

LENIN'S UTOPIANISM

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by

Rodney Barfield

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APPROVED:

Robert G. Landen, Chairman

John W. Davis

G.G. Williamson

Lowell K. Dyson

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INTRODUCTION

Lenin the Revolutionist cannot be divorced from Lenin the Utopian. According to his own justifications of his revolutionary activities, the former was significantly influenced by the latter. The extent and degree of his revolutionary thought, the passion of his self-sacrificing devotion to revolution provide one measure of the extremes of his utopian thought. Had his ideals been less extreme, then his fanatical loyalty to revolution would have suffered in motivation. Had his ideals been limited to a mere destruction of the existing political system, then his revolutionary theories as well as his practical plans of action would not have required such rigidity, such absoluteness. The sheer enormity of the task demanded to realize his extreme ideals, however, left no room for timidity or compromise. It was no mere social or political system that was at stake; Lenin dreamed of nothing less than the complete transformation of the psychological make up of mankind. He envisaged a change that would transform man from an aggressive, competitive, passionate animal into one of passivity and cooperation, ruled by reason and cold logic. The society resulting from this transformation, he believed, would be one characterized by elemental honesty and harmony. It was to be a "new age" inhabited by a "new man." Whereas all past and present societies were motivated by greed, envy

and hatred, producing competitive attitudes, oppressive social institutions, and the exploitation of man by man, the universal society of the "new age" would be motivated by honesty, justice and love, resulting in cooperative attitudes and the unselfish fraternity of mankind.

The obvious religious qualities of Lenin's ideals contributed significantly to the construction of his absolute theories and to the development of his obstinate character. Although he claimed to be a thorough-going atheist, his ideals had much in common with those which make up the so-called Christian spirit. They were concerned with the "good" of mankind, with destroying all that was "evil" in the world. In the "new age" there would be no wars, no strife, no antagonisms. The new society would be governed by Christian-like ethical rules such as "love thy neighbor as thyself" and "treat others as you would have others treat you." Man would not toil for survival but for sheer pleasure, for the betterment of himself and of his fellow man. It was to be a literal heaven on earth.¹

Around these utopian ideals Lenin constructed a total philosophical system. Every aspect of man, of life, every daily experience was related to and interpreted in terms of this final end. Hence, it would logically follow that anyone

¹Nicholas Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism, trans. R.M. French (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), See chapter entitled "Communism and Christianity."

who disagreed with any aspect of his philosophical system, or even with the methods used to attain his ideals, was not merely a dissenting colleague but an absolute enemy. Lenin tolerated no moderate position; one was either absolutely and without question for him or absolutely against him. Just as fundamental Christianity demands that one be either Christian or sinner, providing for no in-between status, so Lenin demanded that one be either "Leninist" or the enemy. In a similar vein, so related and interwoven was his philosophical theory with everyday practicalities that anything less than absolute self-sacrifice to the "cause" was treason. Whoever chose to fight for the cause had to take "up the cross and follow Lenin." Lenin's own sacrifices to the cause of revolution are well known. His revolutionary asceticism remains an ideal to contemporary Marxist revolutionaries. There was nothing false about it; it was an essential demand of his revolutionary thought. It was the result of his firm conviction in the cause of revolution, and, because of the enormous task involved, he renounced many earthly pleasures and comforts in order to better discipline himself for the task. His pedantic concern with practical, everyday problems, his own habits of hard work and personal abnegation are indications of his genuine belief that his Utopia would actually be realized, and probably within his own life-time. He was no "ivory tower" philosopher who constructed social systems to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. He had every intention of seeing his ideals put

into practice. Every day, every minimal task was in preparation for the day when the "new age" would dawn. This was the source of his asceticism: he was determined to carry out the principles that he believed to be right, and this task demanded a renunciation of worldly pleasures. He demanded no less of his associates.²

Because of the integral compactness of practical life and philosophical theory, heated and molded by a conviction that was almost religious in nature, Lenin suspected everyone who did not share his own fanatical views and devotion. This innate suspicion quickly soured into hatred for those who professed sympathy with his aims while disagreeing with his methods or with his amoralism. The task of preparing for the revolution could not be hampered by moral scruples or sentimental emotions, and anyone not prepared to forego such notions in the name of the revolution was a "soft-headed" idealist and the most serious kind of threat to the cause. There could be no compromise with the existing social or political order; every aspect of existing society was to be destroyed. This contempt for moderates and idealists often manifested itself as a bitter mockery that seemed to be an organic part of Lenin's personality.³

²Rene Fuelleop-Miller, The Mind and Face of Bolshevism (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 35-36.

³Peter Struve, "My Contacts and Conflicts with Lenin," Slavonic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 591.

In one sense Lenin's dogmatism made his task far easier than it was for those who tortured themselves with subjective, self-examining criticism. He was seldom, if ever, bothered with the potentially disturbing question of the rightness of his principles. Accepting the absolute validity of his goals, he drove straightforward to their realization without the indecisiveness of those who must constantly evaluate their own position, question their methods at every turn, and always live with the prospect that they could be wrong. Lenin had no such liabilities. The lack of moral or spiritual conflict within his own mind rendered his enormous task far easier than it would otherwise have been.⁴

Lenin's dogmatic and totalitarian nature was in keeping with what some Russian scholars have described as the Russian "character." Lenin had a poor comprehension of the relative but rather tended to think in terms of the absolute. His philosophy of life was a system characterized by its wholeness, and everything was subordinated to an absolute, final end. The spirit of his philosophy was religious in temperament, fanatical in faith, and dogmatic in doctrine. Combined with his utopian ideals, these prepared Lenin for his life's work.

⁴Tueloep-Miller, The Mind and Face of Bolshevism, 36.

THE INFLUENCE OF HOME

Lenin's mental make up was always at odds with his chosen career. His psychological outlook demanded order, stability and rational thinking; it scorned elemental emotion as a destructive weakness of man. He believed that rational thinking, reason, was the only truth; that if man were rational, he would never violate his own interests. Reason was the only path to creating the "new Man." By the same token, emotion was man's worst enemy. Emotion was responsible for man's misery, violence, injustice, and the exploitation of man by man. Emotion was artificial and created disorder and "unnatural" human relations.

The origins of Lenin's distrust of emotion are varied. Part of it was due to his revulsion to the masses' emotional attachment to Russian institutions, institutions that rewarded them with suppression and injustice and kept them in ignorance. The distrust was no doubt intensified by his own brother's emotional outburst against the Russian political system, for which he paid with his life. But the foundation for Lenin's paranoiac distrust of unrestrained emotion or elemental "spontaneity" was the rational, moderate, sedate home training of his youth. The Ulyanovs ruled a "model" home in the sense that it was loyal, conscientious, diligent, moderate, and religious, and these qualities were

instilled by example into the children as they matured. The parents were devoted to their family, participated in the life of the community, and contributed to their society. Lenin's father, Ilya, was an industrious and intelligent school inspector who went far beyond the requirements of his position to upgrade education in the province of Simbirsk. He traveled widely, offering his own courses to prepare new teachers. Often, he was away from his family for long intervals, but his dedication to education made such inconveniences easy to accept. The diligence that he demanded from himself he also expected from his subordinates, his pupils, and his family. Such was his reputation and respectability that he was awarded the position of "Actual State Councillor" which bestowed hereditary nobility on his family.⁵

Friends of Lenin and observers of his personality have noted many of the same characteristics in Lenin that were seen in his parents. He was always a diligent worker. His school work came to him so easily that his father feared that he would not take it seriously. Yet, he was persistent and serious and was quick to tutor those slower than himself. His sister Anna has testified that these qualities were instilled in Lenin by his father's firm example.⁶

⁵ Bertram D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution (3rd ed. rev.; New York: Dial Press, 1961). See chapter entitled "Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov."

⁶ Reminiscences of Lenin by His Relatives (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 18.

This diligence was not outgrown but rather was strengthened with age. A Socialist friend in Lenin's later years, Angelica Balabanoff, has made note of Lenin's implacable dealings with even the slightest detail. She has also noted that, like his father, Lenin expected no less from his associates than he demanded from himself. Balabanoff contends that even if the culprit had been Lenin himself or a member of his own family, he would have applied the same criteria of judgment and would not have hesitated to inflict the death punishment if the crime had demanded it. Indeed, his own wife was very nearly officially reprimanded by the Party because of her absences from party meetings.⁷

The Ulyanov's devotion to duty and diligence left no place for the haphazardness of frivolity or apathy that characterized much of Russia's social and political society. Their household was one of order and peace, governed by honest simplicity and quiet affection, and devoted to study and hard work. The impression of a peaceful and orderly home life on Lenin was profound. He was blessed with the security of a rational and harmonious environment for the first sixteen years of his life. For sixteen years he experienced little of the brutal, irrational Russian life that surrounded him; he merely saw it from a distance and closed his eyes to the reality of it all. Apparently, the

⁷Angelica Balabanoff, Impressions of Lenin, trans. Isotta Cesari (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), 4.

Ulyanovs did their best to shield their children from the more frivolous aspects of their society. Anna Ulyanov has left record of how her mother refused to participate in the female society of Simbirsk because of its primary concern with gossip and scandal. Rather, she devoted her time to her children and to their education.⁸

It is entirely possible that the Ulyanov children have tended to over-rate and glorify their parents in their recollections about their youthful days in Simbirsk. Obviously, pleasant memories, time and death obscure less pleasant experiences. Yet, even with exaggeration, the children of Ilya and Maria have been consistent in their points of praise about their parents. And, their praise has been consistent with that of non-family observers. Not only friends but even enemies of Lenin have written of the order and harmony of the Ulyanov household.⁹

Moreover, Lenin's own letters testify to his love and respect for his parents. His sister Anna has written that one need only read Lenin's letters to get an indication of the close affinity that existed between him and his family. She was quite right. He always felt the loss of his family when he was away from them, particularly of his mother whom he always wanted to come live with him or at least pay him

⁸Reminiscences of Lenin by his Relatives, 17.

⁹Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, 43.

frequent visits. Especially with his first exile, his separation from the family was a severe strain, as the following excerpt from one of Lenin's letters indicates:

All this time I have been on the lookout for letters from you, Mother dearest, but so far in vain. . . . So please write to me more often to the last address known¹⁰ to you -- I am miserable without letters from home.

Lenin was to spend the remainder of his life in search of the simple and honest harmony in which he was reared. He tended to transfer the Ulyanov ideal to the whole of Russia by deducing that if one family could rise above the dirt and decay of Russian society by education and diligence, then all families could do likewise. If only the masses could be educated to the fact that their emotional attachment to traditional institutions was the very factor responsible for their enslavement, then they would rise up and destroy those institutions and replace them with the functions of individual and collective cooperation. These "natural" instincts had been perverted by the greedy and destructive influences of the autocracy, the nobility and the church. Freed from these perverting influences and guided by educated and rational thinking, mankind could live in the simplistic harmony of the Ulyanov household.

The part of his life that Lenin spent in the provincial areas of Russia, especially his years in Simbirsk, was to

¹⁰V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, XXXVII (4th ed.; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 95.

make a very definite impression on his character. When he left the provinces behind, his philosophy and his career had been determined. He never liked the big city even as an adult. Much of his exile in Europe was spent in criticizing and decrying Western habits and customs, systems and institutions. He was drawn rather to the countryside, and most of his holidays were spent away from crowds and close to nature. Nostalgia was not the only reason for his desire to return to Russia; he wanted to rediscover the peace and serenity of his youth which was medicine to his often frayed nerves.¹¹

Lenin's partial isolation from the more unpleasant aspects of Russian society came to a traumatic end in 1887 with his brother's trial and execution for an attempt on the life of the Tsar. Alexander Ulyanov's revolutionary sentiments came as a complete surprise to the Ulyanov family. He was a grave and reserved boy whose school reports were impeccable. A serious student, his expressed goal was to be a scientist. In 1883 Alexander entered the university at Saint Petersburg where he absorbed himself in scientific studies. Three years later he became the leader of a group of students from his own province, many such groups being organized for the purpose of bringing together students from the same geographical location. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of the radical writer, Dobrolyubov,

¹¹ Adam B. Ulam, The Bolsheviks: the Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 5-6.

the confederation of students staged a funeral demonstration in honor of him. Barred from the cemetery by police, the demonstration was halted, and some forty of its alleged leaders were expelled from the university. Although Alexander was not expelled, he considered himself to be equally guilty and could not ignore the fate of his colleagues. Lacking other means to protest the expulsion of his fellow students, Alexander and six of his companions plotted to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. The plot was foiled on the very day of its intended execution by the arrests of its participants. Alexander was sentenced to hang.¹²

Alexander's death placed the responsibility of caring for the family on Lenin, since he was then the oldest son and the father was deceased. It also closed to him a life of respectability. The citizens of Simbirsk, especially the upper class "liberals," socially ostracized the Ulyanovs, while Lenin was kept under police surveillance. The event made him a determined enemy of the Tsarist regime.¹³

It was not long before Lenin realized the full effects that his brother's activities would have upon his own career. Shortly after his brother's execution in 1887, Lenin entered the University of Kazan with a glowing recommendation from school director Feodor Kerensky, father of the same Kerensky

¹²Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution. See chapter entitled "The Life and Death of Alexander Ulyanov."

¹³Ibid, 65.

whom Lenin would later depose. But, at that time, the students of Kazan were being influenced by a wave of student protests then sweeping Russia's universities. Shortly after Lenin matriculated at the University, a group of Kazan students drafted a petition to the provincial inspector requesting that he review their grievances. There is no indication that Lenin participated in the ensuing demonstrations or in the drafting of the petition, unless one chose to believe the official Soviet glorification of his role in the demonstration. The mere fact, however, that his name was the same as the revolutionary martyr, Alexander, was sufficient reason for the university officials to consider him "dangerous and undesirable." He was, therefore, arrested, jailed, forced to leave Kazan, and barred from re-entering the university. It was Lenin's first encounter with the brutal and arbitrary Russian political system. Not only was he kept under police surveillance, he was also refused permission to continue his studies, to go abroad, or to gain state employment. What was left for him? Forced into exile in the provincial village of Kokushkino at the end of 1887, he emersed himself in revolutionary theory.¹⁴

By the time that Lenin left Kokushkino in 1888, his career had been decided. Rather than compromise with a

¹⁴Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution. See chapter entitled "Against a Stone Wall."

system. that made a mockery of reason and justice, he chose the turbulent life of a revolutionist. The harmony of the Ulyanov household had been destroyed by the system, so he would destroy the system. For the remainder of his life he would seek to recreate the peaceful years of his youth, not only for himself but for all of Russia and for all mankind.

This fundamental desire never left Lenin. He had known too long the untroubled existence of a secure home, of respected parents, of family love and honesty. He tried to re-capture that life even as a revolutionist in exile. His diversions from the strained life of the revolutionist were quiet and moderate, such as hiking in the countryside or boating. His private life was conservative almost to the point of dullness. He liked order and discipline, to sit home and pour over books, and he could not tolerate the violent arguments in Europe's "intellectual cafe's" for which so many of the Russian exiles had such a liking. He never tired in his efforts to regain the simple, good life for himself or to find it for Russia. The naive simplicity of his ideals, his reverence for the elemental virtues of honesty and diligence are too strikingly parallel to the atmosphere of his home environment to overlook the significance of their influence on his fully matured intellectual outlook.¹⁵

¹⁵Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution. See chapter entitled "Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov." Also see Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism. See chapter entitled "Russian Communism and the Revolution."

The very spirit of the Ulyanov household made its contribution to Lenin's fanatical devotion to revolution. His parents had taught and practiced the simple virtues of honesty, love and moderation. They had kept their children ignorant of the evil, the injustice and the baseness within humanity. They had not, therefore, prepared their children to accept the brutality and injustice of Russian society. When Lenin was suddenly thrown into such a harsh environment at the very impressionable age of sixteen, which accented the glaring contrast between arbitrary Russian justice and the simple honesty of the Ulyanov home, he, like his brother before him, was unable to accept the realities of his new environment. He could not understand that man could be brutal and greedy by nature. Rather, he sought to lay the blame on man's social and political institutions for all of man's misery and evil. To destroy the existing institutions would be to unfetter mankind and return him to his "natural" state -- that of primitive honesty and self-sacrifice.

Had the industrious Ulyanov family resided in a less oppressive society, Lenin might well have become the same model citizen that his father had been. However, the existence of this model family within the frivolous and decadent society of late nineteenth-century Russia magnified the disparity between the two entities. Its location in the Oblomovist* city of Simbirsk made the contrast all

*Oblomov was the fictional anti-hero of the novelist Goncharov who represented "all that was torpid, apathetic, and impotent in the sprawling Russian spirit." Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, 41.

the more keen. If man's sensitivity to "evil" is determined by his awareness of "good," the Ulyanov children could not have witnessed a more glaring contrast than that of their home environment with the general atmosphere of Simbirsk. The active, hard-working Ulyanovs were surrounded by thirty thousand quiet, undistinguished people in one of the most stagnant river cities on the Volga. There was not even a railroad to connect the city with the rest of Russia. Its insignificance as a river port was equalled by the backwardness of its industry, the ignorance of its peasantry, and the impoverishment of its nobility. Its only citizens of any repute were the historian Karamzin and the novelist Goncharov. Karamzin had been the hostile opponent of the moderate reforms proposed by Speransky and the most prominent historian of reaction. Goncharov, the novelist, had found in Simbirsk the extreme apathy and impotence that he believed formed a part of the Russian character and had incorporated these traits in his famous character, Oblomov.¹⁶

It was this atmosphere, these realities that Lenin was forced to face after his expulsion from Kazan. Although living within this sluggish atmosphere during his youth, Lenin's personal contact with its more brutal aspects was apparently very limited. The majority of his time was spent at the gymnasia and at home, and he had few intimate friends.

¹⁶ Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, 40-41.

Furthermore, his adolescent interests were not concerned with issues of a political or social nature. Essentially, Lenin's adolescent world was the home of his family. It was not until Alexander's arrest and execution and his own arrest and expulsion from the University of Kazan in 1887 that he was forced to consider the grave issues of Russian society, to recognize the disparity that existed between the teachings and practice of his home and the realities of Russian society. With his arrest at Kazan, he was fully exposed to the worst effects of Russian autocracy while, and this is the crucial factor, his own family was living proof that the Russian system was inefficient, unjust, corrupt, and irrational. If the Ulyanov family could function in harmony by simply adhering to the homely virtues of honesty and diligence, then why could not Russia function likewise by adhering to those same principles? His conclusion was that Russia's, and the world's, ills stemmed from the exploitative nature of man's institutions. The Tsar was maintained by his bureaucracy; the landlord was fattened by his peasantry; the industrialist was enriched by his proletariat; the bishop was kept up by his converts. In this sense, in the narrow sense of believing that economic exploitation was the basis of all man's ills, Lenin was a marxist even before really understanding Marxism.

It was this sudden recognition of trivia, oppression

and injustice that abounded all around him, contrasted with the simplistic love and honesty of his own home, whence developed Lenin's devotion to revolution, a revolution designed to destroy the brutality and irrationality of man. In time he became convinced that only a total social and political upheaval could root out the ingrown seeds of corruption and evil that had been planted in the soul of mankind. The operation would be most painful, for the depth of the infection was so extreme as to require nothing less than the death and rebirth of mankind.

CHOOSING A CAREER

Lenin made his debut onto the Russian revolutionary scene at a time when the spirit of its participants was experiencing a significant transition. His generation of the 1880s witnessed the enthusiastic ascent and disillusioning decline of the Narodnichestvo, the success and consequent failure of the terroristic Narodnaya Volya, and the initial, feeble beginnings of Russian marxism. At the same time, his generation was in complete sympathy with its own peculiar century in that it was a continuation of the precarious intelligent* movement that had begun in the early 1820s. While Lenin's generation was still in fervent search of the "true" salvation of Russia, its search had been vastly facilitated and even partially defined by its intellectual predecessors. By the time that Lenin was brought face to face with the haunting issues of Tsarist Russia, much of

*The term intelligent was used to describe that peculiar group of nineteenth century Russians who placed themselves in opposition to Russia's social and political systems. In political philosophy their views ranged from Slavophilism to Marxism. Not necessarily of the academic community or even particularly intellectual, the intelligents constituted "more of a monastic order or sect, with its own ethics, its own obligatory outlook on life, with its own manners and customs and even its own particular physical appearance, by which it [was] always possible to recognize a member of the intelligentsia and to distinguish him from other social groups." 17 In the 1880s the term "intelligentsia" generally came to replace "intelligent," connoting the same characteristics.

17 Stuart Ramsay Tompkins, The Russian Intelligentsia: Makers of the Revolutionary State (Norman, Oklahoma: The Oklahoma University Press, 1957), 19.

the trial and error procedure connected with discovering the path that would lead Russia to salvation had already been performed.

The first attempt to destroy Russia's autocracy had proven a dismal failure, in large part because its opponents, the so-called Decembrists of 1825, had wanted a limited, "palace" revolution that would impose constitutionalism from above while leaving society intact. Their real fear was of setting off a popular revolution that would release the pent-up resentment of the slumbering Russian masses. Hence, their attempt, rather than precipitating a social revolution, proved to be a short-lived revolutionary outburst by a small group of nobles and army officers who were scorned equally by the nobility and the masses.¹⁸ It represented, however, in caricature, the problems, issues, strengths and weaknesses, and the general tendencies of the revolutionary movement for the next three generations.

Following the Decembrist fiasco, the Russian intelligentsia was forced to confine itself largely to abstract theory. For the next three decades it lived in an unreal world of hopes and dreams, a world made more intense by the harsh realities of its own society. It was bound together by its very alienation from society, from "an

¹⁸Anatole G. Mazour, The First Russian Revolution, 1825 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1937), 263-264.

uncomprehending autocratic monarchy above and an uncomprehending mass below." It was estranged not only from society but even from its own feelings by the dissociation between its intellectual life and its daily experience. From this dual alienation originated its "consciousness and elemental spontaneity," the two basic categories under which many of the intelligentsia interpreted their own existence and defined their philosophies of life.¹⁹

By the 1860s the intelligentsia, smarting under a self-imposed guilt for having "failed" the masses, intoxicated by its long sojourn in idealistic theory, began to emerge from its intellectual exile. The Narodnichestvo, while worshipping the heroism of the Decembrists, was convinced that Russia did, in fact, need a complete social revolution, one that would involve the sleeping masses. Its creed was basically that of the Decembrists but much more complex and embracing. Like its martyred heroes, its goal was the destruction of autocracy and serfdom; yet, unlike the Decembrists, it had an abounding faith in the obshchina* of the idealized peasant to form the basis of the new society. Adapting the idealistic theories of French and German socialist Utopians to Russia's own peculiar situation, the Narodnichestvo

¹⁹Leopold H. Haimson, The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 93.

*Obshchina: agricultural communal organizations of the peasantry.

contemplated a revolution that would take Russia directly from autocracy to socialism, by-passing the capitalist phase of industrial development that was plaguing Western Europe.

The 1848 French Revolution had a profound effect on the revolutionary thinking of the Russian Narodnichestvo. Believing that the Revolution was the beginning of a socialist France, its "betrayal" gave rise to a passionate distrust within the Narodnichestvo for parliamentary and bourgeoisie democracy. Prior to 1848 the dominant opinion among the Narodnichestvo had been that revolution, in order to be really social and democratic, would have to come from below, from the masses. After the capture of the 1848 Revolution by the bourgeoisie, many of the Narodnichestvo came to agree with Alexander Herzen that their ideals could only be achieved by a revolutionary dictatorship whose task it would be to destroy every remnant of Russian autocracy. In effect the Russian revolutionary mood shifted from an emphasis on a popular, social revolution to emphasis on an elitist, Blanquist revolution.²⁰

Herzen spoke for many of the Russian intelligentsia who were prepared to adopt a more activist program in fighting Tsarism. The changing intellectual climate was led by the young "Realists" Nicholai Chernyshevsky, Nicholai Dobrolyubov

²⁰ Franco Venturi, Roots of Revolution, trans. Francis Haskell (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), 33.

and Dmitri Pisarev. The Realists were determined to practically realize their dreams, to transform Russian society by an elitist revolution. Their emphasis was on disciplined organization and practical revolutionary activities. Their mood was uncompromising. The reforms of Alexander II merely stiffened their determination to "remake the world in the light of rational principles." Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done?, embodying the moods and sympathies of the Realist movement, became the bible for many of the intelligentsia of the 1860s and 1870s. While its promise was a socialist Utopia, its program was hard and disciplined, demanding a dedicated revolutionary elite to achieve its aims.

The Realists fully represented the attitude of consciousness, the rightist organizational position that insisted "on the ability of a small elite to remake the world in the image of its own consciousness." By the 1870s, however, the predominate mood of the intelligentsia had begun to move again to the leftist organizational position, to the attitude of spontaneity which called on the intelligentsia to give up its distinctive, alienating identity in order to become one with the masses. The result was that the young intelligentsia of the 1870s "went to the people" hoping to stimulate a sudden release of their dormant revolutionary emotions. Instead, they encountered indifference and, frequently, outright hostility.²¹

²¹ Haimson, The Russian Marxists. See chapter entitled "The Background." Also see Venturi, Roots of Revolution. See chapter entitled "The Chaikovskists and the Movement 'To Go To The People.'" "

The repeated failures of the intelligentsia to be accepted by the masses soon resulted in a swing back to a "hard" programmatic position in the revolutionary movement. The shift was foreshadowed by Peter Tkachev who, like the Realists before him, preached that the first duty of the revolutionist was to create revolution. The emphasis again was on "consciousness" rather than "spontaneity." The new split in the revolutionary movement found its organizational expression in the terroristic Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), representing the "hard" position of revolutionary consciousness, and the Chernyi Peredel (Black Partition), representing the "soft" Populist tradition of spontaneity.

Meanwhile, a relatively new revolutionary doctrine was making itself heard in Russia. George V. Plakhanov, leader of the infant revolutionary Osvobozhdenie Truda (Emancipation of Labor), had introduced Marxism to Russia in his book Nashi raznoglussia (Our Differences). In direct opposition to the Populist notion that Russia could by-pass capitalism, that it could jump from a semi-feudal to a socialist society in one stage, Plekhanov contended that the question of circumventing capitalism was superfluous because capitalism was, in fact, already well entrenched in Russia. The Marxist program, then, was that capitalism should be supported and pushed to its very highest level, not because it was a desirable system but because it contained the seeds of its own destruction and because it laid the foundations for socialism. By reaching full maturity,

capitalism would automatically disintegrate under the pressure of a hostile population and would leave in its wake the ground-work for a socialist society.²²

The apparent contradictions in Plekhanov's arguments left the already skeptical Populists even less convinced. To advocate the development of a system that was admittedly detrimental to the population and was even despised by its own advocates, with the explanation that the system would self-destruct while planting the seeds of socialism in its debris, was fantasy to the Populists and to many of the older intelligentsia. But to the younger generation, to Lenin's generation, a generation that witnessed the devastating famine of 1891, the continued apathy of the peasantry, an increase in Russian industrial development, and a wave of strikes in the cities, Marxism offered an active and practical revolutionary theory. The famine of 1891 especially affected the younger members of the intelligentsia, convincing them that a new approach was needed in the revolutionary movement. The famine gave rise to false hopes; it caused many of the intelligentsia to take an active role in the activities of the zemstva. Their participation in administering aid to the country-side gave them a new confidence. Many were prepared, with liberal and progressive bourgeois

²²Solomon M. Schwarz, "Populism and Early Russian Marxism on Ways of Economic Development of Russia," Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, ed. Ernest J. Simmons (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967).

elements, to demand a constitution and social and economic reforms. Nicholas II's "senseless dream" speech quickly dispelled their optimism. He responded to the nascent democratic efforts centered in the zemstva by reducing their autonomy. For those of the intelligentsia who still entertained liberal notions, Nicholas' congratulations to those responsible for the bloody suppression of the Yaroslav strikes could leave no doubts about his intransigent attitude toward serious political reforms.

The ramifications of the famine of 1891 thus resulted in a fundamental break with the Russian revolutionary tradition by many of the younger intelligentsia. They revealed the insincerity of autocracy, the incompetence of the political regime, and the inability of the peasantry to help itself. Skeptical of the romantic and idealistic notions of the Populist faith, many of the younger intelligentsia were converted to the Marxist creed which had, so they were convinced, predicted so much of what had come to pass. Marxism rejected the peasant for the more active city laborer and offered its doctrine as scientific truth, both of which appealed to the eager and young intelligentsia. The Marxists were all too eager to congratulate themselves on the fact that their estimation of the situation had been proven correct while that of the Populists' had been proven wrong.²³

²³Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 53.

Lenin was a member of this new, confident generation. The famine of 1891 was not without its effects on this new revolutionary convert. It had been estimated that some fourteen million people were affected by the famine. It left in its wake epidemics of cholera and typhus; it caused widespread hunger and starvation. During that year Lenin was traveling in Russia in the areas hit by the famine on legal business. He was impressed by the fleeing peasants who left their villages to seek work in the cities, thus transforming themselves into urban proletarians. Like so many of his youthful colleagues, Lenin chose to interpret the famine and its consequences as the fulfilment of Marxist predictions, even though he had not made a systematic study of Marxism. It was only after the famine had wrought its destruction that he began to make systematic inquiry into the revolutionary thought of Marx. In 1892-93, while engaged in an unsuccessful law practice in the town of Samara, Lenin first read Plekhanov's Nashi raznoglassia and actually was converted to Marxism.²⁴

Besides the revelations that attended the famine, Lenin's propensity to arrange ideas and situations into neat and uncluttered categories rendered him readily susceptible to Marxist determinism; his distrust of spontaneous emotion made him welcome Marxism's emphasis on disciplined and

²⁴Stefan T. Possony, Lenin: the Compulsive Revolutionary (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 27.

conscious organization; his lack of faith in the revolutionary energies of the peasantry inclined him to favor the city proletariat; and his conviction that human exploitation was the source of all evil adapted well with Marx's contention that class conflict was the moving force of history. Not only was Marxist doctrine compatible with Lenin's intellectual outlook, but its spirit also expressed much of his own temperament. It spoke with bold and violent defiance against all nineteenth-century institutions and conventions, and yet, its theory was rational and practical.²⁵

Russian Marxism opened anew the old conflict between the advocates of spontaneous revolution and those of conscious revolution. "Consciousness" had indicated the intelligentsia's desire to maintain his distinctive identity in his environment in order to understand, and hence control, his own existence by discovering a logic and purpose different from those which governed most of his contemporary world. "Spontaneity" had stood for the intelligentsia's desire, or perhaps in many cases his necessity, to identify with and to fuse with the masses and to give himself over to the force of spontaneous feeling.²⁶

Marxism was the epitome of the "conscious" revolutionary will. Granted, it would itself later be rent by

²⁵Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 99.

²⁶Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 210-211.

elements of consciousness and spontaneity, but in comparison to Populism, its program was decidedly conscious. Lenin was somewhat instinctively drawn to Marxism largely because of its emphasis on the development of the class consciousness of the worker. His own intellectual outlook was characterized by those notions that make up the concept of consciousness. This intellectual outlook was fostered by a home environment that also lived by those notions: order, discipline, stability, and where "unrestrained emotional demonstrations were frowned upon. . . ."

Whereas Lenin's conversion to Marxism transpired during the years 1892-1893, his baptism in revolutionary thought had occurred much earlier. He was a revolutionist before he was a Marxist by at least four years. This chronological detail is significant because it points up the foundations of Lenin's revolutionary thought which were anything but Marxian. Bertram D. Wolfe has offered the years 1886 and 1887 as the "truly decisive ones" in Lenin's life. They were years in which his consciousness developed and hardened despite, or perhaps because of, several severe personal crises. In the year 1886 Lenin lost his father through natural death. The next year he lived through the arrest, trial and execution of his brother. Later that same year he was himself arrested, after being expelled from the University of Kazan, and ordered into administrative exile. It was especially in 1887 that he was snatched from the domestic security that he had always known and thrown into

the harsh realities of the brutal Russian political system. It was after his excruciating experiences with the real world that he began, in his exile, to read Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev in earnest. These revolutionary writers had initiated the intellectual attitude in Russia described as "consciousness" and were the chief critics of those intelligentsia who clung to the mood of "spontaneity." It is revealing that in Lenin's later deviations from Marxism, his intellectual shifts were often characterized by a turn to the attitudes of these Realists, especially to the sentiments of Chernyshevsky. It appears that Lenin's own inclinations toward consciousness caused him to sympathize with Chernyshevsky rather than his being converted to this conscious attitude by Chernyshevsky. He had read Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done? while in the gymnazia but had dismissed it as "a rather senseless love story." After his brother's execution, however, and after his own arrest and exile, he reread What Is To Be Done? and was completely captivated by it. He never escaped that captivity. It was actually Chernyshevsky's "new age" that became Lenin's ultimate goal rather than Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat."²⁷

Some historians have found "no definite evidence that Lenin even knew of these Russian predecessors (the Realists of the 1860s), still less that he was perceptibly

²⁷Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 19.

influenced by them.²⁸ V.V. Valentinov, however, historian and actual participant in the Russian revolutionary movement has concluded that Chernyshevsky, more than any other writer, including Marx, "influenced the decisive years of Lenin's revolutionary development."²⁹ N. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, supports Valentinov's conclusion in her Reminiscences. She has related how captivated she and Lenin were with Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done? and has mentioned her surprise at Lenin's detailed knowledge of the book.³⁰ She also has mentioned that Lenin kept two photographs of Chernyshevsky in his Siberian album, and on one of them was written the birth and death dates of the writer.

Lenin's own references to the Realist writers are ones of respect and admiration. For example, in an article against pacifism in which he attacked the half-hearted pacifist attempts of Karl Kautsky and Filippo Turati, Lenin wrote that Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky had been speakers of the truth, even in the days of serfdom. He noted their ridicule of apologetic liberals whom he likened to Kautsky and Turati.³¹

²⁸William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, 1917-1918 (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), I, 136.

²⁹Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 98.

³⁰Reminiscences of Lenin by His Relatives, 190.

³¹Lenin, Collected Works, XXIII, 186.

No better proof, however, of Lenin's affinity for Chernyshevsky exists than a comparison of Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done? with Lenin's book of the same title. Lenin adopted not only the title from Chernyshevsky, but also much of the spirit of his revolutionary program. Moreover, his ideas about the ultimate socialist Utopia owe no small debt to Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done?

For it was from this novel that Lenin drew his vision of Utopia that Russia would become after the advent of socialism -- a land criss-crossed by irrigation canals which would create orchards, vineyards, gardens, and tropical plantations, where formerly deserted steppes had stood; a happy people enjoying prosperity and leisure, thanks to the wealth of mechanical equipment that would service their factories and their fields. And from Chto Delat'? Lenin also drew his belief that the realization of this socialist Utopia would depend mainly upon the exertions of the men of the "new age" -- the thin layer of "strong personalities" who [would] impose their character on the course of events and give a definite direction to the 'chaotic movement of the masses.' 32

Lenin's own What Is To Be Done?, written in 1902, reiterates Chernyshevsky's demand for those "strong personalities" or "professional revolutionists" to give a "definite direction to the chaotic movement of the masses" by channeling their spontaneous energies into revolutionary class consciousness. Then, in 1917, when he was concerned that he might not live to witness the advent of socialism, he sketched his vision of the Utopia that he believed would descend on Russia, a Utopia not unlike Chernyshevsky's that

³²Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 98. Also see S.V. Utechin (ed.), V.I. Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?", trans. S.V. and Patricia Utechin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), xviii.

amounted to little more than "Soviet power plus electrification."

Adam B. Ulam has noted the paradox that Lenin's dry, organizational tract should take its title from Chernyshevsky's "sentimental and fantasy-filled work of fiction." Lenin recognized no paradox; he and Chernyshevsky were aiming for the same ends. The difference between the two works is that Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done? described the nature of those ends while Lenin's What Is To Be Done? outlined the program to achieve those ends, the way to arrive at the "new age" that Chernyshevsky had described.³³

Lenin's What Is To Be Done? is as easily identified with Chernyshevsky as with Marx. It is concerned primarily not with capitalism or socialism but with organizing the proletariat for revolution and with discrediting the non-revolutionary Marxist factions -- the Economists. The Economists -- English Fabians, French Ministerialists and German Bernsteinists -- were more concerned with labor reform than with revolution. Operating in more democratic societies than that of Russia, their political programs were tempered by their actual participation in the political life of their societies. Within the framework of constitutionalism, they advocated better working conditions, shorter working days, higher wages, and other economic reforms. The Economists,

³³Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 176.

in fact, restricted their activities to the economic field, arguing that political activities would merely divide the proletariat and invite reactionary measures from the government. Hence, they were more concerned with the economic struggle than with the political struggle, more with trade unions than with political parties, more with practical problems than with the ideological struggle, more with workers' spontaneity than with workers' consciousness.

Such a soft program was anathema to Lenin. His 'Marxist 'objectivity' did not lead him to believe, as it had his Menshevik colleagues, that the inevitable laws of history would accomplish the revolution alone. Like Chernyshevsky, Lenin was too impatient, showing "an emotional reluctance to wait for the propitious moment. . . ." He branded Economism as trade-unionism, reformism and bourgeois ideology. Without extending proletarian activities into the political field, the revolution was doomed.³⁴

Even more repulsive to Lenin was Economism's appeal to the spontaneity of the workers. It held out immediate material gains with which the majority of workers were really interested. With higher wages and shorter working days, the average worker would care less about Marx or capitalism or socialism. Everything within Lenin revolted at this blatant emotional appeal to the workers' materialistic desires. Spontaneity was the workers' most dangerous enemy.

³⁴Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 104.

It was responsible for Oblomovist Simbirsk; it was responsible for religion and autocracy; it was responsible for all the ills of Russia. If the masses could be made to realize that their emotional attachment to God and Tsar was the source of their ills, then the road to salvation would become clear to them. Uneducated spontaneity, however, merely strengthened man's evil institutions and contributed to their survival. To Lenin, non-revolutionary spontaneity was nothing less than a "nonrational revolt of the mind against society."³⁵

Lenin's distrust of human spontaneity reflected a lack of faith in the ability of man to discern his own needs, and, perhaps, it revealed a similar distrust of his own emotions. He witnessed the Russian masses bow to God and Tsar despite the misery and toil that it brought them. Man was slave to man, justifiable by the laws of God and Tsar. That, to Lenin, was the height of irrationality, of spontaneity. The task of the Marxist was to make the masses understand just how irrational they were, at which point they would then automatically revolt against their irrational existence. The task was one that would require the "strong personalities" of "professional revolutionists" because the appeal of elemental spontaneity was so strong that it had to be consciously guarded against. Spontaneity produced

³⁵ Alfred G. Meyer, Leninism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957); see "Class Consciousness." Also see Utechin, V.I. Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?", 17-18.

abnormal relations between people, as Lenin was to discover at Alakaeva where his mother tried to interest him in farming after his dismissal from Kazan. Krupskaya had related that Lenin's attempt at farming did not work because of the "abnormal" relations that it inspired. Could it be that Lenin found himself wanting to lord over the peasants and to assert his authority?³⁶

Lenin's answer to the spontaneous energies of the masses was to convert it into consciousness -- "the rational conception of an order which sought to overcome both habit and spontaneity." The rational, to Lenin, came to be identified with any and everything that opposed the traditional order. Even spontaneity became rational when directed in revolutionary fashion against the existing regime. Again, it was the end rather than the means that guided Lenin's thinking. What was irrational for one purpose became rational for another, so that anything which contributed to the revolution became rational.³⁷

Since spontaneity, if left to its own merits, could achieve nothing but trade-unionism, Lenin concluded that revolutionary consciousness would have to be taught to the workers by non-workers, by bourgeois intellectuals and former workers who would assume a "classless" identity and place

³⁶ Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, 84.

³⁷ Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 135.

themselves at the front of the revolutionary movement. These would constitute a vanguard of professional revolutionists who would be distinct from and in control of the mass movement and labor organizations. The workers' organizations would have to be trade organizations while the organizations of revolutionists would be dedicated primarily to educating and leading the masses and to creating revolutionary situations.³⁸ The task of this vanguard -- that is, the Social-Democratic Party -- was to "combat spontaneity," to divert the spontaneity of the workers with their trade-unionist leanings from its emphasis on immediate material gains to emphasis on revolutionary Marxism, from bourgeois sentiments to Social-Democratic teachings.³⁹ The Party, as conceived by Lenin, was to be:

the general staff of the proletarian revolution, conceiving the strategy of class war, revolutionary attacks, and strategic retreats, training cadres, organizing shock troops, collecting and digesting intelligence, and building up the fighting spirit of the rank and file. 40

The party organization that Lenin described in What Is To Be Done? and the conception of party membership that he advocated at the 1903 Congress often amounted to nothing less than the expropriation of the workers' movement by the

³⁸ Lenin, Collected Works, "What Is To Be Done?" V, 452;

³⁹ Ibid, V, 384-385.

⁴⁰ Meyer, Leninism, 33.

Social-Democratic Party and its subjection to the dictatorial Bolshevik leadership. The highly centralized and conspiratorial nature of Lenin's vanguard reflected his distrust of human spontaneity and his lack of faith in the ability of the masses to discern their own needs. Its emphasis on strict discipline and rigid centralization was designed to implement orders from top to bottom, because only the revolutionary elite were aware of the correct path of revolution.⁴¹

But, in 1902, a disciplined revolutionary organization was precisely what the revolutionary movement required. In view of the inactivity of the masses and the long tradition of Tsarist suppression of the slightest elements of dissent, What Is To Be Done? offered a valid and effective revolutionary program. Lenin's program was definitely more centralized and less democratic than Chernyshevsky's, but the spirit and goals of the two were strikingly similar.

Lenin's attraction for Chernyshevsky was fostered not only by his sympathy with the element of consciousness that prevailed in the latter's works but also because of Chernyshevsky's strong vein of voluntarism which complimented Lenin's own voluntarist tendencies. He was not limited in his actions by a belief in historical or economic determinism as were the Mensheviks. Most of the ideas and attitudes

⁴¹ George Lichtheim, Marxism; An Historical and Critical Study (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 337. Also see Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 195.

that Lenin adopted from Chernyshevsky fitted well with Marxist doctrine, since both Chernyshevsky and Marx had borrowed many of their concepts from Hegel. Yet, unlike Marx but very much in sympathy with Chernyshevsky, Lenin was too much of a revolutionist to sit back and wait for history to bring the revolution to Russia; this was Plekhanov's Marxism. Both Lenin and Chernyshevsky recognized the need to make a place for consciousness and human will in the scheme of history. By utilizing Hegel's law of "transformation of quantity into quality," they were able to rationalize the necessity of the individual to work for the revolution. If relative quantitative changes led to absolute qualitative changes, then this explained the revolutions for which they were striving.⁴²

Whenever Lenin deviated from Marxism, it was usually because Marxist determinism was impeding his own voluntarism by providing a revolution through the force of economic and historical laws rather than through the force of personalities. According to Marx, capitalism would create its own revolution by uniting and exploiting its proletariat. Once its economic forces had progressed to a certain point beyond the social and political institutions, then the proletariat would overthrow the system. Lenin's sense of reality was even more deeply rooted than Chernyshevsky's. He realized that it was impossible to

⁴²Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 100.

actually know reality and to determine beforehand the totality of the historical process, despite Marxist teachings. Hence, by subtle interpretation of Hegel's dialectic, Lenin arrived at his own view of reality that permitted the working of his own free will within the framework of Marxist determinism. He concluded that reality was basically composed of contradictions and that these contradictions provided the moving force of history. Thus, only if one pushed with all the strength of progressive forces against that of backward forces could he discover the elusive boundaries of reality. The revolutionary's task was to push against the old until it should give way and crash to the earth.⁴³

Lenin's impatient character forced him to seek such an interpretation of reality. Just as he was drawn to Chernyshevsky's "strong personalities" and had his own special notions about Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat," so did he quite naturally read his own requirements into Hegel's law of "transformation of quantity into quality." This voluntaristic interpretation was not out of keeping with Lenin's essential views of historical determinism. As early as 1894 he had asserted that

the idea of historical necessity does not in the least undermine the role of the individual in history: all history is made up of the actions of individuals, who are undoubtedly active figures. The real question that

⁴³Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 100-101.

arises in appraising the social activity of an individual is: what conditions ensure the success of his actions, what guarantee is there that these actions will not remain an isolated act in a welter of contrary acts. 44

Thus, like his revolutionary tutor, Chernyshevsky, Lenin gave top priority to the "new men," to those strong personalities who would impose their character on the course of events and give a definite direction to the chaotic movement of the masses." His firm belief in this necessity is adequately revealed in his own stoic devotion to the cause.

The fact is that when one studies Lenin's revolutionary thought, he is forced to consider "voluntary Marxism," because it is such an essential part of the whole Lenin, and also because Lenin's voluntarism was so often at odds with Marxist determinism. Generally speaking, this aspect of Lenin's career has been categorized as a difference between theory and practice. The number of historical and political works having that very title will attest to the significance of the problem in relation to Lenin's total revolutionary outlook. The popular notion is that "the theoretical side of Lenin is in a sense not serious." Rather, his political instinct is usually cited as the expression of his real genius. But, it is also noted that his tactics were always justified with Marxist phrases. and

⁴⁴ Lenin, Collected Works, I, 159.

what was offered as Marxist theory.⁴⁵

Sidney Hook basically agrees with this assessment but with the qualification that Lenin's will to act was due to a "certain characteristic emphasis he gave to Marxist doctrine."⁴⁶ Alfred Meyer has dealt with this ambiguity of theory and practice in terms of Lenin's estimation of the proximity of the revolution. This approach is somewhat more satisfying because it deals not only with Lenin's response to Marxist doctrine but also with his reaction to practical, everyday developments. Meyer points out that in the long-range of the historical process, Lenin generally subscribed to everything Marx had written about the destruction of capitalism and the implementation of socialism. Yet, in his short-range analysis he lost this optimism and was beset by doubts as to whether the situation were developing as Marx had foretold.⁴⁷ Consequently, Lenin believed that the objective situation demanded those "strong personalities" to assure that the revolution would not be thwarted. Therefore, he seized upon Marx's prediction of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and emphasized that facet of Marxism over all others, because it complimented his own revolutionary views

⁴⁵R.N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 171.

⁴⁶Sidney Hook, Marx and the Marxists; the Ambiguous Legacy (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1955), 75-76.

⁴⁷Alfred Meyer, Leninism, 84.

by reducing the role of historical chance. His deviation from the total spirit of Marx was in the form of emphasizing its revolutionary aspects, and in this he was no more guilty than those Western Marxist who chose to ignore those aspects and to emphasize evolutionary Marxism. Lenin's tendencies were conditioned by his initial revolutionary sentiments which were fertilized by the writings of Chernyshevsky.

With Nicholas Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828-1889) we stand at the real source of Bolshevism. . . . Chernyshevsky helped to mold the form of the revolutionary; Marx provided him with the message. 48

⁴⁸Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 54.

STATE AND REVOLUTION

What Is To Be Done? may, for the purposes of this paper, represent the bulk of Lenin's writings until 1917. That is, most of his writings which followed What Is To Be Done? and preceded State and Revolution constitute, in one form or another, a continuing verbal attack against "Economism" and "Revisionism," the two evolutionary trends within the Social-Democratic Party. What Is To Be Done? contained, some in germ, some in more developed form, practically all of the ideas on party organization and politics which have come to be known as "Leninist."⁴⁹ Its program which calls for a tightly centralized party organization of professional revolutionists who would educate the proletariat in class consciousness stands out again and again as the theme of many of his later writings. Its demand for the overthrow of autocracy, to be followed by a bourgeoisie-democratic revolution, reappears constantly. Its plea for the triumph of conscious, revolutionary discipline over elemental spontaneity marks another familiar theme. Nonetheless, What Is To Be Done? represents only one side of Lenin's two-pronged revolutionary vision -- the stage of preparation that required the disciplined skills of the "strong personalities" to give some direction to the chaotic masses. Since, according to Marx, the inevitability of the socialist

⁴⁹Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, 156.

revolution depended upon the fully developed consciousness of the proletariat, the immediate task of Lenin's vanguard was that of educating the proletariat in its own interests. Although Marx was convinced that class consciousness would develop within the proletariat by virtue of its economic and social position, Lenin was too much of a realist to leave this essential development to chance. He, therefore, proposed to bestow class consciousness upon the proletariat from without, through the teachings of bourgeois intellectuals who had been converted to Marxism. The result, thought Lenin, would be the same. Regardless of how proletarian consciousness was instilled, the Marxist dogma would still hold that fully developed class consciousness equalled revolution. The sooner the proletariat became fully aware of its role vis a vis the bourgeoisie, the sooner it would realize its duty to the revolution. At that point the "new age" would begin to take precedence over the "strong personalities," for the masses would have achieved their own direction. What Is To Be Done? and Lenin's pre-1917 writings are concerned primarily with the task of the "strong personalities;" State and Revolution is concerned with the "new age."

Lenin wrote State and Revolution in 1917. This work has plagued all historians who have studied Lenin's career in an attempt to fathom the mentality of this revolutionist. It has served as a bible to communists, a blueprint of the society for which Communist parties everywhere purport to

be striving. Incongruous as it is with Lenin's writings before and after 1917, it remains the accepted document of Communist intentions against which their actual achievements can be measured.⁵⁰ Had Lenin adhered to the political program outlined in What Is To Be Done?, Western historians might well have written him off as a "Blanquist." State and Revolution, however, stands at opposite poles from What Is To Be Done? and looms too heavily over Lenin's career to be dismissed lightly. It made of Communism a religion by promising a heaven on earth, an Utopia much in the spirit of Chernyshevsky.

State and Revolution appears, on the surface, to be completely anathema to the ideas and attitudes expressed by Lenin in What Is To Be Done? and in his other pre-1917 writings. In the description in State and Revolution of the type of society that the socialist revolution would initiate, one is struck by the dominant role of the proletariat, especially when contrasted with the leading role assigned the Party in Lenin's pre-1917 writings. Lenin, who was always skeptical of the ability and devotion of the chameleon proletariat, in State and Revolution declared that only the proletariat could direct the suppression of the bourgeoisie and bring the revolution to its fulfilment.⁵¹

⁵⁰Meyer, Leninism, 195-196.

⁵¹Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 404. Also, V.I. Lenin, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (izdanie piatoe; Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi Literatury, 1960), XXXIII, 26.

Lenin, who was always concerned that the Party might lose control of the mass movement, in State and Revolution spoke of the leading political role of the proletariat who must arm themselves in order to direct the revolution.⁵²

Not only in letter but also in spirit, State and Revolution reveals an unfamiliar Lenin. His traditional hard-line, cautious approach to revolution, leaving the direction of the mass movement in the hands of a select group of tried and trusted revolutionaries, gives way in State and Revolution to the spontaneous, mob action tendencies that Lenin had warned against all of his revolutionary life. Not only was the proletariat to assume direction of the revolution, it was to transport Russia from a semi-feudal society to a communist society, reminiscent of the idealistic Narodnichestvo schemes which had advocated by-passing the capitalist phase of economic development and which Lenin had so avidly condemned. But, whereas prior to 1917 he had demanded that capitalist development be pushed to its ultimate and had branded the Narodnichestvo "leap across the centuries" as utopian, he eliminated his own "leap" from the ranks of utopian schemes in State and Revolution by providing for a brief period of transition from autocracy to communism. He admitted that it would be impossible to destroy all officialdom at one blow; that would be utopian.

⁵² Lenin, Collected Works, 404. Also, Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 26.

His idea was not to destroy bureaucracy at once but to "break up" the old bureaucratic machinery and replace it with a new machinery, a machinery that would gradually destroy itself as its functions would be replaced by the "natural" cooperation of all members of society. That, to Lenin, was no Utopia. It was the essential task, not of the Party but of the proletariat.⁵³

Lenin's conception of the new society, of the "new age," as expressed in State and Revolution, was based on Marx's dubious interpretation of the Paris Commune of 1871 (see Karl Marx, The Civil War in France). Marx described the ill-fated Commune as "the first manifestation of the real proletarian revolution." This description included an idealized picture of the Communards smashing the old bureaucratic machinery and replacing it with a new officialdom, limited by direct democracy from rising above the position of an average worker.⁵⁴ Despite the failure of the Paris Commune, the totally different historical background of Paris in 1871 and Russia in 1917, and the economic and cultural differences between the two, Lenin advocated the wholesale transference of the 1871 Parisian example -- or rather Marx's interpretation of it -- to the Russian scene

⁵³ Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 425; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 48-49.

⁵⁴ Robert V. Daniels, The Nature of Communism (New York: Random House, 1962), 8.

of 1917. Taking his cue from Marx, Lenin described the future Russian commune as a universal bureaucracy, such as that the business of operating the state and the economy was to be entrusted to each and every citizen. The prospect of the illiterate Russian masses directing affairs of state was to most Social-Democrats a ludicrous impossibility. But to those faithful few who shared Lenin's utopianism as well as his revolutionary discipline, Lenin reduced the impossible to the same naive simplicity that characterizes the whole of State and Revolution. He explained that the capitalist system had reduced the functions of state and economy to such simple operations of "registration, filing and checking" that they could be performed by every literate citizen. Hence, the revolution would initiate universal education. Moreover, the simplified operations of the state performed by the average citizen for "workingmen's wages" would prevent the development of an elite bureaucracy. The bureaucracy would, in effect, be universal.⁵⁵ It would be organized much like the postal system, with one standard wage scale, all under control and direction of the "armed proletariat."⁵⁶

The new bureaucratization would take time. It

⁵⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 420-421; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 43-44.

⁵⁶ Ibid, XXV, 427; Ibid, XXXIII, 50.

would require the proletariat to take over the bourgeois state in order to suppress the exploiters, the enemy of the "new age," and to smash the old state machinery. This initial transition would introduce the "first" or "lower" phase of communist society: abolition of the standing army to be replaced by the armed masses; abolition of all private property, to be replaced by the social ownership of all the means of production; and the election of all officials subject to immediate recall.

In order to explain away the existence of the state -- the proletarian state -- after the revolution, while claiming that the state would wither away, Lenin again invoked Hegel's law of "transformation of quantity into quality." That is, capitalist democracy, which employed the state as a special instrument of suppression against a particular class, would be transformed into proletarian democracy, something that would no longer be a state in the accepted sense of the word.⁵⁷ This first phase of communism would not do away with all injustice and inequality, thought Lenin, but it would prevent human exploitation because all the means of production would be held in common ownership by society. Actually, the first phase of communism amounted to the creation of a socialist economy.⁵⁸ The "high stage" of communism involved more

⁵⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 419; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 42.

⁵⁸ Ibid, XXV, 466; Ibid, XXXIII, 93.

than economics; it involved the mental attitude of the masses. This stage would be achieved only after the masses subordinated individual desires to the interest of its society, only after man's competitive instincts were transformed into a spirit of cooperation. The "high stage" would be characterized by a "withering away of the state" as the "special functions of a special stratum" became the everyday tasks of every citizen. Government officials and bureaucrats would be replaced by a universal bureaucracy of bookkeepers, technicians and managers; these would replace the old state machinery. Every citizen would perform to the limits of his ability and would receive according to his needs. Lenin believed that if man could become accustomed to observing what he termed the "fundamental rules of social life," then his labor would be so pleasant and productive that he would naturally work to the best of his abilities. The result would be such an abundance of consumer goods that competition between individuals would cease to exist; everyone would have everything that he would ever need. The citizens of Lenin's "new age" would, like the seamstresses in Vera Pavlovna's shop as described by Chernyshevsky, would come to understand that profits were not a reward for individual talent but a reward for the general character of collective cooperation.⁵⁹ This

⁵⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 468-469; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 96-97; N.G. Chernyshevsky, What Is To Be Done? (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 157-158.

was Lenin's ideal -- as utopian as Chernyshevsky's "new age" and as orderly and harmonious as the Ulyanov household in Simbirsk.

State and Revolution, because of the contrast in mood and ideas with the bulk of Lenin's writings, has been branded as everything from an "aberrant intellectual enterprise, a fanciful exercise," to a propagandist work of political opportunism. Such epithets have been hurled because historians have tended to lump State and Revolution with Lenin's utopian writings after the February Revolution of 1917 as well as with the utopian measures that he proposed after the October Revolution of 1917; then, to compare these to his realistic, pragmatic writings prior to 1917 and following 1918. State and Revolution has usually been treated as the initiator of Lenin's 1917 and 1918 utopian outlook, because much of his writing after the February Revolution and many of his proposed policies after achieving power were a reiteration or an attempt to implement the utopian ideas expressed in State and Revolution. Thus, lumping State and Revolution, his post-February 1917 writings and his post-October 1917 writings and policies together, historians have concluded that Lenin, in 1917, was "inebriated by revolutionary fever," was merely concerned with gaining the support of the radical proletariat, was helpless against the anarchistic mood of the masses, and other such rational explanations. These judgments deserve further consideration.

Robert V. Daniels offers a standard interpretation of State and Revolution, describing it as a deviation from "Leninism." Contrasting State and Revolution with What Is To Be Done?, Daniels points up the disparity between the ideas and the mood of the two works. Noting the domineering position of the Party in What Is To Be Done?, he then shows that in State and Revolution the Party, in the abstract, is mentioned only once. Likewise, he contrasts the roles of revolutionary organization in each work, stressing the absence of the organization in State and Revolution. In short, Daniels has done what most historians have done in attempting to prove the "uniqueness" of State and Revolution; he has tried to demonstrate the deviation of State and Revolution by spotlighting the difference between its ideas and its moods with those of What Is To Be Done? He is little concerned with similarities. What Is To Be Done? is simply taken as the whole Lenin --- as Leninism --- and then juxtaposed to State and Revolution in order to illustrate how the latter deviates from the former. ⁶⁰

Such a comparison misses much of the intent of State and Revolution. What Is To Be Done? is a practical, revolutionary guide designed as a blueprint to be applied to the Russian situation in 1902. State and Revolution is a theoretical

⁶⁰Robert V. Daniels, "The State and the Revolution: a Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology," American Slavic and East European Review, XII, February, 1953, 23.

work projected into the somewhat distant future, a sort of prophesy that attempted to depict the "new age." It was not intended by its author to be realized in his own lifetime; it was a blueprint for the next generation, the generation that would wage the successful socialist revolution. As Trotsky has written, it was to be Lenin's "secret last will and testament."⁶¹

To determine the motivation behind State and Revolution would be to discover its actual position in Lenin's intellectual and revolutionary career. Was it simply a work of political opportunism, the result of the high pitch of emotional fever that accompanied the revolution; or was it a very real part of Lenin's intellectual outlook and of his revolutionary thought? It must be remembered that Lenin put together the material for State and Revolution during the months of December, 1916 through February, 1917. During that time he had no idea that Russia was on the verge of actual revolution. The nation was, it is true, experiencing a number of strikes and riots due to the breakdown of transportation and to the inadequacies of its industry and agriculture. And, these were made all the more unbearable by the continued reverses suffered by the Russian armies at the hands of the Germans. But these complications were nothing new to the wobbling Tsarist

⁶¹ Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, trans. Max Eastman (3 vols.; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), III, 126.

regime. They had been present since the beginning of the war, following an initial, short-lived outburst of enthusiastic patriotism when war was first declared. Few interpreted ~~the~~ the chaotic situation as a prelude to revolution. The fact is that Lenin, like the majority of Russian revolutionaries, was caught completely unaware by the February Revolution. Hence, how can it be said that State and Revolution was composed in an atmosphere of revolutionary fever? The material for the work had already been compiled before Lenin learned of the Revolution. The bulk of the notes from which State and Revolution was written, entitled "Marx on the State," are dated January-February, 1917 -- prior to the February Revolution.⁶² Moreover, on February 17, 1917, a full month before he received the exciting news that Russia was revolting against the Tsar, Lenin wrote to Alexandra Kollontai that he was "preparing (have almost got the material ready) an article on the question of the attitude of Marxism to the state."⁶³ The article was State and Revolution. It was not until March 15 that he learned of the Revolution, at which time he put aside his manuscript and frantically devoted all of his efforts to returning to Russia. It was almost another month before

⁶² Lenin, Sobranie Sochinenii, "Marksizm o Gosudarstve," XXXIII, 306.

⁶³ Lenin, Collected Works, XXXV, "To Alexandra Kollontai," 286; Sobranie Sochinenii, "A.M. Kollontai," XLIX, 388.

he succeeded in reaching Russia, and, in the process, he deposited the manuscript in Stockholm. Hence, from the moment that Lenin learned of the Revolution, he concerned himself not with putting State and Revolution into form to publish but with getting to Russia. Likewise, after reaching Russia, he was absorbed in the work of organizing the Bolsheviks and with attacking the Provisional Government that had assumed power. The manuscript remained in Stockholm; he could not add one word. Yet, shortly after the July Demonstrations which prompted the Provisional Government to outlaw the Bolsheviks, Lenin wrote to his companion L. B. Kamenev:

if they do me in, I ask you to publish my notebook: 'Marxism on the State' (it got left behind in Stockholm) I think that it could be published after a week's work. 64

Lenin's letter to Kollontai in February that the material was almost completed, the ensuing months which found the manuscript in Stockholm so that Lenin could hardly have revised it, and his letter to Kamenev in July stating that the manuscript could be put into complete form with a week's work, all indicate that State and Revolution was essentially completed before Lenin even learned of the Revolution and, therefore, it can hardly be described as a product of the post-February revolutionary fever.

⁶⁴Lenin, Collected Works, "Note to L.B. Kamenev," XXXVI, 454; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Zaliska L.B. Kamenvu," XLIX, 444.

Hence, Daniels' description of State and Revolution as a "monument" to Lenin's "intellectual deviation during the year of revolution" does not fully satisfy the facts. Obviously, if State and Revolution is contrasted with What Is To Be Done?, with What Is To Be Done? offered as indicative of the whole of Lenin's revolutionary thought, then State and Revolution does indeed appear to be a deviation from "Leninism." In a similar vein, if State and Revolution is included in the post-February period when Lenin was actually influenced by the revolutionary emotions sweeping Russia, then it does emerge as a work molded by the pitch of 1917 fever or, perhaps, as a piece of political opportunism.

On the other hand, if State and Revolution is divorced from the revolutions and viewed as a theoretical work written for the future, a work intended to be Lenin's last will and testament, and consisting of ideas which were formulated not in the heat of revolution but in the cool detachment of Zurich Library, then it emerges not as a temporary intellectual deviation but as an integral part of the whole of Lenin's revolutionary thought; it emerges not as a work of political opportunism but as a revelation of the end to which Lenin had devoted his life -- the revolutionary ideal that Lenin had held since his first serious contact with Chernyshevsky's "new age." Lenin did not commit his life to revolution and suffer the

consequent hardships for something as mundane as personal power, as those historians who consider State and Revolution a piece of political opportunism suggest. Nor was he in any way "inebriated" by the emotion of 1917. From the beginning of his conversion to the ranks of revolutionaries, Lenin contemplated nothing less than the complete transformation of Russian society and, finally, even the world; a transformation not only of its physical aspects but also of the mental make up of mankind. This is what State and Revolution is all about -- the harmonious "new age" that would occur in the world after the existing social, economic, and political systems had been destroyed and man returned to his "natural" state. It is about an Ulyanov type society that scorns emotional outbursts and lives in a regimented atmosphere of rational thinking.

Yet, the means described by Lenin in State and Revolution to achieve its expressed ends constitute something of a paradox for historians. How could an orderly and effective society be born out of the anarchistic methods proposed by Lenin in State and Revolution: the destruction of the state, the affairs of the state and economy placed in the hands of the common masses, the abolition of the army and the police? It constituted no paradox for Lenin. He believed, as did his tutors Chernyshevsky and Marx, that the state was actually the creator of anarchy and disorder; that the state created the necessity

of "unnatural" competition; that if the state were destroyed, man would return to his "natural" tendencies of unselfish cooperation and order. He believed that if the state were destroyed, permitting man to return to his "natural" inclinations of observing the "fundamental rules" of social existence, then there would be no functions left for the state to perform -- no police, no army, no special bureaucracy. The few national necessities could be performed by every literate citizen working in harmony with one another.⁶⁵

It did not require a revolutionary situation to cause Lenin to formulate the ideas contained in State and Revolution; he did not have to be intoxicated by any fever. Those ideas had been an integral part of his intellectual make-up for decades. They took initial form in 1887 after his study of Chernyshevsky's What Is To Be Done? and were developed and reinforced with his study of Marxism. They were formally compiled and put on paper in the sober confines of Zurich Library between December, 1916 and February, 1917 and were finally polished into book-form in August, 1917 while Lenin was still a proscribed man.⁶⁶ Far from being the product of revolutionary fever, the ideas

⁶⁵Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 473-474; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 100-102; Chernyshevsky, What Is To Be Done?, 162.

⁶⁶Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I, 133-134.

contained in State and Revolution were formulated at a time when Lenin doubted that his generation would live to see the "decisive battles of this coming revolution." He thought that it would be the youth who would fight, and win, the coming proletarian revolution. This assessment was made by Lenin on January 22, 1917, hardly more than a month before the February Revolution.⁶⁷ According to Leon Trotsky, the work would find few readers during the "whirlpool of revolution" and would be published only after the seizure of power, as it was. He contended that Lenin was working "over the problem of the state primarily for the sake of his own inner confidence and for the future."⁶⁸

The very reasons for Lenin's writing State and Revolution should dispel any notions that it was drafted under the influence of revolutionary fever or that it was written for any political advantages. Daniels credits Nicholai Bukharin, until 1918 the recognized leader of the left-wing Bolsheviks, with inspiring what he calls Lenin's "new trend." He refers to a note by Leo Kamenev from Leninskii Sbornik which states that:

'It was precisely this article [Bukharin's "Der

⁶⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution," XXIII, 253; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Doklad o Revoliutsii 1905 goda," XXX, 328.

⁶⁸ Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, III, 126.

imperialistische Raubstaat" dealing with the nature of the state] which induced Vladimir Il'ich to occupy himself more closely with the corresponding question. From the article prepared by Vladimir Il'ich . . . arose his work State and Revolution.⁶⁹

Lenin himself said that State and Revolution was directed against Bukharin and, also, against Karl Kautsky. In his letter of February 17, 1917 to Alexandra Kollontai, he wrote: "I am preparing . . . an article on the question of the attitude of Marxism to the state. I have come to conclusions which are even sharper against Kautsky than against Bukharin. . . ." ⁷⁰ Two days later he wrote essentially the same letter to Inessa Armand, informing her that he had arrived at some very interesting and important conclusions, "much more against Kautsky than against N. Iv. Bukharin (who, however, is not right all the same, though nearer to the truth than Kautsky)." ⁷¹ In these letters, Lenin does not appear to have been excited over some novel discovery on the nature of the state. His findings merely confirmed his own ideas on the subject, regardless of how

⁶⁹Daniels, "The State and the Revolution," 26; Lenin, Collected Works, XXIII, 377; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXX, 418.

⁷⁰Lenin, Ibid, XXXV, 286; Ibid, XLIX, 388.

⁷¹Ibid, XXXV, 289; Ibid, XLIX, 390.

little publicity he had given these ideas prior to the writing of State and Revolution. Neither of the above letters is concerned only, or even primarily, with Lenin's research into the nature of the state; the mention is almost casual. The ideas expressed in State and Revolution were not strangers to Lenin's thought; they were an essential part of his revolutionary outlook and had been formulated long before the revolutions of 1917.

One point of discrepancy that should arrest the reader's attention is that while Kamenev contended that Bukharin inspired Lenin to begin work on State and Revolution, the content hardly mentions Bukharin but devotes a full chapter of harsh invective against Karl Kautsky. Lenin himself said that Kautsky was the greater culprit. The fact is that Bukharin's anarchism was often very much in sympathy with Lenin's own anarchistic leanings which found their roots in his utopian thought. Kautsky, on the other hand, had raised some disturbing questions about the nature of the socialist state, especially concerning the role of bureaucracy and centralization -- two of the very points on which Lenin's theory of the new state later broke down. Kautsky's conclusions were, in fact, nothing less than a refutation of violent revolution and of Lenin's promise that socialism would gradually lead to a "withering away" of the state. He had declared that "never, under any condition," could a successful proletarian

revolution destroy state power. All that it could do would be to shift the forces within the state power from the hands of the bourgeoisie into the hands of the proletariat. The aim, therefore, of the German Social-Democratic Party was "the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by raising parliament to the rank of master of the government."⁷² Kautsky's conclusion was the epitome of Marxist "Revisionism," that "bourgeois sickness" which Lenin recognized as the greatest threat to the revolution.

State and Revolution was, however, Lenin's first attempt to deal with the nature of the new state in a formal work, another factor which contributes to its appearance of inconsistency with "Leninism" and another reason for its being labeled an aberration. Prior to 1917 Lenin had been almost exclusively occupied with preparing the proletariat with its role in the "inevitable" revolution and, consequently, with developing the effectiveness of the vanguard. Even after the February Revolution he did not abandon these tasks, but he did not concern himself with them in State and Revolution; State and Revolution was not written for 1917. Yet, although it represents Lenin's first formal work on the nature of the new state, the ideas expressed in it may be found

⁷² Lenin, Collected Works, XXV, 489; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXIII, 117.

scattered here and there throughout his earlier writings. As early as 1903 Lenin had given some indication of the nature and scope of his self-appointed task when he wrote: "We want to achieve a new and better order of society: in this new and better society there must be neither rich nor poor; all will have to work."⁷³ This was the same society that is described in more detail in State and Revolution; its anarchistic implications are the same. Furthermore, he continued: "we are fighting to free tens and hundreds of millions of people from abuse of power, oppression and poverty."⁷⁴ Even an historian's mathematics would indicate that Lenin had more in mind than just Russia when he spoke of hundreds of millions; his design was against the world. Then why have historians neglected to mention Lenin's utopian utterances of 1903? Do not the same elements of utopianism exist in the above statements as are contained in State and Revolution and which have caused that work to be labeled an aberration?

Even in 1903 Lenin envisaged a society of voluntary toil and mutual self-sacrifice; even then he dreamed of a

⁷³ Lenin, Collected Works, "To the Rural Poor," VI, 366; Sobranie Sochinenii, "K Derevenskoi Bednote," VII, 132.

⁷⁴ Ibid, VI, 366; Ibid, VII, 132.

society without antagonisms and strife. Again, in "To the Rural Poor," he spoke of ending the struggle for money and of abolishing wage labor; every man would work for himself and for society.⁷⁵ He simply reiterated these promises in State and Revolution when he declared that the "exploitation of man by man will have become impossible. .

. ."⁷⁶ "The suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people . . ." in State and Revolution was demanded by the same Lenin who in 1903 demanded that "the standing army be abolished and that a militia be established in its stead, that all the people be armed."⁷⁷ Yet, no one has pointed to "To the Rural Poor" as an utopian work. Lenin stated then, in 1903: "that is a great cause, and to that cause it is worth devoting one's whole life."⁷⁸ It was to State and Revolution that he devoted his life, to an utopian ideal that was formulated at least as early as 1903.

⁷⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, VI, 413; Sobranie Sochinenii, VII, 182.

⁷⁶ Ibid, XXV, 466; Ibid, XXXIII, 93.

⁷⁷ Ibid, VI, 401; Ibid, VII, 170.

⁷⁸ Ibid, VI, 413; Ibid, VII, 183.

Lenin's flirtation with utopianism is also revealed in some of his other early works. His abstract faith in the innate intelligence of the masses, his belief in the "magical powers" of revolution, his conviction in the dawning of universal harmony are not limited to State and Revolution. During the 1905 Revolution his confidence in the creative abilities of the proletariat almost equalled that expressed in State and Revolution. "The working class," he wrote, "is free of the cowardice, the hypocritical half-heartedness that is characteristic of the bourgeoisie as a class."⁷⁹ Lenin endowed the Russian workers with all of the attributes characteristic of those who would create the "new age." The workers could do no wrong. Even their spontaneous outbursts were, in Lenin's eyes, the manifestation of revolutionary consciousness:

Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles. . . .⁸⁰

And that final goal, Lenin's life cause to which State and Revolution was devoted, was always present: "The proletariat

⁷⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Revolutionary Army and the Revolutionary Government," VIII, 568; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Revoliutsionnaia Armiia i Revoliutsionnoe Pravitel'stvo," X, 344.

⁸⁰ Lenin, Collected Works, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," IX, 113; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Dve Taktiki Sotsial-Demokratii v Demokraticheskoi Revoliutsii," XI, 103.

must always pursue its own independent path, . . . always bearing in mind its great, ultimate objective, which is to rid mankind of all exploitation."⁸¹

Lenin's confidence in the ability of the masses to construct a perfect society, his conviction that they were the only hope for the future were not acquired overnight -- that is, because of the successful February Revolution. As has already been pointed out, the ideas and attitudes that made up State and Revolution were shaped prior to the Revolution, and the dominant role of the masses forms the very basis for that work. Hence, Lenin's faith in the common man was an essential part of his total revolutionary outlook. Although the revolutionary activities of 1917 and the increasing support for the Bolshevik Party finally convinced him that the masses had fully "matured," Lenin had watched its development since 1905 and even before 1917 was convinced that the "people" would build the "new age." He, in fact, dated the origins of Russia's revolutionary consciousness from the 1905 Revolution.

Prior to January 22, 1905, the revolutionary party of Russia consisted of a small group of people, and the reformists of those days . . . derisively called us a 'sect.'

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Within a few months, however, the picture changed completely. The hundreds of revolutionary Social-Democrats 'suddenly' grew into thousands; the thou-

⁸¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Beginning of the Revolution in Russia," VIII, 99; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Nachalo Revoliutsii v Rossii," IX, 204.

sands became the leaders of between two and three million proletarians. The proletarian struggle produced widespread ferment, often revolutionary movements among the peasant masses, fifty to a hundred million strong; the peasant movement had its reverberations in the army and led to soldiers' revolts, to armed clashes between one section of the army and another. In this manner a colossal country, with a population of 130,000,000 went into the revolution; in this way, dormant Russia was transformed into a Russia of revolutionary proletariat and a revolutionary people. ⁸²

The 1905 Revolution had, according to Lenin, accomplished what even Bolshevik leadership could not achieve with its agitation and propaganda. The "magical powers" of revolution were yet another means of divesting the masses of their false clothing and revealing their "natural" inclinations toward Marxist ideals. During revolutionary crises the masses could "generate fighting energy a hundred times greater than in ordinary, peaceful times," an energy directed against capitalism and, subsequently, Lenin believed, in favor of socialism. ⁸³ Indeed, it was impossible to progress from capitalism (via revolution or evolution) without advancing toward socialism. ⁸⁴ Hence, Russia had been

⁸² Lenin, Collected Works, "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution," XXIII, 238; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Doklad o Revoliutsii 1905 goda," XXX, 310-311.

⁸³ Ibid, XXIII, 240; Ibid, XXX, 312.

⁸⁴ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," XXV, 358-359; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Groziashchaia Katastrofa i Kak s Nei Borot'sia," XXXIV, 192-193.

advancing toward socialism since the 1905 Revolution, at which time it won its "republican democracy." Its masses had been prodding in that direction, stumbling in ignorance for a while, then pushing onward again, until by 1917 they had graduated from the school of capitalism and were ready to begin matriculation in socialism.

Prior to 1905, when proletarian political activity was so minimal, Lenin had expressed little confidence in the ability of the workers to provide revolutionary direction. Certainly, he would have appeared as a fool to have done so. And, at that particular time, his estimation was quite correct. What Is To Be Done?, his dispute with the evolutionary-oriented Economists, and the programmatic split within the Russian Social-Democratic Party had all transpired during a period of political inaction, at a time when the revolution seemed to be very remote. The Revolution of 1905 was undoubtedly a potent stimulant to Lenin's pessimism. Yet, it was not something that caused him to reverse his basic convictions or to change his revolutionary theories. Rather, it was a sudden confirmation of his very fundamental, if seldom articulated, belief that the masses would, one day, become aware of its irrational existence and revolt against it. Swept away by this sudden confirmation of his dreams, Lenin, in a burst of renewed confidence, declared that "the working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic." As he would do time and again, Lenin directed his harsh

criticisms not at the proletariat but at the "tail-dragging" Bolshevik leadership:

The workers do not expect to make deals; they are not asking for petty concessions. What they are striving towards is ruthlessly to crush the reactionary forces, i.e., to set up a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. ⁸⁵

Because of the revolutionary activities of the masses in 1905, the disciplinary rigidity of What Is To Be Done? was suddenly relegated to a secondary position. Lenin's plans for a select membership of professional revolutionaries as expressed in What Is To Be Done? and as fought for at the 1903 Congress was temporarily reversed. He quite unexpectedly called for a huge influx of workers into the Party and supported an alliance of the Party with affiliated organizations, proclaiming that the preparatory work done by Social-Democrats had pointed the proletariat in the right direction and that the revolutionary activities of 1905 had molded them into truly class-conscious workers. The Revolution convinced Lenin of not only the readiness and ability of the "heroic" proletariat but also of its Social-Democratic "spirit." To prevent the workers from joining the Party would have been a sin against the revolution. ⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," IX, 113; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Dve Taktiki Sotsial-Demokratii v Demokraticheskoi Revoliutsii," XI, 103-104.

⁸⁶ Ibid, "The Reorganization of the Party," X, 32; Ibid, "O Reorganizatsii Partii," XI, 86.

Seldom before had Lenin been so complimentary or expressed such faith in the abilities of the proletariat to comprehend and accept its historical role. Whereas in 1902 he had declared that the working class, "exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness," in 1905 he announced that the Revolution and Social-Democratic leadership had converted that trade-union consciousness into class consciousness which qualified the workers for Party membership -- a decided shift from his previously expressed notions concerning the role of the workers.⁸⁷

While Lenin was certainly "moved" by the 1905 Revolution, and his undue optimism in the proletariat was sincere, there were also very practical reasons for calling for an increase in Party membership. The years of inaction preceeding 1905 had been ones of distant infamiliarity between Social-Democrats and the proletariat. The Party was generally limited to the alienated intellectuals and "advanced" workers, and its actions were confined largely to publishing underground literature and to educating individual workers in revolutionary Marxist doctrine. Party leadership was too small to establish any real communication with the mass of workers. The revolts in

⁸⁷Thomas T. Hammond, Lenin on Trade Unions and Revolution, 1893-1917. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 150.

1905, however, brought thousands of workers into the streets, converting them into "instant revolutionaries." Revolutionary groups and organizations began to appear all over the country. The resulting predicament faced by the Bolsheviks was: if the Party membership remained as Lenin had defined it, including only a very select elite of "professionals," then the thousands of revolting workers would join other revolutionary groups or expend their energies on useless, disorganized outbursts. The Bolshevik Party was simply too small to deal with the unexpected, vastly enlarged revolutionary movement. Hence, Martov temporarily won his point in 1905, and a loose, democratic party membership was adopted.

Lenin's renewed confidence in the potentialities of the proletariat was equalled by a fresh certainty that Bolshevik doctrine was correctly interpreting Marxist theory. Although never seriously doubting his own program for revolution, 1905 provided Lenin with concrete examples to display as evidence that Bolshevik Marxism was the orthodox and valid one.

So far the revolution has justified all the basic theoretical propositions of Marxism, all the essential slogans of Social-Democracy. And the revolution has also justified the work done by us Social-Democrats, it has justified our hope and faith in the truly revolutionary spirit of the proletariat. 88

⁸⁸ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Reorganization of the Party," X, 32; Sobranie Sochinenii, "O Reorganizatsii Partii," XII, 86-87.

Lenin's interpretation of the 1905 Revolution as a fulfillment of Marxist predictions was based on this one all-important factor -- "the truly revolutionary spirit of the proletariat." Moreover, it was a justification of the "hope and faith" that Lenin had always held, a confirmation of his fundamental convictions about the nature of mankind. All other factors were secondary. He had no care to study the "objective stage" of capitalist development or any of the other Marxist requirements for revolution. Only the revolutionary spirit of the workers was essential. Only the 1905 radicalism of the workers was sufficient to inspire the undue optimism and confidence in Lenin that was so out of context with his general mood.

In the strict sense of the word, Lenin was not at all inconsistent in his 1905 policies, just as his 1917 policies were not the great aberration that they have been labeled. Even in What Is To Be Done? Lenin outlined the task of the Party as that of educating the proletariat in the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism so that it could "advance from their own ranks increasing numbers of 'professional revolutionists'. . . ." That task was in no small part devoted to advancing the idea that "attention must be devoted principally to the task of raising the workers to the level of revolutionists. . . ." Once the worker acquired revolutionary consciousness, then he would be ready for Party membership. And, partly because

of Lenin's belief in the "magical powers" of revolution that generate a fighting energy "a hundred times greater" than in ordinary times and render the masses capable of "performing miracles," his 1905 optimism and subsequent policy revisions were quite consistent with his conception of the development of the revolutionary situation. The total impact was that "the 1905 Revolution showed Lenin that the workers were more inclined toward socialism than he had suspected."⁸⁹ It also convinced him that the proletariat was a revolutionary force par excellence, as his innermost ideals suspected them to be and, for Lenin, that amounted to a revolutionary Marxist fulfillment.

This optimism and unrestrained confidence in the ability of the proletariat to shoulder the burdens of a socialist revolution declined in direct proportion to the decline of revolutionary activity in Russia. As the tone of radicalism dimmed and the Tsarist government recovered from its shock and began to get a hold on the situation, Lenin's characteristic pessimism again emerged. Shortly, he who in November, 1905 had suggested admitting a large number of workers into the Party, in 1906 labeled as "liquidators" those who advocated a "mass party."⁹⁰ As

⁸⁹Hammond, Lenin on Trade Unions and Revolution, 124.

⁹⁰Ibid, 55.

the objective situation changed, Lenin's policies changed to meet the new conditions. Although his practical policies revealed his previous distrust of spontaneity and proletarian ability, his fundamental faith and belief in the potential of the masses remained intact and very much a part of his total outlook.

This dominant, external pessimism of Lenin's prevailed for the next several years. Yet, as often as not, his disappointment was directed at Social-Democratic leadership rather than at the proletariat per se. His 1905 praises that "the proletarian heroes of St. Petersburg now stand as an example to the whole world. . . ." were never retracted and, as late as January, 1917, before the influences of the February Revolution had come into play, Lenin still referred to the 1905 Revolution as the "prologue to the coming European revolution."⁹¹

So, wherein does the deviation of State and Revolution lie? All of its utopian notions are present in many of Lenin's earlier works, of which those already mentioned represent a mere sampling. Admittedly, these notions seldom constitute the dominant theme of a particular article, but prior to 1917 Lenin was rightly more concerned with the present rather than the future. It would

⁹¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution," XXIII, 252; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Doklad o Revoliutsii 1905 goda," XXX, 327.

seem that the primary "uniqueness" of State and Revolution lies in the fact that it was Lenin's first formal, full-length work devoted to the question of the nature of the "new society." Yet, Lenin is not accused of flirting with utopianism until he wrote State and Revolution. This may largely be due to the fact that historians have not generally considered State and Revolution to be a real part of Lenin's revolutionary outlook; it is dominated by utopian notions, therefore, it must be an aberration. Lenin's flirtation with utopianism, however, was a life-long courtship. Its sudden, overt manifestations in 1917 -- which had nothing to do with the writing of State and Revolution -- were due to the fact that the revolution for which Lenin had been preparing all of his adult life caught him completely unaware. It was then that he began to consider whether or not Russia was already prepared for the blueprint which he had drafted for the next generation.

Not a few of the historians who are inclined to view Lenin's 1917 flirtation with utopianism as a result of revolutionary fever, tend to describe his "illness" as occurring precisely at the time that he learned of the February Revolution and continuing unabated, with little change in degree or intensity, until sometime during the spring of 1918. And, with little or no explanation, State and Revolution is included during this temporary period of "improbability." The effect of this interpretation is to

indicate an insincerity in Lenin's utopian thought and in State and Revolution, a falseness which leaves Lenin out of touch with reality or portrays him as a political opportunist. Actually, it does seem that Lenin was seriously affected by the heady atmosphere of 1917, but that infection was neither as constant as many historians tend to describe it nor did it involve the writing of State and Revolution. After learning of the February Revolution, the popular point of origin for Lenin's "intellectual deviation," Lenin was still skeptical of the future of the uprising. To those exiled Bolsheviks in Europe who were returning to Russia for their "moment of glory," he warned them to beware of Kerensky, Minister of Justice in the new Provisional Government, "the spokesman of the democratic peasants and, possibly, of that part of the workers who have forgotten their internationalism and have been led on to the bourgeois path."⁹² He did not, as the general histories would seem to indicate, burst forth with State and Revolution in hand, proclaiming that Russia was ready for socialism. It was still the Party rather than the masses that was directing the course of events. It was still a bourgeois-democratic revolution rather than a proletarian-socialist one.⁹³

⁹² Lenin, Collected Works, "Draft Theses, March 4 (17), 1917," XXIII, 287-288; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Nabrosok Tezisev 4 (17) Marta 1917 goda," XXXI, 1-2.

⁹³ Ibid, XXIII, 290-291; Ibid, XXXI, 5-6.

It may appear a contradiction to point to Lenin's skepticism of the loyalties of the masses and to his emphasis on Party leadership immediately after referring to his life-long courtship with utopianism and referring to his optimistic and confident statements of 1903 and 1905. It is paradox rather than contradiction, for Lenin's utopianism was generally an abstract ideal which often reverted into pessimistic distrust when confronted with reality but which was, nonetheless, a very real part of his revolutionary outlook. It was only infrequently, especially during revolutionary crises, that this abstract was brought to the forefront and an attempt made to put it into practice. What, then, is its worth? What is its validity, its significance? Its significance lies in the fact that had not utopianism constituted a very real part of Lenin's revolutionary thought, he could never have written State and Revolution nor might he have ever attempted to implement those utopian notions which some historians have credited with reducing Russia within two years "to a condition of utter prostration."⁹⁴ But for Lenin's ingrained utopianism, the N. E. P. might have been initiated in 1917 rather than in 1921. His utopianism was very real and not a superficial product of the revolutionary atmosphere of 1917, although that atmosphere did draw his utopian thought

⁹⁴Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, 182.

more to the forefront. Nor was it solely an attempt at political expediency or approval of faits accomplis. Rather, it was part and parcel of his total revolutionary vision. The utopianism goals of State and Revolution are the ends promised by the very realistic and pragmatic revolutionary program of What Is To Be Done?

REVOLUTIONARY FEVER

Lenin did not immediately surrender to his utopian notions upon learning of the February Revolution and rush into Russia with inflammatory speeches about the world revolution being at hand. His susceptibility to the revolutionary fever of Russia in 1917, if such adequately describes Lenin's condition during the months of revolution, was more of a gradual process which seriously affected him only after the July Demonstrations. It would be more accurate to say that this "revolutionary fever," which refers to Lenin's anarchistic outlook and may, therefore, be equated with his utopianism as characterized in this paper, had existed in Lenin's thought since his initiation into revolutionary theory. It was a "fever" that haunted him throughout his career but was usually evident only after stimulation by a revolutionary atmosphere, such as 1905 and 1917. That attack of revolutionary fever which has so often described Lenin during the months of revolution in 1917 was actually more of a "bringing out" of utopian ideas and attitudes which constituted a basic part of his revolutionary thought. Those ideas and attitudes were always in the corners of his mind, but it was only when the Russian situation seemed to be approaching what he had predicted that his renewed confidence would permit an outpouring of his profound

faith and idealism.

Hence, Lenin was skeptical of the revolutionary intent of the Provisional Government that was established after the February Revolution. He cautioned exiled Bolsheviks who were returning to Russia to beware of the new bourgeois government officials. At the same time, if the Provisional Government were seriously revolutionary minded, then the Bolsheviks should welcome its democratic revolution as the prologue to the future socialist revolution. Russia was, after all, one of the most backward and thoroughly agricultural countries of Europe, and that fact precluded the possibility of an immediate socialist revolution. However, no one could be certain of the movement of historical events, not even Marxists, and Lenin was too much a revolutionist and much too utopian to retire to the sidelines while the bourgeoisie constructed a capitalist government without socialist direction. It was certainly possible, he thought, that because of the vast numbers of peasants in Russia, controlled by a small minority of nobles, a peasant revolt might well accompany the bourgeois revolution, thus giving it more the character of a socialist revolution. In that event, the bourgeois revolution would be transformed into a "prologue" of the world socialist revolution.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers," XXIII, 371; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Proshchal'noe Pis'mo k Shveitsarskim Rabochim," XXXI, 91-92.

Even with this precautionary note, Lenin had, nonetheless, placed himself in substantial agreement with the general Social-Democratic belief that the bourgeois-democratic revolution was destined to run its course; that is, to construct a capitalist economy with a corresponding "capitalist" -- or representative -- government.

This assessment was made by Lenin while he was still in European exile. When he arrived in Russia in April, however, his dormant utopian notions had already begun to stir and were edging to the forefront of his thought. Encouraged by the arrest of the Imperial family, by the revolutionary measures instituted by the Provisional Government -- freedom of speech and strike, formation of a peoples' militia, the granting of civil rights to soldiers, and the like -- and by the bold actions of soldiers and workers, Lenin's confidence in his own anarchistic ideals swelled. His first contact with the vitalizing atmosphere of revolt after so many dull years of exile excited his deepest hopes: those utopian dreams that also had been forced into exile. What a short time earlier he had considered to be merely a possibility was, upon reaching Petrograd, interpreted as a reality: that, in fact, the peasant character of Russia was transforming the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a proletarian-socialist one, which meant that power must sooner or later be concentrated in the hands of peasants and workers, and the bourgeois

revolution would have run its course.⁹⁶

Lenin had undoubtedly begun to consider the possibilities of a socialist revolution replacing the bourgeois revolution. His dormant utopianism was making itself heard; that same utopianism that had produced State and Revolution, but with different motivation. It directed him toward the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies which would pave the way for construction of the communist state, "a state of which the Paris Commune was the prototype."

Leonard Schapiro has suggested that perhaps Lenin realized the "enormous confidence" that the masses displayed toward the Soviets only after he had spent a few hours in Russia, something that he may not have been aware of in Switzerland.⁹⁷ In Switzerland, and elsewhere in Europe, Lenin's utopianism remained hidden beneath a hard shield of skepticism lest events in Russia should prove to be premature. His first contact with the Revolution cracked that shield and signaled the emergence of his heretofore reserved utopian notions. His so-called "April Theses"

⁹⁶ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," XXIV, 22; Sobranie Sochinenii, "O Zadachakh Proletariata v Dannoii Revoliutsii," XXXI, 114.

⁹⁷ Leonard Schapiro, The Origin of the Communist Autocracy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), 32.

reiterated many of the demands set forth in State and Revolution: abolition of the police, army and bureaucracy; the salaries of all officials, who would be elected and subject to direct recall, to equal that of an average worker; the confiscation of all landed estates; all lands to be nationalized and model farms constructed on all estates; the creation of a single national bank controlled by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.⁹⁸

This outpouring of Lenin's anarchistic thought, unlike that in State and Revolution, was stimulated by the radical atmosphere that he found in Petrograd. His expressed skepticism about the revolutionary abilities of the masses was quickly dispelled by their increasingly radical activities which identified with his own anarchistic sentiments. During the summer months of 1917 he not infrequently found himself more concerned with the indiscriminate radicalism of the masses rather than their inaction, a radicalism which threatened to outstrip the Bolshevik leadership. As early as May the Petrograd masses had demonstrated their ability to forge ahead of Soviet and Bolshevik leadership and to force ministerial changes in the Government. Foreign Minister Milyukov

⁹⁸ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," XXIV, 23; Sobranie Sochinenii, "O Zadachakh Proletariata v Dannoii Revoliutsii," XXXI, 115.

had dispatched a message to the Allied powers concerning the war aims of the Provisional Government, emphasizing that Russia would continue to fight for the Allied cause and to stand by its obligations as defined under the regime of Nicholas II. As a concession to the Petrograd Soviet, without which the Government was relatively powerless because of the popular support for the Soviet, the Provisional Government forwarded a copy of its April 9 appeal for "peace without imperialist annexations" along with a note reiterating its determination to stand by its obligations. News of the message inflamed the Petrograd soldiers who had hoped that the revolution would bring peace to Russia. Some thirty-thousand soldiers filed into the streets and congregated before the Marinsky Palace, residence of the Provisional Government. Joined by sailors and workers, pro-and anti-Milyukov elements clashed and drew blood. Even with an agreement between the Soviet, as represented by the Menshevik Tseretelli, and the Government, the soldiers and workers continued their marches. Only after the Soviet Executive Committee issued an order forbidding military units to appear on the streets and Milyukov agreed to revise his original note, did the masses dissolve.⁹⁹

⁹⁹Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, See chapter entitled "The Deepening of the Revolution."

Although the Petrograd Soviet -- a coalition of Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Bolsheviks, and other non-categorized revolutionaries -- was actually closer to the masses than was the Provisional Government, it was only the latter that technically possessed "official" authority. In fact, however, the Provisional Government could do little without support of the Soviet, and the majority of governmental decisions displayed the result of compromises with the Soviet -- a situation of diarchy. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, who dominated the Soviet, were generally agreed to support the Provisional Government with some control of the Provisional Government held by the Soviet. Although differing in political doctrine, both advocated continuing the war while working for a non-imperialistic peace, a peace "without annexations and indemnities." The Mensheviks, in particular, accepted the Provisional Government as the legitimate director of the bourgeois-democratic revolution provided for by Marxist theory. The minority Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, were generally more radical, demanding an immediate end to the war, a democratic army, confiscation of large estates, and expressing distrust for the Government. The May Crisis described above was much more in keeping with Bolshevik sentiments than with those of the Soviet, especially its attitude toward the war. Lenin did not fail to note the increasing radicalism of the masses and how easily they

could slip from Soviet leadership. His utopian ideals received another shot of confidence from the May Crisis.¹⁰⁰

The new coalition government that resulted from the May demonstrations, which excluded Milyukov and included some socialist ministers, had the elephantine task of broadening its base of support. The policy advocated by the new War Minister, Alexander Kerensky, to win mass confidence was to begin an offensive against the German army in that a successful campaign would prevent the progressive disintegration of the Russian army and, at the same time, win a measure of respect for the government at home and abroad. The Russian offensive, which began July 1, started as a steam-roller against the complacent Austrian troops. So successful was the initial Russian advance that the Petrograd masses staged demonstrations of support for Kerensky. The outburst of patriotism was short-lived. German shock troops, who had quickly replaced the defeated Austrians, soon turned the Russian steam-roller into a complete rout. Before the month was over, the Russian army had retreated, with tremendous desertions, to the Russian border.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "First Steps."

¹⁰¹ Ibid, I. See chapter entitled "The Deepening of the Revolution."

The repercussions in Petrograd were instantaneous and violent. Petrograd military regiments called for an armed demonstration against the Provisional Government. The Soviet, and even the militant Bolsheviks, unprepared to direct the demonstration, pleaded with the soldiers to disperse. Refusing to bow before the arguments of the thought-to-be "leaders" of the Revolution, the soldiers poured through the streets of Petrograd shooting and looting, only to be joined by masses of sympathetic workers. The demonstrators, rather than marching against the government residence, surrounded Soviet headquarters chanting "All Power to the Soviets." Yet, the Soviet, no more than the government, was capable of devising a single effective plan of action. The demonstration "finally evaporated for sheer lack of a definite goal."¹⁰²

Lenin's doubts concerning the feasibility of his Utopia also evaporated. Convinced that the majority of workers and soldiers sympathized with the Bolshevik slogans of "Peace, Land and Bread," he pronounced the imminent collapse of the government and advocated transferring power to a Bolshevik dominated Soviet.¹⁰³ Convinced that Russia

¹⁰²Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "July Days: The Revolution Checked."

¹⁰³Lenin, Collected Works, "The Eighteenth of June," XXV, 109-111; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Vosemnadtsatce Iiunia," XXXII, 360-362.

had squeezed the last from its bourgeois-democratic revolution, he wanted to get on with the socialist revolution that would begin putting utopian dreams into practice. The Provisional Government, however, had not surrendered. Recognizing the alarming show of force behind Bolshevik slogans during the July demonstrations, the government was determined to discredit Lenin and hopefully to dissolve his following. Capitalizing on the confused emotions of the workers and soldiers, the government published documents purporting to prove that Lenin and his associates were German spies transported to Russia in a "sealed train" with a mission to force the government into a separate peace with Germany. Following the charge, Bolsheviks and their sympathizers were arrested and jailed; others were forced into hiding; the Bolshevik Pravda office was raided and closed; Lenin escaped to the outskirts of Petrograd and then to Finland to await developments.¹⁰⁴

The effects of the "spy" charge did not last. The workers and soldiers still supported the Bolshevik resolutions for an end to the war, land to the peasants, workers' control of industry, and "All Power to the Soviets." Then, the Kornilov attempt in September to crush the leftist elements and to place Russia under a military dictatorship

¹⁰⁴Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "July Days: The Revolution Checked."

recouped for the Bolsheviks the losses in popularity that they had suffered from the turbulent July Days or from the "spy" legend. Equally significant, it placed weapons in Bolshevik hands. The threat of Kornilov's counterrevolution against Petrograd produced a sudden unity among the revolutionary elements and put the government into a position of begging for their help. Workers, even Bolshevik Red Guards who had been forced into hiding after the July demonstrations, were armed with weapons to meet Kornilov's troops. Actually, neither the government nor the Soviet was in serious danger. Kornilov's troops simply melted with the crowds that they were suppose to disperse and were absorbed by the revolution.¹⁰⁵

The Kornilov fiasco greatly facilitated an already progressive situation: increasing mass support for the Bolshevik slogans and increasing hostility toward the Provisional Government. Bolshevik popularity was dramatically illustrated in the elections of local soviets and of local ward councils, such as one in Moscow where the Bolshevik return in July of 11% had reached 51% by October.¹⁰⁶ Not only left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries but Mensheviks as well began deserting to the Bolshevik ranks.

¹⁰⁵ Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "Kornilov and the Failure of the Counterrevolution."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, I, 279.

Lenin's utopianism was emerging full force given these sympathetic and encouraging trends. Forced for so long into the dark confines of his mind by the practical necessities of the Russian political situation, these anarchistic notions were now to plunge into the open to assume their "rightful" position. Lenin had spent his entire adult life for this moment, for the time when preliminaries had been dealt with and he could embark on the fulfillment of his appointed task -- that of directing the development of the "new age."

Lenin, hiding in Finland, welcomed the shift of mood by the Petrograd masses following Kornilov's September blunder. The titles of the letters and articles he wrote during September and October leave no doubts as to the decision he had made: "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power," "Marxism and Insurrection," "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"¹⁰⁷ In these and other articles he concerned himself with the practicalities of organizing an insurrection, an insurrection which many of his own associates opposed. Even so, his utopianism had gained too much confidence to retreat to a secondary role. The very month of the October Revolution, Lenin's task of organizing the revolution and of convincing his own com-

¹⁰⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "Contents," XXVI; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Soderzhanie," XXXIV.

panions of its "inevitability," did not prevent him from articulating his recently emerged anarchistic sentiments. "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" is, in large part, a reiteration of the utopian ideals expressed in State and Revolution. In it Lenin dealt with the business of transferring power to the soviets, of transforming the old state bureaucracy into a universal bureaucracy, where every citizen would become a bureaucrat and, consequently, no one would be a bureaucrat. That state would be achieved simply by "the establishment on a country-wide scale of the most precise and most conscientious accounting and control, of workers' control of the production and distribution of goods."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, this bureaucracy would be established "at one stroke, by a single decree, because the actual work of book-keeping, control, registering, accounting and counting is performed by employees. . . ." ¹⁰⁹ Shades of Chernyshevsky! Vera Pavlovna's voluntary, communal seamstress shop had been transformed into a universal factory: communal living, communal banking, abolition of employers, precise accounting by all the members of the commune, voluntary educational instruction while on the job. The parallel of ideas and attitudes is

¹⁰⁸ Lenin, Collected Works, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" XXVI, 104-105; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Uderzhat li Bolsheviki Gosudarstvennuiu Vlast'?" XXXIV, 305-306.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, XXVI, 106; Ibid, XXXIV, 307-308.

is striking. It seemed as though Marx had become a simple justification for Lenin's fundamental utopianism.

Lenin never wavered in his demand for insurrection. He was too near his life's goal to listen to his comrade's arguments about the necessity of a prolonged bourgeois revolution. He organized committees to deal with the practical aspects of achieving power, armed units of Red Guards, and shock troops. On November 6 and 7, the central telephone station in Petrograd, the State Bank, and railroad stations were occupied by the Bolsheviks; armed Bolsheviks moved through the city and against the Winter Palace, residence of the Provisional Government; the cruiser Aurora threatened the Palace from the Neva River. The government dissolved with hardly a ripple. Lenin had begun his revolution.

The emergence of Lenin's utopian tendencies had bewildered many of his colleagues, but Lenin was too certain of himself to even question their validity. He had known all along that those notions were valid, that it was only a matter of time and preparation before the day would arrive to put them into practice. The very day after seizing power Lenin proposed that "workers' control over the production, storage, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials shall be introduced in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural and other enterprises" ¹¹⁰ His confidence in the "natural" ability of

¹¹⁰ Lenin, Collected Works, XXVI, 264; Sobranie Sochinenii, XXXV, 30.

the soldiers and workers to bring order out of extreme chaos approached a naivete that is incomprehensible lest one is aware of his sincere attachment to utopian ideals and of his belief in the "magical powers" of revolution. In a conference with the delegates of the Petrograd military garrison on November 13, Lenin provided a fair indication of the type of mutual cooperation that he suspected was an inherent virtue of the common masses. Addressing himself to the question of civil order, he informed the garrison's soldiers that the regular army would be abolished and replaced by a people's militia. "You must merge with the workers, they will give you everything the bourgeoisie has failed to give you."¹¹¹ He spared no effort to assure the masses that they were in control of the state and of the economy and that the success of the revolution depended upon each individual contributing his voluntary share.

Remember that now you yourselves are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into your hands all affairs of the state. Your Soviets are from now on the organs of state authority, legislative bodies with full powers. ¹¹²

Not even Chernyshevsky had dreamed of anything so immediate

¹¹¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "Conference of Regimental Delegates of the Petrograd Garrison October 29 (November 11) 1917, Newspaper Report," XXVI, 272; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Soveshchanie Polkovykh Predstavitelei Petrogradskogo Garnizona 29 Oktiabria (11 Noiabria) 1917 g. Gazetnyi Otchet," XXXV, 40.

¹¹² Ibid, "To the Population," XXVI, 297; Ibid, "K Naseleniiu," XXXV, 66.

and all-embracing as Lenin's new state.

Historians continue to seek the answer to Lenin's naive, anarchistic policies of government when he first took the reigns of power. It may be granted that Lenin, unlike the indecisive Provisional Government, dealt immediately with the urgent problems plaguing Russia, but the manner in which he did so seemingly went against all reason. To achieve the peace demanded by the Russian masses, Lenin proposed that all warring nations simply lay down their arms and negotiate a peace without spoils or rewards. That simple. An indication of the sincerity of this proposal was revealed by the peace delegation sent to Breat-Litovsk to negotiate peace with Germany; it included a peasant, a worker, a soldier, and a sailor. Moreover, Russian units at the front were advised to elect among themselves representatives to negotiate with the enemy for an armistic.¹¹³ To satisfy peasant land hunger, Lenin proposed confiscation of landed estates and that the peasantry should organize to carry out the confiscation themselves.¹¹⁴ In order to settle the economic chaos in

¹¹³ Lenin, Collected Works, "Wireless Message," XXVI, 312; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Radio Vcem," XXXV, 81.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, "The Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. November 10-25 (November 23-December 8), 1917;" XXVI, 327-328; Ibid, "Chrezvychnyi Vserossiiskii S"ezd Sobetov Kvest'ianskikh Deputatov 10-25 Noiabria (23 Noiabria-8 Dekabria) 1917 g.," XXXV, 96-97.

Russia, he proposed that the workers and their elected soviets should organize "the exchange of products and introduce regular accounting and control" on a country-wide scale. Moreover, the "proletariat must take the rule of the state upon itself."¹¹⁵ And, just as Vera Pavlovna's "associates" (employees) "became so eager to learn . . . that they decided to interrupt their work to listen to the lessons, . . ."¹¹⁶ so Lenin, in the midst of war, civil disorder, and economic chaos directed himself to the business of opening Russia's libraries to the masses and rendering them more effective.¹¹⁷ It is interesting to speculate why Lenin emphasized a public library system rather than a mandatory, public school system as one of his first policies dealing with education. Perhaps this was indicative of his conviction that the revolution would

¹¹⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "Report on the Economic Condition of Petrograd Workers and the Tasks of the Working Class, Delivered at a Meeting of the Workers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies December 4(17), 1917. Newspaper Report. January 7, 1918," XXVI, 364-366; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Doklad ob Ekonomicheskom Polozhenii Rabochikh Petrograda i Zadachakh Rabocheho Klassa na Zasedanii Rabochei Sektsii Petrogradskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov 4(17) Dekabria 1917g.," XXXV, 146-148.

¹¹⁶ Chernyshevsky, What Is To Be Done?, 160.

¹¹⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Tasks of the Public Library in Petrograd," November, 1917, XXVI, 352; Sobranie Sochinenii, "O Zadachakh Publichnoi Biblioteki v Petrograde," XXXV, 132-133.

promote a psychological transformation in the people, causing them to voluntarily work and produce "to the best of their abilities."

Lenin's post-October decrees and proposals were clearly utopian and anarchistic. They were revelations of his belief in the "magical powers" of revolution that would destroy the decaying pillars of society and construct a truly solid and strifeless society on its debris; of his confidence in the innate intelligence of the masses to direct the affairs of society and achieve absolute order out of absolute liberty; of his conviction in man's inherent cooperative nature which was being perverted by competitive and repressive institutions. Not unlike Chernyshevsky, whose "new people" came to understand that "profits were not a reward for the talent of one or another, but rather a result of the general character of the workshop,"¹¹⁸ so Lenin also believed in the feasibility of a universal, cooperative order governed by the elemental rules of social conduct that had governed the harmonious Ulyanov household.

In practice, however, Lenin's utopian schemes began to break down almost as soon as they were initiated. The "intelligent" masses were having some difficulty

¹¹⁸Chernyshevsky, What Is To Be Done?, 157.

adjusting to their newly won status and accepting their tremendous responsibilities. In fact, the "magical powers" of revolution had failed to rid Russia of its lazy, indolent and greedy elements; proletarian greed was as equally disruptive as bourgeois greed. Transportation, industry, and agriculture remained in a state of chaos; mobs continued to roam the streets in drunken stupor simply taking whatever struck their fancy; the blackmarket boomed during the winter of 1917-1918. But Lenin's utopianism was firmly in control. He realized, he said, that such a drastic change in human history -- that of working voluntarily for oneself rather than under compulsion for someone else -- could not occur without friction and violence against the exploiters. That was precisely the task of the "proletarian dictatorship": to destroy the "inveterate parasites and their hangers-on." Furthermore, he recognized the timidity of the masses who were having difficulty accepting the idea that they were the ruling class. No one could expect the revolution to instil in one stroke the revolutionary qualities of the "new age" into millions of people "who all their lives had been compelled by want and hunger to work under the threat of the stick." This timidity would be corrected, however, when the masses realized that after centuries of working for others, of being exploited as forced labor, they now worked only for themselves, for their own pleasure.

In fact, Lenin wrote:

the Revolution of October 1917 is strong, viable and invincible because it awakens these qualities, breaks down the old impediments, removes the worn-out shackles, and leads the working people on to the road of the independent creation of a new life. 119

Hence, it was just before and after the Bolshevik seizure of state power rather than in State and Revolution, that Lenin, inebriated by revolutionary fever, "believed that communism was just around the corner and needed no help by violent means."¹²⁰ There were certainly no objective factors to validate Lenin's utopian and anarchistic schemes, no rational indications that the masses had acquired the necessary psychological outlook to begin building a commune state. It was rather that Lenin's utopian presuppositions blinded him to the realities of the situation, made him refuse to entertain the possibility that his utopian dreams were just that and could not be realized. To admit such would have been to have recognized that his life's work had been for naught; that there was no such thing as absolute freedom (as he conceived it); that there was no absolute, final solution to society's ills; that there was no absolute order; that the Ulyanov model was unworkable for others.

¹¹⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, "How to Organize Competition?" January 6-9, 1918, XXVI, 409-410; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Kak Organizovat' Sorevnovanie?" XXXV, 199.

¹²⁰ Meyer, Leninism, 194.

Lenin's utopianism, his naive ideas concerning the functioning of a state and its economy and the ability of the average man to direct those functions, may have stemmed in part from his ignorance of administrative affairs. Lenin's conception of the requirements for socialist construction was as shallow as his conviction that the masses could operate a state was deep. If, indeed, Lenin understood socialism as he described it to others, then the masses did have a very simple task confronting them, one that was "within the reach of every literate person." With little variation, except in the amount of words used, both before and after the October Revolution, Lenin defined socialism as "keeping account of everything. You will have socialism if you take stock of every piece of iron and cloth."¹²¹ Even in his more wordy explanations he seldom went beyond the necessity of "accounting and control":

Widespread, general, universal accounting and control, the accounting and control of the amount of labour performed and of the distribution of products -- is the essence of socialist transformation. . . . 122

¹²¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "Speech at a Joint Meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and Delegates from the Fronts. November 4(17), 1917," XXVI, 294; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Rech' Na Zasedanii Petrogradskogo Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov Sovmestno s Frontovymi Predstaviteliami 4(17). Noiabria 1917g.," XXXV, 63.

¹²² Ibid, "How to Organize Competition?" XXVI, 410; Ibid, "Kak Organizovat' Sorevnovanie?" XXXV, 199-200.

This simplistic, universal bureaucracy was to provide the total solution for all of Russia's centuries-old ills. Indeed, it was to achieve what no other political system had ever been able to accomplish, despite their more sophisticated methods -- the elimination of all human antagonisms, a "guarantee of victory over all exploitation, over all poverty and want."¹²³

The sincerity of Lenin's utopianism has often been questioned, and if one accepts the notion that it was a temporary deviation that occurred during the revolutionary months of 1917, its sincerity does appear dubious. If, on the other hand, one recognize it as an essential part of Lenin's intellectual make-up, instilled from his initial contact with revolutionary thought, then it becomes much more serious and sincere. There was no insincerity in his boast in January, 1918 that the Bolsheviks had retained power

two months and fifteen days -- that is only five days more than the preceeding workers' power lasted and ruled over a whole country, or over the exploiters and capitalists, the power of the Paris workers at the time of the Paris Commune of 1871. ¹²⁴

¹²³ Lenin, Collected Works, "How to Organize Competition?" XXVI, 411; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Kak Organizovat' Sorevnovanie?" XXXV, 200.

¹²⁴ Ibid, "Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies," January 23-31, 1918, XXVI, 455; Ibid, "Tretii Vserossiiskii S'ezd Sovetov Rabochikh, Soldatskikh i Krest'ianskikh Deputatov," XXXV, 261.

Lenin had no doubts that the proletarian spirit of mutual self-sacrifice would "spread among millions and tens of millions, and finally create what the French Commune of the nineteenth century began to create. . . ."¹²⁵ This ideal is expressed in a simple story which he heard from a Finish peasant and reiterated at the Third All-Russia Congress in 1918. The tale conveys not only Lenin's sincerity but also the simplicity and honest naivete of his dream. The peasant woman had assured those listening to her that:

"Now there is no need to fear the man with the gun, I was in the woods one day and I met a man with a gun, and instead of taking the firewood I had collected from me, he added some more."¹²⁶

The impact of Lenin's sincerity is much more profound when one considers that his anarchistic schemes were proposed during a time of extreme disorganization and dislocation within Russia, in a situation that actually demanded the most stringent measures of control. Not only was a national economy non-existent, the new government also faced the dire threat of civil war from the various elements

¹²⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies," January 23-31, 1918, XXVI, 463; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Tretii Vserossiiskii S'ezd Sovetov Rabochikh, Soldatskikh i Krest'ianskikh Deputatov," XXXV, 270.

¹²⁶ Ibid, XXVI, 463; Ibid, XXXV, 269.

which had been economically and socially dispossessed by the revolutions. If these were not sobering enough threats, then there was the German army posed ready to sweep into Russia and crush the infant Bolshevik regime. Yet, Lenin remained convinced that workers' control over the production and distribution of goods, abolition of the regular army to be replaced by a citizen's militia, and "in each and every member of the population being drawn gradually both into taking part in Soviet organization . . . and into serving in state administration,"¹²⁷ were the inevitable and desirable results of the revolution. Just as the Paris Commune had demonstrated how to "combine initiative, independence, freedom of action and vigour from below with voluntary centralism free from stereotyped forms," so Lenin declared, "our Soviets are following the same road. . . ."¹²⁸ His naive conviction in the extreme ideals of State and Revolution and his belief in the "cleansing power" of revolution buttressed his faith. He had difficulty

¹²⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B)," March 6-8, 1918, XXVII, 154; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Sed'moi Ekstrennyi S'ezd RKP(B)," XXXVI, 73.

¹²⁸ Ibid, "How to Organize Competition?" XXVI, 413; Ibid, "Kak Organizovat' Sorevnovanie?" XXXV, 203.

comprehending the realities of today because his mind's eye was fixed on tomorrow, on that absolute ideal to which he had devoted his whole existence. Far from fearing the rampant anarchism or trying to repudiate charges of anarchism, he expressed satisfaction that the "concept of anarchism was finally assuming concrete features."

While some anarchists spoke of the Soviets with fear because they were still influenced by obsolete views, the new, fresh trend in anarchism was definitely on the side of the Soviets, because it saw their vitality and their ability to win the sympathy of the working masses and arouse their creative energy. 129

Lenin's utopianism was in full bloom after the October Revolution after some three decades of dwelling deep in the recesses of his mind with only an occasional glimpse of light. The masses, he believed, had already transformed the state structure and were marching down the road to communism. In his report to the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets in January, 1918, he informed the delegates that:

When the masses were taking up arms to start an unrelenting struggle against the exploiters, when a new people's power was being applied that had nothing in common with parliamentary power, it was no longer the old state, outdated in its traditions and forms, that they had before them, but something new, something based on the creative power of the people. 130

¹²⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, "Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies," XXVI, 475; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Tretii Vserossiiskii S"ezd Sovetov Rabochikh, Soldatskikh i Krest'ianskikh Deputatov," XXXV, 282.

¹³⁰ Ibid, XXVI, 475; Ibid, XXXV, 282.

This description is consistent with that in State and Revolution which defines the "new state."¹³¹

Lenin's unrestrained confidence in the feasibility of his utopian schemes during the immediate months following the October Revolution has been interpreted in various ways. Alfred Meyer has provided perhaps the most satisfying explanation of what he has termed the "honeymoon period" of the Revolution. Noting the moderation of arrests of the opposition, the leniency of Bolshevik censorship, the lack of official terror and wholesale murder, he concludes that Lenin was so confident in the inevitable triumph of socialism that any force used to speed the process would have been superfluous.¹³² Lenin's actions and speeches are consistent with this conclusion. Again, in a speech before the Third All-Russia Congress, he in fact declared that the Bolsheviks had already achieved socialism. Pointing out that all other revolutions had merely attempted to create a new state, he asserted that: "We have created it -- we have already established a socialist Republic of Soviets."¹³³

¹³¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "The State and Revolution," XXV, 419; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Gosudarstvo i Revoliutsiia," XXXIII, 42.

¹³² Meyer, Leninism, 194.

¹³³ Lenin, Collected Works, "Third All-Russia Congress," XXVI, 464; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Tretii Vserossiiskii S"ezd," XXXV, 271.

From whence derived Lenin's confidence in the inevitable triumph of his utopian ideals, which, consequently, implied an equal confidence in the capacity of the masses to construct his Utopia? Did he seriously believe that Russia was prepared to work for his Utopia? If so, what supported that belief? Did he discard Marxism in order to make room for his own theories or did he simply modify it? What was his own concept of a socialist state, and why did he believe that he and Russia could achieve it?

Lenin probably never entertained the idea that he might have deviated from Marxism. He may have had to "clarify" it occasionally, but Marxism had proven itself too accurate and fitted too well with Lenin's personal outlook for him to discard it. Had not Tsarism been overthrown by a bourgeois-democratic revolution as Marx had prophesized? Had not then the industrial proletariat risen against those who represented capitalism, as Marx had predicted? Admittedly, Marx did not have backward, predominately agricultural Russia in mind when he spoke of the inevitability of socialism, nor did he envision an elitist, socialist revolution usurping the bourgeois revolution. Nonetheless, the similarities between Marx's predictions and the movement of revolutionary events in Russia allowed Lenin's impatient utopian tendencies to interpret events in Russia as the fulfillment of Marxist laws and also gave him reason to believe that these events

supported the utopian notions of State and Revolution. Had he been more of a practical politician and less of an utopian, his assessment of the revolutionary events of 1917 would have been more realistic.

What, then, was the crucial tendency in Lenin's utopian leanings that befuddled his calculating mind and prompted him to give free reign to his anarchistic sympathies? It would appear from his administrative proposals and from his writings and speeches that all Marxist objectivity was actually subordinated to his avid, abstract faith in the innate goodness and intelligence of the common masses, of the average Ivan in the street. The Ulyanovs were an "average" family, transformed, however, by diligence and discipline. Vera Pavlovna's "associates" were merely average workers, transformed, of course, by a communal spirit of sacrifice and selflessness. All that was required, thought Lenin, to achieve a perfectly harmonious society was to do away with the suppressive institution of Tsarism and the exploitative system of capitalism and man would revert back to a rational communal existence in which everyone "naturally" and voluntarily adhered to a few fundamental rules of social life. These fundamental rules had been the strength of the Ulyanov household and the basis of Chernyshevsky's ideal society. It was Lenin's life goal. But, before these fundamental social rules could be put into practice, the masses would have to instigate a brief

period of violence and destruction during which all of the perverting influences of the contemporary society were completely destroyed. This was the only cure and the one prerequisite for laying the foundations for a communal state. This essential of mass radicalism, which was necessary to destroy the old society, and Lenin's faith in the "natural goodness" of the masses seem to have dominated his utopianism. All other Marxist requirements for socialism were at once interwoven with and subordinated to this prevailing conception. Follow Lenin's optimism and his cautious approach to power; they rely almost exclusively on the radical activities of the masses. The masses had to lead the way, for Bolshevik power without mass support, although feasible, could not accomplish the task of constructing the new state. In 1917 it was only after the radicalism of the Petrograd masses began to outdistance revolutionary leadership that Lenin was convinced that the masses were better prepared for the socialist revolution than he had anticipated. It was only after the "revolutionary energies" of the masses seemed to demand State and Revolution that its author consented to steal it back from the next generation and present it to his own. That is not to say that Marxist requirements for the proletarian-socialist revolution had been met. Capitalism had not evolved to its "inevitable death" stage; the bourgeois-democratic revolution had hardly exhausted itself. But

these were not the "proofs" that Lenin sought; they did not form the basis of his utopian dreams. His "proof" was that the masses wanted to advance beyond the policies of the bourgeois-democratic Provisional Government, and any advancement beyond those policies automatically, so said Marx, moved toward socialism.¹³⁴ Moreover, the masses had advanced to the point of supporting Bolshevik platforms, which, again, indicated their desire for a proletarian-socialist revolution, because the Bolsheviks represented, Lenin had no doubts, the one, true revolutionary Marxist party. Every other factor could be subordinated to this one consideration, or rather, every other factor could be interpreted solely within the framework of this condition: that the masses support the Bolshevik program. If the masses supported Bolshevism, a creation of Lenin, then they must likewise support State and Revolution or Lenin's Utopia.

This is obviously a narrow approach on which to determine a country's future, but what other gauge could have been used to predict the moment of the "historical inevitability" of socialism? How could one measure at precisely what point capitalism would be ripe for des-

¹³⁴ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," September 10-14, 1917, XXV, 358; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Groziashchaia Katastrofa i Kak s Nei Borot'sia," XXXIV, 192.

truction and the masses prepared for socialism? With what apparatus are such intangibles measured? The most the Mensheviks offered was that there should be a "significant interval" between the two revolutions. But who was to determine the length of the interval, who to tell the proletariat when it was time to strike? In Lenin's mind the only tangible for determining the time for the revolution was by the mass support given the Bolshevik (that is, his own) program. Had not his entire career been devoted to preparing the masses to accept his teachings in order that they might create a socialist revolution? If, then, the masses indicated their support for his teachings by supporting the Bolshevik Party, were not the masses prepared to begin socialist construction and had not the time for the socialist revolution arrived?¹³⁵

Lenin's emphasis on the singular task of the masses to pave the way for the new society is non-Marxian in origin. Marx simply agreed with Lenin and specified the proletarian masses. But Lenin had already recognized the need to win the masses to his teachings and to use them as the vehicle for socialist construction after being converted to Chernyshevsky's message. Their revolution

¹³⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," June-July, 1905, IX, 32; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Dve Taktiki Sotsial-Demokratii v Demokraticheskoi Revoliutsii," XI, 19.

would be preceded by a psychological change in their mentality to the attitudes of Lenin's own utopianism. Thus, Lenin believed, whenever the time came that the masses agitated for a socialist (Bolshevik) revolution, they would already have undergone the psychological transformation necessary to institute the "new age" or at least have begun that transformation. Subsequently, the radical activities of the masses were identified with their acceptance of his own utopian schemes. When in 1905 the Russian masses succeeded in staging perhaps one of the most successful general strikes in history, Lenin concluded that the transformation toward the "new people" and the "new age" had already begun. When, in July, 1917, the crowds of Petrograd surged out of control of revolutionary leadership, Lenin concluded that a turning-point had been reached in the revolution; that the masses were further advanced than he had believed.¹³⁶ Rather than analyzing the economic level of capitalist development or the progress of the bourgeois revolution, he was only concerned with the fact that mass radicalism was outpacing Bolshevik radicalism; that Bolshevik leadership was failing in its duty to his own utopianism by underestimating the revolutionary con-

¹³⁶ Lenin, Collected Works, "Draft Resolution on the Present Political Situation," September 16, 1917, XXV, 311 & 313; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Proekt Rezoliutsim o Sovremennom Politicheskom Momente," XXXIV, 144 & 146.

sciousness of the proletariat.¹³⁷ For Bolshevik leadership to restrain the revolutionary energies of the proletariat was to betray the revolution, to doom it to failure. To wait for a meeting of the proposed Congress of Soviets or the Constituent Assembly would make the Bolsheviks "miserable traitors to the proletarian cause." They would be traitors because Marx had predicted a socialist revolution precisely when a majority of the proletariat became politically conscious enough to recognize their historical role. And, for Lenin, that political consciousness was equated with proletarian support for the Bolshevik Party. As early as 1905 he had declared that the advanced members of the working class were "instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic;" that is, Marxist.¹³⁸ By 1917 he was even more convinced of the formula that Bolshevik sympathizers equalled dedicated Marxists and, in spite of Marxist doctrine, those sympathizers were not limited to the industrial proletariat. At the outset of the October Revolution,

¹³⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "Draft Resolution on the Present Political Situation," XXV, 313; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Proekt Rezoliutsim o Sovremennom Politicheskom Momente," XXXIV, 146.

¹³⁸ Ibid, "The Reorganization of the Party," November 10-16, 1905, X, 32; Ibid, "O Reorganizatsii Partii," XII, 86.

speaking as the voice of the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party, Lenin declared that:

behind our Party stand the millions of the workers in the cities, the soldiers in the trenches and the peasants in the villages, prepared at all costs to achieve the victory of peace and the victory of socialism! 139

Mass support for the Bolshevik Party not only signified that the masses had achieved the political consciousness required by Marx for a socialist revolution, it also made the Russian masses the "vanguard of the international socialist revolution."¹⁴⁰ Wait for the bourgeois revolution to run its course!?:

When the workers, soldiers and peasants have said . . . that they will assume full power and will themselves set about building a new life, there can be no question of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. 141

The masses, Lenin believed, had advanced beyond the bourgeois-democratic stage; they were ready to begin socialist con-

¹³⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, "From the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks)," November 18-19, 1917, XXVI, 307; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Ot Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Rossiiskoi Sotsial-Demokraticheskoi Rabochei Partii (Bol'shevikov)," XXXV, 76; Also see "Letter to Comrades" in which Lenin attempted to distinguish between Blanquist conspiracy and Marxist insurrection, Ibid, XXVI, 212-213; Ibid, XXXIV, 415-416.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, "Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets," XXVI, 472; Ibid, "Tretii Vserossiiskii S'ezd Sovetov," XXXV, 279.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, XXVI, 475; Ibid, XXXV, 282-283.

struction, and their support of Bolshevik slogans "proved" it.

That Lenin never really surrendered his faith in the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat that he experienced in 1905 is another major point that has received little attention from historians. It has become popular to describe Lenin's distrust of the proletariat, as evidenced by What Is To Be Done? and his demand for a select party membership in 1903, and then compare this evidence with his optimistic evaluation of the proletariat during the revolutionary periods of 1905 and 1917. From such a comparison the obvious conclusion is that State and Revolution, which is usually included in the 1917 revolutionary period, and Lenin's late 1917-early 1918 writings and policies were the result of his being swept away by the revolutionary atmosphere of 1917; that his actions and ideas had no relation to the objective reality of the situation. Such a conclusion leaves much of Lenin's character and thought untouched. Although he was definitely inspired by the very spirit of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions and his interpretation of the situation was undoubtedly colored by the excitement of events, Lenin nonetheless did not fail to analyze what he considered to be the crucial objective factors and to base his decisions on the relation of the "objective" situation to Marxist requirements. These objective factors, however, were generally reduced to one --

namely, the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat. This was the crucial factor that would determine the time and the nature of the revolution. The revolutionary events following the February Revolution, especially the radicalism of the July Days, did much to convince Lenin that the proletariat was sufficiently revolutionary to support a socialist revolution, but this assessment was, at the same time, a gradual, progressive process that Lenin began emphasizing as early as 1914.

In that year Lenin contributed several articles to an assessment of the strength of Bolshevik sympathies among the elite of Russian workers in comparison with that of other Russian political parties. This research, conducted in European exile in Lenin's usually detached manner, was hardly influenced by emotional radicalism. Yet, his conclusions were that the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat, initiated by the 1905 Revolution, had blossomed not only in quantity but also in quality; that this consciousness had not only been achieved by four-fifths of the workers but that this majority was Bolshevik in sympathy.

Lenin's method of research was a comparison of the statistics of Russia's newspaper circulation and of monetary contributions to the newspapers by workers' groups. He divided sympathies between Pravdists (of the Bolshevik persuasion) and Liquidationists (all non-Bolshevik

papers). In May, 1914, in an article published in Trudovaya Pravda, he demonstrated the predominance of Pravdist workers' groups out of the total number of groups that had contributed money to various newspapers.

	<u>Pravdist</u>	<u>Liquidation</u>
For the two full years, 1912 and 1913 ...	2,801	750
For half of 1914 (January 1 to May 13)...	2,873	671
Total	5,674	1,421 ¹⁴²

Lenin's conclusion that "four-fifths of the workers have accepted the Pravdist decisions as their own, have approved of Pravdism, and actually rallied around Pravdism, . . ." reveals his confidence in the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat. Lenin equated Pravdism with Bolshevism and Bolshevism with revolutionary Marxism. Hence:

the conclusions to be drawn from these objective data are that Pravdism is the only Marxist, proletarian trend, really independent of the bourgeoisie, and has organized over four-fifths of the workers (in 1914, 81.1 per cent of the workers' groups as compared with the liquidators). 143 *

¹⁴² Lenin, Collected Works, "Unity," May 30, 1914, XX, 320; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Obedinstve," XXV, 178.

¹⁴³ Ibid, "Objective Data on the Strength of the Various Trends in the Working Class Movement," June 26, 1914, XX, 387; Ibid, "Ob"ektivnoye Dannye o Sile Razykh Tehenii v Rabochem Dvizhenii," XXV, 250.

* Obviously, Lenin's comparison dealt only with that very small element of active workers who gave monetary support to newspapers. He did not bother to mention that these constituted only a small fraction of Russia's total of some four million workers. But then, Lenin was only concerned with the politically "conscious" elements.

This was the point of Lenin's research: to "prove" that the politically conscious workers were revolutionary Marxists. The more politically conscious the proletariat of its revolutionary responsibility, the less important was the role of the Party as a force for agitation, the more the Party could concern itself with actually directing the revolutionary movement. The more conscious the proletariat, the nearer the socialist revolution. A capitalist nation with a sufficiently conscious proletariat was inevitably doomed to revolution, because a fully conscious proletariat would indicate that all of the other Marxist requirements for the socialist revolution had been met. Lenin never tired of emphasizing this crucial factor:

There can be no more important duty for class-conscious workers than that of getting to know their class movement, its aims and objects, its conditions and practical forms. That is because the strength of the working-class movement lies entirely in its political consciousness, and in its mass character. 144

Only in 1905 had Lenin's confidence in the proletariat reached similar heights. But his 1905 optimism was colored by the spirit of revolution. Not so in 1914. In 1914 Lenin wrote and assessed from the calm of European exile. Yet, his estimation of the proletariat was complimentary and optimistic: "the more politically developed the masses

¹⁴⁴ Lenin, Collected Works, "Objective Data on the Strength of the Various Trends in the Working Class Movement," XX, 381; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Ob"ektivnoye Dannye o Sile Razykh Tchenii v Rabochem Dvizhenii," XXV, 244.

of the workers are, and the higher their level of class-consciousness and political activity, the higher is the number of Pravdists among them."¹⁴⁵

Hence, Lenin's respect for the revolutionary abilities of the proletariat was not an attitude that he acquired overnight following the February Revolution, as has so often been portrayed. An essential part of his intellectual outlook, stimulated by the 1905 Revolution, this attitude was formally declared by Lenin in a number of statistical reports at least as early as 1914, and it remained a part of his outlook for the remainder of his life, reaching a peak in 1917. It was only after the revolutionary events of 1917 had occurred, however, that he could point to concrete results as evidence of the "correctness" of his ideals. Armed with the "proof" of the 1917 revolutionary energy of the masses, he immediately set about to put State and Revolution into practice.

Thus, rather than intellectual deviation^{from} and betrayal of his own principles in 1917, Lenin was quite consistent in his revolutionary thought and action. Even in his original revolutionary blueprint, What Is To Be Done?, he recognized that because "there could

¹⁴⁵ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Working Class and Its Press," June 13-14, 1914, XX, 366; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Rabochii Klass i Rabochaia Pechat," XXV, 299.

not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers, . . ." this consciousness would have to be "brought to them from without." This was the very task assigned the original Party members, the "professionals": to educate the masses and draw them into the Bolshevik ranks; to awaken the masses so that they could "advance from their own ranks increasing numbers of 'professional revolutionists.'" This was what the Party was concerned with between 1903 and 1905 and then from 1905 to 1917. It was Lenin's stated purpose from the very beginning of his revolutionary career. The Party was to provide these "strong personalities" who would prepare the masses for the "new age." And, "he more than once convinced himself that the task had been accomplished, that the masses were enlightened."¹⁴⁶

In this light, Lenin's decision for a socialist revolution is quite consistent with his own revolutionary theory that a successful socialist revolution depended solely upon the political consciousness of the proletariat; that is, on their revolutionary energies against capitalism. "Give us an organization of revolutionists, and we shall overturn the whole of Russia!", Lenin had written in 1902. That organization of revolutionists in 1902 was small and

¹⁴⁶ Meyer, Leninism, 45.

select, its primary task that of increasing its membership among the workers. The fact that the organization was restricted and conspiratorial in 1902 did not mean that it would remain so. It would increase in size as more and more workers became sufficiently conscious so as to effectively participate in the organization. When criticized that his "organization . . . of professional revolutionists" would create a dictatorial elite that would dominate the workers, Lenin replied that such was not necessarily so, that:

this condition does not obtain out of sheer necessity'. It obtains because we are backward, because we do not recognize our duty to assist every capable worker to become a professional agitator, organizer, propagandist, literature distributor, etc., etc. 147

If this definition characterizes what Lenin meant by a "professional revolutionist," then, by 1917 he had sufficient reason to believe that a significant portion of Russia's proletariat had become "professional revolutionists." The workers were not only agitating and propagandizing; they were marching in the streets and helping to overthrow a government. Whether or not Russia's workers were dedicated revolutionary Marxists, whether or not they even supported Lenin's utopian ideas and Pravdism is much less important to the subject at hand than the fact that Lenin believed that they were revolutionists.

¹⁴⁷ Lenin, Collected Works, "What Is To Be Done?," V, 472; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Chto Delat'?", VI, 132.

His writings from 1914 through 1917, and even for the remainder of his life, indicate that he considered the Russian proletarian majority, or at least the more "advanced", to be revolutionary Marxists, at least in sentiment. In light of this conviction, and in relation to Lenin's revolutionary theory, it was only logical that the revolutionary-conscious proletariat should "inevitably" take over the direction of the bourgeois revolution of February, 1917. Marxist doctrine required that the bourgeois-democratic revolution be followed by a proletarian-socialist one when the class-consciousness of the proletariat was sufficiently developed. By 1917 Lenin believed that the Russian proletariat was sufficiently class-conscious to carry out a socialist revolution.

In terms of his own revolutionary theory and his estimation of the revolutionary situation in 1917, what would have been really inconsistent on Lenin's part would have been for him to advocate restraint, to advise waiting while the democratic revolution entrenched itself. For him to have believed that the proletariat were revolutionary enough to desire the destruction of capitalism and the construction of socialism, and then to caution against revolution, that would have been the real treason to his own convictions. He had always preached that revolution would come when the proper conditions were met and, believing that those conditions had been met in 1917, to have cautioned

restraint would have been to turn his back on his life's work.

That the ideas of State and Revolution have never been realized in Russia is obvious, but that is due not to Lenin's intellectual deviation but to insurmountable objective conditions and to false assumptions about the nature of man and economics that were crucial to Lenin's philosophy. However, these fallacies were present in 1902 as well as in 1917; they were simply not articulated in book form until 1917. Lenin's pre-1917 programs were designed for immediate implementation to meet particular situations in Russia's revolutionary development. What Is To Be Done? was written during a period of development that demanded rigid organizational discipline. Yet, it ultimately promised the anarchistic situation described in State and Revolution. State and Revolution was the fulfillment of the promises of What Is To Be Done? The crucial factor for determining the transition from What Is To Be Done? to State and Revolution was always the "level of consciousness of the proletariat." Operating on this assumption, Lenin had every reason to believe that the time had come in 1917 for the proletariat to fulfill its mission. For him to have judged otherwise would have been for him to re-examine his entire life's thoughts and works.

Hence, it was not so much that Lenin's theory of

revolution was invalid -- he was, after all, successful -- as that his assumptions regarding the nature of man and his assessment of the revolutionary situation in 1917 was incorrect, and these stopped the revolution far short of Lenin's intentions. That is, Marx's theory that capitalism will be overthrown when (or rather, if) a sufficient number of its proletariat dedicate themselves to the destruction of capitalism is essentially valid. Such a theory merely states the obvious. No economy can function if its labor base refuses to work and is in fact dedicated to the destruction of the system. The delicate point in Marx's theory, at least for Lenin, was how to determine at precisely what stage of political or intellectual development a worker became a dedicated socialist and not simply an energetic, disgruntled worker; and, likewise, how to determine precisely what portion of socialist proletariat equalled a sufficient number to insure the completion of the revolution. These are the points on which Lenin's political astuteness failed him. He could not know for certain whether the increased radicalism and political activity of the workers was socialist consciousness or elemental spontaneity. His deep-seated utopian ideals often tempted him to interpret spontaneous feelings of resentment or even the workers' acceptance of Bolshevik leadership as socialist consciousness. His failure to distinguish

between revolutionary consciousness and elemental spontaneity doomed the revolution that he had anticipated. Yet, his revolution was doomed from the very beginning because of his false assumptions concerning the nature of man. The ancient Greeks demonstrated that the particular does not reveal the general, but Lenin never doubted that the Ulyanov and Chernyshevsky models were applicable to all mankind. His rational and simplistic youthful environment left him ill prepared to grasp the realities of man or the complexities of running a state.

The masses, true to form, continued to engage in natural, elemental, spontaneous activities, activities not becoming to the image of a conscious, socialist worker. While Lenin spoke of the emergence of a strong, efficient, and orderly state, the Russian economy, transportation, and food supply became progressively chaotic. The hungry masses, rather than keeping books on the distribution of food and material goods that were largely non-existent, were rioting in the streets. The soldiers, rather than cooperating with the workers' communes to keep account and control of goods, were looting homes and shops; the amateur Red Guards, rather than stabilizing the rampant disorder, were joining the workers and soldiers. Not infrequently, rioting peasants attacked the provincial headquarters of the Soviets and manhandled its members. Battles between peasants and Red Guard units were common, and, eventually, set-

and, eventually, anti-Bolshevik organizations developed.¹⁴⁸

Yet, despite these harsh realities, even as late as April, 1918, Lenin was still making agonizing pleas with the population to be faithful to the simple Christian-like virtues that would insure the "new age." In the application of elemental, almost religious, commandments, he still saw Russia's total solution. Nowhere do his naive and utopian convictions reveal themselves with more pathetic keenness than in his appeal to the turbulent masses of a broken down Russia in 1918 to: "Keep regular and honest accounts of money, manage economically, do not be lazy, do not steal, observe the strictest labour discipline. . . ." ¹⁴⁹ Admitting that these rules had been rightfully scorned by the proletariat when the bourgeoisie had held power, Lenin in 1918 urged that "the practical application of these slogans . . . is the sole condition for the salvation of (Russia). . . ." ¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "The Short-Lived 'Breathing Space.'" "

¹⁴⁹ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," March-April, 1918, XXVII, 243; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Ocherednye Zadachi Sovetskoi Vlasti," XXXVI, 174.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., XXVII, 244; Ibid., XXXVI, 174.

While still propounding his utopian goals, by the spring of 1918 Lenin was becoming painfully aware of the inadequacies of his methods. Perhaps unconsciously at first, he began to fumble for some sort of compromise that would permit a less chaotic transition to communism. While aiming for the same utopian goals, he began to search for more practical methods of achieving them until, gradually, method came more and more to take priority over goal; stability soon became such an obsession that the intended compromise lapsed into a full retreat. Even while begging the masses in April to keep honest accounts, Lenin began emphasizing the necessity of compromising with the exploiters -- the bourgeois specialists -- who would be used to facilitate the transition to communism. Had the masses quickly solved the problem of account and control, which theoretically would have stabilized the economy, then the bourgeois specialists could have been done away with immediately. Lenin pointed out, however, that:

Owing to the considerable 'delay' in introducing accounting and control generally, we . . . have not yet created the conditions which would place the bourgeois specialists at our disposal. 151

Lenin recognized that the revolution had moved too far, too fast. The pace would have to be slowed;

¹⁵¹ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," XXVII, 248; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Ocherednye Zadachi Sovetskoi Vlasti," XXXVI, 179.

stability would have to be maintained, even at the expense of a temporary retreat. Whereas the goal remained Utopia, the methods would have to be more practical. Whereas in January he had praised the fresh trend in anarchism that sided with the Soviet, by April he was convinced that anarchism was a bourgeois trend, irreconcilably opposed to socialism and communism. Gradually and painfully he was recognizing the fact that State and Revolution would have to be projected again into the future; that the consciousness and ability of the masses were not yet up to the task of constructing a communist state. Socialism and communism meant stability, a smooth functioning of economy and state or society; the new society presupposed mass discipline. The original goal remained, but there would have to be a revision in the time schedule; the masses needed more training. Russia's arrival at its ultimate Utopia would be somewhat later than Lenin had anticipated a few months earlier; and, it might require some government force.

Thus, Lenin gradually emerged from his lofty heights, his utopianism slowly began receding back to its former confines. More and more, order and stability took priority over mass participation; order and stability meant consolidating Bolshevik power in order to restrain the masses. Lenin's utopian dreams had appeared much more feasible when he was a critic of the ruling powers, when

mass radicalism and anarchy threatened the Provisional Government rather than the Soviet Government. Once in the seat of state authority, constant chaos and anarchy lost its appeal, and the conflict between liberty and order became very real. His conceptions of operating a state and its economy had been much too simple; socialism required much more than simply issuing decrees. His over-estimation of the abilities of the masses and his under-estimation of the requirements for socialism were all too apparent. Lenin the utopian was also predisposed to the order and discipline that had characterized his youthful environment; he could not tolerate disorder as a permanent state. Hence, in his search for an orderly transition to communism, the practicalities of operating a state overwhelmed his anarchistic notions. One "strategic retreat" was followed by another, and each "backward step" was followed by two. By this process, "the Soviets lost their character as freely elected bodies; the dictatorship of the proletariat turned more and more into a dictatorship of the Communist Party."¹⁵² Democratic workers' organizations were sacrificed to the military discipline of individual Soviet leaders. Lenin hinted at these events in April, 1918 when he advocated individual

¹⁵²Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I, 419.

rather than collective leadership and even attempted to justify personal dictatorship. Due to the failure of the masses to consolidate its socialist gains, he said, it had become necessary:

to combine the 'public meeting' democracy of the working people . . . with iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work. 153

Gone were the days when the workers were extolled to take things into their own hands and promenade down the road to socialism. The new watchwords were authority and obedience. Gone were the days of coalition government, constituent assembly, and collective leadership. There was, Lenin declared, hastily beating a retreat, "absolutely no contradiction in principle between Soviet (that is, socialist) democracy and the exercise of dictatorial powers by individuals."¹⁵⁴

The retreat led ultimately to the policies of War Communism, "the period during which problems of power overshadowed all other problems of the regime, when all activities of the Leninist state were concentrated in a grim struggle

¹⁵³ Lenin, Collected Works, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," XXVII, 271; Sobranie Sochinenii, "Ocherednye Zadachi Sovetskoi Vlasti," XXXVI, 203.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, XXVII, 268; Ibid, XXXVI, 199.

for survival."¹⁵⁵ Lenin's utopianism was based on a dubious foundation of emotional idealism which was quickly undermined by the practicalities of state administration. State and Revolution would have to wait.

Historians have been quick to note, in proving the insincerity or opportunistic traits of Lenin's utopianism, the very limited steps taken by the Bolshevik regime toward construction of a communistic society, concluding that he was more interested in power and authority than in creating a better order of society. By the same reasoning, one might conclude that the presence of war and disease is proof of man's desire that they should exist. The actual political, economic, and social measures instituted by the Bolsheviks prior to the period of War Communism did fall far short of laying the foundations for a communist society. In the area of economy, the Bolsheviks initiated an eight-hour work day, nationalized the banking system, and outlawed payments of dividends and shares. Workers' control of industry was gradually rationalized out of existence and replaced by centralized control in the name of stability. The social decrees issued by the Bolsheviks simplified the Russian alphabet, adopted the Western calendar, invalidated traditional

¹⁵⁵Meyer, Leninism, 199.

marriage and divorce laws, and provided for the separation of Church and school and Church and state. Bolshevnik attempts to completely equalize all elements of the population, however, were given up in the name of necessary compromise with the "bourgeois specialists." The political legislation of Lenin's regime annulled all state debts, established government officials' salaries at five-hundred rubles per month (a temporary measure), and provided for judicial elections by Soviets on popular vote.¹⁵⁶ Obviously, these measures represented a radical departure from the institutions of Tsarism, but they were clearly very timid steps toward creating a communist society. The utopian goals of State and Revolution continued to recede into the background. Internal chaos, civil war, and foreign intervention became justifications for more "strategic retreats" and "backward steps" which compromised principle with practical necessity. Every retreat from the ideals of State and Revolution was a concession to the hard, disciplinary tactics of What Is To Be Done? In 1902 these tactics were justified by the need to destroy the heavy hand of Tsarist oppression; in 1918 they came to be justified by the need to stabilize the chaotic situation that had developed in part from Lenin's attempt to implement

¹⁵⁶Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, I. See chapter entitled "First Steps of the New Regime."

the anarchistic ideas contained in State and Revolution.

Yet, while it would be erroneous to consider State and Revolution the basic statement of Lenin's political philosophy, it would be equally erroneous to dismiss it as a "fanciful exercise." State and Revolution does represent Lenin's fundamental philosophy of man, his inner convictions on human nature, his ideals for a more humane world. And, this philosophy was as much a part of his intellectual outlook, of his essential character, as was his political philosophy; that is, his conception of how his ideals could be realized. The fact that his political philosophy, in the end, took precedence over his philosophy of man does not negate the existence of the latter, nor should the former obscure the significance of the latter. Had his not been "a cause worth devoting one's life to," then perhaps Lenin would have been more prone to compromise, less prone to total solutions. Lacking the moral absoluteness of his ideals, perhaps the October Revolution would never have occurred; perhaps Lenin would have settled for a human society rather than demanding an Utopia. The radicalism of 1917 certainly convinced him that his Utopia was feasible, but, lacking those utopian dreams, he undoubtedly would have made a less favorable and more realistic assessment of mass radicalism. It was precisely because of his utopianism that one can understand the "overwhelming irony" expressed by Angelica

Balabanoff that:

Lenin, who must have felt the same throbbing enthusiasm we did, was the one who had to set up the most numerous and difficult obstacles for the triumph of the verdict (socialism) in which he had a stronger belief than any other man. 157

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LENIN'S UTOPIANISM

Rodney Barfield

ABSTRACT

General histories give little credence to the utopian side of Lenin's revolutionary thought, especially in relation to his only formal utopian work, State and Revolution. Standard interpretations pass off that work as an "intellectual deviation" resulting from Lenin's "revolutionary fever" of 1917, while offering What Is To Be Done? as the statement of orthodox Leninism.

Lenin's utopianism was not, in fact, a temporary aberration but a very real part of his intellectual outlook which had its origins in the simplistic atmosphere of the Ulyanov household. The harsh, uncompromising attitudes expressed in What Is To Be Done? were developed during his brother's trial and execution and during his own arrest and exile.

Lenin was attracted to Chernyshevsky and Marx because both expressed his own two-pronged outlook: utopian goals and pragmatic methods. This outlook is revealed in his two best known works, What Is To Be Done? and State and Revolution.

The actual role of Lenin's 1917 "revolutionary

fever" was not to motivate the writing of State and Revolution but to prompt him to attempt a socialist revolution. It was his ingrained utopianism that caused him to interpret the events of 1917 as a mandate for the ideals expressed in State and Revolution. That utopianism was always a part of Lenin's intellectual outlook, but it was only in 1917 that he found the confidence to give it priority over "pragmatic methods."

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