

At the Root of the Economic Theories of Modern Revisionism: Bogdanov/Bukharin's Theory of Equilibrium

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Introduction

The concept of modern revisionism is a well-defined one. It is usually referred to as the ideological apparatus specific to the superstructure of the capitalist mode of production that emerged in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, with the exception of Albania, following the economic transformations that occurred after the death of Stalin. Modern revisionism also propagated to other countries and parties not in power. In the latter case modern revisionism manifested itself in different forms. Even within countries with parties in power modern revisionism is not homogeneous, depending on the period and the country. Generally speaking, we could argue that among the ideologists there existed two main trends, although between them did not exist a Chinese wall and cannot be considered as a disjoint. Firstly, those who advocated the strength of the plan and the organising power of the state. Secondly there existed those who argued that such a model of development hinders economic growth and that the solution to economic stagnation lies in the decentralisation of the economy by which the enterprise would acquire more financial independence in addition to the already existing self-management and the system of economic accounting. The progress of the economic reforms was to a certain extent a balance between these two tendencies. The correlation of these two tendencies was not homogenous across all countries and it evolved with time. In essence, these two tendencies and their interrelation were not that different from that of Keynesianism and neo-liberalism in the West.¹ This analogy is not meant to define the essence of modern revisionism. Despite internal differences, modern revisionism as a whole, and especially in political economy, emerges from a common source. The characteristic of this source is the object of further investigation here.

At the core of the theories of modern revisionism lies the rethinking and revision of the basic tenets of political economy, especially that of socialism. This new theory develops in the 50s by subjecting to criticism and demonising most of the principles of the political economy of socialism published in Stalin's 'Economic Problems' and in doing this revising Lenin's outline of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Towards the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s this economic theory becomes more or less standardised, although economic discussions continue all through the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Modern revisionism is a rather refined ideological apparatus, which in political economy made a tremendous effort to reconcile Marx, Engels and Lenin with the new economic theory that emerged to explain the new economic reality. A cornerstone of this economic theory (despite all its variations and different trends, a diversity that we commonly see in bourgeois thought) comprises the reconciliation of the principles of Marxism-Leninism with the fact that all products in those economies were commodities, both in their outward appearance and their essence and the law of value governed labour flow. The law of value becomes the regulator of exchange of labour among of all economic elements, the exchange between state owned enterprises, between the state and the

collective farms. These economic theories are sometimes referred to as the theories of 'Market Socialism', indicating the attempt to reconcile theoretically the operation of the law of value, as a universal regulator, which is a form that emerged historically expressing the economic relations between independent producers, with socialised production. Needless to say, these economies were not based on the social character of the means of production, they were declared to be such. Ultimately these economic theories were designed to cover up the objective fact that labour had become a commodity together with all the products of labour and that the privileged classes appropriated a fraction of the surplus value.

The restoration of the law of value has far reaching consequences and is necessarily linked to other capitalist laws that manifest themselves in very particular ways. The characterisation of these laws in the context of the specific economic and social relations that emerged in the Soviet Union is a broad and complex topic that we will not touch upon here.² Here we are going to be primarily concerned with two questions. Firstly, starting from Stalin's assessment of the main sources of the right-wing deviationism, we are going to deal with their connection with classical and neo-classical economic thought. Secondly, how the establishment of the theories of 'Market Socialism' are determined by forms of revisionism that occurred earlier and how these transform and propagate in time to evolve into what we commonly know as modern revisionism. The latter will be dealt with mainly within the context of the political economy of socialism.

Instrumental to understanding the linkage between the economic theories of modern revisionism with earlier revisionist constructions is to identify the tight connection between the postulate of the operation of the law of value as a regulator in socialism and the older theory of equilibrium. The theory or postulate of equilibrium is an integral part of the economic and philosophical thought of the ideologists of the right wing opposition in the 20s. We are going to deal with the question of defining the different aspects of the theory of equilibrium in the bourgeois economic thought and how it propagates into the right wing revisionist theories. In short and for the purpose of introducing the subject, we'd like to define the postulate of equilibrium, stated in the general form, as the assumption by which social and economic phenomena occur as the result of the mechanical equilibrium of certain forces. The feasibility of the phenomenon is determined by equilibrium. The transition from one type of phenomenon to another is interpreted as the transition from one state of equilibrium to another. Depending on the subject at hand, different social and economic laws come forth that concretise the general statement about the necessity of equilibrium. These laws tend to acquire absolute character, as they are applicable to all social formations. All these postulates are inherited and developed further by Bogdanov and Bukharin to re-shape historical materialism and political economy.

This theoretical apparatus was used as a weapon to challenge the need for massive collectivisation of the countryside and the rapid industrialisation of the Soviet Union, and in essence, to undermine the liquidation of the capitalist class, capitalist exploitation and the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union. The right wing opposition towards the end of the 20s had a clear leader both organically and ideologically, N.I. Bukharin. His name is well known. What is not so well known today is that he was responsible for the systematic use and inculcation of the theory of equilibrium, both in his historical materialism and political economy. He was instrumental in formulating the so-called law of labour expenses, which is a concretisation of the more general theory of equilibrium and signifies the propagation of the

operation of the law of value as a regulator in the socialist economy. The law of labour expenses materialises the postulates of equilibrium mentioned above with regards to the exchange of labour in general, regardless of the mode of production. In market economies the law of value, which signifies the exchange of equivalents, manifests the law of labour expenses. This law of exchange of equivalents appears in socialism in its 'bare' form, according to Bukharin, void of the fetishist form, inherent the market economy in capitalism. But the latter is in reality a purely formalistic preposition. Effectively, the law of value is promoted as the manifestation of the law of value in socialism. These ideas in political economy, as we will see in the course of this work, were not original and are deeply rooted in the bourgeois philosophical and economic thought developed mainly in the 19th century.

Something that was well known in the 30s and that is less known today is that Bukharin developed these ideas under the influence of A.A Bogdanov. The influence of Bogdanov on Bukharin and other economists of the 20s and how his influence propagates to the post-Stalin period will be discussed below. Bogdanov is known to the Marxist-Leninists mostly due to the fact that Lenin in classical book 'Materialism and Empirio-criticism' exposed the philosophical foundations laid in the three volume work Empiriomonism. Empiriocriticism, was a philosophical tendency advocated by Richard Avenarius and later Ernst Mach, a form of positivism that is characterized by strong subjectivism and idealism. Bogdanov, under the influence of empiriocriticism developed the ideas of empiriomonism, by which the classical individual subjectivism is replaced by the so called collective consciousness. In doing this Bogdanov insistent on the attempt made by Avenarius and Mach of building a philosophy that allegedly overcomes materialism and idealism. These are philosophical foundations of Bogdanov's *opus magnum*, Tektology.³ The latter was written in two volumes and deals with the general theory of organisation, which replaces historical materialism, dialectical materialism and, among others, solves the problems of political economy of organised societies, such as socialism and communism. Lenin saw the ideological danger posed by Bogdanov's insistence in creating a new system of thought that allegedly supersedes Marxism altogether. Lenin took the study of Bogdanov's work very seriously early on:

'I have been following Bogdanov's writings on philosophy since his energeticist book, The Historical View of Nature, which I studied during my stay in Siberia.

When we worked together, Plekhanov and I often discussed Bogdanov. Plekhanov explained the fallacy of Bogdanov's views to me, but he did not think the deviation a terribly serious one.

Bogdanov wrote another piece in prison at the beginning of 1906 – the third issue of Empirio-monism, I believe... It became clearer to me than ever that he was on an absolutely wrong track, not the Marxist track.' (V.I. Lenin, in 'A Letter to A.M. Gorky', February 25th 1908, Collected Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, Vol. 13, page 449).

Lenin's insistence on exposing Bogdanov's revision of Marxism goes beyond 'Materialism and empiriocriticism' and pertains to other areas of humanities in addition to philosophy, not to mention the political implications of his theories. We can find numerous references in Lenin's

works with criticism of Bogdanov in various areas, and together with him Lunacharsky and Bazarov, who were also under the influence of empiriocriticism. These ideological significance and the connection of the ideas advocated by Bogdanov on humanities in the Soviet Union in the 20s were well known to economists and philosophers in the 30s, but were unfortunately forgotten or ignored in the post-war period. A landmark for the exposure of Bogdanovism and the theory of equilibrium and how it influenced right-wing revisionism is the excellent book by A. V. Scheglov, 'The Struggle of Against Bogdanov's Revision of Marxism', published in 1937.⁴ Shcheglov in this work brilliantly demonstrates the linkage between the philosophical premises based on empirio-criticism and Bogdanov's organisational principles laid down in Tektology, on the one hand. On the other hand, the book establishes the connection between the right-wing theories of the law of values and the theory of equilibrium, an integral part of the organisation principles of Bogdanov' Tektology.

The political economy of socialism was a section of the political economy that was being developed in the 20s with great difficulty due to the strong influence of the ideas of Bogdanov and Bukharin, of Trotskyites like Preobrazhenski, Kon, idealists like Rubin, representatives of the petty bourgeois peasantry like Chayanov, Kondratiev who developed under the influence of Tugan-Baranovsky, Mensheviks like Bazarov and Groman and many others. The economic discussions of the 20s are complex for several reasons. One of the main reasons is that for a number of years eclecticism was allowed to be publicised and develop further. Many attempts were done to 'develop', complete, or even overcome Marx's economic theory based on premises that were fundamentally pre-Marxist and, as will be noted later, corresponding to economic thinking of pre-monopolistic capitalism. Overall, a mixture of elements of more or less explicit bourgeois thought with strong methodological flaws driven by a mixture mechanismism and idealism. When we use the term mechanismism in political economy we usually refer to the transportation of the methodology of natural sciences in economic considerations. This tendency can be found in neoclassical economists. We will deal in more detail with the essence of mechanismism within the context when considering the essence of the theory of equilibrium and its bourgeois sources.

The bourgeoisie internationally and the ideologists of the economics of imperialism had placed hopes on Bukharin and his followers to prevent the advancement of Marxism-Leninism in the area of political economy. Of particular value to bourgeois critics of the advancement of so-called 'Stalinism' or dogmatic Marxism, is Bukharin's appreciation of the bourgeois theory of equilibrium:

'The Soviet economists, with the exception, perhaps, of the young Bukharin, have proved unreceptive to the far-reaching modifications and criticisms of equilibrium analysis recently introduced; such knowledge of the 'bourgeois' concept as exists in Soviet Russia is scrappy, obsolete, second-hand, and distorted. This is deplorable...' (E. M. Chossudowsky, *The Review of Economic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Feb., 1939), page 128).

In this citation Chossudowsky points to the evolution of the theory of equilibrium and how the latter was 'improved', departing from the naïve formulations based on static considerations. Bourgeois economists did also appreciate Bukharin's lack of originality, to the extent that they

belittled the so-called theories of equilibrium developed in the Soviet Union.⁵ This issue will be dealt with below when reviewing the theory of equilibrium by the post-classical economists and how the ideas of static equilibrium turn into more mathematised dynamic systems, and how these remain mechanistic in their core, despite the evolution. We will do this with the purpose to illustrate that Bogdanov and Bukharin's version of the theory of equilibrium in economics⁶ were basically borrowed from bourgeois economists who have been working in the development of the general theories of equilibrium for a long time. The Marxist-Leninists in the 30s provided a profound analysis of the bourgeois character of Bukharin economic views and its genesis. It is at that time that the foundations of what we know today as the political economy of socialism were laid, although it is not till 'Economic Problems' that we can state that it is established as a well-developed chapter of the political economy. The foundations were laid in conjunction with the exposure of the bourgeois views of Bukharin's economic thinking. This was done fundamentally in the Soviet Union in the 30s, from the point of view of Marxist political economy. Bourgeois ideologists instinctively appreciated the bourgeois character of Bukharin's economic theory from their own point of view and were very much aware of the ideological struggle. Chossudowsky summarises the 'Stalinist' views on Bukharin's theory of equilibrium in few sentences:

'Bukharin's teachings on equilibrium were, it was said, quite in line with the philosophic basis of his economic thought. Though based on movement, they were spiritually akin to an abstract "moving equilibrium" and thus suspiciously near to bourgeois modified statistics and "vulgar" quantitative evolutionarism.'
(E. M. Chossudowsky, op. cit. page 130)

Stalin rarely refers to Bogdanov in his works, although it is evident that the ideological struggle against the revision of Marxism unavoidably leads to exposing the influence of Bogdanov's organisational science on the Soviet humanitarian sciences, in general, and political economy in particular. We have every reason to believe that Stalin took very seriously, as Lenin did, the influence of Bogdanov or neo-Bogdanovite thought, despite the fact that his references to this author in his works are very rare. One of the most important evidence for this Stalin's concern with neo-Bogdanovism is 'Economic Problems', written about 25 years after Bogdanov's death. Bogdanov gets mentioned three times in the section of the book dealing with Yaroshenko's mistakes. Stalin considered Yaroshenko's thought erroneous, arguing that his treatment of the inter-relation between the productive forces and relations of production in socialism was not Marxist. The relations of production were treated effectively as a part of the forces of production by exaggerating and absolutising the role of the latter. This was motivated by the point of view that the disappearance of class antagonisms eradicated the contradictions between the relations of production and the productive forces. Therefore the main task of political economy shifted from the study of the relations of production to the relations of production to the question of the rational organisation of the forces of production. Hence, the direct connection with Bogdanov's *opus magnum*, Tektology, the organisational science:

'If we followed Comrade Yaroshenko, therefore, what we would get is, instead of a Marxist political economy, something in the nature of Bogdanov's "Universal Organizing Science."' (J.V. Stalin, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR', Foreign Language Press, Peking 1972, page 65.)

The criticism of Yaroshenko's views is not restricted to exposing its relationship with Bogdanov. Stalin openly pinpoints Yaroshenko's connection with Bukharin's denial for the objective need for political economy in socialism, given the fact that the latter is no more governed by antagonistic contradictions. Stalin brings up Lenin's famous remarks on Bukharin's book 'Economics of the Transition Period' to establish this analogy, by which Bukharin's argument about Socialism not needing a political economy, that the latter belongs to the study of the market economy was refuted once and for all. As a matter of fact, Bukharin did not insist on this obvious mistake in the 20s although, in essence, he continued to advocate and refined further the theory of equilibrium and Bogdanov's organisational principles. Yaroshenko, and modern revisionism with him, never openly denied the need for a political economy in socialism. Nevertheless the central theme of the ideology of right wing opposition in the 20s propagated through time by emerging in the post-war period and adopting more and more refined forms by enclosing then with a façade more consistent with Marxist phraseology than that of Bogdanov and Bukharin. In essence, Stalin argues that by reviving Bogdanov's organisational science into play Yaroshenko follows the footsteps of Bukharin and with him mainstream revisionism. Stalin revives a discussion that had been long forgotten in the Soviet literature, namely the ideological struggle against right wing opposition that was reflected in the pages of the main Soviet journals towards the end of the 20s and that acquired a more mature and systematic form in the 30s.² By bringing Bogdanov and Bukharin up, Stalin is saying: look we have them back! He was trying to guide Soviet economists and philosophers by pointing the reader to the spontaneous and seemingly inadvertently restoration of strong elements of Bogdanovism and Bukharinism.

Stalin's struggle against the theory of equilibrium as such dates back from the rebuttal of Bukharin's resistance against collectivisation and reaches a climax towards the end of the 20s. This is highlighted in Shcheglov's book, which refers to Stalin's famous speech 'Concerning Questions of Agrarian Policy in the USSR':

'You know, of course, that the so-called theory of "equilibrium" between the sectors of our national economy is still current among Communists. This theory, of course, has nothing in common with Marxism. Nevertheless, it is a theory that is being spread by a number of people in the camp of the Right deviators.

'It is not difficult to realise that this theory has nothing in common with Leninism. It is not difficult to realise that, objectively, the purpose of this theory is to defend the position of individual peasant farming, to arm the kulak elements with a 'new' theoretical weapon in their struggle against the collective farms, and to discredit the collective farms.

'Nevertheless, this theory is still current in our press. And it cannot be said that it has met with a serious rebuff, let alone a crushing rebuff, from our theoreticians. How can this incongruity be explained except by the backwardness of our theoretical thought?' (J.V. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, pages 449-450.)

It is important to state at this point that in this work, Stalin is dealing with what we are going to refer to as the theory of equilibrium in the narrow sense of the word, as opposed to the theory of

equilibrium in the broader sense. The latter is primarily discussed here. When we refer to the theory of equilibrium in this sense we imply the possibility of coexistence between the capitalist and socialist economic systems in the transitional period. It is implied that by respecting the economic equilibrium between, i.e. commodity-money relations between the socialist and capitalist economic principles that the socialist sector will eventually prevail and that the capitalist sector will eventually become obsolete. Stalin certainly exposed this anti-Marxist view; but he went far beyond that in identifying the extent of the implications brought about by the theory of equilibrium, in the general sense of the word. Economists in the post-war period were very much aware of Stalin's struggle against the theory of equilibrium in the narrow sense, but viewed it as thing of the past, as a peculiarity of Bukharin's thought or a peculiarity of the right wing opposition of that time. This criticism was not put into the broader perspective, like Shcheglov did in his book, and that later Stalin pointed out in *Economic problems*.

The inability or unwillingness of leading economists to see this perspective can be appreciated further in the literature of early 50s. In the period between the publication of 'Economic Problems' and around the death of Stalin, lies a period in which leading Soviet economists and philosophers are engaged in a massive campaign for self-criticism. It became evident that the publication and distribution of anti-Marxist ideas in political economy could not have been done without the acquiescence of leading ideologists. It was not before Stalin's criticism that a discussion is launched and leading ideologists admit to their fault. However, in addition to the fact that the campaign of self-criticism effectively ends with Stalin's passing away, it is particularly important to realise that the self-criticism and praise of Stalin's last work was basically reduced to repetition and did not deal with the causes of this massive restoration of right-wing deviationism in the area of humanitarian sciences.⁸ This happened even when Stalin mentioned explicitly Bogdanov and Bukharin in his last work, which had unequivocal connotations. This alone indicates that the self-criticism was not genuine and fundamental, which unfortunately was corroborated by the historical events that followed Stalin's death. This is further confirmed by the fact that the criticism of Voznesenski's attempt to resurrect the law of value as a regulator in socialism and voluntarism in the evaluation of the role of the state, was brief and not profound. As we'll discuss below, Voznesenski's book 'The War Economy of the USSR in the Patriotic War' published in 1947 establishes a link between Bogdanov/Bukharin revision of Marxism in political economy and modern revisionism. Unfortunately, some of the mistakes exposed by Stalin in *Economic Problems* are directly related to Voznesenski's mistakes with regards to the law of value and the objective character of the economic laws in socialism. 'Economic Problem' emerges as a result of the lack of criticism and self-criticism in this area and the inability or unwillingness to expose the genesis and essence of Voznesenski's deviationism. We believe that only when identifying the ideological roots of these mistakes and deviations that the critique is fundamental and genuine. This involves tracing back to the original sources, which are bourgeois and, therefore, pre-Marxist.

The Marxist-Leninists and many bourgeois economists have studied the tenets of the economic theories of modern revisionism for decades now. Not so well studied is the genesis of the economic theories of modern revisionism and how they emerge and evolve historically. The key to addressing this question lies in Stalin's 'Economic Problems', something has not been largely publicised even by those who formally acknowledge the value of this work. As we will see below, bourgeois economists pointed out to fundamental changes in the economic structure of

these countries even before the Marxist-Leninist did. If this was not enough, it was also bourgeois economists who realized in their own way that the theories of modern revisionism deep down were not really an innovation and that some kind of linkage with earlier theories existed.

Western scholars through a number of sources realised the change of mood in the humanitarian sciences in the Soviet Union. The communists both in the Soviet Union and abroad did not necessarily understand this change of mood immediately. As a matter of fact the advent of the 20th Congress of the CPSU was predated by a series of economic reforms followed by widespread concealed criticism of a number of so-called dogmas in political economy. These changes did, although not necessarily understood did not go unnoticed to those who followed avidly every development in the Soviet Union. We have quite a number of accounts from bourgeois scholars who intuitively perceived a qualitative change in the ideological apparatus of the regime:

‘Contemporary observers were struck by the rapidity with which Soviet Economics seemed to change during the late fifties and early sixties. Just before that, all Soviet social science had seemed one Stalinist wasteland of intellectual barrenness, and suddenly, as if from nowhere, groups of economists, administrators and mathematicians had sprung up, advocating administrative rationalisation, economic reform and a re-examination of not abandonment of long-held Marxist doctrines’ (P. Sutela, ‘Economic Thought and Economic Reform in the Soviet Union’, Cambridge Russian Paperbacks (No. 5), 1991 page 26).

Bukharinism and Bogdanovism re-emerge in the post-war period. This occurred in a complex variety of forms and it was not particularly explicit in the Soviet Union, with some exemptions, as we will see later. Careful analysis reveals this re-emergence covers crucial disciplines in humanities including sociology, philosophy, political economy, history, etc... The re-emerge of Bukharinism is certainly never explicit in the economic literature of modern revisionism till very late, towards the end of *Perestroika*. This is one of the areas where modern revisionism was particularly careful about. Neither is the theory of equilibrium openly adopted. However, the forms that modern revisionism adopts to restore operation of the law of value are no coincidence and they emerge historically from one very well defined source. The Marxist-Leninists have identified this linkage. It has been also noticed, at least superficially, by quite a number of bourgeois scholars. This is well documented in bourgeois sources.

‘It was astonishing to discover how many ideas of Bukharin’s anti-Stalinist programme of 1928-1929 were adopted by current reformers as their own and how much of their critique of past practices followed his strictures and prophecies even in their expression’ (M. Lewin, ‘Political Undercurrents in the Soviet Economic Debates, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1974, page xiii).

Bogdanov has been studied in the West for many years now in two main aspects. Jointly with Bukharin, Bogdanov has been identified by many bourgeois scholars as a leading representative of ‘non-Stalinist’ thought. They have been brought up when dealing with the question of

'Stalinism' in humanitarian sciences. They have not been the only ones who have been praised by the West. Overall, Western scholars have studied with great interest and appreciation the ideological discussions of the 20s and see the 'Stalinist revolution' as the end of intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union. Bogdanov has been among all those authors the one that has created the most interest. This has to do with his book Tektology. Some bourgeois scholars now consider Bogdanov's book as the precursor to the modern theories of cybernetics and the general systems theory.⁹ The interest in Bogdanov in the West has been overshadowed by the interest of the bourgeois ideologists of today's Russia. This process was sparked by the rehabilitation of many ideologists of the right wing opposition in the late 80s. The number of publications on the Russian press has increased over the past decade. This is a phenomenon that bears witness to two contradictory tendencies of today's petty-bourgeois ideologists in today's Russia: The creation of the 'International Bogdanov Institute' is just one of the examples in which the devotion of the Russian petty-bourgeoisie to their ancestry.

'The problem of the relationship between Marxism and the theory of equilibrium is interesting in itself and has a great significance for Soviet economics. Thus, the equilibrium model plays an important part in mathematical economics. Consequently the relationship between the theory of equilibrium and Marxism is crucial for the question of the compatibility of Marxism both with mathematical economics and with the whole of Western economics. The objective study of the theory of equilibrium also enables one to give a more substantial evaluation of Bogdanov's system of ideas and of the whole of Soviet economics of the 1920s.' (A. A. Belykh, 'A.A. Bogdanov's Theory of Equilibrium and the Economic Discussions of the 1920s' Soviet Studies; 1990, Vol. 42, Issue 3, p. 571.)

The restoration of Bogdanovism in the post-Stalinist period was never acknowledged officially and was always covered up by partial criticism of his thought. It could not be otherwise due to the formal acceptance of Leninist philosophy, which invariably condemns the philosophical foundations of empiriocriticism, as the starting point of Bogdanov's revision of Marxism. The increasingly positive attitude towards Bogdanov had become evident especially under Brezhnev and those in the West scrutinising the evolution of Soviet thought noted it. A pamphlet by V. I. Ksenofontov is referred to a source by multiple Western authors as an indication of the change of mood in the Soviet Union:

'One-sided negative criticism of Bogdanov's ideas is a thing of the past. A number of publications have appeared that appeal to the positive significance of his works, which are devoted to the substantiation and development of a general scientific systemic conception, the so called general organisational science (Tektology) that anticipated some aspects of cybernetics and the theory of systems' (V.I. Ksenofontov, 'Leninist Ideas in the Soviet Philosophical Science of the 20s', Publishing House of Leningrad University, Leningrad 1975, page 18. Translated from the Russian).

The attempts of the official Soviet revisionist ideologists to restore Bogdanovism adopted various forms. In the Soviet literature one can find a variety of statements ranging from outright condemnation of Tektology as an attempt to deny the need of philosophy and a direct

continuation of empiriocriticism, as a subjective-idealist conception of the world, to those who openly advocated Bogdanov's organisational principles in the development of the theory of complex systems, cybernetics, theory of management of production etc... What seems more or less accepted in the 70s is the view that Tektology signifies a progressive development with respect to the philosophical statements of empiriocriticism that Lenin subjected to in-depth scrutiny. It is stated that that Bogdanov's transitional work the 'Philosophy of the Life Experience' represents a positive evolution away from subjective idealism, which crystallised in elements of 'unconscious' materialism and the involuntary usage of dialectics. The argument in favour of such a statement is driven by the fact that Bogdanov introduces the notion of organisational principles and laws that are independent of the man's consciousness and considers human experience as an expression of collective experience. This will be discussed in some detail below. This type of analysis is common in the study of pre-Marxist philosophers. The classics of Marxism-Leninism always appreciated positive elements in the philosophy of pre-Marxist thinkers and view in them unconscious attempts to systematise materialism or elements of dialectics. However, the classics of Marxist-Leninism never failed to ascribe given ideological forms to the underlying class forces that operate in society and that the thinker is a representative of. While appreciating the tremendously positive contribution to the development of dialectics by Hegel, the classics of Marxism-Leninism were very clear in identifying the class roots of Hegel's idealism. The Soviet revisionists take this bourgeois attitude in order to effectively restore Bogdanovism and Bukharinism by making abstraction of the concrete-historical circumstances within which Bogdanov's evolution occurs and treat his work as the creative of an isolated intellectual by taking of the underlying class struggle at the time out of the equation. These are academic considerations that are very common in bourgeois professorial circles by which the work of this or that intellectual is viewed as a result of the self-evolution of ideas rather than an expression of the certain class aspirations. Neither the Soviet revisionists nor the imperialist ideologists in the West are able to appreciate the class roots of Bogdanov's organisational principles and its influence on the thinking of the Russian bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. Both fail to address the *raison d'être* of Bogdanov's insistence on accommodating his initial positivism to the historical conditions of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Russia and how it becomes an ideological tool for those class forces behind the efforts to restore capitalism. The spontaneous restoration of Bogdanovism/Bukharinism stands at the very heart of the ideological forms that catalysed the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union subsequently. It is the scope of the present work to demonstrate the fundamentally bourgeois character of Bogdanov's theories that superseded empiriomonism and the strong role they played in the formation of the ideology of modern revisionism in political economy.

To be continued.

Footnotes

1 Many times we find references defining this tendency against the liberalisation of the market as a manifestation of 'Stalinism' in the revisionist period. Careful analysis and study of the history of the political economy of socialism strongly indicates that this statement is deprived of scientific substantiation. This argument has been used for many years by Trotskyite ideologists. The controversy between the 'conservatives' and those like Liberman in the revisionist Soviet Union has nothing to do with the economic debates between Stalin and the right-wing

opposition, or between Stalin in 'Economic Problems' and those who he criticised. Unfortunately, this thesis of about the 'Stalinist' character of the Brezhnevites has been exploited in order to interpret Guevara's economic works as a reaction against 'Stalinism'. Closer analysis has shown that this assessment is grossly incorrect, although we have also found that Guevara himself was under the influence of the same misconception to some extent.

2 The restoration of the law of value as the universal regulator of the labour exchange is a very well established fact admitted even by modern revisionism. Modern revisionism does not accept this objective fact as a manifestation of the restoration of capitalism. The thesis about the restoration of the capitalist mode of production requires a more complex evaluation of how the operation of the law of value in the conditions of concentration of production ultimately leads to capitalist exploitation and other laws inherent to capitalist production. For a comprehensive review of how this transformation manifested itself in the Soviet Union the reader is encouraged to read W. Bland's book, 'The Restoration of Capitalism in the Soviet Union', Wembley, 1980. A large number of references of Soviet economic materials of the post-Stalin can be found in this source.

3 As will be seen later, the ideologists of modern revisionism argued that Tektology signifies a departure from empiriomonism, as a means of re-introducing the theories of organisation in the Soviet Union. A careful analysis of Tektology indicates the philosophical and methodological assumptions made there are consistent with those developed in empiriomonism. We do not observe a serious departure from empiriomonism in later Bogdanov's work.

4 Shcheglov's book and a countless number of other published materials were removed from the Soviet libraries at some point in late 50s. Unfortunately, this book was published only once, with an edition of 10000 thousand copies. We are not aware that a translation into foreign languages of this book or excerpts of it was ever done. The book was available in some libraries in the West but it was really never publicised, at least as an example of the 'Stalinist' critique on freethinking. The doctoral thesis by Ilmari Susiluoto, 'The Origins and Development of Systems thinking in the Soviet Union (Political and Philosophical Controversies from Bogdanov and Bukharin to Present-Day Re-Evaluations)', which contains one of the best bibliographies about Bogdanov, does not mention the book. The reference to this book does not appear in reviews about the history of the economic thought written in the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin period. We are aware of references to this book among few bourgeois scholars. For instance in 'Nineteen Eighty-Four: Science between Utopia and Dystopia', edited by E. Mendelshon and H. Nowotny, a reference to Shcheglov's book appears as a part of the bibliography about Bogdanov (in the article 'Bogdanov's Red Star: an Early Bolshevik Science Utopia'). 'Official Soviet historians, with the exception of A. V. Shcheglov, have traditionally played down Bogdanov's importance as theorist and politician. It has mainly been scholars in western Europe who have been responsible for painting him back into the historical picture.' (The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Jan., 1981), pp. 118.) Shcheglov's article in the leading Soviet journal 'Pod Znameniem Markzisma' 1936, N 5, page 65 is mentioned by B.H. Sumner in the journal 'The Slavonic and East European Review' Vol. 17, No. 49 (1938), pp. 151. References to Shcheglov's article appear when considering the controversy around Pokrovsky's views on historical materialism. These were similar to those developed by Bogdanov about the proletarian culture. According to these views a proletarian science (this is basically Tektology) needs to

emerge to replace the bourgeois science. A reference to Shcheglov appeared in a leading journal published in by the Institute of Economics of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1991 and translated into English 'The author of this article was A Shcheglov, a close associate of the notorious Stalinist academician M. Mitin and the author of a vicious pamphlet *Bor'ba Lenina s Bogdanovskoi reviziei Marksizma* (Moscow, 1937) which became the ultimate source in the Soviet Union for the appraisal of Bogdanov and of the Proletkult. (Georgii D. Gloveli, *Studies in Soviet Thought* 42: 29-55, 1991.) Overall, the references to Shcheglov's book in the bourgeois literature are scarce to say the least. This book still remains unknown to many Marxist-Leninists, as an excellent representative of militant Marxism in the ideological struggle against revisionism. Bourgeois scholars usually refer the latter with the pejorative term of 'Stalinist'.

5 Many bourgeois ideologists in the West avidly read highlights of the Soviet literature in the area of the political economy and other humanitarian sciences. This was done for different reasons; appreciation of the Soviet theories was certainly not one of them. This was particularly true in political economy. Economists in the West did not see real value in the revisionist theories, however inspired in bourgeois economic theories. One exception was L.V. Kantorovich, the only Soviet recipient of a Nobel price in economics, in 1975. Kantorovich published in 1939 a booklet 'Mathematical methods of organising and planning production', (for English translation see *Management Science*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Jul., 1960), pp. 366-422). In this article he laid the foundations of what's referred to in the literature as linear programming. This work was later expanded in a famous book 'The Best Use of Economic Resources' published in the Soviet Union in 1959 and translated into English and several other languages in the 60s. It is claimed that the publication of the book took so long due to the resistance of 'dogmatics' in the field of economics, as the first draft of the book had been written already in 1942 (see S.S. Kutateladze, et al 'Siberian Mathematical Journal', Vol. 43 (2002) N1 page 3-8). Both Russian and Western bourgeois economists refer to him as a pioneer in mathematical economics. It is acknowledged that linear programming was first discovered by Kantorovich before his counterparts in the US. Linear programming is used widely today in management when maximising profits or minimising costs with limited resources.

6 Bukharin's use of the theory of equilibrium goes far beyond political economy. It is the core of his interpretation of historical materialism in his book 'Historical Materialism (a system of sociology)'. This will be dealt with below.

7 It would be incorrect to state that the exposure of the economic theories of the right wing opposition was not mentioned at all in the post-war period. For instance, A. Volgov, in his article "On the Work of J. V. Stalin 'About the Questions of Agrarian Policy in the USSR', published in the leading economic journal *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (Economic Questions) N4, 1948, page 8, he commemorates Stalin's work. In doing so he reminds the reader of the tenets of the Bukharin's economic theory, including the theory of equilibrium. However, Volgov only mentions the theory of equilibrium in the narrow sense of the word that refers to the alleged equilibrium and possibility for peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist relations of production in the transitional economy. As a matter of fact, the theory of equilibrium is a more general problem. By reminding the reader about the re-emergence of Bogdanovism and Bukharinism, Stalin was implying a far broader problem that just the theory of equilibrium of sectors. To this

end, Shcheglov's book remains the most complete critique of the theoretical sources of Bogdanov and Bukharin, their interconnection and their relevance to capitalist restoration.

8 There were some exemptions of authors who genuinely embraced 'Economic Problems' and this work as a step forward in understanding the most complex questions of the political economy of socialism. Among which we'd like to acknowledge the excellent article 'The Rudiments of Product-Exchange' by Smolin.

9 See for instance the review by Gorelik, one of the bourgeois scholars who has studied Bogdanov the most. He translated parts of Tektology into English ("Essays in Tektology: The General Science of Organization", Seaside Calif. Intersystems publications, 1980) 'Modern systems research has established that Bogdanov anticipated most of the central concepts of later generalising sciences, most notably Ludwig von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory (GST) and W. Ross Ashby's Cybernetics' (G. Gorelik, 'Bogdanov's Tektology: its Nature Development and Influence', Studies of Soviet Thought, Vol. 26, N1 (1983), page 42-43). See also R. Bello 'We contend that Tektology contains – some 15 years earlier – all the basic concepts which will be later developed by the General Theory of Systems. As we shall see, Tektology is the ultimate expansion of any theory of systems. This fact is widely ignored in contemporary specialized literature.' ('The Systems Approach: A. Bogdanov and L. von Bertalanffy' Studies in Soviet Thought', Vol. 30, No. 2 (Aug., 1985), pp. 131.)