

**From the past to the present – and beyond?**  
**A long view of conceptions of revolution, social  
agency and World History**

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## End of History, end of revolutions, end of agency

History has come to an end, was the verdict of Francis Fukuyama in 1989, when 'really existing socialism' was in rapid decline. For decades, many people considered the authoritarian brand of socialism based on the model of the USSR to be the only feasible alternative to western capitalism. Now that alternative lost credibility, so there could be no significant development beyond capitalism, no true socialist world revolution, no further History with a capital H, or World History. With just a bit of simplification we may claim that, for Fukuyama, the slogan 'capitalism or barbarism' constitutes the lesson of Soviet experiment.

Thus acknowledging the prior existence of a universal teleological pattern of history, Fukuyama claims that once this *telos* has been attained, there can be no more History. The end of the threat of a macro-historical anti-capitalist revolution means the end of History. Indeed, this recognizes a close association of World History with the modern concept of revolution: The lack of a credible social alternative and the lack of a macro-social, macro-historical revolutionary agency have undermined the continued progress of World History.<sup>1</sup>

Though it should hardly be accepted uncritically as an interpretation of the true character of modern history, the End of History-argument should probably be accepted as an adequate expression of a mentality largely dominant during the recent decades. Perhaps it should even be accepted as a sign of a widespread use of certain central concepts and conceptions in the whole modern epoch as such.

A sketch of the of long-term struggle and interrelation between conceptions of revolutionary agency and conceptions of World History, focusing on the controversy surrounding world historical turning points or revolutions themselves, may provide us with elements for a better historical sense of this mentality and its corresponding interrelations of ideas and concepts, and thereby we may even indirectly confront also aspects of the question of the value of this mentality as an account of the actual macro-historical prospects for revolution and revolutionary agency.

Through a look at a somewhat similar debate on the cycle opened by the French Revolution followed by different conceptual associations of World History, revolution and agency around the English revolution of the 1640's, the French

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<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama: 'The End of History?', originally in *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18. Cf. for critical discussions of this thesis Perry Anderson: *A Zone of Engagement*, London 1992, pp. 279-376; Alex Callinicos: *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 15-38

Revolution of 1789 and the perspective of social anti-capitalist revolution developed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this paper proposes to argue three main points: 1) that Fukuyama's analysis implies the negation of a long-lasting conceptual historical cycle, longer than merely 1917-1989, extending at least as far back as 1789; 2) that it is part of a long struggle of different concepts and ideas concerning revolution and history; and 3) that the dominance of the wider mentality of which the Fukuyama thesis is a part tends to reify a sense of closure, despite oft-asserted claims to the contrary.

This long-term approach, though precluding more detailed investigation of individual authors and their contexts, may perhaps allow us to see shapes of a forest instead of only individual trees. Thus, provided the long-term sketch synthesizes the results of such detailed studies, one may gain insights otherwise easily overlooked and thereby develop new hypotheses for studies of individual texts, authors and mentalities.<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically, this is related to existing approaches to intellectual history. One of these is the conceptual history associated with Reinhart Koselleck, exploring primarily the changes in meaning of the main political, social, cultural and historical concepts within the German cultural sphere during its transition to modernity roughly defined as 1750-1850.<sup>3</sup> Another is the so-called Cambridge school, associated primarily with J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, seeking instead to locate the uses of terms in the writings of individual authors within linguistic contexts usually more narrowly defined.<sup>4</sup> The approach of this paper is related to both of these, yet at the same time differs from them in attempting to explore of interrelatedness of several concepts and in doing so on a more general European level.

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<sup>2</sup> This paper, itself a work-in-progress, partly summarizes elements and ideas from my current PhD project, a historical investigation of the genesis and use of the concept 'bourgeois revolution' in historiography and political theory.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Otto Brunner et al (eds.): *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart 1974-97, and Reinhart Koselleck: *Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979

<sup>4</sup> J.G.A. Pocock: *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*, London 1972, and James Tully (ed.): *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, Cambridge: Polity 1988. The basic features of the Cambridge approach are discussed along with the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*-approach in Melvin Richter: *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction*, New York, Oxford 1995, and Kari Palonen: *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe. Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck*, Münster 2004. For other recent approaches to such matters, see Dario Castiglione & Iain Hampsher-Monk (eds.): *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, Cambridge 2001

## Ending the French Revolution: Furet vs. Soboul

Returning to our subject matter, it is significant to the main elements of Fukuyama's argument that parallel case was made previously in an argument concerning a more specific historical case but with a potential of no less world-historical scope. In his epoch-making book from 1978, *Penser la Révolution française*, François Furet prefigures the Fukuyama-closing of history as revolutionary World History by proclaiming the closure of the political, social and discursive cycle opened by the French Revolution: The liberal concern for individual rights and the conservative concern for a strong, patriarchal political state securing social cohesion has been united, Furet claims, and this closes the century-long rifts in French society.<sup>5</sup>

Behind Furet's concern with the French revolution lies its association with that other modern development of equal world historical significance, the Russian Revolution. He is eager to defeat the Marxist-inspired, or rather, Communist-inspired, consensus within interpretations of the French Revolution, viewing the first revolution as an incomplete anticipation of the second.

The main target of Furet's criticism is Albert Soboul, at the time of Furet's book professor at the Sorbonne-based institute of the History of the French Revolution. According to Soboul, the French Revolution in 1789 was a bourgeois revolution furthering the development of capitalism:

Quant à la Révolution française, le fait essentiel est que l'ancien système de production fut détruit et que la Révolution établit sans restriction aucune la liberté d'entreprise et de profit, ouvrant ainsi la voie au capitalisme.<sup>6</sup>

He and many of his contemporaries in French Revolutionary studies highlighted the struggles and actions of sans-culottes and peasants as central to the achievement of this purpose. The excesses of the revolution, its radical phases, including the Terror, were mainly "plebeian ways of dealing with the enemies of the bourgeoisie", and they

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<sup>5</sup> Furet: *Penser la Révolution française*, Paris 1989. The most comprehensive analysis of Furet in the intellectual context of 1970's critiques of 'totalitarianism' is Michael Scott Christofferson: 'An Antitotalitarian History of the French Revolution: François Furet's "Penser la Révolution française" in the Intellectual Politics of the Late 1970s', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1999, pp. 557-611. A more polemical review of the context of French Revolution historiography is Olivier Bétourné & Aglaia I. Hartig: *Penser l'histoire de la Révolution*, Paris 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Soboul: *Comprendre la Révolution. Problèmes politiques de la Révolution française*, Paris 1981, p. 337

were caused mainly by external social, political and military circumstances at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Soboul does not claim that these struggles of the lower classes were consciously directed towards the achievement of a capitalist society. Indeed, from the subjective point of view they were both anti-feudal and anti-capitalist. But contrary to their intentions, the sans-culottes and the peasants "a contribué à faire avancer l'histoire par l'aide décisive apportée à la révolution bourgeoise".<sup>8</sup> They furnished the revolutionary bourgeoisie with forces sufficient to combat the remnants of feudalism in the French social formation, but their own aspirations was incompatible with "la marche dialectique de l'histoire elle-même".<sup>9</sup> The time had come for bourgeois, or capitalist, society, not yet for socialism.

This concept of 'history itself' being 'advanced' through the social struggles of the masses reveals an underlying conception of World History progressing through large-scale social revolutions situated at the transitions between the successively dominant modes of production on history. Thus, in Soboul's views, the capitalist epoch in World History is the successor of the feudal epoch and would itself be succeeded by socialism and communism.

Criticizing Soboul, Furet skillfully shows how some of the most dominant French Marxist historians of the Revolutions are actually interpreting the Revolution through an odd mixture of orthodox Marxism-Leninism with an uncritical use of the discourse of the French Jacobins themselves. This, he claims, lies at the root of their conception of this revolution as a bourgeois revolution.<sup>10</sup>

According to Furet, the revolutionary Terror of 1793 was not instrumental in the development of capitalism. Neither can it be explained through the historical circumstances of war and austerity. On the contrary, he claims, the Terror was the necessary and logical consequence of the notion of absolute popular sovereignty

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<sup>7</sup> This expression derives from Marx ['Die Bourgeoisie und die Kontrerevolution' (1848), *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 6, p. 107] but expresses a main point of Soboul's approach.

<sup>8</sup> Soboul: *Précis d'histoire de la Révolution française*, Paris 1972[1962], p. 376. Cf. also Soboul: *Les Sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II: Mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire 2 juin 1793 – 9 thermidor an II*, Paris 1958 and Soboul: *Problèmes paysans de la révolution (1789-1848)*, Paris 1976, esp. pp. 9-22, 117-134 as well as the parallel, but more detailed argument on the peasant question: Anatolij Ado: *Die Bauern in der Französischen Revolution 1789-1794*, Leipzig 1997 [1971]

<sup>9</sup> Soboul *Sans-culottes...*, p. 1031

<sup>10</sup> Furet, op.cit., pp. 133-207

expressed already in 1789: "1793 est déjà dans 1789".<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Terror is to be explained through the Jacobin ideology of revolution and democracy.<sup>12</sup>

Having criticized the orthodox Marxist connection of 1789 with 1917, he himself reconstructs this association. The same discursive determinants pushing 1789 towards the Terror of 1793 were at work in 1917, pushing the Bolshevik project towards Gulag from its very beginning. The different historical circumstances in which these two historical processes took place, are largely irrelevant to Furet. What is important is their "identité dans le projet": The French and the Russian Revolutions both embodied the same kind of totalitarianism based on thought about 'pure' democracy and the necessity of revolutionizing society.<sup>13</sup>

Separating the language and the reality of the revolution, Furet is attacking not only Marxism, French historians and the legacy of the October revolution, but also the discursive legacy of the French Revolution as a world-historical phenomenon. Thus, he is combating the intertwined ideas of revolutionary agency and continuing world history. This may well be regarded as an anticipation of what Francis Fukuyama was to do on a much more explicitly World Historical scale a bit more than a decade later.

The historical effect of this attack, as a part of the wider questioning of the orthodox Marxist notion of World History and Revolution, was a demolition of one evolutionary model of history pointing towards a preconceived goal of communism, very often associated with the particular social forms prevalent in the Soviet Union. But is it true, as it has been fashionable to claim since the 1980's, that with Furet's critique of Marxism and his alternative interpretation of the revolution as a discursive event, "the cables have been cut off from any form of determinism", as claimed by Claude Langlois, a historian of the French Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Is it true that Furet through this interpretation, in the words of Sunil Khilnani, "recovered a dimension of human agency and indeterminacy glaringly absent from those earlier interpretations that inserted the Revolution into a linear and progressive schema of world historical development"?<sup>15</sup> For one thing, Furet's notion of a drift towards terror and

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<sup>11</sup> Op.cit., pp. 287, cf. pp. 294, 129

<sup>12</sup> Cf. op.cit., pp. 202, 52

<sup>13</sup> Op.cit., p. 84

<sup>14</sup> Claude Langlois: 'Furet's Revolution', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1990, p. 768

<sup>15</sup> Sunil Khilnani: *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France*, New Haven & London 1993, p. 177

totalitarianism brought about through discursive mechanisms set off by concepts of popular sovereignty actually does have a rather determinist or, indeed, fatalist ring to it. But more importantly for our purposes, Furet effectively excludes all notions of going beyond the existing social order. Not only Soboul's notion of a world History progressing towards future communism, but all notions of futures qualitatively different from the present *and* more desirable than the present are debarred, if we accept the influential explanatory framework of Soboul. Thus, we find an ideological position akin to Fukuyama's: If we could simplify the position of the latter as 'capitalist democracy or barbarism', the equivalent slogan of a Furetian conception of World History would be 'capitalist democracy or terror'. In both cases, World History and the history of large-scale revolutions are conceived as one long evolutionary process reaching its *telos* and its final ending in the present epoch. In both cases, the dominant tendency actually signifies a different type of historical closure than the dogmatic Marxist one: a closure in the 'here and now' rather than a closure in a preconceived 'beyond'.

## Conceptions of World History and revolution

In modern times, the word 'revolution' usually designates progressive social change through popular participation, directed towards a more democratic, egalitarian and wide distribution of social and/or political power.

As an example of this widespread understanding, we may quote Theda Skocpol's influential definition from 1979, without tying ourselves to the details of her formulation:

Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation.<sup>16</sup>

This rather structure-oriented definition can be supplemented by Trotsky's statement, more adequate to revolutions as historical forms of change:

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<sup>16</sup> Theda Skocpol: *States and Social Revolution*, Cambridge 1979, p. 4

The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.<sup>17</sup>

As such, what will be referred to in the following as ‘the modern concept of revolution’ refers to a complex at once characterized by at least three moments: 1) structural social change, 2) collective social agency and 3) a sense of historical change, progression of societal forms. This can be seen in historiography both positively, in Soboul’s interpretation of the French revolution, and negatively, in the target of criticism for Furet.

The genesis of this modern concept of revolution was both co-temporal with and closely intertwined with the development of modern secular concepts of World History as linear, progressive history, as the history of the growth of civilization. And both concepts were closely connected with contemporary attempts to grasp the significance of what we today would call social revolutions.

### **1649: Revolution, innovation and historical closure**

Until the English ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688, the term ‘revolution’ was used primarily in its astronomical sense established by Copernicus: the ‘revolutions’, i.e. rotations, of the celestial bodies.<sup>18</sup> Anticipations of social and historical uses of the concept ‘revolution’ can be found as early as the Florentine renaissance, in which Jacopo Nardi and Francesco Guicciardini, among others, defined the revolt led by Savonarola against the Medicis in 1494 as a “rivoluzione”.<sup>19</sup> This use of the word recurred around 1650, as contemporaries attempted to understand and describe the significance of a “world turned upside down” through the revolutions and revolts in England and within the Italian and Catalonian parts of the Spanish Habsburg empire.<sup>20</sup> Still, the dominant use of the word ‘revolution’ was implied the notion of a

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<sup>17</sup> Trotsky: *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1 (1930), Preface (via [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org))

<sup>18</sup> On the development of the modern concept of ‘revolution’: Karl Griewank: *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff. Entstehung und Geschichte*, Frankfurt 1973 [1955]. Reinhart Koselleck: ‘Revolution. Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg’, in Brunner et al., op.cit., Vol. 5, pp. 653-788. Cf. also Arthur Hatto: “‘Revolution’: An Enquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term”, *Mind*, Vol. 58, No. 232, 1949, pp. 495-517.

<sup>19</sup> Hatto, op.cit., p. 503

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Hill: *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical politics, religion and literature in seventeenth-century England*, London & New York 1990. Vernon F. Snow: ‘The Concept of Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1962, pp. 167-174, Ilan Rachum: ‘The Meaning

return to a previous state of society. In his *Glossographia*, or dictionary, from 1656, Thomas Blount still defined 'revolution' as "a returning back to the first place or point, the accomplishment of a circular course".<sup>21</sup> These uses and meanings of the term were not mere historical accidents but expressed a widely accepted mentality emphasizing the essentially static character of society and the world.

Writing in the 1660's on the rebellion and civil war in England, the royalist Earl of Clarendon significantly used the term 'revolution' to signify the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.<sup>22</sup> In this context, 'revolution' was the *opposite* of the concept of 'rebellion'. Accordingly, to commentators and historians throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the events of the 1640's were summed up, not as a social revolution, but as the 'great rebellion'. And yet, though from our present conceptual vantage point it may seem a quite paradoxical juxtaposition of meaning, the substance what Clarendon hailed in this revolution was precisely what we would call the *end* of revolution (in the modern sense) and the return to a pre-revolutionary state of affairs that to the Earl of Clarendon appeared as the only one desirable and feasible and thus permanent. Thus, to Clarendon, History conceived as a world of flux and change had ended, and according to him it was indeed a happy ending. Popular macro-social subjectivity introducing 'rebellion' and 'innovation' has been transcended, Clarendon implies, and the 'objective', 'natural', 'traditional' and 'right' state of societal affairs has been reintroduced.

Thomas Hobbes, who states a somewhat parallel political position, though his use of the concept of 'revolution' is different, designating the entire cycle from the Long parliament of 1640 till the restoration of Charles II to power as "a circular motion of the sovereign power".<sup>23</sup> Hobbes does not describe this 'revolution' as a transition in the unfolding of progressive World History. Rather, it is a deviation, the product of wicked behaviour. But in its internal mechanisms, it unfolds with strict necessity, leading from one phase to the next, which is why the greater criminals in the eyes of Hobbes the royalist were not the Independents actually introducing the republic and

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of "Revolution" in the English Revolution (1648-1660)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 1995, pp. 195-215

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Hill, *op.cit.*, p. 86

<sup>22</sup> Clarendon: *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, Oxford 1958, Vol. 4, p. 467 & Vol. 6, p. 234

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hobbes: *Behemoth or the Long Parliament* (1667-68), London 1969, p. 204. Cf., on Hobbes' concept of revolution, Mark Hartman: 'Hobbes's Concept of Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 47, no. 3, 1985, pp. 487-495

executing the king, but the far more moderate Presbyterians who started the whole ‘circular motion’.<sup>24</sup>

So even though the word had not yet quite achieved its modern meaning by the 1660’s, it was already loaded with normative value and oriented towards important social processes and notions of civilization as a process. Around the same time, one may also find yet another significant use of the concept ‘revolution’, this one with an even more ‘modern’ appearance. As early as the 1650’s James Harrington pioneered a naturalization of social change, including social change through social revolution. According to him, political government is based on the dominant form of property, and English society around the civil war was in the process of a great change from feudal to non-feudal social relations, making a large scale political change natural. In a text from 1658 he writes remarkably:

Property comes to have a being before empire or government two ways, either by natural or violent revolution. Natural revolution happeneth from within, or by commerce, as when a government erected upon one balance, that for example of a nobility or a clergy, (...) comes to alter to another balance (...) Violent revolution happeneth from without, or by arms.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, ‘revolution’ is conceived as change along a progressive path of development from one state of society to another. It is not hailed as the return to the starting point, but is naturalized as one of the main forms of macro-historical change. Revolution is the same as innovation, and innovation is right.

This, however, still reflects a view of merely structural change, without committing the term ‘revolution’ to social agency, much less to particular forms of social agency, that is, mass action.

### **1789: Revolution and counter-revolution**

Some structural and macro-historical implications of this are developed more thoroughly in 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts by Enlightenment historians and political thinkers, especially the Scottish ones, Adam Smith and John Millar, as well as French ones,

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Hobbes, op.cit., p. 155. On this book and Hobbes’s overall interpretation of the civil war: Royce MacGillivray: ‘Thomas Hobbes’s History of the English Civil War. A Study of *Behemoth*’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1970, pp. 179-198.

<sup>25</sup> Harrington: ‘The Prerogative of Popular Government’, in: J.G.A. Pocock (ed.): *The Political Works of James Harrington*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 405f

particularly Turgot.<sup>26</sup> In the hands of these thinkers, history is no longer a series or trivial events concerning the lives of kings and princes, nor merely a storage house of illustrations for generalizations about mankind or political society. Instead, history became the history of civilization, that is, of social totalities through major stages of social development. In the hands of these writers, historical forms of development are studied at several concurrent levels of temporal and spatial extension, as the history of particular events and as the history of particular epochs, or even the history of civilization as a whole, and as national and European as well as global history. In short, history is reborn as World History, a differentiated unity.<sup>27</sup>

But not before the French Revolution in 1789 was the word 'revolution' generalized in its modern meaning, at the same time signifying a particular social uprising, a progressive cause and a macro-historical turn. As the French revolutionaries of 1789 defined themselves as the third estate and as the true descendants of the bourgeois of the medieval communes, the revolution was seen significantly as a continuation of World History.

The main elements of this are classically stated, of course, in 1789 by abbé Sieyès in his manifesto *What is the Third Estate?*, but even more clearly in the retrospective analyses of the French Revolution in the writings of two politicians from the revolutionary epoch, Antoine de Barnave and Pierre-Louis Roederer, presenting their analyses in 1792 and 1815, respectively.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf., especially, John Millar: *An Historical View of the English Government from the Settlement of the Saxons on Britain to the Revolution in 1688*, London 1818 [1787, 1803]

<sup>27</sup> The most thorough single study of the conceptions of history and society in this intellectual environment is Hans Medick: *Naturzustand und Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Göttingen 1973. Other aspects of these thoughts are explored in Istvan Hont & Michael Ignatieff: *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1983 and Knud Haakonssen: *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1996. Cf. also Hans Medick & Annette Leppert-Fögen: 'Frühe Sozialwissenschaft als Ideologie des kleinen Bürgertums: John Millar of Glasgow, 1735-1801', in: Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Hrsg.): *Sozialgeschichte Heute. Festschrift für Hans Rosenberg zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen 1973

<sup>28</sup> Barnave: *Introduction à la Révolution française* (ed. Fernand Rude), Paris 1960. Roederer: *L'Esprit de la Révolution de 1789*, Paris 1831. The best introduction to Barnave's philosophical history is probably still the introduction in Emanuel Chill: *Power, Property, and History: Barnaves Introduction to the French Revolution and other Writings*, New York 1971. An analysis of Roederer's overall views and life is Kenneth Margerison: 'P.-L. Roederer: Political Thought and Practise During the French Revolution', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 73, No. 1, 1983, pp. 1-166. Strangely, however, I have been unable to locate any extensive analyses of his interpretation of the French revolution.

Here, the French Revolution is seen as the culmination of a century-long struggle of the productive part of the population, that is, the mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie, against the non-productive feudal classes with their political privileges. According to Barnave, the entire French Revolution can be attributed

aux progrès de la civilisation, des lumières et de l'industrie; car c'est cette cause qui, en élevant le tiers-état, augmentant son aisance, son instruction, sa flerté, a rendu inévitable une révolution démocratique. C'est elle qui a donné ce grand pouvoir à l'opinion publique, et qui a rendu nécessaire un gouvernement délibérant.<sup>29</sup>

Roederer in particular adds yet another dimension by developing a sense of a non-reducible specificity of the revolution itself, the revolution as an event. The main results of the revolution, he claims, were the progress of property, liberty and equality of rights. But of these three elements, he singles out the latter as the exclusive immediate cause of the intentions and actions of the bourgeoisie. The other main elements, the progress of liberty and property, developed as unintended consequences of the immediate struggle for formal rights.<sup>30</sup> And yet, these consequences were not contingent through and through, for the unintended consequences were shaped by the preconditions inherent in the long-term development of civilization:

La révolution était faite dans tous les esprit et dans les moeurs avant de l'être par les lois; elle existait dans les relations de société polie, avant d'être réalisée dans les intérêts matériels et communs.<sup>31</sup>

In Aristotelian terms, the preconditions for these consequences were present as potentials in the macro-historical development of new means of wealth through industry and trade. But it took the particular actions of the bourgeoisie and, in turn, what he terms the “lower classes” to actualize this potential. So, in Roederer's analysis we get a sense of a necessary interaction between the macro-history of the progress of civilization and the revolution as a particular event involving human agency and intentions.

Thus, the notion of revolution was tied to notions of change, especially a new linear, progressive conception of history developed primarily through Enlightenment views on history confronted with what we may perceive as the first true revolution of a

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<sup>29</sup> 'Réflexions politiques' (1792), *Oeuvres de Barnave* in 4 vols. Paris 1843, Vol. 2, p. 28

<sup>30</sup> Roederer, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5, 9, 10

<sup>31</sup> Roederer, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5

world historical significance, creating repercussions not only throughout Europe, but in the American colonies as well.

This was fully clear to contemporary observers, especially the ones eager to halt the revolutionary process. The conservative catholic anti-enlightenment philosopher Joseph de Maistre's *Considérations sur la France* from 1796 analyzes the revolution as a satanic expression of human free will attacking the God-given social order of absolutism. In this context he emphasizes his point that the battle against the Revolution, cannot be fought out in the name of 'counter-revolution'. Instead, this battle has to be the very *opposite* of Revolution:

le rétablissement de la monarchie, qu'on appelle *contre-révolution*, ne sera point une *révolution contraire*, mais le *contraire de la révolution*.<sup>32</sup>

'Counter-revolution' would itself acknowledge the sinful progressive, secular development of World History. In order to stop the revolution, one would have to stop its corollary, World History as a progressive movement towards democratization and human freedom.<sup>33</sup>

However, if Barnave, Roederer and de Maistre can be said to grasp this significant connection between world history and the revolution as a particular act, it was only with the moderate restoration Liberals of the 1820's that this was really systematically universalized. François Guizot was probably the primary figure among these liberals who wished to unite the liberal support of the principles of 1789 with the conservative project of ending it. As one of Guizot's close associates, Charles de Rémusat, stated: "We shared one common thought: the idea of bringing the Revolution to an end by creating genuine representative government."<sup>34</sup> But, as Guizot pointed out, they did not want to merely end the revolution; they wanted the

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph de Maistre: *Considérations sur la France*, Lyon 1872 [1796], p. 186. On de Maistre's political philosophy and his views on the Revolution: Owen Bradley: *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre*, Lincoln & London 1999. Richard Allen Lebrun: *Throne and Alter: the Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre*, Ottawa 1965. Cf. also Darrin M. McMahon: *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, Oxford 2001

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Arendt's dismissal of de Maistre's statement as "an empty witticism" overlooks this central connection between History and revolution. [Hannah Arendt: *On Revolution*, London 1963, p. 8]

<sup>34</sup> Charles Rémusat: *Mémoires de ma vie*, Vol. 2, 1959, quoted in Aurelian Craiutu: *Liberalism under Siege: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires*, Oxford 2003. Cf. also Pierre Rosanvallon: *Le moment Guizot*, Paris 1985, esp. pp. 204-12. These two relatively recent books constitute the main reappraisals of Guizot as a major political theorist. The intellectual contexts of Guizot and Rémusat are studied further in Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History 1787-1874*, London 1963; Boris Réizov: *L'historiographie romantique française*, Moscow (n.d.) and Ceri Crossley: *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simoniens, Quinet Michelet*, London 1993.

revolution to bring itself to an end by reconciling the contradictions expressed in and through the revolution with French national history:

(...) je dirai encore que la révolution, amenée par le développement nécessaire d'une société en progrès, fondée sur des principes moraux, entreprise dans le dessein du bien général, a été la lutte *terrible, mais légitime*, du droit contre le privilège, de la liberté légale contre l'arbitraire; et qu'à elle seule il appartient, en se réglant, en s'épurant, en fondant la monarchie constitutionnelle, de consommer le bien qu'elle a commencé et de réparer le mal qu'elle a fait.<sup>35</sup>

This was necessary both to the revolutionary principles and to France. Like Hegel, Guizot held that the revolution was the necessary and ineradicable world-historical starting point of any modern political society.<sup>36</sup> In this fashion, Guizot and other historians and politicians close to him finally conceptualized historical conflicts and negations, including revolutions as violent acts of confrontation, as historically necessary moments towards the redemption of world history.

Even more clearly than Roederer and Barnave, Guizot and some of his contemporaries specified the moments of contradiction and conflict by means of the concept of class struggle. This is the overall principle expressed in Guizot's lectures on the history of European civilization:

A leur origine, Messieurs, toutes choses sont à peu près confondues dans une même physionomie; ce n'est que par le développement successif que la variété se prononce. Puis commence un développement nouveau qui pousse les sociétés vers cette unité haute et libre, but glorieux des efforts et des vœux du genre humain.<sup>37</sup>

On a more specifically revolutionary note, Mignet, the author of one of the seminal early narrative and interpretive histories of the French Revolution, published in 1824, interprets that event as having been caused by class contradictions. Indeed, class struggles are seen as the main driving force of modern history and as having

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<sup>35</sup> François Guizot: *Du gouvernement de la France depuis la restauration et du ministère actuel*, Paris 1821, p. xxviii. Cf. also Guizot: *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, Paris 1842 [1823], p. 381.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Hegel: "Im Gedanken des Rechts ist also jetzt eine Verfassung errichtet worden, und auf diesem Grunde sollte nunmehr alles basiert sein." 'Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte', *Werke*, Vol. 12, Frankfurt 1999, p. 529. On Hegel and the French Revolution: Joachim Ritter: *Hegel und die französische Revolution*, Köln & Opladen 1957. The influence of Hegelian thought on Guizot, a significant aspect of the general prevalence of German thought in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, has generally been overlooked, probably due to the general hasty dismissal of both as political thinkers during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>37</sup> Guizot: *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe*, Paris 1828, 7th lecture, p. 42

determined the phases of the revolution itself, as it progressed from the struggle of the ‘middle class’ against the ‘aristocracy’ to the struggle of the ‘lower classes’ against the ‘middle class’, eventually laying power solidly in the hands of the middle class. Each of these successive phases, moreover, meant the further advance of civilization:

Aucun de ces gouvernements ne put de consolider, parce que tous furent exclusifs. Mais, pendant leurs essais, chaque classe, momentanément dominatrice, détruisit dans les classes plus élevées ce qu’il y avait d’intolérant et ce qui devait s’opposer à la marche de la nouvelle civilisation.<sup>38</sup>

However, eager to show the present as the harmonized *telos* of history, Mignet begins his work by proclaiming the French Revolution as the consummation and ending of class struggles. The revolution, he wrote, “a délivré les hommes des distinctions des classes (...) et elle a tout ramené à une seul état, à un seul droit, à un seul peuple.”<sup>39</sup>

Having thus fulfilled the task of revolutionary change, class struggles can be no more. And since class struggles are the main vehicle of World History, according to Mignet, this History has come to an end, reaching its *telos* through the establishment of modern middle class, or bourgeois, society. History and historical time is inextricably bound to conflict and revolutionary change, but to Mignet and Guizot, historical time cannot significantly transcend the present epoch. Any revolution expressing the moderate liberal principles of 1789 as Guizot and Mignet see them must be the final one.<sup>40</sup>

In the revolution of 1830 this was exactly what they saw.<sup>41</sup> Thus, there could be no real progressive revolution beyond this one, because no legitimate conflicts were left. And thus, as Marx would retort some years later in a different but analogous context, “il y a eu de l’histoire, mais il n’y en plus”.<sup>42</sup> In writing this, Marx expressed the

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<sup>38</sup> F.-A. Mignet: *Histoire de la révolution française*, Bruxelles 1844 [1824], p. 428 Cf. a somewhat parallel interpretation by Guizot, formulated as early as 1816, quoted in quoted in Rosanvallon, op.cit., pp. 209f

<sup>39</sup> Mignet, op.cit., p. 2

<sup>40</sup> Applying a Hegelian normative criteria of truth derived from Victor Cousin, philosopher, moderate liberal co-thinker and colleague at the Sorbonne, Guizot terms these moderate liberal principles the “true” or “proper” sense of the revolution, leading towards its “true” or “proper” government. Guizot: *De gouvernement et d’opposition dans l’état actuel de la France*, Paris 1821 pp. 2-3, 26-7.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Crossley, op.cit., pp. 21, 34, 96-7

<sup>42</sup> Marx: ‘Misère de la philosophie’ (1846), *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe, Erste Abteilung, Band 6*, Berlin 1932, p. 188

challenge of the European wave of revolutions in 1848 which thoroughly shocked and abhorred these moderate liberals.<sup>43</sup>

### **1848, 1917: Transcending the present**

The apologetic tendency of viewing the present epoch as the redeemer of history and of all significant social contraction, was, of course, increasingly contested by social critics. These early socialists and communists claimed that social conflicts persisted and that the alleged redemption through the realization of bourgeois society was merely formal. Instead of idealizing the present, viewing the past mainly as a road ending in the presently established social order, they turned their eyes towards the future.

This turn towards the future does not merely imply a continuous political and social criticism of the viewpoints held by Guizot or Mignet. Socialists also criticize the view of history so central to the political analyses of Guizot or Mignet. This is clear from the writings of Saint-Simon in the 1810's and 1820's and, more systematically, Young Hegelians such as August von Cieszkowski and Moses Hess, writing around 1840.<sup>44</sup> All of these tended to seek *a priori* principles securing, if not the form, at least the 'essence' of future world history, and their search for such principles tended to draw their attention away from concrete analyses of the present.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Auguste Thierry's despair after the February Revolution of 1848: Thierry: 'Préface' (1853), *Essai sur l'histoire de la formation et des progrès du Tiers État*, Paris 1866, pp. 4-5, and Thierry quoted in Crossley, op.cit., p. 60: "I no longer understand the history of France, the present has turned upside down my ideas about the past (...)."

<sup>44</sup> Cieszkowski: *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, Berlin 1838 (reprint: Nendeln/Leichtenstein 1976). Hess: 'Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit. Von einem Jünger Spinoza's' (1837) & 'Die europäische Triarchie' (1841), both in Hess: *Philosophische und Sozialistische Schriften 1837-1850*, Berlin 1961. On these authors see, e.g., André Liebich: *Between Ideology and Utopia: The Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski*, Dordrecht 1979, and Shlomo Avineri: *Moses Hess: Prophet of Communism and Zionism*, New York 1985.

<sup>45</sup> This echoes Georg Lukács's criticism of Hess –Lukács: 'Moses Hess und die Probleme der idealistischen Dialektik' (1926), *Georg Lukács Werke Band 2: Frühschriften II*, Neuwied & Berlin 1968. This has recently been developed further by Stathis Kouvelakis: *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx*, London & New York 2003. Lukács, of course, was at the time of writing his Hess-critique himself progressing from the messianic-philosophical 'ought'-conception of revolutionary subjectivity in his *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* fra 1923 towards the anti-utopian Popular Front-like politics of his 'Blum theses' of 1928 and most of his later writings. Cf. on this Michael Löwy: *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, London 1979, pp. 193-208.

For Marx and Engels, writing in 1845 against the brothers Bauer, the French revolution is far from over:

Die Lebensgeschichte der französischen Revolution, die von 1789 her datiert, ist mit dem Jahre 1830 (...) noch nicht beendet.<sup>46</sup>

A few years later, confronting Guizot's view of constitutional monarchy as the 'goal' of English historical development and thereby the end of the civilization process, Marx adds to the same effect:

In der Wirklichkeit dagegen beginnt erst mit der Konsolidierung der konstitutionellen Monarchie die großartige Entwicklung und Umwälzung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in England. Wo Herr Guizot nur sanfte Ruhe und idyllischen Frieden sieht, entwickelten sich in der Wirklichkeit die gewaltigsten Konflikte, die einschneidendsten Revolutionen.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, secular notions of World History beyond the present epoch – that is, truly *revolutionary* positions – gradually develop as part of attempts at revolutionizing the social world. According to socialist critics of the capitalist bourgeois society, the most eloquent among whom was Marx, World History has not come to an end; historical time transcends the present epoch.

This also implies a new sense of construction of categories for interpreting the past. While Guizot and Mignet constructs the past through its relation to the present fulfillment of the *telos* of history, Marx's insistence on the radically open character of the future means that he does not merely look at the importance of different past events for the present, but also the relationship of past events to potentials in the present for future development.<sup>48</sup>

At least in the perspective of Marx, this amounts to a large-scale opening of the perspectives on the future of humanity. Beyond capitalist or bourgeois society lies not socialism or communism as the end of History, but the end of "die Vorgeschichte der menschlichen Gesellschaft", i.e. the overcoming of capitalism's reified structural limitations on the creative unfolding of human beings.<sup>49</sup> History,

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<sup>46</sup> Marx & Engels: 'Die heilige Familie' (1845), *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 2, Berlin, p. 131

<sup>47</sup> Marx: '[Rezensionen aus der „Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue“. Zweites heft, Februar 1850]', *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 7, p. 211

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Bertell Ollman: 'Studying History Backward: A Neglected Feature of Marx's Materialist Conception of History', in idem: *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*, Urbana & Chicago 2003, pp. 115-126 and Daniel Bensaïd: *Marx for Our Times*, London & New York 2002, pp. 7-94, esp. the contrast with Heidegger p. 82

<sup>49</sup> Marx: 'Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Vorwort' (1859), *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 13, p. 9

then, is no longer conceived as a linear development from a beginning point to an ending point. It is de-reified:

Die Geschichte tut nichts, sie 'besitzt' keinen ungeheuren Reichtum', sie 'kämpft keine Kämpfe'! Es ist vielmehr der Mensch, der wirkliche, lebendige Mensch, der das alles tut, besitzt und kämpft.<sup>50</sup>

Far from being a closed cycle or a one-way street, History is a product of human activity, containing a range of potentials, some of which are actualized through human agency within the concrete totality of social relations. This, of course, does not imply a conception of history as shapeless, as pure contingency, but it does imply a clear rejection of teleology and reified notions of historical development. Marx emphasises that one achieves nothing with „dem Universalschlüssel einer allgemeinen geschichtsphilosophischen Theorie, deren größter Vorzug darin besteht, übergeschichtlich zu sein.“<sup>51</sup>

Yet, in non-revolutionary periods, the insistence of Marxism on a potential future beyond the capitalist epoch has often been transformed into a sense of the historical inevitability of the advent of communism, thus implying a sense of linearity and historical closure somewhat homologous to the apologetic aspects of Guizot or Mignet, only with the redemption in the beyond rather than in the present. This can be seen in some of the more schematic analyses of Second International Marxists during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both the leading German theorist Karl Kautsky and the 'Father of Russian Marxism' Georgij Plekhanov at times insisted that any Russian revolution would have to stay closely within the 'bourgeois-democratic' stage equivalent to France in 1789.<sup>52</sup>

According to Plekhanov, writing during the decades prior to the revolution of 1917, the succession of the feudal stage and the capitalist stage constitutes the "objective process of social development" in each country.<sup>53</sup> Based on this general assumption of a definite pattern of historical development through successive 'pure' stages in

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<sup>50</sup> Marx & Engels: ‚Die heilige Familie‘ (1845), *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 2, p. 98

<sup>51</sup> Marx: [‚Brief an die Redaktion der „Otschestwennyje Sapiski“] (1877), *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 19, p. 111

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Gary Steenson: *Karl Kautsky 1854-1938: Marxism in the Classical Years*, Pittsburg 1978; Massimo Salvadori: *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution*, London 1979; Samuel Baron: *Plekhanov. The Father of Russian Marxism*, Stanford 1963; Michael Löwy: *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, London 1981

<sup>53</sup> ‚For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel’s Death‘ (1891), Plekhanov: *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow 1974, pp. 425-6

each country, he draws analogies between the previous development of Western European capitalism and the prospects for Russian society:

(...) not only the immediate future but the present of our country, too, belongs to capitalism. (...) our capitalism can become, and we have seen that it is becoming, the exclusive master of Russia.<sup>54</sup>

In view of the social composition of Russian society, especially the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie, Plekhanov points to the working class as the central social agent in the approaching Russian revolution against zarism.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, however, he emphasizes the purely bourgeois character of this revolution, and he rejects all anti-capitalist demands for the revolution: "It is now the turn of the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat cannot take history in its own hands and change it."<sup>56</sup> In writings from the time of the Russian revolutions of February and October 1917, this position is shared by both Kautsky and the Mensheviks.<sup>57</sup> This amounts to a fixed, reified, objectivist pattern of historical development, assumed to be valid for every country, regardless of the concrete circumstances, as well as a closure of the future prospects.

Starting from an interpretation of Marxism in several respects different from those of Plekhanov and Kautsky, Trotsky argues during the same period, from the 1905 revolution onwards, that such arguments disregard the fact that industrial development since 1789 has changed the character of the world-historical totality in which any Russian revolution could take place. Also, this new social totality dominated increasingly by industrial capitalism is increasingly introducing modern capitalist relations into Russian society, an effect of what Trotsky terms 'uneven and combined development'. Therefore, a Russian revolution in conjunction with revolutionary developments in Western industrialized societies can produce results significantly different from the purely 'western', capitalist prospects conjured by Kautsky and Plekhanov.<sup>58</sup> By thus widening the scope and scale of historical analysis,

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<sup>54</sup> 'Our Differences', Plekhanov 1976, bd. 1, pp. 240f. Hans kapitalismeanalyse opsummeres i Harding 1977, pp. 38-45

<sup>55</sup> Cf., e.g., 'Speech at the International Workers' Socialist Congress in Paris' (1889), Plekhanov, op.cit., p. 406

<sup>56</sup> Plekhanov quoted in Löwy, op.cit., p. 33

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Salvadori, op.cit., pp. 219-221, 201-211. Steenson, op.cit., pp. 201-211. Leopold H. Haimson (ed.): *The Mensheviks: From the Revolution of 1917 to the Second World War*, Chicago & London 1974, pp. 18-9, 26-7, 128-134, 364-388. Israel Getzler: *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat*, Cambridge 1967, pp. 101-2

<sup>58</sup> Leo Trotzki: *Geschichte der russischen Revolution I*, Trotzki 1973 [1930], pp. 14-5; '1905' (1909). Trotsky: *1905*, Harmondsworth 1973 [1909], pp. 21-41. Trotsky: *The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects*,

Trotsky re-introduces the element of contingency and historical openness insisted upon by Marx.<sup>59</sup> A parallel development can be seen in the political and social thought of Lenin from circa 1915 on, revising his pre-First World War conception of the history and the revolution.<sup>60</sup>

However, with the Stalinist bureaucratization and stifling of the revolutionary dynamics in the Soviet Union, a new form of Marxism developed that, in some ways, was closer to classical bourgeois epochal apologetics than Second International Marxism ever was. With the establishment of a Stalinist discourse from the 1920's onwards, Marxism was transformed from a critique into an ideology of state legitimization.

Some theoretical and conceptual consequences of this can be seen in Stalin's main doctrinal statement, the section 'On Dialectical and Historical Materialism' within the *Short Course*-history of the Soviet Communist Party. Here we have the canonical statement of the five-stage one-way theory of history so often associated with Marxism as such: History is conceived as an evolutionary process proceeding through "die Produktionsverhältnisse der Urgemeinschaft, der Sklaverei, des Feudalismus, des Kapitalismus, des Sozialismus".<sup>61</sup> This is central to Stalinist doctrines. Thus, in a dictionary of historical terms issued in the GDR we find the following definition of "Geschichte":

Werdegang in Natur und Gesellschaft; im besonderen: der objektive, einheitliche, trotz seiner Vielfalt gesetzmäßige Entwicklungsprozeß der menschlichen Gesellschaft vom Niederen zum Höheren, vom Entstehen des Menschengeschlechts bis zur Gegenwart. Die G. vollzieht sich auf der Grundlage objektiver Gesetzmäßigkeiten.<sup>62</sup>

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New York 1969 [1906, 1930]. Cf. also Löwy, op.cit., and Denise Avenas: *Economie et politique dans la pensée de Trotsky*, Paris 1970

<sup>59</sup> Also, Marx's and Engels's own analyses of Russian society are in some respects closer to Trotsky's framework than to that of Plekhanov, which they criticized for that same reason. Cf., e.g., Friedrich Engels: 'Flüchtlingsliteratur. V. Soziales aus Rußland' (1875), *Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. 18, pp. 565, 556, and Baron 1963, pp. 67-8, 123.

<sup>60</sup> This can be seen both at a theoretical level, in his studies on dialectics, and at a practical-political level. Cf. Lenin: *Philosophical Notebooks*, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 38, Moscow 1976; Slavoj Žižek (ed.): *Lenin: Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917*, London 2004; Kevin Anderson: *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*, Urbana & Chicago 1995; Michael Löwy: 'From the "Logic" of Hegel to The Finland Station in Petrograd', *Critique*, No. 6, 1976, pp. 5-16.

<sup>61</sup> Stalin: *Fragen des Leninismus*, Moskva 1943, p. 638, cf. also pp. 638-641

<sup>62</sup> *Wörterbuch der Geschichte*, 2 vols. Berlin 1983, Vol. 1, p. 367

History is presented here as an objective pattern of development according to invariable laws, and communism is seen as the final stage in this development, unfolding with necessity.<sup>63</sup> Once again, the end of History is situated in the present society, *in casu* ‘really existing socialism’, thus eradicating perspectives of further revolutions and mass-scale social agency.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, within the socialist and communist critique of the bourgeois or capitalist epoch we find basically two types of approach to revolution, history and agency: one in which the exact form of agency within the framework of a concretely analyzed totality is crucial, leading towards a future basically open in character; and another, in which History is one objective pattern of development, progressing towards a specified future *telos*. Paradoxically, the latter conception seems to be the closest to both Soboul’s, Furet’s and Fukuyama’s conceptions of the objectivity of historical development.

### **No future? On the enclosures of History and revolution**

Thus, conceptions of World History are inextricably tied to conceptions of the present and the future, to political and social conceptions and to conceptions of socio-historical agency. And the understanding of history and revolutionary agency is tied to the waves of revolution itself, as an expression of the historical self-image of engaged spectators.

Francis Fukuyama’s claims about the End of History are tied to conceptions of History, revolution and agency basic to modern liberalist ideas with a significantly longer ancestry. This can be illustrated by the example of François Furet’s earlier revisionist interpretation of the French Revolution as a cycle definitively closed in the post-Second World War period through what he considers to be a successful integration of individual rights and state authority securing the stability of the social order. Like Fukuyama’s approach, this interpretation implies a closure of history with the establishment of stable capitalist democracies.

Neither of these arguments, however, are particularly novel. They constitute recent additions to recurring debates on the character of revolution and World History. This can be seen in some of the earliest uses of the concept ‘revolution’ to describe

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. “Kommunismus” in *Wörterbuch...*, Vol.1, pp. 591-2

<sup>64</sup> This was epitomized in November 1936 when Stalin proclaimed: “Also ist bei uns die erste Phase des Kommunismus, der Sozialismus, im wesentlichen bereits verwirklicht.” Stalin, *op.cit.* p. 592

social rebellion and change, namely, contemporary interpretations of the English Revolution 1640-60. The Earl of Clarendon, writing in the 1660's, uses the concept in its original sense of 'rotating' in describing the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 as a 'revolution'. This does not yet associate the term with macro-historical progressive development, but it does associate it with a positive evaluation of a social event. In the contemporary analysis of James Harrington, the term is even naturalized to describe a change towards new political forms, corresponding to changes in social property.

Only with the Enlightenment development of histories of civilization and with the experience of the French Revolution in 1789 does 'revolution' become systematically conceptualized as both a singular event and as an integral part of the general development of civilization towards perfection. This is expressed in the contemporary interpretations of the revolution by Antoine de Barnave and Pierre-Louis Roederer, respectively, applying general notions of history and civilization developed by Enlightenment historians and thinkers, especially Adam Smith, John Millar and Turgot.

In the writings of the moderate Liberal historians of the 1820's onwards, this view of the French Revolution is coupled with new concepts of collective social agency, through the development of the concept of class struggle. This ties concepts of World History, revolution and agency together in a much clearer way than anything before. Still, however, class struggle and revolution are explanatory features of the past leading towards the redemption of the present, and as such they can be integrated within the normative framework. But any revolution and class struggle beyond what Guizot considers to be the 'principles of 1789', that is, beyond constitutional monarchy and a strictly censured franchise, can no longer be legitimate, nor lead to further advances of civilization. In effect, Guizot claims for the July Monarchy established in 1830 what Furet claims for Post-World War France: World History is over, revolution is over, macro-historical agency can exist no more

Increasingly throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, socialist critics develop conceptions of World history and Revolution as transcending the present epoch. This can be seen in the development of Marxism, though this in itself contained a dual potential. One was leading to a conception of history as radically open (Marx himself). The other was leading to a conception of history as a closed, linear movement towards a fixed *telos* situated in a definite model of communist society (Second International Marxism, Stalinism). Thus, some versions of Marxism, at least,

pointed towards a new closure of the interrelated conceptions of World History, revolution and social agency.

Rather than really novel or anti-determinist views, Fukuyama's and Furet's proclamations of an end to History and an end to Revolutions signify returns to pre-Marxist *closed* views of historical time as culminating in the bourgeois and capitalist present. Any notion of large-scale subjectivity transcending the present is proclaimed an aberration, an 'illusion' as François Furet termed 20<sup>th</sup> century communism.

As such, we may term their views ideologies in the true analytical sense of that word: not as factually wrong or as false representations of reality, but as pictures of the whole distorted through a partial perspective. Viewed in this way, their analyses of a revolutionary challenges as aberrations reflect a generalization of a number of particular experiences to the level of universality: the generalization of self-proclaimed, bureaucratic 'actually existing socialism' as socialism *tout court*, thus denigrating socialism as achieved through the struggles of the working class and other repressed groups; the generalization of a jubilant conservative politician *anno* 1990 as the true fate of History as such, thus denigrating the persistence of opposition. These generalizations have real and socio-historical foundations within the experience of a particular generation, but as a totalization it is premature.

Fukuyama's and Furet's conclusions, then, are but recent contributions to a continuing struggle over concepts and mentalities between conservative, apologetics of the existing capitalist social system and the revolutionary struggle for future alternatives. And though it was dominant during the first few decades of its existence, this is still less than the French restorationists could claim for their ending of History – or what Stalin proclaimed for his ending of History, of revolutionary agency. This, of course, still does not itself prove either analysis of the prospects of 21<sup>st</sup> century revolutionary change right or wrong in a factual sense. But by relativizing Fukuyama's or Furet's perspectives historically we may at least claim that their diagnoses are open to future challenges.

This leads to further considerations: If liberal democracy itself is a part of revolutionary history, then even if socialist utopias are rejected or dismissed as unrealistic, it is perhaps not credible that liberal democracy itself can persist without such a utopia and without the conception of a social agent capable of bringing it about. Thus, the perpetuation of the 'here and now' advocated by Fukuyama and Furet may be impossible without the conception of the 'beyond' with which it was connected. If this 'beyond' was the dream of a society of individuals unrestrained by

the structural determinants of capitalist market society, then can these determinants be resisted, or even moderated, without the perspective of a post-capitalist ‘beyond’, without the perspective of possible revolution? It is at least quite credible that, as Moses Hess retorted to conservative critics in 1841, the end result of trying to create a society beyond capitalism, though risk-ridden, is preferable to the dangers facing us if we timidly try to stop history in this capitalist epoch:

Das zukunfftige Werk der Liebe wird, wie jedes frühere, wie die französische Revoluton, das Christenthum u.s.w., Ausartungen unterworfen sein, aber der Weltgeist ist nicht so dumm, durch Stillstand oder Ängstlichkeit dem Bösen noch leichteres Spiel zu machen.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Hess: ‘Die europäische Triarchie’, in Hess, *op.cit.*, p. 156