

FROM THE EDITOR

The majority – if not all – of adult Europeans still remember a time when the Russian Revolution rather than belonging to the past was part of *the distant present*, as long as its ideological and social heritage formed a part of everyday experience. This was the case, obviously, not only in countries of the Soviet bloc, but equally in the West, then subject to the threatening proximity and impact of the post-revolutionary empire along with its ideology and myths. When speaking about the Russian Revolution I mean, first of all, the proletarian revolution or, in other words, the Bolshevik turnover and its exceptionally brutal period of social restructuring. It was this event rather than the preceding ‘democratic revolution,’ that was to become the paradigmatic revolution for the twentieth century. It became paradigmatic both in a symbolic dimension, as a source of revolutionary images and artifacts, and in a realistic dimension, as the first element in a long chain of twentieth-century revolutions and reactions. The Russian Revolution seems to have moved within the last decades from the sphere of *a distant present* to that of *a historical past*. For historians of ideas and philosophers it remains a vital problem; while the discussion concerning its meaning – or its absurdity – is far from conclusive. The current issue of our journal is – to a large extent – the outcome of an international conference entitled ‘The Russian Revolution and the History of Ideas,’ which took place in the autumn of 2017 at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Polish Academy of Sciences. The authors of the essays present a variety of interpretive perspectives and tackle a broad spectrum of issues, from the specific to the more general. Some of them (Dobieszewski, Kantor, Król, Augustyn, Jedliński) analyze the specificity of the Russian Revolution in the light of the nature of revolutionary mechanisms as such. Others (Shore, Matveeva, Evlampiev) consider both the broad and local ideological contexts and the intellectual sources of the Revolution. One finds among these equally an analysis of an individual existential experience of the Revolution (Jewdokimow). A few authors reconstruct those interpretations of the Revolution expounded by the leading Russian thinkers of that era, such as Sorokin, Karsavin, Frank, and more. One of the studies (by Mazurek) tries to capture the characteristics of the historiosophies that emerged within Russian religious thought. The two remaining texts – focusing on selected intellectual responses to the Revolution coming from beyond the Russian context, constitute an interesting completion for the volume – Migasiński juxtaposes Merleau-Ponty’s developing position towards Marxism with the evolution of Polish revisionists; while Krempleska offers an overview of George Santayana’s reflections on communism.

Typically for our journal, more or less direct references to the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas are evident. The Polish revisionists, already mentioned, ones whose methodology is challenged by Jewdokimow, number among its founders. Also Wróbel’s

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text – as a result of its thematic scope and regardless of its lack of direct references to the Warsaw School itself - here devoted to the essence and aim of history of philosophy, may fit within this context.

Whether the articles in the volume offer any definitive answer to the question as to the meaning of the Russian Revolution or not, they are nonetheless rich in valuable insights that may constitute potential premises for just such an answer in the future. Today, these texts embolden memory as to the tremendous error that the Russian Revolution was to turn out to be for European humanity. Meanwhile, it is this very memory that appears seriously threatened through the lack of fear of a return to radical revolutionary utopianism. Western humanity, which fears the return of varied twentieth-century demons, inexplicably believes that the revival of utopian revolutionism is non-existent. Let us bear in mind that the twentieth century – ‘the real century and not the calendar one’ (to use Anna Akhmatova’s phrase) – began with the Russian Revolution; and without any recollection of this there can be no talk of authentic memory for this turbulent age.

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