Max Nomad

White Collars & Horny Hands

The revolutionary thought of Waclaw Machajski

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by Black Cat Press

Jan Waclaw Machajski (1866–1926) belongs to the first generation of Marxists to question the teachings of their master. But while other contemporary revisionists were shifting Marxism to the right, towards social reform and class collaboration, Machajski moved to the left, becoming the first to apply Marxism to itself.

Machajski's ideas about a "new class" of technocrats is familiar today in both left and right wing variants. But his concept of Marxism, of socialism in general, as the ideology of a rising managerial elite, has never received the consideration it deserves.

In his writings Machajski stressed that the suppression of private capitalism does not imply the disappearance of the working class as an underclass. The socialization of the means of production through the action of the State merely leads to the creation of a new parasitic layer to consume the surplus value generated by the workers.

Despite his Marxist training, Machajski rejected historicist thinking about "laws of development" of society. Every ruling class – retrograde or progressive – tries to maximize its consumption at the expense of the toilers, he taught, and can only be overthrown through the conscious acts of the oppressed.

Machajski's relation to anarchism is ambiguous. He regarded anarchism as going back to the roots of socialism, before it became corrupted by social scientists. Certainly he owed an unacknowledged debt to Bakunin, who published a critique of State socialism of the Stalinist variety as early as 1873. From anarchosyndicalism he borrowed the concept of the General Strike. But he did not propose the immediate destruction of the State and even went so far as to suggest that the particular form of the State was of no great interest for the working class.

More important than the prefiguring of Machajski's ideas in earlier thinkers is the real phenomenon of anti-intellectualism in working class history. Distrust and hatred of intellectuals can be traced from the origins of the modern proletariat and first took a violent turn during the June days in Paris, 1848, an event which made a great impression on Machajski.

Machajski's theory of the socialist intelligentsia allowed him to understand why socialism had not become strong in the United States. He noted that socialists always struggled harder against absolutism than against capitalist regimes, which they proposed to make more efficient rather than abolish. Since absolutism had never existed in America and there were ample opportunities for aspiring intellectuals, the basis for militant socialism did not exist.

One can also use Machajski's ideas to explain the growth of Marxist-Leninist movements in Third World countries which often have a negligible working class but sizeable numbers of underemployed intellectuals.

In the U.S.S.R. itself, where his ideas were anathema to the ruling circles, his direst predictions came to pass. In fact the evolution of the Soviet Union has seen a faster rate of growth for the intelligentsia than for the working class. According to official figures, the intellectual workers in the U.S.S.R. grew from one million in 1917 to 37 million in 1977. The manual working class increased from 8 million to 73 million over the same period.

A Pole who published his works in Russian in tiny editions, Machajski's writings have never been readily available. In English he is mainly known through the writings of Max Nomad (1881–1973). In the years just before World War I Nomad (his real name was Max Nacht) was one of Machajski's most active followers. (For Nomad's early career, see his delightful memoirs, *Dreamers, Dynamiters, and Demagogues*, New York, 1964.)

The essay reproduced here originally appeared in *The Modern Quarterly* (Fall, 1932) after Nomad had emigrated to the United States. In 1934, following a visit to Machajski's widow, he revised his views somewhat about his former mentor whom he now accused of having dictatorial aspirations. In Machajski's defense it should be noted there is no trace of lusting after power in his writings or in his activities as a revolutionary.

Nomad long outlived the heroic period of his youth although he always retained his sympathy for the "underdogs" along with a cynical view of their self-appointed leaders. His isolated position on the left eventually led to his association with academic social democrats. Thus he ended being patronized by the very elements Machajski so ably exposed.

White Collars & Horny Hands: The Revolutionary Thought of Waclaw Machajski
By Max Nomad

New revolutionary theories are hatched daily in the brains of political malcontents and "cranks." In times propitious for their dissemination these new gospels, if backed by a fascinating personality, occasionally find larger or smaller groups of faithful communicants. Particularly is this so when the old, time-honored, standardized parties or movements of protest show no progress in the way of fulfilling their promises. But more often than not these newer theories find a quiet grave in unread books and pamphlets. As historical curiosities, they are mentioned casually in learned conversation, but no longer seriously discussed. Yet the failure of an idea to get recognition during the lifetime of its originator is not always a proof that there was no inherent merit in it. For it might share the fate of certain purely scientific theories which, having lain hopelessly buried among unread "papers," are sometimes discovered and acclaimed after several decades.

The Russian revolutionary movement of the last two generations has likewise had its nonconformists and heretics. They went their own way outside the beaten paths of the recognized, "legitimate" currents of the native "Populism" (in its various successive forms) of the peasant-loving intelligentsia and of the western Marxism of the educated malcontents, who saw in the industrial workers the lever for over-throwing Tsarism and Europeanizing Russia. Among those "legitimate" currents might also be mentioned the orthodox, "official" communist-anarchism of Peter Kropotkin, which viewed the coming Russian Revolution as nothing but a replica of the great French Revolution.

Those heresies sprang from various sources. Some were the offshoots of the defunct anarchism of Bakunin; another grew out of the Populism of the Social Revolutionaries, and became known as "Maximalism;" and others had their roots in the theories of Karl Marx.

All of these heretics, although speaking theoretically entirely different languages, had one thing in common: they refused to accept the official dictum as to the character of the coming Russian upheaval. In referring to that impending event, both Marxian Social-Democrats and Populist Social-Revolutionists had

in mind exclusively the bourgeois-democratic revolution. If the Social-Democrats sometimes spoke of the "revolution of the proletariat" or the "proletarian revolution," they meant it in a somewhat Pickwickian sense: the fighters of the revolution were to be "proletarians," but the goal was to be democratic, a term which sounded better than "bourgeois." The native "Populists," although chiefly interested in the peasantry, likewise acknowledged the importance of the manual workers in the approaching upheaval. In a discussion between Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, and Tikhomirov, then still the most important mouthpiece of the terrorist "People's Will," there were coined the notable sentences which, almost in a nutshell, reveal the stand taken by the unsophisticated Populists and their more subtle Marxian rivals. Tikhomirov said, "I admit that the proletariat is very important for the revolution." To which Plekhanov replied, "No, the revolution is very important for the proletariat." That was very sharp. But basically the two opponents were in agreement. Only the later Populist deserter to the camp of the Tsarists was more cynical in his readiness to use the workers frankly as a tool for his, the bourgeois revolution; while the later Marxist deserter to the camp of the Russian "bitter-enders," more circumspect, meant to say that the bourgeois revolution was of paramount necessity to the workers themselves. The workers might make their choice . . .

The dissenters went beyond the idea of a mere bourgeois revolution. The unorthodox Anarchists urged a merciless terrorist struggle against the bourgeoisie as well as against the government, with the lofty ideal of "Anarchy" as their immediate aim, incredible as this may sound. They were the romantics of the revolution. The no less heroic, but more reasonable "Maximalists" – the illegitimate sons of the great Social-Revolutionary Party – demanded nationalization of industries immediately after the conquest of power. And so did Trotsky, the ex-Menshevik Marxist who went far beyond the Bolsheviks during the first revolution of 1905.

But prior to all of these heresies which sprang up about the time of the first Russian Revolution (1905), there had appeared in the field another champion of dissent – hailing originally from Marx – who was soon to impress his own name upon an entirely new revolutionary theory. His name was Waclaw Machajski (pronounced Vatzlav Makhayski) – now an almost legendary figure. In the circles of the Russian intelligentsia he has chiefly been known as the bad man "Makhayev" who had tried to arouse and to prejudice the manual workers against their educated liberators. And even to this day, more than two decades after the movement connected with his name has disappeared as an organized affair, the term "Makhayevstchina" (the Machajski ideology) is used in a deprecatory sense to designate all those tendencies or even moods within the socialist and labor movement which in one way or another denote a certain antagonism between manual workers and intellectuals.

Waclaw Machajski, a native of Russian Poland, had started his revolutionary career as a Polish nationalist student with a slight socialist tinge. But he was soon to wash off that stain with five years imprisonment in Warsaw and Moscow and six years of exile in one of the sub-Arctic corners of northeastern-most Siberia. A few years before his imprisonment he had shaken off the last vestiges of his youthful nationalism and become a revolutionary Marxist. In 1892, impressed by a violent uprising among the workers of Lodz – the Polish Manchester – a group of Polish and Russian revolutionary students in Switzerland issued a manifesto to the workers in revolt. Machajski undertook to smuggle the literature across the border. He was arrested at the start, and during his years of sub-Arctic retirement, where by an incredible stroke of luck a large sociological library had been smuggled over by one of his fellow-sufferers, he developed his own point of view.

The starting point of his personal evolution began with a strange observation. All the socialist parties of the world, even long before the appearance of the "revisionist" heresy of Bernstein, had begun to turn into respectable law-abiding progressive parties, constituting practically little more than the extreme wing of the Liberal bourgeoisie. While flaunting revolutionary-sounding, proletarian slogans, promising the overthrow of the capitalist system, they actually aspired to hardly anything more than the broadest possible extension of democratic institutions. Radical or revolutionary methods they recognized wherever it was necessary for them to obtain political rights. But these methods were not deemed applicable when the workers declared their own bread-and-butter demands. In the nineties the Austrian socialists seriously contemplated the General Strike as a means of winning universal suffrage. But they just as earnestly declined the idea of using that same General Strike for demanding the eight-hour day. In 1896, a few years before his death, old Wilhelm Liebknecht, founder of the German Social-Democratic Party, friend and orthodox disciple of Marx, found it possible to say that "the State which has honestly established universal suffrage was secured against revolution" and that "we are the only party of order in Germany." This was a year after the death of the great teacher, Engels, who himself, in 1895, had written approvingly of the "red cheeks and strong muscles" which the Social-Democratic Party was acquiring through its law-abiding tactics. Similar evidence of left-wing bourgeois-democratic tendencies, Machajski detected also in the development of Polish and Russian socialism, whose representatives employed all the underground activities, all the revolutionary energies of the workers, for directing the struggle exclusively towards the attainment of the common aim of all layers of the progressive middle classes: the overthrow of absolutism and the establishment of an orderly capitalist system, Western style, under which the

socialist parties would inevitably develop along the same lines as their opportunist counterparts in the rest of Europe.

All these observations Machajski embodied in his *Evolution of Social-Democracy*, which became the first part of his *Intellectual Worker*. In those years a small number of copies of the *Evolution*, which was completed in 1898–99, were prepared with the help of a primitive hectograph – and the first victim of its distribution was the author himself. In 1900, when his term was up, he started on his trip to European Russia, but was arrested on the way. His own illegal literature having been found in his possession, he was condemned to an extension of his Siberian exile for another five years. In 1903 his friends and followers succeeded in organizing his escape to Western Europe.

During the time that Machajski was elaborating his point of view, his reply to the opportunism of the Socialist parties, whether in its frankly cynical "revisionist" or in its pseudo-revolutionary "orthodox" form, pointed to "a world organization of the working class, its international conspiracy and concerted action" as the "only way to its rule, to its revolutionary dictatorship, to the organization of the conquest of political power" (*Evolution of Social-Democracy*, p. 30). In taking this stand, he made a bold attempt to overcome not only the opportunism of the socialist parties of the various countries, but also the "elements of opportunism," which he traced to the very Teachers themselves. In his opinion, Marx and Engels "showed an incomplete understanding of the class antagonism in modern society." An antagonism whose depth was fully revealed during the Paris insurrection of June, 1848, when the workers were opposed "not only by the monarchist plutocracy, by the oppositionist 'progressive' industrial bourgeoisie, by the 'revolutionary' lower middle classes, but also by the whole mass of *privileged employees* of the capitalist State – lawyers, journalists, scholars – even by those who, not long before, had sung to them songs about 'organization of labor' and 'workers' associations.'" The depth of this antagonism was ignored by Marx and Engels who, in their *Communist Manifesto*, held it possible for Communists to "work everywhere to promote mutual understanding among the democratic parties of all lands" and to confound "democracy" with "working-class rule" by asserting that "the first step in the workers' revolution is to make the proletariat the ruling class, to establish democracy," and who, during the German Revolution of 1848 (after the publication of the *Manifesto*), actually identified themselves with the cause of the liberal bourgeoisie to an extent scarcely exceeded by their later followers and epigones.

Machajski's point of view, declining collaboration with the various strata of the middle classes, and calling for an international secret organization and a concerted action for "the conquest of political power," was only a transitional phase in his development. In the further pursuit of his analysis, he began to realize that what

he considered a mere "mistake" on the part of Marx, a mere underestimation of the depth of the class antagonisms by the teacher and his followers, was something quite different. It was in fact the conscious or unconscious manifestation of "a social force carefully hiding in the socialist movement for which the reconciliation of socialism with the existing order is not a mistake, but a natural interest, an inevitable urge." That social force was "the growing army of intellectual workers, the new middle class, which with the progress of civilization absorbs in itself the middle strata of society," and "the formula of last century's socialism was worked out in accordance with the class interests and the plans of this class." In other words, the intellectual workers, a rising, privileged bourgeois stratum, whose income was derived from the "national surplus product" extracted from the manual workers, were using the struggles of the latter for furthering their own bourgeois class interests. Their inclusion in the "proletariat" jointly with the manual workers was a deceptive device, just as the term "people" or "third estate" was used by the rising capitalist class for covering up the antagonism between the latter and the exploited strata of the population.

The assistance given to the workers by the malcontent section of the intelligentsia in the early struggles against the capitalists thus appears not as an act of class solidarity and selfless devotion, but as a means of gaining the confidence and gratitude of the horny-handed underdog and his support of the intellectuals striving for domination. The fight for more democracy within the private capitalist system, with its concomitant acquisition of more jobs and other opportunities for the impecunious, lower-middle class intellectual, is the first step in that struggle. Next comes the striving for a *gradual*[1] transition to state capitalism (or state socialism, which is the same) – the coming form of exploitation, under which the private capitalists will have given way to the bureaucracy, the latter to include the former capitalists, the intellectuals, and the self-taught, upstart ex-workers. A "socialism," in short, in which classes have not disappeared, and in which the technicians, organizers, administrators, educators, journalists, i.e. the intellectuals, constitute the great joint stock corporation owning collectively – through the State – all the riches of the country, and in which the "haves" have expanded to embrace all the "knows," while the "know-nots" are the self-perpetuating, low-waged robots for their educated masters.

[1] "Maximalist" tendencies, aiming at an *immediate* revolution, were practically non-existent ever since the establishment of democratic institutions in Western Europe had to a large extent taken care of the great mass of desperate, *déclassé* intellectuals of a previous period ready to challenge violently the existing system. A recurrent wave of overproduction of intellectual workers, caused by the later development of capitalism, and particularly intensified since the Great War, has given rise to revolutionary tendencies aiming at the immediate introduction of state capitalism, through the dictatorship of a section of the intelligentsia.

Once Machajski had come to that point, the conquest of power by the working class lost all meaning. For there simply could not be such a thing as a "workers' government." The new incumbents of political power, even assuming that originally they harbored the most altruistic feelings with regard to the horny-handed underdog, once in possession of power, would inevitably and inexorably assert their own class interests of educated organizers of a socialist state, or in other words: they would yield to their natural urge to establish themselves as a ruling class enjoying the concomitant advantages expressed in higher incomes and the opportunity of handing down these advantages and the opportunities for higher education to their own offspring only. And under the new system, as under the old, the manual workers would have to continue their struggle for higher wages until economic equality was attained.

By dropping the struggle for power, Machajski automatically placed himself in very bad company. He was now classified as an "Anarchist" or "Anarcho-Syndicalist" and bore with this label all the implications of utopianism, impractical idealism, and everything else that the term connotes. In fact, however, his conception was tainted with none of these attributes of "anarchist protestantism," as he called the instinctive protest of the more impatient elements of the working class, which, unfortunately, found expression only in extremely naïve formulations.

Machajski preached no lofty "ideal" as do the anarchists and their syndicalist cousins, who presuppose a long – or, rather, never-ending – period of preliminary "education" before that ideal could be attained. He did not demand the "abolition of the State on the morrow after the revolution," as is implied in the old utopian formula of the Anarchists. Nor did he indulge in their innocent pastime of "negating," or "refusing recognition to," the State, which, according to them, should be "ignored." His language was the very opposite of all such Gandhist talk. Having taken the position of the manual worker, who is interested in a better share right now, and not in the pie-in-the-sky of a distant future, he spoke exclusively in terms of wages or cold cash. Basing his argument upon the example of the numerous spontaneous uprisings of the hungry masses, he showed that the workers were ready to take any risk for an immediate improvement of their lot, as expressed in concrete terms – wages, food, jobs. And he charged that what the Socialists of the various denominations did was either to let those uprisings fizzle out, or to side-track them into a political struggle for more bourgeois democracy, a political struggle which, in a world ruled by economics, was in reality an economic struggle for all kinds of soft jobs for their educated, "white-handed" leaders . . .

An "Anarchist" in the opinion of some, because he rejected the political struggle for power, Machajski was sometimes dubbed by the Anarchists as merely a revolutionary trade-unionist because he rejected all talk of the "ideal." It is the

same line of argument which was likewise followed by the writer of the item on Machajski (or rather, on A. Volski, which was his literary pen-name) in the Large Soviet Encyclopaedia. There it is said that Machajski's activity was "essentially directed against the revolutionary movement of the workers, against their struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of the revolution it advocated the struggle for minor, partial demands." With all due respect to the Soviet Encyclopaedia, it almost seems that the severe author of that article protested too much. In those early years of the twentieth century there was no "struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for the dictatorship of the proletariat" in Russia. What the radical intelligentsia were out for was merely a struggle for western democracy, for those political liberties which, in the present Communist conception, are not supposed to be the acme of proletarian aspirations. On the other hand, the "revolutionary movement of the workers" had expressed itself on an enormous scale in the spontaneous economic general strike of Southern Russia (1903) – a mass movement for "minor, partial demands" – which had been entirely ignored by the radical intelligentsia, and which – if given the support of a revolutionary organization – would have developed into an irresistible revolt against the entire bourgeois system and not merely against the Tsarist regime.

In fact, these despised "minor, partial demands" for higher wages and shorter hours were, in Machajski's conception, the Archimedean point of support from which he visualized the overthrow of the bourgeois system. At bottom, his theory runs, every economic strike for higher wages is an embryonic revolt against the parasitism of the privileged classes, but it remains mostly ineffectual because of its embryonic character. Developed to the extent of widespread general strikes, the economic strike for better wages, jointly with the struggle of the unemployed for work, challenges the very bases of the bourgeois system which is based upon economic inequality and not merely upon the private ownership of the means of production. Unable to meet the sweeping wage demands presented to them in the course of a general economic struggle which is bound to assume the aspect of a mass uprising of all the disinherited, the private capitalists will be forced to close their plants altogether. As a result the State will be compelled to take over their management, thus becoming the only employer of labor – the great supertrust representing a system called either "State Capitalism," or "State Socialism."[2]

[2] The two terms are practically interchangeable, the only distinction being that State Socialism is a "socialism" maintaining the capitalist feature of inequality of incomes, while State Capitalism is a capitalism which has adopted the "socialist" feature of government ownership. Both are derogatory terms in socialist terminology and are used only if attempts at socialization are being made by old-time politicians or competitors in the radical camp. For that would involve the controlling jobs of the government machine staying in, or passing into, the hands of the other fellow, whether he

Under the system of government ownership, the workers, in Machajski's opinion, would still continue their revolutionary struggle. Not in order to "abolish the State," which would be childish, for the State as an instrument of class domination will exist as long as there is a separate class of educated managers and organizers of all branches of economic and public life, as opposed to the mass of uneducated manual workers. Neither would that struggle have to aim at changing the government, which would be an idle pastime and only lead to the substitution of a new set of intellectuals, or self-taught ex-workers, for the old ones. The only aim of the workers' struggle would be to force the State to raise wages until the manual workers had equalized their standard of living with that of their educated masters. Equality of incomes would create equal educational opportunities for the offspring of technician and menial alike, thus ushering in a classless, and consequently stateless, society.

So much for Machajski's "anarchism." He himself called his theory neither anarchism nor socialism. One of his followers suggested for it the name of "equalitarianism." However, the movement and theory remained known under the name of "Makhayevstchina," derived from his name, thought the official name of his organization was "Rabochi Zagovor" (Workers' Conspiracy). This was perhaps a distant echo of Babeuf's "Conspiracy of the Equals"; but aside from the emphasis upon equality of incomes, rejected by the later socialist schools, there is little similarity between "Babouvism" and "Makhayevstchina."

After his flight to western Europe in 1903, Machajski stayed chiefly in Switzerland, where he prepared the printed edition of the three parts of his *Intellectual Worker*, his *Bankruptcy of Nineteenth Century Socialism*, and the more popular propaganda pamphlet *The Bourgeois Revolution and the Cause of the Workers*. All of these writings are in Russian, and many of them he set up himself.

No sooner had the last sheet been turned off the press than he shook Geneva's dust from his feet and returned to Russia, where the Revolution of 1905 was already in its defeated stage. With some of his old friends from the Siberian exile, he began his underground activity among the workers and unemployed in Petersburg. His followers (called "Makhayevtzi") attacked the tendency of the revolutionary intelligentsia to direct the dissatisfaction of the workers toward the struggle for bourgeois democracy. In spite of a very violent counter-activity on the part of the socialist agitators of all denominations the "Makhayevtzi" succeeded

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be a regular bourgeois or an erring brother of the pink or red denomination. Socialists – whether extremely moderate or radical – are very human, and any reorganization scheme in which their particular group plays no leading part is damned by them as State Capitalism or worse. Thus the Soviet system of government ownership and economic inequality, which by its defenders is called the "first phase of Communism," applying an old term used by Karl Marx, has been repeatedly dubbed as State Capitalist by its Marxist opponents from the Right and from the Left.

at the meetings of the unemployed in putting across their resolutions demanding immediate relief for the unemployed and wide organization of public works. They believed that a general economic struggle for higher wages would constitute an irresistible revolutionary front against the bourgeoisie and spell the beginning of the workers' revolution the world over.

The group of militants, however, was soon broken up by arrests, and late in 1907 Machajski had to flee again. He stayed abroad until the Revolution of 1917, when he returned to Russia.

The name of his group "Workers' Conspiracy," and the identical title of the publication which he issued in 1908, were expressive of the method of organization which he advocated. Even before Lenin had taken his famous stand in favor of a strict conspirative organization of active militants and "professional revolutionists"[3] – for Tsarist Russia alone to be sure – Machajski had come out with the idea of a conspirative organization the world over, whether the countries enjoyed political democracy or not. He believed that the legal form of organization of the various radical parties and movements was an evidence of their law-abiding, peaceful intentions with regard to the existing *status quo*, or at least, the first step towards assuming such an attitude. Their socialism, he claimed, was nothing short of a "religion for the slaves of manual toil," an idle promise of a terrestrial heaven in a distant future altogether remote from the living generation, while the preachers of that religion were trying to get as comfortable places as they could in the capitalist hell of the present. To Machajski the working class revolution was an ever-present possibility, which, for its fruition, needed a well-knit world-wide secret organization engaged exclusively in unifying and extending the scope of the scattered, spontaneous uprisings. These were to be directed against the bourgeoisie and its State in behalf of the masses of the manual workers, particularly of the semi-skilled and unskilled, with the demand for higher wages and work for the unemployed to be paid for at the rate demanded by the striking workers. This struggle, carried on in the form of general strikes and uprisings, including seizure of factories and supplies by the workers, was to be continued until the higher incomes of all the privileged classes had disappeared and economic equality had been established.

The attempts made by Waclaw Machajski and his followers in St. Petersburg, Odessa, Warsaw and other places, to create a movement inspired by his ideas, did not succeed in attracting large numbers of leading militants. This was indeed a difficult task in Tsarist Russia, where all the followers of the various currents of revolutionary thought were chiefly interested in throwing off absolutism and in

[3] This term is not applied in the derogatory sense which, for various reasons, it has acquired at present.

tasting the delights of political liberty enjoyed by Western Europe. In such an atmosphere, the argument to the effect that civil liberties and political democracy meant nothing to the great mass, and particularly, to the unskilled and unemployed workers, who were being starved regardless of the form of government; that the workers were interested exclusively in the mass struggle for higher wages and work for the unemployed, and that the only beneficiaries of the fight for democracy were the job-hungry intellectuals – was interpreted by the opposing camp as an apology for the existing absolutist system. With their eyes fixed upon the Tsarist oppressor and the capitalist parasite, few of the revolutionary militants could afford so much detachment as to see the hidden bourgeois and anti-working-class character of the struggling socialist intelligentsia. In the same way, it would have been equally difficult under the *ancien regime* in France to enroll a large number of fighters against bourgeois capitalist privilege at a time when the growing bourgeoisie, the potential master of the coming period, was still fighting the nobility and the clergy. This in a way explains the futility of the revolutionary endeavours of the first followers of Machajski. Discouraged, some of his adherents came to believe that perhaps only after a long sequel of betrayals, deceptions, and disappointments would modern socialism, in its various forms, be generally understood as the ideology of the discontented intellectual workers in their struggle for taking over the inheritance of the parasitic private capitalist.

It will only be then, in their opinion, that the masses, by their refusal to follow the old slogans and by their revolts for their own bread-and-butter demands, will force part of their old leaders to take a new course, and win over some of the adventurous, romantic intellectuals and self-taught workers who will then lead them forward in a victorious struggle for economic equality.

Machajski was often confronted with the apparent contradiction that the class struggle of the manual workers may be championed by men not of their own class, or by such of its members who might have the opportunity of rising above it. He replied that there was a manifest and fundamental difference between the purely material causes of the class struggle of an emerging social group – whether it be manual workers in their struggle for economic equality or the intelligentsia in its struggle for power and privilege – and the purely personal motives prompting the altogether disinterested stand of those who play an heroic part in it. These personalities, though, as a rule, motivated by the wrongs or aspirations of their own group, are not urged by the prosaic desire for comforts or the more common aspects of power. Their will-to-power often takes on the aspects of personal self-denial and sacrifice for the sake of fame or immortality. And some of them, for a multiplicity of motives – once the more crude form of egoism is eliminated – occasionally may assume the leadership of social groups below their own.

In the November Revolution of 1917, Machajski saw the "great revolt against the old world of exploitation and of savage wars." However, he did not hesitate, even during the first months of 1918, to attack the weakness which, in his opinion, the Bolsheviks began to manifest in the conduct of the great upheaval. He saw them wavering and hesitating to take the last, most energetic steps against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which had not been expropriated immediately and had been left in the possession of its factories and its privileged incomes. In a monthly called *Rabochaya Revolutsia* (Workers' Revolution) which he published in July, 1918, he laid down his point of view.

"The workers," he wrote, "will not have their 'workers' government' even after the capitalists have disappeared. As long as the working class is condemned to ignorance, the intelligentsia will rule through the workers' deputies. The intelligentsia . . . defends its own interests, not those of the workers . . . After the expropriation of the capitalists, the workers will have to equalize their incomes with those of the intellectuals, otherwise they are doomed to manual labor, ignorance, and inability to manage the life of the country. Thus, even after the downfall of the capitalist system, the workers will not be in possession of power, they will not have an obedient government apparatus in their hands.

"When the working class strives for its own rule, it means that it strives for revolutionary domination *over* the government. Through its revolutionary pressure, through the expression of the will of the toiling millions, the working class ought to dictate the law to the government.

". . . The workers have become so confused, and afterwards so disappointed, that any counter-revolutionist, any Menshevik, may easily pull them back and dare to enjoin them to restore to the exploiters their former rights.

"The task of the working masses is not to overthrow the Soviet Government to the delight of all conciliators and counter-revolutionists, but to push it forward through their economic working-class demands, which after the seizure of power by the Soviets, should not have ceased, but, on the contrary, should have risen to the point of demanding the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the interests of the working class."

Thus Machajski called for the complete elimination of the private capitalists and the reduction of the higher incomes of the intellectuals. Only one issue of this publication appeared.

During the civil war and intervention which for a long time engaged all the militant, revolutionary elements of the country in a life and death struggle for the prevention of the return of the landlords and capitalists, and during the subsequent years, Machajski, an aged man, worked as the technical editor on an economic magazine published by the Supreme Economic Council. In the further

development of the Soviet Republic, through its many zigzags of policy in the direction of State Capitalism, he saw a confirmation of his early predictions.

Machajski died in Moscow in 1926, at the age of sixty. An uncompromising, unbending personality guided by a vision extending far ahead of that of his contemporaries, he lives in the memory of his friends, disciples and admirers as one of the great pioneers of revolutionary thought. In time, his followers are convinced, his name will attain its deserved place as one of the prophetic champions of working-class emancipation.

Max Nomad
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