

MARXISM, CULTURE OF ECONOMIC VIEWS AND IDEAS, AND TRADE UNION IDEOLOGY

It's evident for me as the person, who has been heading the biggest, on the global scale, national trade union center, that Karl Marx's ideas had a great impact on the growth of economic and social self-awareness of the international and Russian trade union movement. And the farther we are from the times of the industrial society, to which the main works of the classical author are dedicated, the more new features are brought in by the post-industrial society, the more we need to clearly, logically comprehend these innovations in fine details, and they are capable to confuse not only public and political figures but also serious theoreticians and thinkers of the modern times.

Recently, I've been hearing several ideas interpreted in various ways from my foreign colleagues and sometimes from social partners as well: employers and representatives of the state. Their essence can be narrowed down as follows:

- the Marxist ideas are hopelessly outdated, Capitalism of the industrial society exists as an anachronism. The modern capital is filled with other meanings, the financial capital ruling on the market has ripened besides the industrial capital. The financial capital's power over labour is of a different nature, it is hardly interested in surplus value, it makes profit on financial markets. Monetary reference points' separation from the golden equivalent broke the former dependencies and laws, because of that the Marx's theory cannot be applied;

- the post-industrial capital contains new component parts that do not allow to treat it from the point of view of the classical economic theory. It includes intellectual property besides the material and financial components, i.e. a part of the "human capital". The economy of knowledge and innovations overturn reasoning and arguments from the industrial past. Machine production without people in the near future will lead us to refusal from hired labour and replace social production with automated production. Synthesis of food and everything required for human existence will start. If some human biological requirements are

preserved and not satisfied, it will be possible to solve the problem by transhumanists' methods, i.e. combining the human body with machine elements (artificial organs, etc.);

- the property right to labour is no longer an issue of pressing concern as well as any other private property. Private property is not required in the system where the economy of joint consumption (use) rules. An individual freed from concerns about buying and servicing property (his house, car, bicycle, furniture or clothes) will be really free. Being provided with the universal basic income, he will stay an active economic consumer and will practically find himself in a Communist society.

This reasoning reminds pictures from Nikolay Nosov's fairytale novel "Dunno on the Moon", where the author described in detail various aspects of "Moon Capitalism".

I have to remind several simple truths in this connection.

Russian trade unions as economic organizations fighting for the rights of hired workers originated and were legally established on the wave of revolutionary events in 1905, absorbing the Marxist ideology to a large extent. Mass setting up of territorial associations of Russian trade union organizations that took place under the impact of the Russian revolution of 1917, reflected expectations and hopes of hired workers to liberate labour from oppression by capital. The ideas of building just social-labour relations, direct participation of workers in the processes of cardinal renewal of social and production relations, including with the help of trade unions, are based on Marx's social thoughts to a large extent. Marx's ideas were already doubted at that time as built on reasoning and arguments referred to the first battle for workers' rights that started in England in 1842, however, Marxism held its ground.

Why is Marxism attractive? In my opinion, Marx created an orderly, well-composed and still up-to-date theory, describing the laws of capitalist economic system's functioning and development. He showed that capitalist production, the aim of which is money accumulation, getting profits, absolutely logically flows out

of common commodity production, the aim of which is consumption and where money is just an intermediary in the exchange. He deduced the first and the second laws of capitalism, not disproved till now. Marx managed to systematically reveal the meaning, contents and role of such a specific phenomenon as “labour force”, step by step, starting from his early works and ending with *Capital*. Marx singled out and scrupulously researched “surplus value” as an independent economic phenomenon. Marx illustratively explained the source and nature of profit on capital with the help of this notion as well as various forms of exploitation of workers and worded the main contradiction of labour and capital.

The Marxist-Leninist theory was especially actively criticized when the Socialist system disintegrated in Russia and Eastern Europe. However, critics of Marxism aimed not so much at the primary sources (many simply did not read them) as at interpretations of Marxism that were made based on the works of the classical author to solve certain tasks of building Socialism. Practically no one of serious researchers of Marx creative works ever doubted the impact of his ideas on social views and ideas and contribution to economics. Thus, Vasily Leontyev, a Noble Prize winner in economics, wrote in his paper *The Contemporary Meaning of K. Marx's Economic Theory*: “Marx was a great expert in the nature of capitalist system... If someone wants to find out what profit, wages, capitalist enterprise really are before trying to explain economic development in some way, he may get more real and qualitative information from the primary source, the three volumes of *Capital*, than he can find in ten consecutive reports by the United States Census Bureau, in a dozen textbooks on today's economy...”.

Turning to the thesis on automation, I'll mention that robotization of production is really capable to increase the output of products but it has a little impact on the attained by now efficiency of labour of a certain individual, and if that happens, the amount of capital investments in such cases is often incomparable with profits. As one of the “pioneers” of the modern “industry of knowledge” Elon Musk said recently, automation and at the same time failure to take into account the human role in production, are capable to increase small miscalculations and

mistakes made at the early design stages many times and lead to unprecedented amounts of defective products and waste.

Another controversial issue is inclusion of intellectual property and other components of the “human capital” into market value. If we discuss skills, education, professional training and workforce on the whole, it can’t be a commodity as it can’t be freely exchanged on the market – another person can’t own the “human capital”. No one has been still able to disprove the theory of alienation, which Marx presented in his third manuscript in 1844. Marx emphasized as opposed to Smith, that the result of labour was not only profit for owners of production means but also human alienation in case of those who were deprived of such property, deprived of an opportunity to freely use one’s time, abilities, had to take the social role forced upon them in the course of production processes.

The main demands of the proletariat in the times when Karl Marx lived and created his works, were demands to raise wages, provide normal working places, rights to decent life. These demands are still urgent today all over the world, including the Russian Federation. It’s widely known that ignoring these demands plunged the world into the series of social upheavals. This should not be forgotten by our contemporary liberal economists and their students in the government and business community. The power of the financial capital, which liberals love to discuss, led to a series of world financial crises, including such unordinary ones as the 2000 financial bubble on the high-tech companies market. The institutions established by financial capital owners for their needs turn out in the centers of such crises. I mean international rating agencies that were not known to Marxists in the two previous centuries, but today exactly these agencies are entrusted with the most important selection task in economy. It’s absolutely not accidental that BRICS states worded the task to set up their own rating agency already at the first stage of working out measures for a more just world order. They learnt very well that financial accounting and economic analysis became factors and tools for management and control both in economy and politics. It’s not only “what is

counted” that is important for the financial capital but also “how and who counts”. Crises generated by the power of money always led to reduction of incomes, purchasing power of workers’ wages and abrupt increase of poverty. At the same time, not a single rating agency lost its license because of unauthentic information. At the same time, the production capital generated industrial revolutions that always led to development, though via destruction of the previous system.

As for various extravagant theories about the automated future, consisting of semi-synthetic people with artificial organs, trade unions treat their authors and propagandists as visitors of the Fool’s Island from the already mentioned book by Nosov, that were to turn into harmless white sheep by the end of their human life.

The idea of the society without private property deserves serious attention. I’d like to emphasize the exceptionally high culture of economic views and ideas attained by Marx, trying to eliminate contradictions and logically unfinished ideas from this theoretical works. This directly refers to the topic of Communism. He mentioned that if there was no more private property as a result of its appropriation by the state, we would get “crude Communism”, the ideas of which were rather widely developed later in the Soviet period. The newly appeared thinkers are trying to build a new model of Communism, replacing Marx’s “crude Communism” (and Hegel’s at the same time) with Communism where private property will be concentrated in the hands of a small group of owners, while the main “human mass” will not require property, only paying rent, sufficient for its owners, for its use. But where is Communism here? If we break from the Soviet interpretation and base on numerous works by philosophers and Karl Marx, human activities in the time of Communism stop being just labour, they turn into free human activities that are unattainable either in the industrial society or the modern economic system as Communism replaced Capitalism as an alternative, in which there is no place for accumulation of wealth.

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx, we give him his due for his fantastically rich scholarly heritage. Trade unions all over the world are armed with

his contribution to the development of economics, the impact of his ideas on the development of social thinking, and they are still urgent in today's Russia.

“Professional unions should prove to the whole world that they are fighting not for narrow, selfish interests but for liberation of oppressed millions”, K. Marx wrote in one of his papers. These words sound very up-to-date to trade unions of the 21st century, fighting for practical realization of the concept of worthy labour as an inalienable condition for sustainable development on the global scale.