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CAPITALISM IS ENDING, BUT “PREHISTORY” IS NOT?

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Abstract. This article attempts to answer the question: is the description of Modernity in terms of “capitalism” justified? The author shows that during the history of the 20th-21st centuries, the pictures of capitalism drawn by theorists got more and more atypical elements. Among these are the theories of imperialism, dependent development, a single industrial society, and especially the world-system analysis. Also noteworthy is the description “modern” applied to the societies of this period. A situation has arisen where many phenomena fit into the concept of “capitalism”, or “capitalism with numerous prefixes”. Thus, “capitalism” in various guises becomes “too much”. Eventually, capitalism itself has come down to the universal phenomena of violence, inequality and exploitation. The productivity of discussing modernity in a paradigm revolving around the notion of “capitalism” is becoming less and less obvious. Too wide range of practices has become associated with “capitalism with prefixes”, which forced a number of researchers to refuse to identify modernity with capitalism in favor of various concepts based on retro-metaphors (“neo-feudalism”). Numerous concepts of “post-capitalism” have also emerged. The author substantiates that at the theory layer, the difference between the types of what is still interpreted as “capitalism” or already as “post-capitalism” does not have a qualitative character. Of all the aforesaid, the marxian concept of human “prehistory” becomes relevant as a more universal paradigmatic frame for comprehending modern trends. Therefore, the concept of communism will still remain a worldview horizon that gives a meaning to this “prehistory”. In a situation where capitalism ends, but “prehistory” does not, this will make it possible to single out social relations that determine the “prehistory” nature by themselves, and not through the prism of denouncing or apologizing (which is “capitalism” initially) of their political discourses.

Keywords: capitalism, socialism, post-capitalism, “human prehistory”, Marxism.

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КАПИТАЛИЗМ ЗАКАНЧИВАЕТСЯ, А “ПРЕДЫСТОРИЯ” – НЕТ?

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Аннотация. Предпринимается попытка ответа на вопрос: оправданно ли описание Современности в категориях “капитализма”? Показывается, что по мере развертывания истории XX–XXI вв. в рисующих теоретиками картинах капитализма становилось все больше не типично капиталистических элементов. Поэтому становится актуальной Марксова концепция человеческой “предыстории” как более универсальная парадигмальная рамка для осмысления современных тенденций. Это позволит выделить определяющие ее характер общественные отношения сами по себе, а не таким образом, каким они выглядят через призму обличающих или апологизирующих их политических дискурсов.

Ключевые слова: капитализм, социализм, посткапитализм, “человеческая предыстория”, марксизм.

MODERNITY = CAPITALISM?

Since the defeat of “real socialism”, the “end of history” has come only halfway: liberalism has not achieved a global triumph, but the understanding of

Modernity as “capitalism” has remained predominant. Theoretical prerequisites for understanding the social evolution of humankind (social progress) are still, to a great extent, based on ideal-typical ideas of

capitalism¹ shaped in the time of Marx and Weber. According to the latter, capitalist socio-economic relations were the basis of Modernity; previous exploitation practices were based on backward “non-economic” coercion, while capitalism eliminates them, replacing them with “economic” coercion, not concealed by moralistic hypocrisy. Despite the growth of economic inequality inherent in capitalism, in many other respects (in particular, racial and gender ones), it radically equalizes people. Ideal-typical capitalism is the realm of almost exclusively “economic coercion”, while still existing practices of unfree labor, as well as relationships based on different types of inequality and oppression dating back to antiquity, are not typical and doomed to disappear.

However, as the history of the 20th-21st centuries unfolded, the pictures of capitalism drawn by theorists included more and more of those not typically capitalist elements.

Theorists of imperialism, in many respects, proceeded from the fact that on a local social and global scale, relationships associated more with “eternal” plots of domination and subordination rather than with relatively recent bourgeois ideas of capital, private property, and exploitation, begin to play an increasingly important role. This was promoted by the merging of capital with the national state and the ever-increasing militarization, which resuscitated almost medieval notions of decent citizens and patriots [1, p. 221].

Theories of dependent development and world-system analysis also contributed to changing ideas about the nature of capitalism and its place in the history of social relations. According to world-system analysis, a socio-historical formation exists only in the totality of countries and regions. This means that even in its “centers”, the unfolding formation is both burdened by “relics of the past” and at the same time inherits and multiplies the advantages resulting from this past in the form of different kinds of accumulated resources available to the elites (and not only them). This implies that in advanced countries, capitalism is advanced precisely because it builds on the advantages achieved within the framework of the pre-capitalist past which remain as constitutive factors in the present.

¹ The distinctive features of the latter usually include the bourgeoisie’s desire to increase its profits, which is the main motive for the expanded reproduction of capital; the domination of commodity-money relations, that is, the commodity market. The necessary feature of capitalism is constantly deepening alienation generated by the very mechanism of buying/selling labor power and the domination of commodity production.

The picture of ideal-typical capitalism eroded even more due to the emergence of theories of a single industrial society, which united both Soviet socialism and Western capitalism into one category. Ideas of a single post-industrial society also appeared, in particular, the theory of Bell, as well as the concepts of the Frankfurt School theorists, assuming that “the further development of capitalism will generate motives and needs incompatible with its social organization” [2, p. 95]. However, within the framework of the Frankfurt School, there was also a theory of “negative convergence”, which turned out to be more realistic. Its representatives (Heilbroner, Marcuse, Habermas), contrary to the supporters of “positive convergence”, believed that, most likely, there would be the assimilation of “the negative phenomena of the opposed system that it had already managed to overcome (egoistic individualism in the stage of ‘wild’ capitalism) or is itself experiencing (corruption, excesses of mass culture)” [3, p. 36].

Another side of the same process was that instead of capitalism, “Modernity” attracted more and more attention. However, the focus on Modernity led to the recognition that in modern societies (especially in conditions of “multiple modernity” [4]), new forms of oppression were found alongside liberation. It turned out that many emancipatory promises of Modernity remained unfulfilled due to the natural resistance to the legacy of the past. There appeared reasons to believe that these promises could not be fulfilled since the very nature of Modernity was not quite correctly understood, its emancipatory potential was overestimated, and the role of various “relics of the past” was underestimated. This encouraged some authors to study the hidden disciplinary practices of Modernity, to raise the issues of unstable coexistence and the constant struggle between capitalism and autonomy, to consider Modernity a field of constant tension, structured between the demands of emancipation and true forms of life, on the one hand, and rational domination, on the other, speaking even about “the self-annulment of Modernity in and through its own practices” [5, pp. 45-46]. Finally, in the paradigm of Modernity, capitalism began to be identified with “modernity” and “economy,” and capitalist relationships with dominant social bonds.

Capitalism was considered the only true “economy”, and everything along with and apart from it was treated as the area of “irrationality” and “culture”. At the same time, the “economy” was separated from “culture” for a long time, since it was viewed as the area of rational choice contributing to making the most effective decisions (while culture was treated

as the area of irrationality). When this paradigm was called into question, it turned out that what was treated as “irrational” culture was also rationality, resulting in “efficiency”, which has not lost its significance to this day. In modern economic science, the model of the most efficient economy, which corresponds to a single efficient culture (“many combinations of institutional parameters”, among which there is “only one optimal combination” [6, p. 369]), is opposed to a model with a “many vertices”, in which “each culture is associated with a result that is optimal according to its own criteria” [6, p. 370], with “subjective well-being”, meaning “an assessment of how people in different societies have achieved the goals that are close to them” [6, p. 372]. However, were the economic models “with many vertices” still capitalist (“optimal” and “efficient”), or not? In any case, *the initially “capitalist” concept of efficiency began to work against the paradigm of capitalism as a comprehensive description of the economic aspect of Modernity*. Taking into account that Modernity was not clearly detached from capitalism and it was not clear what was a deviation from Modernity and what was its continuation, those who “shot” at Modernity actually hit capitalism, making the ideas of capitalism more and more vague.

The change of ideas about the nature of capitalism was also greatly influenced by the fact that in the second half of the 20th century, the capital was largely “tamed”, being limited both by the practices of “real socialism” and by the activities of the “welfare state”. One of the consequences was the development of a “sluggish” “theory of capitalism without capital capable of actions”, the theory representing capital exclusively as a “workhorse” [2, p. 97]. This degeneration of capitalism in theory was the result of excluding capital from its political moment, its “pre-capitalist” connection with power, influence, and everything that gives it the impetus for action and expansion. However, it is tamed capitalism with “workhorse” capital that many researchers treat as capitalism of the “golden age” and describe as “functional” (that is, coping with its economic and social tasks and being balanced), while capitalism of the post-Fordist epoch is viewed as dysfunctional.

Under dysfunctional capitalism, businesses need fewer and fewer people, and those who are still needed are transferred to various forms of temporary employment; capitalism turns “from productive into rent-based, when wealth is not produced through investment in people, technology, and infrastructure, but is extracted in different ways (often fraudulent) by large corporations and financial institutions”

[7, p. 84]. Modern digital capitalism is described as one that “has found a way to turn ‘leisure time’ into production unnoticed by people”, it “can force us to produce even when we strive to free ourselves from any activity by any means, alienating our very free time *par excellence* not in a way leisure practices do” [8, p. 55], since participation in the network is also a production that cannot be avoided. It is noted that capitalism has evolutionarily mutated to such a degree that it no longer makes any sense to describe its current state as a dysfunction, when, according to Graeber, people are not engaged in work at all at their workplaces. This is the normal state of capitalism (*still capitalism!*), which “is changing, adapting to new social and technological conditions” [9, p. 215].

TOO MUCH CAPITALISM

The above introduction, which is far from providing full coverage of the issue, makes it possible to conclude the following. In the current situation, a lot of the most recent and not only new phenomena are by the force of habit adjusted to the concept of **capitalism or capitalism with numerous prefixes**. Whatever new social phenomenon is discovered, it can always be viewed as evidence of the radical diversification of the capitalist mode of production, when its area begins to include previously uncaptialized areas of human existence, for example, when the family turns into a business project, etc. [10]. Thus, there becomes “too much” “capitalism” in various guises, and this allows us to suppose that the problem is not always about capitalism itself. For example, when “cognitive capital” (and, correspondingly, “cognitive capitalism”) was discovered, it was also found that the newest capitalism, not being able to establish effective control over the newest production relations, seeks to compensate for this by inventing new forms of control over the workers themselves. Modern capitalism encourages “being in the flow”, in creative ecstasy stimulating work and yielding profit. However, this is not only a characteristic of capitalism. Rather, on the contrary, anti-capitalist criticism at one time focused on the fact that capitalism destroys it all, and levels it down, subordinating everything to “hard cash”. It is now revealed that capitalism encourages wherever possible the creation of such “zones” of labor “in its idealized artisanal forms” [11, p. 258], “because only by giving people ‘free’ time and space to create new and ‘authentic’ goods can any future income be expected”. Another example is the notion that “capital is constitutively plural in the sense that it feeds on heterogeneous forms of labor and production... Capi-

tal is a social relation, or rather, an antagonistic social relation” [12, p.128].

This universality of the concept of capital makes it, first, an abstract “value for various forms of production” and, second, an equally abstract “antagonistic social relationship”. Thus, capital turns into a kind of pinnacle, a general concept, an attitude that gives a form and “rank” to the previous forms of social relations that are in one way or another antagonistic. Besides, both the old and the new spirits of capitalism imply a number of practices that cannot be reduced to the ideal-typical impersonal relationship between the seller and the buyer of labor power. The features of patriarchy and clientelism, clearly present in early capitalism, do not disappear completely; moreover, they are often harnessed for the benefit of capitalism. Along with this, modern capitalism, with its precarization, freelancing, deindustrialization, institutional consequences of bohemian criticism, etc., results in relations that also cannot be reduced to ideal-typical capitalism either, hence the fact that they are often considered as exceeding the limits of capitalism.

Since more and more phenomena that do not comply with the ideal-typical understanding of capitalism become the focus of attention, it is concluded that capitalism is on the decline and all that is needed is a deliberateness to formalize this decline politically and organizationally. Some newly shaped approaches, in fact, consider an increasing number of new social phenomena as being already outside capitalism, and surplus to it. From this perspective, new phenomena can equally be understood as evidence of the degradation of capitalism, as signs of its renewal (by returning to “non-economic” forms of coercion, capitalism once again reveals its true predatory nature), and as precursors of the future.

One way or another, in a situation when, “on the one hand, the capitalist elites have achieved unprecedented power in history, and on the other hand, capitalism itself has turned out to be more groundless than ever” [13], the fruitfulness of discussing modernity in a paradigm revolving around the concept of “capitalism” is becoming less and less evident.

Those who are disillusioned have reason to believe that all versions of Marxism in the last 50–70 years have turned out to be susceptible to the tricks of the devil called “capitalism”, agreeing that capital is eternal and there is nothing but eternal capitalism. At the same time, there is perhaps no capitalism at all, but there is, for example, vectorialism, which has replaced the dead capitalism and is something worse than it [14]. Hence, it is natural that a number of

newly emerging concepts no longer describe modernity as capitalism. Such concepts become relevant when one reveals in modernity “a situation of coexistence of various modes of power and production, in particular capitalist and feudal, when feudal relations of personal dependence help to create conditions for capitalist production and aggravate capitalist exploitation” [15, pp. 103-104]. At the same time, Dean notes that “this does not mean that the capitalist relations of production and exploitation no longer exist. This means that other aspects of capitalist production – expropriation, domination, and power – have become so essential that any talk about the fiction of free and equal players encountered in the labor market is meaningless today” [15, p. 112]. Dean is not alone: during the coronavirus pandemic, according to Varoufakis, “liberated from competition, colossal platform companies, such as Amazon, coped surprisingly well with the collapse of capitalism, replacing it with something resembling techno-feudalism” [16]. Kotkin also writes about the advent of neo-feudalism; his often biased but witty analysis reveals feudal-like changes in the structures and practices of contemporary societies. The coming new feudalism will be a fancy combination of new technologies, the idea of social hierarchy as the natural order of things, and the rejection of liberal dynamism and intellectual pluralism [17].

When evaluating these theories, a characteristic similarity can be noted: they describe a world in which the elite, preserving continuity with the capitalist elite, is ready to reject the pursuit of profit as a characteristic feature of capitalism, but “under no circumstances will give up power” [18]. Finally, as aptly noted, “what the most radical criticism of capitalism grasps – for example, the alienation of the fruits of labor from their creators and the growing accumulation of this resource separated from them in some remote reservoirs – is also found in such contexts which are not taken into account by the definition of capitalism through a list of signs: in other economic systems – Soviet ‘state capitalism’ – or other areas of human relations – as relations of violence, trust, or knowledge”. In this context, capitalism is reduced to the “production of inequality”, and society is described as a bundle of various “economic relationships”, some of which are “capitalist”, while others are not [19, pp. 88-89].

This “capitalism”, which is already excessively broad and vaguely understood, is contrasted with the equally vague “post-capitalism”, a term that focuses more on the internal transformations of the capitalist system, gradually regenerating into something differ-

ent, but not yet completely going beyond the limits of the existing system [20]. Neoliberal and libertarian masterminds have long been adding fuel to the fire; they complain that “capitalism” itself has long been on the decline or has completely died, without ever having realized all its possibilities of progress, emancipation, and raising the level of public morality [21]. At the same time, they point to abundant facts of oppression, inequality, and exploitation in modern societies, which would not exist if capitalism were not prevented from developing freely; they say that the modern West needs something like a new Reformation, which would increase the share of competitiveness, individuality, and propensity for self-expression in its culture [22, pp. 10-11].

The above-described situation in the field of theory has quite obvious political and ideological consequences. First of all, in societies permeated with various non-capitalist forms of exploitation, oppression, and inequality (including in the form of “post-capitalism” [23]), theories have gained popularity according to which modern capitalism is capitalism “spoiled” by non-capitalist, and sometimes straightforwardly pre-capitalist practices. Therefore, it needs treatment to return to the lost norm. In other words, ideal-typical capitalist relations can currently serve as a utopia for some social groups. From the same perspective, the rise of intersectionalism is also not accidental. (By intersectionalism, the author of this paper means a wide variety of political trends proceeding from the idea that in modern societies, the degree of oppression and inequality is determined by the “intersection” of class, race, gender, and other factors [24, pp. 391-397]). The worldview of its political activists proceeds from the division of any oppression into “modern” (capitalist) and “rooted in antiquity” – patriarchal, racial, gender, etc. Therefore, as noted earlier, “the activity of intersectionalists is actually reduced to attempts to bring capitalism to a complete utopian form. It is revealing that in this their activity coincides with the aspirations of neoliberal reformers, who point to the not yet exhausted emancipatory potential of “pure capitalism” and its moral advantages over various kinds of “archaism and barbarism” [25, p. 46].

It should be noted that representatives of intersectionalism in a number of issues turn out to be more in line with the spirit of modernity than Marxist and other left-wing orthodox thinkers. These “applied postmodernists” [26, pp. 35-36] rely upon the understanding of modernity as the quintessence of all preceding antagonistic relations that remain within it, instead of repeating mantras about the basics and

superstructure and capitalism, the end of which is harder to imagine than the end of the world [27]. (Of course, it is hard to escape the impression that the early intersectionalists look more adequate than modern ones, since, having revealed previously neglected problems, they did not have enough time to draw conclusions reduced to absurdity. However, the problem is that so far, only “applied postmodernists” managed to turn this ideology into a sufficiently influential political force).

STILL “CAPITALISM” OR AGAIN PREHISTORY?

In one way or another, the boundary between capitalism, “non-capitalism” and post-capitalism is erased both actually and theoretically. Descriptions of modernity with all its multifarious relationships (including clearly non-capitalist ones in the classical sense) raise the question: why is it still called capitalism, even if it is dysfunctional, inclusive, etc.?

Proceeding from the foregoing, it becomes reasonable to treat capitalism as one of the systems of relations, which at a certain moment reaches dominance and uses the preceding methods of political and other coercion as universal. In other words, capitalist relations originate from pre-capitalist ones, not completely renouncing them, but rather continuing them. Lachmann notes that “today we still fight the institutions that Florentine patricians, Dutch oligarchs, Spanish conquistadors, French and English landowners, merchants and bureaucrats created to preserve the privileges they achieved as a result of elite conflicts. We will understand our own social reality and recognize the possibilities to remake our own world when we understand the processes by which elites and classes overcame old limitations and created new ones, which have made them and made us reluctant capitalists” [28, p. 431].

It makes sense to assume that for the appearance of societies in which capitalism acquired a dominant role in a certain period, it is no less important what role the “reluctant capitalists” **agreed to play voluntarily**. Traditionally, pre-capitalist relations were considered the rudiments of past times, something existing in the pores of the capitalist mode of production, parasitizing on them (in this way, for example, Marx understood usury [29, p. 623]), or, on the contrary, entirely subordinated to capitalism. An alternative view assumes that in the history of class-antagonistic societies, such relations *are doomed to be reproduced also in the stages following those in which they emerged*. Indirect evidence of the recognition of this point of

view is the growing interest in the issues of neopatrimonialism, clientelism, and rent. Currently, one is encountered with combinations of various practices of inequality and exploitation, relationships established with respect to knowledge and trust, etc. The configuration of these practices in modern times can be conceptualized as modern capitalism with prefixes or as prerequisites for “post-capitalism”, and “neo-feudalism”. At the same time, it is revealing that even in theory, **the difference between the forms of what is conceptualised as still capitalism or “post-capitalism” is of no qualitative nature**, since it remains within the framework of prehistory. Depending on the degree of benevolence or the intensity of alarmism, the shape of the future appears more or less humane. However, in this future, as a rule, the role of creative labor and the rejection of all other kinds of labor are emphasized; the inevitability of the issue of “superfluous people” is postulated, which will have to be solved either through charity on the part of the “creative class” and building something like quasi-feudal relations or through the introduction of “basic income”, etc.

The above-described theoretical and ideological collisions are not surprising and even logical. They occur because society is coming out of the impact of several theoretical axioms that are the product of the previous epoch. Thus, until recently, it was taken for granted that we lived in the phase of historical development designated as “capitalism”, and that this phase, depending on the theoretician’s ideological preferences, would either last indefinitely or be replaced by “socialism”, and then “communism”. However, this situation could not be preserved since “socialism” (*and it is socialism that is the leading element in this paradigm*) temporarily left the scene as an ideology and a social order. The collapse of “socialism” in practice and its discrediting in theory also hit “capitalism”, since the latter acquired the lion’s share of its meaning in opposition to socialism.

The concept of “capitalism” was rather vague and not scientific. It was first (in the second half of the 19th century) clearly articulated and formulated as an antithesis and, in part, an alternative to “socialism” in the conditions of modern societies. At the same time, socialism, even in much later definitions, was opposed **not only to capitalism but in general to any relations of inequality and exploitation** existing in the history of human societies. For example, according to Lenin, “socialism is the protest and struggle against the exploitation of the working population, the struggle aimed at the complete elimination of this exploitation” [30, p. 281]; socialism is the complete liberation of the working population from all

political and economic oppression; it “involves the elimination of the commodity exchange economy” [31, p. 127]; it is “such a social order in which there will be no poverty of the masses, there will be no exploitation of man by man” [32, p. 202]. Socialism was understood as a society in which there is no exploitation of man by man, inequality, private property, etc., that is, as a world-building project confronting the entire prehistory of humankind as a whole. Correspondingly, capitalism first appeared on the stage as a utopian alternative to this project, the goal of which was to harness existing relations of exploitation and inequality for the benefit of progress. Capitalism was an idealization of a certain part of relations existing within the framework of prehistory, which acquired strength in relatively recent times by historical standards. In particular, Schäffle, according to Naumova and Sokolov, “creates a rather idyllic ‘picture’ quite in the spirit of non-twentieth century utopians... a ‘bucolic landscape’ having nothing to do with what was (and, it should be added, what will be). The argument is the ‘naturally fair nature of the development of capitalism’ (but not reality), associated with industrial progress (endowed with a priority status), where everyone’s work is a contribution to the common ‘coin-box’, the degree of fullness of which inevitably leads to an increase in the degree of social tenderness and peacefulness. Touched Schäffle substantiates the thesis that liberal *capitalism is the best form of socialism* (italics added. – L.F.) [33, p. 37]. Ultimately, ‘capitalism’ does not envision any strict ‘phenomenological fixation’ or correlation with the facts of reality... In this respect, it functions – and successfully functions! – along with equally ‘empty’ terms-concepts of the last two and a half centuries, such as ‘human’, ‘progress’, ‘class struggle’, ‘economy’, etc.” [34, pp. 34-35].

Therefore, it is not surprising that Marx, who for many is a model of scientific rigor, did not use this concept, although it emerged in his time. Marx dwelled upon human history, alienation, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and capital. However, Marx’s discourse did not revolve around “capitalism”, which was primarily an ideological phenomenon, a utopia of a harmonious, self-regulating, and self-transparent market society [34]. The same is true for “socialism”, which for Marx and Engels was a kind of doctrine, partly existing within the framework of existing relations of inequality and exploitation (including bourgeois relations but not limited to them), partly a reaction to them, which appealed both to abstract considerations of social justice and to

pre-bourgeois ideas about a life worthy of a person². Thus, in the paradigm of Marx's view of history, the link of "capitalism/socialism" was secondary, ideologically and phenomenologically located "inside" what he considered human prehistory.

THE END OF "CAPITALISM" IS NOT THE END OF HISTORY

For Marx, prehistory was an "economic formation" that included everything from slavery to the bourgeois order. In prehistory, one can see, on the one hand, people's attitude toward nature and property as a means of producing themselves; the attitude toward oneself is mediated by the necessary conditions of such production – the community, the deity, the ruler, etc., on the other hand, there are relations when conditions of reproduction and production of some people become others, that is, when the workers themselves are reduced to the position of natural objects (like slaves, serfs) or are required as such not even completely, impersonally, partially – in the form of "labor" [36, p. 488]. All this presupposes some forms of coercion, more or less undisguised violence.

Kondrashov and Lyubutin note that "the period of prehistory is characterized by dominance, even almost total domination, of such a form of activity as *work*". The latter is characterized by the alienation of its results from their producer; the process of work is "*forced (distressful)*" and is opposed by Marx to "*purposeful activity*" (*labor*), which "does not tolerate any coercion and slavery" [37, pp. 53-54]. The manufacturing of products of daily necessity in prehistory is carried out "in the form of forced and coercive (repressive) activity" [37, p. 55]. Alienation inherent in prehistory manifests itself "in the form of actual everyday hunger, suffering, mutual indifference, and hatred" [37, p. 65]. Following the above-mentioned authors, one should pay attention to the universally repressive side of the "economic" formation, which only in the utopia of capitalism is presented as something detached from violence. In fact, Marx does not draw a clear line between "economic" and "non-economic" coercion, since both coexist within the "economic formation", which is violent and coercive by definition. Exaggerating, one can say that the "economy" is "violence" and coercion, in the same

² The attitude of Marx and Engels toward socialism is comprehensively set forth in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, which shows the almost complete causation of socialism by the existing feudal and bourgeois worldview horizon, due to which it has either an openly reactionary, or conservative-bourgeois, or utopian character [35].

way as everything that remains within the "realm of necessity" is violence and coercion.

It should also be noted that relying upon such an understanding of prehistory to designate alternating "stages of social evolution", no matter how many there are, Marx deliberately resorted to the metaphor of "formation", referring to geological formations. This metaphor implies that the relations that preceded capitalism do not disappear and do not lose their significance, remaining the basis of new versions of social order based on different combinations of relations of inequality, violence, and exploitation. The meaning of the phrase: "the bourgeois social formation brings to an end the prehistory of human society" [38, pp. 8-9] currently can be understood as the fact that bourgeois relations are the last of the types of relations that are essentially possible within the framework of prehistory. This means rather not their elimination when they are no longer dominant, but their new combinations with other types of relationships built on inequality, violence, and exploitation. Since today, there are no solid grounds to assume that inequality, exploitation, violence, and alienation have disappeared from modern societies, and at the same time, it is already difficult to qualify these societies without far-fetched conclusions as exclusively "bourgeois" or "capitalist", we find ourselves in a situation when "capitalism" ends, but "prehistory" does not.

In this context, the return to Marx is a return to the development of theoretical optics, by means of which it will become possible to highlight, at the next stage of "prehistory", the social relations that determine its character by themselves, and not in the way they look through the lens of accusing, apologizing or even institutionalizing and transforming them through political discourse. Anyway, since the essential features and problems of the modern epoch analyzed from the perspective of Marxism are not going to disappear, Marxism will not lose its relevance [39, pp. 80-81].

CONCLUSION

Speaking figuratively, today we find ourselves once more in undifferentiated prehistory with all the accumulated diversity of new and old ways of oppression and inequality. During the last 200 years, a single conceptual label of "capitalism" was attached to this entire complex of phenomena in close dependence on those "socialist" utopias and the political movements inspired by them, which aim at overcoming any social inequality and exploitation. This dependence was not

even always implemented by contradiction: “capitalism” was also initially formulated as a utopia, setting the same goals as “socialism”, but achieving them by other means, which seemed to be better, and more appropriate for human nature. However, the paradigm of socialism and capitalism was relevant as long as it reflected the reality in which the rising and ascending classes acted – the bourgeoisie and proletariat, which determined the political and economic picture of society as a whole. In the conditions of their relative decline, other social groups come to the fore, which are in many respects the products of the disintegration or half-disintegration of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. If they have any utopias, they are much less definite than “capitalism” and “socialism”.

Nevertheless, one can notice some similarities in the way in which contemporary intersectionalism and right-wing and left-wing populist movements perform the functions of socialism of Marxian times, becoming points of crystallization of *one more version of the social order remaining within the limits of human prehistory*. The current epoch is the epoch of the decline of the “labor society” when an ever-increasing part of people lose their actual economic and military value and are forced to be content with “bullshit jobs” [40], in which they become victims of capitalist, non-capitalist, and pre-capitalist forms of oppression and inequality. Owing to the decline in the economic and political value of workers, the legitimate reason for receiving social assistance (which increasingly resembles a set of privileges) is more often the identification of oneself as a victim of any injustice. Thus, in line with identity politics, which is becoming mainstream, many new social groups *define themselves in such a way that society or representatives of other iden-*

tities turn out to be obliged to them simply due to the fact of their existence.

The expansion of the influence of these and similar political forces occurs against the background of the flourishing of various rhetoric of identity, the hidden motives of which are claims for quite material rent. In other words, we are moving toward a society in which the majority of people will need some form of rent (rather than wages or entrepreneurial income) to maintain their subjectivity. As the intersectionalist worldview attitudes are institutionalized, the foreseeable future will bring to the fore different options for their practical implementation. At the same time, conditionally “right-wing” variants of “post-capitalism”, relying upon them, are also being implemented, in which the right to social assistance will be determined according to the previous criteria of national citizenship and cultural identity. Nevertheless, in both “right” and “left” cases, these will be variants of what is called “rent society” [41]. If the hegemony of social strata traditionally possessing property and power persists, one will see a society where the “superfluous” majority will be offered options for spending time in virtual worlds or engaging in narrowly local municipal problems, as well as the equivalent of charity in the form of a “basic income” or its analogues [17, pp. 67-76]. Under other circumstances, there may be attempts to build modern models of “real socialism” with a focus on the development of human potential through creating an economy and technostucture requiring human participation [23]. However, none of the above-described options for solving social problems will go beyond the prehistory of humankind. Therefore, the idea of communism will still remain a worldview horizon giving meaning to this prehistory.

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