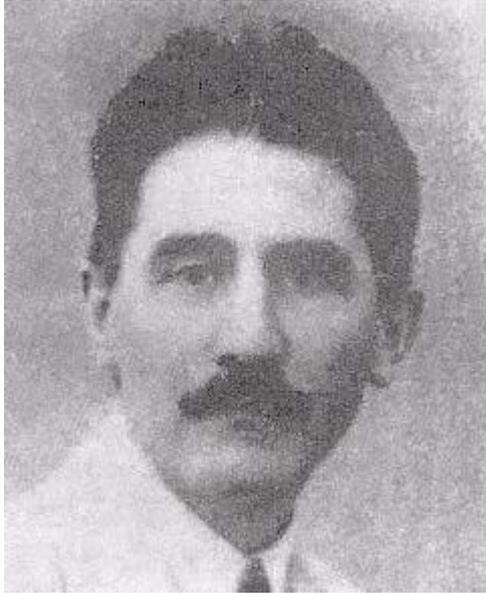


# Ten Theses on Marxism Today (1950)



An insightful short critical survey of Marxism's strengths and weaknesses.

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## **Ten Theses on Marxism Today**

*(Karl Korsch - 1950)*

1. It no longer makes sense to ask to what extent the teaching of Marx and Engels is, today, theoretically acceptable and practically applicable.
2. Today, all attempts to re-establish the Marxist doctrine as a whole in its original function as a theory of the working classes social revolution are reactionary utopias.
3. Though basically ambiguous, there are, however, important aspects of Marxian teaching which in their changing function and applying to different locations have until today retained their effectiveness. Also, the impetus generated by the praxis of the old Marxist labor movement has been presently incorporated into the practical struggles of peoples - and classes.
4. The first step in re-establishing a revolutionary theory and practice consists in breaking with that Marxism which claims to monopolize revolutionary initiative as well as theoretical and practical direction.
5. Marx is today only one among the numerous precursors, founders and developers of the socialist movement of the working class. No less important are the so-called Utopian Socialists from Thomas More to the present. No less important are the great rivals of Marx, such as Blanqui, and his sworn enemies, such as Proudhon and Bakunin. No less important, in the final result, are the more recent developments such as German revisionism, French syndicalism, and Russian Bolshevism.
6. The following points are particularly critical for Marxism: (a) its dependence on the underdeveloped economic and political conditions in Germany and all the other countries of central and eastern Europe where it was to have political relevance; (b) its unconditional adherence to the political forms

of the bourgeois revolution; (c) the unconditional acceptance of the advanced economic conditions of England as a model for the future development of all countries and as objective preconditions for the transition to socialism; to which one should add; (d) the consequences of its repeated desperate and contradictory attempts to break out of these conditions.

7. The results of these conditions are: (a) the overestimation of the state as the decisive instrument of social revolution; (b) the mystical identification of the development of the capitalist economy with the social revolution of the working class; (c) the subsequent ambiguous development of this first form of the Marxian theory of revolution by the artificial grafting onto it of a theory of the communist revolution in two phases; this theory, directed on the one hand against Blanqui, and on the other against Bakunin, whisks away from the present movement the real emancipation of the working class and puts it back into the indefinite future.

8. This is the point for insertion of the Leninist or Bolshevik development; and it is in this new form that Marxism has been transferred to Russia and Asia. Thereby Marxism has been changed; from a revolutionary theory it has become an ideology. This ideology could be and has been used for a variety of different goals.

9. It is from this viewpoint that one comes to judge in a critical spirit the two Russian revolutions of 1917 and 1928, and it is from this viewpoint that one must determine the functions fulfilled by Marxism today in Asia and on a world scale.

10. The control of the workers over the production of their own lives will not come from their occupying the positions, on the international and world markets, abandoned by the self-destroying and so-called free competition of the monopolistic owners of the means of production. This control can only result from a planned intervention by all the classes today excluded from it into a production which today is already tending in every way to be regulated in a monopolistic and planned fashion.