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What is Matriochka about ?

- fantomedeux



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Here the 1920 lithography [1] of Viktor Denis (1893-1946), a Russian poster artist, has been subverted into an overture : the ballet of a witch who takes over from the "Great Leader" to sweep the Augean stables off all domination [2].

The very topmost item on the timeline is devoted to the long-term geopolitical, imperialist epoch, ranging from Louis XIV's death (1715) to China's great comeback after 1979. The Middle Empire had been subjected to western claims during the XIXth century. The Chinese of that time had vigorously revolted against the clandestine importation of opium, which enabled the English to trade the drug they produced in their Indian colony for china (Chinese porcelain tableware) and tea. During the Second Opium War (1856-1860) a Franco-English military task force burnt the Imperial Summer Palace. Humiliated again and forced to accept more trading compromises, China then had to witness the upsurge of the "Rising Sun".

1856 also marks the end of the two-year long Crimean War, in which France, Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire fought against Russia for control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straights. Having lost all access to warm seas, the Russian expansion had no choice but to extend eastwards, which led to the creation of the Vladivostok port (in Russian, "Domination of the East") in 1859 as a gateway to the Pacific Ocean.

Lastly, Rosa Luxemburg stresses the Australian origin of May Day : "The workers there decided in 1856 to organize a day of complete stoppage together with meetings and entertainment as a demonstration in favour of the eight-hour day. The celebration was initially to have been held on April 21. The first event had such a strong effect on the proletarian masses of Australia, enlivening them and leading to new labour campaigns, that it was decided to repeat the celebration every year.

See [site marxists.org](http://site.marxists.org)

These three clarifications for one key date are a perfect example of the way abundant world history events are related, rubbing against each other and encapsulated like matryoshka dolls.

The central section is devoted to the crucial role of energy resources. The insular United Kingdom (approx. 15 Million inhabitants, according to its first census in 1801), having defeated its main rivals (Spain, Holland and France) one after the other, imposed its strategy of development based on fossil fuels on the rest of the world. Coal enabled it to weave a powerful industrial fabric, and the 'black gold' soon became the "driving force and measure of all trading nations" [MALM (3) p. 35/ 46]. In the wake of the First Opium War [India, 180 Million inhabitants, vs China, 330 Million : DUMONT], British gunboats pointed their cannons everywhere and, being steamers, increasingly depended on coke. "Luckily", in 1837, a missionary found coal in Borneo, a large island conveniently located on the route to China. The Victorian bourgeoisie then began prospecting all over the world for the precious ore. According to [MOUHOT], coal even laid the foundation for abolishing slavery and transforming it into wage labour !

Large sailing ships of course carried on sailing until the 1930s, and the mills in my Pyrenean village kept on grinding wheat and sawing timber until 1970. Water and wind were still free, inexhaustible, and non-polluting, although unpredictable. Then, oil became predominant [AUZANNEAU].

This ultra-synthetic timeline sketches the red and black thread of the proletarian and/or feminist movements' struggle to shed their chains. It also underlines the "damage of progress" and the reactionary role of the international bourgeoisie, which willingly unites against its class enemy.

In the wake of nightmarish wars (France-Prussia in 1870 ; Russia-Japan in 1904 ; the first World War in 1914), a first wave reached up towards the sky (1917/1937). Its physical and moral destruction had a lasting impact on the second wave (1956-1986), which got stuck between the anvil of State capitalism in the USSR and the iron sledge-hammer of State capitalism in the USA.

Then USSR empire's implosion (1989 - 1991) left many kinds of debris. Collapsing Stalinism threatened to bury all attempts at emancipation for ever. This ultimate gift enabled the triumphant powers to proclaim [TINA] [4] : "We are not only witnessing the end of the Cold War, [...], but the end of history as such : that is, the end point of humanity's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." [FUKUYAMA]. Such statements are but one step away from Patrick Le Lay, head of TF1 (French then main private sector TV Channel), declaring in 2004 : "What we sell to the manufacturer of Coca-Cola is the time during which the human brain is porous." This frank statement is on a par with what's at stake : capitalism, with its powerful technology, is about to colonise our very minds [BIAGINI].

But reality was to strike back at these bloodsuckers, spin doctors and casino croupiers, in the form of a rebound of the systemic Crisis, namely the Subprime Mortgage Crisis, as of 2007, but also in the resurfacing of class struggle where it was least expected, in Algeria after the "black decade" or on French roundabouts with the Yellow Vests movement of the past 6 months, (after 30 years of defensive struggles and proclaimed reformist strategy, in a word, of certain defeat).

Hence, as we can see, a flurry of condensed, partial information. A better structured text will gradually be put up on this website. My ambition is to gather contradictory material (from international organisations, insurrections, historians or simple activists), without blinders or taboos, so that the proletarian past keeps quenching the thirst of humanity's future. This modest tool will only be of use if it stirs reflexive debate and rigorous and fraternal criticism, to sharpen our consciousness of the commons. Each of you readers can contribute with your dash of spices, your own timeline, so, Comrades, come rally, and... !

I'm eternally grateful to those comrades who forge the weapons of critical thought ; to those comrades who dare the critique of dismal thoughts ; my infinite tenderness to those who sprinkle our lives ...

MarJo and Benoît Gaillard (magnificent traduttore)

[1] "Comrade Lenin cleans the Earth from scum", 1920.

[2] There are three types of violence :

The first type, the origin of all violence, is institutional violence whereby domination, oppression and exploitation are maintained and legalised, trampling and crushing millions of men with its smoothly lubricated, social machinery.

The second one is revolutionary violence, born of the will to abolish the first.

The third type is repressive violence, which comes in to stifle the second type of violence, in supportive complicity with the first violence, the origin of it all. There is no worse hypocrisy than calling violence only the second type and pretending to see neither the first, its cause, nor the third, its killer. [Brazilian archbishop CAMARA Helder (1909-1999), *Spiral of Violence*, Sheed and Ward Book, 1971.]

[3] MALM Andreas, *L'anthropocène contre l'histoire - Le réchauffement climatique à l'ère du capital* (anthropocene against history - global warming in the era of Capital), La fabrique 2017 ; MOUHOT Jean-François, *Des esclaves énergétiques* (Energy slaves), Champ Vallon 2011 ; DUMONT Gérard-François, *Les populations du monde* (World populations), Armand Colin (2e édition) 2004 ; *Géographie des populations*, A. Colin 2018 ; AUZANNEAU Matthieu, *Or noir - La grande histoire du pétrole* (Black Gold - The Great History of Oil), La Découverte 2015 ; BIAGINI Cédric et MARCOLINI Patrick (collectif), *Divertir pour dominer* (Distract to dominate), 2 tomes, L'Echappée 2010 et 2019 ...

[4] TINA ("There Is No Alternative") : Ideological motto credited to Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1979-1990).

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