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KARL KORSCH'S IDEOLOGICAL LIFE AND CRITIQUES

Azer Binnatli

Vytautas Magnus University

K. Korsch was famous in Western Europe because of his researches about Marxism. According to him, the theory was important for proletarian movement as an expression of their struggle. His all emphasizes were for the ideological struggle of proletarian and to develop Marxism according to new conditions of social movements. He worked on that and wrote articles, essays and books. Because of these works, he was called sometimes “revisionist”, or protector of Western Marxism. K. Korsch’s attempts to revive Marxism faced with many critiques thus many scholars analyse his philosophy. To understand the reason of this criticism against him, this paper will investigate K. Korsch’s political and ideological life.

Keywords: Karl Korsch, Western Marxism, Proletarian, Ideological Life, Critiques.

Introduction. Karl Korsch was a Marxist theorist, who was different from others with his knowledge. Western Marxism is of interest to historians of Marxism and both academic and practicing Marxists as well as those critically analysing the legacy of 20th century Marxist authors. K. Korsch was member of Western Marxism as well. He focused on some themes of Marxism as ideology and consciousness (Norton, 1978). His one different features were that he understood K. Marx and F. Engel’s theories and theories of bourgeois, additionally, he attempted to link each other. K. Korsch focuses on Marxism from “historical specificity” (Jenks, 1940). He analysed and tried to relate theory and practice, however, these attempts were killed when J. Stalin came to power, and Marxism was misused by him. He became ultra-leftist after rejected leadership of KDP and it led him to break up with working class. When he was in exile, K. Korsch was away from Marxism. The defeat of the socialist revolution in Western affected him badly. K. Korsch’s attempts to revive Marxism faced with many critiques thus many scholars analyse his philosophy. To understand the reason of this criticism against him, this paper will investigate K. Korsch’s political and ideological life.

1. The scientific problem: The divergence of Western Marxists’ approach about Marxism

2. The object: K. Korsch’s ideological life

3. The goal: to analyze the origin of K. Korsch’s Marxist philosophy

4. The tasks: a) To research K. Korsch’s political life; b) to analyze conflicts he faced; c) to evaluate critiques of K. Korsch

Early years of K. Korsch political life

K. Korsch was famous in Western Europe because of his researches about Marxism. During his years of youthful, K. Korsch was considering that he was a defender of socialism and trying to emphasize positive as democracy sides of socialism. (USPD) (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

K. Korsch was a member of proletarian movement in Germany (Gordin & Oertzen, 1965). K. Korsch who was the member of Berlin Socialization Committee wrote papers for this magazine

“Arbeiterrat” which was revolutionary. Between 1918–1920, he approached this movement from optimistic view and between 1920–1922 his attitude was that more critical opinions were more required (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

After capitalism grew stronger in Germany, the activity of workers’ movement decreased and thus K. Korsch attempted to find answer reason of this failure happened in 1918–1920. For other Marxists, there was no revolutionary organization to raise the power of workers’ movement. In contrasts with others, “Korsch emphasized that the theoretical and cultural preconditions for such a seizure of power were also lacking” (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). After the political power of bourgeois declined in 1918, there was no any obstacle to prevent society to pass to socialism from capitalism. The absence of three-factor did not make possible this transformation to realize (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

1) socio-psychological preconditions;

2) decisive belief which would be a stimulator for masses;

3) knowledge that how to pass to the first step.

According to K. Korsch, there was not decisive ideology, strong political leadership in the movement and it led to the failure of the revolution. These factors shaped his next works. He wrote ‘Labour Law for Factory Councils’ about the proletarian law in 1922. According to K. Korsch, the enlightenment of workers with the proletarian law was the vital factor in this movement (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

It is obvious to see K. Korsch’s Leninist propensity in ‘Labour Law for Factory Councils’ (1922). In this work, K. Korsch emphasized that proletarian institutions need trade unions, party and particularly council (Goode, 1979). This view was opposed by German leftists like Pannekoek and Gorter (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). As it had been stated in “Marxism and Philosophy” (1923):

“Korsch’s work on factory councils and its incipient development towards Leninism contrasts with that of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who was engaged in the Turin Soviet movement over the same period. Like Korsch, Grams-

ci tried to theorize the spontaneous movement of workers' power released by the 1914–18 war. Like Korsch, Gramsci tried to theorize the spontaneous movement of workers' power released by the 1914–18 war.” (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

K. Korsch and Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci had similarity with each other. According to A. Gramsci, the party was a vital factor, in addition, he also noted the necessity of ideological, cultural struggle. The reason of this attitude by both Marxists was that ideological power of ruling class allow them to dominate other classes of capitalist society. For both A. Gramsci and K. Korsch, the most important goal must be an ideological struggle in proletarian movement. In their opinion, the first revolution had to be implemented inside Second International to erase fatalistic and mechanist tendency. In his opinion, legal regulation is the most important factor for this movement to achieve its aim. The same attempts were seen in A. Gramsci's works which related to workers' movement and trying to show the importance of proletarian institutions. But the difference between these two persons was that K. Korsch considered Leninism as an unavoidable tool against bourgeois state in contrast to A. Gramsci (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). In addition, according to K. Korsch, the important reason for failure of movement was optimistic approach of Second International (Bokina, 1984).

After he came back from the war, in 1920, he joined USDP and participated in the conference (Bathrick, 1974). He did not agree with “21 points” system. The members voted to unite with Communists. He had “21 points “reservation, however afterwards he decided to stay together with members. The reason was that he was not in favour of to be within the small sect. “21 points” was part of Russian's centralization policy. According to him, decentralization was a better policy and policy of the workers' soviet were more appropriate. Karl Korsch moved to a new house in Jena, and this house was also the place where he worked with the KDP papers. Afterwards, K. Korsch worked in Socialization Commission in Berlin. This commission had social-democratic members, which was bourgeois organization and working on socialist economy problems in the organization. The Commission intended to draft a plan for the socialization of the German economy. According to his wife Hedda Korsch: “Karl was not nearly as sceptical as so intelligent a person should have been. He was also an enthusiast and his writings on socialization reflected this for nearly a year.” (Korsch, 1972).

The origin of K. Korsch's Marxist philosophy

According to him, the theory was important for proletarian movement as an expression of their struggle. Thus, he worked to develop a theory of Marxism and this process consisted of two stages:

1st stage – He prepared brochures, articles about main principles of Marxism for party members.

2nd stage – He analysed the reason for the decay of Marxism.

In the first stage, he wrote an essay, “Elements of the Materialist Conception of History” (1922) which analyse Marxism and philosophy, mention about the relationship between theory and practice. He utilized and defined basic concepts of Marxism like “class struggle”, “dialectic” in this work

(Korsch, 2017). The name of K. Korsch's other work was “Critique of the Gotha Programme” (1922). The main issue here was about the actuality of Marxism on the proletarian movement (Korsch, 1970).

In the second stage, his work, “Marxism and Philosophy” was published in 1923. The main factor in the growth of “Marxism and Philosophy” (1923), was proletarian movement in Germany and K. Korsch's own knowledge. In this work, he was worry that Marxists and bourgeois philosophers who could not grasp death reason of Hegelian philosophy in 1840, could not connect Hegelian dialectic idealism and Marx's dialectic materialism. If they understood this relationship, the dialectical and material connection between bourgeois and idealism would be comprehensible in their revolutionary period before 1848. Hegelian idealism was the expression of revolutionary bourgeois and it died when bourgeoisie lost its revolutionary character. After bourgeoisie, proletarian became a revolutionary class and its theoretical expression was dialectical materialism. Thus, Marxist materialism by itself is the one way to understand the connection between bourgeois philosophy and Marxist materialism (Dupre, 1972).

The Second International underestimated the relationship between Marxism and bourgeois philosophy. Death of revolutionary feature of Second International was the answer of this underestimation. For instance, they did not analyse the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. They operated passively by avoiding revolution and to analyse the current situation. K. Korsch started to analyse the history of Marxism and revolutionary movement of European workers to grasp reason of this crisis. The revolutionary movement appeared in Europe after 1917. At that time, Lenin connected theory and practice, so K. Korsch attempted to do the same thing. As it had been mentioned above, the ideological struggle was important for him. Thus, he stated that it is a vital factor to fight against bourgeois ideology by scientific socialism after the revolution, in another case, it would be impossible to defeat a bourgeois ideology. On the proletarian law prepared by him, K. Korsch noted the importance of the struggle against bourgeois apparatus which was underestimated by vulgar-Marxists. Without struggle, the mere critic was pointless according to him. Every society includes a socio-economic system in its material base. To destroy this structure in practice, struggle, in theory, was required. Thus, to defeat bourgeois philosophy in theory and practice, these two actions were necessary for proletarian movement (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

K. Korsch and George Lukacs

K. Korsch and G. Lukacs had similarity in their theories about victorious revolution and links between Marx and Engels (1923) (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

“So far as I have been able to establish, I am happily in fundamental agreement with the themes of the author (Lukacs), which relate in many ways to the question raised in this work, if based on a broader philosophical foundation. In so far as there are still differences of opinion between us on particular issues of substance and method, I reserve a more comprehensive position for a later discussion.” (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

K. Korsch was happy to have similar opinions with G. Lukacs in these themes, however, he also was aware of being the difference between each other in some issues. K. Korsch noted that he did not have any published view about G. Lukacs's work, although he realized that discrepancy was wider than he thought. Their different attitude to Communism did not let them cooperate. The obvious difference was that K. Korsch did not stay as a member of the Communist movement, unlike G. Lukacs. According to Hedda Korsch, he did not meet with G. Lukacs while he was writing "Marxism and Philosophy" (1923). When he started to publish volumes of this work, he got information about G. Lukacs. K. Korsch said to his wife that it appeared in another book that expresses similarly his ideas. When K. Korsch lectured, G. Lukacs was one of those who came to listen to her all the time and, he participated in many discussions with K. Korsch. He and G. Lukacs had different political positions. As it had been mentioned above, G. Lukacs was a member of the communist party, and K. Korsch separated his ways with there. Both were critical communists according to themselves. According to K. Korsch, G. Lukacs' idealist philosophy side still appeared more than himself (Korsch, 1972). K. Korsch's view on Marxism was seen similar to G. Lukacs (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

Both stated that Karl Marx was affected by Hegel's philosophy. K. Korsch analysed mostly K. Marx's later works and he emphasized from "Introduction to Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1922) till "Karl Marx" (1938), that K. Marx's theory was not pure one, revolutionary ideas was included in his theory as well. K. Korsch's goal was to indicate that Marxism is more than pure philosophy and it is a bridge between theory and practice.

Political conflicts in K. Korsch's ideological life

The response to "Marxism and Philosophy" (1923) was harsh by Social Democrats and Communists. Karl Kautsky did not give a review about K. Korsch's attitude to Hegel and ideological struggle in Die Gesellschaft. He agreed that Marxism in Second International lost its revolutionary character (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). He noted that K. Korsch indicated Marxism as only theory of social revolution. According to him, Marxism states the possibility of social revolution under specific conditions, period and land. However, Communism had to remember this (Korsch, 1938). K. Korsch faced with many critical attacks in this conference

The other attacks came from Soviet Communist Politician Grigory Zinoviev against K. Korsch, G. Lukacs and Antonio Graziadei in Fifth Conference of Comintern. G. Zinoviev indicated the hostile position to A. Graziadei's revisionism against Marxism and G. Lukacs's attitude to philosophy sociology. According to him, expected defeat would happen in Communist International if these Marxists would tend to revisionism and this kind of tendency will not be allowed (Kahan, 1976). Another attack was from Soviet Marxist philosopher Abram Deborin and Luppel (Korsch, 1938). He gave critic statements about K. Korsch and G. Lukacs's idealism (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). After 1923 when the discussion was held on his criticism, K. Korsch's position was called "heretical" and he was fired from Third International (Mattick, 1962).

After Lenin died, everything began to change in Russia, and K. Korsch was worried about it. In Thuringia, the members of the KDP were doing everything for the welfare of the people and there were meetings and debates. After a while, the number of instructions from Moscow began to increase. In these instructions, the topics of the KDP meetings were written. According to him, the KDP was the only party to fight this order. K. Korsch, who attended in the Comintern's 5th congress in 1924 in Moscow, was aware that he was in danger. Because he was against the Soviet leadership and had an anti-Soviet talk about it. Because of this, he left Moscow earlier than it had been planned, and he could not make such an impact. There was much difference in political views of members in Weimar Republic KDP. From 1924 till 1929 Bolshevization process happened in KPD, and Party was involved with Stalinist ideology. K. Korsch showed opposition position to Party because they obeyed Russian Party. In the Fifth World Congress of Comintern, K. Korsch faced with attacks by Russian Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin, because of his critic article about Bukharin (Kahan, 1976). K. Korsch had been influenced by Russian Revolution, he altered a lot from his character aspect. K. Korsch was fired in 1925 from Die Internationale and opposed Party leadership after it was recognized that K. Korsch disserved his way with Fischer-Maslow group. In 1925 The Tenth Congress of Party was held, organizational 'Bolshevization' of the party was supported by Congress. This tendency led to control of Soviet to strengthen on Party. Although according to KDP, "relative stabilization" dominated capitalist societies, K. Korsch did not agree with this statement and formed "*Kommunistische Politik*" in 1926 (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

He met with people from oppositional groups like Amadeo Bordiga who founded Communist Party of Italy, socialist militant Timofei Vladimirovich Saprionov from Russian Workers' Opposition. They discussed to commence plan for oppositional insurrection and they came to decision to work together. According to them, as a first step, it was necessary to remove the dependence of many groups from the centre and to give them freedom. T. Saprionov and K. Korsch began to write cryptographically signed letters with one another. However, according to Hedda Korsch, this act was very stupid. Because it was easy to solve these codes (Korsch, 1972).

Korsch-Katz group was ultra-leftist and did not agree with New Economic Policy. The policy of Soviet State was opposed by Katz's group and they named Stalin as *Bauernnapoleon* and called his policy as "dictatorship of Kulaks". According to K. Korsch, Comintern was utilized by Russia for its foreign policy as a tool. At that time, there was an oppositional movement of workers under the leadership of Alexander Shlyapnikov and T. Saprionov in Russia, thus K. Korsch showed his supportive position to this tendency, however K. Korsch's position was opposed by Leon Trotsky. The reason L. Trotsky's opposition about K. Korsch was his harsh critic opinions about the Soviet Union. It was vital for them to be in an oppositional position to K. Korsch's opinions in their platform held in 1927 (Trotsky, 1929). Although, K. Korsch did not correspond with L. Trotsky, he agreed with some

ideas like a permanent revolution. According to L. Trotsky, class struggle has different meanings. His main goal was not to raise the consciousness of the working class, but the power of party leadership. According to K. Korsch, L. Trotsky was just playing a game (Korsch, 1972).

K. Korsch had critical opinions about Comintern and this led him to be attacked by N. Bukharin and G. Zinoviev. G. Zinoviev called him “an insane petty bourgeois”. K. Korsch was demanded to leave Reichstag or in another case, he would be fired from KDP. K. Korsch chose the second option and quitted his political activity in KDP in 1926. He continued his political life for next two years and worked in Reichstag. KDP was erased from ultra-leftists and these groups established small groups. K. Korsch wanted to cooperate with R. Fischer and A. Maslow. This action was not accepted by Katz and he called K. Korsch as “another Lenin”. After “Resolute lefts” was separated, K. Korsch united his followers in *Kommunistische Politik*. K. Korsch stopped to be part of some political organization after this magazine ended to work in 1928 (Korsch & Halliday, 2013).

After breaking his ways with Bolsheviks in 1926, he continued his career as a spokesman of left-wing of the Communist Party (Hammer, 1978). K. Korsch started to write papers for some journals after 1928 when he decided to be independent of some organizations and prepared 1st part of Karl Marx’s “Capital” (1932). He was deported by Hitler in 1933 and moved to other countries like England, Denmark, United States. He started to be a lecturer in 1928, Karl-Marx-Schule school, after 5 years, K. Korsch ceased to give lectures here.

He made underground meetings with big groups involving Social Democrats, trades unions, Communists, Christians to make oppositional meetings against Hitler, however, the majority of them were arrested or killed. K. Korsch who could escape from Hitler was invited by Brecht to Denmark in 1933. In Denmark, he applied to many workplaces but was rejected because K. Korsch was considered as a Nazi agent (Korsch, 1972). However, he was assigned to write a book about Karl Marx by London School of Economics. K. Korsch who was a member of “*Gesellschaft für empirische Philosophie*”, started to analyse the political situation of colonial countries and expected consequences after their liberation.

After 1928, he started to be a lecturer and met with Bertolt Brecht. In 1933 he left Germany and he gave a political speech last time on the same day. He criticized K. Kautsky’s view by analysing his “*Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung*” (The Materialist Conception of History; 1896) in 1929, and after one year, he defended K. Kautsky’s views when he indicated in 1923, in “Marxism and Philosophy”. K. Korsch wrote “Theses on Hegel and Revolution” in 1931 and according to him, the ideology of the Enlightenment was in peak point in Hegel’s philosophy which he indicated limits in bourgeois philosophy (Korsch, 1977). This philosophy was utilized by K. Marx, F. Engels and V. Lenin with different ways. Thus, the bourgeois revolution was the foundation for the theory of proletarian as an expression of their movement. Afterwards, as it had been quoted below:

K. Korsch published his “Karl Marx” in which he investigated Marx’s philosophy, in 1938. There was the difference between investigation ways of “Marxism and Philosophy” (1923) and “Karl Marx” (1938). In first work, he analysed the relationship between Marxism and classical bourgeois philosophy, in the second one he emphasized the connection between Marxism philosophy and classical economic theory (Korsch, 2017). K. Korsch analysed K. Marx’s philosophy and how he related his philosophy with science. K. Korsch investigated his speech in German Workers Association in Brussel (Korsch & Halliday, 2013). According to K. Korsch, in K. Marx’s early works, the philosophical influence was seen, however, he tended scientific formation when he analysed the political economy in his later works, however, K. Marx did not leave philosophical formation (Korsch, 2017).

K. Korsch and Brecht became a closer friend during his exile. The reason why Brecht chose K. Korsch and Fritz Sternberg as his teacher, was their anti-orthodox Marxist position. Brecht and K. Korsch had different political views, however, they protected their friendships, they were together in Denmark, did not break their relationship when K. Korsch went to the US.

He was not happy in his last years because of actions happened in his early life. He did not attend in any political struggle during exile and in 1953 after Stalin’s death, during De-Stalinization era happened in the Soviet Union and this tendency was hope for K. Korsch. He did have a positive opinion about the Soviet Union or world revolution. K. Korsch’s last hope was colonial countries. His main aim was to develop Marxism as much as other science according to changing situation of a new epoch. In contrast to some Marxists, K. Korsch stressed the necessity of theoretical and cultural preconditions excepting revolutionary organizations. In addition, after being utilized of Marxism for political purposes of Soviet, he opposed the centralization of Soviet Union and his position was on revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism. During 1960s-70s, he was doing leadership to New Left and left-oppositional with his ideas (Hammer, 1978).

K. Korsch’s critique

Paul Mattick wrote essays about K. Korsch which was sympathetic (Philips, 1981). He could not come to an exact decision about K. Korsch’s aim. Because in his opinion, K. Korsch’s aim was unclear because of some reason as the complexity of matter about Marxism, or he had attempts to understand the situation of his time in the world or because of his illness. According to him, K. Korsch’s accurate message was clear in his “Time of Abolition” (Mattick, 2003). In this work, K. Korsch searched possible ways of removing of the way of capitalist production, and to declare Marxism as a realistic ideology by eliminating its utopian characters. He used mostly K. Korsch’s “Marxism and Philosophy” (1923) to prove that Marxism is not an ideology which is static and belongs to past. P. Mattick analysed this book and came to decision that it was not written to find the only relationship between Marxism and philosophy, but to solve the practical and theoretical problem of Marxism. He saw sinner of all setbacks of Marxism in capita-

list mode of production. In his opinion, all endeavours by K. Korsch was related to unconsciousness proletarian class, that's why he wanted to develop a revolutionary side of Marxism.

According David Bathrick, K. Korsch wrote "Crisis of Marxism" in 1931 with the reason that he wanted to analyse alteration of nature of Marxism by Marxists and these changes cause a crisis of Marxism (Bathrick, 1974). K. Korsch came to decision that, denaturing of the content of Marxism meant changing of K. Marx and Engels's theory. D. Bathrick claimed that K. Korsch attempted to emphasize the evolution of K. Marx's and F. Engels's thoughts, not to reintegrate correct sense of K. Marx's theory (Bathrick, 1974). K. Korsch was against to restore of "pure" theory. According to D. Bathrick, "Crisis of Marxism" (1931) is not developed essay by setting this question:

"To what extent are Marx and Engels themselves responsible for such a development? To what extent does the evolution of a new revolutionary theory imply a synthesis with the old? To what extent does Korsch imply an almost necessarily unmediated split between subjective revolutionary theory and the science of the laws of capitalism? Does not the decline of political movement imply a dissolution of the theory itself?" (Bathrick, 1974).

As it had been mentioned in previous chapters, K. Korsch's main aim was to revive and alter Marxism ideology on the fundamental ideas of K. Marx's and F. Engels's, suiting new time conditions as a weapon of the proletarian movement. D. Bathrick stated that Marx and Engels perhaps did not form Marxism ideology for latter centuries or how it can be possible to be suitable of new and old theories for the revolutionary movement in the different conditions of a new time? K. Korsch indicated K. Marx followed Hegelian's philosophy which was not general but specific belonging to 17-18th-century bourgeois revolutionary. However, Marxism developed with the reason of being non-dogmatic (Korsch, 1931). The answer to the last question of this quote was that K. Korsch indicated that the reason why Marxism decayed in Russia was weakening of proletarian movement by being in limitation by Stalin (Korsch, 1938). D. Bathrick noted that the aim of "Crisis of Marx-

ism" (1931) was meant to perceive any theory with relation to the phrase of political class struggle (Bathrick, 1974). According to D. Bathrick, "Crisis of Marxism" (1931) was involved with oppositions and it makes this essay important and original (Bathrick, 1974). In his opinion, K. Korsch's main goal was to research how unified theory and practice by other Marxists. In addition, K. Korsch understood that crisis of Marxism implied a crisis of proletarian. In K. Korsch's view renovation, in theory, could be a possible renovation in the struggle. However, according to D. Bathrick, K. Korsch did not recommend regeneration in theory which could explain this crisis (Bathrick, 1974).

K. Korsch's position on Marxism was that "Marxism is not positive", but it criticized society. Stalin utilized fundamentals ideas of Marxism for himself to strengthen and for his political aims. David Craven stated that Marxism served to establish society owning single consciousness in Russia. K. Korsch's point was that the aim of Marxism was to prevent society to be built in one consciousness by authority (Korsch, 1935). According to D. Craven, this kind of Marxism reminds basic criticism of European Enlightenment and Schapiro's art historical methodology. So, D. Craven noted that M. Schapiro utilized K. Korsch's this position on Marxism in his "Style" essay (1953) (Craven, 1994).

Conclusion. D. Bathrick, P. Mattick, D. Craven alleged confusion in K. Korsch's Marxist philosophy. The origin of this problem occurred from the political conflicts in his life after separation of Marxism. Benjamin E.'s alleged that K. Korsch's Marxist philosophy for the proletarian movement was impractical. Because classic Marxism reflects past in its idea. On the other hand, P. Mattick stated that Marxism can be utilized in the struggle of working class. As said by him, the one way to develop Marxism is to change it according to social movements of a new epoch. In addition, on the way to defeat capitalist mode, the one method was to remove science and philosophy of capitalism. Accordingly, K. Korsch's all emphasizes were for the ideological struggle of proletarian and to develop Marxism according to new conditions of social movements. In addition, Soviet Union had impacts in incomprehensibility of his philosophy.

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