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Georg von Charasoff: A Neglected Contributor to the Classical-Marxian Tradition

Christian Gehrke*

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Abstract: Since their re-discovery in the 1980s Georg von Charasoff's previously neglected contributions to the classical-Marxian approach to prices and income distribution, which anticipate concepts and analytical results of Piero Sraffa, John von Neumann, and Nobuo Okishio, have been appraised in several articles. Until recently, however, not much was known about Charasoff's life and the intellectual, political, and artistic circles in which he moved. The present paper fills this gap. It documents traces of Charasoff's life and of his intellectual preoccupations that have been assembled from various archive sources in Azerbaijan, France, Georgia, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland.

‘... a gifted scoundrel, mystical anarchist and proven genius, mathematician, poet, anything you like.’

(Boris Pasternak on Georg von Charasoff)

1 Introduction

Since Georg von Charasoff's previously neglected contributions, *Karl Marx über die menschliche und kapitalistische Wirtschaft* (1909) and *Das System des Marxismus. Darstellung und Kritik* (1910), were rediscovered by Egidi and Gilibert (1984) several articles and book chapters have been published that provide summary accounts, critical appraisals and comparative assessments of Charasoff's pioneering work on the classical-Marxian approach to prices and income distribution.¹

Until recently, however, not much was known about Georg von Charasoff's life. Prior to the essay of Klyukin (2008), who discovered some interesting details concerning the later phase of Charasoff's life, almost all the known facts came from a short *curriculum vitae*, which Charasoff wrote at the age of 25 on the occasion of the submission of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Heidelberg, and from the Prefaces of his two books on Marx's economic theory. The printed version of Charasoff's 'Lebenslauf', which he submitted to the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Heidelberg in 1902, reads:²

I was born on 24 June 1877 in Tbilisi. My parents were Russian Armenians. From 1886 to 1890 I attended the first classical gymnasium in Tbilisi; then after the death of my father I was sent to Odessa, where I attended the classical Richelieu gymnasium. In 1893 I returned to Tbilisi and one year later I passed my final exam at the already mentioned gymnasium as an external pupil at the age of 18. Thereafter, I became a student of medicine in Moscow. During the students' protests of 1896 I was expelled and forced to go abroad in order to continue my studies. I came to Heidelberg and here I decided, following an inner impulse which already in Moscow I had difficulty in suppressing, to give up medicine and to turn to mathematics. So I enrolled at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg and after four years of study I submitted my

dissertation and passed my doctoral examination on 27 February 1901,³ choosing mathematics as the main field and physics and mechanics as supplementary fields. (Charasoff 1902: 68)

From the Preface of his first book on Marx's economic theory we also know that Charasoff was living in Zurich in October 1908, and that the book had emanated from a series of (public) lectures which he had given in the course of the preceding three years. Moreover, Charasoff dedicated his book to 'My dear children Alex, Arthur, and Helene' and concluded his Preface with a note of thanks to 'my friend Dr Otto Buek' (1909: ii and v). The Preface of the second book, *Das System des Marxismus*, is dated 'Lausanne, on 24 December 1909' and it is dedicated to 'My friends Marie Charasoff and Otto Buek'.

The purpose of this essay is to supplement these slender pieces of information with some further biographical details, in an attempt to reconstruct the personal, cultural and intellectual milieu in which Charasoff developed his contributions to economic analysis. The main emphasis will be on the period from 1897 to 1915, which Charasoff spent predominantly in Germany and Switzerland, and on which some new findings can be presented, based on archival research in Heidelberg, Zurich, Lausanne and elsewhere. It needs to be emphasised that the portrait of the man which emerges is still based on rather fragmentary pieces of information, and that the available documents on which it draws exhibit a particular bias: as Charasoff lived the life of a private scholar during most of this period the few documents that have been preserved are mostly from administrative bodies.

The essay is organised as follows. Section 2 provides a short summary account of Charasoff's contributions to the classical-Marxian tradition in economic theory. Section 3 provides some additional details on Charasoff's family background and early education. In Section 4, the focus is on Charasoff's study period at the University of Heidelberg, from 1897 to 1902, and on his friendship with Dr Otto Buek. In Section 5, some traces of Charasoff's life in Zurich, in the period from 1902 to 1909, are documented. Section 6 turns to Charasoff's stay in Clarens and Lausanne during the years 1909 and 1910. In Section 7, the contemporary reception of his two books is briefly summarised. Section 8 covers the period from 1910 to 1912, in which Charasoff enrolled as a student of political economy at the University of Zurich. Section 9 discusses Charasoff's planned contribution to Roberto Michels's *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie* project. Section 10 then documents the circumstances of Charasoff's return to Tbilisi in February 1915, and Section 11 informs about the (unauthorised) re-publication of major parts of his books in two German literary-political journals in 1918, 1920 and 1921. Last, section 12 provides an account of Charasoff's life and intellectual preoccupations in the period from 1917 to 1931, which he spent in Tbilisi, Baku, and Moscow.

2 Charasoff's Contributions to the Classical-Marxian Tradition

Charasoff was one of the first economic theorists to recognise that prices of production and the rate of profit can be determined by the eigenvector and eigenvalue of the input coefficients matrix respectively. He not only anticipated most of the arguments that were proposed later in the discussion of Marx's 'transformation problem', but also noted the duality property of the price and quantity system, a finding that is usually associated with the seminal paper of John von Neumann (1945-6 [1937]). Moreover, in the course of his investigation he defined and made use of the concepts of a 'production series' (Produktionsreihe), of

‘original capital’ (Urkapital) and of ‘basic products’ (Grundprodukte), thus anticipating Piero Sraffa (1960) with regard to the related concepts of a reduction series to dated quantities of labour, the Standard commodity, and the basics/non-basics distinction. In addition, Charasoff also anticipated the so-called ‘Fundamental Marxian theorem’ of Michio Morishima (1973) and the theorem of the rising rate of profit from the introduction of technical progress, which is generally attributed to Nobuo Okishio, that is, the so-called ‘Okishio theorem’ (1961). Although Charasoff’s argumentation was undoubtedly based on mathematical reasoning, he chose to present it in non-mathematical form, using only simple numerical examples. From a mathematical point of view, it is remarkable that Charasoff failed to make use of (and in spite of a number of shared mathematical interests apparently was unfamiliar with) the newly-developed theorems of Perron and Frobenius on eigenvalues and eigenvectors of positive and non-negative matrices (see Parys 2014). However, according to Mori (2013), Charasoff in fact anticipated the method of the so-called ‘von Mises iteration’ in some of his arguments.

Since Charasoff’s findings on the determination of production prices and the rate of profits partly resemble results obtained already a decade earlier by Vladimir Karpovich Dmitriev ([1898] 1974), it deserves to be mentioned that there is no indication that Charasoff had read Dmitriev’s 1898 essay on Ricardo’s theory of value, although he refers to the famous paper by Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz of 1906-7 (which contains a reference to Dmitriev) in his second book.⁴ At any rate, Charasoff submitted his first economic manuscript (which is not extant, but which seems to have contained his main findings with regard to these problems) already in January 1907 (see Section 5 below). Thus, it can be supposed he had developed his ideas before having read von Bortkiewicz’s paper.

3 Charasoff’s Family Background and Early Education in Tbilisi and Odessa

In the hand-written version of his *curriculum vitae* Charasoff refers to his parents as ‘Russian subjects, Armenians of the Armenian-Gregorian faith’ (H-V 3/2, Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg), which suggests that he and his family regarded themselves as ‘*russified* Armenians’ (rather than as Russians). When he first enrolled at the University of Heidelberg in 1897 Charasoff inserted ‘burggrave’ (Burggraf) in the entry ‘Profession of the father’, while in a later document he wrote ‘State councillor’ (Staatsrat) – presumably his father was both. Charasoff’s family must have been fairly wealthy; in Zurich Georg von Charasoff ‘was known as a very rich man’, as Dr Häberli, who was appointed guardian of his children in 1919, put it in an aide memoire (Vormundschaftsakten ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich). In a document of 1910, which he had to complete in French, Charasoff gave as his own profession: ‘Docteur en sciences’ and ‘rentier’ (Fiches contrôles des habitants 1910, Stadtarchiv Lausanne). His daughter Lily (b. 1903) stated in a letter of December 1919, which she sent from Tbilisi to her brothers, that their father ‘has lost all his wealth, which is now in the hands of the Russian government’ (Vormundschaftsakten ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich). This implies that the (landed) property of the Charasoff family must have been outside of Georgia, presumably in Armenia or in the Ukraine, since in December 1919 Georgia was still a Democratic Republic, which had not yet been occupied by the Red Army. Lily Charasoff also stated, in a letter of December 1919 to her stepbrother

Alexander, that ‘we still own a factory, but this is out of use and earns us no money’ (Vormundschaftsakt ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich), which implies that in 1919 Georg von Charasoff must also have owned a factory in independent Georgia, besides his (landed) property which had been seized by the new Russian government. When Charasoff enrolled at the University of Zurich in 1910, he gave as his parents’ address ‘Frauen B. v. Ch, Tbilisi, Gribojedowska N. 3’ (Matrikelektion, Universität Zürich), which suggests not only that his mother was still alive in 1910, but also that she had not re-married after his father’s early death in 1890. In documents of 1919, which are preserved in the municipal archive in Zurich and concern Charasoff’s four children, there is no mention of their paternal grandparents (but their maternal grandparents are stated as living in Odessa). There is, however, a reference to an aunt (that is, a sister of Georg von Charasoff), who is stated as living in Baku, Azerbaijan (Vormundschaftsakt ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich).

Childhood and youth in Tbilisi and Georgia around 1880

Only some rather general information can be provided with regard to Georg von Charasoff’s childhood and youth. Throughout the nineteenth century Georgia and its capital Tbilisi were part of the Russian empire. However, after the formal annexation by Tsar Paul I in January 1801, the Russians succeeded only in controlling the eastern part of Georgia, while the mountainous regions in the west remained independent for another decade; Russia indeed never obtained full control over all of the mountainous regions in Western Georgia. Under the Russian reign, Georgia was subjected to an intensive ‘Russification’ in order to adapt its cultural, social and administrative system to that of the Russian empire. At the same time, Georgia was also opened up to Western ideas and culture. In the mid-nineteenth century, enlightenment ideals, liberalism and modern nationalism blossomed in Georgia. European literature was translated into Georgian, European art and music were imported and amalgamated with local traditions, and there developed an interesting cultural and artistic life in Tbilisi, which was sometimes referred to as the ‘Paris of the East’.

In order to silence Georgian (and Armenian) calls for independence and to secure the Russian authority, the Tsar installed Count Michail Voroncov as ‘Viceroy of the Caucasus’. Voroncov, who had been educated in England, modernised trade, industry, infrastructure and town planning, introduced primary schools and founded two gymnasiums, one in Tbilisi and one in Kutaissi. However, it was only in 1917, after the fall of the Russian Empire, that a Polytechnical University was first opened in Tbilisi, followed by a State University in 1918. Serfdom was officially abolished in Georgia in 1866, but semi-feudal relations remained in place for a considerable time. The gymnasiums in Tbilisi and Kutaissi were run on rigorous disciplinary lines, following the Russian educational system. Not surprisingly, many young Georgians were decidedly anti-Tsarist and anti-Russian, and open to radical patriotic and revolutionary messages (Hausmann 1998: 172). In 1880, the Georgian capital Tbilisi had 86,455 inhabitants of which 38,513 were Armenians, 22,285 Georgians, and 19,804 Russians (Jersild and Melkadze 2002: 47).

The gymnasium years in Odessa

The Richelieu gymnasium, which Georg von Charasoff attended from 1890 to 1893, was one of several institutions which had been founded by the Duke of Richelieu during his reign in Odessa. It was intended as a gymnasium for the sons

of Odessa's wealthy merchants, since traditionally only the male offspring of the aristocracy was admitted into higher education. The so-called Richelieu Lyceum, founded in 1817, was transformed into the New-Russian University after the Crimean war. In 1890, when Charasoff arrived in Odessa, the University had three faculties and some 428 students: a historical-philological faculty, a faculty of physics and mathematics, and a law faculty (Hausmann 1998: 105-19). The classical Richelieu gymnasium was located in the inner city district Chersone, right next to the New-Russian University and the commercial college. Close by in the same district was also the German-Lutheran church St Pauli with the associated junior high school 'Zum Heiligen Paulus', which Leon Trotsky attended from 1888. The rich aristocrats and wealthy merchants lived in the adjacent Boulevard district, where also the banks, the stock exchange, the opera house and the theatre were located.

Odessa was the economic, administrative and cultural centre of Southern Ukraine. In the nineteenth century it was a rapidly growing city, whose wealth was predominantly related to trade. Of major economic importance was Odessa's harbour, through which the export of grain and other agricultural products from the Southern Ukraine took place. The international grain export business was first controlled by Greek merchants, but from the mid-nineteenth century until 1917 it was dominated mainly by Jewish merchants. Odessa's industrialisation started rather late, only towards the end of the 1870s, but even then it consisted mainly of sugar and grain mills, packaging factories for coffee, tea and tobacco, and a machine industry which produced mainly agricultural equipment. Between 1870 and 1897 the number of inhabitants increased from 140,000 to over 400,000. In 1892, 57.5% of Odessa's population was Orthodox, 33% Jewish, 5.8% Catholic and 2.3% Protestant. Armenians accounted for a mere 0.3% of the population, but among the students their number was much larger, and in the students' protests against the Tsarist regime Armenians and Georgians strongly participated. Although 95% of the Jews earned their living as craftsmen or small shopkeepers and thus belonged to the lower middle-class, the increasing presence of Jews in the intellectual and economic élite of the city repeatedly led to attacks and even pogroms against the Jews (as in 1881 and in 1905).⁵

Of Charasoff's study period in Moscow and his expulsion from there, no further information can be provided beyond that given in his *curriculum vitae*.

4 Charasoff as a Student in Heidelberg

Heidelberg, in the second half of the nineteenth century, was one of the most important intellectual centres for Russians in Germany. The 'Russian colony' in Heidelberg consisted not so much of writers and artists, as in Berlin, but rather of students and young scientists. A first wave of Russian students came to Heidelberg in the period from 1861 to 1865, after the closure of the University of St Petersburg. In those years more than one-hundred Russians studied in Heidelberg. Later, there was a second and a third 'wave', in the mid-1890s and around 1905-06, when delegations of students in Moscow and St Petersburg, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful revolution, again brought large numbers of Russians to Heidelberg.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Heidelberg was generally considered a centre of excellence in the natural sciences, and students from the Russian empire typically studied chemistry, physics or physiology with such internationally renowned professors as Robert Bunsen, Gustav Kirchhoff, or

Hermann von Helmholtz. The Law faculty of Heidelberg University also attracted talented Russian students, and many wealthy young Russians used Heidelberg as their temporary base for travelling in Western Europe. Its central location, mild climate and low living-costs made it an ideal base for travels to France, Italy or Switzerland: 'For some Russians Heidelberg was a sort of cure resort with a little scientific program on the side' (Birkenmaier 1995: 41). Ever since the 1860s Heidelberg was also one of the centres of Russian revolutionary propaganda in the West. While the leading revolutionaries lived in London, Paris, or Geneva, close collaborators and associates of men like Alexander Herzen or Michail Bakunin were based in Heidelberg, from where they organised the (illegal) printing and dissemination of revolutionary writings. The 'leftist' group of the Russian students in Heidelberg had its own meeting place, which eventually became a special Russian library, and which 'held not only banned Russian books, but also the latest French, German and British books and magazines with a socialist orientation' (Birkenmaier 1995: 10). The 'Russian reading room' (Russische Lesehalle), also known as 'Pirogov's reading room' (Pirogov'sche Lesehalle), became an important institution in the cultural and intellectual life of Heidelberg. Max Weber, who had close contacts with some Russian students after 1903, gave a public lecture there in 1905 and also participated actively in the festivities celebrating the 50th birthday of the 'Russian reading room' in 1912.⁶

Georg von Charasoff lived in Heidelberg from October 1897 to February 1902. Throughout this period he was enrolled as a regular student in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The University address book shows that he lived during his entire study period in rented rooms as a tenant: from the winter term 1897-98 to the end of the summer term 1899 he lived in Gaisbergstrasse 27; thereafter in Schiffgasse 2, and in the following semesters until the end of the winter term 1901-02 he lived in Lauerstrasse 5. In his first year at Gaisbergstrasse 27 Charasoff enjoyed the company of a fellow student from his home town, Tbilisi, Georg Melik-Karakosoff, the son of a Tbilisian 'Hofrat', a high-ranked public servant, also of the Armenian-Gregorian faith, who studied philosophy in Heidelberg. In addition, the two brothers Michail and Vadim Reisner from St Petersburg also lived in Gaisbergstrasse 27 during Charasoff's first year in Heidelberg.⁷ At the turn of the twentieth century, the group of Russian social revolutionaries in Heidelberg included, inter alia, Vladimir Zenzinov, Boris Savinkov, Abram Goc, Il'ja Fondaminskij, Amalja Gavronskaja and Jakov Gavronskij. In a study on the Russian students in Heidelberg it is noted that 'Schiffgasse 2 was for a long time in Russian hands: in the summer term 1901 Jakov Gavronskij lived there; in the summer term 1902 it was Abram Goc; and in the summer term 1903 and the winter term 1903/04 it was the Fondaminskijs who resided there' (Birkenmaier 1995: 161). Interestingly, in the previous year, that is, in the winter term 1899-1900 and the summer term 1900, Georg von Charasoff resided in Schiffgasse 2. Whether this is purely accidental or Charasoff had close contacts with some of the social revolutionaries could not be ascertained.

Studying mathematics in Heidelberg

Charasoff wrote his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Leo Königsberger (1837-1921), a distinguished mathematician who had studied with Karl Weierstrass in Berlin and then held professorships in Greifswald (1864-69), Heidelberg (1869-75), Dresden (1875-77), Vienna (1877-84) and Heidelberg (1884-1914). Königsberger is best known for his biography of Helmholtz

(Königsberger 1902-3, 1906), apart from his contributions to the analysis of elliptic and hyper-elliptic functions. In the course of his long academic career Königsberger attracted a number of excellent students, including some future Nobel laureates.⁸ In 1870, Ludwig Boltzmann came to Heidelberg for postgraduate studies with Königsberger, and thirty-two years later Max Born spent the summer term 1902 in Heidelberg in order to attend Königsberger's lectures on differential geometry. Other famous disciples of Leo Königsberger are the mathematician (and pianist) Alfred Pringsheim and the astronomer Max Wolf. The group of Königsberger's doctoral students in the period from 1897 to 1902, when Charasoff was in Heidelberg, included Max Birkenstaedt, Marcus Lewin, Nathan Mannheimer, Friedrich Rösch and Siegfried Valentiner.

On 22 November 1901 Georg Charasoff was announced as the winner of a prize essay competition of the Natural Sciences Faculty (Chronik der Stadt Heidelberg 1902: 58-9). The essay he had submitted in October 1901 is a hand-written text of 101 pages, entitled 'Parallelogrammum mysticum' (see Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg, Preisschriften, H-V-3/2, PR 126). Just a few weeks later, in a letter of 20 January 1902, Charasoff applied for admission to the final examination for a doctorate; interestingly, this application was sent from Geneva (rue de Hesse, 4). The dissertation thesis he submitted was a slightly revised copy of his prize essay. The thesis defensio and final examination took place on 27 February 1902; shortly afterwards, Charasoff published his thesis under the title 'Arithmetische Untersuchungen über Irreduktibilität' (1902). The available documents in the University archive show that the thesis was graded 'summa cum laude', but the reports of Königsberger and the second examiner are not extant.⁹ While Charasoff's dissertation was listed in several mathematics journals, it was not reviewed, which suggests that it was not considered important. For analyses of the relationship between Charasoff's work in pure mathematics and the mathematical tools that he used – and failed to use – in his economic studies see Mori (2013) and Parys (2014).

Charasoff's friendship with Otto Buek

In the Preface of *Karl Marx über die menschliche und kapitalistische Wirtschaft* Charasoff thanked his 'friend Dr Otto Buek ... for advice and support during the writing of this book and for many ideas which I formed from conversations with him' (1909: no page number). Who was Dr Otto Buek? How did Charasoff get to know him and what was Buek's role in the development of Charasoff's contributions to economic theory? Is it perhaps possible to throw some light, *via* Buek, on the circle of intellectuals with whom Charasoff was in contact?

Otto Buek was a German-Russian philosopher, editor and translator. He was born on 18 November 1873 in St Petersburg and died in 1966, aged 93, lonely and impoverished, in a home for the elderly near Paris. After attending the German gymnasium in his home town Buek enrolled as a student at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of St Petersburg in 1891, with chemistry as his main field of study. Already in his gymnasium years, and in fact throughout his life, he pursued several intellectual interests simultaneously. He is known to have been remarkably well-read when he was still in his early twenties. He not only had a good knowledge of the contemporary literature in the natural sciences, but had studied carefully also the works of Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, the writings of the French socialists, and the first two volumes of Marx's *Kapital*. Moreover, he also had an intimate knowledge of Russian literature from Tolstoy to Gogol. In his

youth, he was a close friend of Lou Salomé (after her marriage: Lou Andreas-Salomé), who later became famous as the ‘Russian muse’ of Friedrich Nietzsche and Rainer Maria Rilke, and as Sigmund Freud’s disciple (and Anna Freud’s confidante). In the winter term 1896–97 Buek moved to Heidelberg, where he first continued his studies in chemistry and mathematics, but then switched over to philosophy. In the winter term 1899–1900 he left Heidelberg in order to enrol at the Phillips-Universität Marburg, where he wrote his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of the Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen, the head of the ‘Marburg school’.¹⁰ His thesis on ‘Die Atomistik und Faradays Begriff der Materie: eine logische Untersuchung’ (Atomism and Faraday’s notion of matter: a logical analysis) (Buek 1905a; see also Buek 1904 and 1912) won him a prize essay competition. Around Cohen and Paul Natorp in Marburg a Kantian-socialist group had formed, which included Robert Michels, Kurt Eisner and Otto Buek, and which sympathised with syndicalism and anarchism, drawing inspiration in particular from Tolstoy’s works (Hanke 1993: 130). During his time in Marburg Buek also contributed to the election campaign of his friend Robert Michels, who ran as a candidate for the German Reichstag as a representative of the syndicalist faction of the Social Democrats.

In 1905 Buek moved to Berlin, where he lived a bohemian life as a private scholar and intellectual, earning his living as an editor, translator and journalist. He edited, co-edited and translated, *inter alia*, a German edition of Gogol’s works (8 vols, 1909–1912) and a German edition of Turgenev’s collected works (12 vols, 1910–1931; jointly with Kurt Wildhagen). He was also involved in the editorial work for Ernst Cassirer’s monumental edition of Immanuel Kant’s works. Moreover, he also edited and translated Alexander Herzen’s *Erinnerungen* and several of Tolstoy’s novels (from Russian into German), as well as the works of Unamuno (from Spanish into German). In the 1920s, he was the European correspondent of the Argentinian newspaper *La Nacion*.

Buek and Charasoff presumably met during their study period in Heidelberg. From the summer term 1898 until the end of the summer term 1899 Buek took residence in Gaisbergstrasse 27, where Georg von Charasoff had already resided since the winter term 1897–98. Whether Buek’s move to Gaisbergstrasse 27 was motivated by an already existing friendship between the two men, or whether the latter formed only afterwards, could not be ascertained. Buek’s circle of friends and acquaintances from his student days in Heidelberg included Georg Friedrich Nicolai from St Petersburg, then a medical student, whom he later supported in his peace initiatives, and the bohemian, philosopher and journalist, Kurt Wildhagen.

In Berlin, where he lived from 1905 to 1933, Buek belonged to the circle around Alfred Richard Meyer, who was one of the major figures in the German arts and literature scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. Buek had close contacts with a large number of intellectuals, artists and writers, many of whom had radical left-wing or anarchistic leanings. He was a close friend of the anarchist writer Senna Hoy (pseudonym of Johannes Holzmann)¹¹ and of Franz Pfemfert, the editor of the literary-political journal *Die Aktion* (see Pfemfert 1911–32). Buek’s circle of friends also included the publisher Max Brod, the expressionist poet (and later minister of culture and education in the GDR) Johannes R. Becher, and the philosopher, Ernst Cassirer.

In the summer of 1905 Buek travelled to Zurich, where he met with the Swiss anarchists Fritz Brupbacher, Max Tobler and Raphael Friedeberg in order to discuss the founding of an anarchistic journal. In the autumn he briefly returned to

Berlin, but then travelled to Zurich again, this time in the company of Senna Hoy. From Zurich he moved on to Ascona, where he stayed in the *Monte verità* community, the bohemian commune and artists' colony that had been founded by the brothers Karl and Gustav Gräser. Around the turn of the century, the *Monte verità* (Mountain of truth) was a well-known meeting place for anarchists and freethinkers, but also for the artistic and intellectual élite (amongst others, men like Hermann Hesse, Ernst Bloch, C.G. Jung, James Joyce, Rainer Maria Rilke and Paul Klee visited the *Monte verità*). Buek returned to the *Monte verità* again in the spring and summer of 1906, first for a few weeks (in April) and then again for a full two months (in May and June). At this time there was an international meeting of anarchists and freethinkers on the *Monte verità*, which was meant to explore 'the possibilities for the foundation of a higher school for the liberation of mankind'. In June and July 1907 Buek returned to Switzerland again and spent a few weeks in a cure resort at Schloss Marbach am Untersee, together with Georg von Charasoff.

From his student days in Heidelberg Buek entertained a lifelong friendship with Nicolai, who later taught at the *Charité* in Berlin. In October 1914 Buek was one of the three signees, together with Albert Einstein and the astronomer Friedrich Wilhelm Förster, of Nicolai's anti-war pamphlet 'Aufruf an die Europäer' (Call to the Europeans), which was an antipode to the pamphlet 'An die Kulturwelt!' (To the cultured world!). The latter pamphlet, which the German government used to justify the military invasion of neutral Belgium, was signed by more than two-hundred natural and social scientists from the German Reich. Nicolai's counter-pamphlet was signed by only four men: Nicolai, Buek, Förster and Einstein. Its publication was prohibited by the authorities in the German Reich. (It was only published in 1917 in Switzerland, as an introduction to Nicolai's anti-war book *Biologie des Krieges*.) Of particular interest in the present context is Otto Buek's friendship with Albert Einstein, which is well-documented for the period from 1914 to 1931, when both lived in Berlin. The philosopher Don Howard, who has worked extensively on Einstein's philosophy of science, stated:

Paul Natorp was the first major neo-Kantian to publish his thoughts on relativity, these concerning special relativity, in his influential *Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften* (1910). ... We have no direct evidence of Einstein's having read Natorp, and certainly no record of his reaction to Natorp. He is likely to have been familiar with Natorp's views on relativity, though, if only through the intermediary of Otto Buek, one of the favorite students of Natorp and Cohen, who struck up something of a friendship with Einstein during the latter's first couple of years in Berlin, 1914–1915. ... Discussions with Buek may have awakened Einstein's interest in thinking about Kant and relativity. (Howard 1994: 50)

According to Howard, Buek and Einstein met regularly in 1914 and 1915, often in Nicolai's house, in order to discuss philosophical issues and to play music together.¹² 'By late 1914 he [Buek] had developed a fairly close and regular relationship with Einstein, who had moved to Berlin ... in April of that year' (Howard 1993: 191).¹³ In the early 1920s Buek was also involved, together with Nicolai and Professor Otto Fanta from Prague, in the making of the first science film, which was shown under the title 'Die Grundlagen der Einsteinschen Relativitätstheorie' (The foundations of Einstein's relativity theory) (see Goenner 2005: 160-1) Although Einstein distanced himself from this film, his friendship with Buek remained intact. After his return from a lecture series in Argentina in

1923, Einstein discussed his travel impressions with Buek and they also met in various scientific societies in order to discuss possible philosophical interpretations of quantum mechanics (Goenner 2005: 161-2).

In a short 'Tableau chronologique sur ma vie', which he composed in 1963 at the age of 90, Buek noted: '1931-33: Avènement de Hitler, Einstein et moi passons le même an 1933 à l'étranger, moi – en France, lui en Amérique' (1931-33: Rise of Hitler, Einstein and I move abroad in the same year 1933, I – to France, he – to America) (Nachlass Szittyá, DLA Marbach). But while Einstein's fame rose to new heights with his move to Princeton, Buek's forced move into French exile led to loneliness and material deprivation. In 1953, when Buek was seriously in need of help, his friend Emil Szittyá, an artist and writer, wrote to Einstein for financial support, who was immediately willing to help: 'I remember Mr Buek very well from the time of the First World War. He is a fine character and a reliable man with a social conscience.'¹⁴

5 Charasoff's Stay in Zurich as a Private Scholar, 1902–1909

It is unclear where Charasoff spent the next six months after he had obtained his doctorate in Heidelberg in February 1902 and before he moved to Zurich, where he was registered from 24 October 1902 onwards (Meldekarte 'Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zürich). In the interim period he married his first wife, Marie Seldovic, who came from a Jewish family in Odessa. The date and place of their marriage could not be ascertained, but their son Andreas Arthenius ('Arthur') was born in Zurich on 5 November 1902. In the following year, their daughter Barbara Lydia Helene ('Lily') was also born in Zurich, on 11 December 1903. A further member of the Charasoff family was Alexander ('Alex') von Charasoff, who was born on 17 March 1900 in Strasbourg. According to the birth entry in the municipal archive in Strasbourg, Alexander was the illegitimate child of Anna Magdalena Seldovic (in some documents: Anna Hanela Seldowitsch or Zeltowitsch) from Odessa, who was born on 31 July 1878 in Beresino, Russia. The child was subsequently 'legitimised' by Anna Seldovic's marriage with Ladislaus von Studnicki-Gisbert, on 22 September 1900, in Zurich. It is unclear how Alexander came into Georg Charasoff's family. One possibility is that he was adopted by Anna Seldovic's sister Marie and her husband, Georg von Charasoff. Another possibility, which also cannot be excluded, is that Alexander's mother, 'Anna', and Charasoff's wife 'Marie' Seldovic are one and the same person.

At the time of his marriage, in September 1900, Ladislaus von Studnicki-Gisbert was a law student of Polish descent at the University of Zurich. Ten years before, as a law student in Warsaw, he had been ostracised to Siberia for socialist propaganda, where he stayed from 1890 to 1896. In 1899–1900 he was enrolled at the Law Faculty of the University of Heidelberg (Matrikeleintrag, Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg); thereafter he continued his studies at the University of Zurich, where he was officially enrolled from the summer term 1900 to the end of the summer term 1901 (Matrikeledition der Universität Zürich). However, in spring 1901 he appears to have returned to Warsaw without de-registering at the University of Zurich. Anna Magdalena Studnicki-Gisbert, neé Seldovic, was enrolled as a student of mathematics at the University of Zurich in the winter term 1900-01 (Matrikeledition der Universität Zürich). According to the matriculation documents in Zurich, she had previously studied mathematics at the Universities of Bonn and Heidelberg as a so-called 'Hospitantin', which means that she was

allowed to attend lectures but could not take any exams (women were only accepted as regular students at the University of Heidelberg from 1900 onwards). It is very likely, of course, that Charasoff knew both Anna Seldovic and Ladislaus von Studnicki-Gisbert from his student days in Heidelberg.

In Zurich, Charasoff appears to have led the life of an independent private scholar. Although his varying addresses are all close to the University and the central library, he did not enrol as a regular student before 1910. There is some evidence that Charasoff took a deep interest in Tolstoyanism, studying carefully Tolstoy's works and exchanging several letters, between 1902 and 1908, with Vladimir Chertkov, the major representative of the Tolstoyan movement in England (see Charasoff's letters in the Chertkov Papers at RGALI, Moscow). However, in his first years in Zurich, his main intellectual preoccupation still seems to have been mathematics. This can be inferred from a letter he sent to the mathematician David Hilbert of the University of Göttingen on 10 May 1904, which has been preserved in the Hilbert Papers. In this letter, Charasoff responded to Hilbert's commentary on a set of papers which he had sent him earlier, and which Hilbert had apparently returned with the remark that Charasoff's main results had already been proved by Hermann Minkowski. Charasoff fully accepted Hilbert's judgement, noting that 'from your assessment I now realise that I was apparently not sufficiently familiar with all the contributions of Minkowski' (Nachlass David Hilbert, Code MS Hilbert 59, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen). In spite of this set-back, Charasoff seems to have continued his mathematical studies; in the summer term 1905 he enrolled as an 'Auditor' at the University of Zurich for the lecture on 'Elliptische Funktionen' (Elliptic functions) by Professor Heinrich Burkhardt.¹⁵ Interestingly, at this very time Burkhardt was one of the two examiners of Albert Einstein's inaugural dissertation *Eine neue Bestimmung der Moleküldimensionen*, which Einstein had submitted on 30 April 1905. It seems likely, therefore, that Einstein's seminal contribution may have caught Charasoff's attention very early on through conversations on mathematics and physics which he surely had with Burkhardt.

There are only few other traces of Charasoff's personal life and intellectual preoccupations in this period. In 1904, he apparently made a comment during a lecture on 'Scientific socialism and religion' that Georgij Plekhanov had delivered in Zurich. This is documented in Plekhanov's 'Notes during the discussion of the report', among which there is *inter alia* the following remark of Plekhanov on 'G. Kharazov's bewilderment': 'If we are to agree with him, we must admit that the question of religion is finished. The existence of God cannot be proved. He considers my ideas common to all people. Very glad!' (Plekhanov 1976: 61).

An important event in Charasoff's personal life must also have occurred in this period: his first wife, Marie Seldovic, must have died sometime between 1904 and 1906. Her death is registered in official documents of 1919, which concern the Charasoff children and which have been preserved in the municipal archive in Zurich (Vormundschaftsakten 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zürich). In these documents neither the exact date nor the circumstances of her death are given, but since Lily was born in December 1903 and Charasoff publicly showed up with a girlfriend in spring 1907 (see below), it must have occurred in the interim period from 1904 to 1906.

Around 1904-05, and in parallel to his mathematical studies, Charasoff also began to study the works of Menger, Böhm-Bawerk and Walras. In the Preface of *Das System des Marxismus*, dated December 1909, he stated that he had only become familiar with those works 'in the course of the last four years'. Charasoff

must have studied the works of the classical political economists and of Marx much earlier, because he also states in his Preface that he had developed the main ideas of his treatise, including the notion of a ‘production series’, long before he had read the works of Menger and Böhm-Bawerk. It is also clear, from references in his books, that he was acquainted with the contemporary literature on Marx’s economic theory, including Tugan-Baranovsky (1905) and Bortkiewicz (1906-07).

In January 1907 Charasoff submitted a manuscript on Marx’s theory of value and distribution, *via* Otto Buek, to Karl Kautsky, the editor of the journal *Die Neue Zeit*. Kautsky rejected the manuscript and returned it to Buek, who forwarded the rejection letter to Charasoff. Apparently, Buek was involved because he had been responsible for producing a German translation of Charasoff’s manuscript. Neither the manuscript and submission letter nor Kautsky’s rejection letter is extant, but a letter from Georg von Charasoff to Karl Kautsky of 7 February 1907 has been preserved in the Kautsky Papers (Correspondence D VII 66, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam). In this letter Charasoff informed Kautsky that he did not consider the reasons which the latter had given for his rejection of the paper convincing and that he was keen to read a more detailed criticism of his views. (For a more detailed discussion of the Charasoff–Kautsky correspondence, see Mori 2007). Since the manuscript is not extant, it is unclear which of the concepts and ideas from his later books were contained already in Charasoff’s paper, which – had it been accepted by Kautsky – would have appeared almost simultaneously with von Bortkiewicz’s famous two papers (1906-7, 1907; see also 1952 [1906-7]).

In the summer term 1907 Charasoff enrolled as an ‘Auditor’ at the University of Zurich again, this time in order to attend a four-hour lecture on ‘Psychiatrische Klinik’ (Clinical psychiatry) by Professor Eugen Bleuler.¹⁶ As we shall see below (in Section 12), Charasoff in fact took a keen interest in psychoanalysis and seems to have studied Sigmund Freud’s and C.G. Jung’s writings very carefully. In June and July 1907 he stayed for a cure treatment in the ‘Kur- und Heilanstalt Schloss Marbach am Untersee (Bodensee)’, for the most part in the company of his friend Otto Buek. This can be inferred from the correspondence of Lidija Petrowna Kotschetkowa, who refers to Charasoff repeatedly in some of her letters to her husband, the anarchist, publicist and medical practitioner to the poor, Fritz Brupbacher. In Kotschetkowa’s account, the group of cure guests at ‘Schloss Marbach’ consisted partly of medium-ranked and high-ranked nobility from Russia and Western Europe (‘The Duke of Parma with his entourage, etc. etc.’), but also of social revolutionaries from Russia, like Leonid Schisko and Vera Figner.¹⁷ Kotschetkowa commented on Charasoff’s personality in several letters. She was highly critical of him, and strongly disapproved of his manners and conversation:

A conceitedness, self-satisfaction and smugness which I have elsewhere encountered only in Bulgarians. All the time at the dinner table he talks about great things – the making of bombs, killings of anarchists, maltreatments in the German army, catholic religion, etc. etc. – and all this in a rather loud voice, and of course in German, among Germans and Catholics. ... He fails to notice that nobody is interested in his conversation and that his style of arguing is simply unpleasant. He is not a wise man and I really regret that he does not get his nerves cured by Veraguth.¹⁸ (Kotschetkowa to Brupbacher, 16 July 1907, Brupbacher Papers MFC 37, Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv)

In one of her earlier letters she observed:

Today Charasoff let his girlfriend (a young female student – Jewish) come here from Zurich. She dined with us at the dinner-table and sat between Charasoff and Buek. The former I cannot stand at all. He really gets on my nerves. This brutal, worn face, this self-contentedness and megalomania are just disgusting. He eats, speaks, makes stupid jokes and talks nonsense – just horrible. An animal – or a rather vulgar person! (Kotschetskowa to Brupbacher, 17 June 1907, Brupbacher Papers MFC 37, Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv)

Kotschetskowa's description of Charasoff's girlfriend matches with the known facts about his later second wife, Marie Kriegshaber, so that we may assume that it is the same person. In the following months, Charasoff continued to work on his economic manuscripts on Marx's theory of value and distribution, and eventually must have decided to publish his ideas in book form rather than as articles. He wrote the finishing sentences of the Preface to the first book, *Karl Marx über die menschliche und kapitalistische Wirtschaft*, on '12 October 1908' (Charasoff 1909: page not numbered).

6 Charasoff's Stay in Clarens and Lausanne

In February 1909 Charasoff moved to Clarens, which was then a small village near Montreux (of which it now is a suburb) at Lake Geneva. He obtained a 'permis de séjour' (residence permission) for three years, but he left Clarens already on 26 August 1909 in order to take up residence in nearby Lausanne (Stadtarchiv Montreux, Meldeakten Charasoff-Kriegshaber). Throughout his stay he was accompanied by his three children and by Marie Kriegshaber.

Clarens has a long tradition as a vacation and cure resort, with luxurious hotels, numerous guest-houses, and excellent restaurants. The little village on the 'Swiss Riviera' was particularly popular among Russian guests and was visited by artists and intellectuals like Leo Tolstoy, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Igor Stravinsky, Maurice Ravel, Arthur Rubinstein and Vladimir Nabokov.¹⁹ Igor Stravinsky first came to Clarens, like Charasoff, in spring 1909, and he returned there in autumn 1910 in order to settle down for an extended period of time. The house in which he lived in Clarens, and where he composed, among other things, 'Le sacre du printemps' and 'Pulcinella', is less than 100 metres up the road from Charasoff's residence. This part of Lake Geneva was also a popular retreat for exiled revolutionaries from Tsarist Russia, and was visited by Pjotr Kropotkin, Michail Bakunin, Wladimir Illjitsch Lenin, Inessa Armand, Vera Figner and several others. In spring 1908 it appears to have been overcrowded with Russians, because Rosa Luxemburg, who regularly spent her spring vacation in the guest-house 'La Colline' in Baugy-sur-Clarens, wrote to Karl and Luise Kautsky in April 1908: 'The entire guest-house, and all of Baugy, Vevey, Clarens, and Lausanne is full of Russians. We are the only ones here to speak some German' (Kautsky Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; quoted from Huser 2003: 83).

From Clarens, Charasoff sent two letters to Karl Kautsky, which have been preserved in the Kautsky archive. The first one, dated 18 February 1909, was an accompanying letter to a complimentary copy of his 1909 book, which he sent Kautsky together with 'a short article in which I have developed the same ideas in a different and, as it seems to me, less popular, but for the adept of Marx's theory

clearer form'. He added: 'I would of course be delighted if you were to publish this article in your journal, but this must of course depend on your judgement'. Just one week later, on 25 February 1909, Charasoff responded to Kautsky's rejection letter and return of the manuscript, which he had received the day before, in the following terms:

I readily admit that my assessment of Marxism may contain some imprecisions. Because I am not a Marxist in the conventional sense of the term, it is impossible for me to think myself into this doctrine, which is really alien to my way of thinking, however much I esteem Marx as a political economist and as a theoretician of the labour movement. ... But that my construction should be fundamentally wrong I am not ready to concede so easily, and I therefore look forward to your promised statement of grounds, by letter or in print, with great interest. (Charasoff to Kautsky, 18 and 25 February 1909, Kautsky Papers, D VII 67-8, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).

During his stay in Clarens Charasoff took residence in rue de la Gare 11 (now rue Gambetta), which is located right next to the train station, with direct connections to Montreux and Lausanne. Just up the hill within walking distance is the small village of Baugy-sur-Clarens, where several Russian exiles lived, including Nicolai Rubakin, whose famous library was thus at Charasoff's disposal.²⁰ A further reason for Charasoff's choice of Clarens as a temporary residence, apart from its natural beauty and its closeness to the Russian community in Baugy, may have been the fact that Léon Walras was living there (until his death in January 1910). Moreover, Lausanne was near and easily accessible, where in 1909 Vilfredo Pareto was still teaching. In view of Charasoff's statement (in the Preface of his book of 1910) that he planned to write a third book on the critique of the marginalist approach to economic theory, the idea is close at hand that he may have tried to get in touch with Walras and Pareto – but so far no evidence has been found in support of this hypothesis. (It should also be noted that in spring 1909 Léon Walras was presumably already too ill for a serious scientific discussion.)

In August 1909, Charasoff moved with his family from Clarens to Lausanne, and took up residence in Avenue de la Harpe 3, until the end of March 1910. There is no evidence for any connection with the University of Lausanne: Charasoff was neither enrolled as a regular student nor as an auditor. He also seems not to have used the University library, although this cannot be ascertained definitively, because the library loan documents are incomplete.²¹ It seems most likely that Charasoff used his 'sabbatical term' in Clarens and Lausanne mainly for composing the book manuscript of his major economic work, *Das System des Marxismus*, the preface of which is dated 'Lausanne, 24 December 1909'.

Marriage with Marie Kriegshaber

Some two months earlier, on 28 October 1909, Georg von Charasoff married Marie Kriegshaber (in some documents: Krigsgaber), who gave birth to a son, Sergius, on 11 March 1910 in Lausanne (Geburtseintrag, Stadtarchiv Lausanne). Marie Kriegshaber was born on 1 August 1882 in Kamenetz-Podolski/Proskurow (then Russia, now Ukraine). After receiving a high school education at the Jewish 'Schitomir' gymnasium for girls in her home town, Marie Kriegshaber studied medicine at the University of Berne from the winter term 1902-03 until the end of the winter term 1903-04.²² In the summer term 1904 she transferred from Berne to

Zurich, where she finished her medical studies in 1908 with a doctoral dissertation (Kriegshaber 1908).²³ The list of courses she attended and the topic of her dissertation suggest that she specialised in gynaecology. Interestingly, the account books for lecture fees show that she also attended the course 'Psychiatrische Klinik' by Professor Bleuler in the summer term 1907 (Kollegiengeldabrechnungen der Universität Zürich für das Jahr 1907, Staatsarchiv Zürich).

7 On the Reception to Charasoff's Contributions

It has rightly been suggested that Charasoff's pioneering contributions were not appreciated at the time because most contemporary economists lacked the necessary mathematical training for a proper understanding of his work (Mori 2007). In addition, two further reasons can be given for the almost complete neglect of Charasoff's two books. First, Charasoff's choice of the publisher was not very fortunate: The Hans Bondy Verlagsbuchhandlung in Berlin only existed from 1908 to 1913,²⁴ its programme consisted predominantly of literary titles, and the print-run was low, so that only very few copies of the two books are extant today. Secondly, Charasoff's rather polemical style not only offended readers, but also turned their attention away from his original ideas and novel analytical concepts. This can be exemplified with regard to three contemporary book reviews.²⁵

Charasoff's first book was reviewed by Otto Bauer in the May issue 1909 of the journal *Der Kampf* (Bauer 1908-09a). According to Bauer, Charasoff rightly pointed out that a central element of Marx's theoretical system is the idea that capitalism fails to develop the productivity of labour to the highest possible degree, 'because the introduction of labour-saving methods of production is hindered by the fact that the capitalist only pays for necessary labour, but not for surplus labour' (1908-09a: 380). However, 'this correct idea is presented by Charasoff in the clumsiest possible way', so that Marx's important idea 'is distorted by his unfortunate style of presentation to the point of making it appear ridiculous' (1908-09a: 380-81). Bauer's rather superficial review makes no mention at all of Charasoff's analysis of prices and distribution. This prompted Charasoff to send a reply to Bauer, which the latter refused to publish. Instead, he provided a summary account of Charasoff's reply in a single paragraph of the July issue of *Der Kampf*. In this short paragraph Bauer merely reported that 'Charasoff complains about the fact that my review did not discuss his solution of the contradiction between the first and the third volume of *Capital* and his analysis of the relationship between the law of the falling rate of profit and the crisis theory' (1908-09b: 480).

Charasoff's second book, *Das System des Marxismus*, was reviewed somewhat more extensively by Bauer in the March 1910 issue of *Der Kampf*. Bauer conceded that Marx's transformation algorithm was 'incomplete', because Marx had 'refrained from showing how the formation of the prices of production must then in turn modify the rate of profit'. But this 'gap' cannot be filled 'by simply setting the prices of the basic products [Grundprodukte] equal to their values, and by thus falling back into the errors of the physiocrats. The value of the commodity exceeds the value of labour power also in the surplus production ['Mehrproduktion', which is the term used by Bauer for Charasoff's term 'Nebenproduktion'], and this surplus value is also distributed among all capitals according to their size' (1910-11: 237). Bauer's objection clearly missed the point of Charasoff's procedure, which was to prove the incompatibility of Marx's two invariance postulates ('sum of values = sum of prices' and 'total surplus value = total profits'). Bauer also failed to understand Charasoff's

proof of the determination of the general rate of profits in the basic industries alone. (For a more detailed discussion of Bauer's review, see Mori 2007.)

Das System des Marxismus was reviewed also by Conrad Schmidt in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, which was the revisionist counterpart of Kautsky's *Die neue Zeit*, the theoretical journal of the German Social Democrats. Schmidt's review opened with a complaint about Charasoff's 'tricky sophistry' (verzwickte Rabulistik), which 'demands very hard work from the serious reader' (1910: 850). Schmidt then contended that Charasoff's book 'contains a damnation [Strafgericht] of my article "Grundriß zu einem System der theoretischen Nationalökonomie" (published in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*)' (cf. Schmidt 1909). Charasoff had indeed criticised this article briefly in the Preface of his book. The remainder of Schmidt's book review is devoted to a defence of his own position on Marx's theory of value. In the quoted article, Schmidt had argued that the labour theory of value should be abandoned altogether, and had also contended – without showing it – that an analysis in terms of production prices suffices for a derivation of all the important Marxian ideas, while at the same time avoiding the errors and contradictions into which one is inevitably led by a further adherence to the labour theory of value.

A third 'review' of Charasoff's 1909 book appeared in *Vorwärts*, in the section 'Literarische Rundschau', of 21 February 1909. All that the reviewer, Gustav Eckstein, had to say about Charasoff's book is contained in the following passage:

If one wanted to note all the nonsense which is in this book, one would have to transcribe it; if one wanted to set it right, one would have to expound the entire economic system of Karl Marx. There is hardly any notion in Marx's theory which Mr. Charasoff has not misunderstood, hardly any doctrine which he has not distorted. (Eckstein 1909)

No grounds are provided for this judgement.

8 Charasoff as a Student of 'Oeconomia Publica' at the University of Zurich

In September 1910, Charasoff returned to Zurich with his new wife and four children and took residence in Plattenstrasse 28; in the following year the family then moved to larger premises in Ottikerstrasse 14 in Zurich-Oberstrass.²⁶ In October 1910 Charasoff enrolled as a student at the Law Faculty of the University of Zurich, with 'Oeconomia publica' as his main field of study. The account books for lecture fees show that from the winter term 1910-11 until the end of the winter term 1911-12 he attended all the lectures and seminars that are required for a degree in economics. In the summer term 1912 the account books show no entries for lecture fees any more, although Charasoff was still enrolled as a regular student. He apparently terminated his studies at the end of the winter term 1911-12, without passing a final examination and without de-registering. The available documents suggest that Charasoff had embarked on this study with the intention of obtaining a degree in economics, and that he worked seriously towards achieving this goal for three semesters.

Political economy in Zurich

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century political economy was taught at the University of Zurich by professors in the Law faculty as a minor subject. It was

only with Julius Wolf, who taught in Zurich from 1888 to 1897, that political economy became a separate field of study.²⁷ Wolf's successor in Zurich was Heinrich Herkner, who taught theoretical and applied economics as well as public economics and statistics from 1898 to 1906. Herkner was in turn succeeded in 1907 by the economic historian Heinrich Sieveking, who taught in Zurich until his return to his home-town Hamburg in 1922.²⁸ The second economics professor was Joseph Esslen, a pupil of Lujo Brentano, who taught in Zurich as an extra-ordinary professor from 1906-12 and as a full professor from 1913-14, when he left for Berlin. From 1913 onwards, Sieveking's co-worker was Manuel Saitzew, an economic historian and historian of economic thought, who succeeded him as a full professor in 1922 (see Gagliardi et al. 1938: 831-6).

If Charasoff had embarked on the study of 'Oeconomia publica' in order to find economic theorists with whom he could discuss his ideas on Marx's economic theory, then his hopes were probably disappointed. Sieveking and Esslen, from their training and their research interests, presumably were unable to understand Charasoff's contributions. It is very likely, however, that in Sieveking's seminars Charasoff came into contact with fellow students with a deep interest in Marx's economic theories. In his autobiographical reminiscences Sieveking noted about his teaching in Zurich (without giving a precise date): 'Apart from the lecture course I also held a regular seminar, which turned out to be rather lively, because it was not only attended by the calm and quiet Swiss-men but also by many Russians, who were still agitated by the revolution of 1905' (1977: 96-7). In all likelihood, Charasoff also came in contact with Natalie Moszkowska, who wrote her doctoral dissertation under Sieveking's supervision during this period.²⁹ In her later book *Das Marx'sche System. Ein Beitrag zu dessen Ausbau* (1929), Moszkowska provided not only a critical discussion of Tugan-Baranovsky's and Bortkiewicz's contributions to the transformation problem, but also discussed Tugan-Baranovsky's, Luxemburg's and Charasoff's contributions to the critique of Marx's crisis theory.

In all probability, the reason for Charasoff's abrupt termination of his studies in spring 1912 lies in a tragic personal event. His second wife, Marie von Charasoff, née Kriegshaber, 'poisoned herself with cyanide' (Vormundschaftakten 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zürich). From the available documents it is not possible to ascertain whether she poisoned herself accidentally (as a doctor of medicine, she might well have experimented with poisonous substances for professional reasons) or rather committed suicide (which seems more likely). In any case, Georg Charasoff was suddenly left behind with four children, with the youngest one, Sergius, barely two years old. He appears to have coped with this difficult situation by giving up his economic studies. He stayed on in Zurich-Oberstrass in Ottikerstrasse 14 with his four children until February 1915.

9 Charasoff's Entry for Robert Michels's *Handwörterbuch* project

In late 1913 Charasoff was invited by Robert Michels, who had meanwhile become a professor of sociology at the University of Torino, to make a contribution to a projected encyclopaedia of sociology, to be entitled *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*. In a letter to Michels of 15 January 1914, which is preserved in the Roberto Michels Papers at the Fondazione Einaudi in Torino, Charasoff explained his ideas for an article on 'Tolstoy' which he intended to contribute. He pointed out that he would challenge the prevailing view of Tolstoy as a thinker who stands in the tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He assured Michels that he was perfectly

aware of the novelty and heretical nature of his views, which ran counter to dominant readings of Tolstoy's philosophical position, but that he felt capable of arguing out his case ('if sufficient space were available to me'), because he had 'thoroughly studied this thinker for many years'. Interestingly, Charasoff ended his letter with the remark:

I would also have liked to contribute something on Marxism, but in this field I am a heretic as well and I do not want to impose my ideas on others. If you should be familiar with my book *Das System des Marxismus*, you would perhaps let me know which entries in this boundary field in between sociology and economics you consider to be worthy of my labour. (Roberto Michels Papers, Fondazione Einaudi, Torino)

This remark shows that Charasoff still entertained some hopes in 1914 that he could bring his ideas on the Marxian theory of value and distribution to the attention of a larger academic audience. With the collapse of Michels's *Handwörterbuch* project (for which, besides the outbreak of World War I, also Max Weber's and Ferdinand Tönnies's refusals of contributing major entries was responsible), a further attempt of Charasoff to gain some recognition for his work in economic theory collapsed as well.

10 Charasoff's Departure from Zurich and Return to Tbilisi

In February 1915 Georg Charasoff travelled to Tbilisi 'in order to take care of some financial or legal transactions related to his property' (Vormundschaftsakten 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zürich), leaving his four children behind in Zurich under the auspices of Dr Max Husmann, the owner of a private high school and a close friend of the Charasoff family.³⁰ On 1 May 1915 Husmann disbanded the apartment in Ottikerstrasse 14, after Charasoff had informed him by telegram that for the time being he could not possibly return. The four children were lodged separately in different families in Zurich, mostly of Russian-Jewish origin, with Dr Husmann in guardianship of all four children. In the following three years no further letters or telegrams from Georg Charasoff arrived, and it was not even clear whether he was still alive. In the revolutionary and post-revolutionary turmoil of 1917 it was rather difficult to obtain any information at all on the situation in Georgia.

Some information about an event that may or may not be related to Charasoff's sudden departure from Zurich emerges from a document in the Staatsarchiv Zurich, which concerns a court decision from the district court Zurich of 24 March 1915 (Urteil des Bezirksgerichts Zürich vom 24. März 1915, 'Charasoff', Staatsarchiv Zürich). Apparently, Charasoff had sacked a housemaid in December 1914 without giving any grounds. She applied to the local judge, who decided that her outstanding wage was to be paid to her. Charasoff did not accept this decision and applied to the next higher court, the 'Bezirksgericht'. In the court hearing on 24 March (which Charasoff did not attend) it transpired that he had approached the housemaid sexually, and had apparently sacked her for refusing him. Moreover, the housemaid's description of him as an extremely arrogant and self-assured but also uncontrolled and ill-tempered person was confirmed by several witnesses. The court sentenced Charasoff (in absentia) to make the outstanding wage payment and to cover the law costs.

For a full four years, Husmann took care of the Charasoff children. In spring 1919 he then applied for resolution of his guardianship, because he had run into serious financial problems with his private school. Moreover, he also had

disciplinary problems with the three elder children. According to Husmann, Charasoff had left him some 6,000 Swiss Francs in February 1915, and approximately the same amount of money he had obtained from disbanding the Charasoff apartment (that is, from the sale of furniture, houseware, carpets and so on), and from the liquidation of Charasoff's share in his private school. But over and above this sum, Dr Husmann declared to have spent out of his own pocket, from 1915 to 1919, 'some 12.000 to 15.000 Swiss Francs'³¹ on the Charasoff children, 'apart from much time and distress. My benevolence has been shamelessly exploited' (Vormundschaftsakten 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zurich).

In early 1919 the municipality of Zurich assumed the guardianship of the four Charasoff children, in the form of its representative Dr Häberli (Amtsvormund). From spring 1919 to spring 1920, there exists an extensive documentation with regard to Dr Häberli's activities concerning the Charasoff children (see Vormundschaftsakten 'Kinder Charasoff' and Fremdenpolizeidossier 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zurich), which can be briefly summed up as follows. By spring 1919, Charasoff's son Arthur, then 17 years old, regularly bunked school in order to hang out with his Russian friends in Zurich; he stayed up late and strolled through Zurich's nightlife, incurred debts, and was arrested by the police more than once. There were plans of confining him to a workhouse for boys in the Swiss countryside, but he left Zurich in May 1919 without giving notice to anybody with one of the 'Russian trains' (Russenzüge), which regularly departed from Zurich in those years. After a journey of several weeks he arrived in Tbilisi, briefly stayed with his father, and then moved on to Batum, where he worked for the British army.

Lily von Charasoff, then 15 years old, also failed to attend classes regularly in the private school for girls in which she had been placed by her father. She was apparently fascinated by the theatre, the ballet and the opera, moved in artistic and literary circles, and also had first love affairs. She informed Dr Häberli that she intended to give up high school attendance in order to become an actress, and she actually took acting lessons. In spring and summer 1919 Lily obtained regular financial support from Edith Rockefeller-McCormick, the mother of her schoolmate and close girlfriend Muriel McCormick.³² Dr Häberli noted in a memo note that Mrs Rockefeller-McCormick, then one of the richest women in the world, was even prepared to employ her as a lady's companion and secretary, but Lily refused this offer and declared that she was determined to travel to Tbilisi in order to search for her father.

Alexander von Charasoff had successfully finished high school in 1918 and then had become a student of chemistry at the University of Zurich. However, after a few months he had largely given up studying and spent his time by enjoying the Zurich nightlife and incurring debts. Only the youngest child, Sergius, then eight years old, caused no disciplinary problems.

Since the municipality of Zurich was keen to get rid of the financial obligations related to the three remaining children, Dr Häberli tried to raise money for their 'home transport'. From various sources, including donations from Mrs McCormick and from a further school friend or teacher of Lily's by the name of Maria Wyss, a sufficient amount was finally available for covering Lily's travel costs. She left Zurich on 21 October 1919 and travelled by train and ship *via* Naples and Constantinople to Tbilisi, where she arrived some six weeks later. Immediately upon her arrival she wrote a letter to Dr Häberli, and another one to her step-brother Alexander, in which she asked him forcefully *not* to embark on the journey to Tbilisi, and rather to make every possible effort to be allowed to stay on in Zurich.

She informed Alexander about the difficult living conditions in Tbilisi, where their father now earned his living as a professor at the Polytechnical University: ‘We don’t have any money, although we still own a factory, but this is out of use and earns us no money. And to sell it now is not the right time’. In a letter to Dr Häberli Lily noted that her father, with whom she was living together in a single, unheated room, ‘has lost all his property, which is now in the hands of the Russian government’. Since life was so difficult in Tbilisi, her plan was to return to Zurich as soon as possible, together with her father:

We plan to come to Switzerland in spring, and if Alexander could stay on until then, this would be a great relief. Here it would be very difficult for him, and his future would be rather bleak, the more so, because he cannot speak the language. (Lily Charasoff to Dr Häberli, 8 December 1919; Vormundschaftsakten ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich)

However, when Lily’s two letters arrived in Zurich on 27 December 1919, Alexander had already embarked on the ‘home transport’ to Tbilisi, together with his younger brother. They had left Zurich on 9 December 1919.

In June 1920 Lily again informed Dr Häberli about her firm intention to return to Zurich, together with her father and her youngest brother. She had meanwhile opened a sewing room and hoped to earn enough money within the next fifteen months to make a return trip possible:

Life is very difficult here. There is an enormous inflation and much suffering. My father is very weak. My brother Arthur has got an excellent job in Baku. Bubi [that is, Sergius] lives with Papa and is doing well on the whole. (Vormundschaftsakten ‘Kinder Charasoff’, Stadtarchiv Zürich)

Neither Georg von Charasoff nor his children ever returned to Zurich.

11 Charasoff’s Articles in *Die Aktion* and *Der Gegner*

In 1918, five essays by Georg Charasoff appeared in the literary-political journal *Die Aktion* (Charasoff 1918a-e). Scrutiny shows that these articles are but slightly revised versions of five chapters from Charasoff’s second book, *Das System des Marxismus*, of 1910. The texts were probably reprinted without the author’s (and the publisher’s) consent: Charasoff lived in Tbilisi from 1915 and the *Hans Bondy Verlag* had been liquidated already in 1913. In 1920, four chapters of Charasoff’s 1909 book, including the final polemical chapter, were published in *Die Aktion*, in three instalments and under the new heading ‘Eine Darstellung der Lehre von Karl Marx’ (An Exposition of Karl Marx’s Theory) (Charasoff 1920).

Die Aktion was a literary-political journal, edited by Franz Pfemfert, which appeared from 1911 to 1932. It was instrumental for the breakthrough of expressionism in Germany (see Raabe 1961, 1964). In the early phase of the expressionist movement, that is, from roughly 1911 to 1914, *Die Aktion* was the main outlet, together with Herwarth Walden’s *Der Sturm*, for the new literary and artistic movement. Very early on, Pfemfert published the works of young writers and poets that would later become world famous, including Gottfried Benn, Max Brod, André Gide, Georg Heym, Else Lasker-Schüler, Heinrich Mann, Frank Wedekind, Franz Werfel and Carl Zuckmayer. *Die Aktion* also published illustrations by artists like Lyonel Feininger, George Grosz, Franz Marc, Henri

Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Egon Schiele. In addition to illustrations, literary texts, and expressionist poetry, the journal also published political-economic essays with a socialist/Marxist/anarchist orientation. In 1918, Pfemfert briefly supported the 'Räte-Kommunismus' and after the foundation of the German Communist Party (KPD) his journal temporarily became the official party journal. Charasoff's texts had presumably been recommended to Pfemfert by his friend Otto Buek.

In 1921, the literary-political journal *Der Gegner*, which was edited by Julian Gumperz and Wieland Herzfelde, published the article 'Karl Marx an seine bürgerlichen Gegner' (Karl Marx to his bourgeois adversaries) by Georg Charasoff (1921). This was a slightly revised version of the final chapter of Charasoff's book of 1909, which had been re-published also in *Die Aktion* (Charasoff 1920 (10): col. 634-9). The editors of *Der Gegner* supported the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and published a number of articles which glorified the 'new life' in the Soviet Union. Ironically, at this very time Georg Charasoff was suffering from hunger and cold in Tbilisi, which had just been occupied by the Red Army.

12 Charasoff's Intellectual Preoccupations in Tbilisi, Baku and Moscow: 1917-31

In 1917, after the collapse of the Russian empire, Georgia became a part of the 'Transcaucasian Federation'. Upon the latter's break-up, the *Democratic Republic of Georgia* was founded in May 1918 under the leadership of the Menshevik party. In order to prevent Georgia from being occupied by the Ottoman empire, the National Assembly signed a treaty with Germany, which recognised the newly founded Republic and stationed troops there, in compensation for the establishment of an anti-Bolshevist region between the Ukraine and the Caspian Sea. After Germany's defeat, the German troops were removed from the Caucasus and replaced by British troops. The Mensheviks introduced a land reform, in which the feudal landlords were expropriated (without compensation) and their land was divided up amongst the peasant farmers as private property. Forests, mineral deposits, the railway system and harbour installations were seized by the government as state property. The Mensheviks also introduced a new educational system, with Georgian as the official language in primary schools and gymnasiums as well as in the newly founded National University in Tbilisi. In March 1921, after the occupation of Georgia by the Red Army, the leading Social Democrats left the country and established a government in exile in Paris, under the leadership of Noe Zhordania. Georgia saw violent riots in August and September 1924, followed by executions of some 4000 people.³³

Futurism, transrational poetry, and psychoanalytical interpretations of literature

In the post-revolutionary turmoil in Russia a very interesting artistic and intellectual life developed in Tbilisi, which was at its height after Georgia's declaration of independence in spring 1918:

In 1917–1921 Tbilisi actually played the same role in Caucasus as Paris in Europe in the beginning of the century; in other words, it became the cultural centre of Russia and Caucasus, where the elite artistic society gathered and its accumulated artistic energy was being creatively expressed at full strength. (Chikharadze 2009)

In 1917-18 many young poets, artists, actors, ballet-dancers and intellectuals from Russia moved to Tbilisi, where they organised readings and discussions of modern poetry, as well as cabaret and ballet performances in coffee-houses and taverns. A popular place was the 'Fantastic Little Inn' (Fantasticheskii kabachok), which was opened in November 1917 on the main street of the Georgian capital and soon became a major centre of attraction for young poets and artists. The Georgian poet G. Robakidse described it thus:

Tbilisi had become a fantastic city. This fantastic city needed a fantastic corner and one fine day at Rustaveli Prospect No. 12, in the courtyard, poets and artists opened The Fantastic Little Inn, which consisted of a small room designed for 12-15 people in which by some miracle as many as 50 people managed to fit in. The walls of the room were decorated with phantasmagoria. The Inn was open almost every evening and writers and artists read their poems and lectures. (Nikolskaia 1998: 167)

Georg Charasoff seems to have participated very actively in these artistic-literary activities right from the start. Marzio Marzaduri, an Italian expert on Russian avant-garde literature of the early twentieth century, refers to him in the following terms:

Charazov is indeed an intellectual of great versatility: he works on mathematics, economics, psychology and literature, also writes poetry. He has returned to his mother country from Zurich, where he had lived for many years, and is regarded by everyone as a sort of master [maestro]. In April 1918 he organized a conference in the 'Fantastic Little Inn' on *The theory of Freud and transrational language*, then published in 'Ars' a psychoanalytical interpretation of the dream of Tatiana, the heroine of *Onegin*; the first work with a Freudian reading of a poetic text in Russia. (Marzaduri 1982: 117)

Gerald Janecek, the author of a book on *Zaum: The Transrational Poetry of Russian Futurism* (1996), refers to Charasoff in the following terms:

The Tiflis mathematician and poet G. A. Kharazov was an active proponent of Freudian psychology. Although Kharazov was apparently able to read Freud in the original German judging by one such reference by him (1919a: 12), the main Freud texts were already available in Russian translation: *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1904, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in 1910 and a second edition in 1916. Among the recorded contributions of Dr Kharazov to the discussion of Freud and *zaum* were a lecture, 'Freud's Theories and Zaum poetry', at the Fantastic Little Inn, April 5, 1918, and his participation in a debate 'On Theatre and Zaum poetry' at the Conservatory, May 27, 1918, in which Kruchenykh also took part. (Janecek 1996: 242)

Aleksei Kruchenykh is one of the best-known Russian avant-garde and Zaum poets, together with Jurii Degen, David Burluk, Sergei Goredetskii and Velimir Khlebnikov (among Georgian poets, Igor Terentyev and Ilya Zdanevich are famously remembered). There were several literary groups in Tbilisi, named 'Alpha-Lira', 'The Blue Horns', '41⁰', 'The Guild of Poets', 'The Academy of Verse', which was founded and led by Charasoff, and the 'Syndicate of the Futurists', amongst others. Various literary styles, which shifted and developed, from futurism, expressionism and Dadaism to *Zaum* or transrational poetry were

explored (for summary accounts, see Markov 1968, Margarotto 1982, and Nikolskaia 2000; for an autobiographical account, see Kruchenykh 1995). In her contribution to *Dada global*, a book that traces the dissemination of the Dada-movement in Eastern Europe, Ludmila Vachtova (1994: 110) contended that Charasoff had been instrumental in transferring Dadaism from Zurich to Tbilisi. However, this is not plausible, because Charasoff had left Zurich in February 1915, while Dada performances in the ‘Cabaret Voltaire’ were held only from March 1916 onwards (and there are also no hints for earlier contacts between Charasoff and Hugo Ball, Hans Arp or other members of the artistic community that were later associated with the ‘Cabaret Voltaire’).

As already mentioned, one of Charasoff’s presentations in the Fantastic Little Inn led to the publication of the article ‘Son Tat’iany (Opyt tolkovaniia po Freidu)’ [Tatiana’s dream (A Freudian interpretation)] in the newly founded literary journal *ARS* (Kharazov 1919a), which also published a transrational poem titled ‘Fuga [poem]’ by him (1919b). It concerns the interpretation of a dream sequence of the main female character, Tatiana, in Pushkin’s famous poetic epos *Evgenij Onegin*. Charasoff’s interpretation, according to which Tatiana’s dream is a nightmarish mirror-like doubling of Onegin’s obsessions, is frequently mentioned with approval in contributions on Russian avant-garde literature.³⁴ According to Harsha Ram (2004: 374), Charasoff’s article was instrumental in turning Aleksei Kruchenykh’s attention to psychoanalysis and in introducing Freudian ideas into *Zaum* poetry:³⁵

It was in Tbilisi that Kruchenykh was to assimilate the lessons of Freud, specifically *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*; it was also in Tbilisi that the first attempt was made to apply Freudian theory to the interpretation of Russian literature. ... Kruchenykh found in Freud a new means of interpreting the randomness of phonetic play. If the mystical and the infantile had long been claimed as analogues to avant-garde linguistic practice, they were now joined by the erotic and the obscene.

Facsimile reproductions and English translations of five transrational poems by Georg Charasoff, which he wrote in 1917 and 1919 into Sudeikin’s album, as well as some further information on his literary activities, can be found in the magnificent *Salon Album of Vera Sudeikin-Stravinsky*, which was edited by John E. Bowlt (1995: 35, 36, 41 and 42).³⁶ According to Bowlt (1995: 35), an entry in Vera Sudeikin’s diary shows ‘that Kharazov also interpreted Vera’s dreams according to the principles of Freud (Diaries, 6 May 1919)’.

In the winter of 1919-20 many poets left Tbilisi because of the deteriorating economic conditions in Georgia. The Menshevik government had difficulties with controlling corruption and with raising taxes, and even the Head of State, Noe Zhordania, admitted that the economic and social conditions were unbearable. Many of the Russian poets moved from Tbilisi to Baku (Azerbaijan) where the newly founded University had just opened. Charasoff stayed on until spring 1921 and continued to participate actively in the literary activities in Tbilisi. The poetess Melitta Rafalovich, the wife of the leader of the ‘Guild of Poets’, recalled the meetings in the winter 1920-21:

We met once a week, read and discussed sixty poems an evening ... about fifty men and women ... half sang half read their verse ... Life was getting very difficult. Rooms were requisitioned. It was unprecedentedly cold in Tiflis, but the Guild still went on meeting. Wrapped up in their coats, people

huddled around the miserable stoves, reading poetry. The electricity went out every minute, but even if it was on, you could not read by it. Paraffin lamps, which smoked, appeared. Cold and hunger stopped this activity. (Nikolskaia 1980: 320)

Charasoff not only participated in those meetings but also led another group of writers, the so-called ‘Academy of Verse’:

Apart from the sessions of the Guild of Poets, in 1920 in Tiflis a literary circle called the Academy of Verse, headed by Kharazov, was also functioning. Apart from readings of poetry at its meetings there were lectures devoted to analysing literary works from a psychoanalytic point of view. ... Not only Kharazov, but also Terentiev, the poetess K. Arsenieva, Tatishvili and the author of prose miniatures, Shepelenko, were active visitors to the Academy of Verse. (Nikolskaia 1980: 320)

From 1919 to 1921 Charasoff earned his living as a professor of mathematics at the Polytechnical University in Tbilisi. According to Marzaduri, ‘Kharazov left Tbilisi in 1921 and moved to Baku, in order to teach political economics at the newly-founded University. In Baku, he continued to work on literature and psychoanalysis, to write poetry and to study Pushkin’s works’ (Marzaduri 1982: 127). This is also confirmed in the reminiscences of Mosei Altman (1990), a poet and literary critic, who notes that from 1921 to 1924 Charasoff lectured on mathematics, physics and political economy in Baku. Altman also referred to two books that were published by the University of Baku in 1922 and 1924, and which summarise Charasoff’s lectures on political economy. The 1924 book, of which a copy has been found, is entitled *Introduction to Theoretical Political Economy* (Kharazov 1924); it was compiled with the help of students from Charasoff’s lectures on political economy that he gave in Baku in 1923–24.³⁷ An assessment of the content of Charasoff’s 1924 book with his ‘Baku lectures’ requires a separate paper.

Charasoff’s contributions to debates in physics and psychoanalysis

In 1925, Charasoff gave several lectures in Moscow and also published a short article in the journal of the *Communist Academy* which aimed at a mathematical refutation of Einstein’s relativity theory (Kharazov 1925a).³⁸ On the basis of this article Charasoff has been associated with the so-called ‘mechanist group’, whose objections to relativity theory triggered heated debates in Russia during the 1920s (Plyutto 1998: 78; Tikka 2008: 187). The debates in the 1920s among Russian physicists on relativity theory were burdened with political and ideological considerations, and articulating a particular view which did not become the official Party line could have far-reaching practical consequences for those involved:

The engineers with a bias to mechanistic thinking (N P Kastarin, Ya I Grdina, G A Kharazov, later V F Mitkevich and others) went much further in their criticism of relativity than the Deborin group did. ... Bringing academic discussions on the relation of philosophy to physics down to the level of admonitions on the adherence of science, Communist Party principles, the class struggle in science, sabotage of scientists, etc. was fraught with a ban on

teaching the physical theories to students and with the persecution of theoretical physicists. (Vizgin 1999: 1261)³⁹

According to Klyukin, the physicist Timiryazev, a main proponent of the group of mechanistic thinkers, referred to Charasoff in his *Introduction to Theoretical Physics* (1933, in Russian) in the following terms: ‘An ingenious and simple derivation of the Einstein-Lorentz transformation ... goes back to the gifted theoretician Professor G A Kharazov’ (quoted from Klyukin 2008: 335).

In parallel to his work in physics, Charasoff also continued to pursue his work on the psychoanalytical interpretation of Russian literature. In March 1925 he delivered a lecture at the Russian Psychoanalytic Institute in Moscow⁴⁰ on the interpretation of Pushkin’s writings:

The members of the institute also heard addresses by guest speakers, including one of the rising stars in Soviet psychology, Lev Vygotsky, on December 14, 1924, and by G.A. Charasov, a literary scholar who spoke on ‘Pushkin’s Work in the Light of Psychoanalysis’ on March 21, 1925. (Miller 1998: 67)

In the reports of the meetings of the Russian Psychoanalytic Association Charasoff’s lecture is summarised in the following terms:

25th meeting. — 21 March 1925.

Prof. G. A. C h a r a s o w (as guest): **Pushkin’s work in the light of psychoanalysis**. The speaker analyses several works of Pushkin and notes some parallels between the social motives in Pushkin’s writings and his psychic attitude. (1926: 125)

In the following week Charasoff presented a further paper:

27th meeting. — 28 March 1925.

Prof. G. **Charasow** (as guest): **Methodological considerations on the psychoanalysis of art**. The speaker wants every work of art to be considered as a dream of the artist. Every creative act has infantile motives, which are socially transformed in the further development. (1926: 126)

In the same year Charasoff also attended a symposium on ‘Psychoanalysis and the Arts’ in Moscow, which was organised by the Russian Academy of Sciences. In a discussion of a contribution by V.M. Friche, Charasoff rejected the latter’s objections to psychoanalysis. His comment on Friche was summarised in the following terms:

What is so scary about someone telling you that a man is a machine, running on some ionic-chemical energy which is also called sexual when directed to securing progeny? This energy creates all social values because society is also a kind of progeny. Creation of social values is called sublimation, or distillation. But all processes are based on the same old rough sexual energy. This energy is the matter from which everything elevated, social, is made. There is nothing scary and awful in this, for as everyone knows from long ago, everything emerges from matter and returns into matter. (Kharazov 1925b: 256-7; quoted from Kurbanovsky 2008: 895)⁴¹

On the fate of Lily Charasoff

Dmitrii Bykov's celebrated biography of Boris Pasternak (Bykov 2005; in Russian) contains an interesting reference to Charasoff's daughter Lily, in connection with a description of New Year's eve at the turn of the year 1926-27:

Pasternak welcomed the new year 1927 at home, almost in the same way as described in Nabokov's 'Dar': There, Godunov-Čerdyncev is supposed to meet Zina for the New Year's Eve ball, but sits down with his manuscript 'The Life of Černyševskij' shortly before leaving the house, begins to revise it, allows himself to be carried away, and then writes all night long – Zina returns home aggrieved, but the thing is finished. Pasternak, as we know, loved to be alone in the house. In the darkness and privacy of a feast day it was good to sit down on the writing table rather than on the festive dinner table. Just as you receive it, so you will also live it: the year 1927 became for Pasternak a year of intensive work and increasing loneliness. In the first night of the new year he sketched the outlines of the second part of 'Šmidt', bringing together finished sections and turning them into a unified style. He also was not disturbed in his working mood by the visit of Lily Charazova shortly after midnight. Charazova came in order to congratulate him and then disappeared, and in the year 1927 she also disappeared from his life and from life in general: she contracted typhus and died on 13 September.

Charazova meant a lot to Pasternak – her fate was a particularly cruel one for a woman even in those days. She was born in 1903. Her father, Georgij Charazov, lived in Switzerland then, as a political emigré ('a gifted scoundrel, mystical anarchist and proven genius, mathematician, poet, anything you like' – is Pasternak's characterization of him in a letter to Marina Tsvetayeva. In 1914 he left his children in Zurich and returned to Georgia, and Lily, when she had just reached her 15th year, began to search for him in Russia. About her Russian exertions very little is known – in the Preface to the failed anthology of her poems (Charazova wrote in German, under the pen name 'Maria Wyss') Pasternak wrote:

'There she got into an environment that never gave anything else to anyone but disarray and suffering; where she, after having become a mother at the age of seventeen and having been exposed to immorality and suffered endless insults and torments, formed such ideas about life, which guaranteed that any future elation would invariably turn into balefulness for her.'⁴²

This environment was, according to Pasternak, inspired by Nietzsche and anarchy: 'The Tbilisi children of the coffee-house period'. Charazova never recollected herself – she forgot Zurich forever, and to Zurich, wrote Pasternak, she must immediately be brought back, and it was not yet too late – but it did not happen. Pasternak called her a beauty, 'Mediumička', and he loved her countenance, but her poems he did not really appreciate – sometimes reprimanding himself for, perhaps, 'not noticing a great talent, numbed by the soberness and pedantry of his standards': he did not like in those poems the arbitrariness, the dreamful illustrative quality and the surrealism of Lautréamont-like shadows, but the roots of all this lay – not in the attempt to follow the literary fashion, but in the drowsy, half-sleeping,

half-insane state, in which Charazova, forever doped by Russia, lived through the revolution, the female tragedy and through her entire life. ...

Charazova first met Pasternak on some evening in spring 1926, perceiving a kindred soul in him, and reaching out for this kinship. He tried to rescue her – but without success: It was the environment that fuelled the madness. (Bykov 2005: 94)

In the reminiscences of the poet and literary critic Mosei Altman (1990), one of Georg Charasoff's friends in Baku, Lily is said to have married the writer and art critic Aleksandr Georgiyevich Romm (1887–1952). This is confirmed also in Christopher Barnes's biography of Boris Pasternak, where it is noted that Lily moved to Moscow in 1922:

where she married the poet Aleksandr Romm. Unable to adjust to Soviet life, she spent her last years in poverty and misery; a member of the Union of Poets (SOPO), she wrote only in German and gave an evening of readings at the Herzen house in March 1926; published translations of Russians in *Die Neue Zeit*; five of her lyrics appeared posthumously. (Barnes 1989: 346)

Lily Charasoff's literary remains have been preserved in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) in Moscow.⁴³

Georg von Charasoff's death

The only source of information with regard to Georg von Charasoff's death is the following notice in *Izvestia* of 6 March 1931: 'The death of Professor Kharazov. Kichkas March 5 (by telegram). On the night of March 5 died suddenly Prof. Georgii Artemovich Kharazov invited temporarily to the Energy Institute at the Dnieper' (*ibid.*: 6). Apparently, Charasoff died on the night of 4 to 5 March 1931 in the Kichkas colony near Zaporizhia, a major city in the south-east of the Ukraine on the banks of the river Dnieper, when he was visiting the energy institute *Dnjepostro*, which since 1927 was overseeing the construction of a dam and a hydro-electric power station in the Dnieper river. Charasoff's eldest son, Alexander, seems to have been killed in 1937 during Stalin's great purge. About the fate of Arthur and Sergius nothing is known.

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Notes

1 See Egidi and Gilibert (1984, 1989), Duffner and Huth (2013 [1987]), Kurz (1989), Kurz and Salvadori (1993, 1995, 2000), Howard and King (1992), Egidi (1998), Stamatis (1999), Klyukin (2008), Parys (2013, 2014), and Mori (2007, 2008, 2011, 2013).

2 Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German sources are mine. The handwritten version of Charasoff's 'Lebenslauf', which is preserved in the documents of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the University of Heidelberg (Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg, H-V 3/2), differs slightly from the printed version (cf. Charasoff 1902: 68). In particular, it contains the additional information that Charasoff's parents were members of the Armenian-Gregorian church. When he registered at the University of Heidelberg in 1897, Charasoff also stated himself to be of the Armenian-Gregorian faith, but in later documents he declared to be 'without confession' (Meldekarte 'Charasoff, Georg'; Stadtarchiv Zürich); his children were not baptised (Vormundschaftsakten 'Kinder Charasoff', Stadtarchiv Zürich).

3 This date is wrong: Charasoff's oral examination took place on 27 February 1902 (cf. Promotionsakten der Naturwissenschaftlich-mathematischen Fakultät, H-V-3/2 fol. 73, Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg).

4 For a comparative assessment of Charasoff's and Dmitriev's contributions see Mori (2011).

5 Georg von Charasoff's first wife, Marie Seldovic, came from a Jewish family in Odessa and the Jewish parents of his second wife, Marie Kriegshaber, also lived in Odessa after 1906.

6 The Russian students with whom Max Weber was in close contact, mostly after 1901-02, were Bogdan Kistjakovskij, Sergej Zivago, Fedor Stepun, and Aaron Steinberg. Though possible, it seems rather unlikely that Charasoff had contact with Max Weber, who did not lecture in the period from 1897 to 1901.

7 Michael Reisner (or Reissner, Rejsner, von Reussner) was a law student in Heidelberg in 1897-98. After the October revolution of 1917 he became a professor at the law faculty of Petrograd University and was involved in the drafting of the first constitutional law of the Soviet Union. In the 1920s, he worked in the Soviet ministry of Sciences and Education and was responsible for the foundation of the 'Communist Academy' in Moscow, which became a centre for Marxist social sciences. He was also a founding member of the Russian Psychoanalytical Society in Moscow.

8 One of Königsberger's best-known students is the Russian mathematician Sof'ja Kovalevskaja (1850-1891), who attended his lectures from 1869 to 1871. She was the first female student at the University of Heidelberg and later was also the first woman ever to be appointed to a professorship in mathematics (in Stockholm).

9 Letter to the author from Prof. Werner Moritz (Archivdirektor Universitätsarchiv Heidelberg), 7 July 2010.

10 On the history of the 'Marburg school', see Sieg (1994); on the role of the 'Marburg school' in the establishment of neo-Kantian philosophy in Russia, see Dmitriev (2007).

11 In 1904-05 Otto Buek, together with the Jewish banker Benedikt Friedländer, financed Senna Hoy's anarchistic journal 'Kampf. Zeitschrift für gesunden Menschenverstand', in which Buek also published an essay on Tolstoy (Buek 1905b).

12 In an unpublished essay entitled 'The Einstein I knew', which is in the Einstein-Archive (EA 59-353), Buek noted 'that he often provided piano accompaniment for Einstein's violin' (Howard 1993: 227).

13 Further evidence for Buek's friendship with Einstein comes from a letter of Hermann Cohen to Paul Natorp, dated 28 November 1914, which contains the following passage: 'It is very interesting that Buek is attending Einstein's lectures & comes together with him regularly & discusses thoroughly with him. He finds him unclear philosophically, & still has no clear opinion on the whole thing, in which only the difficult mathematics is beyond doubt' (Universitätsbibliothek Marburg, Ms. 831/52; quoted from Holzhey 1986, vol. 2: 436).

14 Albert Einstein to Emil Szittyá, 18 July 1953 (Nachlass Szittyá, DLA Marbach). Buek obtained regular financial support from the 'Einstein fund' for several years.

15 As an 'Auditor' he was allowed to attend lectures but could not take exams.

16 Eugen Bleuler (1857–1939) was professor of psychiatry at the University of Zurich and the successor to Auguste Forel as director of the Psychiatric University clinic 'Burghölzli' from 1898 to 1927. Bleuler was the first director of a psychiatric clinic in Europe to adopt the psychoanalytical methods of Sigmund Freud. C.G. Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, first was an assistant and then a collaborator of Bleuler at the clinic 'Burghölzli' from 1900 to 1909. Bleuler is known in particular for his analysis of schizophrenia (sometimes also designated as 'morbus Bleuler').

17 Vera Figner (1852–1942) was a leading member of the militant revolutionary group 'Narodnaya Volya' (Will of the People), which was responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander in 1881. In 1894 Figner was sentenced to death, but the death sentence was not carried out and after her trial she was imprisoned for twenty years at Schlüsselburg. In late 1906 she was set free and with the help of friends brought to Switzerland for cure treatment in spring 1907, *via* Finland and Sweden. After several years in exile, spent mostly in Switzerland, she returned to Russia before the revolution.

18 Otto Veraguth was a well-known psychotherapist in Zurich.

19 In a letter of 1857, Tolstoy raved about the awesome beauty of the unique landscape around Clarens, which had 'blinded' him and had 'moved [him] with unexpected force' (quoted from Huser 2003: 82). Twenty-one years later, Tchaikovsky wrote that he could not imagine any landscape outside of Russia 'which more than this one exerts a comforting influence on the soul' (quoted from Huser 2003: 82-3).

20 The private library of Nicolai Aleksandrovich Rubakin comprised one of the largest collections of Russian books in Western Europe. At the time of Rubakin's death in 1946 it comprised approximately 100,000 volumes. Rubakin freely offered his books to anybody who was interested. Before the Russian revolution of 1917 his library was used *inter alia* by the bolsheviks and mensheviks who lived in Baugy, and by guests like Bukharin, Plekhanov, Lenin, and Stravinsky (cf. Senn 1973).

21 Letter to the author from François Allisson, Researcher at the *Centre Walras-Pareto* at the University of Lausanne, 5 July 2010.

22 Her younger sister Sophie (born 15 February 1886) also came to Berne in the winter term 1903-04 and enrolled as a student of philosophy.

23 The supervisor of her doctoral dissertation was Professor Wyder, the director of the 'Universitätsfrauenklinik' at the University of Zurich.

24 Hans Bondy (1881–1917) was the son of the Viennese industrialist Otto Bondy and his wife Julie, née Cassirer. His sister Tony was married to Ernst Cassirer (her cousin) and his brother Walter was a well-known artist, gallery-owner and art critic. Hans Bondy lived a bohemian life in Paris and Berlin; in 1917 he committed suicide. It can safely be assumed that Otto Buek was involved in Charasoff's choice of publisher.

25 For completeness it should be mentioned that there was also a short review of Charasoff's book of 1909 by Pierre Moride (1909).

26 Charasoff's apartment in Plattenstrasse 28 was within walking distance (in fact just across the street) from the Institute of Economics in Zürichbergstrasse 14.

27 Although Julius Wolf was strongly opposed to Marxism (see Wolf 1892), he attracted a number of revolutionary Marxists as students: 'The most talented among them was in his view Rosa Luxemburg' (Gagliardi et al. 1938: 831). Rosa Luxemburg left Zurich in 1897.

28 Heinrich Sieveking (1871–1945) was born into a well-known family of Hanseatic merchants and public servants in Hamburg. After his habilitation in Freiburg he became a professor (Extraordinarius) in Marburg in 1903, before he became a professor of social economics (Ordinarius für Sozialökonomie) at the University of Zurich, from where he moved on to the newly founded University of Hamburg in 1922. He is known for his work on Italian Renaissance merchant practices and the economic history of Hamburg, as well as for his biographies of Karl Sieveking and Georg Heinrich Sieveking. In Marburg, Sieveking had close contacts with Cohen and Natorp, and he kept up the relationship with the two neo-Kantian philosophers during his time in Zurich (see Sieveking 1977: 85).

29 The Warsaw-born Natalie Moszkowska (1886–1968) moved to Zurich in 1908 in order to study economics. Her dissertation on workers' savings banks in the Polish coal and steel industry was finished in 1914 and published three years later (Moszkowska 1917). For more biographical information, see Howard and King (2000).

30 Max (Meer) Husmann (1888–1965) came to Zurich around 1900, together with his mother and two brothers and sisters, from Proskurow, Poldonia. In 1906 the medical student Marie Kriegshaber lived with the Husmann family as a tenant in Ilgenstrasse 4. In 1912, Max Husmann founded a private school in Sonneggstrasse 80, the 'Institut Dr Max Husmann', with Georg von Charasoff as a silent partner. In 1918, Husmann merged his school with the 'Institut Minerva' in Scheuchzerstrasse 2 (which still exists today), and in 1926 he founded another private school, the 'Institut Montana' in Zugerberg (which also still exists).

31 This corresponds roughly to the annual income of a university professor in Switzerland at the time.

32 Edith Rockefeller-McCormick (1872–1932) was a daughter of the American oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller (Standard Oil); she was married to Harold Fowler McCormick, a son of the inventor and entrepreneur Cyrus McCormick (International Harvester). At the time, she was one of the richest women in the world. She first came to Zurich in 1913 in order to obtain treatment from C.G. Jung, and then stayed on until 1921. During those eight years she lived in a luxurious suite in the Hotel Baur au Lac, where in 1919 Lily Charasoff for several months visited her on a weekly basis in order to spend the afternoon with her. Her daughter Muriel McCormick (1903–1959) was Lily's schoolmate and closest girlfriend. After having finished private schools in Zurich and Lausanne, Muriel McCormick was trained as an actor and opera-singer, but she never performed professionally. After the early death of her husband she devoted her time and energy to the management of her considerable funds and to sponsoring the performing and visual arts.

33 Karl Kautsky, who had rejected Charasoff's submissions to *Die neue Zeit* in 1907 and 1909, visited Georgia from September 1920 to January 1921. He was favorably impressed by the reforms that had been introduced by the Mensheviks, and wrote a small booklet about his travel impressions (Kautsky 1921). However, when it was published in May 1921, Georgia had already been occupied by the Red Army (Stenson 1991: 227).

34 See, for instance, Matlaw (1959: 490-91), Rancour-Laferriere (1989: 229-31), Hasty (1999: 258), Clayton (2000: 104) and Gillespie (2009: 463).

35 According to John E. Bowlit (1995: 35), Charasoff's lecture on 'The Theory of Freud and *Zaum* Poetry', which he delivered on 5 April 1918 in the Fantastic Little Inn, 'seems to have impressed both Alexei Kruchenykh and Igor Terentiev and may have encouraged their literary investigations into *Zaum* poetry'. However, Janecek (1996: 212) notes that Kruchenykh's correspondence contains references to Freud already in 1915.

36 Vera Sudeikin-Stravinsky (1888–1982) was a ballet-dancer, actress and poetess, who travelled with her husband, the artist Sergei Sudeikin, during 1917 to 1920, from Moscow to the Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. In 1921 she met Igor Stravinsky in Paris and started a love affair with him; she then married him in 1940 in the USA.

37 A copy of the 1924 book has been found in the Rare Books collection of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, thanks to the efforts of Nino Parsadanishvili (Tbilisi), who made a thorough search for the book on behalf of the author.

38 Klyukin (2008: 335) has suggested that Charasoff moved from Baku to Moscow in 1925, but so far no documents have been found to confirm this conjecture.

39 In *The Lysenko Affair*, published in 1970, the American historian David Joravsky surmised that Charasoff might have been one of the victims of repressive measures against non-conformist scientists: 'I consider it very likely that some obscurantists did suffer repression. For example, G.A. Kharazov vanished with disturbing suddenness following his "rebuttals" of relativity' (1970: 385). However, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis.

40 On the history of psychoanalysis in Russia, see Miller (1998).

41 See also Voronskij (1998: 224).

42 This passage is from a Preface, entitled 'On Lily Charazova', which Pasternak wrote in 1928 for an anthology of Lily Charasoff's poems, which however did not materialise. The text was published posthumously by Elena Pasternak in 1990 in the journal *Literaturnoe obozrenie*; see Pasternak (1990 [1928]).

43 For Lily's five published lyrics, see Charasoff (1928).

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