

Elena Mareeva presentation: The Paradoxes of Soviet Philosophy – Tribute to Sergei Mareev

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Sergei Nikolaevich was a native Muscovite, although he spent his childhood in the village of Mikhailovskoye near Moscow with his mother's parents. These were the years of the Patriotic War, and people lived in the countryside better (more satisfying) than in the city. Last year, we buried Mareev at the village cemetery of the village of Mikhailovskoye next to his mother. Mother, like himself, loved this "small homeland" of hers.

After serving in the army, Sergei Nikolayevich entered the philosophy faculty of Moscow State University, where from the very beginning he was interested in Marx's Capital and, above all, in his method. Naturally, he could not ignore the works of E.V. Ilyenkov. Mareev met Ilyenkov personally after graduation in 1972. When Sergei Nikolaevich brought his material for his Ph.D. dissertation to Ilyenkov, Ilyenkov offered him a job in the department for the theory of knowledge of the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR. That sector was usually called the "Lektorsky sector" after the name of the head of the sector, Vladislav Aleksandrovich Lektorsky, now an academician, who is still alive and working at the same institute.

Sergei Nikolaevich worked with Ilyenkov for five years and left the Institute of Philosophy after the death of Ilyenkov a few years later to work as a teacher. And a year before their death, the two of them travelled to the Caucasus to Pitsunda and Yerevan. There are photographs of that trip.

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The further we now find ourselves from the Soviet era, the clearer it becomes, what the reality of Soviet socialism was, as it was expressed in the economy, politics and culture. Soviet philosophy, which manifested itself as a node within a global process of philosophical development, is now seen as one of the historical forms of the philosophy of Marxism. And this despite the fact that Karl Marx himself believed that already in the 19th century philosophy as an ideological exhausted its pedagogical possibilities, for Marx considered himself a historian.

After the collapse of the USSR in the post-Soviet space, a polarisation of assessments was observed in relation to Soviet philosophy. On the one hand, many philosophers continued to defend the official Soviet version of the philosophy of Marxism, which consisted of two parts - dialectical and historical material. It was opposed by the anti-Soviet interpretation of Soviet philosophy as an ideology without any theoretical content.

It should be borne in mind that, since the 90s, there has been a mimicry of diamat and historical mathematics in the light of new trends, when the content of dialectical mathematics was presented as modern ontology and theory of knowledge, and historical mathematics was presented as an alleged new social philosophy.

In this context, Sergei Nikolaevich wrote a monograph *From the History of Soviet Philosophy: Lukács-Vygotsky-Ilyenkov*, which was published in 2008 by the publishing house "Cultural Revolution". This was the first experience of analysing dialectical and historical materialism from the standpoint of Ilyenkov and the Ilyenkov school. What Ilyenkov expressed indirectly and wrote in letters to friends, in this book received an open theoretical basis. In his book, Mareev analysed the formation of dialectical and historical materialism in theoretical works and in the education system. He tried to reveal not only the theoretical, but also cultural and socio-political conditions for the establishment of Soviet philosophy.

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This monograph by Mareev consists of two parts. The first part examines the formation of the official version of Soviet philosophy. The second part deals with the formation of an unofficial version of "critical Marxism" in the USSR represented by G. Lukács, L.S. Vygotsky and E.V. Ilyenkov. For Mareev, the line of development of the subject-activity and historical approach to the problem of the essence of man and his thinking was important. For some, it was strange that he built into this evolution both the Hungarian Lukács and the psychologist Vygotsky. But Sergei Nikolayevich devoted a separate monograph to Vygotsky, proving that he was a philosopher of no less magnitude than a psychologist.

A characteristic feature of Soviet philosophy, according to Mareev, was its metaphysics. At the same time, diamat, as Mareev shows, turned out to be an embodied contradiction - a metaphysical form of dialectics itself. Dialectics became a doctrine and lost its critical character. Accordingly, dialectics in official Soviet philosophy ceased to be the "algebra of revolution" (the expression of the Russian philosopher AI Herzen). And in this form, it was quite suitable for the bureaucratic apparatus, which eventually replaced the people's power in the USSR.

Moreover, it was a very abstract theory, which is also characteristic of metaphysical constructions in philosophy. With all the incantations about the critical and revolutionary spirit of Soviet philosophy, this was not true. Ilyenkov called diamat "the dialectic of a boiling kettle." In the work *Dialectical logic. Essays on History and Theory* (1974), he writes that for the supporters of "Diamat", the boiling kettle and the French Revolution have a common nature,

since they supposedly express the law of transition of quantitative changes into qualitative ones. The concrete obeys the abstract here. The three laws of dialectics and categories in the Soviet dialectic, as Mareev shows in his monograph, were turned into the basis of the universe. But philosophy, which is an abstract theory of the world as a whole, here became metaphysics. And this also corresponded to the state of Soviet society, in which alienation had not been overcome.

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Sergei Mareev in his monograph shows how the unified historical materialism of Marx and Engels turned into two materialisms in Soviet philosophy: dialectical materialism - about the foundations of nature and historical materialism - about the foundations of society. Mareev considered the founder of this concept of "two materialisms" G.V. Plekhanov, who was the main authority on Marxist theory in Russia before the 1917 revolution. The fact that he personally met with Engels, discussing with him the peculiarities of Marxist philosophy, "worked" for Plekhanov's authority. According to Mareev, Engels, in his *Dialectics of Nature*, gave rise to the concept of "two materialisms." But this was only a pretext and a negative opportunity, which Plekhanov and his students realised.

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Mareev saw the main drawback of Plekhanov's point of view on the philosophical side of Marxism in the fact that Plekhanov lost its methodological essence. From the method of materialistic dialectics (the core of which is the ascent from the abstract to the concrete), Plekhanov's philosophy of Marxism turns into a "picture of the world" and a doctrine that must be accepted uncritically as the ultimate truth.

Our joint article *Hegelian Dialectics and Soviet Marxism (from Vladimir Lenin to Evald Ilyenkov)* examines in detail the evolution of Lenin's views from *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) to *Philosophical Notebooks* (1914-1916). In 1908, Lenin was still in philosophy following the footsteps of Plekhanov. But during the period of political reaction, he began to study philosophy more seriously, especially the works of Hegel, as a result of which Lenin is already criticising Plekhanov's position. In his *Philosophical Notebooks*, Lenin emphasises dialectics as a method of knowledge and practice, which can be interpreted not only as a criticism of Plekhanov, but also as his own self-criticism.

Ilyenkov never contrasted *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *The Philosophical Notebooks* in Lenin's work. He did not analyse the historical transformation of Lenin's philosophical views. But Ilyenkov, like Mareev, most often quoted the *Philosophical Notebooks*. It can be said that in the *Philosophical*

Notebooks Lenin, relying on Hegel, returns to the understanding of dialectics as the "algebra of revolution."

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In 1938, the Stalinist textbook *A Short Course in the History of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks* contained in Chapter 4 of which the essence of dialectical and historical materialism as a philosophical doctrine in Marxism was outlined. Five forms of movement and 3 laws of dialectics became the basis of the picture of the world in diamat. "Histomat" was interpreted as an extension of dialectical materialism to the understanding of history. Historical mathematics as a separate part of Marxist philosophy was based on the idea of five socio-economic formations. In this form, Marxist philosophy was studied in all higher educational institutions, in the system of party education, in the universities of Marxism-Leninism for decades.

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When analysing the formation of dialectical and historical materialism, Mareev pays special attention to the philosopher A. Deborin, who was a student of Plekhanov. In 2016, materials from the archive of E.V. Ilyenkov were published, which testify to his critical attitude to Deborin's interpretation of dialectics. Prior to that, in the circle of Ilyenkov's followers, there was an opinion that Ilyenkov continued Deborin's line in philosophy. But Mareev in his 2008 monograph, prior to the publication of these archival materials, began to prove that Ilyenkov continued Lenin's line, and Deborin continued Plekhanov's line, and these two lines are opposite in the interpretation of not only dialectics, but also materialism. If in Ilyenkov, following Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, the main philosophical source of Marxism is Hegelian dialectics, then in Plekhanov and his student Deborin the contemplative materialism of L. Feuerbach was decisive in the development of Marxism.

In his 2008 monograph *From the History of Soviet Philosophy* Mareev shows the non-trivial nature of the discussions between Marxist philosophers and natural scientists at the turn of the 1920s-1930s, which are known as discussions of mechanists and dialecticians (Deborinists) in early Soviet philosophy. It was about dialectics as a method of scientific research. Discussions on the same topic will continue during the "thaw" and in late Soviet philosophy with the participation of Ilyenkov and his school.

In the third issue of 2004 in the journal *Voprosy Filosofii* (the renowned Russian journal of philosophy) there is an article by S. Mareev titled *E.V. Ilyenkov and Socialism*, in which he analysed the theme of Ilyenkov's attitude to Soviet power and the experience of building socialism in the USSR. In this article and numerous

interviews about Ilyenkov, Sergei Nikolaevich draws attention to the fact that Ilyenkov experienced the situation with the building of socialism in the USSR as a personal tragedy. In letters to his friend Yuri Andreevich Zhdanov, Ilyenkov points out that in the USSR there was a purely formal, and not real, socialisation of the means of production and all the wealth of society. As a result, private property was replaced by “general private property” represented by the state, which in turn became the prey of the nomenklatura. The main figure in late Soviet society was the official. And the philosophical "bosses" hounded Ilyenkov.

Mareev could by now openly characterise the contradictions of Soviet philosophy, since there was no strict party censorship. But the Soviet civilisation itself is a thing of the past, it has become the property of history. Mareev openly admitted the defeat of socialism in the USSR, but was stoic about it. He regarded the building of socialism in the USSR as an important historical experience and perceived it as a temporary failure on a world-wide scale.