
The Rise and Fall and Rise of *World Marxist Review*

Reflections on the past and present journal

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When I saw an announcement for a new journal called '*World Marxist Review*' in 2024, this inevitably incited memories and reflections on the previous *World Marxist Review* (WMR). I thought about my own experiences of it within the context of the decades of historical turbulence, in which the journal and the international communist movement struggled to convey its position in a hostile world.

The origin

The journal, also known as *Problems of Peace and Socialism* (its title in Russian and some other languages), came into existence in 1958, as a result of a decision of the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in 1957. It was conceived in continuity with previous Comintern and Cominform journals *The Communist International* (1919–1943) and *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy* (1947–1956). It was based in Prague and subsidised by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which appointed and supplied its chief editor until the last one, who was Czech. The majority of its staff of hundreds were also from the USSR. Its editorial board was constituted by representatives from sixty-nine communist parties, many of whom resided in Prague. In the beginning, it was published in eighteen languages: Russian, Czech, German, English, French, Hungarian, Polish, Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Spanish, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Mongolian, Japanese. At its peak, its print run reached 500,000 in forty-one languages in 145 countries. It also hosted conferences and published books.

While its pages conveyed a picture of a harmonious international communist movement with a correct line on all matters, behind the scenes it was a scenario of lively debate, long-running tensions and bitter splits. The emergence of the Sino-Soviet split eventuated in the departure of representatives from China, Korea and Albania and the cancellation of circulation in those countries and editions in those languages during 1962 and 1963. The Prague Spring of

1968 generated a sense of vibrant renewal for some and dangerous revisionism for others. The Warsaw Pact intervention crushing it was extremely controversial in the international communist movement. All communist parties were divided by it. Many of the more important communist parties outside the socialist countries expressed their opposition to the intervention. Those communists within the socialist countries who were against the intervention did not say so openly, but never recovered from their sense of a line being crossed. They discussed it in smaller trusted settings, but a curtain came over it in the public arena. At *WMR*, there was a missed issue, and its editor-in-chief, G. P. Frantov, who had become caught up in the Prague Spring, was replaced by K. Zaradov. I. T. Frolov became editor-in-chief in 1977. When the ideas of the Prague Spring re-emerged in the later 1980s, in the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, this time the journal went with the tide until that wave crashed.

As far as I know, there is no overall history of *World Marxist Review*. I hope someone will write one. The issues are archived.¹ There are other relevant archives, such as those of the CPSU and other communist parties, as well as those of intelligence services from the KGB to the CIA, and various other organizations. There are also accounts of it in overlapping histories and in various memoirs.² There are also some revealing diaries in archives.³ A good history would deal not only with the texts but contexts, not only with the immediate contexts of its production, distribution and reception, but the larger contexts of the history of the times, especially the history of the communist movement in these times. I have written about my own experience of it in my two books *Navigating the Zeitgeist* and *Until We Fall*.⁴ I'll give some indication of those experiences here, although they can be better understood within the larger narrative and analysis in those books.

Behind the scenes

I first came across *WMR* in the 1960s during my years of new left activism, but it was one among an array of many left journals, many of them seeming more relevant and vibrant. When I became a communist in the 1970s, I paid more attention to it, disappointed that I still found its articles rather uninteresting. When I found myself in Prague and learned what was going on behind the scenes, I discovered a ferment of ideas that was at odds with the journal's staid surface. The gap between what was said and what could be published was gigantic. It would have been so much better, so much more honest, so much more readable if it had bridged that gap.

I wondered who really read it or whether it was even written to be read. It seemed to be an ongoing declaration that there was an international communist

movement, and that there were certain positions that were agreed, even if there was no longer a Communist International in which all national parties were essentially sections of a single international party, with one line that could be enforced. Yet, although there was no longer a central authority in the international communist movement to enforce an orthodoxy, the CPSU still dominated, while other parties either complied or pushed against it. The journal reflected what was sometimes a difficult diplomatic balance. *WMR* clung to the lowest common denominator, while concealing all debates and disagreements that could be neither aired nor resolved within its pages. Meanwhile, these debates flared in the pages of journals of western communist parties, such as the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Marxism Today*.

In the mid-1970s, most communist parties in capitalist countries, especially in Europe, were in the throes of a debate about Eurocommunism. It represented a break with Soviet domination of the communist movement from those who were sympathetic to the ideas of the Prague Spring, who took a critical approach to the socialist countries, who stressed the importance of democracy under socialism, who thought that the idea of socialism had to evolve in new times and new conditions, who explored the possibilities of new alliances and who took seriously the rise of new social movements, such as feminism. This far I came to agree with it and came to be part of it. However, it encompassed a spectrum of positions. As time went on, some would take it in a direction that meant the unravelling of everything that made Marxism what it distinctively was. They began to scoff at concepts such as materialism, imperialism, mode of production, class struggle, etc. All that remained, once such crucial concepts had been rejected, was some kind of social democracy or even liberal pluralism. I became enmeshed in these debates, although I saw them play out far more vividly and vociferously in the CPGB than in the CPI (Communist Party of Ireland), my own party.

In 1978, I was in Moscow doing research for my book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History*.⁵ I was based at the International Lenin School, also known as the Institute of Social Sciences. I was researching Soviet debates on philosophy and science over the decades as well as current Soviet work in philosophy of science. I was also exploring Soviet society as best I could. I spoke freely and pushed every encounter as far as it could go in exploring the boundaries of discourse. Once I was speaking at the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences and I mentioned N. I. Bukharin, a great Marxist thinker unjustly accused and executed in the purges of the 1930s, whose name was still unmentionable. Most were glad that I did it, even if they could not yet do it themselves, not until *glasnost*!

While in Moscow, I was invited to speak at an international symposium on Dialectical Materialism and Modern Science in Prague in March 1978. The papers from it were to be published as a book in time for the World Congress of Philosophy in August of that year. This conference was sponsored by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and *World Marxist Review*. I was put on a flight from Moscow to Prague, where I was met at the airport and taken first to the offices of *WMR* and then to a chateau in Liblice, which had been turned into a conference centre. Most of the twenty-one speakers were the leading philosophers and scientists of the socialist countries. All were male, except for me. Also present were representatives of various communist parties on the editorial board of *WMR* and various staff of the journal. Most presentations were of a high standard and the discussion was highly intelligent. Although they were all older and eminent, they treated me with curiosity and respect, despite my youth and lack of eminence. My paper was punchy and polemical, going through various trends within Western Marxism in terms of their conceptualisation of science. It was enthusiastically received by the academics present.

Most of them were critical intellectuals, who were trying to get through a very difficult period for critical intellectuals. These were people whose work had come to my attention in my research and the opportunity to mix with them in this environment was fantastic. During the two days of formal proceedings, interspersed with meals and walks around the grounds and late-night drinking and talking, there was plenty of time for informal discussion. I formed strong bonds during these days, ones that would stretch far beyond this event. I responded most strongly (and vice versa) to Herbert Hörz of the Institute of Philosophy and Helmut Böhme of the Institute of Genetics, both of the GDR Academy of Sciences, Radovan Richta of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, József Lukács of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Theodor Oizerman of the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences. I would also have a lot to do with Ivan Frolov, the editor-in-chief of *WMR*, who was also a philosopher of science and participant in this symposium, although this was a more problematic association. Richta invited me to come back to Prague as guest of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and Hörz invited me to come to Berlin as guest of the GDR Academy of Sciences. I said yes to both, delighted with such invitations.

While in Liblice, there was also a chamber music concert one night and a banquet the last night. At this there were a number of less formal and much wittier speeches, especially after a certain amount of drink was taken. This more informal philosophising continued for a few days. We were taken to a chateau in Libechov to an art exhibition and then to the town of Melník, where there was a reception hosted by the regional party committee, who also briefed us on

the region, followed by a meeting with the mayor in the town hall. Then we were taken to a local wine cellar and let loose in it. There was much philosophising of the lighter sort with much robust laughter.

We then returned to Prague where we were booked into the International Hotel and taken around the city of Prague – so beautiful on the surface, so simmering with disaffection underneath. There was so much hidden from our view. Everyone knew in one way or another, but no one quite said. I was still thinking that perhaps it was necessary, that perhaps ‘socialism with a human face’ would still somehow be possible. In fact, the person responsible for that phrase had been none other than Radovan Richta, who was now in my company. I was quite intrigued by him. He had been a leading reformer during the Prague Spring and was now a leading normaliser in the purged era that followed. What was he thinking? How did he justify it? I wondered. There was a tortured ambiguity about him, a longing for something higher. Whatever he was, he was no thug. However, some were thugs, all through the society, including in academic and party circles. I came up against one of them here, and caught a glimpse of the ugly side of the Soviet presence in Prague.

At the editorial offices of *WMR*, I met with Vladimir Vyunitsky, who was the technical co-ordinator of the editorial work on the book which was to come out the conference, although Ivan Frolov was the formal editor. He told me that my paper would have to be edited for the book. I accepted that it had to cut in length, as did the papers of other participants, but he then proceeded to make unreasonable accusations and demands. He said I had made errors that would have to be corrected, that I was guilty of ideological distortion, that I had made incorrect assessments of several Marxist philosophers. Moreover, it was not my place to make any assessments of philosophers who had ever belonged to other communist parties. Only Hungarian comrades could evaluate György Lukács. Only French comrades could criticise Louis Althusser. Only Italian comrades could say anything about Lucio Colletti. This combination of ignorance and arrogance was stunning and absurd.

Boris Rubalsky, a Soviet interpreter, intervened and told me that the relationship between parties at the journal was very delicate and it had been agreed that no parties would criticise positions taken by others. I didn’t see why this should apply to philosophical discourse. Nevertheless, I compromised reluctantly and agreed to take out all references to Lukács (even though I was criticising the early Lukács as the later Lukács did himself), Korsch, Colletti and Althusser. I stayed up all night revising the text and cutting it in half. In between, I went out with other philosophers to *Laternica Magica*, but I was seething with anger and did not enjoy it. Other philosophers discussed my issues and agreed with my arguments. Hörz tried to reason with Vyunitsky. Richta said that he

would submit my full unexpurgated text to the leading philosophical journal in Czechoslovakia. Soviet philosophers later asked me for the text for *Voprosy filosofii*, the leading philosophical journal of the USSR. I returned to Moscow believing that this had been sorted, however unsatisfactorily, but it turned out that it was far from the end of it.

A month later I received a copy of the text of my chapter in Russian for me to approve. I went over the text with Valery Terin, a philosopher at my institute. The text was utterly alien to me. It bore little resemblance to either the original or revised text. It was riddled with logical contradictions, historical inaccuracies, tedious cliché and convoluted jargon. Valery agreed with me that the text was irredeemable and that I should refuse consent. I wrote immediately to Frolov refusing consent for publication of that text. To be co-operative, I wrote yet another text. The institute was very helpful, providing translation and typing services and the speediest channels to communicate with Frolov. He replied a few weeks later saying that it was too late to do much about the Russian edition. He admitted that the editorial work was problematic and that my views had been distorted by it. He said that he hoped that editorial errors could be corrected and that something of my 'characteristic style' could be restored in other languages. He said that it was good that the full text would be published in philosophical journals in the USSR and Czechoslovakia. I was unhappy with this, but too busy in my last period in Moscow to do much more about it then. The saga would go on for more than a year and have consequences that I did not foresee at this time.

On May Day, I met Betty Sinclair after the parade in Red Square and spent the late afternoon and evening with her. She had recently retired as secretary of the Belfast Congress of Trade Unions and gone to Prague to represent the CPI on the *WMR* editorial board. We went up to Lenin Hills, where there was a panoramic view of the city, to see the fireworks and then to the party hotel for drink and talk. We got on well on the day, as she had not yet comprehended my offence, although I had informed her, as my party's representative at *WMR*, of my problems with Vyunitsky. Betty had mixed feelings about intellectuals. Mostly she was inclined to proletarian anti-intellectualism, but had to deal with the fact that the Soviet Union took intellectuals seriously. She told me on this day that she was proud that our party could produce someone who could hold her own with them. She changed her mind about that as my dispute with *WMR* persisted. During this time, I became very interested in the International Lenin School during the Comintern period. I knew it had been affected by the purges and I asked Betty about that, as she had been there during that period. She was not very forthcoming. As the night went on, the discussion was more and more inebriated and full of uncritical praise of the great USSR. All questions were

smothered in proclamations of victory and loyalty and denunciations of treachery.

At *WMR* in Prague, with the Eurocommunism debate in full swing and the aftermath of 1968 still seething, she did not engage meaningfully with any of the issues, but only made dismissive remarks about 'the boyos of Eurocommunism' and 'poor old silly Dubček'. She mocked the CPGB's programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, as 'the British road to nowhere'. In her diaries, there are many angry comments and negative assessments of comrades, including myself. I was stunned to behold the term 'Sheehanism' for intellectuals who dared to question the party and diverted attention from urgent political tasks to questions of philosophy. When the party decided to recall her, I volunteered to replace her at *WMR*, thinking that I might play a positive role in bringing it out of its malaise. Of course, there was no chance whatsoever of either being sent or being allowed to function effectively if sent. Betty insisted that I would be the last person who would be welcome there and she was right, at least as far as those who held sway were concerned. They decided to send Tommy O'Flaherty, a young unemployed graduate, who was affable and considered reliable.

At the World Congress of Philosophy in Düsseldorf in August 1978, the West Germans hosting it created a nasty cold war atmosphere from the start. At an opening plenary, one speaker provocatively referred to Marx as 'too smart a German to be left to the Marxists'. At most sessions, Marxists, phenomenologists and neo-positivists of many varieties all read papers past each other. Some of the Soviet philosophers found it difficult to address arguments coming from other philosophical traditions, but then so did most analytical philosophers. At one session, there was a head-on attack on 'diamat', where Soviet philosophers sat there stunned, while I leapt up to defend, which left the attacker stunned, as he was expecting a response from an old Soviet male and not from a young Irish female. Another confrontation I had was with a Soviet male, harking back to my time at *WMR*. The book *Dialectical Materialism and Natural Science* was launched and distributed at the congress and the chapter with my name on it was utterly alien to me. It was the text for which I had explicitly refused consent. When I saw Ivan Frolov, I breathed fire and a crowd of other Soviet philosophers gathered, astonished that I would speak to someone so eminent in that way. Once again, he admitted that I was right, but washed his hands of the actual editorial work, although he was formally the editor. Later he became a close confidant of Gorbachev and editor of *Pravda*. I found it ironic, when he later emerged as a prominent exponent of *glasnost*, to remember the lack of *glasnost* he had inflicted upon me.

On International Women's Day in 1979, I was called in by CPI General Secretary Michael O'Riordan to be reprimanded for the way I had dealt with *WMR*.

After the publication of that chapter under my name in *Dialectical Materialism and Modern Science*, I had written a letter of protest to the *WMR* editorial board in Prague. I had also spoken about it to Gordon McLennan, General Secretary of the CPGB, who insisted that I speak to Bert Ramelson, the CPGB representative on the *WMR* editorial board, when I was in London. I was often in Britain, because the intellectual life of the CPGB was much richer than that of the CPI. Both McLennan and Ramelson agreed that this way of doing things at *WMR* had to stop, as did the whole production of jargon-ridden material that no one wanted to read. O'Riordan was outraged that I had spoken to them about it. Moreover, a response to my protest had come from Prague to the party. It was a transcript of an interview that Tommy O'Flaherty had with Vladimir Vyunitsky to inform the CPI of the *WMR* response to my protest. It was full of overt lies, covert distortion and heresy-hunting accusations of errors. Mick didn't want to hear my side of the story at all. For him, if a Soviet person and an Irish person disagreed about something, the Soviet person was right. He was untroubled when the original article, which a Soviet person now said was full of ideological errors, was published in *Irish Socialist Review*. He was not interested in the substantive issues. He referred the matter to the national executive with the recommendation that I be reprimanded for protesting to Prague and for talking to Ramelson. This was hotly debated. As a compromise with those who felt I had a case, the party also decided to inform *WMR* that they regretted the publication of the chapter, which distorted my views and 'inadequately represented the philosophical level of our party'.

Tommy O'Flaherty turned out not to be as compliant as the party had intended. He hit the ground running, because he had to deal with my situation and he believed they had a case to answer. Unlike Betty, he paid attention to the debates that were going on at *WMR*, even if they weren't reflected in its pages. There were social occasions where there were vigorous debates, focused around all the issues raised by Eurocommunism, where Bert Ramelson of the CPGB clashed with John Pittman of the CPUSA. They were on friendly terms, but held conflicting positions. Tommy was increasingly convinced by Bert Ramelson's arguments. Ramelson was a big bear of a man and a robust debater. His position was broadly 'left Eurocommunist', in that he still held to the centrality of class analysis, but took a critical view of 'actually existing socialism' on matters of socialist democracy. Tommy also began to learn Czech and to speak to Czechs, who spoke honestly about their lives, which cast an unflattering light on the party line. He later told me that, because he had been a young hardliner, he realised that in another time and place he could have been a mass murderer. After he was withdrawn, he became less active in politics and regarded himself as someone who should leave a light imprint on the world. Essop Pahad, SACP

representative and another well-known hard-liner who was part of these discussions, later became a government minister in South Africa and a defender of the neo-liberal turn taken by the ANC under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki (also once a leading SACP member).

The last days

In 1990, I returned to Prague after time Berlin and Budapest, where I was watching the world turn upside down. It was a strange interregnum. At the airport, I was taken aside and interrogated. I was asked the purpose of my visit. There were various answers I could have given, all true, which would play differently depending on whether I was dealing with the old or new order. Thinking it was the old order, I said that I was visiting *World Marxist Review*. My interrogator made various phone calls, then walked me through customs and baggage reclaim, hailed a taxi and instructed the driver to take me directly to *WMR*. I had no idea why I was singled out, because Prague was swarming with all sorts of people whom the old order would not have allowed in Prague. I had arranged to stay at *WMR*, which I found to be a very different place from my interval there in 1978. I had a lot to think about as I walked down the long corridors of this building, which was once a Catholic seminary and soon to be one again. The Czechoslovak government had ordered the journal to leave. International members of the editorial board were packing up and booking flights home, although some were members of illegal parties and had nowhere to go. Some assets were up for sale locally, while others were being shipped back to the USSR. The Catholic Church would soon take possession of the building.

There was a flurry of activity as a last issue was being produced before closing down. Under *glasnost*, *WMR* had transformed itself almost beyond recognition. Every issue brought new surprises, especially to those acquainted with it for many years. For years every issue was full of formulaic pronouncements on peace, disarmament, and proletarian internationalism, full of bitter denunciations of bourgeois ideology and socialist revisionism. Anything written with life in it was drained and distorted into an empty and unattractive shell. I was not the only author to object, although others were more resigned to their mutilation than I had been. However, when it changed, it did so for real. There was real debate, openly aired. The letters pages not only praised articles, but took issue with them. The unmentionable names became mentionable. There were honest articles on Trotsky and Bukharin. It opened its pages not only to critical communists, but to non-communists criticising communists. There were articles not only by Alexander Dubček and Milovan Djilas, but by John Kenneth Galbraith, Andrei Sakharov, even Zbigniew Brzezinski. There were articles articulating

positions against which the journal had published fierce denunciations. There was a particular attraction to articles arguing for convergence of communism and social democracy and even convergence of capitalism and socialism. This reflected the transition of many hitherto communists into social democrats and liberals, even some conservatives. There was freedom for honest Marxists to express themselves as they always wanted but also for those who did not want to pretend to be Marxists anymore or had lost their confidence in Marxism once it fell from power.

Everything was opening up just as it was closing down. When the announcement of its closure came in March 1990, I had written an article about it in the *Irish Times*. The sub-editor had entitled it 'Marxist journal reforms too late', which was fair enough. I was sad to see it ending just as it was starting to be interesting. Being there as it was being dismantled made me see vividly how the communist movement was coming apart and also how weak were some of the bonds that held it together. My conversations with Stanislav Shchegolsky were jolting and memorable. I had known him in Moscow a decade earlier. He was a Soviet interpreter who had accompanied me in my research visits to the Academy of Sciences and Lenin Library in Moscow. He seemed harder now. He spoke more freely now. He was very critical of the *modus operandi* of the journal and the role played by representatives of the various communist parties there. They were paid a lot of money for very little work, availed of the best of health care, including luxury spa treatments, and did not want to know how the mass of people in socialist countries actually lived. He did not think the CPI had distinguished itself there. He had much to say about life in both Prague and Moscow, where he was soon returning. He said that his parents were finding it all hard to comprehend.

V. L. Shelepin, a Soviet editor of the journal, told me that he thought that class struggle was a bad thing. He wanted economic efficiency, social justice, consensus, solidarity, democracy. He was keen on Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia and the pluralism of positions within it. I also spent much time in Prague visiting the offices of Civic Forum and the other political parties springing up and speaking to people with many contrasting points of view, including the philosopher Karel Kosík, once a leading Marxist, who now believed that the starting point for critical analysis of our times was the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and the task was liberation of subject from object.

While at *WMR*, I also met Lubomír Mlynář of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, who was exploring the possibility of a successor project to the journal. There were proposals for an international broad left publication. As to his party, it had lost its leading role, much of its property and many of its members. His attitude was that one historical period of socialism had ended and now

another one must begin. As I left, Shelepin said to me ‘If we meet again at the beginning of the next century, we won’t be talking about communist parties and social democratic parties. We need new ideas and new organisational forms.’ I reflected on these words and thought of the words of Marx and Engels ‘All that is solid melts into air’. However, I further reflected, air still exists and we breathe it all the time.

So many times in these months I heard talk of ‘starting again at zero’, of scrapping forty-fifty-seventy years of history and starting over. There would be no starting over and certainly not from zero. This vast experiment in human history failed to fulfil the hopes it engendered and the edifice it constructed was collapsing, but I felt that it had cut too deeply into the psyche, into the rhythms of history, to disappear without trace. The communist movement was the great movement of the twentieth century. Whatever way this legacy would play out, it would be in a drastically transformed environment. I believed that the turn to the right in Eastern Europe would paradoxically bring the greatest need for the left that this part of the world had ever known. After the euphoria would come the exploitation and eventually the discovery that freedom was not so simple nor so accessible as it seemed.

Many years have passed now. We saw the USSR, GDR, ČSSR and Yugoslavia disappear from the maps of the world. People who had lived under socialism, however imperfect it was, were subjected to a particularly brutal form of capitalism. Even if it is sometimes seductive, capitalism is still brutal. It is ever changing and even more brutal in ever new ways all the time. Meanwhile, China has been on the rise, and many Marxists now see the Communist Party of China as the standard bearer of world socialism, even though the CPC will never have the same relationship to other communist parties as the CPSU once had.

A reincarnation?

In 2024, a new publication called *World Marxist Review* was announced. Its founding statement, defined it:

The World Marxist Review (WMR) is a new-founded quarterly, peer-reviewed, open access title, co-sponsored by the Innovative Marxist Studies Branch of the World Association for Political Economy and the Northwestern Polytechnical University in China, published by Canut Press. In the spirit of upholding fundamental principles and breaking new grounds, the *World Marxist Review* aims to solve major theoretical and countermeasure problems in the fields of global economy, people’s livelihood, politics, culture, civilization, ecology, military, international relations, and social movements, thus

objectively analyze erroneous views in various fields, especially criticize the fallacies and acts of neo-imperialist and hegemonic alliances in the current conjuncture, so as to promote the consistency and innovation of Marxist theories around the world. The *World Marxist Review* mainly publishes articles on a wide range of important topics, including: studies on the classical works of Marxism and their development by Marxists in various countries, the latest advances and scientific innovations in Marxist theory in various countries, the major theories of the current communist and workers' parties in various countries, the international communist movement and the development of world socialism, etc.⁶

Although it is not formally linked to the CPC or the 'international communist movement', it is very much within that orbit. Its international editorial board are Marxist authors who are positively disposed toward China, but not necessarily members of communist parties. Its editors-in-chief are Cheng Enfu and Gabriel Rockhill. While it generally reflects the party line of the CPC and sometimes reiterates certain party-line formulas in a style somewhat reminiscent of the CPSU and the old *WMR*, it is by no means reducible to that.

The CPC has devoted much study to the rise and fall of the USSR and learned much from that, because it is determined not to go down in history in the same way as the USSR. While Chinese publications and conferences can sometimes remind me of Soviet ones in stale iterations of Marxism as the orthodoxy of a one-party state, the intellectual life of China is far freer than that of pre-glasnost USSR. There is real debate in Chinese Marxism, as well as a real freedom to hold positions other than Marxism. The reform and opening up that began under Deng Xiaoping brought capitalism not only into economic production but into knowledge production as well. Many Chinese academics do work that is no different from the rest of global academe. In the current 'new era' under Xi Jinping, there is a revival of Marxism, both from above and from below.⁷ The School of Marxism at Peking University, where I have taught for the past two years, is one of many such centres throughout China. Young people on social media produce lively memes highlighting the difference between capitalism and socialism.

In this period where capitalism is decadent yet still dominant, the new *World Marxist Review* could play a role in analysing the forces in motion and galvanising a movement that honours communist traditions while finding a new way forward for them in our own time. To do so, it would do well to take a critical look at its past incarnation as well as the challenges posed by turbulent times facing us now.

Notes

- 1 See https://archive.org/details/pub_world-marxist-review
- 2 See, for example, Richard Staar, *Foreign Policies of the Soviet Union*, Stanford CA, 1991; Zdeněk Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague*, New York 1980.
- 3 Particularly revealing are the diaries of Anatoly Chernyaev, who worked at WMR in its first years, then spent many years in the International Department of the CPSU and later became foreign policy advisor in Gorbachev. These diaries are deposited at the national Security Archive in the US and are accessible at <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/anatoly-chernyaev-diary>. The diaries of Betty Sinclair, who was Secretary of Belfast Council of Trade unions and then CPI representative on WMR, are deposited in Dublin City Library.
- 4 Helena Sheehan, *Navigating the Zeitgeist*, New York 2017, and *Until We Fall*, New York 2023.
- 5 Helena Sheehan, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History* (3 editions), London 1985, 1993, 2017.
- 6 See <https://worldmarxistreview.org/index.php/wmr/about>.
- 7 Helena Sheehan 'Exploring the Chinese revolution today' *Monthly Review* 77 (6) November 2025, pp. 41-53. <https://monthlyreview.org/articles/exploring-the-chinese-revolution-today/>