absolutely coherent and indisputable doctrine; the enforced unanimity of its recognition precluded any debates or creative interpretation among philosophers. During and after World War II, there were some attempts to de-emphasize the reliance of Marx and Engels on the legacy of classic German philosophy and to underscore both their theoretical novelty and their affinities with the legacy of Russian revolutionary democrats. But these political maneuvers did not touch the essence of the dialectical materialist synthesis, which seemed to have been set in stone by Stalin's mighty hand. Ironically, the first man who dared to question this unshakable system of concepts was Stalin himself. In order to remain totalitarian, ideology must leave room for self-revision, which is usually presented as yet another grand achievement and confirmation of the same ideology.

LATE STALIN: FROM CLASS TO NATIONALITY.

The year 1950 may serve as a signpost dividing the history of Soviet Marxism into two periods: (1) the rise and strengthening of dogmatic Marxism (primarily via Stalin) and (2) its gradual loosening and disintegration. It was Stalin himself who initiated the transition; the publication of his pamphlet, *Marxism and the Questions of Linguistics* (1950), became a strong impetus for the subsequent demolition of Marxism, at least in its Soviet version.

The Marxist doctrine of "historical materialism" rests on two assumptions: the determination of an ideological superstructure from an economic basis, and class-struggle as the moving force of history. In his pamphlet, Stalin focused on the phenomenon of language, a topic which had practically no grounding in the works of Marx and Engels themselves, except for several disconnected quotations. However, like all of the arts and sciences of Stalin's time, linguistics was obliged to rely on the principles of dialectical materialism and had its major figure, an
academician Naum Marr (1867 - 1934), whose "new teaching about language" was considered to be infallibly Marxist. Marr theorized the relationship between language and class, claiming that language was yet another determinant in class struggle since it was a tool for power. In Marr's view, the language of the Armenian poor has more in common with the language of the Georgian poor than with the language of the Armenian aristocracy. Thus, the integrity of a national language is belied by class divisions that conform to Lenin's doctrine concerning the existence of two class cultures within every national culture: the progressive and the reactionary, tertium non datur. Marr's ideas dominated Soviet linguistics until long after his death, even to the extent that his opponents were politically persecuted and expelled from their academic positions.

Unexpectedly, Stalin attacked Marr and his followers, setting them apart from "true Leninists" with a surprisingly un-Marxist counter-argument. In his pamphlet, he writes: "culture and language are two different things. Culture can be either bourgeois or socialist, but language, as a means of communication, is always an all-people language and it can serve both to bourgeois and to socialist culture."³ "...Language as a means of social communication of people, equally serves all classes of a society and displays in this respect a kind of indifference toward classes."⁴ Such judgements could easily have been ascribed to simple "common sense" if it had not been Stalin who pronounced them. From the perspective of orthodox Marxism, one which Stalin himself had forcefully expounded in his essay, "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" (1936),⁵ this interpretation of language borders on heresy.

By Stalin's argumentation, language is a non-class phenomenon; moreover, it belongs to neither of the two categories "basis" and "superstructure" that together constitute the conceptual matrix of historical materialism.

In a letter to Stalin, one of his readers asked for clarification, wondering "if it would be right to consider language a phenomenon peculiar both to basis and superstructure, or it would be more accurate to consider language to be an intermediate phenomenon."⁶ Stalin rejected both of these interpretations, arguing that language is used in all social, economic and cultural spheres. "In short: language can be placed neither within the category of bases, nor within the category of superstructures."⁷ "It also cannot be placed within a category of intermediate phenomena between basis and superstructure because such 'intermediate' phenomena do not exist."⁸

Stalin mentions yet another possible interpretation--can language be numbered among the forces of production, perhaps as a tool?-- but he immediately
vitiates this last potential reconciliation with orthodox histmat (the conventional
Soviet abridgement of "historical materialism"). He claims that tools produce
material goods, while "language produces nothing or 'produces' only words." Hence,
language is not a means of production either, "otherwise chatterers would be the
richest people in the world."

For his contemporaries, Stalin's thesis suggested the ghastly impression of a
philosophical black hole into which language drops and vanishes. In the final
analysis, Stalin never explicates the place of language in the system of positive
Marxist concepts, instead he "deconstructs" the Marxist notion of "language" and
demonstrates its elusive, irreducible character. Like an Orthodox theologian, he gives
only a series of negative definitions, shrouding language in a mystical miasma
beyond the grasp of rationale: language is neither this nor that, neither basis, nor its
opposite (superstructure), nor both, nor mediation between them. Stalin's "non-
definition" of language represented a bizarre void in the rigid network of Marxist
categories. Importantly, in Soviet philosophy after Stalin, other "irreducible"
phenomena, like "personality" or "spirituality" emerged, broadening the "black
hole" in the Marxist galaxy. The loosening of the net in one cell inevitably led to its
overall slackening.

Ironically, this relaxation of the Marxist categorial network was precipitated
by the same person who had earlier worked harder than anyone else to transform it
into an unbending iron cage. A possible explanation is that Stalin moved away from
Marxist doctrine after the war in order to advance a nationalist mindset that he may
well have borrowed from the defeated fascist regimes. Often has Russian history seen
its victorious leaders adopt the tactics of their defeated enemies, whether it was with
Moscow Rus' appropriation of a Tartar administrative system in the 15th century, or
with the infection of young Russian officers with French revolutionary and
republican ideals after the seizure of Paris in 1813--which led directly to the
Decembrist revolt of 1825. It is no coincidence that after the victory over Nazi
Germany in 1945, Stalin launched a domestic campaign against "cosmopolites"--who
were mostly Jews--and proclaimed the superiority of the Russian people as "the first
among equals." Stalin's post-war ideological program demanded a revision of the
entire Marxist conception of "class" as the determinant force of the historical process,
in order to promote the category of "nation." Possibly, Stalin was groping for an
ideological revision of the classic Marxist postulate concerning the "dictatorship of
the proletariat" in order to broaden and consolidate the social basis for a communist
utopia, a project which Khrushchev instituted 11 years later in the "Third Program
of the Communist Party" (1961) as he moved the Soviet Union toward the status of an "all-people state" - a necessary stage of social integration on the road to a communist society where classes would be completely abolished. What is more, Stalin clearly anticipated the rapprochement between official Marxism and Russian nationalism which dominated the ideological agenda in the late Brezhnev and post-Brezhnev era.

Of course, it was not easy to rearrange the complex of Marxist concepts in a way that would allow nationalist ideals to supplant class ideology. Such a project contradicted the entire Marxist tradition, imprinted upon every Soviet citizen even in elementary school. This is why Stalin left himself a loophole in the narrow field of the philosophy of language, wherein the notion of national integrity is clearly pertinent, while the application of "class" theory, though irreproachable from a Marxist ideological standpoint, is easily made to seem absurd. Stalin removes the categories of "basis" and "superstructure," relevant to economical determinism, in order to clear a space for "organic" categories of national life, "language" being first and foremost among them. "History tells that national languages are not class languages, rather they are common to whole people (obshchenarodnymi), shared by all the members of a nation, unified for the nation (edinymi dlia natsii)." From among all of the negative definitions of language, Stalin produces one positive conclusion: language implements the unity of national life and allows this unity to prevail over class divisions and conflicts. Thus Stalin succeeded to introduce the nationalist twist in the post-war Soviet ideology in the modest form of a linguistic theory.

Probably no other philosophy of language in the world has ever had such a profound influence on a society as Stalin's pamphlet of forty-odd pages. Not only was the academic institution of linguistics utterly turned on its head, but the entirety of the humanities adopted a position against "vulgar sociologism," which meant orthodox Marxism. Though the "class approach" was still favored for analyses of the international scene, where the struggle against the "world bourgeoisie" was in full swing, it needed to be eliminated from the domestic agenda so that an "all-people" ideology could succeed it.

Another magnum opus from Stalin, "The Economical Problems of Socialism in the USSR" (1952), twice as long as the previous work, proved to be less influential. Published only five months before Stalin's death, it didn't have a chance to produce as radical and lasting an effect as his linguistic theory, though, had its ideas taken root, its consequence might have been even greater. It concerns the
primary aspects of Marxist social and economic teachings, including the fundamentals of historical materialism. Its topics encompass commodity production and the law of value under socialism, the elimination of the opposition between the city and the village and between mental and physical labor, the disintegration of a world market and the deepening crisis of the world capitalist system. Most of Stalin's insights remained intact in the subsequent Soviet textbooks of Marxist philosophy and political economy and influenced the composition of the Third Program of CPSU (1961), though the name of Stalin was everywhere eliminated.

Philosophically the most significant part of this treatise is the first chapter, which regards the character of economical laws under socialism. Its main thrust is a condemnation of subjectivism and voluntarism among those Soviet theoreticians who attributed to the Soviet authorities the capacity to abolish or modify the objective laws of society. They referred to Engels, who predicted in Anti-Düring that alienated social laws, though dominant for centuries, would in the future be applied reasonably and come under the governance of the people. In Stalin's view, Engels had in mind the mastering of objective laws through their cognition and skillful application, not the creation of new laws and abolition of old ones. "Marxism understands the laws of science-- whether natural science or political economy--as a reflection of the objective processes, occurring independently of people's will. People can discover these laws, get to know them, study them, take them into account in their actions, use them for society's benefit, but they cannot change or negate them. All the more, they cannot form or create new laws of science."13

A curious philosophical consequence of this idea would be that the laws of socialism would have had to exist before socialism itself; the construction of socialism would have followed economic laws independently of the will of its creators. For example, from Stalin's standpoint, the law of "planned and balanced development of the national economy," considered to be the main economic law of socialism, could not have been invented by the creators of the "five year plans," who subjected all economy to the "political will of the Party." This law should, like the laws of nature, be taken as a self-contained and objective entity that Bolsheviks merely recognized and implemented. Stalin's emphasis on the objectivity of social laws is reminiscent of Plato's objective idealism, according to which the laws of the Republic preexist within a supernatural mind and are enacted by loyal citizens. Perhaps all practical utopianists, whether they proceed from idealist or materialist assumptions, feel the necessity to ground "prescriptive" laws, as enforced via political power, in the "descriptive" laws of nature itself.
On the whole, Stalin’s later writings, though their publication spans only three years of the period under consideration, stand as one of the two most important contributions to the evolution of Soviet Marxism after 1950. Many of the social-economic ideas that later were appropriated by ideologists under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, including the significance of the law of value, the self-sufficient mechanism of economy and the principle of profitability (khozraschet, rentabel’nost’), derive from Stalin, as do subsequent attempts at reconciling Marxism with nationalist ideology.

The other crucial contribution to the evolution of Soviet Marxism came from Marx himself, with the publication of his early writings.

THE RENAISSANCE OF EARLY MARX. FROM CLASS TO HUMANKIND

Stalin’s death in 1953 encouraged a new mood of openness and a gradual relaxation of the regime known as the "thaw." The future of communism, cleansed of his dogmatic distortions, was now conceptualized as a revival of the political and philosophical ideals of communism’s founders. In 1956, the same year that Khrushchev denounced the atrocities of Stalin’s regime at the 20th Congress of the CPSU and promulgated a critique of Stalin grounded in Lenin’s last will, the Party publishing house ("Politizdat") released a volume of Karl Marx’s early writings which had never before been included in the collected works of Marx and Engels. The reception of Marx’s "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" was an enormous event for Soviet and East European intellectuals and laid the foundation for a new, "humanized" version of Marxism, whose political impact was felt until the Prague Spring of 1968, which sought to establish "a socialism with a human face."

What, in the eyes of Soviet philosophers, made the rough drafts of a 26-year-old "young Hegelian" so important? The previous version of Marxism, canonized by Russian Bolshevism under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, stressed the necessity of class struggle, socialist revolution, and the dictatorship of proletariat. Political and economic issues occupied the foreground, while the ultimate goals and human justifications for such a program were presented as self-evident: the proletariat and its communist party were regarded as the bearers of the true, "class" humanism that could only be achieved through the revolutionary activity of the toiling masses and their avant-garde communist party. Humanism, as a universal moral value blind to class demarcations, was considered to be an abstract bourgeois
notion masking the truth of class motivation. This suspicion originated with Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* (1848), which emphasizes the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the moving force of contemporary history; furthermore, all of their subsequent works, including *Capital*, were devoted to specific economic and social issues rather than to the ultimate ideals and humanistic goals of the communist movement.

It was in his earlier manuscripts that Marx formulated the meaning of communism as a solution to some of the most profound problems of human existence, most significantly the problem of estrangement and alienation. Though Marx borrows these terms (*Entausserung* and *Entfremdung*) from Hegel, he interprets them not as a productive self-estrangement of Spirit in nature and history, but as a ruinous self-estrangement of social man from his "species nature" (*Gattungswesen*) through the institution of private ownership. At this early stage of his thought, the crucial phenomenon for Marx is not Hegel's Absolute Spirit, nor yet is it class struggle; instead, it is "man's essential nature" (*menschlichen Wesen*), as it is displayed and amplified in labor relations and articulated in all the richness of human sensuousness. Marx develops an anthropological theory, much in accordance with Feuerbach's views but oriented socially and economically rather than psychologically and ethically. The central object of this theory is the reappropriation of the human essence via the overcoming of private property, which is identified as the cause of the alienation of the worker from his product. The entire communist project, therefore, is designed to withdraw the investments of human nature from the estranged world of private property and to return them to man's species nature, conceived as a harmonious mode of social collaboration conducive to the fulfillment of all substantial human capacities.

Marx's anthropological principle presumes that this essential "humanness" is degraded in the existing, antagonistic society, which demands revolutionary transformation in order that the products of human activity, now perverted by private property, can be repossessed by humanity as a whole. This humanity potentially embraces not only people, but the entirety of external nature as a part of man's "inorganic body," which is increasingly humanized through industry, the arts, and the sciences. The alienation of man as both a private owner and an exploited worker should be resolved through the mastery of the estranged forces of society and the raw potentials of nature.

"Communism as the positive transcendence of private property, or human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human
essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being... This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism, equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man - the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution. 15

These principles of early Marxist social anthropology (or anthropological communism) reinvigorated the post-Stalinist development of Soviet thought and shaped a new generation of philosophers and humanitarians who started their careers in the middle of the 1950's. Of course, the subsequent changes can hardly be ascribed solely to the impact of early Marx; rather, the unprecedented enthusiasm for his manuscripts was a sign of an urgent demand for social and intellectual innovation.

One important change in post-Stalinist Marxism was a philosophical shift from an emphasis on class determinants to concerns "common to all mankind." It became possible to speak about "man as such," or "human essence," whereas previously such concepts were automatically condemned as "bourgeois humanism" or "reactionary abstraction"--the products of a "non-class approach" (as distinguished from "classless," which was considered to be the highest goal of human progress). By no means was this new tendency intended to be a compromise with bourgeois ideology; the point was that the bourgeoisie had previously proclaimed false "universal" values in order to conceal its class egoism, and now it was socialism's turn to push the idea of a "fully-developed humanism" in order to surpass the "narrow class horizon" of the bourgeoisie.

Consequently, after 1956, epistemological interest turns to theoretical problems concerning such notions as "universal," "general," "generic," "abstract versus concrete," which correspond to the new emphasis placed on universal goals and the spiritual unity of humanity. These "perennial" issues of Western philosophy become vital for such active representatives of a neo-Marxist intellectual generation as Evald Ilyenkov and Genrikh Batishchev.

With the two-part orthodox conception of "dialectical materialism," more stress is now put on dialectics, since it promises to overcome the one-sidedness of materialistic determinism and to demonstrate the inverse influence of
consciousness on the external world. Some of the arguments of 1920's "dialecticians," directed against the "mechanist" faction, are now revived, though without explicit reference to their origin, discussions of which are still officially censored. However, this new diale\ntical reasoning sometimes goes even further than its early Soviet precedents, inasmuch as it stresses the human, spiritual source of dialectics rather than its derivation from objective nature. The entire focus of "neo-
Marxist," or "thaw," philosophy shifts to a concern with "activity" or "life activity" (deiatel'nost' or zhiznedeiatel'nost'), contrasting with the orthodox Marxist determinism, which insists that "social being determines social consciousness." In part, this shift may be attributed to the influence of French existentialism and to Sartre's interpretation of dialectics as the inner property of the subject rather than an objective process of the external world. It is, however, significant that the Russian word for "reality" (deistvitel'nost') contains implicitly the idea of action (deistvie). With this shift, the entire social picture--"the world of circumstances"--is reinterpreted as an objective product of human activity that became alienated from the creative subject and subsequently opposed him as the determining force. Thus the concept of determinism, once prescribed as a Marxist antidote to "non-scientific, Utopian or populist views," comes to be associated with the alienation of the subject from his own creative potential.

With this new generation of Marxist philosophers, communism once again becomes a philosophical, even metaphysical (as opposed to a merely social or political) concept. All of the antinomies that had tormented the European mind since Kant, Fichte and Hegel--like the subject-object dualism and the paradox of the self-alienation--appear to find their solution in communism, insofar as it reappropriates the external world to the collective subjectivity of human kind. Marx's famous definition of communism as "the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation," may be easily adapted to any humanistic or religious view, since it contains a chiliastic vision of "post-history" which foretells "paradise" on earth. No wonder Soviet philosophers in the late 1950's and early 60's willingly indulged in discussions about a "communist future" and "communist ideals," all the more since their realization was announced as an urgent and feasible goal by the third program of the Communist Party (1961). "The Party proclaims solemnly: the present generation of Soviet people will live under communism" -- this was not just a political slogan for the later Khrushchev period, but was also a blessing for the philosophers who would boldly conceive the next historical epoch in order to reconcile all the contradictions-
that were characteristic of previous "antagonistic" social formations. Before the "thaw," Soviet philosophers were obliged to adjust their views to the slightest changes in Party politics; now these same politics demanded that they elaborate a strategy for building the best future for all of humanity.

This drift from class to universal human values was inversely congruent to Stalin's attempt to de-emphasize class doctrine in favor of pan-national unity. Hereafter, two intellectual mainstreams began increasingly to diverge from this revision of the "class" category. Both headed away from class concerns, one moving towards nationalism and nativist ideology, and the other pursuing liberal and universalist tendencies. Ironically, the point linking these two vectors—that is, Marxism itself—rapidly evaporated, and a decade or two later it became hard to identify any common ground between nationalism and liberalism except for their equal contempt for Marxism. Thus the Soviet experience suggests that as soon as Marxism pushes past class doctrine in search of a broader social foundation, whether "nation" or "humanity," it loses its footing and gradually surrenders to alternative doctrines.

The peculiarity of the renovated Soviet Marxism of the 50's-60's is its sincere attempt to embrace universal values without abandoning its class character. The feeling that a classless society of pure communism was knocking the door made a new generation of Soviet Marxists much more broad-minded than its predecessor, which had been raised in the spirit of narrow conformity and dogmatism characteristic of the Stalin era. This new generation included several thinkers, like Merab Mamardashvili, Georgii Shchedrovitsky, or Georgy Gachev, who overcame the Marxist inertia and succeeded to originate their own schools or methods of thought, which will be treated among "non-Marxist" movements. In the next sections, we shall examine those Soviet philosophers, such as Evald Ilyenkov and Genrikh Batischcev, who remained principally faithful to Marxism and tried eagerly to revitalize its original spirit, even at the price of occasional strife and tension with institutionalized and ossified forms of Soviet orthodoxy.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN ACTIVITY. THE RENEWAL OF ETHICS

If Ilyenkov concentrates on the problem of the ideal in order to incorporate it into the world of concrete social phenomena, Genrikh Batischcev elaborates a related problem that was not sufficiently treated in classical Marxist thought: that of
human activity. In his "Theses on Feuerbach," Marx himself connected these two problems, remarking that the chief shortcoming of all previous materialism was its passive and contemplative approach to the material world as a totality of objects. "Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism - but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such." Ilyenkov attempts to overcome this defect of pre-Marxist materialism by divorcing the ideal from abstraction. Batishchev undertakes the complementary task of demonstrating that human activity may be divorced from the ideal and rooted in a sensuous, material foundation of human being. One can schematize the relationship between these two approaches by saying that Ilyenkov's thought makes a downward movement, from the heights of ideality to the material world, while Batishchev moves in the opposite direction, from the given organic status of the human to the horizon of his creative activity.

First of all, Batishchev criticizes two directions in contemporary philosophy concerning the place of the human in the world. One is objectivism, or ontologism, which claims to explore the existing world, as such, beyond the limits of human subjectivity. Positivism, empiricism, psychoanalysis, and structuralism all fall under this general category, since they proceed from an assumption of unhuman, "objective" causality. Thus man proves to be a tool at the disposal of impersonal and anonymous mechanisms variously defined as forces of production, or species nature, or subconscious drives, or language structures. The other extreme, which can be called subjectivism (or activism), grounds human activity in consciousness or will and opposes it to the dead materiality of the external world. According to this view, a human is a free, self-determining entity who does not owe his activity to external influences in the objective world but willfully creates his own destiny. Objectivity can effect this activity only to hinder it, as an obstacle or mechanism of alienation. Fichte, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and philosophers of existentialism and personalism are representative of this subjectivist tendency.

Batishchev argues that these two extremes may be combined in a single theory, one which is deterministic and activist at the same time. Though he addresses his philosophical criticism to "bourgeois philosophy," his implicit target is orthodox Soviet Marxism, which, on the one hand, proclaims its allegiance to scientific objectivity and historical determinism, and on the other condones the most arbitrary and violent activism of communist leaders. Batishchev demonstrates that conceptions of social determinism and ideological voluntarism are, in spite of their seeming incompatibility, internally connected and mutually dependent, which
makes possible the very phenomenon of Soviet Marxism, with its oxymoronic "scientific utopianism." To the same degree that reality is alienated from human activity and reduced to laws of material causality, activity is alienated from objectivity and is reduced to pointless arbitrariness and militant invasions into the organic life of nature and society. In other words, activity and objectivity are alienated from each other, which is exemplified by the Stalinist model of socialism, with its theoretical insistence on the material determination of social life and its practical obsession with ideological intervention into material conditions.

In order to challenge the alienating dichotomy between human activity and objective reality, Batishchev elaborates a theory in which objectivity is an indispensable and primordial quality of activity itself. The truth for Batishchev consists "not in the choice between the insignificance of the substance of the objective world (activism) and the insignificance of man (objectivism) but in understanding the substantial character of human activity." This means that activity is not opposed to external objects but is objective and substantial in its very essence. "Human activity is objective (predmetna). /.../ Objectness (predmetnost') fills up activity and constitutes its own primary definition." That is why the opposition between human activity and the world of objects is chimerical. In Russian, the linguistic correspondence between "reality" (deistvitel'nost') and "action" (deistvie) supports Batishchev's argument that activity does not come to reality from somewhere outside, but is the inherent propensity of people who dwell and act within the real.

A question arises: what distinguishes the human from all other organisms which also constitute a part of objective reality? According to Batishchev, the human does not behave in relation to the world as an organism, using it to satisfy its limited biological needs, but perceives the value and meaning of objects outside of itself. Human activity transcends its own organic boundaries and addresses objects as such in their internal structure and essence. Man is object-oriented to the degree that he can overcome his own specificity as an object and thus become a subject in the true sense of this word. His subjectivity is not opposed to but conditioned by his relationships with the world of objects and by his capacity to perceive these objects as they are, not only through the distorting prism of his utilitarian needs. "...[M]an finds himself in the object world and only in it, but by no means as one of its objects or its totality. He conditions himself by this objectness and by nothing else, but at the same time it is he who conditions himself by it." Objectness does not determine man from the outside but becomes a component of his self-definition and self-
determination as a subject. He positions himself through an activity that is selfless since it reflects the laws of objects instead of imposing on them laws of a particular human organism. In this sense the human may be regarded not as a part of nature, not as the highest animal, but as the representative and descendant of nature on the whole, a universal being, free from any organic limitations.

Man, therefore, is a transcendent being, but not insofar as he is able to escape the objective world; rather, inasmuch as he is able to enter into and understand it, to apply to objects their own measure. According to Batishchev, objectification and transcendence are the same process by which a human realizes itself as an objective reality and comprehends reality as a constituent of itself. The entire world of objects is an actual or potential manifestation of diverse human abilities that discover the internal measure of things and transform them according to this measure—in the way that a violin embodies the artistic and musical potential of wood. Instead of looking at the world as a totality of physical bodies, we should see in it embodiments of human capacities, but this also means that the principle of activity allows one to disembodify the objectified world and to discover its human constructive dimension. "Activity is precisely the concrete identity of disembodiment and embodiment."20 Through activity, since it is essentially objective activity, human potentials are embodied, but at the same time bodies that are created by this activity demonstrate the disembodiment of the natural world. The disruptions between these two aspects of activity give rise to alienation: activity produces objects that fail to be disembodied, owing to the social fetishism of the commodity. In this way, things come to dominate people and claim their own reality independent of the activity that engendered them.

Batishchev's criticism of capitalism and bureaucratism follows Marx's early analysis of alienation and aspires to what he calls "humanistic revolution," which must be permanent, not limited to the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. Revolution should not only transfer the domain of objects from one proprietor to another, from the bourgeoisie to the working class, but ought to prevent the rise of further alienation in the society of bureaucratic socialism. This means that objects themselves should be disembodied and displayed as extensions of free human activity. Freedom, for Batishchev, is misinterpreted when it is treated in terms of "freedom from" or "freedom for". From the standpoint of human activity, freedom cannot be "freedom from," because activity itself is only free inasmuch as it implements itself through the limited substance of specific objects. One cannot be free from freedom itself, i.e. from the substantiality and objectivity that makes free
activity meaningful. Freedom also cannot be "freedom for" since it has no goal outside of itself but comprises its own goal. "Man enters the 'genuine kingdom of freedom' insofar as... the total development of all genuinely human forces becomes an end in itself." Thus Batishchev attempts to restore the entire spectrum of Marx's initial project of human self-transcendence. Such a project assumes that human activity imposes objective self-limitations, alienates itself through reification, and then overcomes this reified condition and restores its freedom, which is a goal in itself.

Proceeding from the category of contradiction central to Marxist dialectics, Batishchev asserts that human activity is deeply contradictory; first, because it unites the opposites of embodiment and disembodiment and, second, because it engenders its own opposite, alienation, which is overcome by means of activity itself. The first law of Marxist dialectics advances the "unity and struggle of opposites"; thus, it not only describes the relationship of opposites, but is contradictory itself, i.e. it includes the contradiction between unity and struggle in its own formulation. Each phenomenon must be interpreted in terms of its inner contradiction, but this contradiction is not a static polarity, instead it is a dynamic interaction with the potential for unification.

According to Batishchev, this basic law of dialectics can be distorted in two ways: by neglecting either the "struggle" or the "unity." Batishchev identifies and criticizes these philosophical "perversions," calling them "distinctivism" and "antinomism," which evidently correspond to his dichotomy of "objectivism" - "activism." Distinctivism, which is typical for empirical and positivist schools as well as for structuralism, reduces contradiction to distinction, or "difference," which downplays the energy of internal opposition. From a distinctivist standpoint, different aspects of phenomena coexist without inner tension and antagonism, even remaining wholly indifferent to each other. This presupposes a purely rationalist description of the world as it is, in the variety of its differences but without penetration into the nature of contradiction as the source of its internal dynamics. Another bias of contemporary thought is the reduction of contradiction to antinomies that can never be resolved, since both extremes are presumed to be equally valid and therefore irreconcilable. This promotes tragical, dualistic and irrationalist views such as those expounded by existentialism and to a certain degree by the Frankfurt School with its negative dialectics. Since contradiction cannot be resolved, the world is condemned to eternal agonizing struggle and self-destructive
antagonism; thus alienation and absurdity can never be overcome by human reason and purposeful activity.

Batishchev advances full-fledged contradiction as the quintessential Marxist concept: it is the source of all dialectical conflicts, but does not deny the ultimate goal of conflict, the perspective of its own resolution. Thus human activity develops through the opposition of embodiment and disembodiment. The antinomistic element of this relationship is manifested in alienation, which opposes the world of self-sufficient objects to human activity; but the antinomy of this self-inflicted dehumanization of humanity is overcome by a proliferation of new activity, which becomes historically self-conscious and, through revolution, reappropriates the alienated world as a sphere of human self-realization.

Batishchev's works, published in the 1960's, remain as perhaps the last expression of a "sincere" Marxism, one which is equally hostile to non-Marxist views and to dogmatic perversions within Marxism itself. Batishchev still believes that all contradictions and polarities—between essence and existence, personality and structure, immanence and transcendence—can be resolved with Marxism, as a project of universal dialectical synthesis through active human self-transcendence and self-realization. To some degree his work can be compared with that of Lukacs, who also attempted to reconcile implicit contradictions between determinism and activism—two cornerstones of Marxist theory. As distinct from Lukacs, Batishchev does not make use of Lenin's theory of reflection, emphasizing the opposite pole of Marxism: active transformation of the world. However, his interpretation of human activity as the voluntary submission of the subject to the intrinsic nature of objects smuggles in the theory of reflection, which presupposes a materialistic and deterministic definition of consciousness as an undistorted mirror of the real. The strategy of substitution of activity for reflection is inevitable if Batishchev desires to remain within the boundaries of human immanence without recognizing other potential sources of human activity than the material world. If activity proceeds according to the laws of objects, it inevitably slips into re-activity, the practical reflection of the world as it is.

Paradoxically, with the interaction of man and the world, as postulated by Batishchev, the "active" role of man consists only in his ability to act according to the demands and tendencies of objects themselves. Perhaps the fundamental deficiency of Batishchev's project is rooted in the very concept of "sensuous human activity" as proposed in Marx. By eliminating the idealistic element of activity and limiting it to sensuousness, one undermines the very foundation of activity, since sensuousness
is first of all the ability to perceive the surrounding world. Marx himself, in his
discussion of sensuous practice, emphasizes the capacities of seeing, hearing,
touching, etc. as "genuinely human" capacities, the development of which is a goal
in itself. But if the mere perception of the external world in all of its subtlety is the
crux of human activity, then the activity itself is understood as the progressive
development of perception—a passive cognitive capacity. Sensuous activity is
activity of perception, not creation; not surprisingly, Batishchev, following Marx,
avoided using the terms "expression," "self-expression," or "imagination" in his
discussion of the ultimate goals of humanity. Creation and expression, as distinct
from sensuousness, presuppose other sources of activity than the external world,
which originate in human transcendence of this world. This transcendent aspect of
creativity is indeed "the active side developed by idealism" and cannot be
convincingly explained by the materialistic model. "Sensuousness," as distinct from
ideal creativity, is either oriented to passive perception of objects or identified with
an organic kind of activity shared by humans and animals. "Sensuous activity," as
such, appears to be a contradiction in terms, since activity exceeds the boundaries of
perception. What remains most valuable in Batishchev's work is its lucid
demonstration of the theoretical tragedy of materialism—the impossibility of
building a theory of human activity on the basis of a purely monistic and
immanentist worldview.

A similar line of thinking that made recourse to "authentic" Marxism can
be traced in the development of ethics after Stalin. On the whole, ethics was one of
the most conservative branches of Soviet Marxism, which for seventy years
produced almost nothing original or innovative. From the standpoint of classical
Marxism, ethics is a subordinate discipline, because all standards and norms of
personal behavior are determined economically and socially. Ethics, therefore, is at
best a kind of applied sociology, and at worst—as an "independent science of
universal values"—is the distorted ideological reflection of the norms by which the
dominant class perpetuates its dominance and oppresses other classes. All claims
concerning absolute and eternal ethical norms, applicable to people of every class and
epoch, are the insidious illusions unmasked by historical materialism. 23

According to Soviet Marxism, the success of the Socialist revolution,
means that regulative norms of behavior, such as collectivism, internationalism,
and the dignity of labor, are dictated by proletarian morality. Lenin asserted that
genuine morality is everything that promotes the ultimate triumph of
Communism. "Morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to
unite all toiling people around the proletariat, which is building a new society of communists."\textsuperscript{24} This formula was ideal for Soviet politicians, since any crime committed for the sake of the Communist cause could be portrayed as righteous, including denunciations of close friends and parents, and mass repression of "the enemies of the people" (for example, the moral icon for all Soviet children and adolescents was presented in the "heroic deed" of the pioneer Pavlik Morozov, who denounced his own father as an accomplice of Kulaks). The same formula, however, signified the abolition of ethics as such, which was replaced by purely political considerations. The highest ethical standard coincided with conformity to the general line of the Party, which, according to Lenin, was "the mind, honor and conscience of our epoch."

Nevertheless, philosophers in the post-Stalin period did try to elaborate some fundamentals of Marxist ethics different from mere political conformism. Under Stalin, the most frequently quoted "ethical" statement from Marx was his definition of morality as "our inner policeman," implying that conscience is imposed by the external social order. After Stalin, the emphasis shifted to another citation from Marx, asserting that Communism presupposes the observation of the "simple standards of human morality." Some of the most advanced Soviet Marxists went so far as to include some biblical commandments among these basic rules, such as "Honor thy father," and "Thou shalt not kill," of course denying their religious origin and presenting them as the manifestations of the people's wisdom. The most ambitious task for Soviet Marxist ethics was to find the dialectical connection between universal ("all-human," \textit{vsechelovecheskii}) and class values. The theory shared by the majority of Soviet ethical scholars was that the morality of the exploiting classes is antithetical to all-human morality. It is only under a Socialist or Communist system that all-human values, or "truly human morality," find adequate expression in the social behavior of people. This formula of dialectical unity of all-human and Communist morality could easily be accommodated to both the justification of existing political regimes and to the criticism of its "separate" shortcomings. On the one hand, Communist values, by definition, must contain all-human appeal and significance, which sanctifies the construction of Communism in the U.S.S.R. On the other hand, all-human values will be fully integrated only in a mature Communist society, which permits a critique of past and present conditions, the exposition of blatant deviations from all-human morality, such as cults of personality and mass repressions of innocent people.
Perhaps the only original contribution to Soviet ethics came from Iakov A. Mil'ner-Irinin, who tried to reconcile Marxist-Leninist views with the Kantian approach to ethics as a purely normative science. In 1963, the Soviet Academy of Sciences refused to publish Mil'ner-Irinin's book on ethics, claiming that it deviated from Marxist teachings, and when he succeeded in publishing an article on ethics in Georgia, it was severely attacked by official Soviet philosophers. Mil'ner-Irinin treats ethics as a normative science, distinguishing it from all other sciences, which are descriptive and relate to what exists. This postulate by itself was considered anti-Marxist, since from the standpoint of historical materialism all ethical norms reflect objectively existent social conditions. Mil'ner-Irinin also emphasizes, to the indignation of orthodox Marxists, the abstract character of ethics, whose norms can be applied to any and all historical contexts: “With regard to abstractness, ethics is akin to logic; I would describe it as the logic of human happiness.... The principles of true humanity are necessarily abstract since they can and must be applied, as the moral law, to each and every case of life without exception.... The concreteness of truth in the science of ethics consists precisely in its abstractness....” Mil'ner-Irinin argues that there can be only one science concerning what should be, namely ethics, an assertion which also contradicts the Marxist definition of "scientific Communism" as the discipline that elaborates prescriptions for the future, the rules for the revolutionary transformation of the world.

However, Mil'ner-Irinin did not intend to challenge Marxism; on the contrary, his task was to lay the foundation for a truly Marxist ethics. He discovers in Marx, not only in his early manuscripts but also in Capital, clear statements about "universal human nature" and "innate rights of man." Therefore, ethics acquires its own ground, its specific subject matter, irreducible to any social or historical dimension. An echo of early Marx is found in late Marx, who wrote "...We must know what human nature in general is, and how it undergoes modifications in each historically given epoch." Ethics concentrates on this "human nature in general," on the "development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself" as "a constant premise of human history."

Mil'ner-Irinin distinguishes between two Marxist definitions of human essence: first, man as a social, tool-making animal, and then, man as a creatively transforming and revolutionary being. The first definition is materialistic, the second, idealistic, though not in a way that contradicts scientific materialism. Materialism is scientific in its description of the human essence as it is, whereas ethics is scientific in its attempt to prescribe the ideal goals of human existence.
Ethics, therefore, can be constructed on a properly materialist basis, since it demonstrates the way of transformation of what really is to what ideally should be. In the primitive stages of history, the spiritual aspect of human life is subordinated to material needs and limitations, but in the course of history, the material aspect becomes increasingly dependent on the ideal contents of life: "...in the world of communism the material aspect of life is only the shell of its high ideal (spiritual) content."28

From this point of view, communism is "what should be," a Kantian world of absolute norms and "ends in themselves"; thus Mil'ner-Irinin inadvertently highlights the Kantian subtexts of Marxist theory. These elements of transcendental, anthropological idealism are the byproduct of Marx's attempt to abandon the objective idealism of Hegel. Indeed, if the Absolute Idea is eliminated as the cause of the historical process, then ideals are relegated to the teleological dimension of history, to the future kingdom of communism, a realm of absolute ethical norms and prescriptions. To a certain degree, by turning the Hegelian system from its head to its feet, from idea to matter as a foundational principle, Marx reinstates the Kantian dimension of the ideal, which is expelled from the objective world in order to constitute the world of human goals, of collective subjectivity. That is why almost all attempts to reinstate the meaning of spirituality on the basis of Marxist historical materialism inevitably lead to Kantian revisions of Marxism, as can be seen, for example, in Russian Machism and Empirio-monism of the early 20th century (Bogdanov, Lunacharsky), which defended the value of collectivist subjectivity and its voluntarist formation of the future, even in the form of "God building," the anthropological religion condemned by Lenin. Contrary to what Lenin believed, Kantian revisions of Marxism do not necessarily deny materialism as the foundation of human knowledge and spirituality, but add a new dimension of moral norms and goals. Mil'ner-Irinin employs this teleological potential hidden in Marxist theory by arguing that materialist ethics proceeds from the fact of human materiality (tool-making animal), and ascends to the level of ultimate goals where a human being transforms itself into a self-conscious and "ideal" entity. Mil'ner-Irinin's precedent shows that ethics, as a normative science, can easily be identified as a Kantian ingredient in Marxism, and that no Marxist ethics is possible without some Kantian extension and revision.

If Ilyenkov reinterprets Marx from a Hegelian point of view, claiming the objective social existence of ideal forms, such as the economical category of value, then Batishchev and Mil'ner-Irinin reappropriate Kantian components of Marxism,
the categories of creative activity and ethical norms. In both cases, however, the revitalization of Marxism accentuates those elements which were most hostile to orthodox Soviet Marxism, but which had been imparted to Marx's thought from his great predecessors in German Idealism. Marxism proved to be a vehicle for the transmission of those ideas which were the least Marxist in the strict sense of the term. The later development of Russian philosophy shows a gradual differentiation of these non-Marxist trends within Marxism and their increasing alienation from and opposition to Marxism, which is seen clearly in the works of Mamardashvili, who moved from a Kantian-Hegelian reinterpretation of Marxism to a criticism of Marxism as such.

REVISIONS OF ORTHODOX MARXISM IN THE GLASNOST' ERA.

With the advent of perestroika, Russian philosophers were permitted for the first time to criticize Marxism openly. Paradoxically, Marxists themselves were most eager to exploit this potential and to settle accounts with their orthodox past, while for non-Marxists the downfall of the official "diamat" meant an opportunity to express their own views publicly rather than to attack a doctrine that they had never trusted. Thus the most active critics of Marxism came from the higher ranks of Party officials, such as Alexander Iakovlev, a member of Politburo and second in command to Gorbachev, or Alexander Tsipko, a consultant of the Central Committee's international department.

This new sense of openness was fostered by Mikhail Gorbachev himself, who as early as 1986 began implicitly to contradict Marxist prescriptions; for example, he publicly attributed to Lenin an unspecified passage which read, "Human values are more important than class values." Furthermore, Iakovlev, as his closest ally and head of the Party ideological apparatus, persistently condemned all forms of Marxist scholasticism and called for a rejuvenation of the Soviet humanities and social sciences on the basis of contemporary Western methodologies.

Several lines of argumentation developed, regarding the cause of communism's failure. Critics debated whether to attribute it to the distortions of those who attempted to implement Marx's vision or to find implicit fault with Marxism itself. The first position, presented by A.Butenko, O.Latsis, Gennady Lisichkin, among others, presupposes that it was Lenin and/or Stalin who were to blame for the totalitarian drift of Marxism to traditional patterns of semi-Asiatic
despotism. In other words, more faithful applications of Marxism would have produced a different outcome. For instance, if the new economic politics (NEP) launched by Lenin had been perpetuated by Stalin, or if Bukharin had come to power instead of Stalin, then Marxist theory would have come to its fruition.

The attribution of the exact historical moment of distortion varies from argument to argument, some ascribing it to the inadequacy of the Russian assimilation of Marxism in the 1880's, others finding fault with the Bolshevik deviation from the Social Democratic movement after 1903, still others blaming an untimely and undemocratic October Revolution in 1917, which gave rise to military communism. M.P. Kapustin, for example, advanced the idea that the socialism constructed in the USSR was nothing but the crude, egalitarian, barracks-like communism unmercifully criticized by Marx himself in the 1844 Manuscripts. From this point of view, neither Stalin nor Lenin could be called authentic Marxists.

Another line of argument, proceeding from a reverence for Marxist thought, was oriented toward the construction of a revised communist future rather than to the conventional criticism of Stalin's perversions of communism. This approach is reminiscent of the spirit of Marxist revival in the 1950's. The early stage of Gorbachev’s perestroika seemed to regenerate the mentality and aspirations of Khrushchev's thaw, not only in its anti-Stalinism but also in its romantic and humanistic appeals to the legacy of early Marx and determination to build a communism with a human face. The period of five or six years after Brezhnev's death and before the Gorbachevian deconstruction of communism, which became explicit only in 1988-89, was dominated by a revisionist impetus similar to the early years of Khrushchev's leadership. Brezhnev's neo-Stalinism seemed to be a thing of the past and what was projected for the future was the promise of "genuine" communism, which, since it was opposed to the militant model of communism traditionally ascribed to Soviet Marxism, could be identified even as a doctrine of post-communism that might realize the most fundamental Marxist ideals.

The post-communist vision was presented most persuasively by Sergei Platonov (1949-86), a Soviet mathematician whose real name remains unknown. It is known that he worked in a defense-oriented research institute while attempting to enter into a dialogue with Soviet leaders in order to suggest a new theoretical view of Marxism, one that might help overcome the dead end of Brezhnevan stagnation. In 1983, General Secretary Andropov publicly proclaimed that the Soviet people had yet to define their historical and social identity, asking: Who are we and where are we going? This question provided the impetus for a theoretical search,
and Platonov was among the brightest of those who offered answers. His writings primarily took the form of letters to Party leaders, whose responses were so favorable as to suggest that Platonov's views may have influenced Gorbachev's early policies, especially as concerns New Thinking and his attitude toward the West.

Platonov's only publication, *After Communism*, was released posthumously and is a collection of his letters and unfinished fragments. A fervent believer in the Marxist cause, Platonov argues from the point of view of a man dissatisfied with the Soviet modification of Marxism. However, rather than accuse it of being a perversion of the Marxist ideal, he theorizes it as a necessary stage in the realization of Marx's vision. The basic project of Marx was the overcoming of alienation, which also implied human liberation from the laws of economical and historical determination. Thus Marxist historical materialism, proclaiming the priority of matter over consciousness and of economic conditions over ideological superstructures, is not a universal method but is related only to the pre-history of humanity, to those antagonistic formations where people function as tools of social forces that dominate them. Marx was correct in his descriptions of the laws of capitalist political economy, but those Soviet Marxists who attempt to formulate laws of socialist economics are wrong. Platonov sarcastically notes that the officially celebrated discipline "the political economics of socialism," taught in all Soviet universities, does not really exist—not because Marxists fail to elaborate it correctly, but because it is impossible in principle. The very essence of socialism presupposes the undermining of the laws of economics as the determining basis of social relationships; instead, ideology and the activity of human consciousness take priority. Hence the October revolution resulted not only in the reversal of oppressed and oppressing classes but, more importantly, in the reversal of the relationship between basis and superstructure. "By the same token, the very relation between social being and social consciousness is reversed," asserts Platonov, referring to Engels' famous statement, "People who at last become the masters of their social being become, as a result of it, the masters of themselves--free people." Thus ideology came to be the basis of historical development under socialism, since people had liberated themselves from the oppression of economical laws. According to Platonov, Marxism should now renounce its allegiance to the method of historical materialism and elaborate a new worldview that prioritizes the role of the subject in the conscious transformation of history. As he puts it, it is impossible to use the anatomy of the horse as the model for the construction of the automobile in
the same way that the knowledge of historical laws cannot be used for the construction of communism.

In full accordance with the Marxist principle of collectivism, Platonov proposes that the role of the subject belongs not to a separate individual but to the collective "subject" manifested by the ruling Party. "Thus the crux of the crux, the engine of the engines, of the mechanism of social development in the communist epoch is the conscious activity of a subject—the ruling party." Platonov summons the ruling party to throw aside all objectivist prejudices of classical determinism and to proclaim the absolute autonomy of the subject as the only determinant of future human history. He claims that this aspiration is the soul of Marxism, while economic and historical determinism was only a necessary tool for the explanation of pre-communist formations.

Platonov also criticizes the traditional Soviet assumption that communism is the telos of the Marxist project. In Marx's early manuscripts, communism appears only as a negation of capitalism, as the first stage in the creation of truly humanistic society. Public property is only a negation of private property, but is not the liberation of people from property relations as such. In Platonov's view, the genuine goal of Marxism is not the glorification of the value of labor and production, but their eventual annihilation, since they still embody the objectified, reified relations between people. "Labor is a category signifying a kind of activity under which people are connected by alienated relations, i.e. relations of production." Thus there are three grand epochs of human development: the kingdom of natural necessity (or pre-history); the kingdom of conscious necessity (the epoch of communism); and the kingdom of freedom (the epoch of humanism). Communism, as such, has no vital attraction for people, which explains why the enthusiasm for communist perspectives has been eroded in Soviet society. The point is that communism is not an end in itself, it is merely a transitional phase, a conscious self-subjection that overcomes natural law, but is not the goal for "...any competent Marxist, who knows the law of the negation of the negation, and understands that history cannot stop on communism..." Communism, as the negation of capitalism, will be negated in its turn by humanism, which will put an end to the dominance of public property as the last stage in the process of liberation from property relations. Platonov predicts that humanism will embrace all types of ownership and will create a pluralistic economy, incorporating the property of associations, territories, organizations and humanity as a whole.
Out of this pluralism comes Platonov's recommendation of a more friendly and flexible relationship with the West. He does not doubt the validity of Marx and Lenin's prediction of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, but argues that their prediction was already fulfilled in the wake of the Great Depression, after which Western society ceased being capitalist. Platonov calls the post-capitalist economic system "elitist," arguing that its basis is no longer private property as such, but property concentrated in the hands of conglomerates, such as corporations. Thus it is socialized property, though not to such a degree as under socialism. This means, first, that "elitism, as distinct from capitalism, does not contain in itself any principally insoluble economic contradiction which would fatefuly doom it to death." Secondly, this notion suggests that there is no antagonism between elitism and socialism, since they represent two varieties of social property. Thus cooperation between the Soviet system and the West is not reprehensible; on the contrary, from the Marxist point of view it is a natural step in the development of humanism.

Not only does Platonov recommend cooperation between East and West, but foresees the eventual synthesis of their socio-economic systems in a future humanist society. He traces back to ancient Greece the increasing divergence between two basic values of humanism: equality and freedom. He criticizes Hegel, for whom the inequality of individuals was a necessary condition for the growth of freedom, and praises Marx, who for the first time recognized the interdependency of freedom and equality. In Marx's famous formula, the ideal of humanism is a comprehensive, harmonious development of personality, realized through a social association in which "the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all." (128) If the value of individual freedom was fostered best in the capitalist West, it is the communist East that best embodies the ideal of equality. Under humanism, this opposition of two values is dialectically preserved and, at the same time, superseded. This contradiction "becomes the source of development for each personality and society on the whole, the identity of equality and freedom is incessantly violated and restored on a higher level..." 

Marxism, in Platonov's interpretation, becomes an argument for a very cautious and moderate theory of convergence between communism and capitalism. Though Platonov's conceptual scheme and terminology are characteristically Marxist, in essence his arguments are social-democratic; as a result, his theory approaches that of the Third Way, advocated by solidarists in the West as an alternative to both capitalism and communism. However, the rightist components of Platonov's
Marxism are paradoxically balanced with an extreme leftist faith in the crucial role of the collective subject embodied by the Communist Party, which subordinates people to its absolute will in order to liberate them from the laws of economic determinism. His theory may be regarded as an act of despair, since his competing intuitions lead him to adopt two radical and antagonistic platforms of reform: to recognize the reality of the West and to promote the voluntarism of the Party. It is rare to encounter contradiction in such a pure and blatant form; in the case of Platonov it demonstrates how the leftist and rightist components of Marxism are incommensurable, though they pretend to comprise a coherent ideological unity.

Platonov represents one variant of the late Soviet disillusionment with communism. Another revisionist project focuses on the disclosure of the internal contradictions within Marxism itself, attempting to distinguish its outmoded aspects from those that remain valid for the future. According to such authors as I. Pantin, K. Plimak, V. Pechenev, G.A. Bagaturia, the method of dialectical materialism is still valuable, especially as regards its application to the analysis of history. However, the social and political views of Marx, including his advocation of revolution and communism, have not withstood the test of time. The majority of these authors regard the inconsistency of Marx's theories not so much as a weakness but as a part of its inner dynamics and a potential source for creative innovation. For example, historical materialism allows one to explain why the ideal of communism could not be realized in such an economically undeveloped country as Russia. Even more, it accounts for the utopianism of the entire communist project, since the laws of historical determinism are not conducive to the intended leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. Thus this line of revisionism proposes to criticize Marxism on behalf of Marxism itself, which leads to rather ambivalent results, since the more wrong Marx was as a communist, the more correct he was as a materialist.

All three of the revisionist lines of argumentation have in common an attempt to retain the vitality of Marxism as a relevant, if not absolutely efficient, cure for the diseases of the Soviet social system. In the first case, Marxism is rescued from the perversions of his successors and restored to its infallible purity. In the second, Marxism is confirmed for its historical insights, although history has moved beyond the horizon of its fulfilled predictions, making some of its methodologies, such as historical materialism, applicable only to the past; however, Marx's humanist aspirations are now more relevant than ever. In the third case, Marx's legacy is evaluated in a piecemeal fashion, and various elements are confirmed or
rejected in their own right. To summarize, these three comprise a spectrum of approval, ranging from total acceptance to historically relative justification to the discrimination between correct and incorrect components of Marx's teachings.

Though the revisionist lines of criticism prevailed in the early stages of perestroika, the critique that eventually won out over all others proved to be the most radical in its merciless rejection of Marxism's entire premise. Marxism came increasingly to be seen as the true culprit in all of the crimes of the 20th century, including both communism and fascism (which arose as an extremist reaction to communism's extremes). Such a reversal of values is typical of the Russian ideological imagination, which often makes recourse to a binary evaluative model. No middle ground is possible; if, in the past, Marxism was lauded as the way to the promised land, now it must appear as a satanic ruse.

THE SELF-DESTRUCTION OF SOVIET MARXISM. ALEXANDER IAKOVLEV.

This radical line of critique was prepared, initially, by the criticisms leveled at the Stalinist perversion of Marxism; but with time, critics became increasingly concerned with earlier, Leninist, stages of the Russian revolution, until, in the final analysis, critical attention was turned to Marxism itself. In this last stage, the very core of Marxist philosophy was attacked as the cause of the subsequent inadequacies and self-destructive tendencies of the Soviet socio-economic and political systems. According to this radical view, Russia is not to be blamed for the distortion of Marxism, but Marxism itself must be seen as culpable for Russia's misfortunes, as well as for the sufferings of many other nations in the 20th century. This radical anti-Marxism, which arose in the later period of perestroika, presupposed that Stalin and Lenin did not deviate from Marx, but were genuine Marxists who therefore had no choice but to institute communism through violence and dictatorship. Paradoxically, this point of view is very close to official Party propaganda, which defended the truly Marxist origin of the Soviet regime as it was traced through Lenin and his inheritors. However, this radical critique came to the opposite conclusion about Marxism itself, condemning the ideology for the subsequent crimes and atrocities committed by the State.

The most well-known proponents of this line of argumentation came from the most powerful circles of the Party hierarchy. Alexander Iakovlev, who was the head of the ideological department of the Communist Party's Central Committee under Brezhnev and a member of the Politbureau under Gorbachev, was instrumental in
determining the ideological policy of perestroika and glasnost. In 1992, after his retirement, he published a book which explicated those anti-Marxist views which had led gradually, under the author's political leadership, to the destruction of Soviet communism. To a certain degree, this criticism utilizes numerous arguments elaborated by Western anti-Marxists for more than a hundred years. Though Iakovlev's ideas are not very original in themselves, they are important inasmuch as they led to the practical deconstruction of Marxism as a ruling ideology of a world superpower. No one else's anti-Marxist arguments, however philosophically coherent and persuasive they might have been, precipitated such radical reforms.

Iakovlev rejects the scientific claims of Marxism, arguing that, from the very start, its tragedy was its aversion to any dialogue, its principles being grounded in unshakable, monological "truths." Furthermore, although its postulates ostensibly are based on dialectics, it gives a simplistic interpretation of the category of contradiction, underestimating the unity of opposites. "According to Marx, any class exists only through its antagonism with another class. There are only exploited and exploiting classes. They are determined by opposition or conflict of interest. This thesis is basically incorrect. The opposition is not necessarily a conflict or contradiction. There exists a harmony of opposites, a collaboration and solidarity among classes. And only because of this, society lives and develops. Every organization is a harmonic collaboration. Each division of labor is a mutual complement of different and opposing functions."36

Along with dialectics, Iakovlev criticizes the other pillar of Marxist philosophy, materialism, by resorting to information theory. "Both materialists and idealists are equally right and wrong because matter and spirit are secondary, while information is primary."37 For Iakovlev, matter is the energetic resource of the informational process, while spirit is information in its most complexly organized form. All levels of what Marx considered to be materiality, from the elementary particle to human society, are interpreted by Iakovlev as informational systems. History, therefore, is a process of the evolution and accumulation of information, not the succession of material modes of production.

Another informational concept used by Iakovlev is "feedback," which presupposes the interaction and interdependency of all elements within a system. The Marxist distinction between basis and superstructure, with its emphasis on the former's determining role, fails to recognize the importance of feedback. In the complicated informational system that constitutes a society, the privileging of any
single component as foundational or determining is a dubious philosophical move. Marx derived human progress solely from the growth of material means of production, but all of these, from the hammer to the computer, are products of the human imagination, which can not be discounted as a decisive factor in history. Historical materialism cannot, in Iakovlev's view, provide an explanation of such different cultural monuments as the Egyptian Sphinx or the Greek Parthenon merely on the grounds of their having been built by slaves, which is the traditional Marxist conception.

Iakovlev's critique does not limit itself to the legacy of later Marx, with its primarily economic interest, but also opposes the humanist Marx of the 1844-46 manuscripts, which were used in the 1950's to revitalize the spirit of communism. His main target is the Marxist idea of a human "species nature," which is opposed to "contingent," or empirical, man--the individual. Marx argues that species nature is not an abstract quintessence of humanness present in each separate person, but is the "integrity of social relationships." In Iakovlev's view, this emphasis on the generic essence of man, which will eventually be realized in the ideal society, reduces the discrete individual to an auxiliary tool for the implementation of a social utopia. The theory of species nature is more readily applicable to collectivist insects than to human beings, whose center of self-determination is individual as opposed to generic.38 For Iakovlev, all the social forms that Marx identifies as distorted modes of human self-alienation--private property, the monogamic family, and religious belief--are the necessary manifestations of human individuality, which requires economic, biological, and spiritual forms of intimacy and privacy that cannot be reduced to a collectivist mode of being. Hence the Marxist categories of alienated behavior conceived of as historical perversions of the human essence pertain only when that essence is postulated as a collectivist totality of social relationships. From a liberal perspective (such as Iakovlev tries to outline), these same categories constitute necessary expressions of human nature, making socialist collectivism the most devastating form of alienation known to history.

In Iakovlev's view, all of Marx's theoretical errors derive from his faulty essentialism, which opposes essence to phenomenon. Marx's "initial conviction that appearance is not very essential, that one should not trust what one sees and what is near, contains the premise for the reduction of reality, of life as it is."39 Marx's essentialism has two aspects, theoretical and practical. From a theoretical standpoint, Marx postulates an essential human nature behind the empirical life of society. This hermeneutics of suspicion leads him to proclaim that the historically
given social order is a perversion of humanity’s true *telos* and so should be overthrown. Hence Marx’s practical essentialism calls for a world revolution, which will destroy the false phenomena and give full expression to the previously alienated essence of humanity. One could conclude that capitalist society does not alienate humans from their generic essence, but that it is Marx’s theory itself that abstracts and alienates human essence from existing society and postulates its realization only in a distant, utopian future. Iakovlev blames Marx primarily for taking for granted Hegel’s theory of the essential self-alienation of Absolute Spirit and its progressive historical self-realization. Having inherited Hegelian essentialism, then interpreting it in economic terms, Marx attempted to accelerate history’s self-realization by violent force, but ended up intensifying rather than alleviating alienation itself.

Iakovlev’s radical criticism of Marxism found several supporters among former dedicated communist ideologists, such as Alexander Tsipko, who was the first, among official Marxists, to publish attacks on Marxism as the theoretical foundation of Soviet totalitarianism. Tsipko emphasizes the self-contradictory character of Marxism, which proclaims the objectively ineluctable laws of history and simultaneously prescribes a means of altering the historical process. "On the one hand, Marx can be regarded as a materialist in his understanding of history, as an enemy of voluntarism, of the external volitional intrusion into the natural course of events. /../ But on the other hand, there is very strong presence of German transcendental idealism in the Marxist understanding of life and history, including the conviction that a self-conscious ‘I’ creates the world. Already in their *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels paid attention to this primordial, organic link between the Fichtean doctrine of ‘I,’ of ‘impetus’ and the communist teaching. ...The communist Marx and Engels converted this Fichtean impetus, the doctrine of the creative self-consciousness, into the idea of revolution, of constructive violence which creates the world. /../This contradiction between the materialist and the idealist, transcendental components penetrates all aspects of Marx’s teachings, without exception." Tsipko further argues that Marxism is not a move from utopian to scientific socialism, as was proclaimed by Engels, but is an explosive mixture of science and utopia by which abstract ideals are disguised in scientific concepts in order that they may be practically enforced.

To summarize, the following aspects of Marxism were prevalently subjected to interrogation during the period of glasnost. First of all, Marx was accused of misunderstanding human nature, especially insofar as private property was
concerned. According to this line of argumentation, private property is a necessary institution that provides individuals with a sense of security and freedom as it protects them from the oppression of an authoritarian state. Certainly, this critique was new only for Soviet citizens—already in the 1850's, French socialist Pierre Proudhon warned Marx that the abolition of economic competition would lead inevitably to the seizure of absolute power by the central organs of the commune. Secondly, Marx was criticized for underestimating the potency of the capitalist system, since he identified it merely as a stage inevitably superseded by communism and failed to account for its dynamism and mutability. Marx derived his understanding of capitalism from a model constructed during the first decades of the nineteenth century, which was based on a purely anarchic conception of free enterprise. Thus he remained blind to the possibility of the marriage of a market economy with governmental regulatory mechanisms and continued to oppose all forms of private economic initiative as antagonistic to his vision of an absolutely rational communist society. Even in the face of later historical developments in the nineteenth century, which suggested that elements of a planned and rational socialist system might be beneficially integrated into a capitalist mode of production without resorting to revolutionary upheaval, Marx remained faithful to his original plan for a proletarian war against the bourgeois order. Thirdly, critics argued that Marx's "internationalist" tendency failed to predict the rise of nationalism that characterized twentieth century world politics and which eventually led within the Soviet Union to the atomization of the integrated communal state into distinct sovereign national entities. In a similar vein, Marx was seen as having exaggerated the crucial role of class consciousness and underestimating other modes of identity, such as racial, familial, regional, professional, sexual, etc. A fourth line of criticism focused upon the Marxist neglect of the moral and spiritual aspects of human life in favor of a purely materialist model, which resulted in the deterioration of homo soveticus into an increasingly apathetic and parasitical being. The overall conclusion of these various polemics was that Marxism, in spite of its scientific claims, was nevertheless a utopian project that failed to address the practical aspects of orchestrating a national economy and building a healthy, productive society, instead offering only condemnations of capitalist shortcomings and abstract visions of a deferred paradise.
Despite the comprehensive critique offered in the wake of perestroika, Marxism has not been fully undermined and still finds several fervent supporters who propose a revisionary reading of Marxist philosophy in terms of its spiritual profundity and eschatological promises. For this new generation of intellectuals, Marx is a prophet of human self-salvation. They read Marxist philosophy as a religion of immanence which assimilates the best features of previous religious systems, such as the formulation of the highest goals of humanity and the mobilization of spiritual power toward the attainment of these goals.

One prominent member of this movement, Sergei Kurginian, received considerable attention for his close affiliation with the later Gorbachevian, conservative, pro-communist government, and co-authored a book called *Postperestroika* in which he develops the notion of communism as the religion of the future. To quote a popular Russian magazine: "Sergei Kurginian is a mysterious personality. The director of the 'On the Boards' theater, an associate of the Memory and Interfront movements, the last mystical hope of neo-Bolsheviks, the savior of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the theoretician of communism as a new religion, the head of the enigmatic corporation, 'Experimental Creative Center'..."42

*Postperestroika* served as a manifesto of the conservative forces dissatisfied with Gorbachev's Westernizing and liberal tendencies and aspiring for the restoration of the country's communist orientation. But since the economic and ideological resources of the Soviet model were exhausted, the communist project needed a radical revision that would revitalize its spiritual appeal. The religious origins and eschatological claims of communism, which seemed to be superseded forever by its Marxist "scientific" and "atheistic" interpretation, now move to the forefront, making it once again a doctrine of Salvation. "We regard communism not only as a theory but as a new metaphysics which leads to the creation of a new, global religious teaching... It contains many fundamental features vitally important for civilization, features of a new world religion with its own saints and martyrs, apostles and creed. ...Among the indisputable predecessors of communism we identify Isaiah and Jesus, Buddha and Lao Tse, Confucius and Socrates... [...] Today there is no alternative to the communist meta-religion which would be spiritually commensurable with the power of communist ideas." 43 From this standpoint, the abandonment of communism in the USSR is a global catastrophe, tantamount to the crucifixion of Christ. All of the highest values that make life meaningful -- brotherhood, freedom, justice -- that the
Christian Church and then the French Revolution failed to implement, were later inherited by Russian communism. With the extinction of this last heroic impulse in history, nothing is left to humanity in the 21st century but a purely animal existence, which will take the form of either dull bourgeois consumerism or the fascist exaltation of the man-beast. "...The entire brilliance and appeal of the red ideal was in its spiritual power, in its ability to oppose and challenge death, to give a tragic fullness to life and a tragic significance to the fact that life's end does not cut short the thread of the common cause and becomes just another step leading to the temple which embraces all humanity." Kurginian's ideal is "a red monastery" where people accomplish technological and simultaneously spiritual breakthroughs, selflessly devote themselves to exhausting labor for the sake of society.

In his later works, Kurginian states more precisely the reason for his dissatisfaction with classical Marxism, accusing it of being too closely connected with the positivistic and bourgeois-materialistic trends of the 19th century. Just as the Theory of Relativity does not undermine Newton's Laws, but incorporates them into a larger scientific framework, classical Marxism needs its own Einstein who will reestablish communist theory on firmer ground than materialism. The main deficiency of Marxist theory is its reduction of the spiritual essence of communism to economic determinants. Marx was right in his relentless denouncement of traditional humanism's liberal illusions, but his theories failed to provide a suprahumanistic project that might give religious impetus to communist struggles and strivings.

The history of the Russian communist party, as founded by Lenin and shaped by Stalin, reveals this inherent deficiency of the Marxist project, since the party was built as a monastic order, but one lacking any religious goals that would justify its holy aura and hierarchical structure. "The contradiction between the theocratical structure of power and the defectiveness of the spiritual political center" led to the victory of a "Party clan, the clan of an intellectually castrated and spiritually destitute pseudo-priesthood." This criticism of the false theocracy of Soviet communism goes along with Kurginian's enthusiasm for a "true" theocracy, based on communism as a "global religion." In his view, the shortsightedness of Soviet rulers distorted the perspective of a worldwide theocracy, although its organizational structures were already in place. The links of comradeship, the imperatives of self-sacrifice, the absolute devotion to a common cause, the subordination of personality to the party—all of these formal attributes of a religious order lacked any organic connection with the Party's Marxist program, which pursued material productivity and prosperity.
That is how the party degenerated in Brezhnev's, and especially Gorbachev's, time: it finally surrendered to the ideology of consumption. Kurginian attributes the failure of the communist idea in its Marxist conception not merely to the subjective betrayals of late Soviet leaders, but even more to the basic deficiencies of its original materialist doctrine. If the ultimate goal of humanity is prosperity, then communism, which promised the shortest route to maximum production, must logically be abandoned as soon as it reveals its inferiority to the capitalist mode of production; this is what happened in the wake of perestroika, which led to the disintegration of the communist superpower.

Communism, however, as Kurginian conceives it, opposes itself to materialism. In his redefinition of the communist project, Kurginian wants first of all to articulate that communism and capitalism are not two successive stages in the linear progress of humanity, but should be viewed as two independent and concurrent systems which developed from ancient times, one prevailing in the East, the other in the West. The progressive dimension of history involves the transition from primitive hunter-gatherer to agrarian societies and beyond to industrial and post-industrial models, but within each stage, one finds the coexistence of communist and capitalist types of property. Capitalism was based on the right to private ownership, whereas communism promoted state and social forms of property; the economic effectiveness of both models is confirmed by the history of civilization. Furthermore, the current tendencies of post-industrial development underscore the value of planned organization and state regulation of economic life, which, in Kurginian's view, allows Eastern countries to compete successfully with the West in supertechnological markets. Even more importantly, communism is superior to capitalism in its moral and spiritual potentials, since the well-being of society replaces the egoistical profit motive. According to one of Kurginian's prophecies, "In the near future, the communitarian, non-traditional principle will dominate in the sphere of production. This means that communism will begin to triumph on a worldwide scale. The market will shrivel up, giving way to a programmatic-projective organization of production." Curiously, this prediction was made one week before the attempted coup in August of 1991, which led to the ultimate demise of Soviet communism. However, the defeat of "red" communism, based on Marxist theory, signifies for Kurginian only the failure of its classical model and the beginning of its transformation into "white" communism, which unites all mystical forces of light in its struggle against the forces of darkness.
One period in the history of Russian communism, which Kurginian regards as a missed opportunity for a religious revival, was the "God-builders" movement in the Bolshevist faction of the Social Democratic Party (1906-13). God-builders, like Lunacharsky, Bazarov, and Maxim Gorky, interpreted Marxism as a new world religion, as a means to a superior organization of humanity's collective will. They insisted that, unlike previous religions, which worshipped transcendental deities discovered through supernatural revelation and preserved by a church, the communist "religion" would create or "build" its own deity. The God-builders criticized orthodox Marxist materialism, defended by the Menshevik leader, Plekhanov, and attempted to derive a communist theology and teleology from the notion of "collectivist subjectivity," as opposed to the materialist emphasis on objective reality. In this philosophical dispute, Lenin unexpectedly turned against his political allies and supported Plekhanov, which later led to the persistent condemnation of God-builders in official Soviet ideology. Kurginian professes his adherence to this aborted program of the reunification of communism and religion. He opposes communism, as a mystical doctrine, to the profane humanism of socialism, which merely attempts to extend capitalist comfort to a broader population. For Kurginian, communism is much closer to eschatological visions found in Richard Wagner and in the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, in the "mystical pragmatism" of Andrei Bely and Andrei Platonov. According to this view, a human being is only one of the participants in an all-encompassing cosmic drama, where gods and people, living and dead, are fighting together against the forces of evil. However, Kurginian identifies two versions of this mystical dualism: one where the final triumph of Light is predetermined by Providence or a Supreme Being; and another, where only the activity of people can determine the fate of the universe. Communism is founded on the second viewpoint, and that is why it requires an extreme concentration of all human spiritual resources in their unification against the forces of darkness.

Kurginian does not explicate sufficiently how these poles of light and darkness are distributed in the contemporary world; but he makes it clear that evil is concentrated in the hedonism of Western civilization, while good is associated with the moral values of communism, which dominate the Eurasian mentality. By Eurasia, Kurginian understands the unique synthesis of Orthodox Christian and Islamic nations, which geographically coincides with the territory of the Soviet Union and its European and Asian satellites, and spiritually is led by Russia. Russia is destined to inspire and organize all the creative and cultural forces in humanity,
which resist the expansion of chaos and destruction represented by the atomistic individualism of consumer society. "...[T]he ongoing war is an ontological war, the war of a cultural hero with a Serpent, cosmos against chaos, the state against the horde." Kurginian is sarcastic about the reformist platform of Russian democrats, which presupposes the formation of a market economy and the emergence of a middle class of businessmen, managers and entrepreneurs. In Kurginian’s view, Russia will never be a land of capitalists, but it is also not destined to be the land of the proletariat, as Lenin predicted, or a land of peasants, as Slavophiles imagine. Essentially, Russia is the country of warriors, and since the contemporary world gives rise to an unprecedented scale of commercial, technological, financial and informational wars, the Russian warrior can become a manager, a scientist, or a businessman without losing his military identity. This is not simple aggressive militarism, but "the theology of struggle," a struggle that is waged by the providential forces of Light against Darkness. Marxists, Slavophiles and Westernized Democrats misunderstand the Russian spiritual identity and interpret it in economic terms. But Russia, from the very start, "experienced a need for an idea with global-messianic potential capable of unifying Eurasia. She found this in communism. The categories of Russian quality of life can be 'competition, victory and feast,' maybe even 'prestige,' but never prosperity and tranquility... Russia has always lived and will live in accordance with a project of mobilization... Russia will always profess, in any form and at any occasion, to its religion of intense struggle between Light and Dark; that is the theology of struggle. It will always oppose itself to hedonism, the cult of luxury... The primary category for Russia will be sanctity, not satiety. If she is tempted by satiety, Russia loses everything, including the daily bread. [...] However paradoxical it may sound, today to be realist means to be a mystic and metaphysician[...]. The red field, Communist eschatology and Communist mysticism existed, exist and will exist in Russia and, most probably, these ideas... will find their place within Eurasian expanses, merging with Orthodox, Sufic, Buddhist, and possibly, Catholic mysticism. [...] Communism has nothing in common with socialism, though they [people] connect them. Communism is mystical and theist, whereas socialism is profane, hedonistic and bears a tediously secular character." Kurginian’s mystical communism has much in common with the famous Eurasian theory elaborated by Russian political emigrants, such as Nikolai Trubetskoi and Lev Karsavin, in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. Almost all of the basic
elements of their conception are adopted by Kurginian: the spiritual superiority of Eurasia over the West; the historical and geographical unity of Russian and Turkish peoples as constitutive of Eurasian identity; the subordination of the individual to the 'symphonic personality' of the nation; the coexistence and integration of Orthodox Christianity and communism; and the determining role of an ideocratic State, organizing all aspects of public life and dominating in both spiritual and ideological spheres. However, Kurginian prefers not to associate himself with Eurasianists, thereby distinguishing himself from the extremes of the contemporary Russian right, which is also inspired by the Eurasian legacy. For Eurasianists, communism was only a transitory ideological and social phenomenon, which in the final analysis had to be incorporated by the long-standing spiritual traditions of Eurasia, whereas for Kurginian, communism appears to be an eschatological perspective for the entirety of humanity, which is to be supported by the cultural and religious legacies of Eurasia, and above all by the traditions of communal property and collectivist morality. He does not subordinate communism to Eurasianism; on the contrary, he attempts to inscribe Eurasian geopolitical unity into the strategy of militant, eschatological communism. Kurginian's worldview is neither evolutionary nor revolutionary, but rather catastrophic and apocalyptic since it assumes that the contemporary world is on the brink of collapse and that the only means to rescue it from chaos is in the dissemination of communist ideals throughout the world and Russia's renewed assertion of its communist identity.

Unlike Eurasianists, Kurginian is extremely eclectic in his religious orientations: Orthodox Christianity, ancient Russian paganism, Islam, anthroposophy, Fyodorov's doctrine of "Common Cause," Nietzsche's vision of Superman, and Bogdanov's collective voluntarism and God-building are equally acceptable for him insofar as they all inspire a communist unification of humanity. The common denominator of all these religious and quasi-religious systems could be identified as Zoroastrianism or Manichaeism, the dualist religion of struggle between Light and Darkness. Those Manichean tendencies that some critics find in Marxism's concept of class struggle are fully realized in Kurginian's revision of communism as a dualistic religion of Light.

Kurginian's ideas are also eclectic from a philosophical or merely logical point of view. On the one hand, he recognizes capitalism as an equally valid model of economic development; on the other hand, he condemns it as a force of evil which should be vanquished. One of his favorite ideas is a "cognitariat" (the same linguistic model as in "proletariat") -- a consolidation of all scientific, technological and
intellectual resources of the nation into one huge enterprise, which will produce the
greatest proportion of national wealth -- something like Moore's Utopia or Hesse's
Castalia, based on the most refined computer technologies. At the same time, the
value of knowledge for Kurginian is subordinated to the imperatives of universal
struggle and religious exaltation of collectivism which, as Soviet experience
witnesses, is destructive for the pursuit of objective and effective knowledge.

It is precisely this eclecticism that makes Kurginian's views so representative of
the post-Soviet intellectual atmosphere. As easily as under "Marxism," one could
situate Kurginian's project under the category of "esoterism," or "radical
traditionalism," or "the philosophy of national spirit." In fact, it incorporates all these
components and can be generally categorized as "messianic Eurasian communism" or
"Russian eschatological post-communism." The unifying thread linking all of these
teachings is their catastrophic and messianic character: the devastating experience of
the complete dissolution of the Russian imperial identity requires the rupture of the
course of history by the revitalization of the forces of national eschatological
destination. What makes Kurginian distinct within this rather conventional
paradigm of catastrophic consciousness is his emphasis on "communism after
communism," which is somewhat similar to the model of "life after death"
elaborated within religious teachings.

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In the course of Marxism's evolution in the period under consideration, with
the unlikely combination of Stalin and Kurginian marking its boundaries, one can
identify two basic tendencies. The first moves towards Marxism's "humanization"
and attempts to combine Marxist historical determinism with "human values"; in
the end, it comes to understand the incompatibility of the two doctrines and develops
into the criticism of Marxism from a humanist point of view. This tendency begins in
the mid-50's with the discovery of Marx's early writings and results, at the end of the
80's, in the dismantling of Marxism by Party leaders, the initiators of perestroika, such
as Gorbachev and Iakovlev. The second tendency, which moves towards the
"nationalization" of Marxism, begins with Stalin's work on linguistics and
culminates with the consolidation of communist and "Eurasian" doctrines as
embodied in Kurginian's "mystical communism" and numerous other extreme right
movements.
It is significant that the aspect of Marxism which was most appealing to Western scholars, its emphasis on historical and economic conditions of society as structural determinants of human consciousness, proved to be equally alien to both vectors of Soviet Marxism. From the humanist point of view, Marxism is indeed economic determinism, but that is why it should ultimately be rejected as the prison of spirit and the dead-end of history. From the nationalist point of view, Marxism is acceptable as a mystical and moral doctrine promoting social unity and collectivist ideals which inspire Russian people (or Eurasian peoples) to adopt a messianic role for the salvation of the entire world. Although humanist and nationalist approaches seem antithetical, together they comprise the specificity of the Russian (both Soviet and post-Soviet) reception of Marxism. Marxism is either condemned for its soulless materialism or extolled for its messianic spiritualism. These two approaches differ in their identification of Marxism as a primarily materialistic or religious teaching but are unanimous in their evaluation of the materialist and determinist components of Marxism as "bad" and the spiritual and moral components as "good." The third approach, characteristic of Western Marxists, such as Lukacs, Althusser and Jameson, founds itself on a structuralist and post-structuralist interpretation of Marxist determinism, which is identified as "good" in contradistinction to the ideological illusions and utopianism of "false consciousness."

Hence, contemporary polemics on Marx's legacy in Russia mostly focus on the problem of defining Marxism in terms of either its materialist or salvationist potentials, and the acceptance or rejection of Marxism as a whole is based on these definitions. The Leninist modification of Marxism heavily influences the contemporary debates, since it was Lenin who strongly emphasized the materialist and objectivist components of Marxism in his philosophical theory of "reflection" and at the same time stressed the subjectivist and activist components in his revolutionary practice. This duality of Marxist doctrine, which was only theoretically problematized within Western Marxism, in Russia is now manifest in the most exaggerated form as the political antagonism between anti-communist humanists and pro-communist national-socialists.

This work was originally written as a series of 5 letters, published in the newspaper Pravda from June 20 to August 2, 1950.


This essay first published as a chapter in A Concise Course of History of All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), 1936 became the most authoritative ideological source for all fields of knowledge in Stalin's time. Though the book was anonymous, the general presumption was - and continues to be - that the philosophical chapter was written by Stalin himself.

If we recall that young Stalin studied for several years in a Georgian Orthodox seminary and that the founder of negative (apophatic) theology, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, was, according to some latest findings, a Georgian, an analogy between negative theological approach to Logos and Stalin's negative philosophy of language would seem less arbitrary.

Published in Pravda on 3 and 4 October, 1952. Stalin died on March 5, 1953.


The Marx-Engels Reader, 107.


This is almost literal repetition of famous Marx's demand to "conceive human activity itself as objective activity." (The Marx-Engels Reader, 107).


We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and forever immutable ethical law on the pretext that the moral world, too, has its permanent principles which stand above history.


25 For the first time Mil'ner-Irinin's views could be exposed for Russian readers in Voprosy filosofii, 1987, no.5, with a cautious reservation that the Editorial Board "does not share a number of the author's positions, and above all his treatment of ethics as a strictly normative science." Soviet Studies in Philosophy. Summer 1988, vol.27, no.1, 6.


27 Ibid., 16.

28 Ibid., 24.

29 For a classification of these positions in the perestroika's discussions of the fates of Marxism see E.N.Moshchelkov. Sovremennye diskussii o kommunisticheskoi teorii K.Marksa i F.Engelsa. Spetskurs MGU press, 1991.


31 Ibid., 78.

32 Ibid., 70.

33 Ibid., 66.

34 Ibid., 142.

35 Ibid., 130.


37 Ibid., p.54.

38 See ibid., 75.

39 Ibid., p.68.

40 Iakovlev as the chief Party ideologist had to conceal his views in order to implement them more successfully on the political scene, thus his criticism of Marxism was publicized a year or two later than that of Tsipko's, though the latter, in his introduction to Iakovlev's book, recognizes his indebtedness to Iakovlev. "The time has arrived to say that Marxism was from the very beginning Utopian and erroneous" - these were the words with which Iakovlev in the autumn of 1988 met Tsipko, who came to work under his guidance in the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Iakovlev, op.cit., p.5). Tsipko emphasizes that in Iakovlev's book "for the first time a Soviet scholar in Russia has written truth about Marxism and has told about the catastrophic consequences of the practical application of this doctrine (ibid., p.3).


movement of Russian chauvinists; "Interfront" - organizations of Russian patriots in non-Russian republics of the former USSR. This Center was actually a kind of think-tank for those pro-communist forces in Gorbachev's government, like Prime Minister Pavlov and the head of the KGB, Kriuchkov, who organized the failed putsch of August, 1991 and attempted to preserve the political unity of the Soviet Union as a communist superpower. Even after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Center remains influential among the movement of the so-called "spiritual opposition" to Yeltsin's reforms, a category which unites nationalist and neo-communist factions. The mouthpiece of this movement was the daily newspaper *Den'. Gazeta dukhovnoi oppozitsii* (after October 1993 renamed *Zavtra*) edited by the famous ideologist of the new right Aleksandr Prokhanov. See the section on Radical Traditionalism.

44 Ibid., 59.
47 Ibid., 331.
49 Ibid., v.3, 228, 226-227, 217, 201.