

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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The first traces of Marxism in Portugal date back to the second half of the 19th century. Alfredo Margarido identified the first reference to Karl Marx by a law student in 1852, named Oliveira Pinto (Margarido, A Introdução do Marxismo em Portugal [The Introduction of Marxism in Portugal], 1975, p.41). However, between the late 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, while in other countries the workers' movement had found a powerful source of inspiration in Marxist ideas, in Portugal republican and/or anarchist ideas predominated among the main social movements. It was only from the mid-1930s, after the 1929 world crisis and the establishment of the Estado Novo [New State], and at the time of the Popular Front in France and the Spanish Civil War, that Marxism began to assume greater relevance in Portugal, positioning itself ambivalently towards the legacies of republicanism and anarchism: while those who had formerly lent their voice to republican and/or anarchist causes were among the initial cultivators of Marxism, its rise occurred precisely by severing all links with these republican and anarchist political cultures, which were frequently explicitly repudiated by the Marxists.

Both the political dynamics of the Partido Comunista Português [Portuguese Communist Party] (PCP) - after a reorganisation of the party which had begun in the early 1940s - and the cultural activity of the neorealist movement - already visible in the late 1930s - were responsible for the establishment of a specific place for Marxism in Portuguese history (Madeira, Os Engenheiros de Almas [The Engineers of Souls], 1996; Nunes, "Comunismo, antifascism e intelectuais" ["Communism, anti-fascism and intellectuals", 1996; Pereira, Álvaro Cunhal, 1999).

The two-fold origin of Marxism in Portugal - affiliated to the party-political sphere on the one hand, and the cultural field on the other - marked its path from the 1940s onwards. Its affirmation was as much due to the practices of a set of leaders, writers and artists, whose names are often highlighted when recalling the resistance to the dictatorship of the Estado Novo, as to the practices of anonymous militants with or without intellectually driven educational and labour trajectories. Beyond a doctrine and general theory or a specific party-political programme, in Portugal, from the late 1930s, Marxism represented an ideological culture within

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which several thousand people dedicated themselves to the analysis, representation or transformation of the existing situation.

Discursive practices, embodying both individualisation processes of an intellectual and/or militant nature—where the author and leader were the most outstanding figures - and those of a collective nature, stemmed from Marxism as an ideological culture. Among the collective processes, in addition to Avante! [Onward!], the central body of the PCP, there were also editorial initiatives in the late 1930s, such as the periodicals O Diabo [The Devil] and Sol Nascente [Rising Sun], and from the 1940s onwards the journal Vértice [Vertex], not to mention other regional and local titles which, in several cases, preceded these more famous periodicals (Trindade, O espírito do diabo [The devil's spirit], 2004; Pita, Conflito e unidade no neo-realismo [Conflict and unity in neo-realism], 2002; Andrade, Utopia, intelectuais e comunismo [Utopia, intellectuals and communism], 2010; Dias, O "Vértice" de uma renovação cultural [The "Vertex" of a cultural renewal], 2012). All these publications were subject to the censorship that remained in force until the fall of the Estado Novo, which also conditioned various informal and formal encounters - through lectures, conferences, colloquia, and meetings of a public, semi-public or clandestine nature - during which, Marxism nonetheless advanced on its course.

Mathematics, philosophy, painting, agriculture, science and sport were among the subjects under consideration by the Marxists, as well as several others including history, in whose research and writing a number of Marxists were engaged. The importance of the study of the past for Marxism may be underlined at two levels. First, such study participated in the formation of Marxism as a specific ideological tradition - that is, just as Marxists proposed new forms of political and artistic practice, they also advocated new ways of practising historiographical activity, the latter constituting a breeding ground for a Marxist way of being sensitive to reality and of producing meaning from it. Second, the study of the past guided the political intervention of Marxists, to the extent that the knowledge produced by Marxist historiography was, at times, mobilised to certify the validity of specific strategic undertakings and to disavow others.

The encounter between Marxism and historiography in Portugal has received little attention from current historians. This may be due to several circumstances, from the lesser relevance of Marxism in today's political-ideological and academic landscape to the general tendency among historians to subject historiography itself to historiographical analysis and criticism. However, some contributions are worthy of note, such as the controversy - at the same time memorialistic and historiographical - of the early 1990s between Jorge Borges de Macedo and Fernando Piteira Santos (Jornal de Letras, 21 July 1992, p.6), and the research conducted within the scope of the History of History or the History of Communism (Madeira, "Os novos remexedores da História" ["The new stirrers of History"], 2007; Neves, Comunismo e Nacionalismo em Portugal [Communism and Nationalism in Portugal], 2008). Such contributions constitute the bibliographical framework that have made this text possible.

**Historical Phases of Marxist Historiography** 

In an attempt to trace the presence of Marxism in historiography in Portugal between the mid-1930s and 1974 (the upper chronological limit of this dictionary), three phases of its emergence and consolidation may be highlighted.

The first phase was marked by the commitment to Marxism of a group of historians, mainly graduates from the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa [Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon] in the late 1930s and early 1940s, who participated in both political initiatives carried out by the opposition movements in general and the PCP in particular, and in cultural and scientific initiatives within the university and publishing environment, an example of which is the Biblioteca Cosmos [Cosmos Library], directed by Bento de Jesus Caraça (Neves, "A Biblioteca Cosmos" ["The Cosmos Library"], 2006). From an institutional point of view, this first phase of Marxist historiography gained expression - albeit rather fleetingly - in the Sociedade Portuguesa para a História da Civilização [Portuguese Society for the History of Civilisation] (SPHC).

The SPHC, an initiative of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho in 1947, brought together the young Jorge Borges de Macedo, entrusted by Godinho with the more executive tasks, other young historians who had been Godinho's former students, such as Joaquim Barradas de Carvalho, and also historians such as António José Saraiva, Armando Castro and Flausino Torres. Although the Annales school, with whom Godinho had already established a close relationship at the time, was the central reference of the SPHC project, it was at the hand of a group of its authors that the first historiographical works which may be referred to as Marxist emerged (Carvalho, As invenções técnicas e a história económica [Technical inventions and economic history], 1944; Torres, Religiões Primitivas [Primitive Religions], 1944; Azevedo, Condições Económicas da Revolução Portuguesa de 1820 [Economic Conditions of the Portuguese Revolution of 1820], 1944; Saraiva, Para a História da Cultura em Portugal [Towards a History of Culture in Portugal], 1946; Castro, Introdução ao estudo da economia portuguesa [Introduction to the study of the Portuguese Economy], 1947; Macedo, A situação económica no tempo de Pombal [ The economic situation during the Pombaline era], 1951). It should also be noted that, with the exception of Magalhães Godinho himself, several of the members of the SPHC were members of, or had strong sympathies with, the PCP.

The second phase of Marxist historiography's affirmation in Portugal began in the late 1950s and lasted through the 1960s, marking a decade in which works by new authors flourished. The provenance of these new authors was relatively diverse, although they all equally maintained a relationship of sympathy and/or militancy with the PCP. Some were part of a small and ephemeral group of historical studies formed in the Peniche prison, bringing together militants and Party leaders. Álvaro Cunhal and António Borges Coelho were noteworthy figures among this group with their works regarding 1383 (Coelho, A Revolução de 1383 [The Revolution of 1383], 1965; Cunhal, Les luttes de classe au Portugal à la fin du moyen âge, 1967 [former versions of this text had been published in French Marxist magazines a few years earlier]) between the 1950s and the 1960s. However, while Cunhal's historiographical production did not advance any further, Borges Coelho then embarked on a long path, during which he focused on themes such as the Arab presence,

Portuguese expansion, the Inquisition, among others, until the writing of his more recent new history of Portugal, in several volumes (Coelho, História de Portugal [History of Portugal], 2010-2013).

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On the fringes of the Peniche Group, but also publishing their first work in the 1960s, Victor de Sá and José Manuel Tengarrinha were also prominent figures in this second phase, namely due to their contributions to the history of the 19th century. Their first studies (Tengarrinha, "Tradição e Revolução I - As Reformas Económicas de Mouzinho da Silveira" ["Tradition and Revolution I - Mouzinho da Silveira's Economic Reforms"], 1961; Sá, Perspectivas do Século XIX [Nineteenth Century Perspectives], 1964), as will be seen further ahead, offer the reader a different vision of the 19th century from that advanced by the Marxist historians of the 1940s, while establishing the first outlines of several study areas, such as the history of the workers' movement or the history of social movements, and performing new analyses of several cultural objects and practices, such as the press and reading (Tengarrinha, História da Imprensa Periódica Portuguesa [History of the Portuguese Periodical

Press], 1965; Tengarrinha, A novela e o leitor português [The novel and the Portuguese reader], 1973).

Finally, the third phase of Marxist historiography in Portugal began in the first half of the 1970s, extending throughout that same decade. Although most of the works of the historians involved in this third phase were published after 1974 and are therefore not discussed at length herein, it is nevertheless important to mention their emergence. While some of the contributions of these new historians gave continuity to former concerns, others severed all links with the Marxist past in Portugal. This shift was all the more visible in authors whose political career had been detached from the PCP - when not deliberately against it - and close to the extreme left currents that had developed with the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict, with Francisco Martins Rodrigues' split from the PCP and the radicalisation of the student movement. Claiming a purer and more consistent interpretation of Marxism than that which was permitted within the sphere of the PCP, authors such as César Oliveira, Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Fernando Medeiros and José Pacheco Pereira, albeit with divergent political-ideological references, sought to develop a historiography particularly aimed at the study of the workers' movement, building on the work of Sá and Tengarrinha, but advancing in the study of the 20th century (Pereira, As lutas operárias contra a carestia de vida em Portugal [Workers' struggles against the high cost of living in Portugal], 1971; Oliveira, O operariado e a República Democrática [The workers and the Democratic Republic], 1972; Cabral, O desenvolvimento do capitalismo em Portugal [The development of capitalism in Portugal] 1976; Medeiros, A sociedade e a economia nas origens do Salazarismo [Society and economy at the root of Salazarism], 1978). Focusing specifically on the period from the late 19th century to the very death throes of the Primeira República [First Republic], they set out in search of an answer to the fall of the latter, the absence of a social revolution and the durability of the Estado Novo.

In short, considering these three phases in their entirety, from the young people whose alignment with Marxism was framed by the Second World War to those who were devoted followers after May 68, three lines of continuity may immediately be noted. First and foremost, most of the Marxist historiographical activity was conducted on the fringes of the Portuguese university, from which the Marxist historians were almost always

excluded until 25 April 1974. Some worked in foreign universities, in France, Czechoslovakia or Brazil, and divided the time devoted to research with the professional tasks required of them as a source of income - in the fields of translation, journalism and advertising, but also in non-intellectual occupations. Secondly, all these historians were not only social scientists who intervened in the historiographical field, but also intellectuals who made themselves heard in the political arena. Alongside their historiographical work, they sought to denounce the regime in force in Portugal at the time and capitalism as a world system, swaying in the priority given to criticism of the latter and to the former, while also condemning Portuguese colonialism. Thirdly, themes of a political, social and economic nature predominated in the research conducted throughout the three phases under study, even though one of the Portuguese works inspired by Marxism with the greatest repercussions was in the field of culture (Saraiva and Lopes, História da Literatura Portuguesa [History of Portuguese Literature], 1954).

# **Problematic Strands of Marxist History**

Considering that which distinguished Marxist historiography from other historiographical traditions, but also the diversity internal to any and every historiographical tradition, this text on the course of Marxist historiography in Portugal is structured around three problematic strands: (1) the national circumscription of historical space (under the banner of national independence and patriotism) and the insertion of national history in an international dynamic (under the banner of anti-imperialism and internationalism); (2) the identification of the determining factors of the historical process, in pursuit of the causality leading to the identification of reasons that were, on the one hand, typical of the social-economic structure and, on the other, of political action; (3) and finally, the configuration of this political action, and in this regard with the development of interpretative tendencies of a more avant-garde or egalitarian nature.

## National Independence and Anti-imperialism

In the Portugal of the late 1930s, the then few Marxists sought to denounce what, in their view, was the excessive attention devoted to the past. In those years when the cultural policy of the Estado Novo invested greatly in the cult of the past, with the commemorations of the two hundredth anniversary and the exhibitions of the Portuguese world, a young man by the name of Fernando Piteira Santos, still a student at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, and already navigating within the orbit of the PCP, criticised what he referred to as "verbose pastism" (Santos, "Considerações acerca da vida pública e dos meus compatriotas" ["Considerations regarding public life and my compatriots"], 1939). Criticism of this nature was all the more vehement since it was based on the understanding of several young Marxists of their militant mission: still under the impulse of the 1917 revolution, this mission was undertaken with the aim of precipitating a future deemed to be in keeping with their ideals. In order that humanity might more quickly embrace that tomorrow, they regarded the past as a burden from which the present needed to free itself.

However, the situation changed from the 1940s onwards. During the course of this decade, not only greater investment in historiographical research was observed among the Marxists, but also increased interest in the past itself, which cannot be dissociated from the nationalisation process of Marxism. In contrast to the dominant narratives, Marxist historiography sought to understand the past in its universality and internationality, but simultaneously promoted the constitution of a new nationalism, alternative to both the official nationalism - albeit with continuities that were by no means negligible - and to the nationalism that was characteristic of other sectors standing in opposition to the regime, namely those inspired by republicanism. At stake here was an elaboration of a Marxist vision of the History of Portugal, which was not even lacking in the practice of synthesis conventionally employed in National History (Torres, Portugal. Uma Perspectiva da sua História [Portugal - A Perspective of its History] 1974; Castro, Lições de História de Portugal [Lessons in the History of Portugal II].

The shift in Marxism from a criticism of the past's nationalisation to the assertion of an alternative national past was part of a broader turnaround within the communist movement which led Marxist intellectuals and communist leaders to hold themselves up as the best representatives of the nation and the people. The historical circumstances of this shift - from the failure of the world revolution in the aftermath of 1917 to 'socialism in a single country', to the adoption of an anti-fascist strategy in the 1930s and the nationalisation of anti-colonialism - are well known, their expression covering an enormous thematic range, from literature to economics and sport, and also encompassing history (Mevius, The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe 1918 - 1989, 2011; Neves, Comunismo e Nacionalismo em Portugal [Communism and Nationalism in Portugal], 2008).

Broadly speaking, it may be said that the content of the alternative vision of the national past constructed by the communists was driven by the tension between two great processual forces, which had battled against each other throughout almost all Portugal's past: on the one hand, the advent of the modernity process, which had its peak in the revolution of 1383, although also expressive in 1820 and even in 1910; on the other, the persistence of a counter-modernity, resurgent from 1926 onwards, in the wake of the Inquisition and episodes such as the loss of independence at the hands of Philippine rule in 1580.

The main criterion presiding over this division of forces - which, while corresponding to the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic scheme, was also akin to visions such as those of António Sérgio and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho - was social in nature. 1383 brought the alleged historical emergence of social groups and classes who, from the bourgeoisie to the rudiments of the urban and rural proletariat, passed the torch of progress from hand to hand, thus embodying modernity, the tomorrow to come. In turn, the Marxist vision identified key aristocratic, military and religious actors in the national past whose reactionary matrix was seen as inspiration for the Estado Novo itself, which took them as bulwarks of counter-modernity. However, the social criterion of division equally liaised with a national criterion, to such an extent that, in the light of Marxism, modernity emerged as a desideratum dependent on the country's national assertion, while counter-modernity, driven by

the interests of the ruling classes, was expressed through the loss of national autonomy and independence at the hands of foreign powers, from the kingdom of Castile to the North American multinationals, including British domination.

It was also by combining criteria of a social nature with those of a national character that Marxist historians analysed Portuguese expansionism and colonialism. On the one hand, they advocated that the raison d'être of the pioneering spirit of Portuguese expansion had stemmed from the social and cultural consequences of the revolution of 1383. Furthermore, they identified in this revolution the foundation of what was considered, by historiographical currents of distinct political and ideological tones, to be the golden period of Portugal's history. On the other hand, they attributed the raison d'être of the elements of colonial oppression so characteristic of expansionism to the negative effects of a counter-modern Portugal which, in their view, was more reactionary the more subjugated it was to the interests of modern Western colonial powers. Thus, Marxist historiography served to convey an interpretation of the past which was compatible with the theorisations of imperialism that became dominant within the communist movement, and conciliatorily embraced patriotism and anti-imperialism.

#### **Production Mode and Class Struggle**

However, the tension between modernity and counter-modernity, essential to Marxist visions of the national past, was operationalised differently in each study. While some historians' research focused preferentially on the nineteenth century, others prioritised the study of the fourteenth century. While some historians overweighted socio-economic factors as determinants of historical becoming, others sought to give autonomy to the social and even cultural and political domains. Moreover, while some works placed global historical dynamics at the forefront, others highlighted national specificities.

In the works of Armando Castro, published from the 1940s onwards, the historical process tended to be described as a series of effects - albeit not without mediation - of major socio-economic structures, which thus marked out the field of possibilities of human action. Conceptual formulae such as the mode of production, and their consideration in light of a specific interpretation of the history of the international division of labour and the national issue, took on the role of instruments capable of unveiling the obscure meanings of the past. For example, in his vision of the Portuguese nineteenth century - from which the Salazarist university established a distance (Pina, A Quimera do Ouro [The Gold Chimera], 2003) - Castro considered the particularities of Portugal's economic development (with an emphasis on the attention he vindicated for the persistence of the Antigo Regime [Ancien Regime]) on the one hand; on the other, in an attempt to make these particularities decipherable in the light of international dynamics (Castro, A dominação inglesa [The English Domination], 1972), he made a first contribution to a History of Portugal which was sensitive to the issue of imperialism.

In Victor de Sá's work on nineteenth century Portugal, produced against the backdrop of the 1960s, the socio-economic structures were less enhanced as the determining factor of the historical process. By contrast,

Sá tended to pay more attention to the political dynamics associated with the social movements of popular groups, challenged by conceptual formulae such as class struggle. In Sá's case, attention was geared in particular towards urban contexts, as is clear in his pages on Setembrismo [Septemberism], in which the political subject somehow becomes autonomous - also by means of his transnational sensitivity - from the former national context (Sá, A Revolução de Setembro [The September Revolution], 1969). From the 1960s onwards, José Manuel Tengarrinha also focused on analysing rural movements, in this case by crossing the issue of class struggle with the debates surrounding popular politics (Tengarrinha, Movimentos camponeses em Portugal na transição do Antigo Regime para a sociedade liberal [Peasant Movements in Portugal in the Transition from the Ancien Regime to Liberal Society], 1981).

Thus, while the Marxist historians who began their journey in the 1940s - uncoincidentally those who were also closest to the first Annales - sought to hold their works up as exemplary responses to the limits of the old Political History, which tended to ignore the social-economic factors of the historical process, historians such as Sá and Tengarrinha, who began their activity in the 1960s, took pains to rescue the political from the institutional domain in which it had tended to be circumscribed by that old Political History. While works such as Castro's struggled to include the economy in the historiographical agenda, studies such as those of Sá and Tengarrinha contributed to extending the analysis of politics beyond its individualist and elitist confinement.

In other cases, however, it is more difficult to position Portuguese Marxist historians on the side of the historiography which gave greater importance to the weight of the economic structure, or, alternatively, on the side of the historiography which described the autonomy of political action in relation to its own structural conditions. Such is the case, for example, with Álvaro Cunhal's analysis of the events of 1383. While this analysis referred to the issue of the dominant modes of production in a given historical era— in line with historians such as Armando Castro -, with Cunhal focusing on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, it also took the question of class struggle into consideration - and here in line with historians such as Victor de Sá -, reporting on dissensions between what Cunhal referred to as the bourgeoisie and the "rudiments of the modern proletariat".

## Vanguardism and the Common

Finally, a third problematic strand may be identified around which Portuguese Marxist historiography developed. It is no longer a question of problems concerning the structural determinants and autonomy of action, but rather of issues related to the form of this very same action. These issues were particularly apparent in the work of historians such as António Borges Coelho, whose initial studies were produced in the prisons where he was incarcerated by the regime between the 1950s and the early 1960s. Especially relevant in this regard was the importance attributed to the issue of concelhos [municipalities] (Coelho, Comunas ou Concelhos [Communes or Municipalities], 1971). In Borges Coelho's view, these were not simple concessions of royal power but historical realities with - if the expression can be imported to the case of Portugal - "a bottom-up" construction. In Borges Coelho, the concelhos emerge as historically powerful realities, even if they are

communally confined, and their power resides in their evidential capacity and spectrality, from which the possibility of "other parameters of collective life" emerged. When seeking to understand the emergence of modern Portugal, which is said to have sprung forth spectacularly in 1383, the historian tells us that the historical effects of the concelhos should not be underestimated.

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Borges Coelho's sensitivity to the possibility of new types of power relations contrasted with another sensitivity, which is best found in the writings of other Marxist historians and can be classified as avant-garde. According to this vanguardist sensitivity, "bottom-up" political power would be a necessary but never sufficient condition for historical transformation. In Álvaro Cunhal's writings on class struggles at the end of the Middle Ages, the place of the working classes was decisive, but ultimately it was also always determined by someone else, namely the bourgeois hero, who both led and betrayed those same working classes. Under the banner of betrayal (in the figure of Miguel de Vasconcelos), ambiguity (in the figure of Nuno Álvares Pereira) and absence (in Victor de Sá's denunciation of the lack of working-class leadership, with respect to the history of Setembrismo), despite the conceptions of power conveyed by Borges Coelho's analysis of the municipal movement, there was an avant-garde conception of historical change in Marxist historiography.

In this contrast between more egalitarian and more vanguardist sensitivities, different ways of understanding emancipation are at stake. While egalitarian sensitivity emerges indebted to an understanding of the emancipatory process as an exercise in autonomy, vanguardist sensitivity displays openness to thinking about the place of heteronomy in that same process, in line with a teleological vision of historical becoming, according to which the class (but one could also say the nation) is found to be in a condition of "backwardness" from which it can only break free when guided by an "external" element.

From the Marxist-Leninist point of view, which became the dominant form of Marxism in the twentieth century, this element preferably takes the form of the Communist Party, however it should be noted that the avant-garde conception of politics is far from being exclusive to the Marxist-Leninist political culture or even to the Marxist tradition. It is this conception that can be found, albeit in different terms, in the historiographical reflection of several of the liberals and republicans who discussed the historical case of the bourgeoisie and problematised what they designated as Portuguese "backwardness".

## **Marxism beyond Marxists**

It should be clear by now that the fact that this tradition has a name of its own - Marxism - does not mean that it is a homogeneous reality. In fact, when speaking of Marxist historiography in Portugal, it is also in the sense of a plural tradition. Indeed, in addition to Marxist historiography's lack of internal homogeneity in Portugal, the tradition was available for use by historians who did not claim Marxist sympathy or identity. While in the Marxist historians discussed herein it was possible to identify elements that were already present in republican inspired historiographical research, it should also be stressed that in the last decades of the twentieth century, the presence of Marxism in Portuguese historiography was felt beyond those who are most often classified as Marxist.

The intellectual paths of historians such as Miriam Halpern Pereira and António M. Hespanha cannot be understood without considering their relationship, at the same time complicit and critical, with Marxism - in Pereira's case, challenging Marxism from the tradition of the Annales and Social History, and in Hespanha's case by mobilising contributions such as those of Michel Foucault towards a renewal of the History of Law and the History of the State (Pereira, Livre-câmbio e desenvolvimento económico [Free trade and economic development], 1971; Hespanha, As Vésperas do Leviathan [The Eve of Leviathan], 1986). Although here this might be a case of the author's deliberate affiliation to Marxism, the same can be said with regard to Fernando Rosas' s reading of the Estado Novo period, in which a cross between the themes of mode of production and class struggle may be perceived, and a fundamentally political understanding - with a Jacobin resonance - of the role of the state as a regime (Rosas, O Estado Novo nos anos trinta [The Estado Novo in the 1930s], 1986).

On a closing note, and at risk of harnessing those who were not Marxist sympathisers to its empire, it should be stressed that ideological traditions often exceed the limits that tend to be imposed on them within the realms of indoctrination. In fact, as a final consideration, one might say that the anathema that so often befalls the Marxist historian today - that he, because of his ideological predetermination, is hostile to scientific truth - is based on an idea of contradiction between ideology and science that was and is frequently nurtured by sectors of Marxism itself...

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