

DE REVOLUTIONIBUS ORBIS TERRESTRIS¹

SUMMARY

Revolution is a modern concept, although the ancients used words to designate revolts or rebellions, generally seen as moments of turbulence that should be avoided (with the exception of Machiavelli). The word revolution has its origins in astronomy. It was used by Copernicus in his fundamental work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) and indicated the revolutions that the planets make around the sun. But over the centuries it has come to signify a radical paradigm shift, both in science (starting with the Copernican "revolution") and in politics (the French revolution) and society (the cultural revolution). How did this radical change in meaning come about? In modern times, it was the English who transferred the word from the physical to the political sphere. With the Glorious Revolution of 1688/89, the English abolished the absolutist monarchy and created a parliamentary monarchy. They understood their struggle to be a "return" to the ancient *liberties* achieved by the English barons with the *Magna Charta Libertatum* of 1215 and usurped by the absolutist monarchs. The meaning given to this word was more "restoration" than "revolution", although it was a restoration that produced a new political system: the parliamentary monarchy. But it was with the North American revolution and, above all, the French revolution that the word took on the meaning of a radical transformation of a political, economic and social system; and the example of the French revolution would influence the cycle of communist revolutions that developed from the Russian revolution onwards. Parallel to the evolution of the political meaning, there was also an evolution of the scientific meaning: in the sense of the industrial (technical-scientific) revolution and the epistemological revolution (the radical changes of a scientific paradigm according to Kuhn's famous work). In this essay, we will focus mainly on the Russian Revolution, interpreted by Karl Löwith as the secularisation of Judeo-Christian eschatology, and draw some conclusions about the relevance of the concept of revolution.

Keywords: revolution; restoration; reform; socialism; communism;

¹ Published in TOSI, G. - ALIAGA, L.- FREIRE, R. *Centenário da Revolução Russa. Balanço e reflexões*. João Pessoa: Editora da UFPB, 2019, p. 9-30.

In all cases the cause of revolt (*stasis*) is inequality (*ánison*); for in the search for equality (*to ison*) revolts break out (*stasiazousin*)
Aristotle, *Politics*, V, 1301, 25-30

Louis XVI, King of France, on learning of the storming of the Bastille:
C'est une revolte? None, Sire, c'est une révolution.
La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt
14 July 1789.

*Everything has changed in the
physical order, and everything must change in the
moral and political order.*
Robespierre

1. The Cycle of Revolutions

"Revolution" is a modern concept. The ancients used similar words, such as *stasis* in Aristotle's *Politics* (especially in book V dedicated to changes in constitutions) to designate revolt, sedition, discord, an uprising; or *metabolé*, more similar to the contemporary concept, because it defines a change, a transformation, in the political sense, but it also has an astronomical meaning: *metabolé heliou* is the eclipse or transformation or change or "revolution" of the sun around the earth, as was believed at the time; in Latin it is *revolutio*, which derives from the verb *revolvere* to return, to lead back, to go back¹. The word that comes closest to the modern concept is *anakúklesis*, revolution in the astronomical sense and *anakúklosis* in the political sense in Polybius.

Already in antiquity, therefore, although in a marginal way, the word had two analogous meanings, one astronomical and the other political, but it didn't have the modern meaning, as Bobbio states quoting Moses Finley:

Finley's basic thesis is that if we understand "revolution" as the passage of power from one class to another, in the modern sense of the word (more precisely in the Marxian sense of the word), we can safely say that there was no real revolution in antiquity, because the ancient world was an agricultural society, founded largely on the labour of slaves. [...] The "mutations" of the ancients were, as Finley explains, changes within a class society that concerned, we would say today, the political system and not the social order, so much so that Aristotle speaks of eleven mutations of Athens (BOBBIO, 2000, p. 610-611)².

¹ In Letter VII, Plato uses the expression *metabolé gignetai* (a revolution was born) to refer to the revolt that overthrew the thirty tyrants of Athens in 404 BC. The organisers of the work translate *metabolé* as "revolution". PLATON, Letter VII, 324 c, p. 48.

² The work by Finley cited by Bobbio is: FINLEY, M. Quale Rivoluzione nell'Antichità? in *Prometeu*, Dec. 1986, p. 34-43.

It acquired its current meaning in modern times from astronomy. It was used by Copernicus in his fundamental work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) and indicates the revolutions that the planets make around the sun. Over the centuries it has come to signify a radical paradigm shift, both in science (starting with the Copernican "revolution") and its application to technology (industrial revolution), as well as in politics (French revolution) and society (cultural, social and moral revolution).

How did this radical change in meaning come about? With the revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, during the period of the rise of the bourgeoisie, which was demanding greater political representation over the nobility and clergy. They provided a consistent ideological justification for the revolutionary movements that would progressively lead to the dissolution of the feudal world and the constitution of the modern world.

Parallel to the evolution of the political meaning, the scientific meaning was also evolving in the sense of the industrial (technical-scientific) revolution and the epistemological revolution (the radical changes in a scientific paradigm according to the famous work by Thomas Kuhn -1997).

The most important and lasting revolution of all was the industrial revolution, which began in England at the end of the 18th century and spread throughout Europe and the whole world, permanently revolutionising the way humanity produces and lives. While the bourgeoisie, after the Restoration, made a deal with the aristocracy and the clergy and their political impetus cooled, the industrial revolution with its successive technological waves set in motion a machine that no one can stop or master anymore (COMPARATO, 1999; MONDAINI, 2006).

The English were the first to transfer the word revolution from the physical to the political. With the glorious revolution of 1688/89, the King signed a *Bill of Rights* (a declaration of rights) that harked back to the famous *Magna Charta Libertatum* that the English barons had obtained from King John the Landless in 1215 in the village of Egham. The English understood their struggle to be a "revolution", in other words, a return to the ancient *liberties* of the English achieved since the *Magna Charta* and usurped by absolutist monarchs. In fact, the meaning given to this word was more of a "restoration" than a "revolution", even though it was a restoration

which produced a new political system: the parliamentary monarchy³.

But the word was also used by revolutionaries in the **North American colonies**. The *Declaration of Rights of the State of Virginia* in 1777 was the basis for the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America (the first 10 amendments of 1791). The emergence of the United States of America created the first great modern democracy in history with lasting institutions that endure to this day: a presidential system, and a rather "lean" constitution that has received few fundamental amendments over the centuries, a Confederation of states with relative autonomy and a strong division between the three branches of government. It was a democracy, however, that was born without abolishing slavery, making slavery one of the pillars of the economic, political and cultural system. It took a bloody civil war to abolish slavery, at least formally.

The American revolution was not a restoration like the English one, but neither was it a revolution like the French one, which gave the word "revolution" the meaning it still has today, i.e. a radical transformation of society: economic, political, legal, religious and cultural. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of the French Revolution* of 1789 was the most radical of all, the "death certificate" of the *Ancien Régime* and paved the way for the proclamation of the Republic⁴.

The **French Revolution** had a much more ambitious purpose than the other two revolutions: to be a transformation that would reach not just the French, but the whole of humanity: a more universal revolution, according to the dictates of the Enlightenment. This can be seen in the title of the declaration of rights, not just of the citizen (French, English, American), but of "man" in general, of all men.

Over a short period of time, from 1789 to 1814, France went from an absolute monarchy, to a constitutional one, to a Republic and finally to the Empire of Napoleon who, at the same time, betrayed and realised the ideals of the revolution by spreading them throughout Europe, with consequences in other parts of the world: for example, in Brazil. The monarchical restoration that followed the fall of Napoleon failed in completely overthrowing the revolutionary ideals that eventually prevailed: to this day, the republican principles of the revolution underpin the vast majority of states.

³ In order to understand the differences between the English and French revolutions, Edmund Burke's work is also fundamental. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1997; and Thomas Paine's response. *The Rights of Man*, 2007.

⁴ For a comparison between the American and French revolutions, which is more favourable to the former, see Hannah Arendt's classic book. *On Revolution*, 2006.

democratic law in the world⁵.

But the French Revolution played another important role, that of fuelling and inspiring the whole great cycle of socialist and communist revolutions, which had its rehearsal in the Paris Commune (1870) and its realisation with the Russian Revolution (1917-8) and for all the communist revolutions of the world, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban, etc. The revolutionaries took the French Revolution as a paradigm and model to be followed, and obviously surpassed in its bourgeois character.

The idea of the irreconcilability of class interests and the class struggle as the engine of history was a very powerful idea that mobilised millions of workers, peasants and oppressed proletarians all over the world. It was also a very powerful ideology to justify the need for revolutionary violence, as a response to the open or surreptitious violence of the capitalist system, whether in its totalitarian, dictatorial or authoritarian version, or in the democratic form of the rule of law, both expressions of the institutional and structural violence of capitalism.

We could thus speak, in a simplified but plausible way, of a great revolutionary cycle that affected the whole of Europe and spread throughout the world, beginning with the bourgeois revolutions, which became the model for the socialist and communist revolutions, starting with the Soviet Revolution.

This was followed by a period of transition characterised by the counter-revolutionary reaction to the Soviet revolution, with Francoism in Spain, Salazarism in Portugal, Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany inspiring other reactionary movements in Europe and around the world.

But the revolutionary cycle doesn't stop: the Soviet Union consolidates its power with its victory in the Second World War, and expands to the countries of Eastern Europe; China fulfils a radical communist revolution with a peasant base, which spreads to Asian countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and serves as an example for communist revolutions in Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique) and Latin America (Cuba), and attempts to promote revolutions inspired by Cuba are repressed by military coups. Perhaps the last attempt at a revolution along traditional lines was the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua (1979-1990).

⁵ On this period, see Eric Hobsbawm's classic work: *The Age of Revolutions (1789-1848)*, 2009.

This cycle came to an end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet communism, which ended the Cold War era and ushered in the current world, the contours of which have yet to be defined.

Below we will present Karl Löwith's reading of the revolution, which is interesting because it shows the novelty of the modern concept, but at the same time indicates its ancient theological roots.

2. Revolution as the secularisation of Judeo-Christian eschatology: Karl Löwith

Karl Löwith's book, *The Meaning of History*, is an ambitious book that defends a controversial thesis, namely that modernity is not a break with tradition, but a secularisation of this tradition, and the philosophy of history, which was born with Voltaire in the 18th century, is a translation in secular and rationalist terms of the theology of medieval history.

By philosophy of history Löwith means the following:

... the term "philosophy of history" is used to mean a systematic interpretation of universal history according to a principle in which historical events and successions are unified and directed towards a final direction. Considered in this sense, the philosophy of history is, however, totally dependent on the theology of history, in particular the theological concept of fulfilment and salvation. In opposition to the current that claims that historical thought proper only begins in the modern era, with the 18th century, the following sketch seeks to demonstrate that the philosophy of history begins with the Hebrew and Christian faith in fulfilment and ends with the secularisation of its eschatological scheme (LÖWITH, 1991, p. 15, 16).

This is the central thesis of this dense and erudite book, which sets out to explore the different ways of interpreting the meaning of history, from contemporary secularisation to the theological foundations in St Augustine and the Bible⁶.

⁶ This reading of modernity as a secularisation of Christianity, promoted by Löwith and in a different way also by Carl Schmitt, found a rejoinder in Hans Blumenberg, who claims, on the contrary, the "legitimacy" of modernity. Blumenberg responds to Löwith by saying that while it is true that modern concepts find their roots in Christianity and Christian theology, from the patristic synthesis to late medieval nominalism, it is also true that these concepts have definitively emancipated themselves from this tradition, acquiring a legitimacy of their own and occupying a new and different place and a new hermeneutic function. Thus, for example, the concept of linear progress is not merely a secularisation of the Christian idea of *the* history of salvation that arises from Saint Augustine's *City of God*, as Löwith claims - thus displacing the birth of the Modern Age to the end of Antiquity. Blumenberg replies that if this were the case, we wouldn't understand the

The German philosopher sees Modernity as a long and contradictory process of secularisation of Christianity, and of the theological categories that crystallised during the Middle Ages; a process that reaches its peak in the "death of God" announced by Nietzsche, which inaugurates the era of contemporary nihilism.

This applies both to the metaphysical categories of the tradition that Heidegger (1999) defined as onto-theological, and to the categories of the "political" according to Carl Schmitt (2006). From this point of view, it would be an illusion to think that we can definitively rid ourselves of the influence of Christian thought, its values and its conceptual coordinates: although secularised, Christianity remains the founding paradigm of the spirit of the West.

It is in this context that Löwith interprets Marx's work. Löwith sees Marx as more than an economist, a sociologist or a historian, he sees him as a philosopher and above all a philosopher of history, à la Hegel:

The main characteristic of the last two works mentioned [*The Manifesto* and *Capital*] is not the dogmatic emphasis on the class struggle and the relationship between labour and capital, but the absorption of all these categories into an exhaustive historical scheme. Like Hegel in philosophy, Darwin in biology and Ferdinand Christian Baur in theology, Marx transforms the problem of his special science into a historical problem (IDEM, p. 43).

To corroborate this thesis, Löwith quotes some passages from Marx, taken from the aforementioned works, as well as from youthful writings such as *The German Ideology*:

But it is also empirical that this power, so mysterious to German theorists, will be abolished by the suppression of the current social state, by the communist revolution and by the abolition of private property, which is inherent to it; the liberation of everyone will then be realised to the extent that history becomes completely world history.

[...]

Universal dependence, that natural form of the co-operation of individuals on the scale of world history, will be transformed by the communist revolution into conscious control and domination of those powers which, engendered by the reciprocal action of men on one another, have imposed themselves on them and dominated them until now, as if they were absolutely foreign powers. (MARX; ENGELS, 2001, p. 35)

epochal rupture that Modernity introduced as the antithesis of the medieval worldview. As Kant said in his famous essay *What is the Enlightenment*, Enlightenment Modernity finally allowed humanity to leave its state of minority, tutelage and paternalism and dare to think with its own head: *sapere aude!* See: BLUMENBERG, 1992. BLUMENBERG - SCHMITT, 2012.

According to Löwith, Marx's central idea would be that of revolution, as the creation of a new society and a new man, which would take place on the basis of capitalism's ever greater antagonism between the enormous development of the productive forces and ever more oppressive relations of production, between the socialisation of ever more extensive relations of production and private appropriation. Marx states in *The Revolution of 1848 and the Proletariat*:

There is an extraordinary fact that characterises the 19th century that cannot be denied by either side: on the one hand, industrial and scientific forces have developed what no previous period in history could have imagined; on the other, one finds symptoms of disintegration that go beyond even the well-known errors of the late Roman Empire. [...] Humanity is taking control of nature, but man is man's slave [...]

But we recognise in this antagonism the shrewd spirit [the astuteness of reason according to Hegel] that is keen to resolve all these contradictions. We know that the new form of social production, to achieve the good life, needs new men (apud LÖWITH, 1991, p. 455)⁷

Löwith wonders whether Marx was aware of the implications of his own presuppositions and the immense responsibility he was bearing for the proletariat:

One wonders if Marx ever realised the human, moral and religious implications of his postulate: to create a new world by creating new men, a new kind of man. [...] The matrix of this new man is, according to Marx, the most terrible creature of capitalist society, the proletariat, which has become completely estranged from itself and is forced to defeat itself in exchange for wages to the capitalist who owns the means of production [...] Marx sees in the proletariat the universal-historical instrument for achieving the eschatological goal of all history through a universal revolution. The proletariat is the chosen people of historical materialism, for the same reasons that it is excluded from the privileges of established society (LÖWITH, 1991, p. 46-47)

The question also arises as to whether Marx, who advocated scientific socialism, was aware of the utopian and eschatological nature of his theory:

At the end of this process, the organised proletariat will not be a ruling class like the bourgeoisie but will have abolished its own supremacy as a class; and instead of the old bourgeois society and its class antagonism, we will have an "association" in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all. Later, the dominance of

⁷ Excerpt taken from Marx's *The Revolution of 1848 and the Proletariat*. We haven't found the Brazilian edition.

vital needs will be replaced by a "domain of freedom" in a better community of a communist character: a kingdom of God without God and on earth, which is the goal and primary ideal of Marx's historical messianism (LÖWITH, 1991, p. 50,51).

Löwith quotes the famous passage from Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (MARX, 2008) in which he states that political economy is "the anatomy of civil society", and that changes in economic structures determine changes in all the superstructures of legal, political, religious and philosophical forms of consciousness more or less rapidly, and concludes that "to believe that these transformations come about through consciousness itself would be as superficial as judging an individual solely by his consciousness of himself (MARX, 2008, p. 45- 45). 45- 46).

For Löwith, this statement, which is one of the definitions of the concept of ideology as false consciousness, could be applied to Marx's own philosophy.

So, the secret history of the Communist Manifesto is not its conscious materialism and Marx's opinion of it, but the religious spirit of prophetism. The Communist Manifesto is first and foremost a prophetic document. In Marx's schema of universal history [exploitation] is nothing other than the radical evil of "prehistory", or, in biblical terms, original sin. And like original sin, exploitation affects not only man's moral faculty, but also his intellectual one (LÖWITH, 1991, p. 51).

Here, we could say unconsciously, the Judeo-Christian heritage appears at the very heart of the thinking of the "emancipated Hebrew" that was Karl Marx.

Marx was a Jew the size of the Old Testament, despite being an emancipated nineteenth-century Jew who felt deeply anti-religious and even anti-Semitic. It is the ancient Jewish messianism and prophetism [...] and the Jewish insistence on absolute righteousness that explain the idealist basis of Marx's materialism. It is therefore no accident that the "ultimate" antagonism between the two hostile camps of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat corresponds to the Judeo-Christian belief in a final struggle between Christ and the Antichrist in the last epoch of history, that the task of the proletariat corresponds to the universal-historical mission of the chosen people (IDEM, p. 53).

Löwith comments that only the "religious" character of Marxism and historical materialism can explain the force that inspired millions of followers, which would not have happened if Marxism had been a merely scientific theory, based on simple statements of fact.

The central thesis we take from Löwith is that Marx's philosophy of history is a secularisation of the theology of history and Christian eschatology: *in this vale of tears (in hac lacrimarum valle)* that is capitalism there is no possibility of redemption, we need to get out of it; and that only in communism is there salvation, a motto that sounds like St Augustine's famous motto: "*Extra ecclesia (socialismus) nulla salus*".

Löwith draws an almost literal comparison between theology and the philosophy of history: the "original sin" is capitalist oppression, the "chosen people" for the redemption of sin is the proletariat, which has the messianic function of freeing humanity once and for all from oppression through a revolutionary process that will build a new society and a new man, and overcome all contradictions, a true Kingdom of God on earth.

Löwith makes a comparison with the dichotomy printed on history by Augustine in the *City of God*: history has a *telos*, a meaning, a "before" and an "after", a "here" and an "there"; and a line that divides it, no longer transcendent but immanent; no longer entrusted in the hands of a mysteriously provident God, but of a class, the proletariat, which carries with it the mission of realising the philosophy of history and which has its authorised interpreters/priests/prophets in organic intellectuals.

The moment of division, of demarcation is the revolution, the cathartic moment, the *kairós* that dialectically gives history a qualitative leap, from which, once the transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat has passed and private property has been eliminated, all the contradictions will be overcome and there will be no need for the state, replaced by the "self-regulation of associated producers".

About the concept of revolution, Bobbio takes a very close and almost identical position to Löwith, it almost seems as if he is reading the summary of *The Meaning of History*, but without quoting him. Bobbio states:

The idea of revolution as a rupture in historical continuity, as an event protruding into the future, as *renovatio*, has come down to us not through the classical tradition, but through the Judeo-Christian tradition; which leads us to say that the word "revolution" in its modern meaning is new, but the thing it designates is ancient, having entered the history of the West violently with Christianity, and, going even further back in time, through a prophetic conception of history, proper to Judaism. [...] This history moves between two protagonists, the prophet and the messiah, the prophet who anticipates the catastrophic event and the messiah who realises it (BOBBIO, 2000, p. 611).

And he cites W. Benjamin's fragment of *Political Theology* in this regard, but not Löwith.

3. The Russian Revolution: a new society and a new man

For the ancients, "revolutions" were the cyclical transformations of forms of government, from monarchy to tyranny, from tyranny to oligarchy, from oligarchy to democracy, from democracy to monarchy, and so the cycle resumed its endless course. The solution could be found, according to Polybius in antiquity and Machiavelli among the moderns when he commented on the stability of the Roman Republic, in the "mixed form" of government that allowed the monarchical principle to coexist with the aristocratic and popular, and would thus give guarantees of more stability, which was the goal of political coexistence.⁸

But neither the ancients nor Machiavelli imagined revolution as an "absolute" foundational moment, a change not only in the political form, but in the social system.

This is the "metaphysical" novelty that Burke criticises in the French Revolution. From the criticism of the abstract and metaphysical character of human rights comes the criticism of the revolution's claim to build on these "metaphysical rights" a totally *new* man and society, which leads to the justification of revolutionary violence.

These professors, having no way of applying their extreme principles to cases that lack only a qualified, or one could say, civil and legal opposition, don't oppose it at all. With them, it's either a war or a revolution, or nothing at all! [...] The worst thing about these revolutionary speeches is that they harden and insensitize hearts, to prepare them for the desperate blows that are only used on extreme occasions. [...] For some people, plots, massacres and assassinations become a small price to pay to achieve a revolution (BURKE, 1997, p. 92).

Arendt defends the thesis that the concept of revolution, like that of totalitarianism, is modern. In its early days, the term still retained some of the characteristics of its astronomical origin, which indicated a preordained, irresistible, recurring and cyclical movement. In this sense, it meant a restoration, a return to the rule and the old: the restoration of the liberties of the English barons against the absolutist monarchy (in England), or the restoration of the old order of things against abuses

⁸ Machiavelli's novelty was that the mixed form served not to repress conflict, but to allow it to express itself and for the "moods" (*umori*) of the crowd to have their turn before the "moods" of the optimates and thus make the Republic great.

of the colonial government (America) or against the despotism of the absolutist monarchy (France).

Due to its astronomical origin, Arendt notes, the word indicated

a recurrence, a cyclical movement; it is the perfect Latin translation of Polybius' *anaktuklosis*, a term that also originated in astronomy and was used metaphorically in the field of politics. [...] But nothing could be further removed from the original meaning of the word *revolution* than the idea that has obsessively taken hold of all revolutionaries, namely that they are agents in a process that results in the definitive end of an old order and brings about the birth of a new world (ARENDT, 1990, p 34).

This is so true that, in the polemic between Burke and Paine about the meaning of the French Revolution, Paine, in defence of the Revolution, claims that it was restoring an "initial period" and that men were in possession of rights and prerogatives that had been stripped away by tyranny and conquest. And Arendt comments: "Burke was right and Paine was wrong. Since "inalienable political rights, common to all men by virtue of birth, would have seemed to every age before ours the same as it seemed to Burke - a contradiction in terms" (IDEM, p. 37).

The change in meaning came with the deepening of the revolutionary processes, especially in France, when the term began to take on a new meaning, one that will be the one that will take hold, that of a new beginning:

The modern concept of revolution, inextricably linked to the notion that the course of history is suddenly starting in a new direction, that an entirely new history, a history never known or narrated, is about to unfold, was unknown before the two great revolutions at the end of the 18th century [the American and the French] (IDEM, p. 23).

The revolutionary doctrine of the radical transformation of society in order to create a completely new social order (*novus ordo saeculorum*) and a new man (Löwith) has an extremely powerful religious and utopian charge. It is this pretence, this *hybris* that has led revolutions to their success and failure: the pretence of a new absolute foundation for human coexistence generates monsters, "daydreams" turn into nightmares.

The warning of the reactionary Burke remains relevant: from the abstract and metaphysical character of human rights arises the pretence of the revolution to build on

these "metaphysical rights" a totally *new* man and society, which justifies revolutionary violence and terror.

Löwith shows how this claim is a secularisation of the theology of history, an immanent theology that must take place here and now and not in an indefinite afterlife. This powerful religious charge is also a factor that leads to the justification of violent means.

The Russian revolution was more radical and more ambitious than the French revolution, but it did not break with tradition; it established a despotic and autocratic government, not very different from the Tsarist one, from the point of view of the political regime. Unlike France, where terror was defeated, the revolutionary terror of the Bolsheviks became institutionalised in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist period, creating one of the two most radical forms of totalitarianism, according to Arendt (1989). The utopian dream of a revolution that would create a new man and a new society gave way to a totalitarian nightmare. The revolution could have developed differently if Lenin and the Bolsheviks had stuck to the three slogans that brought them to power: an end to the war, all power to the soviets and land to the peasants. However, only the first promise was realised, and the end of the war gave the Bolsheviks enormous popularity and power over the army, but the workers', peasants', soldiers' and sailors' soviets were quickly controlled by the party, which was then in power.

began to identify with the state and lost their autonomy as grassroots powers.

Those who opposed it, such as the Kronstad sailors or the Ukrainian anarchists, were brutally crushed; and the peasants' land, after its initial distribution during the NEP, was brutally nationalised and nationalised at the cost of the deaths of millions of people. Thus, a revolution that began as a popular and mass moment, continued with a coup with the closure of the Constituent Assembly and the seizure of absolute power by the Bolshevik party (AARÃO FILHO, 1999 and 2017)⁹.

On the other hand, it was practically impossible, and Kautsky (1979) and Rosa Luxemburg (1991), from different perspectives, had already seen that a revolution in an economically backward country like Russia, without a minimum democratic tradition, without a minimally organised civil society, could have any other success. This contingent situation further exposed the contradiction of the

⁹ Daniel Aarão Reis Filho's latest book talks about not one, **but four revolutions**, from the 1905 uprising (Bloody Sunday), through the February 1917 revolution, the October 1917 revolution and the 1921 NEP, and states that there was a democratic and popular revolution, but there was also a coup (*golpe*) (REIS FILHO, 2017).

Marxian theory of revolution as a process of dictatorship of the proletariat, which would aim to destroy the bourgeois state and then destroy itself. Nothing could be less "scientific" or more utopian than this perspective. The result was not a dictatorship of the proletariat, but over the proletariat.

The Soviet Union that emerged from the Russian Revolution, with its brutal process of forced modernisation and industrialisation, was closer to what Marx had defined as the "Asian mode of production" than to the socialist mode of production, since it retained many of the traits of authoritarianism and autocracy that characterised Russian history, rather than the libertarian socialism imagined by Marx and Engels.

In conclusion

It seems that the cycle of bourgeois and communist revolutions came to an end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent fall of communism in the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, with repercussions for the other communist regimes in the world. And we don't see the possibility of its resumption on the short and medium-term horizon, at least along the lines of the revolutions we've analysed (unless we consider the "Islamic revolution" to be a form of emancipatory revolution).

But there is a revolution that never stops. While it's true that the bourgeoisie cooled its impetus for political transformation after the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, it's also true that the industrial, technical-scientific revolution has never stopped and continues to revolutionise all human relations, on a global scale, as never before seen in history and as Marx and Engels had shown in their panegyric to the bourgeoisie in the *Communist Manifesto*.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without permanently revolutionising the instruments of production, therefore the relations of production, therefore all social relations. [...] The permanent revolutionization of production, the uninterrupted shaking up of all social conditions, the eternal uncertainty and movement distinguish the epoch of the bourgeoisie from all others. All the fixed and rusty relationships, with their procession of old representations and intuitions, are dissolved, all the newly formed ones grow old before they can ossify. All that was state [or social order - *ständisch*] and stable is volatilised, all that was sacred is desecrated, and men are finally forced to look with prosaic eyes at their position in life, their reciprocal connections. (MARX- ENGELS, 1997, p. 32)

We've already lost count of the technological revolutions that have taken place since the start of the industrial revolution and there's no doubt that the Artificial Intelligent revolution that has only just begun will open new, unknown and unpredictable horizons.

But the question posed by Kant as to whether humanity is moving towards progress remains valid (1992). There is no human or divine guarantee that this progress will be ethically and politically better than the past. There is certainly technical and scientific progress that was unimaginable before the Industrial Revolution, which opens almost infinite possibilities for humanity, both in terms of construction and destruction.

The darkest aspect of modernity as the secularisation of theology has reached an extreme point, in which the fate of the end times (the *eschaton*), a prerogative that was in the hands of God, is now in the hands of men: the atomic bomb, or the ecological bomb, or both combined, open literally apocalyptic scenarios. And there is no longer any religious hope of a *kathecon*, capable of postponing and containing with its powerful force the end of times, the final struggle between Christ and the Antichrist (SCHMITT, 2006).

It's quite possible that, as Marx predicted, capitalism will fall due to its own ever-growing and insoluble contradictions, but everything indicates that this fall will lead not to the "radiant sun of the future", but to the catastrophe of humanity. Because history is not in the safe hands of God and Providence (Augustine), of a Hidden End of Nature (Kant), of the Cunning of Reason (Hegel), or of the Proletarian Revolution (Marx), but in our fragile hands as humans who are too human.

Perhaps the call for possible reforms is more sensible than the call for an impossible revolution.

REFERENCES

ARENDT, Hannah. *Sobre a revolução*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006.

ARENDT, Hannah. *As origens do totalitarismo*. Trad. Roberto Raposo. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1989.

BLUMENBERG, Hans. *La legittimità dell'età moderna*. Genova: Marietti, 1992.

BLUMENBERG, Hans - SCHMITT, Carl. *L'enigma della modernità*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2012.

- BOBBIO, Norberto. Reforma e revolução. In BOBBIO, N. *Teoria Geral da Política*. Org. Michelangelo Bovero – Trad. Daniela Beccaccia Versani. Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier, 2000, p. 577-617.
- BURKE, Edmund. *Reflexões sobre a revolução na França*. Brasília: Editora UnB, 1997.
- COMPARATO, Fábio Konder, *A afirmação histórica dos direitos humanos*. São Paulo: Saraiva 1999.
- HEIDDEGER, M. *A Constituição onto-teológica da Metafísica*. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1999 pp. 185-200 (The Thinkers)
- HOBBSAWM, Eric. *A era das revoluções (1789-1848)*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2009.
- KANT, I. Resposta à questão: o que é o Esclarecimento, In: *A paz perpétua e outros opúsculos*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1990, pp. 11-19
- KANT, I. *Idea di uma história universal do ponto de vista cosmopolita*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1992.
- KAUTSKY, Karl. *A ditadura do proletariado*. São Paulo: Livraria Editora Ciências Humanas, 1979.
- KUHN, Thomas S. *A estrutura das revoluções científicas*. 5a. ed. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva S.A, 1997.
- LÖWITH, Karl. *O significado da história*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1991.
- LYRA, Rubens Pinto. Kautsky, Lenin e o comunismo soviético. *Cronos*, UFRN, Natal, v. 14, n.1, jan./jun. 2013, p. 137-163.
- LUXEMBOURG, Rosa. *A revolução russa*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1991.
- MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. *A ideologia alemã*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001.
- MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. *O manifesto do Partido comunista*. Lisboa: Avanti! 1997.
- MARX, K. *Contribuição à crítica da economia política*. São Paulo: Expresso Popular, 2008.
- PAINE, Thomas. *Os direitos do homem*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2007.
- PLATON, *Carta VII*, 324 c, p. 48.

REIS FILHO, Aarão Daniel. *A revolução russa (1917-1921)*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1999.

REIS FILHO, Aarão Daniel. *A revolução russa e o socialismo soviético*. São Paulo: UNESP, 2017.

ROBESPIERRE, Maximilien. *Rapport sur les idées religieuses et morales. Discours prononcé à la tribune de la Convention le 7 mai 1794..* Available at:

<http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Communism/rob-rel-french.htm>

Accessed on: 15.01.2018.

SCHMITT, C. *Teologia Política*, Belo Horizonte: Del Rey, 2006.