State and Counter-Revolution

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Lenin's state was to be a Bolshevik state supported by workers and peasants. As the privileged classes could not be expected to support it, it was necessary to disfranchise them and thus end bourgeois democracy. Once in power, the Bolsheviks restricted political freedoms – freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association, and the right to vote and to be elected to the soviets – to the laboring population, that is, to all people "who have acquired the means of living through labor that is productive and useful to society, that is, the laborers and employees of all classes who are employed in industry, trade, agriculture, etc., and to peasants and Cossack agricultural laborers who employ no help for purposes of making profits."[1] However, the peasants could not be integrated into the envisioned "one great factory," which transformed "all citizens into the hired employees of the state," for they had made their revolution for "private property," for land of their own, disregarding the fact that nominally all land belonged to the nation as a whole. The concessions made to the peasants were the price the Bolsheviks had to pay for their support. "The Russian peasantry," wrote Trotsky, "will be interested in upholding proletarian rule at least in the first, most difficult, period, no less than were the French peasants interested in upholding the military role of Napoleon Bonaparte, who by force guaranteed to the new owners the integrity of their land shares."[2]

But the peasants' political support of the Bolsheviks was one thing and their economic interests another. Disorganization through war and civil war reduced industrial and agricultural production. The large landed estates had been broken up to provide millions of agricultural laborers with small holdings. Subsistence farming largely displaced commercial farming. But even the market-oriented peasantry refused to turn its surpluses over to the state, as the latter had little or nothing to offer in return. The internal policies of the Bolshevik state were mainly determined by its relation to the peasantry, which did not fit into the evolving state-capitalist economy. To placate the peasants was possible only at the expense of the proletariat, and to favor the latter, only at the expense of the peasantry. To stay in power, the Bolsheviks were constantly forced to alter their positions regarding either one or the other class. Ultimately, in order to make themselves independent of both, they resorted to terroristic measures which subjected the whole of the population to their dictatorial rule.

[1] Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (1918), Article 4, Chapter XIII.

[2] Trotsky, Our Revolution, p. 98.

The Bolshevik dilemma with regard to the peasants was quite generally recognized. Despite her sympathies for the Bolshevik Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, for example, could not desist from criticizing their agricultural policies as detrimental to the quest for socialism. Property rights, in her view, must be turned over to the nation, or the state, for only then is it possible to organize agricultural production on a socialistic basis. The Bolshevik slogan "immediate seizure and distribution of the land to the peasants" was not a socialist measure but one that, by creating a new form of private property, cut off the way to such measures. The Leninist agrarian reform, she wrote, "has created a new and powerful layer of popular enemies of socialism in the countryside, enemies whose resistance will be much more dangerous and stubborn than that of the noble large landowners."[3] This criticism, however, did no more than restate the unavoidable dilemma. While she favored the taking of power by the Bolsheviks, Luxemburg recoiled before the conditions under which alone this was possible. Lenin, however, expected the peasants' continuing support not only because the Bolsheviks had ratified their seizure of land, but also because the Soviet state intended to be a "cheap government," in order to ease the peasants' tax burden.

It is partly with this "cheap government" in mind that Lenin spoke so repetitiously of the necessity of "workingmen's wages" for all the administrative and technical functionaries. "Cheap government" was to cement together the "workers' and peasants' alliance." During the first period of Bolshevik rule, moreover, the egalitarian principles enunciated in State and Revolution became largely a reality, due to the difficulties in the way of providing the urban population with the bare necessities of life. The government saw itself forced to take from the peasantry all their surplus grain, and often more than that, in the form of "loans," or in exchange for valueless paper money. Their violent reactions induced the Bolsheviks to replace the system of confiscation with a tax in kind, which failed to still the peasants' opposition. Finally, in 1921 the government was forced into a New Economic Policy (NEP), involving a partial return to capitalist market relations and an attempt to attract capital from abroad.

The invitation to invest in Russian industry was largely ignored by Western capitalism. The problem remained how to capitalize the country without ending up with a private-enterprise system – the logical outcome of a development of peasant farming under free market relations. The New Economic Policy could be regarded either as a mere interval in the "socialization process" or as a more permanent policy entailing the risk that the newly generating private capitalist forces would overtake the state-controlled sector of the economy and even destroy it. In such an eventuality, the Bolshevik intervention would have been in vain – a mere incident in a bourgeois revolution. Lenin felt sure, however, that a partial return to market relations could be politically mastered, i.e., that the Bolshevik Party could hold state power and secure enough economic weight by maintaining control of key positions, such as large-scale industry, banking, and foreign trade, thus neutralizing the emerging private property relations in agriculture, small-scale industry, and the retail trade. In time, the real social power would shift from the peasantry to state-controlled industry by virtue of the latter's growth.

In the end, however, the problems of the "mixed economy" of the NEP period were resolved by the forced collectivization of agriculture, the centrally planned economy, and the terroristic regime of Stalinism. The fears of Rosa Luxemburg with respect to Bolshevik peasant policy proved to be unwarranted. However, the destruction of peasant property by way of collectivization did not lead to socialism but merely secured the continuance of state capitalism. By itself,

[3] Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, p. 46.

the collectivized form of agriculture has no socialist character. It is merely the transformation of small-scale into large-scale agricultural production by political means in distinction to the concentration and centralization process brought about, though imperfectly, in the capitalist market economy. Collectivization was to make possible a more effective extraction of surplus labor from the peasant population. It required a "revolution from above," a veritable war between the government and the peasantry,[4] wherein the government falsely claimed to act on behalf of and to be aided by the poor peasants, in wiping out the kulaks, or rich peasants, who were blocking the road to socialism.

Unless for higher wages, implying better living standards, wage workers see no point in exerting themselves beyond that unavoidable measure demanded by their bosses. Supervision, too, demands incentives. The new controllers of labor showed little interest in the improvement of production at "workingmen's wages." The negative incentive, implied in the need for employment in order to live at all, was not enough to spur the supervisory and technical personnel to greater efforts. It was therefore soon supplemented with the positive incentives of wage and salary differentials between and within the various occupations and professions, and with special privileges for particularly effective performances. These differentials were progressively increased until they came to resemble those prevalent in private-enterprise economies.

But to return to the Bolshevik government: Elected by the soviets, it was in theory subordinated to, and subject to recall by, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, and merely empowered to carry on within the framework of its directives. In practice, it played an independent role in coping with the changing political and economic needs and the everyday business of government. The Congress of Soviets was not a permanent body, but met at intervals of shorter or longer duration, delegating legislative and executive powers to the organs of the state. With the "carrying of the class struggle into the rural districts," i.e., with the state-organized expropriatory expeditions in the countryside and the installation of Bolshevik "committees of the poor" in the villages, the "workers' and peasants' alliance" that had brought the Bolsheviks to power promised to deteriorate and to endanger the Bolshevik majority in the congress as well as its partnership with the left Social Revolutionaries. To be sure, the Bolshevik government, controlling the state apparatus, could have ignored the congress, or driven it away, as it had driven away the Constituent Assembly. But the Bolsheviks preferred to work within the framework of the soviet system, and to work toward a Congress of Soviets obedient to the party. To this end, it was necessary to control the elections of deputies to the soviets and to outlaw other political parties, most of all the traditional party of peasants, the Social Revolutionaries.

As the Mensheviks and the right Social Revolutionaries had withdrawn from the congress and opposed the government elected by it, they could easily be disfranchised, and were outlawed by order of the Central Committee of the Congress of Soviets in June 1918. The occasion to put an end to the left Social Revolutionaries arose soon, not only because of the widespread peasant discontent but also because of political differences, among which was the Social Revolutionaries' rejection of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. After the signing of the treaty, the left Social Rev-

[4] Lord Moran reports the following dialogue between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow in 1942: Churchill: "When I raised the question of the collective farms and the struggle with the kulaks, Stalin became very serious. I asked him if it was as bad as the war. 'Oh, yes,' he answered, 'Worse. Much worse. It went on for years. Most of them were liquidated by the peasants, who hated them. Ten millions of them. But we had to do it to mechanize agriculture. In the end, production from the land was doubled. What is a generation?' Stalin demanded as he paced up and down the length of the table." C. Moran, Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1940–1965 (Boston: Houghton, 1966), p. 70.

olutionaries withdrew from the Central Committee. The Fifth Congress of Soviets, in July 1918, expelled the left Social Revolutionaries. Both the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars were now exclusively in Bolshevik hands. The latter secured their majority in the soviets not only because their popularity was still in the ascendancy, but also because they had learned how to make it increasingly more difficult for non-Bolsheviks to enter the soviets. In time, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets became a manipulated body, automatically ratifying the actions of the government. The abdication of soviet power in favor of governmental rule, which Lenin had denounced with the slogan "All power to the soviets," was now for the first time actually realized in the Bolshevik one-party government.

With the soviets no longer thought of as the organizational instrument for a socialist production system, they became a kind of substitute parliament. The soviet state, it was proclaimed programmatically,

> "while affording the toiling masses incomparably greater opportunities than those enjoyed under bourgeois democracy and parliamentary government, to elect and recall deputies in the manner easiest and most accessible to the workers and peasants,... at the same time abolishes the negative aspects of parliamentary government, especially the separation of the legislature and the executive, the isolation of the representative institutions from the masses... The Soviet government draws the state apparatus closer to the masses by the fact that the electoral constituency and the basic unit for the state is no longer a territorial district, but an industrial unit (workshop, factory)."[5]

The soviet system was seen by the Bolsheviks as a "transmission belt" connecting the state authorities at the top with the broad masses at the bottom. Orders issuing from above would be carried out below, and complaints and suggestions from the workers would reach the government through their deputies to the Congress of Soviets. Meanwhile, Bolshevik party cells and Bolshevik domination of the trade unions assured a more direct control within the enterprises and provided a link between the cadres in the factories and the governmental institutions. If so inclined, of course, the workers could assume that there was a connection between them and the government through the soviets, and that the latter could, via the electoral system, actually determine government policy and even change governments. This illusory assumption pervades more or less all electoral systems and could also be held for that of the soviets. By shifting the electoral constituency from the territorial district to the place of production, the Bolsheviks did deprive the nonworking layers of society of partaking in the parliamentary game,[6] without, however, changing the game itself. In the name of revolutionary necessity, the government made itself increasingly more independent of the soviets in order to achieve that centralization of power needed for the domination of society by a single political party. Even with Bolshevik domination of the soviets, general control was to be administered by the party and there, according to Trotsky,

[5] Lenin, Program of the CPSU (B), adopted 22 March 1919 at the Eighth Congress of the Party.

[6] Stalin's Constitution of 1936 reestablished the universal right to vote, but combined it with a number of controls that preclude the election to state institutions of anyone not favored by the Communist Party, thus demonstrating that universal franchise and dictatorship can exist simultaneously.

> the last word belongs to the Central Committee… This affords extreme economy of time and energy, and in the most difficult and complicated circumstances gives a guarantee for the necessary unity of action. Such a regime is possible only in the presence of the unquestioned authority of the party, and the faultlessness of its discipline… The exclusive role of the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious revolution is quite comprehensible… The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat presupposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of the party, with a clear programme of action… We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party. It is thanks to the clarity of its theoretical vision and its strong revolutionary organization that the party has afforded to the Soviets the possibility of becoming transformed from shapeless parliaments of labor into the apparatus of the supremacy of labor. In this "substitution" of the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all. The Communists express the fundamental interests of the working class. It is quite natural that, in the period in which history brings up those interests,.., the Communists have become the recognized representatives of the working class as a whole.[7]

Whereas with regard to the soviets of 1905, Trotsky recognized that their "substance was their efforts to become organs of public authority," now, after the Bolshevik victory, it was no longer the soviets but the party and, more precisely, its central committee, that had to exercise all public authority.[8] The Bolsheviks, or at any rate their foremost spokesmen, Lenin and Trotsky, had no confidence whatever in the soviets, those "shapeless parliaments of labor," which, in their view, owed their very existence to the Bolshevik Party. Because there would be no soviet system at all without the party, to speak of a soviet dictatorship was to speak of the party dictatorship – the one implying the other. Actually, of course, it had been the other way around, for without the revolution made by the soviets the Bolshevik Party could never have seized power and Lenin would still have been in Switzerland. Yet to hold this power, the party now had to separate itself from the soviets and to control the latter instead of being controlled by them.

Notwithstanding the demagoguery displayed in State and Revolution, Lenin's and Trotsky's attitude regarding the capacities and incapacities of the working class were not at all surprising, for they were largely shared by the leading "elites" of all socialist movements and served, in

[7] Trotsky, Dictatorship vs. Democracy (New York, 1922), pp. 107–9.

[8] Trotsky, undoubtedly as outstanding a revolutionary politician as Lenin, is nonetheless of no interest with respect to the Bolshevik Revolution, either as a theoretician or as a practical actor, because of his total submission to Lenin, which allowed him to play a great role in the seizure of power and the construction of the Bolshevik state. Prior to his unconditional deference to Lenin, Trotsky opposed both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, the first because of their passive acceptance of the expected Russian Revolution as a bourgeois revolution in the traditional sense, and the second because of Lenin's insistence on a "peasant-worker alliance," which in Trotsky's view could not lead to a socialist revolution According to Trotsky, moreover, the socialist revolution, dominated by the industrial proletariat, cannot be contemplated at all within the framework of a national revolution, but must from the start be approached as an international revolution, united the Russian revolution with revolutions in Western Europe, that is, as a "permanent revolution" under the hegemony of the working class. Changing over to Lenin's ideas and their apparent validity in the context of the Russian situation, Trotsky became the prisoner of a dogmatized Leninism and thus unable to evolve a Marxist critique of the Bolshevik Revolution.

fact, to justify their existence and privileges. The social and technical division of labor within the capitalist system did indeed deprive the proletariat of any control, and therewith understanding, of the complex production and distribution process that assures the reproduction of the social system. Although a socialist system of production will have a division of labor different from that prevalent in capitalism, the new arrangements involved will only be established in time and in connection with a total reorientation of the production process and its direction toward goals different from those characteristic of capitalism. It is therefore only to be expected that the production process will be disrupted in any revolutionary situation, especially when the productive apparatus is already in a state of decay, as was the case in the Russia of 1917. It is then also not surprising that workers should have put their hopes in the new government to accomplish for them what seemed extremely difficult for them to do.

The identification of soviets and party was clearly shared by the workers and the Bolsheviks, for otherwise the early dominance of the latter within the soviets would not be comprehensible. It was even strong enough to allow the Bolsheviks to monopolize the soviets by underhanded methods that kept non-Bolsheviks out of them. For the broad urban masses the Bolsheviks were indeed their party, which proved its revolutionary character precisely by its support of the soviets and by its insistence upon the dictatorship of the proletariat. There can also be no doubt that the Bolsheviks, who were, after all, convinced socialists, were deadly serious in their devotion to the workers' cause – so much, indeed, that they were ready to defend it even against the workers should they fail to recognize its necessary requirements.

According to the Bolsheviks, these necessary requirements, i.e., "work, discipline, order," could not be left to the self-enforcement of the soviets. The state, the Bolshevik Party in this case, would regulate all important economic matters by government ordinances having the force of law. The construction of the state served no other purpose than that of safeguarding the revolution and the construction of socialism. They spread this illusion among the workers with such great conviction because it was their own, for they were convinced that socialism could be instituted through state control and the selfless idealism of a revolutionary elite. They must have felt terribly disappointed when the workers did not properly respond to the urgency of the call for "work, discipline, and order" and to their revolutionary rhetoric. If the workers could not recognize their own interests, this recognition would have to be forced upon them, if necessary by terroristic means. The chance for socialism should not be lost by default. Sure only of their own revolutionary vocation, they insisted upon their exclusive right to determine the ways and means to the socialist reconstruction of society.

However, this exclusive right demanded unshared absolute power. The first thing to be organized, apart from party and soviets, was then the Cheka, the political police, to fight the counterrevolution in all its manifestations and all attempts to unseat the Bolshevik government. Revolutionary tribunals assisted the work of the Cheka. Concentration camps were installed for the enemies of the regime. A Red Army, under Trotsky's command, took the place of the "armed proletariat." An effective army, obedient only to the government, could not be run by "soldiers' councils," which were thus at once eliminated. The army was to fight both external and internal foes and was led and organized by "specialists," by tsarist officers, that is, who had made their peace with the Bolshevik government. Because the army emerged victorious out of war and civil war, which lasted from 1918 to 1920, the Bolshevik government's prestige was enormously enhanced and assured the consolidation of its authoritarian rule.

Far from endangering the Bolshevik regime, war and civil war against foreign intervention and the White counter-revolution strengthened it. It united all who were bound to suffer by a return of the old authorities. Regardless of their attitude toward the Bolsheviks and their policies, the peasants were now defending their newly won land, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries their very lives. The Bolsheviks, at first rent by internal dissension, united in the face of the common enemy and, if only for the duration of the civil war, gladly accepted the aid of the harassed but still existing Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, and even Anarchists as that of a "loyal opposition." Finally, the interventionist character of the civil war gave the Bolshevik resistance the euphoria of nationalism as the government rallied the population to its side with the slogan "the fatherland is in danger." In this connection it must be pointed out that Lenin's and so the Bolsheviks' nationalism and internationalism were of a peculiar kind, in that they could be used alternatively to advance the fortunes of the Russian revolution and those of the Bolshevik Party. In Trotsky's words, "Lenin's internationalism needs no recommendation. But at the same time Lenin himself is profoundly national. Lenin personifies the Russian proletariat, a young class, which politically is scarcely older than Lenin himself, but a class which is profoundly national, for recapitulated in it is the entire past development of Russia, in it lies Russia's entire future, with it the Russian nation rises and falls."[9] Perhaps, being so profoundly national, mere introspection may have led Lenin to appreciate the national needs and cultural peculiarities of oppressed peoples sufficiently to induce him to advocate their national liberation and self-determination, up to the point of secession, as one aspect of his anti-imperialism and as an application of the democratic principle to the question of nationalities. Since Marx and Engels had favored the liberation of Poland and home rule for Ireland, he found himself here in the best of company. But Lenin was a practical politician first of all, even though he could fulfill this role only at this late hour. As a practical politician he had realized that the many suppressed nationalities within the Russian Empire presented a constant threat to the tsarist regime, which could be utilized for its overthrow. To be sure, Lenin was also an internationalist and saw the socialist revolution as a world revolution. Still, this revolution had to begin somewhere and in the context of the Russian multinational state, the demand for national self-determination promised the winning of "allies" in the struggle against tsardom. This strategy was supported by the hope that, once free, the different nationalities would elect to remain within the Russian Commonwealth, either out of self-interest or through the urgings of their own socialist organizations, should they succeed in gaining governmental power. Analogous to the "voluntary union of communes into a nation," which Marx had seen as a possible outcome of the Paris Commune, national self-determination could lead to a unified socialist Russian Federation of Nations more cohesive than the old imperial regime.

Until the Russian Revolution, however, the problem of national self-determination remained purely academic. Even after the revolution, the granting of self-determination to the various nationalities within the Russian Empire was rather meaningless, for most of the territories involved were occupied by foreign powers. Self-determination had meanwhile become a policy instrument of the Entente powers, in order to hasten the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and an imperialistic redrawing of the map of Europe in accordance with the desires of the victor nations. But "even at the risk of playing into bourgeois hands, Lenin nevertheless continued to promote unqualified self-determination, precisely because he was convinced that the war would compel

[9] Trotsky, "Lenin on his 50th Birthday," in Fourth International (January-February 1951), pp. 28–9.

both the Dual Monarchy and the Russian Empire to surrender to the force of nationalism."[10] By sponsoring self-determination and thereby making the proletariat a supporter of nationalism, Lenin, as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out, was merely aiding the bourgeoisie to turn the principle of self-determination into an instrument of counter-revolution. Although this was actually the case, the Bolshevik regime continued to press for national self-determination by now projecting it to the international scene, in order to weaken other imperialist powers, in particular England, in an attempt to foster colonial revolutions against Western capitalism, which threatened to destroy the Bolshevik state.

Though Rosa Luxemburg's prediction, that the granting of self-determination to the various nationalities in Russia would merely surround the Bolshevik state with a cordon of reactionary counterrevolutionary countries, turned out to be correct, this was so only for the short run. Rosa Luxemburg failed to see that it was less the principle of self-determination that dictated Bolshevik policy than the force of circumstances over which they had no control. At the first opportunity they began whittling away at the self-determination of nations, finally to end up by incorporating all the lost independent nations in a restored Russian Empire and, in addition, forging for themselves spheres of interest in extra-Russian territories. On the strength of her own theory of imperialism, Rosa Luxemburg should have realized that Lenin's theory could not be applied in a world of competing imperialist powers, and would not need to be applied, should capitalism be brought down by an international revolution.

The civil war in Russia was waged mainly to arrest the centrifugal forces of nationalism, released by war and revolution, which threatened the integrity of Russia. Not only at her western borders, in Finland, Poland, and the Baltic nations, but also to the south, in Georgia, as well as in the eastern provinces of Asiatic Russia, new independent states established themselves outside of Bolshevik control. The February Revolution had broken the barriers that had held back the nationalist or regionalist movements in the non-Russian parts of the Empire. "When the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in Petrograd and Moscow, nationalist or regionalist governments took over in the non-Great Russian areas of European Russia and in Siberia and Central Asia. The governing institutions of the Moslem peoples of the Transvolga (Tatars, Bashkirs), of Central Asia and Transcaspia (Kirghiz, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkomans), and of Transcaucasia (Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaidzhanis, Tartars) favored autonomy in a Russian federation and opposed the Bolsheviks."[11] These peoples had to be reconquered in the ensuing civil war.

The nationalist aspect of the civil war was used for revolutionary and counter-revolutionary purposes. The White counter-revolution began its anti-Bolshevik struggle soon after the overthrow of the Provisional Government. Volunteer armies were formed to fight the Bolsheviks and were financed and equipped by the Entente powers in an effort to bring Russia back into the war against Germany. British, French, Japanese, and American troops landed in Murmansk, Archangel, and Vladivostok. The Czech Legion entered the conflict against the Bolsheviks. In these struggles, territories changed hands frequently but the counter-revolutionary forces, though aided by the Allied powers, proved no match for the newly organized Red Army. The foreign intervention continued even after the armistice between the Allied powers and Germany, and, with the consent of the Allies, the Germans fought in support of the counter-revolution in

[10] A. J. Mayer, Wilson vs. Lenin (1964), p. 301.

[11] H.H. Fisher, "Soviet Policies in Asia," in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (May 1949), p. 190.

the Baltic nations, which led to the destruction of the revolutionary forces in these countries and the Soviet government's recognition of their independence. Poland regained its independence as an anti-Bolshevik state. However, the counter-revolutionary forces were highly scattered and disorganized. The Allied powers could not agree among themselves on the extent of their intervention and on the specific goals to be reached. Neither did they trust the willingness of their own troops to continue the war in Russia, nor in the acquiescence of their own population in a prolonged and large-scale war for the overthrow of the Bolshevik regime. The decisive military defeat of the various White armies induced the Allied powers to withdraw their troops in the autumn of 1918, thus opening the occupied parts of Russia to the Red Army. The French and British troops withdrew from the Ukraine and the Caucasus in the spring of 1919. American pressure led to the evacuation of the Japanese in 1922. But the Bolsheviks had definitely won the civil war by 1920. While the revolution had been a national affair, the counter-revolution had been truly international. But even so, it failed to dislodge the Bolshevik regime.

Lenin and Trotsky, not to speak of Marx and Engels, had been convinced that without a proletarian revolution in the West, a Russian revolution could not lead to socialism. Without direct political aid from the European proletariat, Trotsky said more than once, the working class of Russia would not be able to turn its temporary supremacy into a permanent socialist dictatorship. The reasons for this he saw not only in the opposition on the part of the world reaction, but also in Russia's internal conditions, as the Russian working class, left to its own resources, would necessarily be crushed the moment it lost the support of the peasantry, a most likely occurrence should the revolution remain isolated. Lenin, too, set his hopes on a westward spreading of the revolution, which might otherwise be crushed by the capitalist powers. But he did not share Trotsky's view that an isolated Russia would succumb to its own internal contradictions. In an article written in 1915, concerned with the advisability of including in the socialist program the demand for a United States of Europe, he pointed out, first, that socialism is a question of world revolution and not one restricted to Europe and second, that such a slogan

> may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others. Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone. After expropriating the capitalists and organizing their own socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country will arise against the rest of the world – the capitalist world – attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, stirring uprisings in those countries against the capitalists, and in case of need using even armed force against the exploiting classes and their states.[12]

Obviously, Lenin was convinced – and all his decisions after the seizure of power attest to this – that even an isolated revolutionary Russia would be able to maintain itself unless directly overthrown by the capitalist powers. Eventually, of course, the struggle between socialism and capitalism would resume, but perhaps under conditions more favorable for the international working class. For the time being, however, it was essential to stay in power no matter what the future might hold in store.

[12] "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe" (1915), in Collected Works, Vol 21 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), p. 342.

The world revolution did not materialize, and the nation-state remained the field of operation for economic development as well as for the class struggle. After 1920 the Bolsheviks no longer expected an early resumption of the world revolutionary process and settled down for the consolidation of their own regime. The exigencies and privations of the civil war years are usually held responsible for the Bolshevik dictatorship and its particular harshness. While this is true, it is no less true that the civil war and its victorious outcome facilitated and assured the success of the dictatorship. The party dictatorship was not only the inevitable result of an emergency situation, but was already implied in the conception of "proletarian rule" as the rule of the Bolshevik Party. The end of the civil war led not to a relaxation of the dictatorship but to its intensification; it was now, after the crushing of the counter-revolution, directed exclusively against the "loyal opposition" and the working class itself. Already at the Eighth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, in March 1919, the demand was made to end the toleration of opposition parties. But it was not until the summer of 1921 that the Bolshevik government finally decided to destroy all independent political organizations and the oppositional groups within its own ranks as well.

In the spring of 1920 it seemed clear that the military balance in the civil war favored the Bolsheviks. This situation led to a resurgence of the opposition to the regime and to the draconian measures it had used during the war. Peasant unrest became so strong as to force the government to discontinue its expropriatory excursions into the countryside and to disband the "committees of the poor peasants." The workers objected to the famine conditions prevailing in the cities and to the relentless drive for more production through a wave of strikes and demonstrations that culminated in the Kronstadt uprising. As the expectations of the workers had once been based on the existence of the Bolshevik government, it was now this government that had to take the blame for all their miseries and disappointments. This government had become a repressive dictatorship and could no longer be influenced by democratic means via the soviet system. To free the soviets from their party yoke and turn them once again into instruments of proletarian self-rule required now a "third revolution." The Kronstadt rebellion was not directed against the soviet system but intended to restore it to its original form. The call for "free soviets" implied soviets freed from the one-party rule of Bolshevism; consequently, it implied political liberty for all proletarian and peasant organizations and tendencies that took part in the Russian Revolution.[13]

[13] This found its expression in the program adopted by the sailors, soldiers, and workers of Kronstadt: 1) Immediate new elections to the soviets. The present soviets no longer express the wishes of the workers and peasants. The new elections should be by secret ballot, and should be preceded by free electorial propaganda. 2) Freedom of speech and of the press for workers and peasants, for the Anarchists, and for the left socialist parties. 3) The right of assembly, and freedom of trade union and peasant organizations. 4) The organization, at the latest on 10th March 1921, of a conference of non-party workers, soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and the Petrograd district. 5) The liberation of all political prisoners of the socialist parties, and of all imprisoned workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors belonging to working class and peasant organizations. 6) The election of a commission to look into the dossiers of all those detained in prisons and concentration camps. 7) The abolition of all political sections in the armed forces. No political party should have privileges for the propagation of its ideas, or receive State subsidies to this end. In the place of the political sections, various cultural groups should be set up, deriving resources from the State. 8) The immediate abolition of the militia detachments set up between towns and countryside. 9) The equalization of rations for all workers, except those engaged in dangerous or unhealthy jobs. 10) The abolition of party combat detachments in all military groups. The abolition of party guards in factories and enterprises. If guards are required, they should be nominated, taking into account the views of the workers. 11) The granting to the peasants of freedom of action on their own soil and the right to own cattle, provided they look after them themselves and do not employ hired labor. 12) We request that all military units and officer trainee groups associate themselves with this resolution 13) We demand the press give proper publicity to this resolution 14) We demand that handicraft production be authorized provided

It was no accident that the widespread opposition to Bolshevik rule found its most outspoken expression at Kronstadt. It was here that the soviets had become the sole public authority long before this became a temporary reality in Petrograd, Moscow, and the nation as a whole. Already in May 1917 the Bolsheviks and left Social Revolutionaries held the majority in the Kronstadt Soviet and declared their independence vis-à-vis the Provisional Government. Although the latter succeeded in extracting some kind of formal recognition from the Kronstadt Soviet, the latter nonetheless remained the only public authority within its territory and thus helped to prepare the way for the Bolshevik seizure of power. It was the radical commitment to the soviet system, as the best form of proletarian democracy, that now set the Kronstadt workers and soldiers against the Bolshevik dictatorship in an attempt to regain their self-determination.

It could not be helped, of course, that the Kronstadt mutiny was lauded by all opponents of Bolshevism and thus also by reactionaries and bourgeois liberals, who in this way provided the Bolsheviks with a lame excuse for their vicious reaction to the rebellion. But this unsolicited opportunistic verbal "support" cannot alter the fact that the goal of the rebellion was the restoration of that soviet system which the Bolsheviks themselves had seen fit to propagandize in 1917. The Bolsheviks knew quite well that Kronstadt was not the work of "White generals," but they could not admit that, from the point of view of soviet power, they had themselves become a counter-revolutionary force in the very process of strengthening and defending their government. Therefore, they had not only to drown in blood this last attempt at a revival of the soviet system, but had to slander it as the work of the "White counter-revolution." Actually, even though the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries lent their "moral" support to the rebellion, the workers and sailors engaged in it had no intentions of resurrecting the Constituent Assembly, which they regarded as a stillborn affair of the irrevocable past. The time, they said, "has come to overthrow the commissarocracy… Kronstadt has raised the banner of the uprising for a Third Revolution of the toilers… The autocracy has fallen. The Constituent Assembly has departed to the region of the damned. The commissarocracy is crumbling."[14] The "third revolution" was to fulfill the broken promises of the preceding one.

With the Kronstadt rebellion the disaffection of workers and peasants had spread to the armed forces, and this combination made it particularly dangerous to the Bolshevik regime. But the rebellion held no realizable promise, not because it was crushed by the Bolsheviks but because, had it succeeded, it would not have been able to sustain and extend a libertarian socialism based on soviet rule. It was indeed condemned to be what it has been called: the Kronstadt Commune. Like its Paris counterpart, it remained isolated despite the general discontent, and its political objectives could not be reached under the prevailing Russian conditions. Yet it was able to hasten Lenin's "strategic retreat" to the New Economic Policy, which relaxed the Bolshevik economic dictatorship while simultaneously tightening its political authoritarian rule.

The workers' dissatisfaction with Lenin's dictatorship found some repercussion in his own party. Oppositional groups criticized not only specific party decisions, such as state control of trade unions, but also the general trend of Bolshevik policy. On the question of "one-man man-

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it does not utilize wage labor. Quoted by Ida Mett, The Kronstadt Commune (London: Solidarity, 1967), pp. 6–7. For a detailed history of the Kronstadt rebellion, see Paul Avrich, Kronstadt 1921 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

[14] In Izvestiya. Journal of Kronstadt's Temporary Revolutionary Committee, 12 March 1921; quoted in The Truth about Kronstadt (Prague, 1921).

agement," for instance, it was said that this was a matter not of a tactical problem but of two "historically irreconcilable points of view," for

> "one-man management is a product of the individualistic conception of the bourgeois class … This idea finds its reflection in all spheres of human endeavor – beginning with the appointment of a sovereign for the state and ending with a sovereign director in the factory. This is the supreme wisdom of bourgeois thought. The bourgeoisie do not believe in the power of a collective body. They like only to whip the masses into an obedient flock, and drive them wherever their unrestricted will desires. The basis of the controversy (in the Bolshevik Party) is mainly this: whether we shall realize communism through the workers or over their heads by the hand of the Soviet officials. And let us ponder whether it is possible to attain and build a communist economy by the hands and creative abilities of the scions from the other class, who are imbued with their routine of the past? If we begin to think as Marxians, as men of science, we shall answer categorically and explicitly – no. The administrative economic body in the labor republic during the present transitory period must be a body directly elected by the producers themselves. All the rest of the administrative economic Soviet institutions shall serve only as executive center of the economic policy of that all-important economic body of the labor republic. All else is goose stepping that manifests distrust toward all creative abilities of workers, distrust which is not compatible with the professed ideals of our party… There can be no self-activity without freedom of thought and opinion, for self-activity manifests itself not only in initiative, action, and work, but in *independent thought* as well. We are afraid of action, we have ceased to rely on the masses, hence we have bureaucracy with us. In order to do away with the bureaucracy that is finding its shelter in the Soviet institutions, we must first of all get *rid of all bureaucracy in the party itself.*[15]

Apparently, these oppositionists did not understand their own party or, in view of its actual practice, diverged from its principles as outlined by Lenin since 1903. Perhaps they had taken State and Revolution at face value, not noticing its ambivalence, and felt now betrayed, as Lenin's policy revealed the sheer demagoguery of its revolutionary declarations. It should have been evident from Lenin's concept of the party and its role in the revolutionary process that, once in power, this party could only function in a dictatorial way. Quite apart from the specific Russian conditions, the idea of the party as the consciousness of the socialist revolution clearly relegated all decision making power to the Bolshevik state apparatus.

True to his own principles, Lenin put a quick end to the oppositionists by ordaining all factions to disband under threat of expulsion. With two resolutions, passed by the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, March 1921, "On Party Unity" and "On the Syndicalist and Anarchist Deviation in our Party," Lenin succeeded in completing what had hitherto only approximately been accomplished, namely, an end to all factionalism within the party and the securing of complete control over it through the Central Committee, which, in addition, was itself reorganized in such a fashion as to get rid of any opposition that might arise within the party leadership. With this was laid a groundwork on which nothing else could be built but the emerging omnipotence of the rising bureaucracy of party and state and the infinite power of the supreme leader presiding

[15] A. Kollontai, The Workers' Opposition (1921).

over both. The one-man rule of the party, which had been an informal fact due to the overriding "moral" authority of Lenin, turned into the unassailable fact of personal rule by whoever should manage to put himself at the top of the party hierarchy.

The bourgeois character of Bolshevik rule, as noted by its internal opposition, reflected the objectively nonsocialist nature of the Russian Revolution. It was a sort of "bourgeois revolution" without the bourgeoisie, as it was a proletarian revolution without a sufficiently large proletariat, a revolution in which the historical functions of the Western bourgeoisie were taken up by an apparently anti-bourgeois party by means of its assumption of political power. Under these conditions, the revolutionary content of Western Marxism was not applicable, not even in a modified form. Whatever one may think of Marx's declaration concerning the Paris Commune – that the "political rule of the proletariat is incompatible with the externalization of their social servitude" (a situation quite difficult to conceive, except as a momentary possibility, that is, as the revolution itself) – Marx at least spoke of the "producers," not of a political party substituting for the producers, whereas the Bolshevik concept speaks of state rule alone as the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the transformation of the capitalist into a socialist mode of production. The producers are controlled by the state, the state by the party, the party by the central committee, and the last by the supreme leader and his court. The destroyed autocracy is resurrected in the name of Marxism. In this way, moreover, ideologically as well as practically, the revolution and socialism depend finally on the history-making individual.

Indeed, it did not take long for the Russian Revolution and its consequences to be seen as the work of the geniuses Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin; not only in the bourgeois view, to which this comes naturally, but also quite generally by socialists claiming adherence to the materialist conception of history, which finds its dynamic not in the exceptional abilities of individuals, but in the struggle of classes in the course of the developing social forces of production. Neither Marx nor any reasonable person would deny the role of the "hero" in history, whether for better or for worse; for, as previously pointed out, the "hero" is already implicit in class society and is himself, in his thoughts and actions, determined by the class contradictions that rend society. In his historical writings, for instance, Marx dealt extensively with such "heroes," like the little Napoleon, who brought ruin to his country, or, like Bismarck, who finished the goal of German unification, left undone by the stillborn bourgeois revolution. It is quite conceivable that without Napoleon III and without Bismarck the history of France and Germany would have been different from what it actually was, but this difference would have altered nothing in the socioeconomic development of both countries, determined as it was by the capitalist relations of production and the expansion of capital as an international phenomenon.

What is history anyway? The bourgeoisie has no theory of history, as it has no theory of social development. Since it merely describes what is observable or may be found in old records, history is everything and nothing at the same time and any of its surface manifestations may be emphasized in lieu of an explanation, which must always serve the social power relations existing at any particular time. Like economics, bourgeois history is pure ideology and gives no inkling of the reasons for social change. And, just as the market economy can only be understood through the understanding of its underlying class relations, so does this kind of history require another kind if its meaning is to be revealed. From a Marxian point of view, history implies changing social relations of production. That history which concerns itself exclusively with alterations in an otherwise static society, as interesting as it may be, concerns Marxism only insofar as these changes indicate the hidden process by which one mode of production releases social forces that

point to the rise of another mode of production. From this point of view, the historical changes brought about by the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik regime have their place within an otherwise unaltered mode of production, as its social relations remained capital-labor relations, even though capital – that is, control over the means of production – and with it wage labor were taken out of the hands of private entrepreneurs and placed in those of a state bureaucracy performing the exploitative functions of the former. The capitalist system was modified but not abolished. The history made by the Bolsheviks was still capitalist history in the ideological disguise of Marxism.

The existence of "great men" in history is a sure indication that history is being made within the hierarchical structure of class-ridden competitive societies. The Lenin cult, the Hitler cult, the Stalin cult, etc., represent attempts to deprive the mass of the population of any kind of self-determination and also to ensure their complete atomization, which makes this technically possible. Such cults have little to do with the "great men" themselves, as personalities, but reflect the need or desire for complete conformity to allow a particular class or a particular political movement sufficient control over broad masses for the realization of their specific objectives, such as war, or making a revolution. "Great men" require "great times," and both emerge in crisis situations that have their roots in the exaggeration of society's fundamental contradictions.

The helplessness of the atomized individual finds a sort of imaginary solace in the mere symbolization of his self-assertion in the leadership, or the leader, of a social movement claiming to do for him what he cannot do for himself. The impotence of the social individual is the potency of the individual who manages to represent one or another kind of historically given social aspiration. The anti-social character of the capitalist system accounts for its apparent social coherence in the symbolized form of the state, the government, the great leader. However, the symbolization must be constantly reinforced by the concrete forms of control executed by the ruling minority.

It is almost certain that without Lenin's arrival in Russia the Bolsheviks would not have seized governmental power, and in this sense the credit for the Bolshevik Revolution must be given to Lenin – or perhaps, to the German General Staff, or to Parvus, who made Lenin's entry into the Russian Revolution possible. But what would have happened in Russia without the "subjective factor" of Lenin's existence? The totally discredited tsarist regime had already been overthrown and would not have been resurrected by a counter-revolutionary coup in the face of the combined and general opposition of workers, peasants, the bourgeoisie, and even segments of the old autocratic regime. In addition, the Entente powers, relieved of the alliance with the anachronistic Russian autocratic regime, favored the new and ostensibly democratic government, if only in the hope of a more efficiently waged war against the Central European "anti-democratic" powers. Although attempts were made to resume the offensive in the west, they were not successful, and merely intensified the desire for an early peace, even a separate peace, in order to consolidate the new regime and to restore some modicum of order within the increasing social anarchy. A counter-revolution would have had as its object the forced continuation of the war and the elimination of the soviets and the Bolsheviks, to safeguard the private-property nature of the social production relations. In short, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" would most probably have been overthrown by a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, enforced by a White terror and other fascist methods of rule. A different political system and different property relations would have evolved, but on the basis of the same production relations that sustained the Bolshevik state.

Similarly, there is little doubt that World War II was initiated by Adolf Hitler in an attempt to win World War I by a second try for German control of capitalist Europe. Without Hitler,

the second war might not have broken loose at the time it actually did, but perhaps also not without the Stalin-Hitler Pact, or without the deepening of the worldwide depression, which set definite limits to the Nazis' internal economic policies, on which their political dominance depended. It is clear, however, that Hitler cannot be blamed for World War I or for the Great Depression preceding World War II. Governments are composed of individuals, representing definite ideologies and specific economic interests, for which reason it is always possible to give credit, or to put the blame, for any particular policy on individual politicians, and to assume that had they not been there, history would have run a different course. This might even be true, but the different course would in no way affect the general development insofar as it is determined by capitalist production relations.

In brief, it is not possible to make any reliable predictions with regard to historical development on the strength of political movements and the role of individuals within these movements as they are thrown up by the development of capitalism and its difficulties, so long as these occurrences do not concern the basic social production relations but only reflect changes within these relations. It is true that political and economic phenomena constitute an entity, but to speak of such an entity may be to refer to no more than erratic movements within the given social structure, and not to social contradictions destined to destroy the given political and economic entity by way of revolutionary changes that bring another society into existence. Just as there is no way to foresee economic development in its details, that is, at what point a crisis will be released or be overcome, there is also no way to account for political development in its details, that is, which social movement will succeed or fail, or what individual will come to dominate the political scene and whether or not this individual will appear as a "history-making" individual, quite apart from his personal qualifications. What cannot be comprehended cannot be taken into consideration, and political as well as economic events appear as a series of "accidents" or "shocks," seemingly from outside the system but actually produced by this system, which precludes the recognition of its inherent necessities. The very existence of political life attests to its fetishistic determination. Outside this fetishistic determination, this helpless and blind subjection to the capital-expansion process, the entity of politics and economics would not appear as such, but rather as the elimination of both in a consciously arranged organization of the social requirements of the reproduction process, freed of its economic and political aspects. Politics, and with it, that type of economy which is necessarily political economy, will cease with the establishment of a classless society.

That even Lenin was somehow aware of this may be surmised by his reluctance to use the term "wage labor" after the seizure of power. Only once, in deference to an international audience, at the founding Congress of the Third International in March 1919, did he speak of "mankind throwing off the last form of slavery: capitalist or wage slavery." Generally, however, he made it appear that the end of private capital implies the end of the wage system; although not automatically abolishing the wage system in a technical sense, it would free it from its exploitative connotations. In this respect, as in many others, Lenin merely harked back to Kautsky's position of 1902, which maintained that in the early stages of the construction of socialism wage labor, and therefore money, (or vice versa) must be retained in order to provide the workers with the necessary incentives to work. Trotsky, too, reiterated this idea, but with an exemplary shamelessness, stating that

> we still retain, and for a long time will retain, the system of wages. The farther we go, the more will its importance become simply to guarantee to all members of so-

> ciety all the necessaries of life; and thereby it will cease to be a system of wages. [But] in the present difficult period the system of wages is for us, first and foremost, not a method for guaranteeing the personal existence of any separate worker, but a method of estimating what the individual worker brings with his labor to the Labor Republic… Finally, when it rewards some (through the wage system), the Labor State cannot but punish others – those who are clearly infringing labor solidarity, undermining the common work, and seriously impairing the Socialist renaissance of the country. Repression for the attainment of economic ends is a necessary weapon of the Socialist dictatorship.[16]

As the wage system is the basis of capitalist production, so it remains the basis of "socialist construction," which first allows people like Lenin and Trotsky, and their state apparatus, not only to assume the position but also to speak in the voice of the capitalists when dealing with the working class. As if the wage system had not always been the only guarantee for the workers to earn a livelihood, and as if it had not always been used to estimate the amount of surplus value to be extracted from their work!

As a theory of the proletarian revolution, Marxism does not recognize alterations within unchanged social production relations as historical changes in the sense of the materialist conception of history. It speaks of changes of social development from slavery to serfdom to wage labor, and of the abolition of the latter, and therewith all forms of labor exploitation, in a classless socialist society. Each type of class society will have its own political history, of course, but Marxism recognizes this as the politics of definite social formations, which will, however, come to an end with the abolition of classes, the last political revolution in the general social developmental process. Quite apart from its objective possibility or impossibility, the Bolshevik regime had no intention to abolish the wage system and was therefore not engaged in furthering a social revolution in the Marxian sense. It was satisfied with the abolition of private control over the accumulation of capital, on the assumption that this would suffice to proceed to a consciously planned economy and, eventually, to a more egalitarian system of distribution. It is true, of course, that the possibility of such an endeavor had not occurred to Marx, for whom the capitalist system, in its private-property form, would have to be replaced by a system in which the producers themselves would take collective and direct control of the means of production. From this point of view, the Bolshevik endeavor, through a historical novelty not contemplated by Marx, still falls within the history of the capitalist mode of production.

By adhering to the Marxist ideology evolved within the Second International, Lenin and the Bolsheviks succeeded in identifying their inversion of Marxian theory as the only possible form of its realization. While the Bolshevik concept implied no more than the formation of a state-capitalist system, this had been the way in which, at the turn of the century, socialism had been quite generally understood. It is therefore not possible to accuse the Bolsheviks of a "betrayal" of the then prevailing "Marxist" principles; on the contrary, they actualized the declared goals of the Social Democratic movement, which itself had lost all interest in acting upon its beliefs. What the Bolsheviks did was to realize the program of the Second International by revolutionary means. However, in doing so, that is, by turning the ideology into practice and giving it concrete substance, they identified revolutionary Marxism with the state-directed socialist society envisioned by the orthodox wing of international Social Democracy.

[16] Dictatorship vs. Democracy, p. 149.

Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, the bourgeoisie had looked upon Marxism as a meaningless utopia, contrary to the naturally given market relations and to human nature itself. There was of course the class struggle, but this, too, like competition in general, implied no more than the Darwinian struggle for existence, which justified its suppression or amelioration, as the case might be, in accordance with changing circumstances or opportunities. But the very fact of the existence of the bourgeoisie was proof enough that society could not prevail without class divisions, as its very complexity demanded its hierarchical structure. Socialism, in the Marxian sense of the self-determination of the working class, was not a practical possibility and its advocacy was not only stupid but also criminal, for its realization would destroy not only capitalist society but society itself. The adaptation of the reformist labor movement to the realities of social life and its successful integration into the capitalist system was additional proof that the capital-labor relations were the normal social relations, which could not be tampered with except at the price of social decay.

This argument was put aside by the Bolshevik demonstration that it is possible to have "socialism" on the basis of capital-labor relations and that a social hierarchy could be maintained without the bourgeoisie, simply by turning the latter into servants of the state, the sole proprietor of the social capital. Although Marx had said that capitalism presupposes the capitalist, this need not imply the capitalist as bourgeois, as owner of private capital, for the capital concentration and centralization process indicated the diminishing of their numbers and the increasing monopolization of capital. If there was an "end" to this process, it would be the end of private capital, as the property of many capitalists, and the end of market economy, which would issue into the complete monopoly of ownership of the means of production. This might as well be in the hands of the state, which would then become the organizer of social production in a system in which "market relations" were reduced to the exchange between labor and capital through the maintenance of wage labor in the state-controlled economy. This concept might have made "socialism" comprehensible to the bourgeoisie, were it not for the fact that it involved their abolition as a ruling class. From the bourgeois point of view, it was quite immaterial whether they found themselves expropriated by a state, which was no longer their own, or by a proletarian revolution in the Marxian sense, that is, the appropriation of the means of production by the working class. The Bolshevik state-capitalist, or, what amounts to the same, state-socialist concept was consequently equated with the Marxian concept of socialism. When the bourgeoisie speaks of Marxism, it invariably refers to its Bolshevik interpretation, as this is the only one that has found concrete application. This identification of Marxism with the Leninist concept of socialism turned the latter into a synonym for Marxism, and as such it has dominated the character of all revolutionary and national-revolutionary movements down to the present day.

Whereas for the bourgeoisie Bolshevism and Marxism meant the same thing, Social Democracy could not possibly identify the Leninist regime as a socialist state, even though it had realized its own long-forgotten goal of reaching socialism via the capture of state power. Yet because Bolshevism had expropriated the bourgeoisie, it was equally impossible to refer to it as a capitalist system, without acknowledging that even legal conquest of the state by parliamentary means need not lead to a socialist system of production. Hilferding, for one, resolved the problem simply by announcing that Bolshevism was neither capitalism nor socialism, but a societal form best described as a "totalitarian state economy," a system based on an "unlimited personal dictator-

ship."[17] It was no longer determined by the character of its economy but by the personal notions of the omnipotent dictator. Denying his own long-held concept of "organized capitalism" as the inevitable result of the capital concentration process, and the consequent disappearance of the law of value as the regulator of the capitalist economy, Hilferding now insisted that from an economic point of view state-capitalism cannot exist. Once the state has become the sole owner of the means of production, he said, it renders impossible the functions of the capitalist economy because it abolishes the very mechanism which accounts for the economic circulation process by way of competition on which the law of value operates. But while this state of affairs had once been equated with the rise of socialism, it was now perceived as a totalitarian society equally removed from both capitalism and socialism. The one ingredient that excluded its transformation into socialism was the absence of political democracy. But if this were so, Hilferding was fundamentally in agreement with Lenin on the assumption that it is possible to institute socialism by political means, although there was no agreement as to the particular political means to be employed. In fact, Lenin was very much indebted to Hilferding, save in his rejection of the means of formal democracy as the criterion for the socialist nature of the state-controlled economy.

In this respect it is noteworthy that neither Lenin nor Hilferding had any concern for the social production relations as capital-labor relations, but merely for the character of the government presiding over the "new society." In the opinion of both, it was the state that must control society, whether by democratic or dictatorial means; the working class was to be the obedient instrument of governmental policies. Just the same, it was Lenin's concept of "dictatorship" that carried the day, for the Bolsheviks had seized power, whereas Hilferding's "democracy" was slowly eroded by the authoritarian tendencies arising within the capitalist system. Besides, the "Marxism" of the Second International had lost its plausibility at the eve of World War I, whereas the success of the Bolshevik Revolution could be seen as a return to the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism. This situation assured the rising prominence of the Leninist interpretation of Marxism, as dependent on the existence of a vanguard party not only for seizing power but also for securing the transition from capitalism to socialism. At any rate, in the course of time the Leninist conception of Marxism came to dominate that part of the international labor movement which saw itself as an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist force.

We have dealt with Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution in some detail in order to bring out two specific points: first, that the policies of the Bolshevik regime subsequent to Lenin's death had their cause in the prevailing situation in Russia and the world at large as well as in the political concepts of the Leninist party; and second, that the result of this combination of factors implied a second and apparently "final" destruction of the labor movement as a Marxist movement. World War I and its support by the socialist parties of the Second International signified a defeat of Marxism as a potentially revolutionary workers' movement. The war and its aftermath led to a temporary revival of revolutionary activities for limited reformist goals, which indicated the workers' unreadiness to dislodge the capitalist system. Only in Russia did the revolutionary upheavals go beyond mere governmental changes, by playing the means of production – not at once, but gradually – into the hands of the Bolshevik party-state. But this apparent success implied a total inversion of Marxian theory and its willful transformation into the ideology of state-capitalism, which, by its very nature, restricts itself to the nation-state and its struggle for existence and expansion in a world of competing imperialist nations and power blocs.

[17] Article written for Sotsialistichesky Viestnik; English version in Proletarian Outlook 6:3 (1940).

The concept of world revolution as the expected result of the imperialist war, which seemingly prompted the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, was dependent upon Lenin's notion of the indispensable existence of a vanguard party, able to grasp the opportunity for the overthrow of the bourgeois state, and capable of avoiding, or correcting, the otherwise aimless squandering of spontaneously released revolutionary energies on the part of the rebellious masses. Aside from the Russian Bolsheviks, however, no vanguard party of the Leninist type existed anywhere, so that this first presupposition for a successful socialist revolution could not be met. In the light of Lenin's own theory, it was therefore logically inconsistent to await the extension of the Russian into an international revolution. But even if such vanguard parties could have been created overnight, so to speak, their goals would have been determined by the Leninist concept of the state and its functions in the social transformation process. If successful, there would have been more than one state-capitalist system but no international socialist revolution. In short, there would have been accomplished at an earlier time what actually came to pass after World War II without a revolution, namely the imperialistic division of the world into monopolistic and state-capitalistic national systems under the aegis of unstable power blocs.

Assuming for the sake of argument that revolutions in Western Europe had gone beyond purely political changes and had led to a dictatorship of the proletariat, exercised through a system of soviets controlling economic social relations, such a system would have found itself in opposition to the party-state in its Leninist incarnation. Most probably, it would have led to a revival of Russia's internal opposition to the Bolshevik power monopoly and to the dethroning of its leadership. A proletarian revolution in the Marxian sense would have endangered the Bolshevik regime even more than would a bourgeois and social democratic counter-revolution, because for the Bolsheviks the spreading of the revolution was conceivable only as the expansion of the Bolshevik Revolution and the maintenance of its specific characteristics on a global scale. This was one of the reasons why the Third International, as a "tool of world revolution," was turned into an international replica of the Leninist party.

This particular practice was based on Lenin's theory of imperialism. More polemical than theoretical in character, Lenin's Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism paid more attention to the fleeting political aspects of imperialism than to its underlying socioeconomic dynamics. It was intended to unmask the imperialist character of the first world war, seen as the general condition for social revolution. Lenin's arguments were substantiated by relevant data from various bourgeois sources, by a critical utilization of the theoretical findings of J. H. Hobson and Rudolf Hilferding, and by a rejection of Karl Kautsky's speculative theory of superimperialism as a way toward a peaceful capitalism. The data and the theories were bound up with a particular historical stage of capitalist development and contained no clues regarding its further course.

The compulsion to imperialism is inherent in capitalist production, but it is the development of the latter which accounts for its specific manifestations at any particular time. For Lenin, however, capitalism became imperialistic "only at a definite and very high stage of capitalistic development," a stage that implied the rule of national and international monopolies which, by agreement or force, divided the world's exploitable resources among themselves. In his view, this period is characterized not so much by the export of commodities as by that of capital, which allows the big imperialist powers, and a part of their laboring populations, an increasingly parasitical existence at the expense of the subjugated regions of the world. He perceived this situation as the "highest stage" of capitalism because he expected that its manifold contradictions would lead directly to social revolutions on an international scale.

However, although World War I led to the Russian Revolution, imperialism was not the "eve of the proletarian world revolution." What is noteworthy here nonetheless is the continuity between Lenin's early work on the development of Russian capitalism and his theory of imperialism and the impending world revolution. Against the Narodniks, as we saw, Lenin held that capitalism would be the next step in Russia's development and that, for that reason, the industrial proletariat would come to play the dominant role in the Russian revolution. But by involving not only the workers, but also the peasants and even layers of the bourgeoisie, the revolution would have the character of a "people's revolution." To realize all its potentialities, it would have to be led by an organization representing the socialism of the working class. Lenin's theory of imperialism as "the eve of world revolution" was thus a projection of his theory of the Russian revolution onto the world at large. Just as in Russia different classes and nationalities were to combine under proletarian leadership to overthrow the autocracy, so on an international scale whole nations, at various stages of development, are to combine under the leadership of the Third International to liberate themselves from both their imperialistic masters and their native ruling classes. The world revolution is thus one of subjugated classes and nations against a common enemy – monopolist imperialism. It was this theory that, in Stalin's view, made "Leninism the Marxism of the age of imperialism." However, based on the presupposition of successful socialist revolutions in the advanced capitalist nations, the theory could not be proven right or wrong as the expected revolutions did not materialize.

This truly grandiose scheme, which puts Bolshevism in the center of the world revolutionary process and, to speak in Hegelian terms, made the *Weltgeist* manifest itself in Lenin and his party, remained a mere expression of Lenin's imaginary powers, for with every step he took the "greatest of *Realpolitiker*" found himself at odds with reality. Just as he had to jettison his own agrarian program in exchange for that of his Social Revolutionary opponents, to rid himself of the "natural economy" practiced with devastating results during the period of "war communism" and fall back to market relations in the New Economic Policy, and to wage war against the self-determination of oppressed nationalities at first so generously granted by the Bolshevik regime, so he saw himself forced to construct and utilize the Third International not for the extension of the international revolution but for no more than the defense of the Bolshevik state. His internationalism, like that of the bourgeoisie, could only serve national ends, camouflaged as general interests of the world revolution. But perhaps it was this total failure to further the declared goods of Bolshevism that really attests to Lenin's mastery of *Realpolitik*, if only in the sense that an unprincipled opportunism did indeed serve the purpose of maintaining the Bolsheviks in power.

Lenin's single-mindedness in gaining and keeping state power by way of compromises and opportunistic reversals, as dictated by circumstances outside his control, was not a practice demanded by Marxist theory but an empirical pragmatism such as characterizes bourgeois politics in general. The professional revolutionary turned into a statesman vying with other statesmen to defend the specific interests of the Bolshevik state as those of the Russian nation. Any further revolutionary development was now seen as depending on the protection of the first "workers' state," which thus became the foremost duty of the international proletariat. The Marxist ideology served not only internal but also external purposes by assuring working-class support for Bolshevik Russia. To be sure, this involved only part of the labor movement, but it was that part which could disrupt the anti-Bolshevik forces, which now included the old socialist parties and the trade unions. The Leninist interpretation of Marxism became the whole of Marxian theory, as

a counter-ideology to all forms of anti-Bolshevism and all attempts to weaken or to destroy the Russian government. Simultaneously, however, attempts were also made to bring about a state of coexistence with the capitalist adversaries. Various concessions were proposed to demonstrate the mutual advantages to be gained through international trade and other means of collaboration. This two-faced policy served the single end of preserving the Bolshevik state by serving the national interests of Russia.

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