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SOVIET MARXISM AND NATURAL SCIENCE 1917-1929. By DAVID JORAVSKY
Columbia University Press, New York 1961

This is quite an excellent book which shows the exact opposite of what is supposed to be the "Leninist" view of philosophy, that is to say, he reveals that "partyism" in Lenin was the exact opposite of what it became under Stalin; that, far from being a monolithism, meant to separate philosophy from the politics of the party.

Also, the disregard for philosophy in the whole of the second international, even in its good days. On p. 16, the author quotes Kautsky, in 1909, holding that "Marx proclaimed no philosophy, but the end of all philosophy."

The references to Plekhanov's interest in the materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries, (p. 20) (Joravsky does sense that the Philosophic Notebooks was quite a new stage, but because of its fragmentary nature considers it "idle speculation" to try to draw conclusions from it. He does, however, on page 21, speak of "Lenin's belief in the ontological significance of his philosophy. (Chapter 1)

Chapter 2. Lenin and the Partyism of Philosophy. On p. 25 the author shows that Partyism that Lenin coined meant no more than class struggle in action.

In 1899, Lenin liked Bogdanov's Work on Philosophy and, in fact thought it was a pseudonym for Plekhanov. Philosophic neutrality continued to be a condition for the unity of the Bolshevik faction. It was only when the Machists, through Gorky, sent in to the paper an article which proclaimed a fight against "philistine materialism", "historical fatalism" against what was needed "a philosophy of activism" that Lenin plunged into philosophy in the fall of 1908 with his Mat. Nap. (p. 23) and on p. 30, the author shows clearly that Lenin "had a political aim in writing the book, but it was not to join the philosophical and political issues that Russian Marxists were arguing about; IT WAS TO SEPARATE THEM."

On p. 47 where part 2, 1917-1929, begins, we get an entirely different concept of the intra party politics and philosophy, with the notation that M.B. Mitin was then (April '29, a Deborinite fighting against the Machists and he quotes Deborin, the early Deborin, on p. 74)

"The stamp of 'subjectivism' and 'voluntarism' lies on all the tactics of so-called Bolshevism, the philosophical expression of which is Machism ... Our Machist-shaped Marxists are conscious Bolsheviks, who 'give meaning' to the practice and tactics of the latter. And Bolshevik tacticians and practical people are unwitting (besoznatel'nye) Machists and idealists."

For our purposes, the important chapter is 5 called the Cultural Revolution and Marxist Philosophers. On (p. 78) begins the question of the level of philosophy, beginning with the new Philosophical Journal, Under the Banner of Marxism, in 1922, was at first not natural science but social and political theory. Lenin's communication was published in the second issue: "Materialism cannot be militant materialism. It will be, not so much the smiter as the smitten. Lenin's communication was called "the significance of militant materialism" and proved to be of critical importance (Collected Works, volume 33, p. 208)

Why not
Name under
Dialectics

On p. 80 the author deals with the whole point of Lenin's Letter which was to grant the Journal "a solid philosophical ground" -- Hegelian Dialectics. It is here that the quotation occurs about the need for "the group of editors and contributors of the magazine under the banner of Marxism should, in my opinion, be a kind of 'Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics'". On the following p. 81 the author notes the formation of an actual society called "Friend of the Hegelian Dialectic"; later it merged with the Society of militant Materialists to become the Society of Militant Materialist Dialecticians (EJ 1928, #12, footnote p. 334)

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83. The author speaks of how difficult it was in those years to get any scientists to work within the Communist Academy's Section of the Natural Sciences and Exact Sciences

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The author also thinks that Lenin's heterodoxy was shown in the fact that Lenin advised the youth to study "everything Plekhanov wrote on Philosophy in for it is the best in all the international literature of Marxism at the very moment" when he was criticising Bukharin's Understanding of Dialectics. A better proof of the heterodoxy, I think, is Lenin's acceptance in the Bolsheviks Vperedists like Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky and Bazarov who were given very high posts, though they never disclaimed their Machism and, of course, Lunacharsky became ~~the~~ Commissar of Education. It was the Bogdanovs who ~~was~~ created the Proletcult which, at first, Lenin tolerated but in May, 1919 declared "merciless hostility" (See New Introduction to Mat. Exp. which was issued on the eve of the Second Congress of Proletcult.) (Bukharin, too, was an admirer of Bogdanov)

Very much
Bukharin

Trotsky, the author shows, (p. 97) was less interested in abstract theory than Bukharin, and his mechanistic outlook was revealed in the one time he was (1925) lecturing on chemistry. On p. 92, the author is good at showing that both Trotsky and Bukharin thought little of Lenin as a philosopher; Trotsky even considered Labargue ahead of Lenin as a source of Marxist philosophy, preferred the Machist to the ~~Bogdanov~~, even after Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks were published -- and they were published during the controversy.

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Draw abstract for 3rd pages
W. P. P.
W. P. P.

The author quotes Bukharin:

"In my view, the relationships of production are the labour co-ordination of people (considered as 'living machines') in space and time. The system of these relationships is as 'psychical' as a system of planets together with their sun. Determinateness of place at each chronological point—that is what makes the system a system."

(Pp. 339 to 340) contain very interesting footnotes to this Chapter 6: (1) regarding Trotsky's resignationism; (2) Stalin's lecture on the Foundations of Leninism in April, 1924, likewise denied that Lenin had a Weltanschauung; (3) Bukharin's admission in his autobiography for Granat about "heretical inclination toward ~~empirio-criticism~~ empirio-criticism" expresses himself also in Ataka, pp. 135-36 but he denies that and in Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks (1933) edition, pp. 431-432; also refers favorably to Bogdanov in his Historical Materialism, pp. 83, 171 and finally in his Economics of the Transition Period, he makes extensive use of Bogdanov's terminology. (4) Daborin was the editor of the great Soviet Encyclopedia but had to approve many mechanistic articles.

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In Chapter 20, ³⁰the Conclusion, the author shows that the first phase of Soviet Marxism did not settle the conflict between Positivism and Metaphysics (within dialectical materialism. The philosophers were exhorted to develop dialectical materialism as an empirical philosophy, the philosophy of practice "that transcends both positivism and metaphysics. But the narrow partyness that triumphed in the great break turned such exhortations into a cruel joke on the philosophers." (p. 311, nb)