

From Gogol's 'Overcoat': The Origins of Left(ist) Historiographies in Marxist Historiographies

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Abstract

Marxist historiography is often associated with the Soviet Union. That is why it is often assumed that it had gone nearly extinct after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The notion of left(ist) historiography on the other hand is more generic, more flexible, but vague. Its conceptual borders are not as clear as those of Marxist historiography. This is due to the fact that some strands of Marxist historiography expanded their views on the basis of gender, ethnicity, culture and other potential axes of oppression, repression and suppression, to evolve into left(ist) historiographies. This evolution paved the way for the relatively younger areas of economic history, social history, labor history, feminist history etc. Secondly, various Marxist historians had already left the ranks of the Soviet Union either due to the acts of the Soviet Union that they find unacceptable or due to the influence of Latin American popular movements which do not completely follow the Soviet recipe for revolution and socialism. Thus, in this paper, we present and discuss the origins of left(ist) historiography in Marxist historiographies.

Keywords: *Marxism, historiography, Marxist historiography, leftism, leftist historiography.*

Gogol'un 'Palto'sundan: Sol(cu) Tarihyazımlarının Marksist Tarihyazımlarındaki Kökenleri

Öz

Marksist tarihyazımı, çoğunlukla Sovyetler Birliği ile ilişkilendirilir. Bu nedenle, yine çoğunlukla onun neslinin Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşünden sonra neredeyse tükendiği varsayılır. Öte yandan, sol(cu) tarihyazımı kavramsallaştırması, daha genel, esnek ama muğlaktır. Onun kavramsal sınırları, Marksist tarihyazımıninkine kadar açık ve net değildir. Bu, kimi Marksist tarihyazımı yönelimlerinin kendi görüşlerini toplumsal cinsiyet, etnisite, kültür ve diğer potansiyel zulüm, baskı ve bastırma eksenleri temelinde genişletmelerinden ileri gelmektedir. Bu evrim, görece daha yeni olan ekonomik tarih, toplumsal tarih, emek tarihi, feminist tarih vd. gibi alanların önünü açtı. Bu nedenle, Marksist tarihyazımının Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşünden sonraki ölüm ilanına karşın, o, büyük ölçüde, sol(cu) tarihyazımının çeşitli biçimlerinde ve tarih araştırmalarının görece daha güncel alanlarında sağ kalmayı bildi. Dahası, Marksist tarihyazımlarının kimi biçimleri, var olmayı sürdürerek Sovyetler sonrası dünyadaki gelişmelere yanıt verdi. Sovyetler Birliği'yle birlikte çekip gitmediler. Bunun nedeni, çeşitli Marksist tarihçilerin Sovyetler Birliği çizgisini, Sovyetler'in kabul edilemez buldukları kimi hareketleri nedeniyle ya da Sovyet devrim ve sosyalizm reçetesini tümüyle izlemeyen Latin Amerikalı halk hareketlerinin etkisi dolayısıyla çok önceden terk etmiş olmalarıydı. Bu makalede, sol(cu) tarihyazımının Marksist tarihyazımlarındaki kökenlerini sunuyor ve tartışıyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Marksizm, tarihyazımı, Marksist tarihyazımı, solculuk, solcu tarihyazımı.*

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1. Introduction

Although the dissolution of Soviet Union and the marketization of the Chinese economy marked the end of Marxism as a viable economic and political system for many, Marxism is still feasible and powerful as a tool to interpret capitalism and history overall. Thus, the developments in the socialist world can be approached from a different angle: It is rather about a disconnect between how to interpret to the world and how to change it, contrary to Marx's well-known 11th thesis. Secondly, it is clear that Marx's teleology and predictive mode are not applicable. Then the question is what to save from Marxism to carry forward (Wang & Iggers, 2016). In this article we develop our arguments through Marxist historiography, post-Soviet Marxist historiography and finally, left(ist) historiography.

2008 Financial Crisis led to the revival of the interest in Marxism and its historiography (Carrigan, 2016). Although the socialist models are mostly discredited, capitalist injustice and economic/financial crisis testify that something is wrong about capitalism. Marxist critique of capitalism is mostly applicable. That explains the revival of the interest.

2. Marxist Historiography

In the history of historiographies, Marxist historiography is the most remarkable as it is the most widespread and influential historical approach. We can comfortably claim that there is no geographical area or people whose history had not been re-interpreted and rewritten from a Marxist point of view. What connect Thai history and let's say Angolan or Slovak historiography is the Marxist approach. Although Marxism as a political system has been declared dead, this immense historico-geographical coverage is an indisputable fact. Thus, another question to ask is whether Marxist historiography is a matter of history, a past of way of writing history or an approach that has implications for future history writing. For one thing, Wang & Iggers (2016) point out the dramatical influence of Marxist historiography over the notion of social history, i.e., history of the people rather than the rulers. The term 'social' rather than 'Marxist' offers more intellectual and practical space for historians to work on social issues that are not necessarily covered by a Marxist approach. Furthermore, academically speaking, social historians have more chances to survive in mainstream academia of the neo-liberal times and to be offered positions and funds, compared to Marxist historians.

There are marked differences between Marxist historiography of the socialist states and that of the anti-government opposition in other states. For example, Thai and Lao Marxist historiographies can be contrasted in that sense (cf. Stuart-Fox, 2003). Thai Marxist historiography is more critical, and influenced by Western Marxism; while that is not the case for the Lao version. Furthermore, the Lao version is expected to support the official ideology which curbs its latitude of freedom, while Thai version is not expected to do so. Thus, paradoxically enough, although Marxist historians are repressed in capitalist countries by various ways, they have more options to reflect on their historical conceptualizations.

When we look at the cases of Marxist historiography in different geographies, we see that especially for the countries and people engaging in anti-colonial struggles, the Marxist approach is often blended with a nationalist approach (Wang & Iggers, 2016). For example, in Vietnam, Marxist historians and official discourse exalt some of the kings in history in contrast to others for their patriotism against the colonial invaders (Gezgin, in press a). Overall, for Latin American, African and Asian countries, a key theme to take into account by any kind of historiography

would be colonialism, anti-colonial struggles, independence and dependence (see Malerba & Jesus, 2016; Maignashca, 2016).

According to Petrov (2001), some of the major controversies in Marxist historiography in the Soviet Union until 1956 was "over periodisation of history, correlation between the "productive forces" and the "social superstructure", [and] Asiatic Mode of Production" (p.374). The fervent debates over Asian or Asiatic mode of production were especially relevant for non-Western contexts such as Iran (see Zakipoor, Allahyari & Abari, 2014). Those proposing it consider it as an improvement over the Marxist approach without leaving it, as a response to the Eurocentrism of some of the Marxist works. As this term was a part of the Marxist classics, it is not an exogenous term, but one that needs expansion, or with modern terms we can say 'unzipping'. However, this argument is flawed from the very beginning as it tries to freeze a particular idea and generalize it to a whole continent, essentializing and homogenizing Asia, the most populous continent of the world. Furthermore, such a conceptualization can't show a reason for not proposing similar terms for other continents. How about Latin American mode of production or Australian mode of production, African mode of production, Antarctic mode of production and even and before all European form of production!?! It can't even stop there as this can also pave the way for a fragmented regional approach to economic history. For example, Pók (2016) presents and reviews Eastern European history discussions on how to explain the Eastern European underdevelopment compared to Western European developed states, and the likely regional accounts mobilized as an answer.

Marxist Greek historian Kordatos (Γιάνης Κορδάτος, 1891-1961) offers an excellent example of how Ottoman and Byzantine history can be interpreted from a Marxist perspective, especially in his well-known work, 'The Last Days of the Byzantine Empire' (1931/1975). According to Kordatos who was also one of the founders of the Greek Communist Party, when Constantinople was under the 'terminal' Ottoman siege, not all Byzantine people were against Ottomans, some of them were supporting Ottomans against their ruling elites. This bifurcation is also due to the fact that Byzantine society was divided through religious lines: Those supporting the unity of Orthodoxy and Catholicism vs. those asserting the distinct status of the Orthodox church against Rome. A major reason for this division was related to European crusaders' arrival to Constantinople in the 13th century and plundering and taking control of the city with the pretext of fighting against the Muslim 'heathens'. Thus, some of the Byzantine people preferred Ottoman control instead of Latin control over the city. This division was not independent of the classes, their peculiar interests and on the top of all, the taxation system that binds the popular classes with the ruling classes. Unlike the nationalistic and statist accounts, the parties to historical conflicts are not homogeneous. In the case of Vietnam-American War, not every Vietnamese was anti-American and not all the Americans were anti-Vietnamese.

Kordatos is also noteworthy as he applied the Marxist framework to write the history of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman rule, clearly diverging from the nationalist discourse viewing it as a unanimous struggle. He not only focuses on social class divisions and also is critical of the actions of the Orthodox church which is often ignored in Greek right(ist) historiography (Gazi, 2012).

Marxist historiography was also used in archaeology in creative ways. For instance, the burial sites and funeral objects were evaluated to check whether a particular society had slavery or not, which can be shown by differential treatment to dead (see Thorp, 1980). Furthermore, the excavation of graves that belong to ordinary people was consistent with the notion of people's

history where 'big man narratives' of the bourgeois history with a focus on the rulers are challenged and questioned.¹

While we can note various other convincing examples of the application of Marxist approaches to history, the collapse of the Soviet Union contradicted with the historicity of the Marxist historiography whereby the history consisted of consecutive socio-economic formations such as feudalism and capitalism, transition to which was believed to be inevitable sooner or later. This understanding also predicted that socialism would ultimately prevail, and there would be no historical regressions from socialism. Although community socialism was demeaned and mocked by the early Marxists and called as 'utopian socialism' in contrast to the so-called 'scientific' socialism, the notion of communism without classes, borders and states and its conceptualization as the final stage of history are by themselves often considered utopian (cf. Zahoor & Bilal, 2013). Likewise, the state model of Marxism is criticized to be schematic and simplistic (cf. Zahoor & Bilal, 2013).

3. Post-Soviet Marxist Historiography

As stated earlier, the collapse of the Soviet Union is usually associated with the demise of Marxist historiography. In fact, it led to the collapse of the demise of a particular strand of Marxist historiography only, but not all. In most parts of the world, before its collapse, the left movements of the world were more or less divided into three groups: Pro-Soviet Marxists, pro-Chinese Marxists and independent Marxists. Independent Marxists consisted of groups from various origins: There were those who had left pro-Soviet communist parties or movements after especially major historical events such as exile and execution of Trotsky, Eastern European uprisings, the invasion of Afghanistan etc., as well as those who find pro-Soviet legal or illegal communist parties as pacifist and without any initiative, with an inspiration by Cuban and other Latin American popular movements. Thus the collapse of Soviet Union and 'capitalistization' of China only affected historians and histories under influence of these two countries, but not the independent left. While in some countries, independent leftists were the minority, in others they were the majority among the Marxists. This explains how Marxist historiography survived even after the global events of 1990s in Latin America and elsewhere. In the meantime, many Pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese historians either joined the independent Marxist ranks or moved towards liberalism converging with American and European official accounts of history either on the basis of great rulers or nations narratives or ideals such as freedom. The misperception that Marxist historiography is dead is also due to the fact that various schools of Marxist-inspired historiographies no longer call their thought or activity as Marxist, nevertheless they don't deny their origins in Marxism. Regardless of whether we theorize it or not, the way we interpret the present forges how we see the history and the historiography as well. As they refer to historical processes of repression, oppression, suppression and mutedness; ethnic, cultural, feminist, LGBTI etc. accounts of history can still be viewed as extensions of original Marxist historiography if we don't take it as dogma in contrast to the Soviet position. For example, without Marxism, a feminist understanding of history can fall into the trap of great historical personalities narrative where the queens rather than kings would be considered worthy of recording and writing in history, which would deny the women's labor history that is indispensable for any form of human civilization. The female labor is almost always invisible, while a queen or a female commander would be visible enough to be recorded by any sort of

¹ Marxist archaeologist Gordon Childe's contributions to field needs to be noted. Review of his work requires a separate paper.

historiography. Likewise, a Marxist account of history can't deny the contributions of women to the class struggles. Although Marx and the first Marxists are known to support women's rights even in a pre-suffrage era, feminism was incorporated a lot later into the Marxist historiography which was not a case of patriarchal neglect, but an understudied area that had to be expanded. Currently, that is what is happening. A Marxist historiography without a feminist one would be deficient and vice versa.

Wang & Iggers (2016) state that throughout the development of Marxist historiography, especially by 1990s, a high number of historians ceased to use the notion of class struggle as their basis of analysis and discussion, and moved from class as a category which is found to be too restrictive and schematic compared to other social categories such as gender, culture, subaltern etc. However, we think that such a move misses the main point that historical developments are often underlined by economic activities. It is common to see that Marxists are accused of economism, but the critiques are often 'infected' with culturalism excluding any other alternative explanation. Economic relations and not the cultural ones direct the history. Of course, one can study cultural issues in history, but it can't be a substitute of a Marxist historiography. Additionally, the alleged failure of Marxism as a political system can't be an excuse to remove class and class struggle from the seat of history.

On the other hand, this cultural turn can be covered by a revised Marxist approach. Here is how: We can view the structure of history, as a narrative. In all narratives, we have 3 major elements. They are the milieu, character and event. The events take place in a social environment, that is the milieu; and they are not automatic, they are the products of historical agents. Milieu brings to us the objective conditions of the history. For example, inflation rate or unemployment rate of a country, assuming that they are measured properly are matters of the background, i.e., milieu for the coming events. These, we can state, are mostly determined by economic relations, whereas how the characters, i.e., historical agents such as governments, organizations, mass movements, people in general etc. will act can be determined by non-economic factors. Milieu and characters bring out events which naturally will have both economic and non-economic dimensions. But agents act on milieus that are economic. That is one of the ways to show how we can reconcile the original notion of class struggle and the cultural turn in Marxist historiography.

Another way to cope with the collapse of the Soviet Union is the following: It is possible to dissociate the descriptive and prescriptive components of Marxism (Carrigan, 2016). Carrigan (2016) calls this as 'detached Marxism'. As an analytical tool, Marxism is still relevant and useful with a more flexible interpretation, ignoring the dogmatic versions. In what ways Marxism can still be useful for social analysis? For instance, we can talk about ethnic or gender oppression, but in fact we have intersectionality: Gender and social class intersect in an individual. The class reigns supreme over gender. The low-income women are the most exploited. The high-income women have more freedom and thus individual achievement. This simple example shows that even topics such as gender and ethnicity can't be understood properly without Marxism. On the other hand, prescriptive components will involve those about revolutions, futurological speculations (such as "socialism will ultimately win" or "there can't be return to capitalism after socialism is established in a country" or "revolutions will take place in the most advanced economies"), the character of a socialist government etc. What is wrong about these prescriptive components is that they often ignore other historical agents that bring pro-labor social changes and historical agents from the other side, i.e. anti-labor agents such as state security

instruments. Furthermore, by not applying the same Marxist analysis on the former socialist societies, it ignores social and economic contradictions under socialism that can lead to the collapse of the system. The notion of the ruling classes in any country is not only applicable in political sense, but also in economic sense. How come? That is because in such a system, there are people who earn their living by ruling over the country and the other people, and this means of subsistence is sufficient for the formation of a class on its own. The rulers should be continuously rotated so that they would be unable to form a class with its own class interests. In fact, that is one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ruling classes expected that capitalism would better suit their class interests. In one way or another, there were limits to plundering the public resources and blatantly exploiting the people under socialism; so they moved back to capitalism where most of the same 'communist' leaders became the 'new' leaders of the new states.

A flexible interpretation of Marxism and its historiography is significantly influential over its realism. How? The long-criticized Eurocentric elements in Marxism and exclusive focus on industrial labor (see Iggers, 2016) need to be transcended. In fact, in various cases, this has already been done. Unlike what the so-called Marxologists or bookish Marxism debates criticize, when Marxism has met with practice in different countries, these modifications have already taken place. For example, for any labor relation including service sectors and even house labor, we can have trade unions. This fact by itself shows that Marxism has already been adapted to the current social realities and accordingly updated and upgraded. This case is also evident in Latin America where Marxist historiography is still alive and vibrant, through the contrast between those adapting Marxism to the local settings vs. those testing the universal applicability of Marxism without any modification as if it is a dogma, as stated by Maiguashca (2016):

"Among those who accepted it [Marxism], some did so uncritically and without major modifications, while others adapted it in a manner that made it consonant with their national experiences. Whereas the former tended to seek local evidence to confirm the universal validity of the foreign paradigm, the latter attempted to modify the paradigm itself, thus contributing to the emergence of a distinctive current of Marxism, a Latin American one" (p.104).

On the other hand, let's note that both nationalistic and national histories are in fact in conflict with Marxist historiography, as the latter is borderless and more global in its outlook (Carrigan, 2016). This conflict is often managed through trends towards a more global or international history writing. In contrast to these trends, Japanese move towards a more nationalistic history writing through revising the accounts of the Japanese atrocities during the 2nd world war as minor events is problematic. The terms like 'aggression' are replaced with 'advancement' (Gayle, 2016).

Carrigan (2016) notes 4 directions in the current American history writing that is more or less influenced by Marxist historiography. They are historical works on American foreign policy which is conceived as a form of imperialism rather than an agent of freedom; cultural history studies; slavery studies and the history of the social resistance and uprisings. We can also add here history from below, i.e. history of the ordinary people rather than the elites of a society considering Marxist historians such as Howard Zinn's 'A People's History of the United States' (1980).

An alternative to Marxist historiography is the individualistic and great historical personality narratives. In fact, this is one of the directions taken by Soviet and Russian historians when they abandoned Marxism (Krom, 2016). Why did they get alienated from Marxist historiography? That was due to the dogmatic, schematic and rigid applications of Marxist ideas into history. Contrary to the official Soviet position, Marxism is not a religion, it is a living organism that has the capacity to adapt to the new developments in social and political practice. Krom (2016), in this context, mentions the common practice among the Soviet historians 1970s and onwards to drop quotations from Marxist classics to show support for the government, but not really connecting those quotations with their history writing activities. Obviously, this is another way to dogmatize Marxism. That is also a common mistake visible among bookish Marxists and Marxologists: Contrary to their conceptualizations and debates, Marxism is not a bunch of words, but a living practice among the resisting people of the world. For them, the question is not whether Marxism is outdated or not, but rather how it can be mobilized to support people's ongoing struggles. Thus, what post-Soviet Russian historians rejected as Marxist historiography is just a caricature of it. It is also notable to see that although Communist Party of Russia is one of the leading parties in the country, even tiny traces of Marxist historiography disappeared in Russian academic history. We can claim that there are a higher number of Marxist historians in countries without a socialist past compared to those in ex-socialist countries. Another observation by Krom (2016) is notable: Among post-Soviet historians, scholarly interest in certain topics such as labor history and revolutions waned, which implies that Marxist historiography is not only a formal approach, but has implications for the content of history writing as well. In other words, some of the historical topics may be more important than others for Marxist historians.

Krom (2016) concludes that nothing about Marxist historiography survived in the current Russian historiography such as "class struggle", "historical optimism and belief in progress", "materialistic explanation of historic events" etc. (p.68). Furthermore, belief in a general theory is long gone. Russian historical studies are full of micro-history pieces, case studies etc. But this means fragmentation of the profession. These historians can no longer see the big picture and before all, are not even willing to see that. But the value of such a low-quality history writing is problematic. Why should such a history be every relevant for anybody?!! The same holds for the post-Mao Chinese historiography (cf. Li, 2016). What is notable for both Russian and Chinese historiographies after socialism is the fact that they usually develop their ideas by criticizing the official ideology of the socialist period; and consistent with this situation, they currently look like adaptations to the post-socialist official ideologies. So we can state that unlike the claims otherwise, The Russian and Chinese mainstream historiographies are continuous with the past historiography: Like a liquid without any character, they take the shape of their container, which is the official ideology. After the collapse of the socialist world, both historiographies are more nationalistic and pro-capitalist. Furthermore, due to the global Western influences, indigenous views on historiography get weaker. New generations of Russian and Chinese historians treat their subjects as if they (i.e. the historians) are Westerners.

Another non-Marxist but dialectical historiography is the one that relies on distinguishing the rulers as modernizers/reformers and conservatives. This is quite consistent with the pro-Western historiography of the global non-West. For international institutions such as IMF and the World Bank, the world consists of developed and developing countries. A historical consequence of such an understanding is writing the history on the basis of how the globally

non-Western political actors respond to globalization which has until recently been synonymous with Westernization.

We see a parallel shift from popular history to statist history for instance in post-Mao Chinese historiography. The history is no longer about people's struggles, but the survival of the state. This is also very common in Turkish republican history which focuses on writing the history of the republic rather than the people (Gezin, in press b). Modernization becomes the key and bottom-up developments such as uprisings go out of favor to be replaced with top-down approaches exalting the state and its rulers (cf. Li, 2016). A typical example of such a shift can be visible in how Qin Shi Huang (259 B.C.-210 B.C.) was interpreted. From a Marxist historiography, he was a despot, and an enemy of the people; and his failed assassin was exalted as a hero. However, in post-Mao era, the unity and security of the state was the priority; thus the representations were reversed: The emperor was hailed as the first unifier of the Chinese territory and the assassin was coded as a traitor and an enemy of the state (Gezin, 2020).

4. Leftist Historiography

Based on these examples, we argue that there are sufficient reasons to disagree with Iggers (1993), the most well-known researcher on historiography about the relevance of the distinction between Marxist and non-Marxist historiographies, as seen in the following quotation:

"The dividing line between Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to history, which seemed so important before the 1960s, became increasingly irrelevant in the New Left. Despite the continued use of Marxist rhetoric by segments of the New Left, the understanding of what constituted exploitation and oppression now extended to areas of everyday life and culture - which had been excluded in the more narrowly economic critique of modern society by the established Marxist movements - and included segments of humanity, women, ethnic and racial minorities, as well as the socially marginalized groups which had been neglected not only in the main stream of historical writing but in Marxist historiography as well. The non-Western societies, too, now were viewed from a very different perspective, no longer, as even Marx and particularly Engels had seen them, in terms of the imperial policies of the West - policies which were to enable them to enter the world of modern economic development and civilization - but as cultures with their own history and character" (p.33).

This may be the case for the British 'New Left', but we argue that there are still clear-cut distinctions to differentiate Marxist and non-Marxist historiographies. A Marxist historiography, can't rely on great personality narratives excluding women, masses of people, labor and minorities. Such a history can't be racist, sexist, pro-capitalist, religious fundamentalist, chauvinist etc. The focus will be bottom-up, not top-down. Its account can't be exclusively political ignoring social, economic and cultural dimensions. These are also what leftist historiography inherited from its Marxist origins. So finally, we direct our attention to leftist historiography.

There is a famous quote attributed to Dostoevsky: "We all come out from Gogol's 'Overcoat'."

Can we also say that all leftist histories have come out of Marxist historiography? The answer would possibly be affirmative. There are alternative accounts of historical events antedating Marx, however their methodology was problematic. For example, despite of the Eurocentrism of the mainstream historiography discussions, Chinese kept thousand years of continuous

historical records that also helped us to reimagine the events that would be a part of the oral history or even get lost in the depth of history if not recorded by Chinese. To exemplify, Chinese records are the only written sources to uncover the historical origins of various Asian groups, such as Mongols, Koreans, Huns, Vietnamese etc. However, methodologically speaking, ancient histories were without socially conscious historiographies. In other words they lacked the proper, critical discussions of how, why, for whom and from whose perspectives the history was recorded and written. Marxist historiography through its basis in historical materialism, historical stages (from primitive society onwards) and class analysis differs from preceding attempts theorizing history and historiography (cf. Zahoor & Bilal, 2013).

We can state that the Soviet experience shows that not necessarily the ownership of the means of production, but instead the control and power over the means of production can be a source of class formation and class society. In the Soviet Union, although they were publicly owned, they were not publicly controlled. The Communist Party leaders had the power over the means and that engendered social, political and economic inequalities in socialism in practice. This power and control included not only production processes but allocation and distribution. As a result, a class salaried by their political activities per se was formed in contrast to the majority of the Soviet citizens who are paid on the basis of their manual or mental labor (or both). In that sense, 'A people's history of the Soviet Union' would be an interesting project, following Hobsbaw'n's and Thompson's focus on the lowest in the social hierarchy.² Such an approach would have the potential to be left(ist), but not necessarily Marxist in the Soviet sense.

On the other hand, such a people's history of the Soviet Union can't be equated with pro-American and pro-capitalist accounts of the Soviet Union. For the former, the key motive is inequality, while for the latter it is freedom. Interestingly, but later on convincingly enough, a historiography considering freedom or search for freedom as the engine of history will produce a right(ist) history. That is because freedom is often conceived in these accounts, independent of classes and social groups in general, which means the dominant social groups will dominate the so-called 'struggles for freedom' very much resembling a famous quote from Marx: "The dominant ideology is the ideology of the dominant class." For instance, the expression 'Catalans' struggle for freedom' is in fact right(ist), compared to Catalans' struggle for equality (to become legally or internationally equal). Freedom would have different meanings and implications for different classes. Under capitalism, we have freedom to travel nominally on paper, but in fact only those that can afford it can enjoy it, as reminded by Uncle Ho long time ago (Ho Chi Minh, 1969). Likewise, when we compare the historical accounts of the pro-American South Vietnamese government, the war was for freedom, not for independence (which implies equality in the sense of being as independent as other countries internationally). Converging with this, pro-American non-state actors are usually renamed as freedom fighters in American official accounts. The United States bombs a number of countries to spread freedom or what the American military-industrial complex and the ruling classes understand from 'freedom'.. Furthermore, the notion of the fight for freedom as the basis of history is incompatible with the materialist principle of the Marxist historiography. Freedom is a political idea with no clear basis in economic relations, whereas inequality is tangible as it is associated with the historical infrastructure. Thus, for a left(ist) historiography we should think more about this dichotomy

² Works by E. P. Thompson, Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbaw'n and I. Wallerstein need to be elaborated in a separate paper.

(i.e. inequality vs. freedom), as the terms become eroded, blurred, got complicated in official historiographical accounts.

Another avenue for a left(ist) history would be participatory history writing as the case for the post-war Japan under American occupation (see Gayle, 2016). Those who are ignored and repressed in history writing can be the writers of their own history. That attempt at what is called as 'Japanese People's History' would include workers, subalterns, poor people, women etc. as the history writers, which target the elite status of historians and aim at deprofessionalization and decentralization of history writing. Currently, a more preferred term is participatory history writing which does not necessarily focus on written documents. Oral history movement goes hand in hand with these approaches. This movement is completely compatible with both Marxist and left(ist) historiographies, as statist history writing will ignore, disable and suppress alternative historical accounts.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, diverging from the mainstream view about the subject, Marxist historiography can't be discarded altogether. There are components that are not applicable, but a considerably high number of elements are still useful to understand and interpret the history. It is clear that leftist historiographies are mostly offshoots of Marxist historiographies. They have been formed by rejecting, expanding or adapting some of the elements of Marxist historiography. That is why, we argue that Marxist historiography is not dead, it just evolved into leftist historiography as an approach, and social, economic and cultural histories in terms of historical areas and contents. A non-dogmatic, flexible, open-minded mobilization of Marxist and leftist historiographies can still be useful for the historians. Furthermore, as the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of Marxism in general and Marxist historiography in particular can be separated, one does not need to be a Marxist or leftist to capitalize on the tool kits of Marxist and leftist historiographies.

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