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**Marx's Concept of Secret Diplomacy –
adieu to Economics?**

Introduction: Secret Diplomacy and Conventional Marxism

Secret Diplomacy (SD) is a model of the state Marx developed beginning in 1853 in response to the movement and writings of David Urquhart (1805–1877), a Turkophile Scot MP for Glasgow, veteran diplomat and professional 'Russia-hater' (*Russenhasser*). Being diplomacy-driven and little informed by political economy, the SD concept represents a distinctive alternative to such currents of Marxist state theory of the 1970's and 1980's as the 'Derivationist School' (E. Altwater, C. v. Braunmühl and H. Radice), currents which sought to derive state theory from categories of political economy (Barrow, 1993, pp. 78–88). Indeed, by implicitly denigrating political economy as a guide to politics and the state, SD represents a distinctive alternative to much of conventional Marxist theory overall, theory canonized by Engels in the heyday of the Second International and regularly reproduced ever since. Two of the Ultimate foundations of Second International orthodoxy – that there are no significant differences between Marx and Engels, and that under the impact of industrialization 19th-century Russia passed from being an Asiatic despotism to a backward part of Europe – are directly undermined by SD. There are numerous other differences as well. Thus, for conventional theory the decisive event heralding modernity is the French Revolution of 1789 – for SD the decisive events are the Great Northern War, 1700–1721; the Hannoverian Accession of 1714 in England; and the Tartar Yoke in Russia, 1241–1480. For conventional theory, political economy is the queen of the state sciences; for SD it is diplomacy, followed at a distance by anthropology and ethnology. For conventional theory the key modern social development is industrialization – for SD it is diplomatic connivance between England and Russia. As mentioned, for conventional theory post-1861 Russia had become a backward part of Europe – for SD Russia is a culturally-alien body (*bacillus*) which has infected Western society, an Asiatic intruder disrupting 'normal' developments. For conventional theory the only writer who developed a concept Marx adapted wholesale was Engels – for SD it is Urquhart, specifically

Urquhart's analysis of Palmerston. For conventional theory the three sources of Marx's state construct are British political economy, French socialism and German philosophy – for SD the chief source is German historicism in Berlin, i.e., Ranke, J. Droysen and Hegel as a German historicist. For conventional theory, 'Bonapartism' occurs when a panic-stricken national ruling class delegates authority to a semi-autonomous national governing class – for SD (after Marx identified Napoleon III as a Russian agent in 1859 and 1860 [Drischler, 1994, p. 111]) Bonapartism occurs when a ruling class delegates real authority to non-Western (i.e., Russian) elements, i.e. surrenders national sovereignty. In conventional theory's version of the base/superstructure problematic, the economic 'base' determines the broad outline of the ideological and state 'superstructure' – for SD the diplomatic connivance state of 1714 is the semi-permanent 'base' for a dizzying array of economic superstructures from mercantilism to industrialism. For conventional theory, class struggle is the stuff of history – for SD class struggle is not only subordinate to struggle of civilizations (East/West struggle – Russia versus Europe), it is also simultaneously subordinate to *intra-civilizational* struggle (peripheral English-speakers versus core Continental Europeans in Western civilization). For conventional theory Marx's state concept stands in a relation of *Aufhebung* (simultaneous negation and preservation of key aspects) to that of Hegel – for SD, after Marx's 'Urquhart Apotheosis of 1853' (the intellectual cauldron which produced the largely-finished concepts of SD, the Asiatic mode of production (AMP) and *Russenhass*), Old Moor in effect gave an uncritical endorsement to Hegel's state concept of 1820; in the 1819\1820 Berlin lectures on the State, the Swabian had noted 'The state as such is always something anterior to bourgeois society. Said society constitutes itself only in the state, and only within the realized unity which the state is, can said society come to the fore.' (*Der Staat als solcher ist immer etwas Frueheres als die buergerliche Gesellschaft. Diese bildet sich nur im Staat aus, und sie kann nur innerhalb der ganzen Einheit, die der Staat ist, hervortreten.*) (Hegel, 1983, p. 205). For conventional theory, the AMP is a curiosity to be used to analyze archaic societies and pre-modern China – for SD the AMP is indispensable for analyzing industrial capitalist state and society since Russo-Asiatic mode of production elements are co-ruling inside that state (Drischler, 1996, p. 200). For conventional theory, relying on the unpublished (by Marx) *German Ideology* of 1846, the Marxist critique of bourgeois historical writing is that it neglects economic factors – SD, following the *Revelations* of 1857, asserts the cardinal defect of the historical writings of the 'haute bourgeoisie'