

# Alexander Bogdanov — Autobiography

*Photo: Bogdanov plays chess with Lenin in Capri (in the mid Gorky)*

**Bogdanov (Malinovsky) Aleksandr Aleksandrovich was born 10 (22) August 1873 from a national teacher, the second of 6 children.** My father was soon promoted to teacher-inspector in the city school, and thanks to this I had access to the library of the school from the age of 6 – 7, and then to its small physics room.

**Bogdanov-student.** I studied at the Tula Gymnasium, lived in its boarding house, a scholarship student, under barracks-prison conditions; there the viciously stupid superiors taught me by experience to fear and hate those in authority and to deny authority. After graduating with a gold medal, I went to Moscow University as a naturalist; in December 1894 I was arrested as a member of the Union Council of Compatriots, and was exiled to Tula. There he was attracted to work in the circles as a propagandist by gunsmith I.I.Savelyev; V.Bazarov and I.Stepanov soon took part in it. He renounced to social-democratic ideas on this work in 1896; **“Short course of economics”** was compiled from the lectures in circles (published at the end of 1897, mutilated by censorship; Lenin greeted it fervently in his review “God’s World” (1898, #4). He spent a part of his time in Kharkov since the fall of 1895 studying on the medical faculty and being a member of the local sd intellectual circles, whose leader was Cherevanin, but broke off with them because of the question of morality, to which they

attached independent value.

In 1898 he wrote his first philosophical book **“Fundamental Elements of the Historical View of Nature”** in order to be able to give an answer to the broad demands of our workers in the sense of a general outlook of the world.

In autumn 1899 he graduated from the university, then was arrested for propaganda. Half a year in jail in Moscow, exile to Kaluga, then 3 years in Vologda. He studied and wrote a lot, in 1902 he organized and edited the collection against idealists – **“Essays of Realistic Worldview”**. Served as a doctor in a psychiatric hospital for a year and a half. From the end of 1903 he edited the Marxist magazine *Pravda*, which was published in Moscow.

In the autumn of 1903 he joined the Bolsheviks, and ending his exile, soon in the spring of 1904, went to Switzerland, where he joined Lenin. At a meeting of 22, he was elected to the Bureau of Majority Committees (BKB), the first Bolshevik centre. Around the same time I was for the first time excommunicated from Marxism by the Menshevik *“Iskra”* (an article by Ortodox in No. 70 accusing me of philosophical idealism). I returned to Russia in the autumn, and from December 1904 I worked in St. Petersburg, in the B.K.B. and St. Petersburg Committee. I wrote B.K.B. tactical leaflets about an armed uprising and about convening a party congress, as did most other B.K.B. leaflets.

In the spring of 1905, at a congress in London (III Congress, Bolshevik) he was a speaker on the armed uprising as well as on the organisational question, and was elected to the first Bolshevik Central Committee. He worked in Saint Petersburg, took part

in the editorial office of "Novaya Zhizn" ("New Life"), represented the Central Committee in the Soviet of Workers Deputies, where he was arrested on December 2, 1905. Released in May on bail, he joined the Central Committee (already Mensheviks) of Bolsheviks; after being exiled abroad, he returned home illegally and lived in Kuokkala together with Lenin. He worked in editorial office of Bolshevik organs as well as in Duma's factions of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Duma. I was a boycottist on the question of the 3rd Duma, but after the decision of the party conference against the boycott, I campaigned for that Duma in the illegal workers' paper "Vpered", which I edited.

At the end of 1907 I was sent abroad by comrades as part of a troika (with Lenin and Innocent) to edit the Bolshevik organ "Proletarij". In the summer of 1909, together with L.B. Krasin, as a leftist Bolshevik, I was removed from the Bolshevik Centre, and in January 1910, with the merger of the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, also from the Central Committee of the Party. In Autumn 1909 he participated in the organization of the First Party Workers' School, in Capri, and in Autumn 1910 of the Second School, in Bologna. In December 1909 he was the speaker of the platform of the "Bolshevik group", which soon took the name of the "literary group Vpered". This platform – "The Current Moment and Tasks of the Party" – formulated the slogan of proletarian culture for the first time. In the spring of 1911, when the "Forward" group began to change from cultural-propaganda work to politics in a foreign spirit, I left it and stepped away from politics, writing only propaganda articles in Pravda and other workers' organs until the revolution. On my return to Russia in 1914 I was sent to the front

as a doctor. The revolution found me in Moscow; there I firstly wrote political-propagandistic articles; in one of them, in January 1918, I put a diagnosis of military communism, then I turned wholly to cultural and scientific work – at the *Proletkultur*, the Proletarian University, etc., and then I had to change my job. In the autumn of 1921 my proletkultivskaja work ceased and I devoted myself wholly to science. But although I definitively left politics, it did not entirely leave me, as my arrest in September-October 1923 showed. I am still, since 1918, a member of the Communist (former Socialist) Academy.

1. On Political Economy: **A Short Course in Economic Science**, its first textbook, written according to a historical scheme (the latter editions revised in collaboration with **Sh. M. Dvolaitzky**; translated into English and several other languages; **An Elementary Course in Political Economy in Questions and Answers**; a large **Course in Political Economy** (in collaboration with **I. I. Stepanov**). Article **“Exchange and Technique”** (1903), in **“Essays on Realistic Worldview”**, which gave the first proof of the labour value theory, based on the principle of equilibrium.

2. On historical materialism: **Science of Social Consciousness, a historical account of the development of ideologies, chiefly forms of thought, with an explanation of their genesis from production relations**; translated into German; **From the Psychology of Society** (collection of articles 1902-06); **Organizational Principles of Socialist Technology and Economics** (Vestnik Socialistakademie, 1923, No. 4), explaining forms of cooperation

through technical relations.

3. In philosophy: **Empiriomonism, ch. I, II, III** (1903-1907); A picture of the world from the organizational point of view, i.e. as a process of formation, struggle and interaction of complexes and systems of different types and stages of organization; **Philosophy of Living Experience** (1911) – review of the development of realistic systems of philosophy, ending with Empiriomonism; **From religious to scientific monism, report** (in appendix to the 3rd edition (“Philosophy of Living Experience”) – justifying the struggle for scientific monism, which eliminates philosophy in general.

4. On Organizational Science: **General Organizational Science (Tectology)**, ch. I, II, III (1913-1922): A general doctrine of the forms and laws of organization of all elements of nature, practice and thought (part I published in German; **Principles of the Unified Economic Plan** (Vestnik of Labour, 1921, no. 4- 6) and **Labour and the needs of the worker** (Moloda Gvardia, 1922, no. 3) – applications of organizational laws to the solution of basic economic problems; **Objective understanding of the relativity principle – applications of the organizational view to interpret the relativity principle** (Bulletin of the Communist Academy, 1924, no. 8).

5. On proletarian culture: **The New World** (1904-06), a popular characterization of the highest cultural type of life; **Cultural Tasks of the Working Class** (1911), a substantiation of the program of proletarian culture; **Art and the Working Class** (translated into German; Socialism of Science – on proletarian science (part also translated into

German; Elements of proletarian culture in the development of the working class – a historical analysis; On proletarian culture, a collection of articles 1904-1924.

This includes two novels: *Red Star* (1907), a utopia (translated into French, German and several other languages; *Engineer Manny* (1912), a picture of the clash of proletarian and bourgeois culture.

There were several books, several dozen journal articles, pamphlets and reports, even more newspaper articles and leaflets, mostly propaganda and agitation.

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Autograph.