

Angelo Segrillo (ed.)

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**Russia and Russians
In Different Contexts**

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RUSSIA AND RUSSIANS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

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Foreword

This is the eighth book published under the auspices of the Center for Asian Studies (*Laboratório de Estudos da Ásia* - LEA) of the University of São Paulo, the fifth one in English for an international audience.

The book contains essays by LEA researchers on Russia and Russians in various historical and geographical contexts.

Camilo Domingues examines a crucial aspect of 19th-century Russian literature's *modus operandi* exemplified in the context of Nikolay Chernyshevsky's relationship with works by Western European writers.

Daniel Aarão Reis proposes a new (revisionist) reading of the Russian Revolution of 1917 in the context of the Russian Revolutions of 1905-1921.

César Albuquerque analyzes the evolution of Mikhail Gorbachev's thought within the context of the post-Soviet Russia.

Vicente G. Ferraro Jr. examines the post-Soviet Russian political system in the context of an overview of political science theories that study new democracies in transition.

Angelo Segrillo proposes a new index of political and economic democracy for an analysis of Russia's post-Soviet democratic developments in a comparative context with other countries in the former socialist camp.

We hope you enjoy the reading.

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***Liberalism, Marxism and Democratic Theory Revisited:
Proposal of a Joint Index of Political and Economic Democracy
based on the Experience of Transition Countries (Alternate Version)***¹

Angelo Segrillo²

Liberalism and Marxism are two schools of thought which have left deep imprints in political, sociological and economic theory. Both have been very fruitful in illuminating a wide range of common issues across these fields and yet are usually perceived as opposite, rival approaches contradicting each other in general. The fall of the Soviet Union and of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe obliged Marxist and liberal theorists to make further efforts to understand this process — the former to comprehend the crumbling of communism, the latter interested in the political and economic transition to capitalism. Due to the circumstances surrounding these developments — seemingly the complete victory of one side over the other — the common task to analyze the perestroika and transition experience did not lead to a coming closer of the two contending views, but may have even led to a deepening of the gulf between them.

This essay argues that liberalism and Marxism are extremely useful approaches and that they are not mutually exclusive. It will propose some first steps towards a synthesis between them exactly in relation to one of their greatest bones of contention — the issue of democracy. No grand synthesis will be offered here, but rather the humble beginnings of an effort to bring the more moderate contenders from each side to utilize some of their specific insights to co-jointly better illuminate this complex matter. In practice, it will propose the creation of a new, alternative index for measuring democracy which incorporates liberal and Marxist insights and can therefore be more acceptable to *both* sides than the presently existing ones. Hopefully if we can

¹ This essay is an alternative version of Angelo Segrillo's homonymous article published in *Brazilian Political Science Review* (vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 8-27, 2012). This version was also presented to the journal, but did not find its way to print. We thank *Brazilian Political Science Review* for the permission to publish it because it includes some interesting additional insights, especially in the Conclusion and in the footnotes.

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<http://lea.vitis.uspnet.usp.br/arquivos/angelosegrillobookthedeclineofthesovietunion.pdf>

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create an index that is acceptable to both sides, this may lead to joint collaborative research which will deepen our present understanding of democracy and of the difficulties it still faces in being fully accepted in many parts of the world.

The article is composed of three sections — a presentation of how the problem of democracy historically arose between liberalism and Marxism; the proposal of a beginning synthesis of the Marxist and liberal views via the creation of a joint index of democracy which incorporates insights from both camps; and an initial application of this index to the transition countries of Eastern Europe.

Since we will focus on the experience of transition countries, we will start by describing the definitions of democracy used in the studies of transition.

Concept of democracy in transition studies

The concept of democracy arose a long time ago and has been a highly controversial one, but the version used by most mainstream political scientists (especially transitologists) has its roots in Joseph Schumpeter's (1984, 336) famous minimalist definition of democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". In other words, democracy is characterized by the existence of *competitive* elections for the executive and legislative posts instead of them being filled by means of hereditary succession, violent revolutionary means, etc. According to Schumpeter this was a *descriptive* definition, *i.e.*, one that describes in an objective manner what modern democracies are like, thus avoiding subjective, normative definitions which prescribe what an ideal democracy should be like according to each author's worldview. As Samuel Huntington put it:

In his path-breaking study, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter spelled out the deficiencies of what he termed the "classical theory of democracy", which defined democracy in terms of "the will of the people" (source) and "the common good" (purpose) [...]

For some while after World War II a debate went on between those determined, in the classical vein, to define democracy by source or purpose and the growing number of theorists adhering to a procedural concept of democracy in the

Schumpeterian mode. By the 1970's the debate was over and Schumpeter had won. Theorists increasingly drew distinctions between rationalistic, utopian, idealistic definitions of democracy, on one hand, and empirical, descriptive, institutional and procedural definitions, on the other, and concluded that only the latter types of definition provided the analytical precision and empirical referents that make the concept a useful one. Sweeping discussions of democracy in terms of normative theory sharply declined, at least in American scholarly discussions, and were replaced by efforts to understand the nature of democratic institutions, how they function, and the reasons why they develop and collapse (Huntington 1991, 6-7).

Thus, Schumpeter's minimalist concept of democracy lies at the base of current mainstream Western political science. It is especially influential in the field of study of democratic transitions (*e.g.*, O'Donnell and Schmitter 1988, 26; Huntington 1991, 7; Przeworski 1991, 10; Schmitter & Karl 1996, 50; Przeworski *et alii* 1997, 114). Definitions of democracy used in the study of countries in democratic transition are "Schumpeter's heirs" in the sense that they owe greatly to that Austrian thinker. As noticed by O'Donnell (1999, 484), Schumpeter's definition of democracy is not as minimalist as it appears at first sight. In it the adjective *competitive* has crucial significance. If the democratic method is basically the *competitive* struggle for the people's vote, in order for this struggle to develop properly, a series of preconditions must be present. Among them Schumpeter (1984, 338, 341) himself lists the freedom of press and of discussion, without which there can be no "free competition for the free vote". Especially if we take into consideration these remarks about the "not-so-minimalist" character of Schumpeter's definition, we must acknowledge that most definitions presently used reveal themselves as more or less sophisticated variations on the Schumpeterian original matrix. For example,

democracy is...

[...] a regime in which government posts are filled by means of competitive elections. A regime is democratic only if the opposition [can] compete for, win and take charge of these posts (Przeworski *et*

alii 1997, 131).

[A political system in which] the most powerful decision makers are elected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote (Huntington 1991, 7).

[...] a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives (Schmitter & Karl 1996, 50).

[...] a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive *competition* among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of *political participation* in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and a level of *civil and political liberties* – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations – sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Diamond *et alii* 1989, xvi).

These are some of the most important theorists of processes of democratic transition and consolidation in the world today. Their definitions, from the first two, which are more minimalist, to the more elaborate last one, like Schumpeter's, place democracy's greatest emphasis on the method of choosing the rulers (and the possibility of becoming a ruler oneself), emphasizing that the elections must be "clean" and "competitive", which presupposes a series of civil and political liberties.

Schumpeter's concept of democracy has been criticized from different points of view (*e.g.*, Held 1987, 178-85), but we should herein draw attention to one specific facet of the problem. Procedural (descriptive) definitions of democracy of the Schumpeterian type turn liberal, representative democracy into the *only* possible type of real democracy. In it the main political role of

the great mass of the population is to elect (and kick out), with great freedom and in a competitive way, those special citizens who will represent them in the executive and legislative branches of government. According to Schumpeter's intellectual heirs, historical experience has shown that it was with this model of political organization that modern societies have reached the greatest degree of freedom for their citizens. However, the elevation of liberal, representative democracy to the status of *sole* valid paradigm brings with it contradictions with definitions of democracy which adhere to its historical and etymological origins. Let us examine this in greater detail.

The Origins of Democracy

Etymologically speaking, the word democracy comes from the Greek *demokratia* (*demos*, "people", *kratia* linked to *kratos*, "force", "power" and *kratein*, "rule", "govern") meaning "power of the people", "rule of the people". It referred to the government system of Athens in the 5th century BC. As per Brinton *et alii*'s (1965, 26-27) description, in Athens every (male adult) citizen could himself vote in the Assembly (*eklesia*) on the most important questions of the city. Apart from the *eklesia* — which met at least ten times a year — Athenian citizens elected a council (*boule*) made up of 500 people who exercised executive power, running daily business, putting into practice the decisions of the Assembly, preparing the agenda of its future meetings, etc. The members were elected for a one-year period. This Council was divided into committees of 50 members, each committee governing for a period of one tenth of the year. Since nobody was allowed to remain on the Council of 500 for more than two years, ordinary citizens had a good opportunity to serve on it at some point in their lives. Rotation in government posts was considered a good method to escape the formation of oligarchies and ensure participation. Athenian "politicians" in general were then not professional but amateur.³

Thus, in its Greek origins, democracy was *direct*, *i.e.*, the citizens voted personally and directly in the Assembly and the executive power of the Council of 500 was not exercised by a separate class of politicians but rather by the citizens themselves in alternation. Democracy was a new form of government in which the citizenry as a whole could exert power, in opposition to the previous regimes of monarchy/tyranny (one-man rule) or aristocracy/oligarchy (rule of the few). The will of the majority of citizens ought to be the basis for the final decisions.

³ The exception was the ten generals elected every year to command the army and the navy. They could be reelected indefinitely. Pericles, for example, was reelected for 30 years (Brinton *et al.* 1965, 26-27).

The main point, as far as our discussion is concerned, is that democracy, in its origins, was basically *direct* (no “middleman”). It is important to emphasize this fact because, after its heyday in Athens, democracy went through a centuries-long eclipse. Except for a few isolated cases, democracy reappeared as a political regime only after the “democratizing shock” given by the French Revolution (1789) and the American War of Independence (1775-1781) on the principles of political liberalism originated in the English Glorious Revolution (1689). Liberalism in its 17th-century beginnings was an elitist doctrine. It was only after the democratizing shock of the French and American Revolutions that liberalism started vigorously expanding the suffrage to wider parts of the population, thus starting to format of what we now call a *liberal democracy*. The goal of a liberal democracy was to allow participation of ever greater portions of the population as *electors* and *potential candidates* (for government posts), at the same time trying to keep the public and private spheres separate, restraining government so that it would not become tyrannical over the individual. Thus liberal democracy became an *indirect* democracy. Due to the excessively large size of the new nation-states it was not any more possible for the people to directly exert power in Greek *eklesia*-like assemblies and therefore it became necessary that citizens elect representatives to a smaller Parliament, which will then take the proper final decisions.

Direct and indirect democracy — controversies

When we say that the current, “Schumpeterian” concepts of democracy emphasize the competitive election of rulers we notice that this view “freezes”, turns into a paradigm the representative (indirect) type of democracy. Moreover it elevates to a pedestal exactly what Rousseau (and also, from another angle, the defenders of direct democracy) considered the one thing capable of emptying out the very essence of democracy: the election of autonomous “representatives” of the citizens who legislate *au lieu* of them. For Rousseau, people’s sovereignty is non-transferable; either people exert it directly or it does not exist. Therefore his ironical comment on the “liberal” political system of Britain in the 18th century:

Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated [...] The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be their representatives; they can only be their commissioners, and as such are not qualified to conclude anything definitely. No act of theirs can be a law, unless it has been ratified by the people in

person; and without that ratification nothing is a law. The people of England deceive themselves when they fancy they are free; they are so, in fact, only during the election of members of parliament; for, as soon as a new one is elected, they are again in chains, and are nothing (Rousseau 1947, 85).

In modern jargon, Rousseau at best accepted what we call the *imperative mandate* for the deputies, by which these merely fulfill pre-arranged orders from the voters. But he would never accept the autonomy of those elected deputies, for it would be a form of alienating sovereignty, and sovereignty, according to him, is inalienable.⁴

Thus we notice that definitions of the Schumpeterian kind, which make legislative representation (under liberal conditions) synonymous with democracy, find themselves in conflict with some currents of “classical” democracy, which view sovereignty as emanating directly from the people and inseparable from it in the act of law-making. We also saw that the conception of democracy of the ancient Greeks emphasized the citizens voting their laws directly in the Assembly (*eklesia*) while the executive power was vested in a rotating collective body of citizens, the Council of 500 (*boule*). According to this model, democracy should literally mean “the government of the people”,⁵ as indicated in the etymological roots of the word. It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that Schumpeterian-type definitions of democracy do not easily fit together with either the etymological or historical roots of the concept. On the contrary, they go against the essence of the original model of democracy when they (according to Rousseau) take away sovereignty (*i.e.*, the power to rule or legislate over oneself) from the people and transfer it to a chosen few.

These observations can be viewed as petty nostalgia for some forgotten, golden past in which, due to the limited size of the city-states, direct democracy was possible. However, the question is more complicated.

⁴ Although he did not put things in these terms, it is important to notice that Rousseau is not especially in favor of direct democracy in the *executive* branch of power. Sovereignty, *i.e.*, the power to rule (legislate) over oneself, refers, in his view, to the legislative branch. Laws must be ratified directly by the people. Now, the executive power, *i.e.*, the more mechanical or formal aspect of merely carrying out these laws (wishes) of the people, can be entrusted to some persons who will faithfully carry it out. There is a certain analogy here with the post-independence U.S.A., in which some Founding Fathers had the idea that the legislative branch of government would be the powerful one, with the executive branch merely “executing” the orders (laws) of Congress.

⁵ People understood as citizens.

The central problem is as follows. If democracy is really to be a “government of the people” and we accept the impossibility of having direct democracy in present-day large nation-states,⁶ then the only way to have a true representative democracy would be to make certain that Parliament and government (*i.e.*, the elected body) reflected exactly (or very closely) the proportions of preferences of the body of electors. If this condition is not realized, then we do not have a democracy but, at best, a mixed type of government with elements of aristocracy. Moreover, even if Parliament reflects “the people”, in real life a problem frequently arises which we may call parliamentary “refraction”, *i.e.*, the disassociation of the interests of electors and elected once the electoral campaign is over and real legislative activity begins.

Those who attentively observe the political scene in different countries notice that the above-mentioned *refractive phenomenon* indeed occurs and often the elected do not reflect the wishes (or even the ultimate interests) of the electors once they are well established in the “House of the People”. This is not a problem according to Schumpeter’s definition because he does not stipulate an imperative mandate for the deputies, but rather the utmost freedom for the elected politicians to pursue their causes according to their personal conscience. Like James Madison (1999, 160-167) in *Federalist Paper No. 10*, Schumpeter thinks that an elite of capable parliamentarians chosen from among the best options by the people will be in better condition to discuss and decide about the complex political issues than the general mass of people as a whole, the majority of whom do not have the technical skills or knowledge to best tackle these questions.

⁶ The question of whether or not direct democracy is possible in present-day large nation-states is controversial. It is frequently pointed out that once home computers (or, at least, access to computers) become universalized (like radio and TV became in the past) the technical difficulties to carry out nationwide simultaneous computerized voting are actually not big. If Brazil (a “third world” country) can conduct completely computerized voting for executive and legislative posts (with near real-time result announcement) every two years, why could it not conduct every four or six months universal voting or ratification of laws by the whole population? Also important in this regard is to notice that in March 2007 Estonia became the world’s first country where internet voting was allowed in a national election.

As the argument of technical difficulties for direct democracy seems to dwindle with the possibilities of electronic voting, we are faced with the evidence that the main obstacles for direct democracy are not of a technical nature, but of a political nature, such as expounded by James Madison in *Federalist Paper No. 10* (echoing some arguments against democracy already put forth by Aristotle and Plato).

If in Schumpeterian democracy the political role of the people is basically to elect (and kick out) a governing elite, we come to the following dilemma. Doesn't changing the focus of democracy from searching for the best way for the people to self-govern and placing it on the institutionalization of a method of inclusive formation of autonomous political elites mean to abandon the very essence of democratization?

Schumpeter's attempt at creating a "descriptive" definition of modern democracy comes up against epistemological difficulties. Would it not be a tautology to define democracy by the mere description of the regimes considered democratic? How could Schumpeter know that these regimes were really democratic if he did not have an *a priori* definition of democracy?

These represent a group of problems regarding the Schumpeterian view of democracy on an abstract, theoretical plane. However, even if we disregard these issues stemming from the point of view of direct democracy, there is still another problem with the conception of democracy of the present "heirs of Schumpeter", namely the unresolved question of the interaction between political and economic democracy. And that is the great bone of contention with Marxists.

The socialist objections

Even not taking into account some considerations which would be essential to the more literal defenders of direct democracy (such as the difficulty in achieving a faithful proportional representation of the electorate in Parliament, the problem of the divergence of opinions and positions of the electors and elected in the post-election period, the Rousseauian problem of alienation of sovereignty, etc.), there is still a basic objection put forth by socialists in the 19th century which has not yet been adequately answered: the objection that political democracy without economic democracy is insufficient to qualify a society as fully democratic.

The most forceful formulation of this objection was Lenin's famous diatribe in *The State and Revolution*:

In capitalist society, under the conditions most favourable to its development, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always bound in by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist

society always remains just about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners [...]

Marx splendidly grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy when, in analyzing the experience of the [Paris] Commune, he said that the oppressed were allowed, once every few years, to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class should be in parliament to represent and repress them! (Lenin 1943, 71-73)

In the passage above, Lenin puts forth a series of questions that reflect the socialist criticism of the insufficiencies of political democracy unaccompanied by economic democracy. How can one believe that the “vote” (= the power to elect) of a slum dweller has the same weight as that of, say, Ted Turner, who owns influential media? “One person, one vote” is the basic principle of all the definitions of democracy above. But if the real voting power (*i.e.*, the real capacity to “make” rulers) of citizens vary according to their wealth, their access to or domination of the means of communication, then can it be considered a real democracy?

The question of the control of the means of communication is especially crucial because the capacity of the citizen-owners of the big media to influence the rest of the citizenry makes their “vote” (their real capacity to influence policies) much greater than average.

However, the socialist criticism of bourgeois democracy goes deeper than that. It says that capitalist society is *inherently* undemocratic because if the means of production are concentrated in the hands of a minority class, and not socialized throughout the population, the unequal conditions will influence the strictly political field as well. Socialists ask why bourgeois democrats demand equality in the political field only. What is the reason for not expanding equality into the economic field as well? Liberal political scientists restrict democratic equality to the political sphere, refusing to expand it to the economic field. As two famous transitologists put it in an influential work:

The advent of political democracy is the preferred *terminus ad quem* of our interpretative effort, but it is not the end of struggles over the form and purpose of politics [...] In a sense, the transition to political democracy sets up the possibility — but by no means, the inevitability — of another transition. [...] We have called this “second” transition

“socialization” [...] In this context, all we can do is reaffirm our earlier presumption that political democracy *per se* is a goal worthy of attainment, even at the expense of forgoing alternative paths that would seem to promise more immediate returns in terms of socialization (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1988, 30-33).

This passage is emblematic because it highlights the dilemma of the gulf between the two positions. For liberals, political democracy is an end in itself, independently of economic democratization. On the other hand, the socialist/Marxist critics state that without economic democracy bourgeois political democracy is insufficient.⁷

The Marxist/liberal divide

Where do we stand on this issue? At present we find this deadlock: liberals refuse to leave the safe haven of political democracy and extend their reach to economic democracy; revolutionary Marxists dwell on economic democracy and refuse to go without it to political democracy.

In order to cross the sea that separates these two continents, this article proposes the following research agenda: is it possible to come up with a “unified field” theory of democracy? In other words, is it possible to create a method that simultaneously evaluates (measures) the advances (and setbacks) in the fields of political democracy *and* economic democracy?

The possibility (or functionality) of such unified theory is denied by both the liberal and the Marxist sides. The post-Schumpeterian liberals say that the inclusion of economic democracy would be a complicating, highly subjective extra factor, which would undermine the concision, precision, functionality and objectivity typical of today’s minimalist, procedural definitions of democracy (Huntington 1991, 9; Mainwaring *et alii* 2001, 651). On the other hand, radical Marxists, in the footsteps of Lenin (1943, 71-73), affirm that liberal democracy “is always bound by the narrow

⁷ *cf.* Norberto Bobbio’s (1983:33-34) famous assessment: “If the historical experience has shown us that so far no socialist system created by means of non-democratic methods (*i.e.*, by revolution or conquest) could become democratic, it has also shown us that capitalist systems cannot become socialist democratically [...] In capitalist states, the democratic method, even in its best formats, closes the road to socialism; in socialist states, the concentration of power from a unified controlling center of the economy makes extremely difficult the introduction of the democratic method”.

framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes” and that a real *government of the people* may only develop in a society in which the means of production are socialized — therefore, it is a useless pastime to measure [the illusion of] political democracy in capitalist countries. As we see, one side refuses to measure the level of economic democracy and the other side that of political democracy.

We must admit that the search for this “unified field” democratic theory is very difficult. The spheres of political democracy and of economic democracy seem so qualitatively different that the possibility of their joint measuring may turn out to be a Herculean, even Sisyphean task. However, this is a necessary effort for the sake of objective research on democratization. Take the case of two democratizing regions, for instance, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Some transitologists have written sophisticated works comparing the democratization efforts in these two regions (*e.g.*, Przeworski 1991; Nelson 1994; Greskovits 1998). If in the analysis of the “South”, a minimalist, Schumpeterian approach to democracy (centered on the political side) is facilitated by the fact that the economic basis in the region (capitalism) is the same before and after the transition (thus justifying the concentration on the political aspect), the same does not hold true for the “East”. In the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the economic base changed completely from the beginning of transition (socialism) to the end (capitalism). In this case, it is difficult not to take into account the consequences of the transformation on the economic side (*i.e.*, also measure the changes in economic democracy). Due to the structural differences in the original modes of production these regions started off from, the comparative evaluation of the gains and losses the populations in the “South” and the “East” had with these transformations (and also the comparisons between capitalism and socialism in general) are in need of a synthetic breakthrough in the field of evaluation of political and economic democracy. Such a breakthrough might allow a common language for Marxist and non-Marxist political scientists in their analyses of the transformations of the former socialist countries in general.

A first, prosaic step in this direction could be the establishment of an extra item in rankings like those of *Freedom House* (the organization that evaluates quantitatively the level of political democracy in the countries of the world). Besides measuring political democracy, it would be useful to also measure economic democracy (*i.e.*, the degree of equal access of citizens to the means of production and wealth of the nation) by using the provisional proxy of the Gini coefficient. In order to avoid the trappings of using a more sophisticated, subjective measurement of economic democracy which might reduce its concision, simplicity and functionality, the use of the Gini

coefficient, which measures the degree of income inequality, may be a good provisional operational proxy and may allow Marxists and liberals to start using the common language of numbers as a modest beginning towards greater future understanding around this hypothetically enlarged ranking of democracy of the new Freedom House of the future.

The Gini coefficient varies from *zero* (= absolute equality) to *one* (= one persons owns all the wealth of a country). Historically the Gini coefficient varied from around 0.2 in the more egalitarian socialist countries of Eastern Europe before perestroika (*e.g.*, Czechoslovakia, Hungary) to around 0.6 in extremely inegalitarian countries, like Brazil and Guatemala. The average of the OECD countries is around 0.3 (World Bank 2002; Cloutier 2007). The provisional utilization of the Gini coefficient as a rough, initial proxy for the level of economic democracy may also bypass the possible barrier of a criticism often leveled at the Marxist defense of the collective property of the means of production as more democratic than private property. Many non-Marxist economists say that the end goal of production is *consumption* and that, since state socialist property is administered inefficiently, most of the population will have a higher standard of living if factories and other units of production are privatized and more efficiently run. Then, via taxation, the larger income may be redistributed to the population (the Keynesian welfare state model). In other words, with a privatized, but better run, economy most of the population will have a higher standard of living (via redistribution of income by means of taxation) than in a society where the means of production are socialized, but ill administered. This was the *ratio decidendi* behind the privatization processes in Eastern Europe. The utilization of the Gini coefficient has the side (beneficial) effect of covering this reasoning, since it measures economic democracy also on the output side, *i.e.*, according to income or wealth produced, not according to the mere possession of means of production.

The new joint index of political and economic democracy

As we saw, the main difficulty in bringing together liberals and Marxists in creating a common measurement of democracy is that liberals say that economic democracy, unlike political democracy in its minimalist definition, is too abstract a concept to be quantified and operationalized, whereas Marxists refuse to take into account political democracy without economic democracy. Therefore, if we could find a quantifiable and functional index for economic democracy, this could be a great step forward. Since economic democracy is really an abstract and controversial concept — for example, a completely state-owned economy would signify that everybody has control of the means of production or that nobody has control

of them? — we proposed a proxy, which is the Gini coefficient of income differentials. As mentioned earlier, the fact that the Gini coefficient does not relate directly to the ownership of the means of production may even turn out to be an asset. It creates a “healthy” competition for which system or regime, *in practice*, shows better distributive justice, regardless of the form of ownership of the means of production. Of course, the Gini coefficient is far from a perfect index, even in its own terms, but it may be regarded as a valid, provisional (until a better indicator is found) first step towards an attempt to jointly measure political and economic democracy.

For the purpose of presenting an illustration of how this index can be built, we will propose the following exercise. For economic democracy we will use the Gini coefficient of different countries as presented in the World Income Inequality Database of the United Nations University (2005) and in the TransMONEE (2006) database of the Innocenti Research Center of UNICEF.

Our index for political democracy will be the arithmetic mean between the scores of political rights and civil liberties assigned by Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org.) to each country every year. In order to make our indicators for Economic Democracy and Political Democracy comparable, we will present both of them in a scale from zero to ten, with zero being the worst score (*i.e.*, least equal or least democratic) and ten the best score (the most equal or the most democratic). Finally, our joint index of political *and* economic democracy will be the arithmetic mean between these two indicators in the scale from zero to ten. The result is shown in table 1.

Table 1
Ratings of Economic Democracy, Political Democracy and Combined Score

	1989			2004 (or most recent available Gini C. data)			2006			(1989-2006)		
	ED	PD	Mean ED/PD	ED	PD	Mean ED/PD	ED	PD	Mean ED/PD	Variation ED	Variation PD	Variation ED/PD
Armenia	7.5	2.5	5.0	5.4	4.2	4.8		4.2		-2.1	+1.7	-0.2
Azerbaijan	6.9	2.5	4.7	4.9	2.5	3.7		2.5		-2.0	0	-1.0
Belarus	7.7	2.5	5.1	7.5	0.8	4.2		0.8		-0.2	-1.7	-0.9
Bulgaria	7.7	0	3.9	6.4	9.2	7.8		9.2		-1.3	+9.2	+3.9
Czech Republic	8.0	1.7	4.9	7.6	10	8.8		10		-0.4	+8.3	+3.9
Estonia	7.2	2.5	4.9	6.0	9.2	7.6		10		-1.2	+7.5	+2.7
Georgia	7.2	2.5	4.9	5.5	5.0	5.3		6.7		-1.7	+4.2	+0.4
Hungary	7.8	5.8	6.8	7.3	9.2	8.3		10		-0.5	+4.2	+1.5
Kazakhstan	7.2	2.5	4.9					2.5			0	
Kyrgyz Republic	7.3	2.5	4.9	6.2	2.5	4.4		4.2		-1.1	+1.7	-0.5
Lithuania	7.4	2.5	5.0	6.9	8.3	7.6		10		-0.5	+7.5	+2.6
Latvia	7.4	2.5	5.0	6.2	9.2	7.7		10		-1.2	+7.5	+2.7
Moldova	7.5	2.5	5.0	5.8	5.8	5.8		5.8		-1.7	+3.3	+0.8
Poland	7.2	5.8	6.5	6.3	10	8.2		10		-0.9	+4.2	+1.7
Romania	7.6	0	3.8	6.4	7.5	7.0		8.3		-1.2	+8.3	+3.2
Russian Federation	7.3	2.5	4.9	5.1	3.4	4.3		2.5		-2.2	0	-0.6
Slovak Republic	8.0	1.7	4.9	7.0	9.2	8.1		10		-1.0	+8.3	+3.2
Tajikistan	7.2	2.5	4.9					2.5			0	
Turkmenistan	7.2	2.5	4.9					0			-2.5	
USSR	7.3	2.5	4.9									
Ukraine	7.7	2.5	5.1	6.7	5.0	5.9		7.5		-1.0	+5.0	+0.8
Uzbekistan	7.2	2.5	4.9					0			-2.5	

Note:

ED = Economic Democracy; PD = Political Democracy; ED/PD = combined score of ED and PD (arithmetic mean between ED and PD).

The score for Economic Democracy is the Gini coefficient of income inequality of each country expressed in an inverted scale from zero (total inequality) to ten (total equality). The score for Political Democracy is the arithmetic mean of the Freedom House ratings for political rights and civil liberties of each country expressed in a scale from zero (least democratic) to ten (most democratic).

The Gini coefficients for all countries, except for the USSR and the Russian Federation, are from TransMONEE 2006. The data for the USSR, the Russian Federation, the 1989 data for the Czech and Slovak republics, and the 2002 data for Azerbaijan are from former TransMonee database versions as presented in the UNU-WIDER database.

The 1989 PD score for the Soviet Union was used as a proxy for the PD scores of the Soviet Republics in 1989. The 1989 PD score for Czechoslovakia was used as a proxy for the PD scores of the Czech and Slovak republics in 1989.

The columns under "2004 or most recent available Gini Coefficient data" show ED, PD and Mean ED/PD for the most recent year for which the Gini Coefficient data is available for each country: 2004 for Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Romania; 2003 for Estonia, Hungary and the Slovak Republic; 2002 for Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

The columns "Variation" show the rise or decline in points from the end period of the socialist regime (year 1989) to the most recent year available for each indicator separately.

Occasional discrepancies in decimals are due to rounding of numbers in the process of calculation.

Source: TransMONEE 2006 database at <http://www.unicef.icdc.org/resources/transmonee.html>; UNU-WIDER World Income Inequality Database at <http://www.wider.unu.edu/wiid/wiid.htm>; Freedom House homepage at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

What the new index tells us

The table with the new index was designed to measure the difference the populations of the transition countries experienced between the end period of the former socialist regime and recent years in terms of economic democracy, political democracy and both simultaneously. Let us analyze them separately.

All countries in this survey had a drop in their level of economic democracy. Their income inequality (as measured by the Gini coefficient) worsened — in some nations more than others. The greatest decrease in income equality was in the Russian Federation (from 7.3 to 5.1 = -2.2), Armenia (from 7.5 to 5.4 = -2.1), Azerbaijan (from 6.9 to 4.9 = -2.0), Georgia (from 7.2 to 5.5 = -1.7) and Moldova (from 7.5 to 5.8 = -1.7). The ones that had the smallest falls in the item Economic Democracy were Belarus (from 7.7 to 7.5 = -0.2), the Czech Republic (from 8.0 to 7.6 = -0.4), Hungary (from 7.8 to 7.3 = -0.5) and Lithuania (from 7.4 to 6.9 = -0.5).

In terms of political democracy, the worst performers in this period were: Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (both from 2.5 to zero = -2.5); Belarus (from 2.5 to 0.8 = -1.7); and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation (all four having in 2006 the same level of PD [*i.e.*, 2.5] as in 1989). The largest advancement in political democracy as compared to 1989 went to Bulgaria (from 0 to 9.2 = +9.2), the Czech Republic (from 1.7 to 10 = 8.3), the Slovak Republic (from 1.7 to 10 = 8.3) and Romania (from 0 to 8.3 = +8.3).

If we take the combined index of political *and* economic democracy, the greatest improvements also go to Bulgaria (from 3.9 to 7.8 = +3.9), the Czech Republic (from 4.9 to 8.8 = +3.9), the Slovak Republic (from 4.9 to 8.1 = +3.2), and Romania (from 3.8 to 7.0 = +3.2). The greatest falls in the joint index were those of Azerbaijan (from 4.7 to 3.7 = -1.0), Belarus (from 5.1 to 4.2 = -0.9), the Russian Federation (from 4.9 to 4.3 = -0.6) and the Kyrgyz Republic (from 4.9 to 4.4 = -0.5).

The figures above show a diversity of outcomes in the transformative processes of each country. Some nations were clearly more successful than others in the different areas. The main advantage of an index that shows both political and economic democracy, rather than only political democracy, is that it obviates that both areas have to be taken into consideration if we want to understand the full impact of the transformations on the populations and how they react to it. Although certain countries have made great gains (especially in terms of political democracy), all of them worsened their economic democracy. This may be at the heart of a malaise captured in

opinion polls in these countries which demonstrate a degree of dissatisfaction within the present regimes (and sometimes even a certain nostalgia for the former times among some groups of the population) which is not congruent with the improvements since the last decade (Levada 2000; Polit.ru 2002). This new index brings to light and to the public debate the question of economic democracy, without which the transformations of the past years cannot be fully comprehended.

Since the purpose of this article is to introduce the new triple index in general, we will not analyze in details the implications of the above figures for each country. We will just point out that the table presented could be analyzed in myriad ways: the individual characteristics of the most successful and least successful countries; the development paths apparently more conducive to higher scores in the three areas; how much of the present absolute situation in the three areas is due to legacies from the socialist past and how much is due to the transition itself, etc. Does the index show that there are paths more conducive to both political and economic democracy? Or are the paths to political and economic democracy separate? All these fields of research are extremely rich and will certainly bring new insights. Hopefully the new triple index can spur this kind of research from both liberals and Marxists in fruitful dialogue.

Difficulties and possible variations in the use of the new index

Even if one accepts the idea of measuring economic democracy alongside political democracy (which is the main point of this article), there may be interesting debates on how to best use the new index.

In the specific case of the comparative table on the transition countries, one could debate whether the most appropriate approach is to compare the present situation with that of the last years of their respective perestroikas. Some might argue that it would be better to compare the present with the pre-1985 situation (or with the average of the scores of all years of perestroika) since these times were more typical of the socialist experience. All three alternatives have reasonable arguments behind them and would yield different outcomes. For most countries the gains in political democracy would be greater, and so would the steepness of the fall in economic democracy as our comparisons go further back in time because the socialist regimes then were both more authoritarian and egalitarian. Also, depending on the time each country began to liberalize, the apparent gains in political democracy may seem greater or lesser as a consequence of the base year utilized. In sum, it would bring a healthy and fruitful debate to explore all scenarios possible with the triple index and analyze what results the different comparisons yield.

The main questions to be highlighted here, however, are the ones concerning the joint index *per se*, independently of the group of countries under analysis. It was already pointed out here why the Gini coefficient of income differentials should be considered an appropriate rough, initial and provisional proxy for economic democracy (until we construct a better indicator). Although it is not directly related to the form of ownership of the means of production (as some Marxists would probably prefer), it captures the allocative result of the *use* of the means of production, which is actually the gist of the matter as far as the general population is concerned.

The other main objection to using the Gini coefficient would be the problem of comparability. As with almost all cross-national economic indicators, the Gini coefficient raises issues of comparability. Conceptual application and survey methods may vary in different countries, or according to source, contaminating the comparison. There are two solutions to this problem. The most immediate is to carefully examine the survey methodologies and utilize in the comparison the surveys that use similar approaches. Secondly, the very development of the field and utilization of such indicators lead to the standardization of procedures and therefore ever-increasing comparability. For example, for many OECD countries the standardization of statistics as embodied in the work of the Luxembourg Income Study group (www.lisproject.org) is already a reality. Hopefully, the widening of the use of the Gini coefficient in other areas will help spur the ongoing efforts towards ever-greater standardization in cross-national statistics. As we mentioned, the Gini coefficient is a provisional *proxy* for the initial quantitative incorporation of the economic aspect into the debate on democracy. Its use can be either perfected or substituted as we progress along this previously uncharted road.

In the present demonstration, we directly drew upon the Freedom House scores to designate the level of political democracy of each country. Improvement can also be made to this category. The Freedom House rankings have been criticized in different aspects (especially for a certain degree of ideological bias) and attention to some of these criticisms may improve their methodology. One technically important aspect would be to promote a change in the scale of their scores (at present from seven to one, being 1 the most free and 7 the least free). This creates a crowding in the upper end of the scale with the result that Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, etc. are considered to have achieved the same level of political democracy (=1, or the maximum) as, for instance, Denmark or Sweden. It would be better to have a more open-ended scale, like the Gini coefficient, for example, where the supreme score (denoting perfect equality) is not achievable in practice by any country, so that it better differentiates between the front runners. Theoretically, the supreme score of such a Gini coefficient-like scale of

political democracy would be the level achieved by a society with *direct*, free democracy and fully universal suffrage. The closer a society (by different mechanisms, including indirect representation) comes to this (in historical practice so far unreachable) ideal, the more democratic it would be.

One objection the joint index may receive is that using an arithmetic mean between the political democracy and economic democracy indicators is too simplistic a way to measure between two qualitatively different magnitudes. My answer to this is threefold. Firstly, the arithmetic mean (instead of some more sophisticated weighted average) expresses the belief that *both* political and economic democracies are important. Secondly, simplicity and concision (in a word, minimalism) have revealed themselves important to break through complex epistemological barriers in the past. Schumpeter's minimalist definition of democracy (deemed too simplistic at first by some authors) is one of such cases. Finally, it should be reiterated that the triple index is an initial attempt to develop a joint indicator of political and economic democracy by means of a minimalist approach (until we are able to later develop a more sophisticated indicator).

This triple indicator stands more reasonably half-way as a "give-and-take" compromise between the Marxist and liberal positions than the other indexes available in our present literature. The Freedom House scores, the Polity Project's democracy and autocracy scales, the Vanhanen polyarchy dataset, and the Coppedge-Reinicke polyarchy scale concentrate on political democracy. Marxists object to this exclusivity and also to the existing indexes of economic freedom, like the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, the EBRD's Transition Indicators, and the Cumulative Liberalization Index by the World Bank's de Melo *et alii*, which, according to them, measure basically the freedom to pursue business. On the other hand, efforts by Marxist or social-democratically oriented sociologists to operationalize concepts closer to economic democracy such as, for example, the erstwhile burgeoning literature on workplace democracy and workers' control of past decades remained overall normative and descriptive. As such, they failed to produce a quantifiable index which could satisfy the operational requirements of liberal institutionalist political scientists (for the indexes mentioned, see the Freedom House website at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>; Polity IV Project website at <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity> ; Vanhanen's Polyarchy dataset at <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/iss/data/Vanhanen>; Coppedge & Reinicke 1990; Index of Economic Freedom website at <http://www.heritage.org/index>; Transition Report (various years) at <http://www.ebrd.com> and Melo *et alii* 1996; For literature on workplace democracy or workers' control see, for example, Blumberg 1968, Hunnius *et alii* 1973, Stephens 1980).

All these remarks are for the future. This article will have achieved

its objective if it can convince some liberals and some Marxists of the necessity to evaluate and measure both political and economic democracy. It proposes one possible way to do that.

If this challenge is taken on, even if Marxists and liberals work separately, very interesting comparative work can be done in the near future. For instance, investigate the levels of political and economic democracy of the countries before and after the third wave of democratization; compare the transitions in Eastern Europe and in Latin America; analyze the current transformations in Asian countries, etc.

However, the greatest results would be obtained if Marxists and liberals abandon the zero-sum game attitude between them and engage in a constructive dialogue whereby the purpose is not to “defeat” the opponent, but through discussion reach superior insights, combining the best of each position. My hope is that the use of objective, measurable yardsticks as a means to judge political and economic democracy may be the beginning of an effort to bring the more moderate contenders from both sides to establish a meaningful, unprejudiced discussion of democracy. Historical experience has shown that neither the state nor the market alone can adequately manage the development of modern societies. The Post-World War II decades and the experience of the welfare state have shown that it is possible to simultaneously increase economic efficiency and social justice. This *Weltanschauung* suffered setbacks in the decades of the eighties and the nineties when the radical separation between market and state was again postulated. Thus, attempts to make a dialectical synthesis of the two apparent opposites, Marxism and liberalism, become important not only in theoretical but also in practical terms. It is necessary to recover the notion that state and market, social justice and efficiency, economic and political democracy are not opposites *per se* and can come together in a more harmonious manner.

Finally, is it too utopian to imagine that maybe a Hegelian synthesis between the camps of Marxism and liberalism will in the future be reached and in the historical practice eventually a society will emerge possessing both political and economic democracy to the highest degrees?

Conclusion

Liberalism and Marxism have been extremely productive in yielding important insights into the political and economic fields of human research. They have traditionally been regarded as incompatible in terms of democracy studies in the sense that their conceptions of democracy seem irreconcilable. However, if we could find an operational index which minimally satisfies definitional requirements from both sides, the way may be paved for a dialogue between both camps in terms of actually measuring and comparing

democratic performance across a wide range of countries, both socialist and capitalist. Since the differences between the two camps on the definition of democracy are very wide, a minimalist approach, which sticks to the main pillars of their conceptual frameworks (*political* democracy on the liberal side and *economic* democracy on the Marxist side), might be the shortest route to tackle the problem. The task is facilitated by the fact that liberals have already devised indexes of political democracy. Since Marxists have not yet devised a quantitative index for economic democracy and it indeed seems very difficult to find a suitable one, this article proposed a proxy by means of the utilization of the Gini coefficient. By measuring income differentials, the Gini coefficient roughly parallels the distributive aspects of the politically organized set of means of production of a given country. This should minimally satisfy the heuristic requirements of Marxists in this field. Thus, a triple index — composed of the index of political democracy, the index of economic democracy and the joint (average) index —, by bringing Marxist and liberal insights into the equation, may attract authors from both sides in order to establish a dialogue on the best way to more objectively evaluate the political and economic performance of countries from different parts of the capitalism-socialism continuum in the world.

To illustrate this idea we employed the triple index in relation to the transition countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Although the idea here was to provide a simple example of how the index might be used, and not to engage in a full-scale evaluation of the experience of transition countries, some insights were brought up by the magnitudes obtained. We may divide these insights according to the three components of the joint index.

In relation to the component of economic democracy separately, we notice that the transition has brought a worsening of the level of income inequality in all countries involved in the process. This could be expected since the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR had some of the lowest Gini coefficient levels in the world in the 1980's.

In relation to the levels of political democracy we may have some surprising results. It would be expected that all (or practically all) of these countries would have higher levels of political democracy than when they were under a communist regime, since the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Eurasia were considered totalitarian by most Western political science analysts. However, some countries got the worst of both worlds, not only lowering their economic democracy index, but also keeping very low scores of political democracy — due to the fact that their socialist regimes were replaced by authoritarian successors. The worst performers were Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus whose political democracy (PD) score even worsened (!) in relation the USSR's relatively freer final years of

perestroika (having 1989 as benchmark). Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan kept approximately the same level of PD as the USSR's final years of perestroika. All other countries improved their PD level in relation to 1989 with the best performances going to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Romania.

In terms of political and economic democracy combined, the worst performers were Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic and the best performers were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and Romania.

As stated before, the aim of this article is to present the idea of the joint index of political and economic democracy and illustrate it by means of the case of the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR and not to engage in the analysis of the results of the transition *per se*. However, in conclusion, one characteristic seems to stand out. The fact that the list of the best performers cited above for political democracy is identical to the list of best performers for political and economic democracy combined seems to indicate one of two things (or both simultaneously): 1) political democracy may be the best way to achieve a regime in which there is both political and economic democracy at higher levels; 2) a regime with both political and economic democracy is the best way to keep high levels of political democracy.

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*The Russian Revolutions of 1917 — A Necessary Revision*¹

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I. Introduction

In the commemorations and celebrations of the one hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 2017, the October Revolution was always a central reference, considered — whether celebrated, criticized, or abominated — by the historiography and common sense as the birthplace of Soviet socialism. As for the other revolutions in the revolutionary cycle which changed the face of Russia and the world, running from 1905 to 1921, they were frequently omitted and when cited only received rapid references, as if October was a type of star and the other revolutions just satellites, without their own light.

In the essays I wrote then, I sought to emphasize, always from the point of view of social history,³ that to understand the Russian revolutions better it was necessary to encompass five revolutionary processes in two cycles, connected in time — the 1905 Revolution and the 1917 revolutions (February and October), or *the democratic cycle*; and the civil wars (1918-1921) and the Kronstadt Revolution (1921), *the authoritarian cycle*. Moreover, I formulated the hypothesis that the real birthplace of Soviet socialism was not exactly located in October 1917, the third revolution of the first cycle, but during the second cycle, beginning in the civil wars. It was then that a revolution in the revolution occurred through profound social, political, economic, and cultural transformations.⁴ In turn, these transformations conditioned the subsequent developments with the crushing of the last revolution — Kronstadt in 1921 — and afterwards the revolution from above, carried out at the end of the 1920s, which would return to references and orientations made during the civil wars.⁵

In this interpretation, to a great extent the emphasis on October can be

¹ This essay returns to and expands upon questions dealt with in books of my authorship published in 2017: Cf. Daniel Aarão Reis, 2017a and 2017b. I thank FAPESP, the São Paulo academic financing agency, and the Hoover Institution (Stanford University) for their respective 2020 and 2018 grants that allowed me to pursue this research.

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³ In relation to the importance of the innovations introduced by the methodology of social history, cf. R.G. Suny, 1994 and R. G. Suny and A. Adams 1990.

⁴ Cf. Daniel Aarão Reis, 2017a.

⁵ I do not include the revolution from above in these cycles because I see it as a reiteration, on a large scale, of the references and orientations expressed in the context of war communism (1919-1921).

attributed to the political disputes which since the beginning conditioned the debates about the history of the Russian revolution and Soviet socialism. On the one hand, Soviet and communist historiography, celebrating in a positive manner the decisive role of the Bolsheviks, Lenin, cities, and the working class.⁶ On the other, the testimonies of those defeated by the revolution, the anticommunist historiography, the *cold warriors*, above all after the Second World War, Cold War activists, demonizing Lenin and the Bolsheviks in general.⁷

This polarization has obscured the study of the other revolutions, their nexus, the relations of interdependence between them, and even the possibility of questioning the central position attributed to October.

In this essay, my concern is to establish the nexus between the 1905 Revolution and those which occurred in February and October 1917, which in my view form the *democratic cycle* of the Russian revolutions. In my opinion, this first cycle forms a congruent group defined by democratic struggles which ultimately triumphed in their more radical form in October 1917. The authoritarian and statizing rupture, which would mark Soviet socialism — *the authoritarian cycle* — would occur afterwards, in the framework of the civil wars and in the context of the crushing of the final revolution, which occurred in Kronstadt in March 1921, when the doors were closed on a possible democratic socialism in Russia.⁸

II. The 1905 Revolution

The 1905 revolution, in the context of the revolutionary cycle, is actually one of the most underestimated — unjustly in fact.⁹ It was not exactly a “dress rehearsal” for the 1917 revolutions. This metaphor has some basis, although it would be incorrect to call an entire historical process as “preparation” for something which at that moment had not even been imagined.

It is more correct to call it what it was, a frustrated revolution or a

⁶ E. Hobsbawm, 1982-1985; J. Reed, 2017; J. Stalin, 1950; L.D. Trotsky, 1978.

⁷ Cf. G. Buchanan, 1923; R. Browder and A. Kerensky, 1961; A. Kerensky, 1919 and 1927; P. Miliukov, 1978 (1st edition, Sofia, 1921); M. Paléologue, 1921-1923; R. Pipes, 1968 and 1995; L. Schapiro, 1965.

⁸ In March 1921 the X Congress of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) was held in Russia and approved a new centralist and vertical statute, liquidating a tradition of internal debates which marked the history of the Bolsheviks, principally in 1917.

⁹ Cf. O. Anweiller, 1974; F.X. Coquin, 1985 and F. X. Coquin and C.G. Francelle, 1986; J.F. Fayet; H.J. Strauss, 1973 and R. Wortman, 2013.

revolution *manquée*, as F.X. Coquin correctly named it.¹⁰ Or as the *first Russian revolution*, according to the title of a collection which published the papers of a commemorative seminar for the 80th anniversary of this revolution.¹¹ Various aspects highlight the importance of what happened in 1905 in Russia.

Evidenced then is the association between war and revolution, something which had not been on the radars of the social democratic International, whose forecasts for revolution were more associated with economic crises than bellic conflicts. As could be seen during the twentieth century, wars had a destabilizing nature and an impact that was much more devastating than economic crises. Furthermore, they tended to radicalize the spirits of the subordinate classes much more profoundly than economic crises.

In the case of the Russian Empire, also discovered in 1905 was the desegregating potential of the combination of modes of production — unequal and combined development in L. Trotsky's apt concept — in a given society.¹² When submitted to intense pressure, this combination had an explosive — and revolutionary — effect. On the other hand, and surprising the nineteenth century revolutionaries, the revolution did not find its best conditions in the more developed capitalist societies. Although stronger working classes were concentrated there, capitalism there was also more resilient, more flexible, and better at withstanding antagonistic pressure. In agrarian societies, in the framework of the combination of the modes of production, submitted to destabilizing pressures, the revolutionary explosion gained an unforeseen intensity.

However, shrewd leaders, such as V. Lenin and L. Trotsky, were open to hypotheses not yet considered, new vistas opened by the 1905 revolutionary process. In their own modulation, they coined the formulations of *permanent revolution* (Trotsky) and *uninterrupted revolution* (Lenin), imagining a historic leap over the democratic-bourgeois stage, until then considered axiomatic by the social democratic tradition for agrarian societies — unless the Russian process was accompanied by an international revolution in Europe. Despite this they did not invest in changes in the Russian social democratic program established in 1903, which remained unaltered until 1917, based on the characterization of the two-stage revolution (democratic-bourgeois and socialist). However, it should be noted that the content of the “permanent revolution,” in other words, the passage from the “bourgeois” stage to the socialist one already appeared in the

¹⁰ Cf. F. X. Coquin, 1985.

¹¹ Cf. F.X. Coquin and C.G. Francelle, 1986.

¹² Cf. L. Trotsky, 1975 and 1978.

anarchist proposals and the program of the Socialist Revolutionaries, especially defended by the Left SRs, the Union of Socialists-Revolutionaries Maximalists.¹³

The four principal social actors of the 1905 revolution would also surprise in terms of their rapid radicalization and movements: the working class and their waves of mass and political strikes, aiming to conquer economic and political demands already achieved in various Central and Western European societies;¹⁴ the peasantry, although at a much less important scale, with demands for the abolition of taxes and/or the extinction of leases; soldiers and sailors in mutinies which took place on naval bases (Sebastopol) or warships (the episode of the battleship *Potemkin*) and who demanded the end of the war and the democratization of the armed forces. Even when reinvented by fiction, as in the case of the battleship, these became historic landmarks.¹⁵ Finally, but no less importantly, the non-Russian nations, almost half of the Russian Empire in demographic terms, demanded autonomy and at times complete independence.

In contrast, the social elites and the bourgeoisies did not show the expected dynamism. Initially their social representations, such as the Union of Unions, bringing together professional associations, and the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Kadets, showed a certain willingness to fight. However, after the October Manifesto they showed a great political timidity attributed to their dual political and economic dependency on the state and international capital.¹⁶

In the context of the broad social movements of 1905, there also emerged a form of democratic organization, original and innovative, the workers' councils, the *soviets*.¹⁷ Initially in May they appeared as organizations for strikes and struggle. They would spread through various cities, including St. Petersburg, capital of the Empire. There they assumed great political importance, in particular in the context of the large strike in October 1905, becoming an unprecedented democratic experience for large groups of workers (the election and revocation of representatives), also

¹³ Cf. Volin, 1969 and O. Anweiler, 1974.

¹⁴ Cf. A. Pankratova and Sidorov, 1949.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Ferro, 1989.

¹⁶ For the history of Russian liberalism, cf. V. Leontovitch, 1974 and W.G. Rosenberg, 1974. The Kadets, which had organized underground and in exile, emerged into legality during the Revolution. In the sphere of the social elites, another group, the more moderate Octobrists, was formed after the so-called October Manifesto (1905), formulated by the Tsar, when he promised to convene a representative assembly, although not exactly defining its powers.

¹⁷ Cf. O. Anweiler, 1974; Geller, L. and Rovenskaia, N. 1926; Khrustalev-Nosar, 1907; L. Trotsky, 1975.

exercising at certain moments the activities of an alternative public power.¹⁸ The experience would often be evoked, in particular by a fraction of the left of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and above all by anarchist groups which had seen in it, since the beginning, a possible embryo of a federative power structure in a networked form, which corresponded to their orientations and perspectives.¹⁹

However, the effervescence of the subordinate classes and the protagonism assumed by workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors did not hide the fact that the political leaderships of parties, including the socialists, were mostly occupied by people who from the social point of view were linked to the social elites. It was a popular revolution — by illiterate or semi-literate people — but led in the political spheres by educated intellectuals coming from the middle or upper classes.²⁰ The contradictions which could result from this were not considered a relevant question.

Against the popular demands, the Tsarist regime asserted itself. Important concessions contributed to this — the peace treaty with Japan in September 1905, removing Russia from an exhausting war and the recognition of a representative assembly to be elected according to the above-mentioned October Manifesto. Victorious, the autocracy seemed to have reestablished itself, incarnating traditions of a dynasty which had reigned for almost three centuries.²¹

Although the revolution was defeated after the crushing of the Moscow insurrection in December 1905, the political forces involved in it did not suffer a catastrophic defeat. Its main leaders and political parties

¹⁸ The Soviets as an alternative power also emerged in Moscow, in the context of the December insurrection, and in part in provincial cities.

¹⁹ For the Revolutionary Socialists cf. Anweiller, 1974 and D.W. Treagold, 1951 and 1955. For the anarchists, cf. Volin, 1975. In relation to the Social-Democrats, the Mensheviks were important in the formation of the St Petersburg soviet, cf. Anweiller, 1974. The Bolsheviks, although estimating the soviets as positive instruments for struggle, did not hide, like at times the Mensheviks, a certain suspicion of institutions which could become rivals of political parties. It is important to bear in mind the social force that propelled the soviet movement, which widely overlapped with the political parties. Cf. L. Trotsky, 1975 and Volin, 1969. The Revolutionary Socialist Party, founded at the end of 1901, equally participated in the formation of the soviets, although in minority positions. For the SRs cf. D.W. Treagold, 1951 and 1955. A fraction of the “left” of the SRs, the Union of Socialist-Revolutionary Maximalists already referred to was formed in 1905 and afterwards defended radical conceptions of “Soviet power.”

²⁰ Cf. O. Anweiller, 1974; H.J. Strauss, 1973; M. Ferro, 2011.

²¹ Cf. R. Wortaman, 2013. For the history of the Russian Empire, cf. H. Seton-Watson, 1967.

remained, partially legalized in the context of the Imperial Duma, although the powers of the latter and its legal space for political action were always very limited.

Undoubtedly the 1905 Revolution had a great international impact, above all in Europe, reinforcing radical tendencies in the social democratic movement which used the “Russian example” as a lever to deepen the questioning of the parliamentary reformism which marked the trajectory of European socialist parties.²²

To end these brief reflections on the essentially democratic 1905 Revolution, we have to raise the question of the unpredictability of the course of historical events. This revolution *manqué* — like those which happened later — puzzled the great majority of those who thought about Russian society, including the revolutionaries.

III. The February 1917 Revolution

After the defeat of the Moscow insurrection in December 1905, the revolutionary forces did not recover quickly, despite the hopes of the most optimistic. Criticism and questioning of the Tsarist order was limited to the parliament — very controlled and limited — and the popular organizations which while underground did the molecular work of agitation and propaganda.²³ In exile — in Siberia or abroad — many political leaders remained active, but the effect of their work was almost irrelevant from the social point of view. In this context, survival was in itself a victory.

The situation began to change in April 1912, when during a protest by workers in the Bodajbo gold mine, in the Lena river basin in Siberia, repression by the military killed hundreds of workers, causing commotion throughout the empire. Thereafter social movements were reactivated in cities — workers and students —, reaching relatively high levels in the first half of 1914.²⁴ However, when the Great War started, in August of the same year, to the distaste of the most radical sectors, the immense majority of those who lived in Russia rallied around the imperial government in defense of the threatened fatherland — the so called *Sacred Union*, which, albeit

²² Cf. R. Luxemburgo, 1979; J. F. Fayet, 2007.

²³ The Imperial Parliament (Duma) was kept alive, but at the cost of a drastic limitation of its margins of freedom. It could be dissolved at any moment by the Tsar and had no control over the government, appointed by the Tsar. However, the political parties, including the socialists, were legalized, even though the deputies did not enjoy parliamentary immunity.

²⁴ Cf. N. Werth, 1999. The ascendant curve of strikes in this period brought Russia close to a profound political and social crisis.

provisionally, erased class differences and contradictions. The few parliamentarians, Bolsheviks, who protested openly were arrested. The violence did not produce any social convulsion.

Since the first month of the war the inferiority of the Russians against the Germans was evident. The Imperial armies were more numerous and the Russian soldiers, once again, would show fearlessness and a spirit of sacrifice, but they were clearly inferior in weapons, munitions, and logistics (railway networks, means of communication, and equipment of all types). Moreover, the Russian officers and commanders, with few exceptions, demonstrated a notable incapacity from the point of view of the demands of modern war.²⁵

As a consequence, very quickly the war was transformed into a succession of German victories and on the Russian side, into carnage. Before the end of 1915, around four million losses were reported, including dead, injured, prisoners, and missing. A *débaclé*. Faced with the incapacity of the government, society began to self-organize to deal with the challenges and urgencies of war: transport and assistance of the injured; supply; organization of industry. In the Duma, the so-called Progressive Bloc was formed, asking for the formation of a government responsible to the Parliament.

In 1916, a strike movement reemerged in the factories. At the bottom of society, the anger of people provoked social pressure.²⁶ Among the elites, conspiracies, focusing on the empress, of German origin, and the figure of Rasputin, a Siberian of obscure origins to whom were attributed supposedly miraculous gifts.²⁷ Rasputin's inclinations for continuous orgies compromised the prestige of the Imperial family, demoralizing the Tsar, the government, and the social elites. At the end of 1916, a group of nobles killed Rasputin, but they could go no further than this in the machinations of the top of society, showing the limitations which had been demonstrated in 1905.

The situation deteriorated blatantly and the social disintegration was regularly recorded in the information gathered by the political police. Despite this, there was no expectation of an immediate change. Not even V. Lenin, exiled in Switzerland, expected an immediate eruption of great proportions.²⁸

However, this was exactly what happened.

²⁵ Cf. A. Soljenitsin, 1973.

²⁶ Cf. S.M. Balabanov, 1927.

²⁷ These gifts were particularly appreciated by the Tsarina and the Tsar, since Rasputin, with his gestures and prayers, managed to do better than the doctors accredited for the treatment of the hemophilia which tormented the only male son of the imperial couple.

²⁸ In a 1917 speech to Swiss socialists in Zurich, Lenin was skeptical about a revolutionary solution to the Russian situation in the short or mid-term. The revolution would explode less than two months later. Cf. D. Aarão Reis, 2017b.

On 23 February 1917,²⁹ in the then Petrograd,³⁰ a five day long insurrectional process began which, to general surprise, led to the overthrow of an empire whose ruling dynasty — the Romanovs — had reigned for three centuries.

The process began with a march by women in honor of their international day.³¹ They paraded through the central streets of the city with banners and flags calling for bread and an end to the war. Many people were enthusiastic because they received widespread sympathy and were not bothered by the security forces. On the following day other marches were held, larger and more vibrant. Again, apart from some small clashes with police agents, they were not repressed. Even the Cossacks, known for their truculence, appeared indifferent and at some moments showed sympathy. Limits were being passed and the police received strict orders to stop the avalanche. Political activists, who feared the beginning of an unmerciful devastating repression were by then participating and encouraged a third day of demonstrations. More violent clashes occurred, causing more indignation than fear. The fourth day witnessed a torrent of demonstrations. However, this time the troops quartered in Petrograd were mobilized. Some attempts at confraternization occurred, but under the orders of their officers the soldiers opened fire, wounding and killing hundreds of people. However, it turned out to be a shot in the foot of the regime. That night and early the following morning, revolted, regiments rebelled against their officers and conspired with their comrades in other barracks. On the fifth day, there was great confraternization between soldiers and workers. The Armory was taken over and arms distributed to the population. Police stations, prisons, and the court were burned, with the prisoners being freed. The insurrection was victorious. The Tsar and the general staff of the army made some attempts to reverse the situation, sending new troops to repress the uprising. In vain. The troops disbanded or melted away when coming into contact with the protestors or were lost along the way on the railways, their movement sabotaged by rail workers.³²

On the evening of the fifth day, while in the Imperial Duma

²⁹ In this article, we use the calendar then in force in Russia, the so-called Julian calendar. There was a 13-day gap between it and the Gregorian calendar used in Europe, its colonies and the Americas.

³⁰ St. Petersburg had its name altered to Petrograd in 1914, a change made to comfort Russian nationalist feelings.

³¹ 23 February in the Julian calendar corresponded to 8 March in the Gregorian calendar, International Women's Day.

³² Cf. D. Aarão Reis, 2017a; N. Faulkner, 2017, M. Ferro, 1997 and 2011. For testimonies from this epoch, cf. N.N. Sukhanov, 1962 6 S. Alekseev (org.), 1925 and A.G. Shliapnikov, 1925.

negotiations were being carried out for the formation of a provisional government, a council, a *soviet*, of workers and soldiers was formed. On 2 March, trying to maintain the monarchy, the Tsar abdicated in favor of his brother. This maneuver was unsuccessful. Archduke Michael, feeling insecure, also resigned, The Tsarist autocracy collapsed.³³

A time of doubts, uncertainties, promises, fears, and hopes began.

Some aspects of the February revolution deserve attention.

As stated, it was an *unexpected* revolution. Desperately wanted by revolutionaries and feared by the social elites and the forces of repression, all right, but surprising due to the strength, intensity, and velocity at which it was produced. Particular mention should be made of the *collapse of the armed forces* and the consequent — decisive — participation of the soldiers. However, this collapse only occurred because it was supported by the actions of the Petrograd workers.

An *anonymous* revolution. Not spontaneous, as those who overestimate parties and political organizations as the formulators and “makers” of history would like us to believe. But propelled by groups and organizations invisible to the naked eye, which — contrary to the law and forces of repression — organized the demonstrations which effectively bought down the autocracy in a crescendo.

A *violent* revolution, contrary to a certain legend which sees February 1917 as a pacific movement, without opposition. The official count of the victims was a little more than 1400 dead and around 6000 injured.³⁴

It should also be mentioned that it was a *unanimous* revolution since, once victorious in Petrograd, it triggered a dynamic of adhesions which reached everywhere in the vast Russian Empire and all social classes and political institutions, including the army high command who forced — or remained indifferent to — the tsar and his brother into a dual abdication.

The unexpected February insurrection, anonymous, violent, and unanimous, such as the one in 1905, was a *democratic revolution*. The following months would certify its radical potential.

IV. The democratic revolution spreads its wings.

Having overthrown the Tsarist autocracy, Russia, which was considered a “prison of the peoples,” became the “freest country in the world.” The question is that the empire was not just any state. As Claudio Ingerflom has shown,³⁵ it is not possible to understand it as if it were a

³³ For chronological references, cf. N. Avdeev, 1923 and F. A. Golder, 1927.

³⁴ Cf. N. Werth, 1999 and W.H. Chamberlin, 1965.

³⁵ Cf. C. Ingerflom, 2010.

European state.

Gosudarstvo, the traditional term used until now to translate into Russian the word and the concept of “state,” imported from the West, assumes and expresses an absolute and crushing power, essentially different from the state in the European mold, born after the French Revolution. In the context of the reforms which began in the 1860s, various “intermediary” institutions were created between society and the Tsar, such as the Dumas/municipal assemblies and the *Zemstva*/provincial assemblies, representative institutions of the social elites. Later, after the 1905 revolution, the Imperial Duma began to function and political parties were legalized. However, all of these institutions, and those created under the auspices of the Education and Justice reforms, remained without autonomy, subordinated to the will of the Tsar, and without any power of independent decision-making.³⁶

The result was that after the overthrow of the autocracy there was an enormous vacuum of power. *Multiple powers* emerged to occupy these spaces.³⁷ A Provisional Government was formed, remade, and reformed various times during the year, until it was overthrown by the October Revolution. However, its powers were very limited, even from the point of view of the control of traditional civil and military institutions.

On the other hand, in parallel, there emerged everywhere different institutions, expressing the conscience and will of the subordinate classes – soviets, committees, assemblies, associations, clubs, red guards, etc., in factories, educational institutions, neighborhoods. At a certain point, it became very difficult to find someone who was not part of one or two of these institutions and these, in turn, did not obey any type of political or geographic “center,” assuming a *network* format.³⁸

Undoubtedly the Petrograd Soviet had great political prestige, due to its location in the capital of the country and due to its size, but its decisions and advice had no binding or coercive power over the other cities and much less over the dozens of soviets or committees which existed in the city of Petrograd.

It should be noted that from March onwards, the same process of the

³⁶ One should note that for the election to the Imperial Duma, despite the inequalities imposed by the electoral census, the creation of worker and peasant circumscriptions, the so-called *curias*, allowed the electoral expression of popular and workers’ parties, such as the Social Democratic party and the Socialist Revolutionary party amongst others.

³⁷ Cf. M. Ferro, 1967/1997.

³⁸ The best descriptive study of this process is the previously mentioned one by O. Anweiler.

formation of committees, soviets, and popular organizations occurred in the countryside, where 85% of the population lived and in the trenches and lines of combat, where there were around seven million men, the great majority of which were “peasants in uniform.”³⁹

Similarly, among the non-Russian nations — very diverse but demographically relevant, since they accounted for almost half the population of the Empire — this process of self-organization also spread, creating diverse forms of political parties and regional or national assemblies.

At an initial moment the demands of the people were quite modest. Workers asked for rights already recognized in a large part of European states, summarized in the eight-hour workday. They also asked for pay increases which would allow them to deal with the growing inflation and for improvements in working conditions, which would respect their dignity as human beings.

Soldiers and sailors, still somewhat timidly, asked that peace gestures be sent to the belligerent powers. They did not want to be considered as “cowards,” but called attention to the harshness of life in the trenches and to the need to bring an end to the slaughter.

Peasants asked for access to land, all lands — the *black partition*, a historic demand — and without any type of compensation. In relation to the non-Russian nations, there was talk of independence, but the majority were satisfied with portions of autonomy, legally established in a federation or confederation, whose shape was in urgent need of definition.⁴⁰

Connecting these demands there emerged the Constituent Assembly, a historic aspiration of all the different opposition groups to the tsarist autocracy. It was to be chosen by universal suffrage and be free and sovereign to formulate a new constitutional pact which could organize society in the molds of a democratic republic — the most moderate dreamed of a constitutional monarchy, inspired by the British model.⁴¹

The Provisional Government, supported by the Petrograd Soviet, recognized some of these demands: in an agreement with the business class, an eight hour working day was decreed; ample democratic liberties and an amnesty for all political prisoners became law, as well as the right to

³⁹The formulation of the concept of *dual power* (Provisional Government X Petrograd Soviet), coined in a pioneering manner by L. Trotsky (L. Trotsky, 1978) and incorporated by a large part of the historiography, made “invisible” the effective existence of the multiple powers to which I referred.

⁴⁰ For the national question, cf. R.G. Suny and L. Zakharova, D. Areland J. Cadiot (orgs.), 2010.

⁴¹This was the position of the Octobrists and the moderate liberals. Cf. P. Miliukov, 1978.

citizenship for all peoples living in Russia. In the international sphere, an appeal on all belligerent states and peoples was approved, for an immediate opening of negotiations to end the war. Other fundamental questions, such as the national question and the land question would be studied by specific committees which were to prepare reports and proposals to be considered by the Constituent Assembly, whose date was to be established later.⁴²

Considering the past of Russia, these were important advances. However, due to the atmosphere of ebullition which existed all over the country, they quickly came to be considered insufficient.

The liberals from the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Kadets, on the one hand, leading the Provisional Government, and, on the other, the moderate Social Democrats (the Mensheviks, and the Socialist Revolutionaries) hegemonic in the soviets, seemed to have the situation under control.⁴³

They then formulated a type of equation: the democratic liberties which had been established would be maintained, however, more profound reforms had to wait for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, elected by all the peoples of Russia, in other words with representativeness and legitimacy to formulate and adopt a new institutional framework which would enshrine the great reforms demanded. However, this had to wait for the end of the war, an indispensable condition for the holding of free elections, with the participation of all, including those in territories occupied by the Germans. The equation, considered reasonable by many, was supported by the I Pan-Russian Congress of Peasants in May 1917 and by the I Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets of Soldiers and Workers in June of the same year. However, it very quickly lost touch with the social democratic movements which were becoming increasingly radical.

Among workers the demand for *worker control* became established, in other words, the right of workers to gain a voice — and a decision-making capacity — for the recruitment and dismissal of workers, to verify the financial situation of companies, and also to supervise the general flow of raw materials and the production of companies. These ideas were defended by the *factory committees*, organizations which spread through all the important cities and stood out as the most radical wing of the worker movement.⁴⁴

⁴²The right of Poland to independence was recognized immediately, but it had scant practical impact, since Russian Poland was occupied by German troops.

⁴³For the Mensheviks, cf. Z. Galili, 1989, I. Getzler, 1967 and L.H. Haimson, 1974; for the Socialist Revolutionaries, cf. J. Baynac, 1979, M. Hildermeier, 2000.

⁴⁴For workers' movements cf. D. Koenker, 1981; D. Koenker and W.G. Rosenberg 1989; A. Rabinovitch, 1968 and 2004; A. S. Smith, 1983.

Peasants had been occupying land since May, led by *agrarian committees*.⁴⁵ Although the Peasant Congress, as mentioned above, had supported the need to wait for the Constituent Assembly, in practice in many provinces people were expropriating land by violence. Armed deserters frequently assumed the leadership of these episodes.⁴⁶

The non-Russian nations also gave indications that they were not willing to wait for the Constituent Assembly. Nationalist movements in the Ukraine, in Finland, the Caucasus, and even in Central Asia presented proposals for autonomy and independence that the coalition of moderate socialists and liberals found difficult to assimilate.⁴⁷

However, the most dangerous threat came from the process underway in the armed forces. Shortly after the victory of the insurrection in February, an anonymous groups of soldiers published at their own initiative the so-called Prikaz no. 1.⁴⁸ Despite its nondescript title,⁴⁹ the document called for the radical democratization of the armed forces. It called for the formation in all military units of *soldier and sailor committees*, with wide-ranging powers to control arms and munitions and military movements of any nature. Moreover, it demanded that soldiers and sailors be treated as citizens, no longer being obliged to salute officers when off duty. The officers saw this as a coup, since, above all in war, regular armed forces are based, as is well known, on discipline and hierarchy. They protested in vain, in face of a disintegration process which from then on gained speed, since the initiatives for power over war and peace had no concrete impact. A combination of mass desertions and open challenges to officialdom would gradually annul the operational capacity of the Russian navy and armies.

At an increasingly speed in the context of a chaotic economic crisis these convergent social movements would question and finally make unviable the connection of the dominant political forces consisting of the liberals and the moderate socialists.⁵⁰ In the wake of the successive crises

⁴⁵ The popular peasant movements functioned under various denominations, and in many cases the traditional assemblies, existing within the framework of the peasant community, assumed the direction of social movements and demands. Cf. T.A. Remezova, 1950.

⁴⁶ For the peasant movements, cf. N. Werth, 1999 and D.J. Raleigh, 1986 and 2001. M. Gorky criticized and lamented the violence unleashed by peasants and workers, characterizing it as “Asiatic,” as if the Europeans were not capable of the worst violence committed in Europe and in the whole world. Cf. M. Gorky, 1922.

⁴⁷ For non-Russian nations, cf. note 34.

⁴⁸ M. Ferro has highlighted the importance of this document, cf. M. Ferro, 1967.

⁴⁹ Приказ/Prikaz means Service Order in Russian.

⁵⁰ For the economic data, cf. A. Nove, 1990.

(April, July, and August), these political groups lost their support bases, including in popular organizations.

In contrast, and as a consequence, parties and groups committed to more radical proposals grew: the Bolsheviks, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries,⁵¹ and the anarchists,⁵² who allied with each other around proposals to overthrow the Provisional Government and to transfer *all power to the soviets*. As well as expressing these proposals, these parties encouraged the contradiction between those “from below” and those “from above,”⁵³ enhanced by steepness of the social inequalities.

It should be added that even within popular organizations, since March 1917 another contradiction had been evidenced between popular participation, active in the large assemblies and the grassroots, on the one hand, and on the other, the preeminence in executive, steering, and organizational bodies and commissions of individuals from the intermediary or upper parts of society. Educated and familiar with the Word, they assumed an immeasurable importance, as had happened in the 1905 revolution.⁵⁴ On the other hand, in the urban soviets, the soldiers and workers in small and mid-sized companies acquired an over-representation in relation to workers from large factories. This fact was registered and raised protests as a limit on and a contradiction of the democratic principle.⁵⁵

Undoubtedly, the dynamism of the social movements and the popular organizations opened promising horizons, creating conditions for a new revolution, capable of meeting the radical democratic demands of the subordinate classes and the immense majority of those who lived in Russia.

⁵¹ Within the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR) criticism grew of the moderation of its principal leaders. Currents were thus formed which organized the Left SR, in practice another party. They claimed the revolutionary tradition of the nineteenth century, abandoned in practice by the moderate SR. For the Revolutionary tradition of the nineteenth century, cf. D. Aarão Reis, 2006; I. Berlin, 1988 and F. Venturi, 1972.

⁵² In the perspective of the best social history, these currents appear as expressions of social movements, much more than as the artificers or organizers of these. For a classic work about this, cf. A. Rabinovitch, note 38. For the anarchists, cf. P. Avrich, 1967, M. Brinton, 1975 and Volin, 1969; for the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, cf. O.H. Radkey's, 1958 and 1973.

⁵³ In Russian, between the *нижний и верхий*. The latter were also called the *буржуй*, the bourgeoisie.

⁵⁴ Cf. Note 20.

⁵⁵ These protests were overcome with the argument that it was fundamental to incorporate in the soviet movement all enterprises and all soldiers. Cf. O. Anweiler, 1974.

V. The October Revolution

This new revolution occurred in October 1917. To the contrary of the February one it was not anonymous, but organized by the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Petrograd Soviet. It did not happen unexpectedly, it was planned and carried out by identified political forces: the Bolshevik party, supported by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and by the anarchists. It was not the result of a popular and workers' revolution to which the soldiers adhered, but basically a process carried by soldiers and sailors (from Kronstadt). It did not take a few days, but was resolved in a little more than twenty-four hours, between the afternoon of 24 October, when the movements of the revolutionary troops in Petrograd started, and the night/early morning of 25/26 October, when the Winter Palace fell into the hands of the insurgents.⁵⁶

The revolution, whose possibilities of victory would be underestimated by many political forces and leaders, asserted itself with great speed through Russia, surprising its enemies and even a large part of its supporters and leaders.

However, the nature of the victorious revolution would cause numerous controversies.

It is common in history to find episodes which raise passionate controversies in relation to which decades later it is still not possible to establish consensus. The October Revolution is certainly one of these episodes. Moreover, the political passions unleashed by it and around it have produced various distortions.

Primo, the eyes of historians have been turned to cities and to Petrograd in particular, leaving in obscurity the fundamental and equally decisive role played by the agrarian revolution.⁵⁷ *Secundo*, the struggles between political parties have been privileged, imagining them as demiurges of history, almost always losing sight of the fact that their action, with the exception of their specific importance, was much more an expression of social movements and popular organizations than the other way round. *Tertio*, in the debates about parties, focus on leaders — often worshipped or

⁵⁶ Simultaneously, the Winter Palace, the base and center of the Provisional Government, was taken over and the II Soviet Congress was held which immediately, in its first session, approved the transfer of all power to the soviets and the Decree on Peace. The second session, which began on the night of 26 October and ran until late in the morning of 27 October, passed the Decree on Land and the formation of the new revolutionary government, the Council of People's Commissars/CPC.

⁵⁷ Cf., amongst others, G.T. Robinson, 1932 and S. Grosskopf, 1976.

demonized as responsible for the political processes in which they participated — has increased.

Cities, parties, and leaders are unavoidable aspects, but it has to be asked up to which point the excessive attention given to them has not ended up eluding social movements and contexts without the study of which the revolutionary process remains an undecipherable enigma.

A revisionist historiographic movement, from the 1960s onwards, emphasizing the importance of contexts and social movements, has managed, through innovative research (much of which serves as references for this article), to open new paths and alternatives – for directions of investigation, objects to be studied, and methodological angles.⁵⁸

One of its most important contributions, amongst others, was to reposition the debate about the October insurrection. A mere coup, led astutely and in a Machiavellian way by the Bolsheviks as proposed by the *cold warriors*?⁵⁹ Or an audacious social revolution, as the Soviet and communist historiography intended?

The Gordian knot has already been cut by various historians. A coup, certainly. That does not exclude the evidence of a historic revolution. Instead of the proposal of radically different and diverging alternatives: coup OR revolution, we may posit the apparently paradoxical meeting of two poles which at first sight seem antagonistic: coup AND revolution.⁶⁰

The *coup* is evidenced *threefold*: in the decision and the preparation of the insurrection before and in spite of the II Congress of Soviets, carried out by the Bolsheviks, at the proposal of V. Lenin.⁶¹ At the *start* of the military insurrection of 24 October 1917, therefore before the II Congress of the Soviets. And *on the publication* of a note on the morning of 25 October 1917, signed by the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC), announcing the overthrow of the Provisional Government, thus presenting the II Congress of Soviets, which would start a few hours later, with a *fait accompli*. It is on this evidence that the *cold warrior* historians base themselves to affirm the coup-like nature of October and based on this the irredeemable authoritarian origins of Soviet socialism.⁶²

⁵⁸ Amongst other works are those of M. Lewin, 1995 and 2007; A. Rabinovitch, 1968 and 2004 and R. Suny, 1972 e 1994.

⁵⁹ Cf. R. Pipes, 1995 and L. Shapiro, 1965.

⁶⁰ Cf. the works of A. Rabinovitch, 1968 and 2004 and Marc Ferro, 1967/1997 and 2001.

⁶¹ Cf. the minutes of the meetings of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party on 10 and 16 October 1917, when the decision was made to make insurrection an *immediate* task.

⁶² For the minutes of the meetings of the CC of the Bolshevik party on 10 and 16 October 1917, cf. Lenin, V. Oeuvres, vol. 26, pp. 192-193 and 195-197,

However, *at the same time*, the *social revolution* is evidenced during the II Congress of Soviets, opened on the night of 25 October 1917.⁶³ In the first session of the Congress, the delegates approved the *transfer of all power to the Soviets*, validating with their votes the victorious military insurrection and also approving a declaration of commitments in which figured the proposal of an “*immediate and democratic*” peace, the handing over of *all land to the peasants, the democratization of the armed forces; workers control* over production; respecting the convocation of the *Constituent Assembly*⁶⁴ and *the right of all the nations which peopled Russia to legislate for themselves*.⁶⁵ In a second session, begun on the night of 26 October, they adopted the Decree on Land, incorporating peasants’ historic demands and legally enshrining the ongoing agrarian revolution. Finally, the first revolutionary government was established, the Council of People’s Commissars (CPC), with a provisional nature, to be confirmed by the Constituent Assembly to be elected weeks afterwards.⁶⁶

The demands of the active social movements — workers (worker control), soldiers and sailors (peace and the democratization of the armed forces), peasants (distribution of all land, without annexations), and non-Russian nations (right to independence), the four basic vectors of the revolutionary historic process of 1917 — were solemnly adopted and proclaimed.

It was for no other reason that, to the contrary of what had happened in February, adherences to the new government rapidly multiplied, guaranteeing throughout Russia the “triumphal march of the Soviet revolution”⁶⁷ and allowing V. Lenin, referring to the process, to formulate his apt statement: “it was easier than raising a feather.” It was the triumph of a radical, historic, democratic revolution. The achievement of what was frustrated in 1905. The crowning of the horizons opened in 1905.

However, a consensus was formed about the October Revolution,

respectively.

⁶³ Cf. K. Ryabinski, 1926.

⁶⁴ It is important to mention that the new revolutionary government assumed the title of “provisional,” referring all its decisions to the Constituent Assembly, called for the following 12 November. Cf. O.H. Radkey, 1950.

⁶⁵ In the Decree on Peace, once again the right of peoples to self-determination was emphasized.

⁶⁶ For the II Congress of the Soviets, cf. V. Lenin, *Oeuvres.*, vol. 26, pp 265-269 and also A. Rabinovitch, 2004, as well as the testimonies of the epoch, such as the classic of J. Reed, 2017. In all the revolutionary decrees the mention of their “provisional” nature was recorded, pending confirmation by the Constituent Assembly.

⁶⁷ Cf. A. Rabinovitch, 2004 and E. Mawdsley, 1987.

exalting it or demonizing it, as the birthplace of Soviet socialism, distinguishing it radically from previous revolutions, and at the same time pushing the others into obscurity.

It is exactly this common place which we intend to question in the final part of this article.

VI. The 1905 and 1917 revolutions (February/October): the forgotten nexus

The 1905 revolution is usually presented as a “dress rehearsal,” or in a more appropriate manner, as a frustrated revolution. That of February 1917 appears as “spontaneous,” since it is the tradition of political parties – and the political police – to designate as “spontaneous” all the processes not explicitly directed by visible and registered political organizations. The October Revolution, celebrated or demonized, is seen as a radical break with the past, including with the two which preceded it, the birthplace of a new regime — Soviet socialism.

These names hide — or let slip — something essential — the *democratic nexus* between the first Russian revolutions.

The three witnessed the grandiose struggles for the democratization of Russian society. The democratization of political power — contained in the proposal to overthrow autocracy, opening the possibility for the self-organization of the people and election based on (direct and secret) universal suffrage of a Constituent Assembly. Democratization of land ownership — land monopolized until then by several thousand owners, by the state and by the Church, now handed over, without any type of compensation, to peasants who took the responsibility to distribute it according to the needs and possibilities of each family. Democratization of the armed forces — regulated by authoritarian mechanisms which denied the dignity of the human being. Democratization of the economy, questioning business despotism and structuring worker control over production. Self-determination of peoples, thus, democratically recognizing the right of non-Russian nations to decide their own fate, even to the point of separating from Russia, if so willed.

This democratic program was sketched out and defeated in 1905. It was raised again as a hypothesis in February 1917. It matured during the struggles of that year, when Russia became “the freest society in the world,” witnessing a notable process of self-organization of the people, in the form of Soviets, committees, assemblies of all types. Finally, the program became victorious through the October Revolution, when the II Congress of the Soviets of worker and soldier deputies approved it, which was afterwards confirmed in the election for the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, when the socialist parties — демократия/democracy — won by an immense

margin — more than 85% of votes⁶⁸ — and finally by the II Congress of Rural Soviets and Committees in December 1917.

Despite the coup-like nature of the October insurrection, planned and decided by the Bolsheviks without any consultation of democratic organizations, the Bolsheviks were obliged to bow to the force of the democratic movements, putting before the vote and the approval of the soviet congresses a radically democratic program which in some essential points was foreign to their convictions, formulations, and programs.

The triumph of the democratic program between October and December 1917, despite the contradictions and authoritarian tendencies which had already been noticed (and denounced) enshrined the victory of thousands of women and men who implemented a historic radical and democratic revolution, with global impact and relevance.

It is these broad social bases which allow the understanding of the “triumphal advance of the Soviet revolution” and the fact that achieving victory was “easier than lifting a feather.” A *cycle with a democratic nature* thus came to an end, obscured by the distorted form by which the Russian revolutions would be considered from then on.

This revolution would be lost and was later lost, beaten by a new revolution — *a revolution in the revolution* — undertaken in the first months of Soviet power⁶⁹ and consolidated during the civil wars (1918-1921) and war communism which devastated Russia. The democratic hypothesis would still give one last — and epic — sigh in the context of the Kronstadt revolution in March 1921,⁷⁰ crushed by violence. A second cycle then came to a close, the *authoritarian cycle*, the birthplace of Soviet socialism. What it exactly consisted of and why the democratic forces were not capable of prevailing against the authoritarian tendencies will be the theme of future essays.

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⁶⁸ Cf. O. Radkey, 1950.

⁶⁹ Cf. I.N. Liubimov, 1930 and A. Rabinovitch, 2007

⁷⁰ Cf. P. Avrich, 1967

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From Reformer to Spectator: Gorbachev's Views on the Political and Economic Processes of Post-Soviet Russia

César Albuquerque¹

A few hours before publicly announcing his resignation as president of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in a farewell call to the then US president, George H. W. Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev had assured his interlocutor that he had no intention of abandoning politics and hide in the taiga forests of northern Russia.² Fulfilling his promise, the last leader of the socialist superpower would remain highly present on the Russian political scene for the two decades following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

But if until 1991 his actions took place in the central nucleus of power, that is, in the upper echelons of the Communist Party of the USSR and, later, in the presidency of the country, after his departure from the Kremlin, Gorbachev would no longer occupy any position in the state administration of the Russian Federation. The former leader of perestroika would now change from reformer to spectator of ongoing processes. This does not mean, however, that his subsequent activities turned out to be merely passive. Both at home and abroad, Gorbachev sought to reflect and express his thoughts about what was happening politically and economically in the country. He had an active, often critical voice about these processes.

In general, the analyses and manifestations of the former Soviet leader were directly related to the historical context of the years that followed the Soviet decline. In this sense, we can distinguish two periods in his intellectual trajectory. Firstly, during Boris Yeltsin's presidency (1991-1999), when Gorbachev had as one of his main themes the criticism of the political and economic transformations underway in the Russian Federation. He repeatedly pointed out the mistakes of Yeltsin's economic "shock therapy." Secondly, in the first decades of the 21st century under Vladimir Putin, Gorbachev presents new reflections, with initial hopes brought about by the political stabilization and economic recovery of the country being gradually replaced by misgivings about the fate of democracy in Russia.

If it is true that the systematic study of the evolution of Mikhail Gorbachev's political and economic thought during perestroika has not yet been the object of much attention by researchers, who often limit themselves to analyzing his performance as a political agent and reformer, even less has been studied about his ideas and reflections after the demise of the Soviet

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² GORBACHEV, 1992, p.83

Union. In this sense, the present essay intends to venture into this field and present some of Gorbachev's main contributions to the political and economic debates experienced by post-Soviet Russia.

It should be noted that the ideas presented here consist of preliminary observations, obtained from a larger research project in progress, which aims to identify the main trends in the ideas of the last Soviet leader before, during and after perestroika. This project is being carried out as a doctoral thesis in the Social History Graduate Program at the University of São Paulo, using Gorbachev's publications, speeches, interviews and public statements as main sources.

The Yeltsin Era

The 1990s were a period of profound changes and turmoil in the former Soviet republics. With the Union dissolved, each of the new independent states began to conduct the necessary reforms autonomously to complete the processes of economic and political reorganization initiated by perestroika. In Russia, under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin, a serious political and economic crisis marked the period. Data from the International Monetary Fund show that between 1992 and 1998, the country's economy fell by 21%, while for the World Bank the contraction between 1991 and 1998 exceeded 35%.³

After leaving the Kremlin in December 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev soon found a new political home. Later that year, he created the International Foundation for Socioeconomic and Political Studies, popularly known as the Gorbachev Foundation. The organization, which effectively started its activities in the first months of 1992, was structured along the lines of other institutions of this nature. It invited former national leaders to participate, hosted debates and encouraged research focused on topics considered important for the development and improvement of modern society.⁴ At the same time, the organization is also dedicated to the study of the recent history of Russia and the USSR, especially during the years of perestroika.

At the head of this foundation, Gorbachev organized debates and meetings between experts and politicians, in addition to producing a huge

³ Data for the value of the Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity) in international dollars. Data extracted from: IMF- International Monetary Fund. "IMF Data Mapper - World Economic Outlook" [Online Database] April, 2018. (Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPGDP@WEO/RUS>); WB – World Bank. "World Bank Open Data" [Online Database]. 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?end=1999&locations=RU&start=1989> [accessed 03/23/2018]

⁴ TAUBMAN, 2017, pp. 619-620.

flow of publications aimed at discussing the political and economic reality of his country. In his first reflections after his resignation, although mainly focused on the assessment and recording of the recent processes involved in the Soviet Union's dissolution, the former leader strongly criticized his successor. The assessment of Yeltsin's performance as president of Russia was a constant theme in Gorbachev's speeches in the 1990's. He visibly felt betrayed by what he considered opportunism on the part Yeltsin during the final period of the USSR: he had outwardly supported the negotiations for the approval of the new Union Treaty while at the same time negotiating separately the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus. In Gorbachev's words:

See how Yeltsin behaved. Together we lead the preparations for the Union Treaty and, with the other republics, we sent the project to the Supreme Soviet for discussion. But in Minsk, Yeltsin offered something completely different. He didn't even call me. At the same time, he talked to George W. H. Bush, although there was no need to involve the President of the United States in this. This is not just a matter of morality. I see no justification for this style of behavior.⁵

The political disputes at the end of perestroika profoundly marked the relationship between the two leaders, directly determining the content of the criticisms that Gorbachev directed against the first president of the Russia Federation not only during his term, but also in the Putin era, by characterizing the legacy that Yeltsin had left his successor. Although he sponsored the initial rise of his future opponent in the ranks of the Communist Party of the USSR (CPSU), the former General Secretary of the Central Committee (CC) sought to share this burden with other leaders of the time, who had advised him in this regard. Later Gorbachev would say he regretted having been too "liberal and democratic" with Yeltsin, that he should have removed him from the central core of power and appointed him to a diplomatic post before the end of the USSR.⁶

Much of Gorbachev's first year outside the Kremlin was spent abroad, where he made a series of trips, the vast majority of which at the invitation of Western governments, universities and organizations where the Soviet leader enjoyed great popularity. There, Gorbachev began to clarify his view on the main concepts and ideological debates that marked his reforms.

⁵ GORBACHEV, 1992, p. 63.

⁶ STEELE, 2011a.

His interventions in this period, often aimed at audiences in Western Europe and the United States, had a tone critical to the old Soviet order, while valuing liberal principles and reinforcing the virtues of democracy along the lines of the model in force in the main Western powers.

However, a closer look at these manifestations allows us to see that the former Soviet leader had not become a *laissez-faire* “Chicago boy” as far as his economic views. On the contrary, he was an early critic of the kind of economic “shock therapy” used in the Russian Federation during the 1990s, which implemented neoliberal and monetarist prescription.⁷ Analyzing the first steps of this new policy, he said that it favored money over people.

A year has passed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but also since the beginning of a large-scale experiment aimed at the immediate introduction of the market through shock therapy.

It is not my intention to assign former Prime Minister Gaidar and his team a responsibility that they do not have. [...] But they made serious mistakes. They ignored this important circumstance: economic reform is a long and gradual process that can only progress in stages. [...] This policy had no priorities, neglected humans, was anti-human. This team was blinded by neoliberal ideological blinkers, by the desire to follow monetarist theories and recipes without reservation.⁸

The preliminary results of the measures adopted until that moment, far from attaining stabilization, had been a worsening of all the economic and quality of life indicators of the Russian population. Among them, Gorbachev highlighted the acceleration of inflation, the increase in unemployment, the fall in production and the reduction in security indicators and the supply and quality of public services. According to him, such worsening had only been seen in the days of the Great Patriotic War [WWII], which had put the Russian state itself at risk.⁹

But shock therapy in itself was not the only threat to the recovery of economic growth and the building of democracy in Russia. Once again, Gorbachev reinforced his criticism of Yeltsin, whom he considered one of the greatest risks to the country’s stability.

⁷ GORBACHEV, 1993, p. 425.

⁸ GORBACHEV, 1993, pp. 424-425.

⁹ GORBACHEV, 1993, p. 425.

What worries me is Yeltsin's lack of security, his lack of firmness where it is indispensable, and his explosive statements where efficient and cautious work is needed. I am convinced that Yeltsin has not yet given his full contribution. But he must free himself from the clutches of groups that push him towards political manipulation, exceptional measures. To be up to Russia's immense potential, he needs to rise on the national level. The immediate future will show us whether he is capable of it.¹⁰

On several occasions, the former leader revealed his concern for the consolidation of democracy in Russia, a process that was hampered by a combination of inadequate reformist policies and an authoritarian style by the new leaders. Such worries did not appear to be unreasonable. Data from opinion polls conducted with the Russian population by the American Institute *Pew Research Center* show that when asked about their preference between extending democracy or giving leeway for a strong leader to solve national problems, it was only in 1991 that democracy was the option chosen by the majority of Russians (51%). From 1992 onward, the preference for a strong leader was chosen by the majority of the population until it reached the 70% mark in 2002 (already under Putin).¹¹

Confirming Gorbachev's fears about the future of democracy in his country, 1993 was one of the most troubled years in Russia's recent history. Yeltsin faced strong resistance from the federal legislature, still controlled by a communist majority, in relation to neoliberal political and economic reforms. The dispute between the powers would reach its peak after a national referendum organized by the president, in which the majority of voters had affirmed their consent to the reforms. In view of this result, the president decided to dissolve the parliament, even though the Constitution did not give him such power. In response, the Russian parliamentarians approved the president's impeachment, creating a real constitutional crisis. After intense protests and conflicts between the population and the security forces, the army, obeying Yeltsin's orders, bombarded the parliament building, where the oppositionists were quartered.

As a result of the crisis, that legislature was finally dissolved, replaced by a new bicameral parliament. A new constitution was adopted after approval in a national referendum held later that year. Although his positions did not have much repercussion abroad, Gorbachev claims to have

¹⁰ GORBACHEV, 1993, pp.426-427.

¹¹ PRC, 2012, p. 17.

manifested himself in the local press condemning Yeltsin's authoritarian attitudes, to whom he attributes responsibility for the serious crisis experienced by the country.¹² Before the bombardment of the parliament building, the former Soviet leader had defended the resignation of the head of the executive branch and called for simultaneous elections for president and parliament as the best solution to the political crisis at that time.¹³

In the midst of this turbulence, Gorbachev defended his perestroika, which he defined as a choice to democratize and humanize the country. He claimed that after the demise of the Soviet Union he was even more convinced of the validity of socialist values for the world and, specifically in his country, in a clear criticism of the liberal Russian reformers of the period. However, his diagnosis is that at that point socialists (meaning social democrats) were scattered in the various parties and did not have enough political and electoral strength.¹⁴ The 1995 parliamentary elections in Russia confirmed this diagnosis: the sole assumed "social democratic" party [*Sotsial-demokraty*] received only 0.13% of the votes on the party lists and did not win any seats in the Duma, which remained divided between the communists and their allies on the one hand, and right-wing populist groups on the other.¹⁵

Once again, Gorbachev's criticism of Soviet socialism is not accompanied by praise for the Western model. For him, capitalism had not emerged unscathed from the years of conflict with the USSR; it was also necessary to modernize and reform it. The former leader is opposed to views shared by Western ideologues and conservatives in the former Soviet republics who regard the Soviet decline as a victory for capitalism. He pointed out that the Cold War was costly for all sides and the West also needed to experience its own perestroika.¹⁶ The solution to this problem ought to be cooperation between different views, debated in a democratic environment, by means of gradual measures that lead to the construction of a system which would combine the best of both worlds. He argued that Russia has the potential to offer the world new paths, new directions to face the

¹² GORBACHEV, 2016, pp. 65-70.

¹³ GORBACHEV, 1995, P. 684.

¹⁴ GORBACHEV, 2002, p. 127.

¹⁵ See: "The official Central Electoral Commission protocol, December 29, 1996, including corrections by the Central electoral Commission Resolutions, January 4, 1996 and February 19, 1996". In: GELMAN, Vladimir. GOLOSOV, Grigori V (eds.) *Elections in Russia, 1993-1996: Analyses, Documents and Data*. Berlin: Sigma, 1999. Available at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20041010051827/http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=RUSSIA&election=ru95duma> [accessed 07/08/2019]

¹⁶ GORBACHEV, 2002, p. 142.

dilemmas of the end of the century and the exhaustion of both capitalist and socialist models. But at that moment, however, his country was going in the opposite situation, facing the challenges of reform with neoliberal prescriptions.

Let me just add something to that for my part: today the exact opposite is actually happening in Russia. Following the precepts of the International Monetary Fund, efforts are being made to adjust everything to the IMF's demands, to duplicate Western models, and to throw out the entire complex and valuable experience, the Soviet experiment, and to denounce it all as harmful ballast. This is a mistake on both the philosophical and the political levels, which leads to a conflict with society, because it is in conflict with our people's mentality, culture and needs. The liberal ideologists display a nihilistic attitude toward the past, whereas in fact the past should be utilized, including that part of it that is linked with socialist values.¹⁷

Between 1995 and 1996, the Russian political scene experienced a new period of turmoil due to the approach of parliamentary and presidential elections. And it was also during this period that Gorbachev published his memoirs, an extensive work that he himself defined as his political testament. Although the vast majority of pages are dedicated to Soviet times, from childhood to his resignation as president of the USSR, the English edition is accompanied by an epilogue, dated July 1996, in which the author addresses issues related to the new Russia.

Gorbachev points out that since his departure from the Kremlin he had not been absent from politics and that he had fought a battle against those who, in his view, wanted to relegate him to oblivion and distort the truth about his role in conducting reforms. The former leader said that the press and media in general, especially in Russia and the former Soviet republics, had "poisoned" the atmosphere of public opinion against him.¹⁸ He also accused the Russian government of creating obstacles during his travels abroad, where his figure was seen in a much more positive light.¹⁹

Although he reported and thanked the welcoming way in which he was received in those trips, the former Soviet president reaffirmed his

¹⁷ GORBACHEV, 2002, p. 181.

¹⁸ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 679.

¹⁹ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 676.

rejection of the vision of an alleged Western victory in the Cold War. For him, the Western powers, especially the USA, seemed to want to take advantage of the crisis experienced by Russia after the collapse of the USSR. Gorbachev pointed out that the mentality of confrontation between the systems had not been overcome and that the great powers supported a policy based on maintaining security by force and guided by old prejudices. The crisis experienced during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and NATO's aggressive expansion toward Russia were the most categorical examples of this enduring bipolar vision.²⁰

At the Russian domestic level, the worsening of the crisis in the early 1990s was for him the result of two major coups against his country. Firstly, the dissolution of the USSR, which separated market and production structures that were built and functioned in an integrated manner. Secondly, the erroneous model adopted by the new leaders in carrying out the reforms.²¹ Regarding this last point, Gorbachev pointed out that the worsening of the crisis scenario since 1992 was directly related to the application of the liberal policies prescribed by the IMF.

The other bleeding wound was the catastrophic consequences of the erroneous reform model, and the unskilful, amateur methods of its implementation. A very important rule was ignored, that, first reforms should not be forced on people, and second, while being energetic and consistent, they should not be like a "cavalry charge", or an avalanche.²²

During his travels to Latin America, he saw how the direct application of the IMF's liberal reforms, which used foreign formulas without adapting them to local realities, resulted in social problems, as Russia was then experiencing.²³ He maintained that he had always been against shock therapy, but that at first he chose to moderate his criticism of the policies adopted and the leadership itself for the good of the country.²⁴

As a result of this process, Gorbachev claimed that nostalgia for the "good old" top-down authoritarian practices as well as disbelief in market reforms and democracy itself was growing among Russians.²⁵ This diagnosis

²⁰ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 675.

²¹ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 687.

²² GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 687.

²³ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 677.

²⁴ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 681.

²⁵ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 688.

seems valid if we note some opinion polls taken in Russia after the end of the 1990s. According to data from the *Pew Research Center*, in 2002 80% of respondents stated that a strong economy was more important than a good democracy (11%). In the same survey, 70% of respondents said they believed in a strong leader more than in democracy (21%) to solve Russia's problems.²⁶

If shock therapy had aggravated the economic crisis in Russia, Yeltsin's performance at the helm of the country had, in Gorbachev's view, led to a profound destabilization of the Russian political system. Taken together, these factors signaled authoritarian tendencies on the part of the new Russian leaders and a setback for the country's democratization.²⁷ According to Gorbachev, in the face of instability and growing popular rejection of the Moscow government, the crisis in Chechnya was used as an instrument of political mobilization by Yeltsin. Gorbachev offered to mediate the conflict. The proposal was accepted by the Chechen authorities, but ignored by the federal government. He argued that the best way out of the impasse was a negotiated peaceful solution that would guarantee greater autonomy for Chechnya, without imperilling the unity of the Russian state.²⁸

For Gorbachev, crises like that of Chechnya were just another negative aspect brought about by the Soviet Union's dissolution. The fall of the USSR interrupted the democratization process in several republics, with the rise of authoritarian currents that took advantage of the instability experienced in the final years of perestroika. The replacement of the Union by the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) proved to be highly flawed and did not provide real integration of the former republics. The economic infrastructure, hitherto integrated, had been disconnected and ethnic conflicts not only did not abate, but, in many cases, intensified.

Although he felt that his image was associated with negative aspects since the dissolution of the USSR, Gorbachev believed that people's views were gradually changing and public perception of him improving. Driven by this expectation, he decided to participate more actively in Russian politics. He was a candidate in the 1996 presidential elections.

My trips around the country, my talks with my fellow citizens and their reactions to my speeches, together with the many letters I received, convinced me that the country needed Gorbachev and that inspired me to

²⁶ PRC, 2012, pp. 17-18.

²⁷ GORBACHEV, 1996 p. 686.

²⁸ GORBACHEV, 1996 pp. 689-690.

participate in the 1996 presidential campaign.²⁹

Regarding the electoral campaign, which at that time dominated the Russian political debate, he pointed out that the population was being persuaded to believe that they could only choose a “lesser evil” between the two main leaders in the polls. On the one hand, Yeltsin, whose political group wished to maintain the course of reforms that the people were rejecting; on the other hand, there was the Communist Party candidate, Gennady Zyuganov, whose authoritarian and backward-looking preferences Gorbachev mistrusted. He found this dichotomy abstract and held that both poles represented a setback in the path of freedom chosen by Russians since perestroika. For him, the path forward would be the deepening of democracy - one of the mottos of his campaign.³⁰

But if there was any improvement in public perception of the former Soviet leader, it was still going on very slowly. Public opinion polls conducted in 1995 revealed that Gorbachev’s image in the mid-1990s was not very positive in his own country. When asked whether they shared the view of much of the West who considered Mikhail Gorbachev to be one of the most exceptional political figures of the 20th century, only 20% of respondents responded in the affirmative.³¹ The following year, the result obtained in the presidential elections in Russia seemed to confirm this scenario: he received just over 386,000 votes from a total of 75.5 million voters who went to the polls, which represented about 0.5% of the votes.³²

The end of the 1990s was marked by a succession of economic crises. Most of them started in emerging countries, but soon affected global capitalism as a whole. Russia went through a serious financial crisis in August 1998. The Moscow government devalued the ruble and decreed a moratorium on the payment of its foreign debt. The roots of the crisis were to be found in another global turmoil that occurred in Southeast Asia a year earlier and resulted in a reduction in credit supply and a drop in the prices of commodities, including minerals and energy resources, Russia’s main exports. Potentialized by the effects of austerity policies, Russian GDP fell by almost 5%, while inflation reached 84%.³³

²⁹ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 695.

³⁰ GORBACHEV, 1996, p. 695.

³¹ “*Mikhail Gorbachev, prezident SSSR*”. Fond “Obshchestvennoye mneniye”, 2006.

³² “*Russia Presidential Election Observation Report*”. International Republican Institute, 1996.

³³ See: World Bank. “World Bank Open Data” [Online Database]. 2018. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?end=1999&locations=RU&start=1989> [accessed 11/27/2019]

In Europe, while the process of EU integration was deepening, the continent witnessed political and military upheaval. Amid the unfolding dissolution of Yugoslavia, NATO troops intervened militarily in the Kosovo War, bombing targets in present-day Serbia, then under the regime of Slobodan Milošević. In Russia, there was also a worsening of ethnic-national disputes, especially in Chechnya, where a second war started in August 1999. Combined with the effects of the August 1998 financial crisis, this would influence the reconfiguration of the Russian political scenario from 2000 onward.

Faced with this reality, Gorbachev made clear his view on the role of Russia in the main global processes underway. When dealing with European integration, he considered this movement to be a positive symptom of the change in the security and cooperation paradigm since the Soviet Union's dissolution. However, the former Soviet leader pointed out that its protagonists insisted on marginalizing the potential of Russia's contribution, as if the country was not part of Europe.

Given all the specificity of its historical development, given all its national pristinity, Russia, to be sure, belongs in Europe, and Europe is incomplete and deficient without Russia. Prominent Western politicians, whom the Cold War's time-serving quality did not render blind, were aware of this. A case in point is de Gaulle's famous idea of Europe stretching as far as the Ural mountains.³⁴

For the former Soviet leader, Russia is an inalienable part of what he defines as "Greater Europe" and, as such, cannot remain excluded from the integration processes experienced on the continent. He highlights Christian culture in the formation of Russian national identity as one of the factors of contact and common origin with the rest of European countries. Likewise, he points out that even among Western European countries there are cultural differences as significant as in relation to Russia and that this did not prevent the process of union from progressing.³⁵

The European Union's exclusion was not the only negative sign coming from the West. Gorbachev identified an unfair and even aggressive treatment of Russia on the part of these countries. The greatest example of this hostility was NATO's expansion process, which throughout the 1990s incorporated several Eastern European countries as members, including

³⁴ GORBACHEV, 1997, p.258.

³⁵ GORBACHEV, 1997, p. 258

former Soviet republics. As a result, a cordon sanitaire was formed around Russia, making his country feel increasingly threatened. The former Soviet leader claims that there was no point in maintaining an organization like NATO in the post-Cold War era. In addition, he pointed out that the organization's advance to the east violated the agreements reached during the German reunification process at the end of the previous decade.³⁶

The hostile policy of the West towards Russia signaled to Gorbachev that until that moment the USA and the European Union had not changed their perspective in relation to Moscow, even with the end of the Cold War. The NATO expansion and the exclusion of Russians from the integration of the continent were understood as a threat not only by the government, but also by various segments of Russian society. Such hostility strengthened radical, anti-Western sectors of the Russian elite interested in capitalizing on the conflict and staying in power.³⁷ In addition, the situation of imminent confrontation could lead to the resumption of the arms race and favor the rise of political groups with a more aggressive rhetoric as an instrument to defend the country's national interests. It is interesting to note that the tendencies Gorbachev was then detecting seem to foreshadow future developments, especially under Vladimir Putin's regime.

Gorbachev argued that throughout most of her modern history, Russia looked to the West, although with reservations and resistance when such orientation clashed with the particularities of Russian civilization.³⁸ Shock therapy was a clear example of an attempt to impose Western prescriptions and models without respecting the specificities of Russian reality. Its creators were trying to solve macroeconomic problems at the expense of social protection, a positive legacy left by the Soviet past.³⁹ He reiterated that the destabilization caused by neoliberal policies would fuel popular dissatisfaction not only with the government, but also with democracy and the free market.⁴⁰

In the late 1990s, Gorbachev pointed out that crises such as the one experienced by Russia were directly linked to the globalization process, both in their origins and in the economic, political and social result caused by them. Faced with the loss of legitimacy of democratic values and the market, he favored, as a possible solution, the abandonment of liberal radicalism in favor of the introduction of social-democratic policies, which would reconcile the potential opened up by free initiative with the historical desire

³⁶ GORBACHEV, 1997, p. 261

³⁷ GORBACHEV, 1997, p. 261

³⁸ GORBACHEV, 1997, p. 262

³⁹ GORBACHEV, 2000, pp. 44-45

⁴⁰ GORBACHEV, 1997, p. 263.

for social justice, which he identified as an essential characteristic of his people.⁴¹

He also addressed possible solutions to the Russian crisis. As a starting point, he advocated cooperation of political forces with the new government, here understood as the new prime minister appointed by Yeltsin, Yevgeny Primakov, a former Gorbachev ally from the times of perestroika. Support for the ministerial cabinet would be essential for the country's stabilization. Then, it would be up to the leaders to seek to strengthen the national economic structure and prop up production and the quality of life of the population. Finally, the former Soviet leader considered it necessary to renegotiate the foreign debt with international creditors, easing the pressure on the Russian economy.⁴²

Regarding the functioning of the Russian political system, Gorbachev advocated changes to constitutional legislation aimed at reinforcing the role of parliament vis-à-vis the president, thus establishing a more balanced semi-presidentialism. For the economy, in line with his social-democratic platform, he defended the establishment of a regulated market again. If these measures did not materialize, Gorbachev believed that popular dissatisfaction with democracy and the market would grow even more, making room for the rise of a more powerful and authoritarian leader.⁴³

Until that moment, Gorbachev believed that the reforms introduced by the Moscow government after the Soviet Union's dissolution largely dehydrated the main achievements of the Soviet period, causing an increase in poverty levels and a reduction in the well-being of the population.⁴⁴ The process of consolidating Russian democracy, on the other hand, had proved to be much slower since the end of perestroika. According to him, the blame rested with the Yeltsin government, now characterized as an authoritarian regime allied with the "oligarchs", an economic clique that came to control most large Russian companies after the privatization of the 1990s.

[...] The present authoritarian regime is putting the brakes on Russia's development towards democracy. For this regime, democracy is becoming more and more of a burden. The political forces that came to power on the democratic wave have been removed from power or have removed themselves from power today. A bureaucratic-oligarchic regime has taken shape, and

⁴¹ GORBACHEV, 1999, p. 10.

⁴² GORBACHEV, 1999, p. 12.

⁴³ GORBACHEV, 1999, pp 12-13.

⁴⁴ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 30.

under the guise of democratic phraseology it has imposed a neoliberal course of so-called reforms on our society.⁴⁵

Resuming the debates at the end of the Cold War, the former leader recognized the economic advantages of the current model in the West, notably in terms of productivity and quality. The market as a mechanism for choosing and allocating resources proved to be more efficient than the extremely centralized planning of the socialist countries, which ended up deprived of the flexibility and adaptability of the markets.⁴⁶ On the other hand, he argued that capitalism is nowhere near perfect or immune to error. It was at that time primarily responsible for the deepening of social problems, such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. The environmental agenda was also affected by the incessant and irresponsible search for profit.⁴⁷ For Gorbachev, the worsening of these issues was due to the absence of an agenda of social policies and aims, which had been the strong side of the socialist experience. The last Soviet leader pointed out that despite problems of supply and quality, socialism had guaranteed minimum conditions of subsistence, social protection and stability for all.⁴⁸

The solution, therefore, would be neither the small government proposed by neoliberals nor the return to the planned authoritarian model of Soviet socialism, but in the consolidation of a market regulated by the State, which combines the advantages of planning with the flexibility of the market. The success of such model would only be possible through the advance of democracy in the scope of the economy, politics and society as a whole.⁴⁹ The Soviet experience did not bury socialism, but on the contrary, revealed what was in fact incompatible with its core values. Socialist theory maintains its historical relevance and can still contribute to the solution of major issues of contemporary society, such as justice, equality, freedom, democracy and solidarity.⁵⁰

His diagnosis at the end of the 1990's was that the battle against authoritarianism had not been won and that on the eve of the new century, democratic consolidation in the former space of the USSR was at risk.

Unfortunately, thus far we cannot say that overcoming

⁴⁵ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 36.

⁴⁶ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 48.

⁴⁷ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 49.

⁴⁸ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 50.

⁴⁹ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 51.

⁵⁰ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 67

totalitarianism in the Soviet Union has resulted in the genuine democratization of either Russian society or the other former republics of the Soviet Union. The freedom of choice provided by perestroika has by no means resulted in the choice of genuine freedom.

The regime in Russia today can be called democratic only in part. Outward forms and institutions characteristic of democracy do exist, but their content remains authoritarian in many respects. Moreover, in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union forces continue to exist that long for a return to the essentially totalitarian past — although a complete return to that past is simply not possible.⁵¹

The twentieth century ended with great challenges for the future. And the 2000s would soon bring in new factors — and new actors.

The Putin Era

The turn of the century was accompanied by profound changes both in the Russian domestic scenario and globally. In Moscow, Boris Yeltsin surprised everyone by announcing his resignation from the presidency on December 31, 1999. Following the constitutional prescriptions, the position was temporarily held by the country's prime minister, Vladimir Putin, until the call for new elections, anticipated for March 2000. Putin had been appointed prime minister in August 1999 and since then his popularity had grown as a result of his firm performance in the Second Chechen War, after years of political fragility and vacillation. With a speech based on the defense of unity and the rescue of national stability, Putin won the elections and became the second president of the Russian Federation since the Soviet Union's dissolution.

The first years of the so-called "Putin era" were marked by the resumption of economic growth, after years of decline under Yeltsin. According to data from the World Bank, the Russian economy grew at an average of more than 7% per year during Putin's first two terms (2000-2008), totaling in 2008 a GDP growth of more than 180% compared to 1999.⁵²

⁵¹ GORBACHEV, 2000, p. 261.

⁵² Data extracted from: WB - World Bank. "World Bank Open Data" [Online Database] 2019: [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.KD?end=2018&location_s=RU&most recent value desc=false&start=1998&view=chart](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.KD?end=2018&location_s=RU&most%20recent%20value%20desc=false&start=1998&view=chart) [accessed

Different authors point out that this accelerated growth was partly due to a combination of propitious circumstances: a significant increase in the price of hydrocarbons in the first years of the new century and a natural tendency for the economy to recover after the August 1998 peak of the Russian financial crisis of the 1990s. In parallel, the government also adopted felicitous measures, such as implementing tax reform and expanding investments in the “real” (*i.e.*, productive) sector of the economy.⁵³ Although the initial GDP growth in practice merely recovered the levels of the Soviet period (1991), for the general population the feeling was that the country was experiencing its first positive economic tide since perestroika.

In line with the economic reality, the political environment also seemed to favor the new president. Since Putin’s rise, Russia experienced a period of political stabilization and pacification, especially when compared to the turmoil of the previous two decades. In 2004, Putin carried out an important political and administrative reform, the main measure of which was the end of the direct election of local governors. Another fundamental change was the standardization of the competences of central and local powers, as well as the resolution of legal conflicts between the different spheres of administration, with the primacy of decisions made in Moscow. Taken together, the measures adopted by Putin were aimed at reestablishing the supremacy of central power, which had been weakened in the Yeltsin era with its “exchange of favors” (political bargaining) between the federal president and regional governors.

Putin fought yet another battle for power, now against a group of powerful “oligarchs” who, throughout the 1990s, had allied themselves with the Yeltsin government in exchange for a series of privileges. Initially, many of these entrepreneurs supported the election of Putin, who once in power led a campaign to restrict the political privileges of this group. The aim of the new president did not seem to be to end the oligarchic system that had been in place since the end of the USSR, but to submit it to his authority. The lawsuits brought against Mikhail Khodorkovski and Boris Berezovsky were emblematic of that period.

In this new phase, a frequent object of interest to foreign reporters was Gorbachev’s opinion about the policies and actions adopted by the new Russian government, especially with regard to the attacks against the press and the risks to democracy in the country. In the early years of the Putin era, some of Russia’s major media outlets were investigated and often these investigations ended in lawsuits against oligarchs who had supported Yeltsin. For many analysts in the West, it was in reality an action orchestrated by the

authorities to control the press.

To the surprise of many of his interlocutors in the West, the former Soviet leader believed that this move by the new president on the issue of media and oligarchic processes represented the beginning of a battle against corruption, and that despite possible excesses and the need to reform the Russian judicial system, he trusted Putin's intentions.⁵⁴ Gorbachev openly declared his support for Vladimir Putin and his belief in the new leader's commitment to democratic values. Contrary to many analysts, he understood that democracy continued to consolidate in Russia, although it was necessary to remain vigilant about possible deviations in this process. For the former Soviet leader, perestroika had created a solid basis for democratic development in the country, especially in the mentality and conscience of the citizens.⁵⁵

Gorbachev also reported on personal encounters with Putin, in which the new president had declared himself committed to strengthening democracy. For the former Soviet leader, some of the toughness of the new measures was due to the necessity of overcoming the difficult legacy left by Yeltsin. He further stated that the new president had been under a lot of internal pressure in his attempts to overcome the political and economic chaos inherited from his predecessor and that although some mistakes had been made, in general Putin was leading the country on the path to stabilization and problem solving.⁵⁶

In March 2000, Gorbachev led the formation of the United Social Democratic Party of Russia, founded via the merger of a series of minor movements with a social democratic ideology. In the following year, this association would merge with the Russian Social Democratic Party, then led by Konstantin Titov, resulting in the Russian Social Democratic Party (SDPR). At the time, the former Soviet leader publicly declared that social democracy was at the heart of the Russian state and population. What is more, he said that this view was shared by President Putin himself — something that may help explain Gorbachev's sympathy and excitement with the new leader in his early stages.⁵⁷

Gorbachev's positive view of the new president would remain largely unshaken throughout Putin's first term. The 2003 parliamentary elections were widely criticized inside and outside Russia, thanks to a series of legal measures adopted before the process, which, in parallel with the advance of state control over the press, resulted, according to these critics, in

⁵⁴ GORBACHEV, 2002b.

⁵⁵ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 104

⁵⁶ GORBACHEV, 2006 p. 105

⁵⁷ GORBACHEV, 2001.

compromising the fairness, competitiveness and freedom of the electoral process. At the end of the process, the government party and its allies obtained a large majority of elected deputies.

In relation to this event, the last Soviet leader recognized the occurrence of problems in the election for the Duma, but at that time exempted the president from direct responsibility for them.⁵⁸ On that occasion, he not only defended Putin, but also warned against what he considered to be exaggerated pressure exerted by the West on the Russian government, which could result in an increase in hostile feelings and reinforce the old practices of the Cold War period, compromising not only domestic stability, but also foreign relations.⁵⁹

Even in the face of this scenario, Gorbachev reaffirmed his belief in the consolidation of Russian democracy, rejecting the assertions — frequent, especially in the West — that there was a risk of fostering authoritarianism under Putin's rule.⁶⁰ The last Soviet leader believed that the Russian president had the necessary conditions to rebuild the country and that he showed signs that he was taking advantage of such an opportunity, but that the success of these policies and of Russian democracy itself depended to a large extent on the decisions of the president at that time.

The president's position will be decisive [...] If he uses his power to continue democratic reforms, to modernize the country, to address the country's many problems, then Russia will move forward. If he uses power only to retain power, to make his own power even firmer, then this, for me, would be a big disappointment.⁶¹

It is possible to note that although confident in Putin's intentions, Gorbachev was aware of the risks that the process of democratic consolidation in Russia was undergoing at that time. The former Soviet leader did not deny that there were mistakes or that certain measures adopted by the new government were authoritarian, but he tried to put them in perspective in view of the political situation in the country, removing much of Putin's responsibility and directing it to his predecessor in the office. Gorbachev recognized the improvement in economic indicators under the new government, but he stressed that this increase was largely based on the rise in hydrocarbon prices and that the real recovery of the Russian economy should

⁵⁸ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 119

⁵⁹ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 120.

⁶⁰ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 119

⁶¹ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 120.

be based on the productive sphere and the modernization of the country.⁶²

For the former leader of the USSR, foreign critics did not properly know the Russian reality of that moment. He argued that, given the high levels of poverty and the economic, political and social difficulties that Putin had inherited from Yeltsin, some tougher or even authoritarian measures, although limited to certain points and of a specific character, could be necessary.⁶³

On more than one occasion, Gorbachev claimed that the president was under strong political pressure with a power struggle raging between antagonistic forces inside the Kremlin over the country's future course. Contrary to what was feared in the West, the former Soviet leader claimed that the main risk to the future of Russian democracy was not a conspiracy on the left or any rescue of the Soviet past, but rather attacks from the right of the political spectrum. As an example, he cited the discussions that had been taking place in the Russian government and society regarding the reform of public services. Liberal government officials proposed to reduce spending in these areas, substituting direct provision for their monetization through "vouchers" given by the government to citizens as a way of paying — in whole or in part — for services to be provided by private entities.

In criticizing the "government," Gorbachev was actually addressing the cabinet led by the prime minister and not the president himself. Regarding the top leader of the country, Gorbachev reiterated his confidence and support, even attributing to Putin himself the credit for having suspended these more radical proposals.⁶⁴ For him, there was a clear distinction between the progressive character of the presidential speeches, in which an advance in social issues was advocated, vis-à-vis the policies enacted by the prime minister, guided by a more liberal perspective in the economic field.

This dissociation in criticism of the administration is related to the formally semi-presidential system that was constituted in Russia after the end of the USSR, which divides the powers of the executive branch between two offices: on the one hand, it gives the president, as head of state, functions linked to representation, conduct of foreign policy and defense; on the other hand, the Prime Minister, as head of government and leader of the ministerial cabinet, is responsible for conducting home policies.

In practice, however, there was traditionally a greater preponderance of the presidential figure, who is responsible for not only the choice of the prime minister (with the consent of the parliament), but has also traditionally defined the main direction of policies and, in certain circumstances, was

⁶² GORBACHEV, 2004a.

⁶³ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 113

⁶⁴ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 134.

authorized to dismiss part or all of the cabinet and dissolve the Duma.⁶⁵ In this sense, although the cabinet led by the prime minister was charged with proposing and conducting reforms in the various administrative spheres — such as education, health or social security — in practice, however, given the primacy of the president, it is unlikely that such measures were being taken in dissonance with the ideas of the head of state, as it often sounds in the speech of the former Soviet leader.

Gorbachev also sought to counter the rumors that arose in the West associating Putin's authoritarian positions with a mobilization of left-wing forces that intended to restore, albeit partially, the communist model. The former Soviet leader said that authoritarian setbacks could occur in Russia, but that at that time there was no room for the return of communism, which lacked both influence on the country's leadership — notably on the right — and support among the population. He also disputed the arguments of Western leaders that attributed the restrictions on business and trade with Russia to the authoritarian tendency of the Moscow regime, whose political instability would drive investors away. Gorbachev pointed out that stability for investments is not necessarily linked to the success of democratic regimes, such as the good investment relations maintained by Westerners with China, and that, on the contrary, a closer commercial relationship could contribute to greater political stability in his country.⁶⁶

At the beginning of the new century, Russia was faced with a new choice, which largely reflected the trajectories of the two reform experiences that the country had undergone in the past two decades. For Gorbachev, Putin's choice seemed to be the advancement of the ideas contained in perestroika.

Today, Russia is facing a moment of choice:

- either it will follow the inertia of the 1990s Yeltsin's reforms, which broke down the state and the economy and impoverished tens of millions of people,
- or, based on the prerequisites created during the first years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, it will choose the path of truly democratic reforms that take account of its unique identity, its historic experience and cultural and intellectual potential.⁶⁷

Reinforcing his critical view of shock therapy, Gorbachev argued

⁶⁵ For a deeper look at the construction and functioning of the post-Soviet Russian political system, see FERRARO, 2016, p. 9-149.

⁶⁶ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 134.

⁶⁷ GORBACHEV, 2006, pp. 52-53.

that the policies implemented throughout the 1990s replaced the gradual trajectory adopted by perestroika with a “revolutionary” and radical option. He defined Yeltsin’s reforms as “Bolshevism” with an inverted direction, but unlike the 1917 movement, the first post-Soviet Russian president received support and was applauded by Western powers.

As in the previous decade, Gorbachev claimed that the West still did not understand Russia, keeping it in the position of a potential enemy even after the decline of the USSR. The responsibility for continuing the separation between Moscow and the Western powers should be shared by both sides of the equation, which seem to be unable to overcome the old prejudices and views of the past. Although he acknowledged that some decisions by the Russian administration reinforced certain stereotypes, the former Soviet leader remarked that the United States refused to treat Russia with the respect it deserved, given its history and its contribution to the development of humanity in several aspects.⁶⁸

While Western leaders and analysts accused Vladimir Putin of concentrating power in his hands, Gorbachev claimed that these critics did not understand the particularities of Russian historical development, such as the two-century Mongol rule, late serfdom, and communism itself. Such peculiar experiences marked the trajectory and constitution of his country and also differentiated the political mindset of Russians, especially what concerned the question of centralization of the state. For him, Moscow’s challenge consisted precisely in finding a balance between central power and regional autonomy, guaranteeing stability to the country — a path that, according to Gorbachev, was being followed by the president.

Currently, we have the prerequisites for moving ahead to complete Russia’s reforms. Putin has proposed a political program for the coming years that includes fighting poverty, promotion of small- and medium-sized business, helping move Russia’s manufacturing base toward post-industrialism.

This is the right direction for Russia. But the question remains: Who will implement those goals? Unfortunately, the current (cabinet) government and parliament are incapable of doing so. This is the problem.⁶⁹

Gorbachev resumed his criticism of Yeltsin when he affirmed that the excess of decentralization instituted during the 1990s had not brought

⁶⁸ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 126

⁶⁹ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 129.

more democracy to the state, but, on the contrary, had resulted in regional “feudalism,” whose objective was to guarantee support to the former president at the federal level. Faced with this scenario, he defended the regulatory reform that guaranteed the primacy of federal laws over regional ones.⁷⁰ The former Soviet leader criticized, however, the end of direct elections for governors, as well as the end of independent candidacies for parliament, measures that for him took power away from the people.⁷¹

After Putin’s victory in the 2004 elections, Gorbachev maintained his support for the president, although he openly criticized the lack of competitiveness of the electoral process in Russia. Defending the stabilization achieved by the president in his first term, the former Soviet leader envisioned that in his new term, Putin would move toward political modernization and the advancement of democratization in the country. For him, Putin’s first term had recovered what had been lost by Yeltsin’s policies, but now it was necessary to move forward.

Great efforts will be required to overcome the consequences of the chaos that swept Russia in the 90s. The solution to this most difficult historical problem fell on the years of the presidency of Vladimir Putin. At the first stage, stabilization was achieved, and this is positive. Now the main thing is to continue the democratic transformation, because without this it is impossible to bring Russia onto the path of dynamic development.⁷²

Gradually, Gorbachev’s almost unrestricted support gave way to tentative criticism of the president’s delay in putting his campaign promises into practice. He questioned Putin’s choices for head of the cabinet of ministers, although he granted that the president had moderated the government’s more radical and ill-conceived measures.⁷³ He also defended the nationalization of strategic sectors of the economy, such as energy and railways, but questioned the excessive use of force and the policy of fear as a legal instrument in investigations against oligarchs and politicians accused of corruption.⁷⁴

In 2007, Putin gave his famous speech at the Security Conference in

⁷⁰ GORBACHEV, 2006, p. 129

⁷¹ GORBACHEV, 2004b.

⁷² GORBACHEV, 2005a.

⁷³ GORBACHEV, 2005c.

⁷⁴ GORBACHEV, 2005b.

Munich, Germany. On that occasion, the Russian president harshly criticized the actions of the United States and its allies on the international stage and defended the establishment of a new multipolar order. For many analysts, Putin's speech marked the decisive break with Russia's more passive stance on international relations since the fall of the USSR. Economically recovered, Moscow now seemed ready to resume its role as a protagonist on a world scale.

While in the West Putin's words echoed in a threatening tone, Gorbachev approved the speech of Russian President. For him, the representative explained to his interlocutors that after years of crisis Russia was in a position to return to occupy the space it needs on the international stage and to position itself against the hegemonic attacks of the USA and its allies.⁷⁵ In fact, much of Putin's criticism had already been voiced by the former Soviet leader, as was the case with his warnings against the expansion of NATO and the hostilities of the West towards Moscow.

Until the end of Putin's second term, Gorbachev still largely shielded the president from direct criticism, constantly reiterating his support. However, he sharpened his judgment of United Russia, the main party supporting the government. Although the president was not officially affiliated with the party until the eve of the 2008 election, United Russia not only controlled the parliament but also filled the cabinet of ministers — chosen by the president. The reforms in the electoral system approved by the deputies were vehemently rejected by the former Soviet leader, who accused the majority party of acting only with an interest in maintaining its power, becoming a bureaucratic apparatus worse than the PUCS.⁷⁶

The proximity of the elections stirred the Russian political scene in late 2007. Constitutionally, Putin could not run for a third term, but there were rumors that the president would modify the legislation so that he could run for office again. Gorbachev repeatedly rejected this possibility and welcomed the decision of the president to support Dimitri Medvedev's presidential bid instead. With the victory of the candidate of the ruling party, Gorbachev again criticized the lack of competitiveness of the elections due to the changes that had been proposed by United Russia, but reiterated his support for the new president. He also stated his belief in Medvedev's and Putin's commitment to democratic values.⁷⁷

Faced with the new government, Gorbachev continued to defend the legacy of the stabilization brought under Putin, but reinforced the need for advances in both economic modernization and democracy. It is interesting to

⁷⁵YAKUB, 2007a

⁷⁶KOLESNICHENKO, 2007.

⁷⁷GORBACHEV, 2008.

note that the terms seem similar to those that were already used by the former Soviet leader when Putin was elected for his second term. But the delay in implementing new policies would finally get him to criticize the government directly.

The most assertive condemnation was directed at the majority party in the Duma, United Russia. In 2009, Gorbachev claimed that United Russia had become a bad copy of the CPSU. During Medvedev's presidential term (2008-2012), the party was led by Vladimir Putin, who also held the post of prime minister. Gorbachev questioned this "diarchy" that seemed to control the Russian political scene and decide the direction of the country without listening to the population.⁷⁸ However, the former Soviet leader appeared to be rather sympathetic to the way Medvedev himself led the country, saying he was committed to modernization — at least in speech.⁷⁹

As of 2011, however, the signs of rupture with the country's leadership became more evident. Gorbachev went on to directly criticize the possibility that Putin would run in the 2012 elections, claiming that this would not contribute to the advancement of democracy in the country. The tone of criticism of the new prime minister rose gradually, as the former Soviet leader came to understand that Putin had as primary objective the maintenance of the status quo and his power.

Vladimir Vladimirovich calls for stability. He believes we should maintain the status quo. But we say: "No, if you want to maintain the status quo, then what kind of modernization can we talk about?" Putin was able to overcome all this devastation [1990's]. He used different methods. Some of them were authoritarian, but I think that at that time authoritarian methods were necessary. If this were all that Putin did, he would still take his deserved place in history. But then the moment came when I saw that he was changing the electoral system, canceling the election of governors of the Russian regions, canceling single-member districts. I counted 20 changes that I could not support. [...] Now we must be aware that we are facing a wave of social problems that will determine the future of the country, the situation in the field of education, healthcare and other things. If we cannot successfully solve these problems, there will be no modernization in Russia. We

⁷⁸HANRAHAN, 2009

⁷⁹GORBACHEV, 2010

need a program different from what Putin stands for. I even criticized Putin for being conceited. I respect him as a political leader and a person, but I believe that his current policy blocks the country's movement forward.⁸⁰

Later that year, parliamentary elections were held and criticized inside and outside Russia on charges of electoral fraud. Shortly after the official result was released, protesters took to the streets of Moscow and other major Russian cities demanding the cancellation of the elections and calling for more freedom and democracy. Gorbachev took the side of the protesters, whom he even called the “Glasnost Generation” in reference to the fact that they were mostly young people who were born or grew up during the years when he carried out reforms in the USSR.⁸¹ In response to the protests, the former Soviet leader even publicly advised Putin to resign, a proposal that logically was not well received by the latter.⁸²

Even in the face of demonstrations of dissatisfaction on the part of the population with the country's political course, Vladimir Putin easily won the elections for his third presidential term. While not disagreeing with all the measures that Putin would take in the future, Gorbachev, already quite old, would become one of the few voices within Russia to publicly question and criticize some of the policies of the Russian leader.

Gorbachev as an spectator

From this brief review of some of the main public utterances by Mikhail Gorbachev over the two decades after his resignation as president of the USSR, we can identify some trends in the analyses and opinions of the former Soviet leader about the processes experienced by Russia in the post-Soviet period.

Gorbachev's view of his successor, Boris Yeltsin, was perhaps one of the elements that changed least during the period. Since the beginning of Yeltsin's presidency, Gorbachev criticized the authoritarian way in which the president conducted his policies, while openly condemning the economic reforms under way in the country throughout the 1990s. The former Soviet leader did not hide his discomfort in relation to the way Yeltsin had acted in the final years of the USSR, an experience that certainly influenced his analyses in the post-Soviet period. During the Putin era, he repeatedly characterized the previous period as chaos in all spheres — political, economic and social. It is evident, therefore, that for Gorbachev the Yeltsin

⁸⁰STEELE, 2011b.

⁸¹HALPIN, 2012.

⁸²GORBACHEV, 2011

era did not represent any continuity of the processes started in 1985, but rather an abrupt rupture.

In the same sense, his criticism of shock therapy also remained almost unchanged throughout. Although he never concealed his appreciation for some of the greatest icons of world neoliberalism — Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, in special —, Gorbachev was vehemently opposed to the implantation of what he called “liberal and monetarist prescription” in Russia. In contrast to the IMF’s proposals, Gorbachev advocated a transition to a regulated market economy, along the lines of the European social democracy of the second half of the 20th century.

But what draws the most attention when reviewing this public positions is certainly Gorbachev’s relationship with Vladimir Putin. The former Soviet leader had been a strong supporter and enthusiast of the second Russian president in his early years at the head of the Kremlin. Like most of his countrymen, Gorbachev seemed to support the man who had been able to pull Russia out of its worst crisis and put it back on its feet. Even when critics already pointed to authoritarian trends in the behavior of the new president, the former General Secretary of the CC of the CPSU seemed convinced that such measures would be sporadic and even necessary to overcome the chaos inherited from Yeltsin.

This relationship gradually deteriorated, as Gorbachev realized that once the crisis was overcome, Putin would not move on the path that the former Soviet leader envisioned for the modernization and democratic consolidation of Russia. United Russia’s machinations to remain in power gradually came to be identified with the president himself, increasing Gorbachev’s dissatisfaction with the new leadership. The 2011 protests finally emerged as a hope for the last Soviet leader that the legacy of his perestroika might be able to lead the country towards democracy. This saga in defense of his reforms seems to justify the definition that Gorbachev gave of himself as an eternal optimist.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, although acclaimed in the West, Gorbachev has been very critical of the position of the Western powers towards Russia. While criticizing Yeltsin’s foreign policy, seen as subservient to the interests of the global financial markets, the former Soviet leader condemned the stance of the USA and the European Union that on the one hand excluded Russia from integration processes on the European continent and closed the siege on Moscow by incorporating the countries of the east into NATO, and on the other seemed to want to take advantage of the critical situation experienced by the country.

Since the Yeltsin era, Gorbachev has warned of the risks of this policy of hostility, which could ignite an anti-Western mood in Russia and even rekindle the tensions erased with the end of the Cold War. Hence, the

positive reception of the former Soviet leader for Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Conference is not surprising. Even after he began to more openly criticize the conduct of domestic policies, Gorbachev remained aligned with Putin and Medvedev in foreign policy issues, such as his support for Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. While this may sound strange to many of his admirers in the West, it may perhaps help us understand why the last Soviet leader claimed that the outside world still had great difficulty in comprehending Russia.

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**“Good people have said that...”: the literary representation of
French economic and social theories
in the novel *What is to be done?* by Nikolay Chernyshevskii**

Camilo Domingues¹

Several authors classify Chernyshevskii’s novel *What is to be done?* as a utopian work, whose literary and social origins date back to French utopian socialist thought. For instance, in 1909, Georgi Plekhanov claimed that Chernyshevskii was influenced by the utopian socialists Fourier and Owen.² He considered the writer a Russian Enlightener and *What is to be done?* a philosophical novel.³ Similarly, Aleksander Skaftymov stated that “Chernyshevskii’s novel undoubtedly is in connection with the literary current of humanism and utopian socialism.”⁴

According to Lidiia Lotman, in writing *What is to be done?*, Chernyshevskii was aware of the tradition of world utopian literature and further developed the genre with his novel.⁵ Thanks to Lotman’s work, argued Iurii Rudenko, it was possible to achieve the understanding that Chernyshevskii had created a new type of utopian novel. At the same time the writer associated himself with the utopian socialists of the past, said Rudenko, he also related his work to those of the future materialist thinkers.⁶ Such an understanding would help to transform Chernyshevskii’s literary utopianism — previously frowned upon by Soviet scholars — into great artistic quality.

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² Plekhanov, Georgi. “N. G. Chernyshevskii”. In _____. *Sochinenia v dvadtsati chetyrekh tomakh*, v. 5. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1925, p. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

⁴ Skaftymov, Aleksander. “Xudozhestvennye proizvedeniia Chernyshevskogo, napisannye v Petropavlovskoi kreposti”. In _____. *Nravstvennye iskaniiia russkikh pisatelei: Stat’i i issledovaniia o russkikh klassikakh*. Moskva: Xudozhestvennaia literatura, 1972, p. 267.

⁵ Lotman, Lidiia. “Russkii filosofskii roman”. In _____. *Realizm russkoi literatury 60-kh godov XIX veka. (Istoki i esteticheskoe svoeobrazie)*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1974.

⁶ Rudenko, Iurii. “Chernyshevskii-khudozhnik: (Osnovnye tendentsii i itogi izucheniia)”. *Russkaia literatura*, n. 3 (1978), p. 185.

In the 1975 Russian edition of *What is to be done?*,⁷ Grigorii Tamarchenko published the article “*What is to be done?* and the Russian Novel of 1860s.” Tamarchenko stated that Chernyshevskii, in portraying the future society in detail, manifested a characteristic of utopian socialism.⁸ In the same edition of the novel, Solomon Reiser signed several notes emphasizing the relationship of Chernyshevskii’s novel to the economic and social theories of utopian socialists such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Victor Considerant, Louis Blanc and Robert Owen. Fifteen years later, Michael Katz translated the 1975 edition of the novel into English.⁹ Katz preserved the original notes and comments and ratified Chernyshevskii’s relationship with those thinkers and social reformers. More recently, Sonia Werner stated that “the utopian impulse is palpable throughout *What Is to Be Done?*.”¹⁰

Thus, from 1909 to today, there are numerous references to Chernyshevskii’s and his novel’s relationship to European economic and social theories later identified as utopian socialism. But what are the concrete and textual evidences of this theoretical and literary relationship between the Russian writer and the French social thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries? Following the clues from these studies on Chernyshevskii’s theoretical influences while writing his novel, this essay will seek to identify the dialogue that he established with the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Fourier, Victor Considerant, Louis Blanc, and Robert Owen. It will be analyzed how the economic and social thought of these authors on organization of labor and economic life were represented in Chernyshevskii’s novel, and how he interpreted and developed their theories according to the Russian reality.

Domestic life and agricultural labor organization in Rousseau’s *The New Heloise*

Chernyshevskii’s relationship with Rousseau’s work developed ever since his student years at the University of St. Petersburg. Beginning in 1850, Chernyshevskii’s diary was filled with several entries about the Genevan and his ideas. In 1854, when he reviewed the Russian translation of Aristotle’s

⁷ Chernyshevskii, Nikolai. *Chto delat’?* Leningrad: Nauka, 1975.

⁸ Tamarchenko, Grigorii. “Chto delat’?” i russkii roman shestidesiatykh godov. In Chernyshevskii, Nikolai. *Chto delat’?* Leningrad: Nauka, 1975, p. 764.

⁹ Chernyshevskii, Nikolai. *What is to be done?* Translated by Michael Katz. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

¹⁰ Werner, Sonia. “The Reality Effect and the Real Effects of Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?*”. *Novel : a forum on fiction*, v. 3, n. 47 (2014), p. 434.

Poetics, the critic registered his first public mention of the novel *The New Heloise*. The ideas represented in it had great influence on Chernyshevskii, especially those related to Rousseau's theory of real and artificial needs and the discussion of the role of women in society. For example, in *What is to be done?*, in addition to the main character (Vera Pavlovna), Julie Letellier is also inspired by *The New Heloise's* Julie d'Étange. Rousseau and his character are also mentioned in Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream.

What is to be done? also makes reference to *The New Heloise's* ideas about economic organization based on agricultural labor and domestic life. According to Rousseau, the countryside was the environment most conducive to natural and uncorrupted society, as it preserved the primordial and vocational connection of man to land, the origin of all wealth.¹¹

In Rousseau's novel, after the wedding, Julie de Wolmar moves with her husband to the estate of Clarens, in the countryside. Later, as the character Saint-Preux returns to Clarens, he reports to Milord Édouard that the estate housed a small natural society, where order, peace and innocence reigned. According to him, that realm was "assembled without pretention, without ostentation, everything that corresponds to man's veritable destination!"¹² The simplicity of rural life reminded him of the "golden age" of humanity. Only on the fields, while cultivating the land, could workers find their true natural condition. There real needs were reconciled with usefulness, so that the fruit of labor was not distorted in superfluous production and consumption. Satisfying those needs brought the true pleasures that human beings should enjoy. In addition, it is from the countryside that the true wealth of a nation must come, as there reside the necessary arms for both work and defense.

In addition to country life, the type of life that was most propitious to preserving man's natural state was the withdrawn and domestic one. Domestic life corresponded to the natural order of things, according to which everything should obey the principle of real needs. So, in the Wolmar household, abundance did not denote extravagance or luxury, but rather simplicity. Only the lords and a few servants resided in it. In Clarens, gentlemen and servants held together for a common purpose, which gave rise to mutual needs.

¹¹ In developing his philosophy, Rousseau partly borrowed from the teachings of French physiocrats (e.g., his contemporaries François Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau).

¹² Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "Julie , or the New Heloise – letters of two lovers who live in a small town at the foot of the Alps". In _____. *The collected writings of Rousseau*, v. 6. Translated and annotated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché. Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1997, p. 363.

To guarantee that perfect order of domestic life, it was necessary to recruit only honest people for work. It was up to the masters to forge the servants' noblest feelings through their own example. The lords should transmit to the servants their honesty, judiciousness and benevolence, making them superior to the very condition of their servile state. Saint-Preux heard from the Wolmar couple the teachings on how to recruit, prepare, reward and deal with servants on a daily basis. They could not be people who worked only for money, like mercenaries, but true family members, honest people, willing to love and respect their master, and to serve him willingly.

In order to keep the servants in work for a long time and avoid turnover, the couple adopted a progressive wages policy: for each new year of work, those who remained received a 1/20 pay raise. Such a system guaranteed that there would not be any layoffs or abandonment of work in Clarens. Wages were not limited to the current price of labor in Switzerland. The Wolmar couple calculated them in two parts: the first corresponded to the national average and the second (more valuable) corresponded to a bonus proportional to performance and level of satisfaction in carrying out the activities.

At harvest time, Julie de Wolmar added yet another bonus to the salary of the most diligent. In the end, that system proved to be the most conducive to ensuring productivity and work efficiency, in addition to harmony in the activities: "All these incentives for emulation which appear expensive, applied with prudence and justice, imperceptibly make everyone industrious, diligent, and ultimately pay back more than they cost."¹³ Servants were also guaranteed the necessary hours of rest and leisure, so that the whole atmosphere of that small society was pleasant.

The great "spectacle of reason," however, was crowned at the time of great work, the harvest of grapes. On these occasions, lords and servants worked together. The atmosphere was usually one of great familiarity and equality among all, who spent their entire days working, sharing the same tasks, the same food and the same tiredness. At the end of the work week, everyone got together in big celebrations promoted by the lords: "These saturnalia are far more agreeable and proper than the Romans'. [...] The gentle equality that prevails here re-establishes nature's order, constitutes a form of instruction for some, a consolation for others, and a bond of friendship for all."¹⁴

Monsieur de Wolmar's orientation was to take from agricultural labor everything it could provide, producing as much more as more people worked on it and had to be fed. In fact, Clarens' lands provided abundant

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

production, sufficient for everyone's real needs, and even a surplus, which was usually exchanged for other products in the region. The lord's economic maxim was that production and consumption should be local, avoiding what he considered waste or unnecessary spending with middlemen. Even when there was need to purchase or exchange products, it was not through money, but through the direct exchange of goods. All rural and domestic life in Clarens was conceived as a kind of small, self-sufficient industry. All production and consumption in the Wolmar estate was direct and natural, so the economy of that small society, according to the lords, could never be disturbed, since it was itself based on a direct and balanced exchange with nature. Julie de Wolmar, for example, was not used to the fluctuations of fashion, which dictated the prices of women's clothing. Embroideries and lacework were produced domestically, in the *gynécée*, a group of women who met periodically in Julie's rooms to socialize, as well as to embroider and knit.

Finally, Rousseau stated that the concept of wealth was not absolute: "There is no such thing as absolute wealth. That word merely signifies a relation of surplus between the desires and the means of the rich man."¹⁵ In other words, wealth was not a measure of accumulation, but a measure of the use of the goods available. The possession of a good without its proper use made it superfluous, unnecessary, and therefore, could not enrich its owner. Only true wealth, the result of the use of really needed goods, could provide an economy that would lead to happiness.

Concerned only with maintaining the present equilibrium of the economy of that estate, the Wolmar family organized their domestic life, the cultivation of the land and the work of their servants according to the natural order of things. They sought only to satisfy their real needs, avoiding everything that was superfluous. They also sought to make the work pleasurable, and to drive the different self-interests into a common interest: that should be true happiness. Virtue, order and simplicity were the principles that must guarantee them that state of affairs.

Fourier's social theory: the phalanx, the phalanstery and the emancipation of women

Thirty years after Rousseau's death, Charles Fourier published *Theory of the four movements and the general destinies* (1808).¹⁶ According

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

¹⁶ Fourier, Charles. "Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales : prospectus et annonce de la découverte". In _____. *Œuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, v. 1 (3ed). Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1846.

to Fourier, just as Isaac Newton had discovered the theory of universal gravitation, describing the force of attraction between bodies, the social world was governed by forces of attraction between animated beings. In the same way, there should be an “industrial attraction” between man and manufacturing work that, once understood, respected and redirected, could lead human beings to universal harmony.

Fourier stated that the general development of humanity, from the emergence of the first forms of social organizations to its extinction, lasts 80,000 years. This period is divided into 4 phases and 32 periods, from the simplest and most barbaric to the most complex and harmonic. The first and last phases have 7 periods each, and are the phases of sadness, or “incoherence”; the intermediate phases have 9 periods each, and are the phases of happiness, of “combination”, or of “universal harmony”. In 1808, when he published his treatise, humanity was still in the fifth period of the first phase, called “Civilization”. After this, the sixth period would come, the “Garantism” or “Half-association”, and then the seventh. In this last one, the leap from the first to the second phase, from chaos to harmony, should occur. The distinguishing feature of the second phase would be the formation of more complex associations (*pleine association en mode composé*).

In the seventh and final period of the first phase, Fourier assumed that the phenomenon of progressive union (*ménage progressif*) would occur. Gradually, men and women would constitute more pleasant marital relationships, free from the constraints of “permanent marriages.” On the whole, the new marital combinations would free fifth period couples from embarrassment, hypocrisy and betrayal. In parallel, such an evolution would signal the progressive emancipation of women. According to Fourier, the most advanced nations were those in which women enjoyed the greatest freedom.

The French social thinker further proceeded with the elaboration of his general theory and published *Treatise on domestic-agricultural association* (1822). The work was republished soon after and became known as *Theory of Universal Unity* (1822-1823).¹⁷ In it, Fourier went from theory to the outline of practice, exposing the general organization of the “phalanx”. The author came to the conception of phalanx from a harsh critique of “civilization”. According to Fourier, the movement of civilization was limited and composed of four phases: slavery, feudalism (*féodalité nobiliaire*), mercantilism, and capitalism (*féodalité commerciale*). This last moment, whose symbol was the anarchy of the market (*morcellement*) would give rise

¹⁷ Fourier, Charles. “*Théorie de l’unité universelle*”. In _____. *Œuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, v. 2-5 (2ed). Paris: La Société pour la propagation et la réalisation de la théorie de Fourier, 1841-1843.

to the sixth period (the system of guarantees of individual freedoms, the *garantisme*). Then, *there would come* the seventh and final period of the first phase, that of the beginning of the association and the constitution of the first phalanxes.

Fourier indicated all the details of the phalanxes' constitution and operation: the recruitment of dwellers; the socioeconomic composition; the distribution of each branch of economy; and the organization of labor and social life. One of the conditions for the recruitment of families (shareholders) should be their attention to the principle of merging their individual interests with the common one. The basic principle should be that of association, so that any unit of production or exchange was associated in larger combined series. This model could guarantee greater savings and optimization of resources, greater productivity and greater efficiency. Once in operation, the phalanx would bring only advantages in relation to the fragmented life of "civilization".

Instead of 300 families (around 1,500 people) having 300 isolated granaries, in a phalanx all of them could gather in only one large granary, organized in a more rational, economical and profitable way. Likewise, instead of 300 families negotiating their production surplus separately, the phalanx could allow trade to be carried out through only one representative. The associated production of wine could free isolated families from problems such as possible thefts during the harvest season, or loss of production due to poor storage and bad weather. Fourier also argued that it would be more economical to promote climate control against extreme cold and heat in a single building than in 300 scattered houses. Finally, a single large residence would be safer and more economical. Each one could have a small number of kitchens to serve its inhabitants, instead of 300 separate kitchens.

All families would live and do their basic activities in the "phalansteries" (large and rational dwellings providing optimization of resources and better life for their residents). In the future, "Harmony" (the society to-be) would have 500,000 phalansteries. The first phalanstery, the *phalanstère d'essai*, was to occupy an area of approximately 3 thousand acres, with variegated fertile soils, and be close to a beautiful watercourse, hills and a forest. It should also be close to a city, in order to make commerce possible but not excessive. Agricultural work would be developed in accordance with rational principles. In a phalanx, agricultural work should be developed before industrial production is established. In Harmony, the crops were harmonized with the properties of each type of land. Major irrigation works were also to be carried out; water would flow from large reservoirs to irrigate the fields. Finally, there would be time and space set aside for education, as well as for the development of the arts and sciences.

The architecture of each phalanstery should also follow rational and harmonic principles. The main building would be U-shaped, with a large central part and two smaller side wings. The central part would be dedicated to the quieter spaces, such as the dining room, the Council room and other meeting rooms (*séristères*). Noisy activities, such as carpentry and forging should be concentrated in one side wing. The other side wing would have an inn to receive visitors while maintaining the residents' privacy.

In 1829, faced with the editorial failure of his treatise on universal unity and the lack of investor interest in his associative project, Fourier published a summary of his theory and his project of society: *The New Industrial and Associated World*.¹⁸ He insisted on the convenience and feasibility of his socioeconomic enterprise, trying to attract supporters, partners and investors to his project. Fourier also sketched more detailed maps of the phalanstery and added information on his plans for the industrial organization in the phalanxes.

In the associative system, industry would be present in all phalanxes, but it should be only a complement or accessory activity to agricultural production. Some manufactures would be carried out only in winter, when it was not possible to do agricultural work. The production of musical instruments should be the main manufacturing branch in the phalanx. According to Fourier, it was a job that equally attracted men, women and children — men would be the carpenters; women and children would ornament the instruments. He expected everyone to become musicians after living six months in the phalanxes, since music was a crucial activity in his harmonic education project. Finally, manufactures should not be concentrated in cities, for those were usually agglomerations of impoverished workers. On the contrary, industries would be widespread across the countryside.

Fourier's three works mentioned above sum up the essence of his theory and his project for a more rational and harmonic associative society. In the 1840s, they were gathered and republished in his Complete Works edition (1841-1848). Chernyshevskii attended the University of St. Petersburg, where — through professors or colleagues — he had access to Fourier's works. Several notes were left in his diary in 1848 and 1849, showing that the Russian critic had already had contact and was even familiar with the theory of that French social thinker. Above all, the notions of organization of labor and economy, as well as the emancipation of women, were represented in his novel *What is to be done?*, as will be seen below.

¹⁸ Fourier, Charles. "Le Nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire ou invention du procédé d'industrie attrayante et naturelle, distribuée en séries passionnées". In _____. *Œuvres complètes de Charles Fourier*, v. 6 (3ed). Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1848.

Considerant on social destiny

Victor Considerant became Fourier's disciple in 1825, as soon as he graduated from high school at the age of 16. In 1834, he published the social treatise *Destinée sociale*, in which he intended to give a clear and detailed explanation of Fourier's theory, in addition to propagating it. He also founded the newspapers *Le Phalanstère*, in 1832, and *La Phalange*, in 1836. Considerant regarded the science discovered by Fourier as "humanity's true anchor of salvation."¹⁹ The young socialist also thought that the true happiness of individuals depended on the organization of labor and the proper regularization of domestic, agricultural and manufacturing functions and activities. For this reason, Considerant advocated refounding society.

The new society should be based on the principle of association, by which individuals contribute to the construction of social wealth, receiving from it in proportion to their invested capital, work and talent. Considerant drew his own sketch of the phalanx, according to the ideas established by Fourier. The young Fourierist also distinguished between fragmented (*morcelée*) society and the associated one. The former was that of free competition, in which the anarchy of the market, disorganized investments and brutal competition between capitalists prevailed. The latter was that of the association in which the holders of capital, instead of battling each other, would unite in a larger-scale enterprise. The sum of the associated capital would provide greater strength to the business and greater credit capacity; larger-scale production would provide better supply to the market at lower prices. The individual interest of each capitalist would become collective interest for mutual enrichment.

In practice, the phalanx would be a shareholder company built on a land of about a thousand acres, inhabited by 1,500-2,000 people and managed as collective property. The movable and immovable assets of each partner constituted their share of the business. In the phalanx, individuals organized themselves like a bee hive, as their work was complementary to each other and harmonic. Agriculture is managed according to soil fertility and the recommendations of science, being arranged with art and elegance. Irrigation supplies water for agriculture and fish farming. The fields are fresh and luxurious places, full of grasslands, gardens, woods and orchards — a marriage between the useful and the pleasant. Regarding male and female workers, "All the groups (...) are deployed in the plains and take position on the hills, like armies in the countryside, with their work uniforms, their

¹⁹ Considerant, Victor. *Destinée sociale*, v. 1 (2ed). Paris: Librairie du Palais Royal, 1837, p. 2. Here and henceforth all translations are mine.

wagons, their equipment painted in the colors of each industrial battalion.”²⁰ When weather conditions do not favor agricultural activities, everyone returns to the phalanstery, where they dedicate themselves to all kinds of artistry and cooking. The days end with balls, parties and concerts, whose musicians are the inhabitants themselves.

Considerant attached special importance to the “culinary factories” (*fabriques culinaires*), which he considered one of the most important branches of industry, as it was present in all French homes. However, instead of small isolated industries, the associated domicile (*ménage sociétaire*) would be organized by associated families. Thus, instead of hundreds of isolated kitchens, only one, with fewer utensils and fewer people in charge, was needed to prepare superior quality food, saving fire, time and resources. The same applied to washing and ironing. Such reorganization was all the more important as it alone could free women from the domestic and family functions to which they had been confined until then.

As Fourier had said, manufacturing work should be ancillary to agricultural work. Manufactures would start to operate only when the climatic conditions did not favor the agricultural activities, as in winter and in rainy or hot seasons. The introduction of machinery in manufacturing, instead of causing unemployment and misery among workers, as normally happened in “civilization,” could not cause serious problems in Harmony, since industry was only a complementary activity. If there were a surplus of labor in industrial production, it would return to the primordial agricultural activities. Finally, commercial activities would also be optimized in Harmony. Both the negotiations for the surplus exchange and the purchase of consumer goods would be made through the association. Trade would be carried out on a larger scale of buying and selling. Such a mechanism could save time and resources.

Considerant attached great importance to architecture. For him, the phalanstery was not supposed to be only a landmark of social progress but also of the evolution of human art. Architecture should be regarded as the first and most elementary of art forms, from which all others derived: “Architecture is the pivotal art, it is the art that sums up all the others, and that therefore sums up society itself: architecture writes history.”²¹ For this reason, the phalanstery should be as monumental as human history itself, and be able to harmonically house the whole species. The phalanstery should be built in the center of the agricultural lands and together they would form a phalanx. It would be both a place of residence and a center for development of economic, administrative, educational and leisure activities. Inside, the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 382. My translation.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 456. My translation.

palace would be richly decorated and pleasant, with winter gardens and flower beds along its wide corridors. The different parts of the palace would be joined and surrounded by an immense, airy and glassed in *rue-galerie*, which would provide freshness in summer and warmth in winter. The heat produced in the culinary factories would be channeled through a network of ducts capable of distributing it to greenhouses and bathrooms, and to all other rooms in the palace, when necessary. The prepared food would be conveyed to the banquet rooms by machines, from which the individual meals would be available. Architecture would beget general comfort and well-being.

Chernyshevskii had known Considerant's thought at least since June 1849, when he left a note in his diary about the French thinker's participation in the protests of June 13, 1849 in Paris.²² Later, imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, Chernyshevskii referred to *Destinée sociale* in his novel *What is to be done?*. In one of the few overtly humorous passages in the novel, when investigating the books Lopukhov had lent Vera Pavlovna for her philosophical and political training (including *Destinée sociale*), Marya Aleksevna confuses its title and believes it to be a book about finance, as it dealt with "series." This passage indicates that Chernyshevskii was aware of Considerant's work and thought and that they could have served as inspiration for the depiction of the sewing cooperative created by the main character of his novel.

Louis Blanc and the organization of labor

In 1839, Louis Blanc published in his *Revue du Progrès* a brochure entitled *Organisation du travail* ["Organization of labor"]. From then until 1850, the work had nine editions, and played an important role in the political training of workers and protesters in the June *jours* of 1848 and 1849 in France.

According to Blanc, the fate of man was related to his general conditions of existence and his work. So, the right to live off one's own work should be regulated and guaranteed, protecting workers from the instability of capitalism's free competition. It was clear to the journalist that such a system was the cause of social misery, and what led impoverished workers to theft, crime and prostitution. The organization of labor would therefore be essential to guarantee the material conditions of existence to the majority of the population, as well as to give them back the moral conditions of existence, such as freedom, independence and self-esteem: "We want work to

²² Chernyshevskii, Nikolai. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, v. 1. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1939, p. 287.

be organized, so that the soul of the people (...) does not remain compressed and spoiled under the tyranny of things."²³

In the ninth edition of *Organization of labor* (1850), the author advocated the creation of a Ministry of Progress, which would be in charge of the main initiatives for the organization of labor in France. Its aim was to centralize the regulation of credit, industry and trade in the hands of the state. The first measure should be to replace the Bank of France with a State Bank. Then, the ministry should promote the nationalization of railways and mines; the centralization of the credit; the opening of commercial warehouses, in which the state would mediate the wholesale trade between agricultural producers and manufacturers; and the opening of bazaars, via which the state would mediate retail trade. Such measures would form the labor budget, which should be used in the creation of social workshops (*ateliers sociaux*).

For each of the most important branches of private industry, there should be a competing social (i.e., laborers') workshop. According to Blanc, they would soon beat the competition, as they were based on associated production, and on a way of organizing labor by which collective interest boosts workers's productivity and efficiency. For instance, the introduction of machinery, instead of causing unemployment, as in the free competition model, would improve the working conditions of members, as it provides lighter work and more leisure hours. For their proper functioning, social workshops should recruit only workers who gave proof of moral behavior and had affinity with the respective branch of activity.

The agricultural social workshops would operate on vacant lands, purchased and made available by the state. The state would provide credit for the purchase of the necessary agricultural equipment and supplies. As in the Fourierist model, in winter and in the rainy season agricultural activities would be replaced by manufacturing ones, such as weaving, sewing, forging or carpentry. Associated families would reside in a single building, and collectively organize the purchase and consumption of basic goods and utensils. In place of poor family huts, agricultural workshops would have large and sumptuous buildings, with good ventilation and lighting, with apartments for all families, as well as meeting and reading rooms, libraries, schools, community kitchens and gardens.

Thus, from the initial supply of credit to the final organization of industrial and agricultural work, the state would be the regulator of economic activity, thus doing away with the competition responsible for the anarchy of the market and the misery of workers and establishing associative production.²⁴ From this model a peaceful social revolution would ensue

²³ Blanc, Louis. *Organisation du travail* (9ed). Paris: Nouveau Monde, 1850, p. 5.

²⁴ Blanc also envisaged the establishment of literary social workshops, focused on

within the framework of a law enacted by the National Assembly to establish the statute of the social workshops. This would solve the problems of inequality in the current social order and establish a new one, the *monde nouveau*.

The fruit of collective work would be divided in proportion to each person's work and needs.²⁵ Blanc advocated that true distributive justice would entail proportionality in the sharing of benefits. According to the author, the formula that would prevail in associative production would be: "Let each one produce according to his aptitude and his strengths, let each one consume according to his needs."²⁶ In both industrial and agricultural workshops, after paying for common expenses and interest on capital advanced by the state, the benefits would be distributed as follows: a quarter for the amortization of capital financed by the state; a quarter for the formation of an assistance fund for the sick and the elderly; a quarter for the division between workers, in proportion to the days worked; and a quarter to set up an emergency fund for moments of crisis and to provide solidarity between the various workshops.

In 1849, Blanc published another document that became important for establishing his theory on the organization of labor. After a speech by Adolphe Thiers against social workshops in a legislative session, Blanc published his answer in the form of a brochure, *Le socialisme – Droit au travail* ["Socialism — The Right to Work"]. The socialist deputy maintained that the principle of property should be based on free, associated, and proportionally remunerated work. Thus, any property that did not come from work would be illegitimate; any work that did not result in property would be a form of oppression. For this reason, the right to property, as defended by Thiers, was considered nothing more than a privilege in the free competition system, since ordinary labor would not suffice to acquire the necessary goods for subsistence welfare.

According to Blanc, only the organization of labor along the lines of social workshops could guarantee the right to work to all individuals, who should be paid proportionally to their capacity and need. Initially, only agricultural association could make it possible for everyone to guarantee property rights and freedom: "There is not a single socialist system whose starting point is not the agricultural association. In this regard, Fourier, Victor

editorial production and trade.

²⁵ This is the text of the ninth (1850) edition of *Organization of labor*. Blanc himself states that, in previous editions, he had defended the equal participation of benefits (of wages). However, he corrected himself in the 1850 edition, in which he stated that the fairest system would be one of proportional distribution.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

Considerant, Pierre Leroux, Vidal, Pecqueur, Cabet, Villegardelle, and all the socialists agree.”²⁷

Chernyshevskii wrote for the first time about *Organization of Labor* in his diary in 1848 (year of publication of the fifth edition of the work and of the revolutionary *journées* in Paris). Afterward followed several mentions in his diaries and in his works on the thought and political role of Louis Blanc, almost always in association with other French social thinkers. In the novel *What is to be done?*, the mention of Blanc’s organization of labor occurs not only in the form of Vera Pavlovna’s sewing workshop but also through its first commercial name: “Au bon travail. Magasin de Nouveautés”. The fact that in the novel the authorities demanded the change of the name to “À la bonne foi” denoted Chernyshevskii’s intention to establish a connection with Blanc’s slogan “droit au travail.”

British among the French: Owen’s new vision of society

Robert Owen is the only socialist author explicitly mentioned in *What is to be done?*. Although the novel implies the reformist theories of French social thinkers, only Owen, the “old saint” (“святой старик”) is portrayed. His reform project is one of the inspirations of Vera Pavlovna in the establishment of her sewing workshop. Vera’s husband, Lopukhov, keeps a photograph of Owen, from whom he receives a letter, in which Owen himself congratulates the character for her initiative. Thus, it is necessary to include the British Owen in the list of social thinkers and reformers who influenced Chernyshevskii’s conception of economics and labor, even though some of them, such as Fourier and Considerant, had taken a stand against Owenist principles.

The popularization of Owen’s work in Russia was due to the article by Nikolai Dobroliubov entitled “Robert Owen and his attempt at social reform,” published in the magazine *Sovremennik* in January 1859. Dobroliubov based his analysis mainly on *A New View of Society* (1813) and on a manifesto published by Owen on February 2, 1840. Obviously, Chernyshevskii was aware of Dobroliubov’s article, since he was his friend and co-worker. Even before, in 1857, Chernyshevskii had already mentioned Owen’s name, in a review of a work by the German agronomist August von Haxthausen. So it was no accident that the name of the Welsh social reformer came up in *What is to be done?* associated with the main character’s workshop.

²⁷ Blanc, Louis. *Le socialisme – Droit au travail* (3ed). Paris: Nouveau Monde, 1849, p. 53.

In *A New View of Society*, Owen presented four essays, in which he established the principles of his “rational system”; recounted his own experience in the Scottish industrial district of New Lanark; and made a public appeal for the general adoption of his ideas. At the heart of Owen’s thinking was the assumption that Britain’s social problems were due to the ignorance of the population. Until that time, neither the 12 million British workers nor the wealthiest classes had received an adequate education. As a result, everyone ignored the fundamental principle of the formation of human character, as discovered by Owen. According to him, the formation of human character depended not only on the individual’s will or disposition but also on external circumstances. Therefore, once circumstances were improved, the character of individuals would also change. As long as they were not aware of that new truth, misery and social inequality would prevail in Great Britain.

Owen believed that once educated, all individuals would realize that their own happiness could only be achieved through promoting the happiness of the entire community. This would be the moral principle of his rational system, which could be instilled through a great educational reform. Both working-class adults and, above all, children, should be educated from an early age based on these notions in order to be able to build a society free from the “evils” that Britain faced in the early 19th century. As the overcoming of poverty and wickedness was a “mathematically precise” pedagogical-social process, Owen believed that this could happen in a peaceful manner, “without domestic revolution, without war and bloodshed, nay without disturbing any thing which exists.”²⁸

Owen described his experience in the industrial district of New Lanark. According to him, in 1784, the Scottish industrialist David Dale had installed a spinning and weaving factory not far from Clyde Falls, in Scotland. The mills were water-powered. Dale installed the factory and hired Scottish peasants to work in it. Nevertheless, due to worker resistance, Dale ended up creating a small settlement next to the factory and recruiting 500 children from Edinburgh charity and workhouses (aged 6 to 8) who should work 11 hours a day. According to Owen, Dale had done everything he could to make the venture successful, providing schools and good shelter for the children. However, as the circumstances were adverse, “vice and immorality” prevailed in the small community of New Lanark: workers were lazy, lived in unhealthy and miserable conditions, were indebted and indulged in criminal practices. Thus, in the early 19th century, Dale sold the factory to a group of

²⁸ Owen, Robert. *A New View of Society: Or, Essays on the Formation of Human Character, and the Application of the Principle to Practice*. London: Richard And Arthur Taylor, 1813, p. 18 (essay first).

partners, including Robert Owen himself, who assumed the direction of the enterprise in 1800.

Initially, Owen tried mild reforms, but his first two years at the helm of New Lanark were a failure. The same old social problems prevailed: promiscuity, alcoholism, steeling and fights. The industrialist then decided to gain the confidence of the workers, replacing punitive measures with preventive, advisory ones. From that moment on, said Owen, “the pleasure of good conduct [was] experienced [...] the evil became greatly diminished.”²⁹ He established a pension fund for workers and limited the beginning of child labor to 10 years old. He installed nursery schools, based on new pedagogical models and without doctrinal religious teaching, as well as night schools for adult education.

For the education of children, he suggested that they attend schools between 5 and 10 years of age, and only then be allowed to work in factories. Boys should be taught to read, write and count, do military drills and acquire technical skills. The girls, in addition to literacy and basic operations, should be taught to sew, cook and do other household chores. As for adults, a formal workday of no more than ten hours and forty-five minutes should be guaranteed, as well as weekly rest on Sundays. After daily work, adults should attend evening classes three times a week. On the other days, there would be dances. Each industrial district should have, in addition to housing, gardens and public walkways, a school, a reading room and a religious center. After thirteen years of successful experience in New Lanark, which then housed a community of 2,000 people, Owen had “discovered” the general and universal principles of his rational system:

Let it not, therefore, be longer said that evil or injurious actions cannot be prevented; or that the most rational habits in the rising generation cannot be universally formed. In those characters which now exhibit crime, the fault is most obviously not in the individual, but the defect proceeds from the system in which those individuals have been trained. Withdraw those circumstances which tend to create crime in the human character, and crime will not be created.³⁰

In his third essay, addressed to the “Superintendants of Manufactories,” Owen endeavored to demonstrate that the application of his

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 24 (essay second).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29 (essay second).

system could generate an increase in the industrialists' profit. He himself points out that he was nothing more than an industrialist in search of profit. For him, investing in the purchase and good maintenance of inanimate machines should be equivalent to investment in the good maintenance of "living machines." He assured industrialists that, proceeding in this way, their capital could go from a return of 15% to 50%, or even more, as proven by his own experience. Workers could work harder and better, provided that bad circumstances were removed. The process would be slow, since it is a difficult task to change habits and educate oneself as an adult, but experience had shown that it was possible.

In the final essay of *A New View of Society*, Owen addressed the British government, in an attempt to convince the crown of the applicability of his system. Owen assured that his proposal would not bring about drastic changes or incite public disorder. It was a proposal for gradual change, which would guarantee a better future for all British society. Owen assumed that a nation's public revenue had only one legitimate source: labor. Therefore, the state should promote and protect it. Religious and legal reforms should go hand in hand with the implementation of his "System for the Prevention of Crime, and the Formation of Human Character," which would provide the government with the means to guarantee general well-being by the creation of a national educational system, based on the principles of rationality, and practical-factual knowledge.

Certainly, Chernyshevskii did not enjoy in Tsarist Russia the same freedom of speech that Owen enjoyed in the British Empire. Owen's proposals, while well regarded by some members of the British court, greatly upset religious leaders, industrialists and some parliamentarians. The Russian publicist could not propose the tsar social and political reforms of that scale — or even non-radical ones — since they could spark criticism from the Orthodox church and from the Russian nobility, two of the pillars of the Tsarist regime. Nevertheless, in the absence of press freedom, his novel *What is to be done?* metaphorically presented a good part of those ideas. It can even be suggested that Vera Pavlovna's saga — from the moment she eloped until her emancipation — was a representation of the Owenist principle. Once freed from limiting circumstances — and unlike her mother's degradation process — Vera was able to acquire and forge a new character for herself.

The representation of economic and social theories in What is to be done?

One must acknowledge that the first mention of the philosophical concept of labor in *What is to be done?* did not come from the theories

depicted above. In Vera Pavlovna's second dream, she listens to the conversation between her husband, Lopukhov, and his friend Aleksei Petrovich, who says: "life has as its main element labor; consequently, the main element of reality is labor."³¹ This passage, an allusion to Feuerbach's humanistic materialism, reveals the great philosophical importance Chernyshevskii gave to that question.³² Nevertheless, as this theme acquires a practical meaning, the novel's prevalent concepts on economics and labor turn out to be those of the French social reformers.

After five months of her first marriage, Vera Pavlovna had the idea of organizing a sewing establishment. The protagonist's first concern was the recruitment of future seamstresses. According to Vera, workers "must be genuinely honest and good, not frivolous or fickle, but reliable and gentle."³³ Vera also made sure that the first seamstresses would be reasonable and direct, and that they mastered the craft well, since the whole business was based on the laws of commerce and free competition. As seen above, judicious recruitment was also the Wolmar couple's first concern — servants should be honest — as well as Fourier's — who recommended that workers should be able to establish a relationship between individual and collective interests — and Blanc's (for whom workshop workers should give proof of moral behavior).

Vera initially hired three seamstresses, to whom she promised higher than average wages. From the first day of work, she treated them with respect, gaining their trust based on her own character, modesty, reasonableness and example. It was the same stance adopted by the Wolmar couple with their servants, and the same attitude taken by Owen in relation to his workers, in order to gain their confidence and initiate the moral reform in New Lanark.

However, after the first month of work, Vera surprised the three seamstresses by presenting them her ideas. They were based on a new form of labor organization: "Good people have said that dressmaking establishments can be organized so as to make them much more profitable for seamstresses to work in them than the ones we now know."³⁴ Vera showed them the company's account book, disclosing monthly income and expenses. Then, the surplus was distributed equally among the seamstresses. They were surprised by this measure, and Vera explained to them why she acted that way. Chernyshevskii used Rousseau's philosophy to provide Vera's answer. It was based on the conception of real needs *versus* artificial needs. She had

³¹ Chernyshevskii (1989), *op. cit.*, p. 181.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

distributed the profit among the seamstresses, since she and her husband, although not rich, were not in great need. Their real needs were met and, therefore, they did not need to appropriate the profit of the enterprise.

Only then, Vera Pavlovna turned again to the “good and smart people” who had designed the program and the proposals for that new model of economic and labor organization: “Many good, clever people have written books on the subject of how one should live on this earth so that all people may be happy. According to them, the most important thing is to organize workshops according to a new system.”³⁵ In this passage, Vera recalled the ideas of all European thinkers and social reformers analyzed in this article. She referred to Owen’s principle of general happiness. She also mentioned the ideas of associative work, such as those proposed mainly by Blanc (social workshops) but also by Fourier and Considerant. Vera added that everything should be done only according to what people wanted, referring to Fourier’s principles of universal attraction and selective affinity.

From that moment onward, the sewing workshop became a collective asset. Nevertheless, despite respecting the principle of Blanc’s collective ownership, the collectivization was at odds with the principles of property and individual freedom proposed by Fourier. Obviously, it was also at odds with Owen’s system, since Owen never envisaged turning his manufacturing enterprises into common good. As he himself had said, he focused on profitability.

The sewing workshop grew rapidly. After a year and a half, it already had twenty seamstresses. They decided to set aside a third of the profit (minus wages and other expenses) to set up a credit bank at the disposal of the workers. At the end of the third year of the enterprise, it also was decided, by consensus, that wages would be proportional to one’s work and specialization (work and talent, in Fourier’s words), but that participation in the surplus would be equal, regardless of individual contributions. At this point, Chernyshevskii was at odds with Blanc’s final proposal for his social workshops. Despite having advocated equal sharing of benefits in the first editions of *Organization of labor*, Blanc later came to support proportional division, according to the capabilities and needs of each individual (principle of distributive justice). According to Chernyshevskii, however, the nature and spirit of the workshop should reside in the joint work of all. Therefore, the final result should be divided equally. So, he established a system of double remuneration which harmonized individual productivity and collective result. Interestingly, the Wolmar couple had also established double remuneration for Clarens’ servants, albeit in reverse fashion: equal wages and proportional participation in benefits.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

Initially, the earnings of each worker were spent individually. One made one's own purchases, chose one's own priorities and paid for one's own living expenses. Over time, the workers agreed that, instead of making separate purchases, they should establish a collective purchasing agency. Through it, they could buy basic products such as bread, tea, coffee, sugar and clothing wholesale at much cheaper prices. Similarly, they concluded that it was more economical to rent a single large apartment for everyone, instead of dozens of small, cramped ones. Most unmarried girls chose to share the same household while those who were married shared only common purchases. Children could also live in the dorms until the age of eight (for boys) or thirteen (for girls) — after that they were sent to work. The elderly helped in the kitchen and with housework.

Little by little, Chernyshevskii turned Vera's sewing workshop into a kind of Fourierist phalanx. The Russian writer, like Fourier and his disciple Considerant, was concerned with demonstrating how the measures of labor association were simple, rational and economical. Furthermore, in parallel with the introduction of those associative measures, the business side was prospering. The workshop had set up a ready-made clothes sales agency, and established outlets in commercial centers.

The education of the workers was also a concern for Vera Pavlovna. From the beginning, she had provided books and organized collective readings in the workshop. The seamstresses quickly acquired a taste for reading and learning. The progress was so great that Vera instituted a regular course, in which she herself worked as a teacher. Likewise, leisure opportunities were organized collectively. Together, they held parties after work, organized picnics and went out to theater.

As mentioned, education and leisure were also ingredients of the new social system proposed by Owen. In New Lanark, adult workers took classes at night and also went to balls on alternate days. Festivities were not absent even among the Wolmar's servants. They were the final celebration of each harvest, and were considered important occasions for arranging weddings for single girls (the same occurred at Vera's workshop). Finally, Chernyshevskii also reports sad events among the workers, but those were due to the bad social circumstances that made such episodes inevitable. Only by changing circumstances, as Owen had pointed out, could they cease to exist.

Several pages later, Chernyshevskii presented his maximum representation of the economic and social theories of Rousseau, Fourier, Considerant, Blanc and Owen: Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream. In the first part of her dream, Vera follows the evolution of human society, starting with the nomadic tribes, passing through the ancient Athenian society, through feudalism, until reaching the main character's present time. As those societies

succeeded each other, women — represented by the deities Astarte, Aphrodite and Chastity (the Virgin Mary) — acquired more rights and more freedom. The very entity that accompanies Vera Pavlovna during her dream is feminine, and has the face of all women. She is called “Equal Rights”.

Up to this point in Veras’s fourth dream, Chernyshevskii seems to make a direct allusion to the phases and periods of the social movement, according to Fourier’s four-movement theory. For the French thinker, “Civilization” would correspond to the fifth period of the first phase. It would be preceded by barbarism and would lodge four other movements within itself: slavery, feudalism, mercantilism and capitalism. According to Fourier, the transition from one to another would be accompanied by growing emancipation of women. So, what is represented in the first part of Vera’s fourth dream is precisely such an evolution of human society coupled with the acquisition of rights by women, despite the fact that Chernyshevskii did not strictly follow the four movements of civilization proposed by Fourier. In *What is to be done?*, instead of the sequence barbarism-civilization (slavery, feudalism, mercantilism and capitalism), there is only the representation of nomadism, slavery and feudalism.

Fourier still proposed that “Civilization” would be followed by the sixth period, the “Garantism” and, then, by the seventh and last period of the first phase, that of simple association. Then, the “dawn of happiness” (*auroru du bonheur*) arrives. It would be the eighth period and the beginning of the second phase of the social movement. This phase would be marked by composite association. Therefore, it is not by chance that the seventh section of Vera’s dream in *What is to be done?* is unknown. Chernyshevskii leaves only a dotted line to represent it. In the next section, the eighth, there is the representation of the future society. Many scholars have attributed to the absent seventh section an Aesopian allusion to the revolution, which could not be represented due to censorship. However, even if such an interpretation is plausible, it cannot be ignored that the leap from fragmented capitalist society to associated society (*saut du Chaos en Harmonie*), according to Fourier, takes place precisely in the seventh period. In other words, it could also be a representation of the periods Fourier’s social movement. The blank seventh section can also be apprehended as the moment the novel’s own narrative takes place. Like Fourier’s seventh period, Chernyshevskii’s seventh section could represent the organization of a simple association, the sewing workshop, allied with the emancipation of the main character of the novel.

From the eighth to the tenth section of the novel, the future society of Vera’s dream is depicted. It constitutes a kind of phalanx, despite also sharing allusions to the social theories of Rousseau, Blanc and Owen. The protagonist’s first vision is of a phalanstery, represented by Chernyshevskii as

the Crystal Palace, built in London for the Great Exhibition of 1851 (and rebuilt in Sydenham in 1854). The palace, like the original phalanstery project, was sumptuous — “There’s no other building like it!”³⁶ — and was set amid gardens, orchards and vast fields. As Considerant had indicated, it was a monumental architectural work. It was built in a unique style and with the use of impressive technical innovations: all of it was built only with “crystal and cast iron — nothing else.”³⁷ Then, there is a description very similar to the one that Considerant makes of the phalanstery: its facade was unique and formed immense galleries that surrounded the building. The windows covered the entire length of the walls and inside the furniture (made of aluminum) and the ornamentation were sumptuous. The palace also housed a huge winter garden, and was inhabited by hundreds of people.

Beyond the palace, Vera saw countless people working in the field. Men and women sang while they worked. They were aided by machines, and protected from the hot weather thanks to a large mobile canopy. The work was pleasant and very productive. The machines helped and lightened the workers’ burden, as Blanc had predicted. And as Fourier had proposed, there would be mild alternatives to work in times of bad weather.

After working in the field, everyone returned to the palace for dinner. There were about a thousand people in the dining hall and the tables were already set. As Considerant had said, there were “domestic industrial workshops” that did the kitchen work. In the banquet room of Considerant’s phalanstery, the food was taken mechanically from the kitchen, whereas in the dining hall of the Crystal Palace, the buffets were heated by steam, so that people could serve themselves.

In winter, almost all of the residents of the Crystal Palace moved south, looking for a milder climate, just as the inhabitants of the phalansteries also left the fields and started working in manufacture, science or art. Formerly arid, the southern mountains had been fertilized by Vera’s dream workers. Instead of cliffs, there were now forests, orchards, coffee and sugar cane plantations. Instead of an extensive desert, there were now fertile fields, thanks to the opening of canals and the use of irrigation techniques, as Fourier and Considerant had also predicted. As it was a very hot region, Chernyshevskii, like the French thinkers, also described an air conditioning system.

Intrigued, Vera Pavlovna asked the entity that accompanied her in her dream if there were no cities in that society. Yes, there were. They were even bigger and more sumptuous than the current ones. However, very few people decided to live in urban centers, as the countryside was more pleasant.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

They moved to the cities only for short periods. Thus, in the same way that the French social thinkers indicated manufacturing only as an accessory activity to agriculture, Chernyshevskii also attributed to cities — to industrial centers — only a complementary role, since everybody in the dream wanted to return to the countryside. One can even find here an allusion to Rousseau's predilection for rural life. In *The New Heloise*, the characters left Clarens only sporadically and briefly for business reasons.

Vera still questioned how it was possible to build all that — the irrigation canals, the air conditioning system, the Crystal Palace, and the rest of that productive and happy society. The answer given by the entity could have come from Owen's writings: "One has only to be rational, to know how to organize, and to learn how to use resources most advantageously."³⁸

At dusk, the entire interior of the palace was lit by electricity, a marvel of technology for that time in Russia. There were about a thousand people fraternizing, most of them wearing Greek tunics as standard clothing (only Considerant had proposed the use of uniforms by workers). Vera was surprised, as it was an ordinary party, which took place every day after work. The workers played in the orchestra and sang in the choir; they were excellent instrumentalists and singers, as proposed by Fourier. In Vera's dream, there were still people who had fun in theaters, museums, libraries or with the company of their choice in their own rooms. Then, the entity told her: "you see that every kind of happiness exists here, whatever anyone desires. Everyone lives as he wants; each and every person has complete will, yes, free will."³⁹ Thus, the dream ended with a reference and homage to all the French social thinkers whose works influenced Chernyshevskii. By equating happiness with the realization of the will, the author certainly referred to the real needs, as Rousseau had done. The same allusion to self-interest can be found in Fourier's theory of *attraction passionnée*, as well as in Considerant's defense of individual freedom. Both also believed that the realization of collective interest should be simultaneous with the satisfaction of individual interest. It was the same idea postulated by Owen in asserting that only after the moral reform of the character of individuals, would their interests identify with general well-being.

Final remarks

Naturally there are differences between the economic and social theories of the thinkers discussed above that can also be detected in Chernyshevskii's novel. For instance, Fourier, Considerant and Owen dealt

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

with private initiatives when advocating the building of phalansteries or factories like the New Lanark Mill. The associative work proposed by Fourier and his disciple was based on a societal community, in which shareholders would contribute from the very moment they joined with their share, whether in the form of capital, labor or talent. On the other hand, Owen actually envisaged rational work, rather than associative work. As demonstrated in *A New View of Society*, his project was directed to more rational organization of labor, aiming not only at common well-being but also at profit. In other words, the ideas and projects of these thinkers and social reformers were inscribed in the possible alternatives to the free competition system, even though they were persistent critics of it. Their ventures would be private initiatives that, as Owen had said, would offer no risk of radical change or social conflict.

Unlike Fourier and Considerant, however, Owen requested state support for his plan. It should not interfere in the internal organization of the industrial enterprise, but would provide the favorable external circumstances for the general social and moral reform. The British state, according to Owen, should be in charge of eliminating ineffective punitive policies against poor workers and unemployed, moving them away from the temptation of addiction — alcoholism and gambling — and, especially, establishing a national education system.

Louis Blanc also requested state support for the establishment of social workshops, but in a different way than Owen's. Since the establishment of the first workshop, the state should have a crucial role as an investor, or as a financier. In agricultural workshops, the state should also be responsible for acquiring unoccupied land and making it available to peasants. However, the workshops would not belong to the state, as they would be an inalienable collective asset of all its members. The capital and interest on the debt with the state would be gradually amortized. This plan would be regulated by law and approved by the National Assembly, as presented in Blanc's *Organization of labor* (1850). Thus, the state should act not only as a guarantor of external circumstances, but as a propelling entity, since it would supply the initial capital to establish the workshops. However, it cannot be said that they would be state institutions. The state should only act as a partner and regulator of those initiatives, not acquiring or managing them directly.

But what is the relationship that the economic and social principles represented in *What is to be done?* have with the Russian state? At this point, the representation of economic, political and social relations in the novel is closer to Fourier and Considerant's proposals than to the others. Vera's sewing workshop was a private enterprise, with declared commercial purposes. The proposed labor organization aimed at both improving the

workers' well-being, as well as increasing productivity and establishing a competitive business. As Chernyshevskii implied that this mode of organization could lead to the general well-being of society, it is not clear what role the state would have in this field, if any.

The absence of the state in Chernyshevskii's literary representation can have at least three interpretations. Firstly, detained in the Peter and Paul Fortress, where he wrote his novel, it was unlikely that the writer could enjoy enough freedom to imply the role of the state in his novel. If he did, censorship was likely to prevent its publication. Secondly, it is possible that Chernyshevskii was not really able to associate the organization of labor in a small industry (the sewing workshop) with the state. Chernyshevskii was well acquainted with the daily life and difficulties of the Russian *raznochinets* youth and, to some extent, the problems of peasants subjected to serfdom. But he left few records demonstrating his concern or political engagement in Russian industrial workers' issues of the period. One can also remark that the Tsarist Empire, at that time, was not a fully developed industrial or capitalist nation, as were France and England. This fact, probably, made it less likely for Chernyshevskii to recognize the relationship between economy, organization of labor and the state. Furthermore, the French social thinkers and Owen enjoyed a degree of freedom of speech and political action that allowed them to rely upon the functions of the state, which would have been only a chimera for the Russian writer. Thirdly (albeit controversially), one might think that, in view of his knowledge of English liberal economic theory,⁴⁰ Chernyshevskii consciously left out the state in his picture of economics.

For one reason or another, the fact is that Chernyshevskii's silence in relation to the role of the state in the economy, and his distance from the properly proletarian issues, ends up bringing him closer to Rousseau's philosophy. In the absence of an external political entity to which he could attribute the initiative or regulation of his enterprise, the writer finds refuge in the discussion of general philosophical questions. Fourier did the same. The establishment of the phalanxes was not primarily a political issue, but a philosophical one. It concerned a battle about truth — the theory of universal attraction and association — against an allegedly false system, the anarchy of the market and free competition. According to Chernyshevskii, likewise, the general well-being was a primarily rational issue. The horizon for political action was not available to him. Thus, the inclusion of Rousseau among the thinkers and social reformers who influenced the writing of *What is to be done?* is due not only to the obvious evidence shown above but also to the

⁴⁰ In 1860, Chernyshevskii translated and commented Mill's *The Principles of Political Economy: with some of their applications to social philosophy* (1848).

crucial role that his thinking played as the frontier between Chernyshevskii's criticism and political action.

Hence another important discussion. Was *What is to be done?* a call to youth for revolution, a sort of pamphlet aimed at peasants and *raznochintsy* students? Seditious texts had already been published and attributed to Chernyshevskii (such as "Letter from the Provinces", 1860, and "To the Landlords' Peasants", 1861). However, if one considers only the influences of the thinkers listed above, it cannot be peremptorily concluded that Chernyshevskii envisaged to imply revolution in his novel, unless it was a peaceful one.

Starting with the influence of Rousseau's literature, which foresaw refuge in the countryside instead of any confrontational attitude, the proposals of the French social thinkers were not revolutionary. Fourier and Considerant never mentioned a clash with the prevailing social forces. Both wanted to build alternatives within the legal possibilities opened by the society they criticized. Blanc, perhaps the one who came closest to an insurrectional proposal, predicted that his workshops would carry out a peaceful revolution. At a certain point in *Socialism – Right to Work*, he even characterized the proletarian uprisings as "impossible revolutions" (*révolutions impossibles*).⁴¹ Owen guaranteed in his fourth essay, addressed to the British court, that his measures did not propose radical social changes, nor social upheavals. Thus, based on the influence of these social thinkers, one cannot deduce that *What is to be done?* put forth a revolutionary message, unless it was that of a peaceful revolution à la Blanc. For this reason, it is appropriate to reinterpret the seventh enigmatic section of Vera's fourth dream in the light of Fourier's social theory, and not only as an Aesopian mention of the social revolution. Likewise, it is appropriate to seek new possible interpretations for the meaning of the writer's mention of the year 1865, which many scholars have understood as a veiled reference to the impending revolution in Russia.⁴²

Finally, the correspondence between several aspects of the economic and social theories seen above is also striking, from Rousseau's *The New Heloise* to Chernyshevskii's *What is to be done?*. All of them put forth, in one way or another, associativism, the relationship between individual and collective interest, proposals for communal ways to organize domestic life, architecture for the new alternative establishments, and the emancipation of

⁴¹ Blanc (1849), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴² Chernyshevskii (1975), *op. cit.*, pp. 214, 852; Chernyshevskii (1989), *op. cit.*, pp. 273, 287, 444-445. There is a brief discussion of this issue in Ingerflom, Claudio. *Le citoyen impossible: les racines russes du léninisme*. Paris: Éditions Payot, 1988, p. 97.

women. These proposals were all based, as Owen had put it, on scientific discoveries about the character of the individual, about his/her relationship with society, and about its operating laws. All proposals had, paradoxically and simultaneously, a scientific source — they all believed that the social problems prevailed due to the ignorance or irrationality of the people — and a source in common sense, which made it urgent to solve the contradictions of capitalism in its early years of free competition.

Perhaps because they were drawn from similar sources (with Rousseau's work as a common embryo), the propositions of those thinkers, from France to Great Britain, had many similar points. As much as one can identify the ideas and influences of each of those thinkers in *What is to be done?*, the least doubtful conclusion is that Chernyshevskii had effectively integrated and participated in the flow of the international circulation of those ideas, originally centered in France. The author of *What is to be done?* actively operated in that circuit, selecting and mixing the most convenient or appropriate concepts in the face of his own reality, and finally reproducing them in the possible form of a literary work.

***Democratization in Post-Socialist States:
An Overview of the Literature on Political Transition
in Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet Space***

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Almost thirty years after the demise of the socialist bloc, states in Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet Space (Eurasia) still face challenges and obstacles regarding the prospects for democratization and democratic consolidation. The bargains and tradeoffs concerning the simultaneous implementation of huge political and economic reforms posed additional difficulties. This article presents a brief overview of the literature on political transition in these regions.²

The studies on democratization in post-socialist countries may be divided into two major fields: the first emphasizes the exceptionalities which differentiated post-socialist countries from other states that have gone through the so-called “third wave” of democratization. The second, by means of intra-regional comparisons, seeks to explain why certain countries, mainly in Eastern Europe,³ presented better results in the political and economic reforms compared to others, especially the majority of the former Soviet republics (see Annex 1 – Democracy ratings). It highlights both structural and institutional aspects, as well as elements of agency and “path dependence.” Studies of post-socialist states, despite focusing on specific regions, have made important contributions to political science and the field of comparative politics. (Frye 2012)

The following review will be divided into three parts: the specifics of the transition in post-socialist countries compared to transitions in other regions of the globe; variations in the transition between post-socialist countries; and, as a subdivision of the latter, the challenges of multiple transitions.

1. Specificities of the political transition in post-socialist states

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³ Some authors refer to the region as East-Central Europe or Central Eastern Europe, sometimes incorporating former Soviet republics, such as Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltic states and even Russia. In this paper, Eastern Europe encompasses states that did not belong to the USSR.

One of the main specificities that differentiated post-socialist democratization from other regions was the complexity of promoting a multiple — “double” and “triple” — transition. While several countries in the third wave of democratization underwent solely a political transition, post-socialist states had to carry out simultaneously an economic transition — the transformation of a socialist model into a market economy (“marketization”) — and, in some cases, a reformulation of state boundaries and identities constrained to them, in nation-building processes.⁴ (Offe 1991)

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) underscore several characteristics of communist regimes that brought additional difficulties to the democratization process: the communist legacy reduced levels of civic participation, made it difficult to institutionalize the rule of law, and left a centralized economy, with few autonomous and private groups and many state resources available to national elites for co-opting opponents. In the socialist period, “civil society” organizations were dependent on the state, penetrated by the communist party, and often counted on the co-optation of civil informants.⁵ Furthermore, the monopoly of the communist party and the “imposed” secularization constrained the functioning of religious institutions and rendered the political society with a low degree of pluralism. With respect to the rule of law, socialist laws were generic, gave ample space to discretion and did not establish control mechanisms in the interaction among elites. Officials in the state bureaucracy were recruited on political grounds, often linked to the communist party — in the transition, a layoff of employees in the face of a “lustration”⁶ process could have prompted large state-dependent sectors to support successor parties of the former regime, hampering reforms. Finally, the challenge of dismantling a command economy requires the regulatory capacity of a strong and effective state, otherwise there may be misappropriation of resources — such a condition was almost absent in the crisis period.

Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich Preuss (1998) point out that the transition in post-socialist states was characterized in most cases by a non-

⁴ Claus Offe (1991, pp. 871-873) calls these three components of the triple transition “nation-building” (or “territorial issue”), “constitution-making” (“issue of democracy”) and “politics of allocation and redistribution” (“the issue of economic and property order”).

⁵ The authors call this phenomenon “informer legacy”. Unlike authoritarian regimes in other regions, in which citizens were usually spied on by members of the state intelligence or the coercive apparatus, in socialist countries the vigilance system also counted on ordinary citizens. (Linz and Stepan 1996, p. 251)

⁶ “Lustration” is the process of dismissing officials and state servants linked to the former communist parties conducted in different states of Eastern Europe. In some cases, it also entailed a ban on communist parties and symbols.

military and non-violent nature, as well as by an absence of counter-elites, ideologies, “revolutionary” projects and unified political agents. The old regime did not bequest significant socioeconomic cleavages (*e.g.*, city-countryside and rich-poor) that could have stimulated the consolidation of collective representative agents. On the contrary, it left an “atomized and politically decapitated mass of ex-clients of state socialism, accustomed to the authoritarian (as well as largely egalitarian) provision of the means of subsistence and the rules according to which life had to be conducted.” (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998, p. 25) With the exception of some Central Eastern European countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, there was no significant mobilization by either the army or society — political agency seemed to be “extremely fragmented, incoherent, ambiguous, and short-lived.” (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998, p. 17) In a similar way, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, pp. 236-244) hold that the mobilizations in Eastern Europe only gained strength after the central elites of the Soviet Union, the “hegemon” of the socialist bloc, initiated a one-sided political opening and signaled that they would no longer guarantee support for local regimes. This, added to the problematic legitimacy of these regimes (often perceived as an external imposition) and the economic crisis meant that the costs of repression exceeded the costs of tolerance, giving space to mass demonstrations and opposition movements. Valerie Bunce (2003, p. 172), in turn, remarks that in countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the transition to democracy started with mass protests.

Another element of differentiation concerns the relationship between elites. Vladimir Gel'man (2003) mentions that while in other regions the democratization process was facilitated by intra-elite “pacts,” in post-Soviet states “pacts” were used to halt democratization. Given the weakness of societal cleavages in terms of ideological preferences and class segmentation, as well as the high level of dependence of the masses on elites’ patronage, “the principal sources of political contestation as a necessary (although not sufficient) condition of democratization are elite cleavages and conflicts, rather than ‘pacts’.” (Gel'man 2003, p. 96) The political competition was more acute where there were intra-elite disputes and no group was able to impose itself upon others. Bunce (2003, pp. 174-175) clarifies that the transition in Latin America required the establishment of pacts and commitments, since authoritarian regimes were conducted by armies — “the military in these contexts can make or break regimes.” (Bunce 2003, p. 175) In socialist states, conversely, the axis of regime support was the communist parties in decline — the armies, historically under civilian/party control, had

little influence during the beginning of the transition.⁷

2. Transition variations among post-socialist states

The literature that addresses the intra-regional variation of post-socialist regimes generally covers seven explanatory fields: (I) communist and pre-communist legacies; (II) nationalist mobilization; (III) geographical location and Western influence; (IV) negotiations between elites in transition, institutional choices and path-dependence; (V) cultural legacies; (VI) transitional uncertainties, pacts and informal institutions; and (VII) multiple transition trade-offs, with their economic and identity dimensions. I have adopted these categories only for methodological reasons — the divisions between the fields sometimes overlap each other.

(I) Communist and pre-communist legacies

In the field of communist and pre-communist legacies, one of the most notable works is that of Kitschelt *et al.* (1999), who approached the relationship between pre-democratic bureaucratic experiences and different communist regime types. At one end of the spectrum one finds the “authoritarian-bureaucratic” regime, based on a professional bureaucracy and labor/socialist parties inherited from the pre-communist democratic period (the interwar period). Such an arrangement restricted the entrenchment of communists in state institutions and hampered their political survival at the end of communism, favoring the “communist exit.” The longer the period in which a state experienced an independent democratic regime before communism, with a legal-rational bureaucracy, the greater was the likelihood that former communist elites would leave power during the fall of the regime. The democratic experience in the interwar period left an important legacy for parties to represent societal interests after communism. At the other end of the spectrum is “patrimonial communism,” based on authoritarian regimes and non-professional bureaucracies from the pre-communist period. Such a configuration enabled the institutional entrenchment of communists and facilitated the grip of former regime officials on power after the demise of communism. (Kitschelt *et al.* 1999, p. 24)

Keith Darden and Anna Grzymala-Busse (2006, p. 84) criticize Kitschelt *et al.*, claiming that the mechanisms underneath the relationship

⁷ Bunce (2003, p. 175) asserts that in East-Central Europe, except for some states, control over the army had been ceded to the USSR. In Russia, there was a long tradition of civilian control over the army. Despite military participation in the Russian Revolution of 1917, the subsequent years saw a demilitarization process.

between the “communist exit” and the outcomes of the transition are not clear — furthermore, some Soviet republics that faced “patrimonial communism” also experienced “communist exit.” In a statistical analysis of 27 post-socialist states,⁸ the scholars found that those which underwent a schooling process with nationalist content before communism were the ones that most stood against old regime candidates in the first free elections. Pre-communist schooling⁹ afforded the spread of nationalist ideas and the consolidation of national identities, which in turn boosted the perception that the communist regime was as an illegitimate foreign imposition. As soon as the electoral liberalization process began, dissatisfaction with the regime was channeled into support for non-communist candidates. Countries that did not have independent pre-communist schooling or underwent schooling only in the communist period showed less opposition to old regime officials during liberalization and less or no “communist exit.”

Also using comparative studies, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013) provide evidence that the communist legacies brought negative effects for post-communist civic participation.¹⁰ The number of years lived in communism matters. Countries that were already communist in the interwar period displayed lower civic participation rates than those that experienced communist regimes only after World War II. Sociodemographic factors and low religious attendance,¹¹ constrained during communism, are also associated with a lower level of civic participation. In short, the legacy of communism had a greater negative impact on democracy in the Soviet Union’s successor states than the communist legacy in Eastern Europe, where the regime had a shorter duration (Pop-Eleches, 2014)¹².

Marc Howard (2003), in one of the seminal studies of civic participation in post-communist states, emphasizes that the persistence of

⁸ For historical reasons, Ukraine was divided into two parts: Western (Galicia) and Eastern. Thus, there were 28 observations in the study.

⁹ According to Ernest Gellner (1983), in Western Europe industrialization led to social complexification and schooling contributed to the socialization of individuals based on identities that went beyond the limits of their immediate communities — the convergence of political and cultural units.

¹⁰ By “civic participation” the authors mean participation in religious, cultural/artistic, ecological, professional and sports/recreational organizations. Trade unions were not considered, since participation in these associations was practically mandatory during the communist period. (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2013, p. 57)

¹¹ The option “Religious service” in the surveys.

¹² Taras Kuzio (2000, p. 144) remarks that post-Soviet states spent more time under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes than countries in Latin America and Southern Europe, “which never became totalitarian and did not have to grapple with inherited weak and multinational states”.

informal friendship networks, stimulated by rampant shortages of good in communist societies, the mistrust of formal organizations and the disappointment with the post-communist system are among the factors that hindered the development of civic participation in Eastern Europe.

(II) Nationalist mobilization

Scholars such as Mark Beissinger (2008), Lucan Way and Adam Casey (2018) emphasize that anti-Soviet nationalism, associated with the inclination and opportunity to become a member state of the European Union, was fundamental for mobilizing civil society and achieving better outcomes in the democratization process. Bunce (2005, p. 410) affirms that the diffusion of the national idea served as a mechanism for the opposition to confront “imperial domination” and to seek to establish its own states and regimes. The weaker salience of anti-Soviet nationalism in several post-Soviet republics helped officials of the former regime to remain in power. (Way and Casey, 2018)

(III) Geographical location and Western influence

In the field of geographical location and Western influence, one of the primary works is that of Jeffrey Kopstein and David Reilly (2000), who assert that proximity to Western Europe and the diffusion of norms, expectations and institutions across borders (“neighbor effect”) accounted for deeper political and economic reforms. In general, the greater the proximity to Western Europe — the distance between the capital and Vienna or Berlin — the better the outcomes of the transition process.¹³ (see Annex 1 — Democracy ratings) Darden and Grzymala-Busse (2006) also mention the neighbor effect: countries of East Central Europe associated communism with economic backwardness, comparing themselves both with pre-communist political-economic status and with the status of their neighbors in the West. Meanwhile, Soviet republics of Central Asia perceived communism mostly in a positive way — during that regime the region experienced intense urbanization, modernization, schooling and the expansion of women’s rights. Furthermore, comparisons with neighbors further reinforced the positive view of communism and the Soviet past — “Afghanistan under the Taliban

¹³ Although the Soviet Space is at a disadvantage due to the greater distance, the former Soviet Baltic republics experienced a relatively rapid process of democratization.

fit precisely the Soviet stereotype of pre-communist life.” (Darden and Grzymala-Busse (2006, p. 106) The most “favorable” regional reference for modernization is China, but it is also ruled by a communist regime. Martha Olcott (1992) claims that the Soviet Central Asian republics were practically “catapulted” to independence. The low separatist mobilization and the high support for the continuity of the Union in the 1991 referendum on the future of the USSR are evidence of this passivity.

Regarding the incentives for democratization promoted by Western European institutions, Frank Schimmelfennig (2005) argues that the conformity with liberal norms and rules by Eastern European national elites depended on their evaluation of the domestic costs and benefits of compliance. The perspectives of membership in the EU and NATO played a major role in generating incentives, but their success depended on the appearance of a constellation of strong liberal parties (or at least a mixed constellation of parties). Strong liberal parties were present where society had already partly identified with the West and aspired to adopt liberal norms. Milada Vachudova (2005, p. 4) additionally mentions that from 1989 to 1994 the European Union exerted only minor and “passive” pressure on domestic politics, reinforcing liberal strategies of reform in some states. However, once it moved towards enlargement, the entry requirements conditional on democratic reforms allowed it to play an “active” role. The deliberate EU policies toward candidate states increased the attractiveness of compliance and the costs of noncompliance. Darden and Grzymala-Busse (2006, p. 88) point out that the prospects for joining the EU became feasible only after 1995 and the Bosnia conflict, when many economic and political reforms had already been enacted. Addressing the complexity of ascertaining causality, David Cameron (2007) notes that the aspiration to join the EU may have been one of the causes that influenced democratization in post-socialist states — the conditions for membership were well-known even before the demise of communism —, but it was associated with several correlated factors, such as spatial location, political background (having been democratic in the past), transitional politics (division of elites and mobilization of civil society) and economic ties with the EU. Due to the proximity between these factors, it is not feasible to eliminate the risks of endogeneity and accurately ascertain the direction of causality: “it does appear that those factors, taken together, may have caused some countries to aspire both to join the EU and to create a democratic polity.” (Cameron 2007, p. 215)

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010) hold that the success of democratization in the third wave was related to the existence of “linkages” with the West (trade, migration, technocratic ties, exchange students, etc.), “leverage” from Western powers and organizations — with such mechanisms as conditional financial aid — and “organizational power,” understood as the

availability of a strong and cohesive party supporting the incumbent in parliament and a strong state coercive capacity (instruments of repression and law enforcement, such as police, secret service¹⁴ and army). The most successful countries in terms of democratization were those that presented higher linkages and leverage, and also did not face serious organizational capacity crises. Most Soviet republics, however, had neither ties with, nor experienced significant pressure from, the West — they were not even contemplated with chances of access to the EU — which favored the predominance of authoritarian regimes. For geopolitical considerations, such as competition for regional influence with Russia and concerns due to the advance of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, the West offered economic aid to authoritarian regimes in the region without strict demands for liberalization and political opening.¹⁵ In the face of unfavorable external conditions (low linkages and leverage), the variation in organizational power was decisive for the outcomes of the post-Soviet transition. Where constraints on organizational capacity were absent, incumbents managed to establish stable authoritarian regimes. Where capacity was constrained, incumbents failed in concentrating power, even when the political “playing field” was skewed in their favor — such cases were characterized as “competitive authoritarianism,” with a higher degree of pluralism. Lucan Way and Adam Casey (2018) hold that the set of geo-historical structural factors — above all anti-Soviet nationalism and conditionalities to join the EU — constrained the strategies available to Eastern European political elites, giving greater linearity to their democratization process.¹⁶ The absence or low intensity of these factors in post-Soviet states, however, provided space for voluntarist

¹⁴ According to Levitsky and Way (2010), the persistence or reformulation of security institutions established in the communist period, as successor local bodies of the Soviet State Security Committee (KGB), guaranteed coercive power to authoritarian leaders, skewing the political “playing field”. In reference to Colton (2008, p. 259), they report that Boris Yeltsin once mentioned that the communist party was the “head” of the Soviet system and the KGB — its “backbone”. Once the head had been “pulled out”, the backbone could be reused for his benefit.

¹⁵ Such Western policy of “double standards” differentiating Eastern Europe from the Post-Soviet Space, based on geopolitical considerations, had already been noticed by Linz and Stepan (1996) in its initial phase. In the book “Dirty Diplomacy”, the former British diplomat Craig Murray (2007) reports on human rights violations committed by the Uzbek regime and neglected by Western powers. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the geopolitical dispute between the USA and Russia for influence on the Post-Soviet Space has been noticeable, including Central Asia, an important route for intervention in Afghanistan.

¹⁶ Grzymala-Busse (2007) shows that Eastern European states adopted different strategies in their process of democratization.

factors to acquire greater relevance, which accounts for the higher regional variation in regime types and their lower democratic performance (see Annex 1 – Democracy ratings). Boris Makarenko and Andrey Melvil (2014), however, argue that there were positive structural factors in the Post-Soviet Space — apart from some states that faced the resource curse due to oil revenues. Several post-communist states counted on high levels of education and industrialization. At the same time, they converge in mentioning that agency played a major role — institutional choices by elites were more decisive in the course of the transition than structural constraints: “democratization evolves where elites, voluntarily or sometimes not, choose institutional settings and develop practices that enable a more developed and better institutional pluralism, conflict resolution and the involvement of society in politics.” (Makarenko and Melvil, 2014, p. 36)

(IV) Negotiations between elites in transition, institutional choices and path-dependence

Concerning the explanatory field of negotiations between elites, institutional choices and path-dependence, Gerald Easter (1997) argues that the politics of regime breakdown — basically the continuity and structure of elites — influenced the adoption of institutional design and the distribution of power resources, resulting in democratization success or failure. Where opposition to the regime was weak and the former communist elites remained consolidated, a presidential system was adopted. Where the opposition was strong and the elites were dispersed, a parliament system evolved. According to Easter (1997, p.189), presidentialism was chosen by consolidated elites of the old regime, since it “provided a buffer against the encroachment of democracy, liberalization, and the market, by insulating the president from parliament’s control.” By means of decree powers, the separation between executive and legislative branches, and fixed mandates, the president can ensure access to power resources and usually deny it to others. The stability of the distribution of power was contingent on the executive branch and its use of patronage, which, in many cases, led to democratization failure. Parliamentarism was preferred by new political players because it facilitates access to and redistribution of these power resources by means of mechanisms like the vote of no confidence and strong legislative controls over the executive. The prospects for democratization were higher in this scenario. In fact, one finds a strong association between strong parliaments, weak executives and democracy in post-socialist countries (Fish 2006; Cameron 2007, p. 213).

In a case study on Russia, Eugene Huskey (1997) showed that

Russian presidentialism since its foundation had counted on few checks and balances, partly due to administrative structures inherited from the communist party. In the Soviet period, several state structures were duplicated and interwoven with party structures. The presidency of the USSR was instituted during the dismantling of this system, incorporating some functions of the party. In a comparative analysis of the constitutions adopted by former Soviet republics, Petra Stykow (2019) identified several prerogatives that guaranteed the president's preponderance in the political system. According to her, the Russian Constitution of 1993 instituted the “doctrine of presidential supremacy,” through which the president is presented as “meta-power,” a kind of regulatory body above the three branches of powers, and holds special prerogatives concerning coordination and agenda setting. Such innovation is probably a remnant of the leading and guiding role of the communist party in society recognized by the Soviet constitution (Rumyantsev 2011, p. 36; Stykow 2019, p. 9).¹⁷ The Russian model was partly emulated and adapted by other post-Soviet states, therefore, Stykow calls it “Eurasian-type presidentialism” or “superpresidentialism.” Although large-N analyses have indicated that authoritarian regimes do not constitutionalize higher levels of executive power (Elkins, Ginsburg, and Melton, 2013, p. 162), she showed that post-Soviet states indeed incorporated special powers into their constitutions. Among the constitutional prerogatives, one can mention: direct references to the president as a meta-branch regulating the relations between the other branches; dissolution of the parliament, in which the president has the final say; his/her preponderance in conflicts with the legislature; absence of political parties in the cabinet’s formation; and unlimited presidential terms — in some cases providing personalist prerogatives to a particular leader as the “founder” of the statehood. The countries that displayed better democratic outcomes in the region have not codified these elements — especially the “doctrine of presidential supremacy” — and have ensured greater participation of political

¹⁷ Article 6 of the 1977 Soviet Constitution read: “*The leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organisations and public organisations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people.*”

The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the home and foreign policy of the USSR, directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism.

All party organisations shall function within the framework of the Constitution of the USSR.”

parties in the formation of cabinets. Some constitutional arrangements associated with authoritarian regimes were not necessarily invented by dictators, (Stykov 2019, p.13) but stemmed from pre-existing institutions — evidence of path dependence in the evolution of these regimes.

Gel'man (2003, p. 97) argues that constitution making in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus was conducted in a one-sided process imposed by the winners of intra-elite conflicts, who designed flexible institutions in order to minimize formal constraints to the president. Addressing such flexibility, Vicente Ferraro (2019) showed that the Russian system guaranteed several constitutional prerogatives to the president, while relegating the “rules of the game” to the sub-constitutional sphere, which allowed the executive to promote incremental reforms¹⁸ and demobilize veto players without the need for large parliamentary majorities’ support. As a result, the president further strengthened his institutional powers at the expense of political pluralism. Flexible institutions may be more easily adapted by the incumbent for his/her own benefit when addressing contextual challenges. In view of the uncertainties of the transition, institutional flexibility was preferable to the president vis-à-vis rigid arrangements. (Ferraro, 2019)

(V) Cultural legacies

With regard to the field of cultural legacies and informal institutions, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p.245) argue that Orthodox Christianity, by virtue of its national organizational structures and its links to the state,¹⁹ did not offer a background for the constitution of an autonomous opposition. Conversely, the Roman Catholic Church (due to its external hierarchies) and Protestant dissident groups contributed to a different civil society in some states of Eastern Europe. Andrew Janos (2000) suggests that states of Western Christianity were characterized by a greater individualist and contractualist tradition, which provided more openness to liberalism. Orthodox countries were marked by collectivism and communal paternalism, which facilitated the establishment of authoritarian rule and illiberal traditions. Surveys conducted by Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer (1993, tab. 35)²⁰ showed that the share of respondents which never or rarely frequented church was considerably lower in countries such as Slovenia and, especially, Poland —

¹⁸ Fabian Burkhardt (2017) also analyzed the adoption of incremental institutional changes in the Russian political system.

¹⁹ This structure was called “caesaropapism” by Max Weber. (Linz and Stepan 1996, pp. 245, 260, 453)

²⁰ Data also mentioned by Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 246).

evidence that Western Catholicism may indeed have offered greater resistance to the secularization and atheist policies promoted by communist regimes. Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013, pp. 50, 59-60) point out lower religiosity and church attendance as a major sociodemographic factor undermining civic participation in post-communist states.

In an analysis of the relationship between ethnic diversity and the level of democratization in the region, Steven Fish (1998) showed that there is no significant correlation — a conclusion similar to that of Merkel and Weiffen (2012) in a global study.²¹ However, he found correlation between Islam and authoritarianism in Central Asian republics, although it is not possible to speak of a causal relationship, given the fact that in the Soviet period religious identifications were deeply weakened and therefore it is difficult to dissociate religion from other geo-historical factors.

(VI) Transitional uncertainties, pacts and informal institutions

Addressing pre-colonial institutions, Kathleen Collins (2004) argues that the lower performance of Central Asian republics in the democratization process stems from the traditional influence of clans and tribal affiliations in local politics, a cultural element that, according to her, has survived and adapted even within Soviet institutions. Faced with an external “threat” to the balance of power between different clans (the demise of the communist regime), their leaders sought to make pacts around legitimate “brokers” that could bring stability and reduce transitional uncertainties. Collins emphasizes that these informal clan pacts ended up distorting and overlapping formal institutions, which explain why former Soviet republics in Central Asia, despite having adopted different institutional arrangements, converged on authoritarian personalist regimes.²²

In the explanatory field of transitional uncertainties and informal institutions, Rico Isaacs (2010) disputes the deterministic influence of clan politics on the outcomes of democratization, claiming that the formation of neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes, with predominance of informal institutions²³ and clientelist relations, did not result from cultural factors or

²¹ Merkel and Weiffen (2012, pp. 407-408) hold that ethnic heterogeneity may pose difficulties to the prospects of democratic consolidation.

²² According to Kitschelt *et al.* (1999, p. 23), the intertwining between traditional politics and the Soviet administrative structures gave rise to “patrimonial communism”, in which the functioning of the regime relied on “vertical chains of personal dependence between leaders in the state and party apparatus and their entourage, buttressed by extensive patronage and clientelist networks”.

²³ Helmke and Levitsky (2004) argue that the spread of informal institutions in the

traditional institutions, but above all from the uncertainties contingent to the transition — especially those associated with institutional conflicts, emerging pluralism and electoral competition.²⁴ The preponderance of elite pacts and informal politics over formal institutions was an elite-led strategy aimed at minimizing the political risks and the costs of the transitional context. Similarly, Henry Hale (2014) argues that several Eurasian regimes saw the evolution of a dominant patronage pyramid around a particular leader, the patron, responsible for guaranteeing its functioning. The different levels of the pyramid are interconnected by networks of mutual interests and exchanges of patronal benefits; therefore, he refers to this phenomenon as “patronal politics.” States where other concurrent patronage pyramids arose faced regime instability.

Gel'man (2003) says that one of the major challenges for the rule of law in the post-Soviet space is the migration from a system saturated with informal institutions toward formal institutions. The author proposes that the transition in the region could be examined from the perspective of two analytical axes: the degree of political contestation (basically “non-competitive monocentric” and “competitive polycentric”) and the set of formal and informal rules and norms (political institutions). In this sense, democratization may be understood as a process of “transition (whether simultaneous or not) toward both political contestation and the rule of law,” that is, from a non-competitive monocentric regime with predominant informal institutions toward a competitive polycentric regime with active formal institutions. (Gel'man, 2003, p. 95)

Finally, Valerie Bunce (2003, p. 190) asserts that the greater the uncertainties of the transition, the greater the probability that key players sought to come to a consensus (“bridging”) in order to reduce the costs of changes, which, in turn, posed additional difficulties on democratization. On the other hand, where the uncertainties were less intense, the greater were the chances of breaking with the regime (“breakage”), which favored democratization. Factors such as strong mass protests, favorable results for opposition forces in the first elections, and late non-violent nationalist mobilization reduced the prospects for political survival of the former elites,

Soviet period resulted from a social strategy to circumvent the bureaucratic rigidity of formal communist institutions — a “second-best” measure in the face of the impossibility actors changing institutions or the high costs for that. This approach is similar to that of Howard (2003) regarding the establishment of friendship networks as a strategy to circumvent the shortage of goods.

²⁴ Timothy Frye (1997) holds that under a low level of uncertainty, powerful decision makers choose institutions that benefit their already privileged position, whereas a high level of uncertainty reduces their ability to implement their preferred options, what in turn results in less biased institutions.

which diminished the uncertainties regarding the end of the regime and the course of the transition. (Bunce 2003)

3. The challenges of multiple transitions

The explanatory field on the trade-offs of the multiple transitions may be divided into “economic” and “identity” subfields. Regarding the economic dimension, Joel Hellman (1998) holds that the major hindrances to reforms did not come from social groups that ended up losing, such as workers, former bureaucrats, retirees and unemployed, but from groups that benefited the most from partial reforms, such as new company owners (former insiders of state-owned enterprises), bankers, local officials averse to breaking monopolies in their regions, and mafia associations. Instead of supporting the continuity of reforms, these “short-term winners” sought to paralyze them to maintain a status quo beneficial to them. Democratic governments, with multiple veto points, were essential to prevent short-term winners from capturing the state. Expanding political participation to include “losers” in the policy-making process helped to mend problems resulting from partial reforms. In reference to the effects of the transition on civil society, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013, p. 63) argue that low post-communist civic participation stems not only from the socialization under communism and the regime’s sociodemographic effects, but also from ‘living through the collapse of communism’ because the poor economic performance right after the end of communism had a demobilizing effect.

Fish (1998) noted that countries which most promoted economic reforms were the most democratic. However, although the extent of economic reforms appears to be a better predictor of the extent of democratization, the problem of multicollinearity makes it difficult to identify causality and its direction. One can at least state that marketization does not constrain democratization. (Fish 1998, pp. 231, 242-243). Similarly to other scholars in the field of post-socialist transition (*e.g.*, Linz and Stepan 1996; Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998), he argues that, unlike the transition in other regions, post-communist states did not have economic groups independent of the state that could sustain themselves as opposition. The creation of a market economy, with the consequent emergence of an autonomous middle class, was, thus, a fundamental condition for democratization.²⁵

In a study on Russia, Makarenko *et al.* (2008, p.19) hold that the allocation of strong institutional powers to the executive was a necessary

²⁵ Such assertion goes back to Barrington Moore's (1966) famous line “no bourgeoisie, no democracy”.

condition for the implementation of deep political and economic reforms in the short-run, underscoring that the country was one of the few post-socialist states in which the president was expected to promote systemic transformations in the midst of an anti-reformist parliament dominated by opposition forces. Timothy Frye (2010) also highlighted the negative effects of political polarization. In contexts of high polarization between the president and the largest party in parliament, economic actors tend to curb their investments fearing that a change in government may imply a turnaround on the implemented policies. As a consequence, the executive has less revenue to be converted into resources to obtain political support. This scenario provides incentives for the incumbent to promote harmful distortions to economic and institutional reforms in order to remain in power.

Finally, the identity dimension of the transition's tradeoffs corresponds to one of the most troublesome aspects of post-communist transformation. Linz and Stepan (1996) were among the first scholars to draw attention to this issue, calling it a "stateness problem."²⁶ There is a problem of "stateness" when disagreements over the territorial boundaries of the state's political community and over who has the right to citizenship in that state acquire political prominence. "Without a state, there can be no citizenship; without citizenship, there can be no democracy." (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 25) According to the authors, Western European states engaged in state-building and nation-building projects — with Roger Brubaker's (1996) so-called "nationalizing policies and practices" — and only later, with relative homogeneity, they underwent democratization. In several ethnically diverse post-communist countries constituted after the dissolution of other states (*e.g.*, the USSR and Yugoslavia), democratization and economic reforms were conducted simultaneously with processes of state-building and efforts to constitute a nation-state,²⁷ which made the tradeoffs of the "stateness" problem even more complex. Democratization was stabler in more homogeneous countries, such as Poland and Hungary.

Political opening in authoritarian settings enhances the potential to accentuate separatist and irredentist aspirations, since free elections can facilitate the channeling of these demands into the mobilization of ethnicity by political players. (Snyder 2000) For Linz and Stepan (1996, pp. 26-30), the presence of an irredentist country contiguous to the state borders, high cultural diversity, and the existence of a multinational society may deepen the problem of "stateness" and its tradeoffs, hindering the creation of a nation-

²⁶ As mentioned before, Claus Offe (1991) had also addressed the problem — the "territorial issue" — in his work on the triple transition.

²⁷ Taras Kuzio (2000) addresses "nationhood" apart from the "stateness" question, claiming that some post-communist states underwent a "quadruple" transition.

state and posing difficulties to the establishment of an agreement on the fundamentals of democracy.

Several case studies on post-communist states have directly or indirectly addressed the problem of “stateness.” Analyzing the early transition years in Kazakhstan, authors such as Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt (1996) and Steven Fish (1998, p. 224) noted that ethnic divisions, the potential for conflict and the nation-building process were being mobilized by Kazakh central elites against democratization. Gagnon (1994) analyzes how Serbian elites, threatened by the transition, resorted to ethnic violent discourse as a strategy to retain their grip on power. In a study on the relations between the federal and regional governments in Russia, Cameron Ross (2003, p. 177) observes that the centralization promoted by the Russian central elites in order to curb separatism and centrifugal tendencies had negative consequences for democratization: “Yeltsin and Putin, unlike Gorbachev, may have succeeded in maintaining the unity of the state, but only by sacrificing Russia’s democratic transition.” Approaching Ukraine, Taras Kuzio (2000, p. 153) sees the elite’s division between Slavophiles and Westernizers as a challenge to democratization, since Slavophiles tend to be opposed to the multiple transition. Lucan Way (2015), on the other hand, holds that this division of the national identity, associated with a weak coercive and economic control by the central state, contributed to a “pluralism by default” in the political system.

Concluding remarks

This review presented some of the main studies that have sought to explain the political transition in post-socialist countries, underscoring characteristics that differentiated the beginning of the transition process in comparison to other regions around the world and factors that contributed to variation in the transition outcomes among post-socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet Space — in the latter I also considered subregions, such as Central Asia. Additionally, special attention was drawn to the tradeoffs of the “triple” transition, basically the challenges of conducting political, economic and identity transitions in a short period.

In spite of having counted on similar initial conditions, post-socialist states currently present a wide variety of regimes, ranging from parliamentary democracies to personalist super-presidentialism. Structural variables (such as communist legacy, demography, geopolitics, Western influence) and agency (negotiations between elites, strategic action and institutional choices) contributed to this differentiation. International factors constrain the dynamics of these regimes, for example, growing geopolitical

antagonism between Russia and the West, “frozen conflicts” in some former Soviet republics, ethnic tensions and the prolonged crisis in Ukraine.

One of the greatest contemporary challenges is the rise of right-wing populism in Eastern Europe. Will states that have performed better in the democratization process be able to withstand populist menaces? Will the institutional know-how acquired in the last thirty years and the constituted civil society be enough to resist dissatisfaction and discontent with representative democracy in some layers of the population? Possibly, there will be no single answer and the outcomes will be as diverse as they have been so far.

Annex 1 – Democracy ratings

Country	Region	Freedom House, Nations in Transit, 2020 - Democracy Score (1 to 7)	BTI, 2020 - Political Transformation Index (1 to 10)	V-Dem, 2020 - Regimes of the World, measure with categories for ambiguous cases (0 to 9)	The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2019 - Democracy Index (1 to 10)	Polity 5, ref. 2018 - Polity Score (-10 to +10)
Albania	Eastern Europe - Balkans	3.82	7.15	4	5.89	9
Armenia	Former USSR - Caucasus	3.00	7.10	4	5.54	7
Azerbaijan	Former USSR - Caucasus	1.14	3.43	3	2.75	-7
Belarus	Former USSR - Eastern Europe	1.39	4.38	3	2.48	-7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	3.32	5.75	5	4.86	-
Bulgaria	Eastern Europe - Balkans	4.54	7.95	6	7.03	9
Croatia	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	4.25	8.15	6	6.57	9
Czech Republic	Eastern Europe	5.64	9.35	7	7.69	9
Estonia	Former USSR - Eastern Europe / Baltic	6.07	9.80	8	7.90	9
Georgia	Former USSR - Caucasus	3.25	6.60	6	5.42	7
Hungary	Eastern Europe	3.96	6.80	4	6.63	10
Kazakhstan	Former USSR - Central Asia	1.32	3.78	3	2.94	-6
Kosovo	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	3.18	6.55	6	-	8
Kyrgyzstan	Former USSR - Central Asia	1.96	6.10	3	4.89	8
Latvia	Former USSR - Eastern Europe / Baltic	5.79	8.90	8	7.49	8

Lithuania	Former USSR - Eastern Europe / Baltic	5.64	9.50	7	7.50	10
Moldova	Former USSR - Eastern Europe	3.11	5.80	6	5.75	9
Montenegro	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	3.86	7.35	4	5.65	9
North Macedonia	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	3.75	7.20	6	5.97	9
Poland	Eastern Europe	4.93	7.95	6	6.62	10
Romania	Eastern Europe	4.43	7.65	6	6.49	9
Russia	Former USSR - Eastern Europe/ Eurasia	1.39	4.50	3	3.11	4
Serbia	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	3.96	6.95	3	6.41	8
Slovakia	Eastern Europe	5.29	8.65	7	7.17	10
Slovenia	Eastern Europe - Balkans, Former Yugoslavia	5.93	9.15	8	7.50	10
Tajikistan	Former USSR - Central Asia	1.18	2.92	3	1.93	-3
Turkmenistan	Former USSR - Central Asia	1.00	2.75	2	1.72	-8
Ukraine	Former USSR - Eastern Europe	3.39	6.90	4	5.90	4
Uzbekistan	Former USSR - Central Asia	1.14	3.63	1	02.01	-9

Notes:

- *Freedom House, Nations in Transit*: Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (1.00–2.00), Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (2.01–3.00), Transitional/Hybrid Regime (3.01–4.00), Semi-Consolidated Democracy (4.01–5.00), Consolidated Democracy (5.01–7.00).

- *BTI Political Transformation Index*: Hard Line Autocracy (0- 3.99), Moderate Autocracy (4-4.99), Highly Defective Democracy (5-5.99), Defective Democracy (6 – 7.99) and Democracy in Consolidation (8-10).

- *Varieties of Democracy, Regimes of the World, classification adapted from Lüthmann et al. (2018)*; *V-Dem Codebook*: Closed Autocracy (0-1), Electoral Autocracy (2-4), Electoral Democracy (5-7), Liberal Democracy (8-9).

- *EIU Democracy Index*: Authoritarian (1.00-4.00), Hybrid Regime (4.01-6.00), Flawed Democracy (6.01-8.00), Full Democracy (8.00-10.00).
- *Polity 5*: Autocracy (-10 to -6), Anocracy (-5 to +5) and Democracy (6 to 10).

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