SOCIALISM, DEMOCRACY *and the* ONE PARTY SYSTEM.

MONTY JOHNSTONE.

35p

This article is reproduced without change from Marxism Today, where it appeared in the issues of August, September and November 1970. It gave rise to a sharp discussion, which continued in the pages of that journal from January 1971 to February 1972 and to which the author replied in the issue of March 1972. He is at present completing a book, to be published by New Left Books, in which he deals more fully with these questions, considers the subsequent experience of socialist countries and argues the relevance of a theory of Socialist pluralism for the developed industrial countries of the West.

Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System

Monty Johnstone Part One

On no question are there such sharp divergences of opinion and such passionate debate both between Marxists and non-Marxists, and among Marxists themselves, as on the nature of democracy under Socialism. Above all this revolves around the issue of the one-party system, the role of the Communist Party and the right of opposition of other parties, both Socialist, non-Socialist and anti-Socialist.

A great obstacle to Communist growth and to Communist unity with other Socialist forces in Western countries has been, and to no small extent remains, the fear that we aim to establish a state in which the ruling party or "bloc" could not be constitutionally removed. Many are afraid that, whatever may be Communist tactics under capitalism, we envisage the suppression under Socialism of all political opposition, hence (in their view) effectively depriving the people of a free choice of government.

This conception, although widely promoted by the opponents of Communism, cannot simply be dismissed as an arbitrary capitalist invention. As Friedl Fürnberg, Secretary of the Communist Party of Austria, has written, it owes "its origin to the specific circumstances of the rise and development of the first Socialist country—the Soviet Union—and it gained currency and persists with remarkable tenacity to this day, because, for a time, the Communist Parties themselves believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat, unlike bourgeois democracy, could be effected only through one-party rule."[1] Broadly speaking it reflects the experience not only of the Soviet Union but also of those Socialist states where non-Communist political parties exist but may only function within the framework of a national front, in which the leadership of the Communist Party is accepted and there are no party contests at elections.

However, particularly since 1956 with the revelations of undemocratic practices, crimes and repressions in some Socialist states, many Communist Parties, especially in countries with strong democratic traditions, have concerned themselves with the question of safeguards against the erosion of Socialist democracy by the concentration of uncontrolled power in the hands of a small group of Communist Party leaders. This is reflected, for example, in the goal of the Italian Communist Party of "a pluralistic Socialist society" which "is not centralised, not controlled by bureaucracy and not identified with the power of a single party."[2] It finds its expression also in our own Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. Here the aim is set out of a Socialist democracy where "democratically organised political parties, including those hostile to Socialism, would have the right to maintain their organisation, publications and propaganda, and to contest elections."[3]

In the past two years, strong attacks have appeared in the press of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, in particular, against pluralism and the most "harmful" idea of "revisionist ideologists" that "the Socialist state should guarantee freedom of expression to minority interests and views."[4] It is asserted that "behind the hypocritical arguments about a multi-party system and parliamentary opposition and under cover of demagogic slogans about 'democratic, humane Socialism', the

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[1] F. Fürnberg, "The Multi-Party System under Capitalism and Socialism", in *World Marxist Review* (Prague), November, 1964.

[2] Theses of the 12th Congress of the Italian Communist Party, in *Marxism Today* (London), April, 1969, p. 120.

[3] *The British Road to Socialism* (London, 1968), p. 52.

[4] Dieter Uhlig, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Petty Bourgeois Democratism", in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (Berlin), No. 2, 1969, p. 143. At the October 1968 Central Committee Plenum of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Central Committee Secretary Kurt Hager devoted a section of his report to "Pluralism—a Means of Diversion" (*Neues Deutschland*, October 29th, 1968), a theme which was briefly taken up by Walter Ulbricht at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in 1969. (Official Report, pp. 219-220.)

right wing revisionists encroach on the 'holy of holies' of Marxist-Leninist teaching—the historical necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Socialist state and the leading role of the Communist and Workers' Parties."[5]

In these two articles it is intended to examine the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin, on parties and democracy under Socialism, including the circumstances under which a one-party system emerged in the U.S.S.R.[6]

Marxist View of Parties

The theoretical basis for the identification of Socialism with a one-party state was first provided by Stalin, who was wont to present the latter not only as necessary in the particular circumstances prevailing in the Soviet Union but also as implicit in a classless society. "A party is part of a class, its most advanced part," he said in 1936. "Several parties, and, consequently, freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes whose interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable."[7] The whole argument, which was for many years propagated through the international Communist movement as a fundamental cannon of Marxism, is a false one. By crudely oversimplifying Marx' and Engels' conception of political parties, Stalin concocted a theory derived from the kind of economic determinism which led Marx to exclaim in relation to the French "Marxists" of the late seventies: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist."[8]

Though Marx and Engels never set out a finished theory of political parties, the elements of such a theory—the creative development of which has been neglected by Marxists for far too long—can be found in their works. Their starting point was their belief that political conflicts can *ultimately* be traced back "to the struggles between the interests of existing social classes and fractions of classes created by the economic development." Hence Engels saw parties as "the more or less adequate political expression of these same classes and fractions of classes."[9]

Engels' formulation contrasts with Stalin's in two important respects. Firstly, it relates parties not only to classes but also to fractions of classes, thereby allowing for the fact that classes are not homogeneous. Thus different sections of one and the same class may, and usually do, see their interests expressed by different parties. This certainly does not suggest that different non-antagonistic classes, like workers and peasants in a Socialist society, must *necessarily* be represented exclusively by one and the same party. Secondly, Engels is less categorical, adding the qualification "more or less adequate."

Nonetheless, Engels tends here to convey a conception of political parties that is oversimplified when compared with the subtlety and total lack of dogmatic preconceptions with which Marx and he dealt with parties in their historical and journalistic writings. Largely responsible for this flexibility was the "relative independence" that they attributed to ideological factors.[10] "The economic situation is the basis," Engels wrote to Bloch in 1890, "but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its results . . . —also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases predominate in determining their *form*."[11]

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, which he wrote in 1851-52, Marx made it clear that he did not consider that every party struggle must necessarily, even indirectly, reflect conflicting economic interests. Thus he saw exclusively "ideological" factors as the *raison d'être* of the "republican faction of the bourgeoisie"[12], which in 1848 stood in opposition to the bourgeois royalists in the Party of Order. The former was *not* held together "by great common interests and marked off by specific conditions of production," he wrote. "It was a coterie of republican-minded bourgeois—writers, lawyers, officers and officials—that owed its influence to the personal antipathies of the country against (King) Louis Philippe, to memories of the old republic, to the republican faith of a number of enthusiasts, above all, however, to *French nationalism*."[13] Marx represented the economic policies of this bourgeois party as flowing from its class position, whilst not attempting to find in its members any separate economic characteristic to account for their preference for "a republican instead of a monarchist form of bourgeois rule and, above all, the lion's share of this rule."[14] The latter phrase implicitly attributes to this party

[5] F. Kalinychev and E. Kuzmin, "Socialist Democracy and Pure Democracy", in *Soviet News* (London), March 11th, 1969, p. 101.

[6] No attempt will be made to extend the theme to include a critique of multi-party and one-party systems under capitalism, nor to deal with the problem in relation to emergent countries.

[7] J. Stalin, *Leninism* (Allen & Unwin edition, London, 1940), p. 579.

[8] F. Engels to C. Schmidt, August 5th 1890, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow-London, 1956), hereafter *Sel. Cor.*, p. 496.

[9] F. Engels, Introduction to K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France— 1848-1850, Selected Works* (Moscow-London, 1950), hereafter *S.W.*, I, p. 110.

[10] F. Engels to C. Schmidt, October 27th 1890, *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 503-505 .

[11] F. Engels to J. Bloch, September 21st-22nd, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 498. Emphasis in original.

[12] *S.W.*, I, p. 233.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 234. Emphasis in original.

[14] *Ibid.*

5 a concern with power for its own sake, which they were on numerous occasions to point to as an element in politics.

Writing in 1857 of the British political scene, Marx said that the Peelites, who had for a decade played a certain role as a parliamentary party, "did not represent a class or parts of a class."[15] Engels, more than three decades later saw "very varied" class elements making up the rising German Centre Party, based on the anti-Prussian regional particularism of the Catholic areas.[16]

Although regarding the working class as potentially the most homogeneous class, Marx was very conscious that "the stage of development reached by different sections of the workers in the same country . . . necessarily varies very much, the actual movement necessarily expresses itself in very diverse theoretical forms."[17] Hence, Engels told Bebel in 1873, "the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is everywhere realised in different party groupings, which carry on life-and-death feuds with one another."[18]

Marx and Engels and Democracy

Throughout the whole of their political lives Marx and Engels were deeply concerned with winning "the battle for democracy."[19] Marx entered the political arena as a revolutionary democrat opposing the Prussian monarchy and its bureaucracy and striving for representative institutions through which the sovereignty of the people could be realised. His first articles in 1842 were on the freedom of the press, which he considered to be a prime condition for free political development. He condemned censorship as "a law of suspicion against freedom". It rested, he wrote, "on the principle that 'the end justifies the means.' But an end which has need of unholy means is not a holy end." Lack of freedom, he argued, was "the really deadly danger for man. . . . You cannot enjoy the advantages of a free press without tolerating its inconveniences. You cannot pick the rose without its thorns."[20] He urged that the popular press should be allowed to develop in the shape of different independent organs. "It is above all necessary," he wrote, "not to issue any instructions to it from outside."[21]

Marx did not abandon these deeply democratic precepts when he developed from a revolutionary democrat to a Communist, a transition that he was already beginning the next year with his essay *On the Jewish Question*, in which he exposed the limitations of bourgeois democracy. Rather he envisaged their extension and combination with the social and economic freedom that could only be obtained by a change in the class basis of society. By taking the ownership and control of the productive forces out of the hands of a small exploiting class and placing them in the hands of a democratically run society, Socialism would secure freedom for man as a producer and a human being as well as legal and constitutional freedoms for him as a citizen. It would provide the basis for ending his alienation from the products of his creative labour and from effective control of society.

The League of Communists that they joined in 1847 made it clear that its members were "not among those Communists who are out to destroy personal liberty, who wish to turn the world into one huge barrack or a gigantic workhouse." In a declaration of policy, its organ, the *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* (Communist Journal) of September 1847 went on: "There certainly are some Communists who, with an easy conscience, refuse to countenance personal liberty and would like to shuffle it out of the world because they consider that it is a hindrance to complete harmony. But we have no desire to exchange freedom for equality. We are convinced . . . that in no social order will personal freedom be so assured as in a society based upon communal ownership." It was necessary to "work in order to establish a democratic state wherein each party would be able by word or in writing to win a majority over to its ideas."[22]

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Marx and Engels saw the working class movement as "the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."[23] This was reflected in the thoroughly democratic character that they ascribed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which they believed had to replace the bourgeois state. It meant that the working class would use governmental measures "forcibly to speed up the process of transformation of the economic conditions on which the class struggle and the existence of classes rests."[24]

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[15] K. Marx, "The Result of the Elections", in *New York Daily Tribune*, April 22nd, 1857.

[16] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1956-68), 21, p. 461; 22, p. 8.

[17] K. Marx to F. Engels, March 5th, 1869, *Sel. Cor.*, p. 265.

[18] F. Engels to A. Bebel, June 20th, 1873, *ibid.*, p. 347.

[19] *Communist Manifesto.*, *S.W.*, I, p. 50.

[20] *Werke*, I, pp. 57, 60.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

[22] D. Ryazanoff, Editor, *The Communist Manifesto of K. Marx and F. Engels* (London, 1930), Appendix E, p. 292.

[23] *Communist Manifesto*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[24] K. Marx, Marginal Notes on Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy* (1874-75), *Werke*, 18, p. 630. For a fuller exposition of what the founders of Marxism understood by the dictatorship of the proletariat, see Jack Cohen, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as seen by Marx, Engels and Lenin", in *Marxism Today*, November, 1969, pp. 326-338. See also H. Draper, "Marx and the Dictator-

There can be no justification for Mr. Richard Crossman's statement that Marx envisaged that this "period of proletarian dictatorship would be no more controlled by all the proletariat than democracy was controlled by all the bourgoisie" but that it would be managed "by a trained élite of revolutionary Marxists . . . in the interests of the proletariat."[25] In fact the founders of scientific Socialism strongly criticised such views, which were put forward in the nineteenth century by Auguste Blanqui and his followers. The latter favoured a revolutionary élite taking power and concentrating it in its own hands until such a time as the masses, stultified by centuries of deception and oppression, could be educated to a point where they themselves came to understand their own best interests. "From Blanqui's conception of every revolution as the *coup de main* of a small revolutionary minority," wrote Engels in 1874, "follows of itself the necessity of a dictatorship after it succeeds: the dictatorship, of course, not of the whole revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of the small number of those who carried out the *coup* and who are themselves already in advance organised under the dictatorship of one or a few individuals."[26]

Nowhere did Marx or Engels suggest that the dictatorship of the proletariat should take the form of a one-party state. In fact, the Paris Commune, which Marx described as "the conquest of political power of the working classes"[27] and Engels as "the dictatorship of the proletariat"[28], was certainly not one. It was divided into a Blanquist majority and a mainly Proudhonist minority, with various political groups like the middle class Union Républicaine functioning freely. Despite their precarious position Paris' new rulers allowed the bourgeois supporters inside Paris of the counter-revolutionary Versailles government, which was preparing their violent destruction, to stand in the elections to the Council of the Commune, in which they won 15 out of the 80 seats. Not till two weeks after the Versailles troops started attacking the outskirts of Paris and bombarding the city did the Commune begin to suspend hostile papers,[29] a measure that Marx considered fully justified as a *wartime* measure. "With the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris," he wrote, "would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep up all the decencies and appearances of liberalism *as in a time of profound peace*?"[30] With these civil war conditions in mind, Engels asked: "Would the Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?"[31]

However, in his vindication of the Commune in his *Civil War in France*, Marx placed his greatest emphasis on the creative initiative that it released among the masses and on the "basis of really democratic institutions" with which it had supplied France. [32] He attached special importance to the fact that the Commune "did not pretend to infallibility, the invariable attribute of all governments of the old stamp", but "published its doings and sayings" and "initiated the public into all its shortcomings."[33] He had long considered that "the general spirit of bureaucracy is *secrecy*, mystery preserved internally by hierarchism, externally by acting as a closed corporation. The conduct of state affairs in the open . . . hence appears to the bureaucracy as *treason* against its mystery."[34] Engels, in his turn, stressed the Commune's anti-bureaucratic measures to "safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials", all of whom were elected by universal suffrage, "by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any moment."[35]

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ship of the Proletariat" in *Cahiers de l'Institut de Science Economique Appliquée*, Série S, *Etudes de Marxologie*, No. 6 (Paris, 1962), pp. 5-73. No attempt is made here to discuss this concept except in relation to the specific theme of the article.

[25] R. H. S. Crossman, *Government and the Governed* (London, 1969), p. 229.

[26] F. Engels, *The Programme of the Blanquist Communard Refugees*, *Werke*, 18, p. 529. A number of writers, including Mr. George Lichtheim, one of the most serious contemporary bourgeois writers on Marxist theory, have seen Marx' and Engels' March 1850 *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League* (*S.W.*, I, pp. 89-108) as representing a "Jacobin-Blanquist aberration" on Marx's part. (G. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, London, 1961, pp. 124-5). I have attempted to show that this is incorrect in my essay "Marx and Engels and the Concept of the Party" in *Socialist Register*—1967 (London), pp. 127-8.

[27] K. Marx's speech at dinner for delegates at London Conference of First International, 1871, in M. Molnar, *Le Déclin de la Premiére Internationale* (Geneva, 1963), p. 238.

[28] F. Engels, Introduction (1891) to K. Marx, *The Civil War in France*, *S.W.*, I, p. 440.

[29] See F. Jellinek, *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London, 1937), pp. 227, 295.

[30] K. Marx, *Civil War in France*, *op. cit.*, p. 478. My emphasis.

[31] F. Engels, *On Authority* (1873), *S.W.*, I, p. 578.

[32] *S.W.*, I, p. 473.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 479.

[34] K. Marx, *From the Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Law"* (*Staatsrecht*), 1843, *Werke*, I, p. 249. Emphasis in original.

[35] *S.W.*, I, p. 438. See, also, F. Engels to A. Bebel, March 18th-28th, 1875: "The first condition of all freedom (is) that all officials should be responsible for their official acts to every citizen before the ordinary courts and according to common law". (*Sel. Cor.*, p. 356.)

Role of Communist Leadership

After the crushing of the Commune, Marx and Engels stepped up their call for building independent working class parties to provide the conscious leadership and direction that had been lacking in Paris. However the Communists' claim to leadership was based on possessing a greater theoretical understanding than the mass of the working class, as the *Communist Manifesto* had already argued, making it clear that they had no intention of trying to "shape and mould the proletarian movement" by imposing their own particular views on it.[36] Marx relied, as Engels pointed out in his 1890 preface, "for the ultimate triumph of the ideas set forth in the *Manifesto* solely and exclusively upon the intellectual development of the working class, as it necessarily had to ensue from united action and discussion."[37]

This was the way that the founders of Marxism believed the working class would acquire a growing awareness of "its own life situation," which demanded a fundamental transformation of capitalist society as a whole. This is what they had in mind when they wrote in 1844 in their *Holy Family:* "The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is*, and what, consequent on that *being*, it will be compelled to do."[38] The "compulsion" in question was not seen as an external one but as a logical one, which in the long run would assert itself in the minds of the majority of workers.

This quotation is, however, not infrequently torn out of its context by academic opponents of Marxism in order to impute to Marx some sort of teleology that he would himself have dismissed as dangerous metaphysical nonsense. Thus Professor George Catlin, in his *History of the Political Philosophers*, by a combination of mistranslation and the total omission of the crucial phrase "at the moment" (*einstweilen*) in the first sentence, makes Marx say: "We are not concerned[39], therefore, with what this or that proletarian, or even the proletariat as a whole, may regard as its aim." He then "explains" Marx's thought as follows: "A disciplined minority, which during the period of revolutionary action remains a minority, may yet interpret the Real Will of the people or of the proletariat and comprehend what, by theoretical necessity, that people or proletariat will 'be compelled to do', even although that people is actually unconscious of this Will or Process."[40] This is a doctrine which bears a marked resemblance to the usually unspoken assumptions behind the paternalism of a certain school of "Marxists"[41]—but none at all to Marx's own views!

In a more recent book "refuting" Marxism, Mr. Bertram D. Wolfe attacks Marx for pronouncing "his version to be inevitable", giving those possessing it "an illusion of their own infallibility and the firm support of history" and "hence, also, of the predestined and unchallengeable right to enforce their blueprint upon more ignorant, recalcitrant men. What mercy," he continues sarcastically, "should be shown to men who stood in the way of History and opposed her will, who rejected the tenets of science and refused to abide by them?"[42] The ascription of such "historicism" to Marx is a gross distortion of his whole scientific method.[43] "*History* does *nothing*," wrote Marx and Engels elsewhere in *The Holy Family*, "it possesses *no* immense wealth', it 'wages *no* battles.' It is *man*, that does all that, that possesses and fights; 'history' is not a person apart, using man as a means for *its own* particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims."[44]

Attitudes to Opposition

Another argument of anti-Marxists is that Marx's advocacy of the expulsion of the Anarchist Bakunin from the First International in 1872 proves that the one-party system "written into Marx's doctrine of dictatorship."[45] This is equally

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[38] K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Holy Family* (London, 1956), p. 53. Their emphasis. The German original is in *Werke*, 2, p. 38.

[39] The German phrase in the original is, "Es handelt sich nicht darum", which means, "the question is not" or "it is not a question of".

[40] G. Catlin, *A History of the Political Philosophers* (London, 1950), p. 589.

[41] See, e.g. S. Kovalyov, "Sovereignty and the International Duties of Socialist Countries", *Soviet News*, October 1st, 1968, p. 6. The author says that "formal observance of the freedom of self-determination in that concrete situation which arose in Czechoslovakia" in the summer of 1968—i.e. letting the majority of the Czechoslovak people continue to pursue the course that they *actually* desired—"would mean freedom of 'self-determination' not for the masses of the people, the working men and women, but for their enemies"—i.e. they would choose a course deemed contrary to their Real Will of which they were unconscious. Action had to be taken to stop them doing this!

[42] B. D. Wolfe, *Marxism* (London, 1967), p. 380.

[43] The now widespread practice of attacking Marx as a "famous historicist" was initiated by Professor Sir Karl Popper in his books, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. II (London, 1945) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1957). For a Marxist refutation, see Maurice Cornforth, *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society* (London, 1968), esp. pp. 129-159, 178-187.

[44] K. Marx and F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 125. Emphasis in original.

[45] R. N. Carew Hunt, *Marxism:Past and Present* (London, 1954), p. 155.

wide of the mark. Marx distinguished between the right of an organisation to expel from its ranks elements that disrupted its work or opposed its fundamental existence. Thus, in 1873, he wrote of the Anarchists that "in *open opposition* to the International these people do no harm but are useful,"[46] in the same way that, six years later, he spoke of the "perfect right" of "the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie" to form their own independent party outside the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, within which they were "an adulterating element."[47]

Within working class parties Marx and Engels favoured the fullest possible democracy for those who accepted the parties' basic aims. "The workers' movement is based on the sharpest criticism of existing society," wrote Engels in 1889 to the Danish Socialist Trier; "criticism is its vital element; how then can it itself avoid criticism, or try to forbid controversies? Is it possible for us to demand from others freedom of speech for ourselves only in order to eliminate it afresh in our own ranks?"[48]

Marx and Engels certainly stood for the use of resolute "dictatorial" measures against reactionary opponents in a civil war or a "pro-slavery rebellion" in which a ruling class refused to submit to a "peaceful and legal revolution."[49] They saw such "authoritarian" methods as fundamentally democratic when they were used to remove obstructions to the carrying out of the wishes of the majority of the people. There are no grounds however for arguing that they would have favoured the suppression of dissenting views as a normal feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which they conceived as extending throughout the whole historical period between capitalism and a classless and stateless Communist society.

From Marx's first article, in 1842, denouncing press censorship, up to Engels' last political exposition in 1895 rejecting the idea of revolutions made in the interest of the majority of the people "by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses"[50], their writings are permeated with a profoundly democratic, anti-élitist spirit.

Lenin and the Party

If some anti-Communist ideologists discover in Marx a source of alleged Communist élitism, it is Lenin's "theory of the Party" that most of them regard as the mainspring of the evil. It is claimed that there is a direct line of descent from Blanqui, through his Russian nineteenth century follower Tkachov and other revolutionary Narodniks, to Lenin and hence present-day Communism.[51] Lenin is said to have developed and applied the Blanquist conception of a highly disciplined, hierarchical organised, conspiratorial body of professional revolutionaries—the Party—that was to concentrate in its hands the decisive control of the Labour movement. Substituting itself for the workers, whom—we are told—Lenin "regarded as too stupid to see where their real interests lay", it strove to "engineer' the revolution for them.[52] From these "Leninist" organisational principles it followed inexorably that, if triumphant, the Bolsheviks would end up establishing, in the name of the workers, their own iron dictatorship. All competing parties and organisations would be suppressed. Hence, we are assured, the one-party system in Soviet Russia and Stalin's subsequent repressions were the logical outcome of Lenin's "élitist" views on the Party. Lenin's victory represented, in the words of Professor Brzezinski, of Columbia, in a recent article in *Encounter*, "the successful 'de-Westernisation' of Marxism; a victory of oriental despotic propensities over occidental democratic tendencies."[53]

The premise for this argument is Lenin's *What*

[46] K. Marx to F. Bolte, February 12th, 1873, *Werke*, 33, p. 566. Emphasis in original.

[47] K. Marx and F. Engels, "Circular Letter", September 17th-18th, 1879, *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 394-395.

[48] F. Engels to G. Trier, December 18th, 1889, *Werke*, 37, p. 328. This important letter, despite Engels' stipulation that it should only be published *in full*, has unfortunately only appeared in English without this part. (See *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 491-492). Engels expressed similar views on inner-party democracy in a number of other letters, written 1890-92. cf his letter to Bebel May 1st-2nd, 1891: "The Party needs Socialist science and this cannot exist without freedom of movement . . ." (*Werke*, 38, p. 94). Also his and Marx's condemnation in 1873 of "unity of thought and action" (a principle inscribed in the programme of Bakunin's Revolutionary Organisation of International Brothers, one of his hierarchically organised secret societies) as a Jesuit conception meaning "nothing other than orthodoxy and blind obedience". (*L'Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste et l'Internationale*, in J. Freymond, Editor, *La Première Internationale: Recueil de Documents*, Geneva, 1962, II, p. 393).

[49] F. Engels, Preface (1886) to K. Marx, *Capital*, Volume I (Allen & Unwin edition, London, 1943), p. xiv.

[50] F. Engels, Introduction (1895) to K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, *S.W.*, I, p. 123.

[51] See, e.g., A. B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks* (London, Fontana Ed., 1969), p. 109; B. D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution* (London, Pelican Ed., 1966), p. 180; L. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1960), p. 4. See, also, Professor G. Sabine's *A History of Political Theory* (London, 1960), p. 673: Lenin's conception of the Party "belonged not to Marx but to the French syndicalist (!) Blanqui". Such assertions were also made by Mensheviks and others during Lenin's lifetime.

[52] H. B. Mayo, *Introduction to Marxist Theory* (New York, 1960), p. 135.

[53] Z. Brzezinski, "The Soviet Past and Future", in *Encounter*, March, 1970, p. 3.

9 *is to be Done?*, published early in 1902, which is so often presented as expounding *the* "Leninist" doctrine of the Party. In fact, it did no such thing. Already in 1907, in his foreword to a collection of his writings, which included *What is to be Done?*, Lenin cautioned against those who made the "basic mistake" of treating the pamphlet "apart from its connection with the concrete historical situation of a definite, and now long past, period in the development of our Party." It was "a controversial correction of economist distortions and it would be wrong to regard the pamphlet in any other light."[54] (Unfortunately this warning has not been included in separate editions of this pamphlet published in English.)

In 1902 Lenin had, as he was to explain, emphasised the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries in an "exaggerated" way because in the prevailing conditions of Tsarist absolutism this was the next step required to establish, out of the amorphous Social-Democratic circles, an effective Marxist party capable of making an impact on the revolutionary struggles ahead. Taking advantage of the "temporary spell of freedom" provided by the 1905 Revolution, this party was quick to broaden its whole composition by a mass recruitment of industrial workers and to build "a legal organisation with an ideal democratic structure, an electoral system and representation at congresses according to the number of organised members."[55]

Democratic Centralism

Lenin's conception of democratic centralism, the Party's basic organisational principle, in no wise envisaged the suppression of dissent in its ranks. It was necessary, he wrote in 1903, that they should "hospitably throw open the columns of the Party organ for exchanges of opinion", affording an opportunity to groups in the Party with divergent views systematically to set them out. The whole Party must have "*all, absolutely all the material* required" to make an "independent judgement" on all the issues in dispute, which should, as far as possible, not be concealed from the outside public, either. He warned against being "too harsh and stiff-necked . . . towards 'anarchic individualism' ", even if to do so involved "a certain departure from tidy patterns of centralism and from absolute obedience to discipline."[56] The next year, in his famous pamphlet on Party organisation, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he wrote: "A struggle of *shades* in the Party is *inevitable and essential*, as long as it does not lead to anarchy and splits."[57] And, in 1909, when Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were still in one party, he explained that "a party can contain a whole gamut of opinions and shades of opinion, the extremes of which may be sharply contradictory."[58]

In Lenin's lifetime the internal life of the Bolshevik Party, even during the Civil War, was characterised by free debate and discussion within the framework of the Party's programme. The leaders of the Party took part in this in the Party press and at congresses, frequently arguing opposing views on major policy issues until these were resolved by a democratic vote. After this it was the duty of all members to carry out majority decisions under the direction of the leading bodies by the membership, whilst having the right to retain their former viewpoint.

In September 1920, in the final stages of the Civil War, the Ninth Party Conference declared that "it is necessary in the inner life of the Party to practise more widespread criticism both of the local as of the central bodies of the Party. . . . It is impermissible to carry out any sort of reprisals against comrades who have different opinions about questions which have been decided by the Party."[59]

The Tenth Party Congress in 1921, which banned factional groupings and platforms, by no means envisaged outlawing controversial debate. On the contrary, it decided to publish a periodical *Discussion Bulletin* and special symposiums, in which this could take place.[60] In addition, on Lenin's insistence, it not only re-elected to the Central Committee Trotsky, Bukharin and others whose platform on the trade union question had been defeated at the congress, but also brought on to it two leaders of the "Workers' Opposition", Shlyapnikov and Kutuzov, as well as V. V. Osinsky, who had been leading another leftist opposition group,

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[54] V. I. Lenin, Preface (September 1907) to the Collection *Twelve Years*, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1960-1970), hereafter *C.W.*, Volume 13, pp. 101, 108. This comment should not, of course, be taken to mean that *What is to be Done* does not also contain much that is of general validity—in particular, its emphasis on the indispensable role of a party guided by the most advanced theory in helping to develop Socialist consciousness in the working class.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 102-105.

[56] Letter to *Iskra* (November 1903), *C.W.*, 7, p. 116. Emphasis in original.

[57] *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (May 1904), *C.W.*, 7, p. 347. Emphasis in original.

[58] "Report on Conference of *Proletary* Editorial Board (June 1909), *C.W.*, 15, p. 430.

[59] *Die Kommunistische Partei der Sowjetunion in Resolutionen und Beschlüssen* (Berlin, 1957), Volume 3, p. 155.

[60] Lenin, Tenth Party Congress (March 1921), *C.W.*, 32, p. 243. The Congress followed Lenin's advice to reject as "far too prohibitive" an amendment seeking to add that such bulletins be issued only by the Central Committee or its Regional Bureaux. (*C.W.*, 42, pp. 283-4).

the "Democratic Centralists". Lenin intended that this should "emphasise our desire to be fair" and give an "expression of comradely confidence" in comrades who had adhered to the opposition.[61] Yet those who seek to show Lenin as the architect of the monolithic party point particularly to this congress in support of their thesis. The facts, which are all too little known, do not support them.

Lenin and Political Liberty

In his revolutionary perspectives Lenin was inspired by the same democratic and anti-élitist principles as Marx and Engels. In common with all Russian Marxists, up to February 1917 he saw the next stage as a bourgeois democratic revolution against the Tsarist autocracy. In leading such a revolution, the working class—constituting a minority of the population—would need to ally itself with the peasant majority. This alliance would be reflected in "the participation and even the predominance of the most diversified representatives of revolutionary democracy" in the government that would come to power on the basis of a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." A workers' government at this stage would be impossible, he argued against Parvus and Trotsky, "because only a revolutionary dictatorship supported by the vast majority of the people can be at all durable."[62] For Lenin, as for Marx, such dictatorship meant "defence against counter-revolution and the actual elimination of everything that contradicted the sovereignty of the people."[63] And he warned: "Whoever wants to reach Socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense."[64]

Like Marx and Engels, Lenin did not see political liberty as an abstraction. It meant concretely "the right of the people themselves to choose all their officials, arrange all kinds of meetings for the discussion of all state affairs, and publish whatever papers and books they please without having to ask for permission."[65] He welcomed the workers' Soviets (councils) when they sprang up spontaneously in the 1905 Revolution, as providing in embryo a new form of state power, which "in the freest, widest and most resolute manner, enlisted all the masses in the task of government." This authority "concealed nothing, it had no secrets, no regulations, no formalities." It was "open to all, it carried out its functions before the eyes of the masses, was accessible to the masses, sprang directly from the masses, and was a direct and immediate instrument of the popular masses, of their will."[66]

Such political freedom presupposed the free struggle of political parties, as Lenin often stressed. Great as were the frauds perpetrated in the contests between them for election to representative institutions, in their absence "the people have much fewer means of exposing the deception and finding out the truth," he wrote in 1912.[67] "In free countries", he insisted five years later, "the people are ruled through an open struggle between parties and by free agreement between these parties."[68]

Winning a Majority

After the February Revolution of 1917 overthrew Tsarism, the aim of passing from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the Socialist revolution could be placed on the order of the day. So long, however, as they remained in a minority in advocating this, the Bolsheviks must confine themselves "patiently to explaining" their point of view and winning support for it. "You cannot disregard the people," Lenin emphasised. "Only dreamers and plotters believed that a minority could impose their will on a majority. That is what the French revolutionary Blanqui thought, and he was wrong. When the majority of the people refuse, because they do not yet understand, to take power into their own hands, the minority, however revolutionary and clever, cannot impose their desire on the majority of the people."[69] Without a majority, not only "among the front ranks of the revolutionary classes" but "in the country generally", there could be "no question of insurrection."[70]

As late as the middle of September 1917, despite the repressive measures taken against his party by

[61] Lenin, Tenth Congress, *C.W.*, 32, pp. 257-8, 260. At the same time the Congress called on all members of the dissolved "Workers' Opposition" to submit themselves to party discipline. (*Ibid.*, p. 260; *K.P.S.U. in Resolutionen*, Volume 3, p. 190).

[62] "Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government" (April 1905), *C.W.*, 8, p. 291.

[63] Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (July 1905), *C.W.*, 9, p. 133.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[65] Lenin, *To the Rural Poor* (March, 1903), *C.W.*, 6, p. 368.

[66] Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* (April, 1906), *C.W.*, 10, pp. 244-5. Lenin reproduced this in October 1920 in his article, "A Contribution to the History of the Question of Dictatorship", *C.W.*, 31, pp. 351-2.

[67] "Political Parties in Russia" (May 1912), *C.W.*, 18, p. 45.

[68] *Lessons of the Revolution* (September 1917), *C.W.*, 25, pp. 227-8.

[69] "Report at Meeting of Petrograd Organisation" (May 1917), *C.W.*, 41, p. 433.

[70] *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* (October 1917), *Selected Works* (Moscow/London, n.d.—1937?), Volume 6, p. 293.

the pro-capitalist Provisional Government, Lenin was seeking a "compromise". The Bolsheviks would work for a government of S.R's (members of the populist peasant "Socialist-Revolutionary Party") and Mensheviks, responsible to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, in which these parties still had a majority. In proposing this, Lenin declared: "*We* have nothing to fear from real democracy, for reality is on our side. . . ."[71]

The Mensheviks and S.R's were not prepared to accept Lenin's proposals and so closed the door to the last possibility of a peaceful revolutionary development. The people were already coming close to desperation in both town and countryside. Peasant revolts had broken out over more than half of the European part of Russia. Meanwhile there was a danger that the bourgeoisie would surrender revolutionary Petrograd to the Germans. Lenin carefully studied the growth of popular support, as shown by election results, and concluded from the end of September that "the majority of the people are on our side." In such a situation it was both possible and necessary for the Bolsheviks to organise an armed insurrection and to take power at once, without waiting for a "formal" majority. History would never forgive them if they did not seize power now, when they were certain of victory.[72]

[71] "On Compromises" (September 1917), *C.W.*, 25, pp. 307-8. Emphasis in original.

[72] "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power" (September 1917), *C.W.*, 26, pp. 19-21. Lenin was more explicit and more exact when he wrote in his Letter to the Central Committee etc. of October 14th that "together with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries" they had "an *obvious* majority *in the country*". (*C.W.*, 26, p. 140. Emphasis in original). See, also, Letter to I. T. Smilga, October 10th, 1917, *C.W.*, 26, p. 71.

Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System (Part Two)

Monty Johnstone

The almost bloodless revolution carried through in Petrograd under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky placed power on November 7th (October 25th) 1917 in the hands of the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. That evening the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met. The Bolsheviks, who had made up only 14 per cent of the delegates at the first congress in June, now comprised 60 per cent. They were joined by the left wing of the S.R.s bringing another 15 per cent of the delegates to give their approval to the uprising and the transfer of all power in Russia into the hands of the Soviets. In the next few months, on a wave of popular enthusiasm, Soviet power was relatively peacefully established throughout most other parts of the country.

The new regime constituted in essence the dictatorship of the proletariat[73], which Lenin saw as "a specific form of class alliance between the proletariat, the vanguard of the working people, and the numerous non-proletarian strata (petty bourgeoisie, small proprietors, and peasantry, the intelligentsia etc.) or the majority of these strata."[74] If, however, we apply Stalin's un-Leninist definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat as leadership "*wholly* and *entirely* in the hands of *one* party, in the hands of our party, which does not and cannot share the leadership of state with another party",[75] it could not logically be said to have existed in Russia from November 1917 to March 1918, when the Bolsheviks shared power with the Left S.R.s.

Multi-Party Soviet System

Far from seeing Soviet power as a one-party system, Lenin frequently argued in the months before the revolution that "only this power could assure a continuous and broad development of the revolution, a peaceful struggle of parties within the Soviets."[76] After the October Revolution, he drafted a decree providing for proportional representation "based on acceptance of the party system and the conduct of elections by organised parties."[77] He continued to argue the superiority of the Soviet system on the grounds that, under it, "if the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all."[78] This approach is the exact opposite of that subsequently adopted by Stalin, who in 1927 argued that the Communist Party could claim to enjoy a monopoly of legality because in 1917 "the working class of the USSR made its *final* selection and accepted the Communist Party as the only party."[79]

Lenin's views on the freedom of the press under Soviet power also presuppose a multi-party system. "Freedom of the press," he wrote in September 1917, "means that all opinions of *all* citizens may be freely published. . . . State power in the shape of the Soviets takes *all* the printing presses and *all* the newsprint and distributes them *equitably:* the state comes first. . . . The big parties come second. . . . The smaller parties come third, and then any group of citizens which has a certain number of members or has collected a certain number of signatures."[80]

When the Bolsheviks were in power they moved a resolution, adopted by the Central Executive

[73] In the first period of Soviet power it was usually described as "the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry".

[74] Foreword (June 1919) to "Deception of the People", *C.W.*, 29, p. 381.

[75] J. Stalin, "The Party's 3 Fundamental Slogans", 6 April 1927, *Works* (Moscow, 1954), Volume 9, p. 217. Emphasis in original.

[76] "One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution" (September 1917), *C.W.*, 25, p. 367.

[77] Draft Decree on the Right of Recall (December 1917), *C.W.*, 26, p. 336.

[78] Replies to Questions sent up at Extraordinary All-Russian Railwaymen's Congress (January 1918), *ibid.*, p. 498. See, also, from C.C. of R.S.D.L.P.(b) to all Party Members (November 1917), *ibid.*, p. 303.

[79] J. Stalin, Interview with First American Labour Delegation (September 1927), *Leninism* (London, 1933), Volume 2, pp. 58-59. My emphasis.

[80] "How to Guarantee the Success of the Constituent Assembly", *C.W.*, 25, pp. 377-8. Emphasis in original.

Committee of the Soviets (CEC) on November 17th, 1917, likewise providing for "the confiscating of private printing presses and stocks of paper and handing them over to the Soviet authorities, both central and local, for the use of political parties and groups in proportion . . . to the number of their adherents."[81]

Professor Sobolev's Article

In his article, "The Origins of the One-Party System in the USSR,"[82] the Soviet historian, Professor P. N. Sobolev, interpreting a multi-party system as a multi-party *government*, disputes the contention that a multi-party system existed in Russia until 1920-21 since other parties were able to function legally till then.[83] By the terms of his definition a "multi-party system functioned . . . only in the period of the *bloc* of the Bolsheviks with the Left S.R.s when the latter formed part of the All-Russian CEC and the Soviet government."[84]

This approach seems to me to obscure the important fact that a one-party government need not in any way entail a one-party system in the usual sense of the term—i.e. one where only a single party is allowed to exist, function and be represented in legislative bodies—as we know from the British political system. By concentrating his whole attention on the question of a governmental "*bloc* with those parties that recognised the October Revolution, the leading role of the working class and its party in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat,"[85] Comrade Sobolev avoids analysing the crucial question of the attitude of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to the claim to legal existence under the dictatorship of the proletariat of parties in disagreement with, and even in opposition to, the Communist Party.

Lenin regarded these two questions as separate. Freedom for other parties, which he favoured, did not at all presuppose that the Bolsheviks must share power with them. Having won a majority at the Second Congress of Soviets, Lenin argued, the Bolshevik Party was "entitled to form the government and it was their duty to do so."[86] However, having already taken over and implemented the land programme of the S.R.s ("as a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the mass of the people even when we disagree with it", Lenin explained[87]), the Bolsheviks sought further to broaden the basis of the government's support among the peasantry by bringing the Left S.R.s into the government. Between November 1917 and March 1918 the latter held seven posts in the Council of People's Commissars.

Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly

By their coalition with the Left S.R.s the Bolsheviks secured majority support for the Soviet government among the people, whose true feelings were inadequately reflected in the Constituent Assembly elected at the end of November 1917. In this the S.R.s emerged as the largest single party, followed by the Bolsheviks, who had obtained about one quarter of the votes.[88] Professor John Plamenatz, not noted for his sympathies for Communism, is right to warn against interpreting this result too much as though it had happened in England. "In the villages," he points out, "the peasants, when voting for the Socialist-Revolutionaries, were not voting against the Bolsheviks, while in the towns the Bolsheviks won an overwhelming victory over the Mensheviks and the middle-class Cadets."[89]

The lists of candidates for the Socialist-Revolutionary Party had been made up before the

[81] J. Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 1917-1918, *Documents and Materials* (Stanford, 1961), p. 220.

[82] *Marxism Today*, April 1969, pp. 106-114.

[83] In his original article in *Voprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.*, No. 8, 1968, Sobolev specifically polemises against another Soviet historian, E. G. Gimpelson, who had argued this in his article, "From the History of the Formation of the One-Party System in the USSR" in *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 11, 1965.

[84] Sobolev, *Marxism Today*, p. 109.

[85] *ibid.*, p. 107.

[86] From the Central Committee (November 1917), *C.W.*, 26, p. 304.. See, also, Speeches concerning the Left S.R.s' Question, *ibid*, p. 289.

[87] Report on Land (November 1917), *C.W.*, 26, p. 260.

[88] Out of 44,433,309 votes cast in 65 (out of a total of 79) electoral districts, the S.R.s obtained 17,942,974, or 40.4 per cent. The Bolsheviks received 10,661,130, or 24 per cent; the Cadets—2,088,121, or 4.7 per cent; the Mensheviks—only 1,144,615, or 2.7 per cent. The remaining votes went to nationalist bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties and various other groups. (L. M. Spirin, *Classes and Parties in the Civil War in Russia*, in Russian, Moscow, 1968, p. 59) Lenin, in his article, *The Elections to the Constituent Assembly and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (*C.W.*, 30, pp. 253-275) uses the figures given by the Socialist-Revolutionary N. V. Sviatitsky, which are drawn from only 54 electoral districts, in which 36,262,560 votes were cast.

[89] J. Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (London, 1961), p. 255. The Bolsheviks, who had the support of the great majority of the Russian workers, received 47 per cent of the votes in Petrograd and Moscow—nearly four times as many as the Socialist-Revolutionaries and slightly more than the combined vote of the S.R.s, Cadets and Mensheviks. The Mensheviks only polled 3 per cent of the total. Nearly half the army voted Communist. (Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.)

October Revolution, which irrevocably split the S.R.s into two separate parties—the Left S.R.s, who supported the revolution, and the Right S.R.s, who opposed it.[90] Only in 5-6 gubernias did the Left S.R.s put up their own independent candidates.[91] The position which emerged with 370 of the S.R.s elected adhering to the Right and only 40 to the Left made the Assembly totally unrepresentative of the feeling in the country. This was clearly shown at the two All-Russian Congresses of Peasants' Deputies in November and December 1917, where the Left S.R.s secured majorities.[92]

The original intention of holding new elections to make the Assembly reflect the will of the people was not carried into operation. Although the effect of a Bolshevik-Left S.R. victory in such elections would unquestionably have been of considerable assistance to the Communist cause in countries with strong parliamentary-democratic traditions,[93] the threat created by the anti-Soviet uprising in the Don Region, led by Generals Kaledin and Kornilov, militated against their being held. The prospects of any assembly where —as Lenin saw it—the Cadet Party intended "to sit and organise civil war at the same time"[94] were hardly promising. Moreover, such elections were felt to be superfluous since power was now in the hands of the Soviets, which Lenin saw as "revolutionary organisations of the whole people . . . incomparably superior to any parliament in the world."[95]

After the anti-Bolshevik majority in the Constituent Assembly had refused to recognise Soviet power and approve the main decrees passed since the October Revolution, Bolsheviks and Left S.R.s agreed on its dissolution. This was promulgated by the CEC in January 1918. The Right S.R.s and Mensheviks succeeded in arousing singularly little enthusiasm among the Russian people for their campaign for the "defence of the Constituent Assembly", whose dispersal they cited as proof of Communist contempt for democracy. Though peasant attitudes to the Soviet government were to fluctuate in the years ahead[96] it would never have won through against overwhelming odds in the Civil War unless, as the late Professor Peter Nettl pointed out, the majority of the population had "opted for the Reds" as the only viable alternative to a Tsarist restoration.[97]

Repression Against the Bourgeoisie

In the first period of Soviet power the multi-party system envisaged by Lenin operated within the framework of the Soviets, in which Bolsheviks, S.R.s, Mensheviks and other smaller groups sharply debated policy. Repressive measures were however taken against the Cadets, the main capitalist party, around which all the bourgeois and monarchist forces had grouped themselves and which was directing the recruitment of officers for the White Guard Volunteer Army in the South.

On December 11th, 1917, Lenin and other People's Commissars signed a government decree declaring that "members of leading bodies of the Cadet Party, as a party of the enemies of the people, are liable to arrest and trial by revolutionary tribunal." Local Soviets were to "exercise special surveillance over the Cadet Party in view of its connections with the Kornilov-Kaledin civil war against the revolution."[98] The few dozen Cadets arrested under this decree were all released within a few months following the defeat of the insurgent forces on the Don.[99] It is interesting that the

[90] Lenin, Report to Extraordinary Railwaymen's Congress (January 1918), *C.W.*, 26, pp. 485-487; I. N. Steinberg, *In the Workshop of the Revolution* (London, 1955), p. 53.

[91] In Petrograd, where there were separate lists, the Left S.R.s received 152,230 votes as against only 4,696 for the Right S.R.s; in the Baltic Fleet they obtained 30,756 as against 13,613, and in Kazan 180, 316 compared with 89,684 for the Right S.R.s (Spirin, *op. cit.*, Appendix No. 1, pp. 417-419.)

[92] The Extraordinary Peasant Congress that opened in Petrograd on 10 November 1917 was attended by 330 voting delegates, of whom 195 were Left S.R.s, 65 Right S.R.s and 37 Bolsheviks. (P. N. Sobolev, Ed., *History of the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1966, p. 277). Out of the 790 delegates at the Second Peasant Congress (26 November—10 December) 350, or 44 per cent, were Left S.R.s; 307, or 39 per cent, were Right S.R.s; and 91, or 12 per cent, were Bolsheviks. (Spirin, *op. cit.*, p. 112).

[93] It is interesting however that Rosa Luxemburg, who criticised the Bolsheviks for not holding new elections to the Constituent Assembly (R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Michigan, 1961, p. 59) was shortly afterwards, in the German Revolution of 1918-19, to counterpose the demand for Workers' Councils to a National Assembly. (R. Luxemburg, "Die Nationalversammlung"—(20 November 1918—in R. Luxemburg, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, Berlin, 1951, Volume 2, pp. 605-6.)

[94] Meeting of the All-Russia CEC (December 1917), *C.W.*, 26, p. 354.

[95] Speech on Dissolution of Constituent Assembly (January 1918), *ibid.*, p. 439.

[96] See Lenin, "The Elections to the Constituent Assembly" (December 1919), *C.W.*, 30 pp. 268-9; Speech at Transport Workers' Conference (March 1921), *C.W.*, 32, pp. 277-279.

[97] J. P. Nettl, *The Soviet Achievement* (London, 1967), p. 65.

[98] Decree on Arrest of Civil War Leaders, in *C.W.*, 26, p. 351. Lenin's speech justifying this decree and the CEC resolution approving it appear in *ibid.*, pp. 353-356.

[99] Spirin, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

decree did not speak of actually *banning* the party, which continued to publish most of its newspapers till August 1918, despite "temporary and special measures" against seditious bourgeois journals. These were decreed on November 9th 1917, when Kerensky was marching on Petrograd with Cossack troops under General Krasnov.[100] In fact it was a sign of strength on the part of the Bolshevik government that in this period it allowed the great bulk of the opposition press to appear with very little interference, even in February 1918, when the German army resumed its advance into Soviet territory.[101]

The disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie, spelt out in the Soviet Constitution adopted in July 1918, "is not a necessary and indispensable feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat," explained Lenin in his polemic with Kautsky. Like so much else in the exceptional circumstances of the Russian Revolution, it had not been proclaimed or planned in advance, but had "*emerged*" in the course of the struggle.[102] It reflected the intransigent position that the bourgeoisie had chosen to take up towards Soviet power. "Nobody drove the bourgeoisie out of the Soviets before or after the October Revolution," emphasised Lenin. "*The bourgeoisie themselves left the Soviets.*"[103] Thus no question of principle was involved whereby, as some would-be Leninists assert today, working class power must necessarily assume institutional forms that exclude the bourgeoisie. "It is theoretically quite conceivable", Lenin asserted, "that the dictatorship of the proletariat may suppress the bourgeoisie at every step without disfranchising them. . . . Nor do we propose our Constitution as a model for other countries All we say is that whoever conceives the transition to socialism without the suppression of the bourgeoisie is not a socialist. But while it is essential to suppress the bourgeoisie as a class, it is not essential to deprive them of franchise and equality."[104]

Right SRs and Mensheviks in Civil War

In the spring and summer of 1918 foreign military intervention and civil war began on a large scale. The young Soviet state found its shrinking borders under attack from all sides. Meanwhile a variety of anti-Soviet organisations—in contact with both allied and German missions—sought to foment discontent and revolt.[105] Not only the Cadet Party but also the Right S.R.s and an important section of the Mensheviks (despite the disapproval of the majority of their central committee) were involved in these plots which the Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (the Cheka) proceeded to uncover.

In May 1918, the Eighth Council of the Right S.R.s, held in Moscow, instructed their party's central committee to "take whatever measures may be necessary"[106] in working "to overthrow the Bolshevik dictatorship and to establish a government based on universal suffrage and willing to accept allied assistance in the war against Germany." An All-Russian Menshevik conference, meeting quite legally the same month in the Soviet capital, agreed on striving to bring down the Bolshevik government. It was however deeply divided on methods. The right wing, led by Lieber, favoured accepting Anglo-French help. The left and centre, following Martov and Dan, persuaded the conference to reject this course and to concentrate on legal action to attain its ends. But their "continuous orgy of equivocal phrases and ambiguous resolutions"[107] only added to the rising difficulties of the Soviet republic.

Right S.R.s—with the support of a number of prominent Mensheviks and local Menshevik organisations—played the leading roles in a number of anti-Soviet governments set up in various parts

[100] Bunyan and Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220. See, also, John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook The World* (London, 1934), pp. 225-228, which carries a lively report of the debate in the CEC, where the decree was approved by 34 votes to 24. Among those opposing were some Bolshevik leaders. So deeply rooted was their party's traditional attachment to democratic freedoms that they rejected such measures against capitalist opponents even in an incipient civil war. This disproves Professor Leonard Schapiro's assertion that "suppression of the opposition was taken for granted by all Bolsheviks." (L. Schapiro, "Putting the Lid on Leninism", in *Government and Opposition*, London, Volume 2, No. 2, January-April 1967, p. 182).

[101] For a different estimate, see Andrew Rothstein, *A History of the USSR*, (Penguin Books, 1950), p. 46, where this is seen as "proof of a tolerance which was as fruitless as that of the Paris Commune."

[102] *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (November 1918), *C.W.*, 28, pp. 271-2. Emphasis in original.

[103] Report on the Party Programme to Eighth Congress of R.C.P. (b), (March 1919), *C.W.*, 29, p. 185. Emphasis in original.

[104] *ibid.*, pp. 184-5. See, also, Insertion for Politica Section of Programme, *ibid.*, p. 125, where the introduction of "unrestricted universal suffrage" is contemplated. (Those disfranchised constituted barely 2 or 3 per cent of the population.)

[105] J. Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December* 1918, *Documents and Materials* Baltimore, 1936), pp. 172-185, 192-196.

[106] *ibid.*, pp. 187-8. Also, Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-161, where the ambiguities of the Menshevik position are discussed.

[107] I. Maisky (at this time a member of the Menshevik Central Committee, from which he was expelled for joining a government of members of the Constituent Assembly at Samara), *The Democratic Counter-Revolution*, in Bunyan, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

of Russia under the protection of foreign bayonets during the summer and autumn of 1918,[108] as well as in insurrections, like that at Yaroslavl in July 1918 financed by French embassy funds.[109] In Baku, at the same time, the Right S.R.s and the Mensheviks voted to invite in British troops.[110]

On June 14th, 1918, noting the precarious position in which the Soviet republic now found itself, the CEC decided to exclude from its membership the representatives of the Right S.R.s and the Mensheviks and urged all Soviets to do likewise. The presence there in that situation of "representatives of parties which were obviously endeavouring to discredit and overthrow the Soviet government" was "absolutely intolerable", declared its decree, pointing to the implication of leading members of these parties in *armed* counter-revolutionary actions.[111] Following this, Right S.R. and Menshevik papers were temporarily closed down.

Left SR Uprising

Although the Left S.R.s had resigned from the Soviet government in March 1918 in protest at the signing of the Brest Litovsk Treaty with the Germans, they had retained their places in the CEC, the Cheka and other Soviet agencies. At the Fifth Congress of Soviets at the beginning of July 1918 their 352 delegates mounted a violent verbal offensive against Bolshevik food policies and the Brest Treaty, to which Lenin calmly gave a point by point reply. It was the Left S.R.s themselves who chose to place themselves outside this constitutional framework, in which they could have continued to function legally as the chief opposition party. After they had been outvoted at the congress, they walked out and embarked on a course of terrorist action. In accordance with a decision of their central committee, the German ambassador, von Mirbach, was assassinated on July 6th in the hope of provoking a renewal of hostilities with Germany. They immediately followed this action by abortive armed uprisings in Moscow and other parts of the country. These included the revolt of Muravyov, the Soviet Commander-in-Chief on the Eastern front.

Such behaviour, at a time of great national danger, could not but produce repressive measures against those involved. A number of leaders were tried and sentenced to up to three years' imprisonment, from which several of them were almost immediately amnestied. These appear to have included Proshyan, who died at liberty in December and for whom Lenin wrote a laudatory obituary despite his leading role in the Moscow rising.[112] The Congress of Soviets called for the expulsion from all Soviets of all Left S.R.s who associated themselves with the assassination and the risings.[113] However, on the proposal of Sverdlov, the Bolshevik Chairman of the CEC, seats on that body—allocated to each party in proportion to its support—would be reserved for representatives of the Left S.R.s who repudiated these acts.[114] The party itself was not banned and held its fourth (and last) congress in Moscow in October. Internal divisions led to the formation of two small breakaway parties favouring co-operation with the Soviet government. They were the short-lived Narodnik Communists, who dissolved to join the Bolsheviks in November, and the Party of Revolutionary Communists, who retained their independent organisation, publishing house and periodicals till the autumn of 1920, when they followed suit.[115]

Its July adventure lost the Left S.R. Party a large part of its peasant support. The drastic fall in its representation from 352 delegates (30.3 per cent) at the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July to only four (0.6 per cent) at the Sixth in November reflect this decline in popularity as well as the administrative measures taken at a time of fierce civil war against those associated with terrorist acts.

Terror—White and Red

In the summer of 1918—at a time when three-quarters of Soviet territory was controlled by anti-

[108] See Bunyan, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6.

[109] *Boris Savinkov pered Voennoy Kollegiey Verkhovnogo Suda SSSR* (Moscow, 1924, pp. 56-59, 69-70.

[110] Lenin, *C.W.*, 28, pp. 20-22. General Dunsterville, who commanded these troops, later revealed that the Right S.R.s had been in touch with him throughout the preceding period of Soviet power. (L. C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, London, 1920, pp. 182, 186.)

[111] Bunyan, *op. cit.*, p. 191. In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (*C.W.*, 28, pp. 276-7) Lenin replies to the criticism of this measure made by Karl Kautsky in his book, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (London, 1919), 84.

[112] "In memory of Comrade Proshyan" (December 1918), *C.W.*, 36, pp. 497-8. This article was excluded from the fourth edition of Lenin's Works, prepared in Stalin's last years. After the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU it was included in a supplementary volume.

[113] *Decrees of Soviet Power* (in Russian), Volume 2 (Moscow, 1959), p. 538.

[114] Y. A. Sverdlov, *Selected Works* (in Russian), Volume 2 (Moscow, 1959), p. 255.

[115] The latter published a *Programme of the Party of Revolutionary Communists* (Moscow, 1919), which criticised the Marxist Communists from the traditional Narodnik standpoint. (pp. 17-21). Whilst "sharply disapproving" of various Bolshevik measures, they thought these should be fought legally within the Soviets and they repudiated the 6 July rising. (pp. 16, 24-27).

17 Soviet forces—S.R. terrorists started resorting to the same methods against leading Communists as they had previously used against Tsarist officials.[116] They assassinated the Bolshevik leaders Volodarsky and Uritsky and seriously wounded Lenin. In response to the white terror developing throughout the country, the CEC on September 2nd launched a "mass red terror against the bourgeoisie and its agents."[117] Virtually all opposition papers were now closed down and rough justice meted out to thousands of enemies of the Soviet government, above all from among the old ruling classes, but also from the ranks of the S.R.s.[118]

Legalisation of Mensheviks and Right SRs

Even now a one-party system was not instituted in Soviet Russia. Both the Mensheviks, at their central committee meeting in Moscow in October 1918, and the Right S.R.s, at a national conference in Petrograd in February 1919, were forced seriously to review their policy. Taking stock of the extreme right-wing dominance that had now asserted itself among the anti-Bolshevik forces, each of them explicitly repudiated any co-operation with capitalist elements and denounced all attempts to overthrow the Soviet government by force of arms. At the same time they continued to voice many of their criticisms of the Bolsheviks.[119] The CEC quickly responded by annulling the relevant parts of its resolution of June 14th in order to readmit all Mensheviks and Right S.R.s except for those groups supporting counter-revolutionary forces against Soviet power.[120] At the same time their papers were allowed to reappear. These measures were taken without any official conditions being imposed.[121]

In the following two years of bitter civil war and famine the Soviet government's treatment of these parties was to vary according to the behaviour of their members in each prevailing situation. It is a crude oversimplification to state, as does the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, that in the civil war "the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Anarchists . . . exposed themselves not only as accomplices, but also as active partners of the counter-revolutionaries, as counter-revolutionary parties."[122] These parties were in fact deeply divided in their attitudes and activities. Lenin's whole approach was based on a recognition of this and on his conviction that they were not a serious enemy. "Our enemy", he stressed, "is the bourgeoisie."[123]

On the one hand, Lenin explained in April 1919, the government would "grant full liberty" to "all those Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries who are really prepared to help us in our difficult

[116] Most of these acts were carried out by individual Right S.R.s and were officially repudiated by their party leadership.

[117] Quoted by E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Volume 1 (London, 1950), pp. 167-8.

[118] See Bunyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-252; Rothstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-7; Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-7. See, also, the recognition by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart (at that time Head of the British Mission in Russia), that in the first months of Soviet power "there was no terror. . . . The anti-Bolshevik papers continued to appear and to attack the Bolshevik policy with violent abuse . . . I mention this comparative tolerance of the Bolsheviks, because the cruelties which followed later were the result of the intensification of the civil war. For the intensification of that bloody struggle Allied intervention . . . was largely responsible." (*Memoirs of a British Agent*, London, 1946, pp. 241-2.)

[119] The Mensheviks' appeal outlining this policy was published in *Pravda* on 26 November 1918. It was that same day favourably commented on by Lenin, who said: "We must meet them half-way." (Speech to Co-operators' Meeting, *C.W.*, 28, p. 198.) Fairly long extracts from the Mensheviks' October Central Committee Theses appear in a critical *Pravda* article by Stalin, reproduced in his *Works*, Volume 4 (Moscow/London, 1953), pp. 136-148. In December 1918, a Menshevik conference specifically condemned groups of the party in the Urals, the South, Archangel and Georgia for coming out against Soviet power, as well as others that had joined the Communists. (Lenin, *C.W.*, 28, p. 471) The Right S.R.s' resolution is quoted in Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 172. Their leader, Viktor Chernov, was to explain: "For the moment . . . we were ceasing all armed struggle against the Bolsheviks, in the sense that we were removing our troops—the troops of the Constituent Assembly—from the front. But not because we had become less hostile to the Bolsheviks, but because to maintain these troops at the front would have meant making them fight for (Whiteguard General) Kolchak and for political and social restoration." (V. Chernov, *Mes Tribulations en Russie Soviétique*, Paris, 1921 pp. 22-23.) The new positions taken by the two parties are documented and discussed in Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-308.

[120] The CEC resolution in respect of the Mensheviks was passed on 30 November 1918 (*Sobranie Uzakoneniy i Rasporazheniy Rabochego i Krestyanskogo Pravitel'stva*—R.S.F.S.R.—1917-1918, No. 926, p. 1145) and that regarding the Right S.R.s on 26 February 1919. (Arthur Ransome, *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*, Glasgow, 1919, pp. 108-110.) In January 1919 Sverdlov publicly threatened the disbanding of local organisations that were hampering the return of the Mensheviks to the Soviets. (Sverdlov, *op. cit.*, Volume 3., p. 124.)

[121] Chernov, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[122] *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1960), p. 341. cf. Sobolev, *op. cit.*, p. 109, who accuses the Mensheviks, S.R.s, Bundists etc. of waging an armed struggle against Soviet power.

[123] Report of Central Committee to Eighth Party Congress (March 1919), *C.W.*, 29, p. 151.

struggle."[124] On the other, it would "wage relentless war" on those who, despite verbal protests against the armed intervention of the allied powers, were fomenting strikes.[125] Nor would these parties be permitted to spread demoralisation in the rear by freely criticising Soviet power "in front of the weary and tormented masses,"[126] at a time when hostile armies on six fronts were driving concentrically towards Moscow.

The situation was now more critical than it had been at the time of the German offensive early in 1918, and Menshevik and S.R. papers were not allowed to last long under these circumstances. The Menshevik organ, *Vsegda Vperiod*, was closed down on February 25th 1919 for an article entitled "Stop the Civil War", a slogan undermining mobilisation against Kolchak's White Guard troops. Lenin proposed that the ban should remain "until the Mensheviks show by their action their resolve once and for all to stand for the defence and support" of Soviet power.[127]

In May 1920 members of the British Labour delegation visiting Moscow attended a meeting of the Menshevik central committee. The party had its own club and premises, as well as 40 deputies (3 per cent) in the Moscow Soviet, including Martov and Dan, and 250 in the Kharkov Soviet. British Labour leaders were able freely to meet the leaders of the Mensheviks, S.R.s and other opposition parties, who complained to them about repressions, whilst in many cases recognising the responsibility that allied intervention must bear for the bad situation. Lenin told the delegation quite frankly that "there would be no freedom either of press or speech for the enemies of the revolution—war is war, and no quarter can be given while the revolution is being attacked by its enemies from within and without."[128]

Last Years of Left SRs

A similarly differentiated attitude was shown towards the Left S.R.s as towards the other two parties. In February 1919 hundreds of their active members were arrested, including their leader Spiridonova, who had been on a tour of factory meetings denouncing the government.[129] Many others went underground to work against the Bolsheviks. From August 1919, however, meetings were held between representatives of the central committees of the Bolsheviks and Lefts S.R.s to discuss the latter's request for legality.[130] As a result of assurances that they did not favour armed struggle against the Soviet government, a small Left S.R. group, led by Steinberg, operated in Moscow in 1920-21, as a legal opposition party. They brought out their own journal, *Znamya*, published books and launched a fighting fund for a million roubles.[131]

Throughout this period Anarchist groups proliferated, though their influence in Russia was never very large. Anarchist premises had been raided in April 1918 and their occupants disarmed. All ideological Anarchists (as opposed to the various criminal elements that attached themselves to them) were quickly released and their daily paper, *Anarkhia*, started reappearing after being banned for a week.[132]

An All-Russian Anarchist Conference in December 1918 showed just how deeply divided they were among themselves on the attitudes to the Soviet government. Anarchist terrorists like those who in September 1919 threw a bomb in to a meeting of the Moscow Committee of the Communist Party were, of course, subject to the fullest rigours of repression by the Cheka. Those who did not oppose the Soviet government were free to meet and publish their propaganda legally. Some of them occupied responsible positions in Soviet institutions and the fighting forces. Those agitating against the Bolsheviks but not resorting to terror or sabotage led a semi-legal existence, subject to periodic arrests and closures of their papers.[133]

Their main strength was in the Ukraine, where uneasy relations existed between the Red Army and the peasant guerrillas under the Anarchist Makhno, who at times controlled wide areas of

[124] Resolution on Report on Situation (April 1919), *C.W.*, 29, p. 273. At the Seventh Congress of Soviets, in December 1919, Trotsky, as Commissar of War, was to "appreciate very highly the fact that other parties, too, parties belonging to the opposition . . . have mobilised a certain number of workers for the army. They have been received there as brothers." (Quoted by I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, London, 1954, p. 447.)

[125] *C.W.*, 29, pp. 272-3.

[126] Report on tasks of Trade Unions (April 1919), *ibid.*, p. 295.

[127] Closure of Menshevik Newspaper (February 1919), *C.W.*, 28, p. 447.

[128] *British Labour Delegation to Russia, 1920, Report* (London, n.d.), p. 56.

[129] I. N. Steinberg, *Spiridonova—Revolutionary Terrorist* (London, 1935), pp. 239-240; Spirin, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

[130] I. N. Steinberg, *In the Workshop of the Revolution*, pp. 187-193, gives extracts from the transcript of these meetings at which the Bolsheviks were represented by Kamenev, Beloborodov and Stasova.

[131] *Znamya*, Organ of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries (Internationalists). Nol 1 (3), April 1920.

[132] Lenin, Interview with *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* (July 1918), *C.W.*, 42, pp. 102, 512. P. Malkow, *Kreml-Kommandant unter Lenin* (Berlin, 1964) pp. 297-313 carries a graphic first-hand account of these raids.

[133] See Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 395-7; P. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, 1967), Chapter 7; V. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (London, 1963), pp. 119-120.

the country. Agreement was however reached between both sides in October 1920 on co-operation against Wrangel's white guard army. It included political clauses providing for an amnesty of all Anarchists and Makhnovites arrested. It guaranteed them freedom to propagate their ideas (but excluding any call for the violent overthrow of the Soviet government) and their right to vote and be elected to the Soviets.[134] It could however not survive the mutual suspicions of Black and White forces and the reluctance of the Soviet authorities, after the rout of the Whites in November, to allow Makhnov's armed bands to continue their independent, uncontrolled existence. A Red Army offensive was launched, which ended in their defeat in August 1921. During the fighting, Anarchists were imprisoned all over the country.

[134] S. N. Semanov, "The Makhno Movement and its Collapse", (in Russian), in *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 9, 1966, p. 56; D. Footman, *Civil War in Russia* (London, 1961), p. 295.

Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System Part Two Completed

Monty Johnstone

The Aftermath of the War

Paradoxically enough, although it was the civil war which led to curtailments in the freedom of opposition parties in Soviet Russia, they were not finally suppressed there till after its conclusion. For Professor Schapiro, of the London School of Economics, this fact is conclusive refutation of Lenin when he "justified the eclipse of his socialist political opponents by an appeal to the argument of self-preservation." In 1921, Schapiro argues, "when wisdom, vision, compromise and moderation might have given Russia the beginnings of normal democratic development, he failed."[135]

Even a superficial glance at the situation in Russia in 1921 shows that, after seven ruinous years of war, conditions were the very antithesis of those in which even liberal bourgeois democratic theory could expect a "moderate" and "normal" democracy to operate. This "background of economic crisis" is succinctly described by Professor Schapiro's friend, Dr. George Katkov, of St. Antony's College, Oxford, as follows: "Agricultural and industrial production had dropped to a mere fraction of what it had been before the Revolution. Losses in human life had been enormous under the combined effect of war, starvation and epidemic. Transport was disorganised to an unheard of degree, and this in the winter of 1920-21 brought with it a critical fuel shortage in the larger cities. The production of oil had fallen to one third, of coal to one sixth, of cotton to one fifth, of flax to one sixth, of sugar-beet to one quarter and of cast iron to one twentieth of what it had been in 1916. The purchasing power of the Petrograd workers' pay packet was down to less than one tenth of what it had been before World War 1. Under these conditions the de-population of the towns was proceeding rapidly and on an enormous scale."[136]

This alarming situation inevitably reflected itself in discontent and despair among all sections of the population. The demobilisation that followed the end of the Civil War, noted Lenin in March 1921, brought about "a new kind of war, which is summed up in the word 'banditism'—when tens and hundreds of thousands of demobilised soldiers, who are accustomed to the toils of war and regard it almost as their only trade, return, impoverished and ruined, and are unable to find work."[137] Peasant revolts were rife in the central and south eastern regions and in Siberia. In Tambov province in 1920-21 about 50,000 peasants, led by the Right S.R. Antonov, formed themselves into an anti-Soviet army that was joined by the remnants of the defeated White forces.[138] Among the hungry, exasperated workers dissatisfaction was reflected in a wave of strikes even in such former Bolshevik strongholds as the Putilov Works in Petrograd. Menshevik, S.R. and Anarchist speeches and leaflets, seeking to make political capital out of the economic grievances, made an impression on workers who had previously rejected these parties."[139]

The Kronstadt Revolt

The culmination of this process came with the Kronstadt Mutiny of March 1921. The sailors (mainly of peasant origin) at this key island fortress protecting Petrograd, seized control of the base, arrested representatives of the fleet command and about three hundred Communists.[140] Associating themselves with the revolts in other parts of Russia, the mutineers proclaimed "the third revolution that will strike the last fetter from the working

[135] L. Schapiro, "The Russian Revolution: Some Neglected Aspects", in M. & L. Kochan, Ed., *Russian Themes* (Edinburgh/London, 1967), pp. 139, 142.

[136] G. Katkov, "The Kronstadt Rising", in D. Footman, Ed., *St. Antony's Papers*, No. 6, *Soviet Affairs*, No. 2 (London, 1959), p. 13. See, also, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1960), pp. 343-4.

[137] Report to Tenth Party Congress, *C.W.*, 32, p. 172.

[138] K. Gusev, *The Break-up of the Left S.R. Party* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 256-7. (In Russian.)

[139] A. Sliepkov, "The Kronstadt Rebellion", in W. Astrov, Ed., *An Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution*, Volume 2 (London, n.d.), pp. 554-5; F. Dan, *Two Years of Wandering* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 113-4 (In Russian); O. Anweiler, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland 1905-1921* (Leiden, 1958), p. 312.

[140] Katkov, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

masses."[141] In an "Appeal to Comrades Workers and Peasants" their Provisional Revolutionary Committee declared: "The Kronstadters have raised the banner of rebellion and are confident that tens of millions of workers and peasants will answer their call. . . . The Kronstadt explosion cannot fail to arouse the whole of Russia and first of all Petrograd. Comrades, arise for the struggle against the Communist autocracy!"[142]

Although there is no evidence that they were responsible for organising what was essentially a spontaneous outburst, the opposition parties, both capitalist and "socialist", wholeheartedly identified themselves with it.[143] In the tense drama being enacted on the Russian stage, whilst hostile foreign powers watched and waited in the wings, "self-preservation" was indeed the issue. The preservation not only of their own leadership but of the fundamental gains of two revolutions demanded that the Bolsheviks suppress the activities of parties that were now openly championing mutiny and revolt,[144] the outcome of which they would be powerless to control. As Isaac Deutscher argued, the Bolsheviks "could not accept it as a requirement of democracy" that they should allow the country to be plunged "into a new series of civil wars just as one series had been concluded."[145] The divided anti-Communist left had no realistic alternative to offer to pull Russia out of her terrible plight. Their negative exploitation of discontent could contribute only to weaken the country further and—though they obviously did not desire this—to pave the way for the return of extreme reaction. This was the lesson of the various ephemeral "socialist" and "democratic" anti-Communist governments of 1918, which were one after another supplanted by strong-arm military dictatorships.

The only basis for democracy to revive in famished, devastated Russia was to get the wheels of the economy turning again. In 1921 the Bolsheviks introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), with its concessions to private production and trade, in order to promote this recovery. They believed that it would be placed in jeopardy by the propaganda of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, which could have turned a necessary retreat into a rout. "If you insist on expressing your political views publicly in the present circumstances, when our position is far more difficult than it was when the whiteguards were directly attacking us," Lenin told them in 1922, "then you will have only yourselves to blame if we treat you as the worst and most pernicious whiteguard elements."[146]

The End of the Opposition Parties

In this period large scale arrests were made of Mensheviks, S.R.s and Anarchists, some of the best known of whom were permitted legally to emigrate. Most of their organisations were collapsing or being suppressed. However, certain Anarchist groups were allowed to go on propagating their ideas. Their news-sheets appeared till 1926.[147] The Anarchist "Voice of Labour" bookshops, which were not finally closed till 1929, brought out several volumes of writings by Bakunin and other Anarchists.[148] The Left S.R.s enjoyed for a while a bizarre, semi-legal status. In the summer of 1921, their official representative abroad, A. A. Shreyder, was issued with a Soviet passport and visa so that he could come to Moscow to report to the central leadership of his party . . . in the Butyrki prison. Having finished his consultations and delivered some public lectures, he packed his bags and returned perfectly legally to Berlin.[149] In 1922 individual Mensheviks, Anarchists, Poale-Zionists (this Zionist Socialist Party existing legally till the mid-20's) and others were still being elected to some Soviets, although their number was decreasing at every election, whilst those of "non-Party" delegates rose.[150] No decree was ever passed

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[141] *Izvestia* of the (Kronstadt) Provisional Revolutionary Committee, No. 6, 8 March 1921, reprinted in *The Truth about Kronstadt* (Prague, 1921), pp. 83-4. (In Russian.)

[142] *ibid.*, No. 9, 11 March 1921, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-1.

[143] See Lenin, *The Tax in Kind* (April, 1921), *C.W.*, 32, pp. 358-9. Also I. Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune* (Duplicated *Solidarity* pamphlet, Bromley, 1967), pp. 27-33, which reproduces Anarchist, Menshevik and S.R. statements on the mutiny.

[144] See, e.g. the resolution of the Tenth Council of the Right S.R.s in August 1921: "The question of the revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship of the Communist Party is placed on the order of the day as a cast-iron necessity." (*Revoliutsionnaya Rossiya*, No. 11, August 1922, quoted by Spirin, *op. cit.*, p. 390.)

[145] I. Deutscher, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

[146] Political Report to the Eleventh Party Congress (March, 1922), *C.W.*, 33, pp. 281-3.

[147] V. Serge, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

[148] P. Avrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 237, 244. See, also, R. Baldwin, *Liberty Under the Soviets* (New York, 1928), p. 144, who reports that at that time the Anarchists still had a bookshop on a main thoroughfare opposite the Moscow University.

[149] Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-9.

[150] Gimpelson, *op. cit.*, p. 30, gives a table showing the party breakdown at All-Russian Congresses till December 1922. A. Rothstein, Ed., *The Soviet Constitution* (London, 1923), p. 119, gives the figures for the Moscow Soviet where, between 1918 and 1922, the representation of the Mensheviks is shown to have dropped from 88 to 3, the S.R.s from 51 to 1 (a Left S.R.) and the Anarchists from 5 to 1, whilst the independents rose from 9 to 207.

making parties other than the Communists illegal.[151]

In the summer of 1922 the leaders of the Right S.R.s were tried and sentenced for conspiracy and participation in a number of counter-revolutionary uprisings and attacks on Soviet leaders.[152] It is noteworthy, as Professor E. H. Carr has pointed out, that "throughout the proceedings it was not alleged that the S.R. Party was itself an illegal institution: evidence was brought against the defendants of acts which under any system of government would have been criminal." The CEC decree, confirming and suspending the sentences, continued to imply, in his estimation, "its recognition as a legal party."[153]

Although severely battered, divided and reduced in size, with many of their members having joined the Bolsheviks, whilst others sat in jail, the opposition parties still continued to exercise some influence in the Soviet republic. The Twelfth Conference of the Bolshevik Party in 1922 found it necessary to devote a special resolution to them, which stressed: "The anti-Soviet parties and tendencies are not yet smashed."[154] It was necessary, it declared, to combat them ideologically, whilst, under the prevailing circumstances, not renouncing the use of repressive measures. The role of the latter should, however, "not be overestimated."[155] By the mid-1920's the last of the opposition parties had disappeared from the scene in the Soviet Union and existed only as émigré groups isolated from the Russian people.[156]

Far Eastern Republic

Whilst a one-party system was coming into existence in Russia, there existed a Communist-led and inspired multi-party state in that part of the Soviet Far East not under Japanese occupation. This was the Far Eastern Republic, created in 1920 on Bolshevik initiative and acting as a buffer between Soviet Russia and Japan. With Lenin's approval elections were held there to a Constituent (later National) Assembly on the basis of universal suffrage.[157] All political groups, including reactionaries, took part in them.

The elections resulted in a parliamentary majority for the Communists (91 seats) and their non-party peasant allies (180 seats), who together formed a government. They faced a parliamentary opposition, which included anti-Communist peasants (44 seats), S.R.s (18) and Mensheviks (13).[158] In April 1921 a constitution was adopted guaranteeing "the right to organise and maintain unions and societies", provided that a court had not ruled that they were pursuing aims punishable under the Republic's criminal code.[159] In November 1922, after Japanese troops had left the Far East, the National Assembly voted to enter the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (R.S.F.S.R.).[160]

Party: State Relations

In the hard-pressed first years of Soviet power, it is not surprising that, as the ruling party, the Bolsheviks should "merge the Party and government leadership."[161] The political problems were accentuated by an acute shortage of loyal, capable and experienced administrators. However, already in March 1919, a resolution of the Eighth Party Congress insisted that "the Party strives to *guide* the activity of the Soviets, not to replace them."[162]

In his Political Report to the Eleventh Party Congress in April 1922, Lenin indicated that the relations between the Party and the government were "not what they ought to be." He personally was "greatly to blame" for letting matters that were properly the concern of the government be "dragged before the (Party's) Political Bureau." The former's prestige had to be raised.[163] The congress underlined in its resolutions the need for "a systematically observed demarcation" between Party and state apparatuses. The Party organisations

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[151] Not till 1936 did the Communist Party's special position receive juridical expression—in Articles 126 (as "the vanguard of the working people" and "the leading nucleus of all organisations of the working people, both social and state") and 141 (where it is the only party named—alongside trade unions etc.—as having the right to put forward candidates in elections) of the new "Stalin Constitution".

[152] *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz* (Berlin), No. 160, 10 August 1922, p. 1024.

[153] E. H. Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-3.

[154] *Die Kommunistische Partei der Sowjetunion in Resolutionen*, Volume 4, p. 108.

[155] *ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

[156] Spirin, *op. cit.*, pp. 392, 394, 399; E. H. Carr, *Socialism In One Country* 1924-1926 (London, 1959), Volume 2, pp. 453-4.

[157] Lenin, Answers to Questions by A. M. Krasnoshchokov (July, 1920), *C.W.*, 42, p. 204.

[158] H. K. Norton, *The Far Eastern Republic* (London, 1923), pp. 152-5; *Large Soviet Encyclopaedia* (Ist. ed., Moscow, 1930), Volume 20, p. 219. (In Russian.)

[159] *The Constitution of the Far Eastern Republic* (Washington, n.d.—1921?), p. 4.

[160] *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1968), Volume 3, Book 2, pp. 549-550. (In Russian.)

[161] Lenin, Political Report to Tenth Party Congress, *C.W.*, 32, p. 177.

[162] *K.P.S.U. in Resolutionen*, Volume 3, p. 63. Emphasis in original.

[163] Political Report to Eleventh Party Congress (March, 1922), *C.W.*, 33, pp. 306-7.

23 were enjoined to "refrain from issuing administrative directives" to Soviet bodies.[164]

Special Historical Circumstances

As we have seen, many of Lenin's statements during the civil war and its aftermath bear a strong "authoritarian" imprint. Without trying to justify everything said and done,[165] there is little doubt that the Soviet state could not have survived without the use of repressive measures. This was recognised by the late Professor Laski, one-time Chairman of the Labour Party, who wrote: "To have admitted the classic freedom of opposition to elements which were prepared to wage civil war upon (the Russian Revolution's) aims, to have given them freedom of speech and association, would have presented the Revolution to its enemies; the history of the Weimar regime is sufficient proof of that."[166] The choice was not between using "democratic" or "dictatorial" methods of government. "The only alternative to Bolshevism", as the American bourgeois historian of the Russian Revolution, W. H. Chamberlin, has pointed out, "would not have been (the Right S.R. leader) Chernov, opening a Constituent Assembly, elected according to the most modern rules of equal suffrage and proportional representation, but a military dictator, a Kolchak or a Denikin, riding into Moscow on a white horse to the accompaniment of the clanging bells of the old capital's hundreds of churches."[167]

Again and again the opponents of Communism select material and quotations from this period to depict Lenin as the legitimate progenitor of Stalin's subsequent repressive rule. Similar statements are used by those in the world Communist movement who wish to condemn as "revisionist" and "anti-Leninist" those Communist Parties advocating a pluralistic Socialist democracy. They all ignore or play down the exceptional historical circumstances prevailing from 1918 to 1922, which forced the Bolsheviks to curtail the freedoms that prevailed during the first period of Soviet power and reluctantly to resort to forms of political repression quite contrary to their original intentions.

The Bolsheviks always stressed the *provisional* nature of such measures as the suppression of hostile bourgeois papers, which would be "removed by a special decree just as soon as normal conditions are re-established."[168] The Party Programme, adopted in March 1919, likewise indicated that "the forfeiture of political rights, and whatever limitations may be imposed upon freedom, are necessary only as temporary measures."[169]

"A Severe Case of Childbirth"

Childbirth may be easy or difficult, wrote Lenin in 1918. The Russian Revolution, breaking out in a war and forced to maintain itself in the midst of a war, was "a *particularly severe* case."[170] The Russians "had to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat in its harshest form" due to the "special conditions" which had given rise to "acute forms of struggle."[171] Other countries, he said in 1919, "will travel by a different, more humane road."[172] Russia had made "the first breach in the wall of world capitalism," he told the Communists of the Caucasus in 1921. They should take advantage of the more favourable international conditions. "Do not copy our tactics," he advised them, "but analyse the reasons for their particular features, the conditions that gave rise to them, and their results; go beyond the letter, and apply the spirit,

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[164] *XI.S'ezd R.K.P. (b), Stenograficheskiy otchet* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 525, 553. These decisions were not contradicted by the statement in Lenin's last article that the "flexible amalgamation of a state institution with a Party institution", seen in the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, would be appropriate "for our state apparatus as a whole". This is sometimes quoted out of context to imply that it refers to an overall amalgamation of Party and state institutions. (See, e.g. R. N. Carew Hunt, *The Theory and Practice of Communism*, Penguin, Ed., Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 192.) In these proposals, which are discussed below, Lenin in fact makes it quite clear that he is referring only to the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, responsible for the control of all state institutions. ("Better Fewer, But Better", March, 1923, *C.W.*, 33, p. 496.)

[165] Lenin was the first to emphasise that mistakes were made under his leadership. (See, e.g. *C.W.*, 28, p. 169; *C.W.*, 32, p. 507). His colleague, Karl Radek, wrote: "When Lenin speaks of his mistakes, he hides nothing, he leads the workers into his own laboratory of thought." (K. Radek, "Lenin", in *Communist Review*, London, May, 1923, p. 23.) Note, also, Lenin's warning against taking him "at his angry words" uttered when he was very tired. (*C.W.*, 42, p. 252.)

[166] H. J. Laski, *Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (London, 1944), pp. 66-7.

[167] W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution* (University Library Paperback Ed., New York, 1965), Volume I, p. 371.

[168] Extract from Decree of Council of People's Commissars, (9 November, 1917), Bunyan and Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

[169] *Programme of the Communist Party of Russia*, in N. Bukharin & E. Preobrazhensky (London, 1924), p. 390.

[170] "Prophetic Words" (June, 1918), *C.W.*, 27, p. 498. Emphasis in original.

[171] Report to Moscow Workers' Meeting (November 1918), *C.W.*, 28, pp. 207-8.

[172] Report to Plenary Meeting of Moscow Soviet (April, 1919), *C.W.*, 29, p. 271.

the essence, and the lessons of the 1917-21 experience."[173]

In 1917 Lenin and the Bolsheviks took power, convinced that they were "*on the eve of a world revolution.*"[174] They believed that they would be building a new society in association with developed industrial countries in the West, where Marx had found the main prerequisites for socialism. When the revolutionary upsurge in other countries died down or was crushed, the Soviet state found itself on its own, confronted with a world bourgeoisie "still very much stronger" than itself.[175] The measures dictated by this position of weakness can hardly be considered a model many decades later for Communist Parties which see "the superiority of the forces of socialism over those of imperialism . . . becoming ever more marked in the world arena."[176] They were taken, moreover, in a backward, beleaguered, war-weary peasant country. By 1921 its small working class, which had led the Revolution, was "largely declassed" and the dictatorship of the proletariat "would not work except through the Communist Party."[177] This was a thoroughly abnormal state of affairs. It reflected in an extreme form the general proposition that Lenin had advanced two years earlier: "In Russia, the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably differ in certain particulars from what it would be in the advanced countries, owing to the very great backwardness and petty bourgeois character of our country."[178]

Nothing could be more contrary to the whole spirit of Leninism than to make a virtue of a necessity by sanctifying measures which—though necessary for the survival of the newly-born Soviet infant in dire distress—were to leave it with reduced powers of resistance to meet serious ailments that were to assail it from other quarters and disfigure it in later life.

Lenin's Pluralism

Lenin was certainly no liberal democrat. He quoted approvingly the famous dictum pronounced by Plekhanov in 1903: "Salus revolutionis suprema lex". (The welfare of the revolution is the highest law.)[179] Yet even when forced to resort to the harshest methods against those combating or undermining the Revolution, Lenin continued to give expression to his deep-rooted democratic convictions and to display marked pluralistic tendencies. This was shown very clearly in the trade union controversy in the Party (1920-21). He emphatically rejected Trotsky's "administrative approach", which called for the incorporation of the trade unions into the state apparatus on the superficially plausible grounds that both represented the workers and that the trade unions could not logically be expected to defend the workers against their own state.[180] Lenin argued that it was "an abstraction" to talk of their having a workers' state. It was a "workers' state with bureaucratic distortions."[181] The workers' organisations had "to protect the workers from their state."[182] The trade unions no longer had to face the *class* economic struggle but the "non-class 'economic struggle', which means combating bureaucratic distortions of the Soviet apparatus, safeguarding the working people's material and spiritual interests in ways and means inaccessible to this apparatus, etc."[183]

When Lenin spoke of the trade unions as "transmission belts," it was in a very different sense from the one that it came to acquire in practice under Stalin as a means of conveying instructions from the Party leadership to the workers to carry out. Lenin had in mind a two-way process whereby the vanguard kept in close contact with the masses, able at all times to judge their mood, aspirations and thoughts and capable, in turn, of winning their confidence "by a comradely attitude and concern for their needs." One of the greatest dangers facing the Party was that it "might run too far ahead" and "fail to maintain firm contact with the whole army of labour."[184] The Communists

[173] To the Communists of the Caucasus (April, 1921), *C.W.*, 32, pp. 317-8.

[174] Lenin, "The Crisis Has Matured" (October, 1917), *C.W.*, 26, p. 74. Emphasis in original.

[175] Lenin, Letter to G. Myasnikov (August, 1921), *C.W.*, 32, p. 505. Lenin points to this fact to argue that in the prevailing circumstances the Soviet government could not permit freedom of the press ("the core and foundation of political organisation") as it would enable the international bourgeoisie to finance a hostile propaganda force in Russia ten times larger than that supporting Soviet power. In July 1919, however, he had challenged capitalist governments to "a contest" taking the form of a free exchange of pamphlets putting the case for their respective social and political systems. (Answers to American Journalist, *C.W.*, 29, p. 519.)

[176] *36 Million Communists Say*. Statement of 81 Communist Parties. (London, 1960), p. 3.

[177] Lenin, Summing-Up Speech on C.C. Report (March, 1921), *C.W.*, 32, p. 199.

[178] "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (October, 1919), *C.W.*, 30, p. 108.

[179] Lenin, "Plekhanov on Terror" (January, 1918), *C.W.*, 42, p. 48.

[180] Lenin, *Once Again on the Trade Unions* (January, 1921), *C.W.*, 32, p. 97; *On the Trade Unions* (December, 1920), *ibid.*, p. 24.

[181] *The Party Crisis* (January, 1921), *ibid.*, p. 48.

[182] *On the Trade Unions*, *ibid.*, p. 25.

[183] *Once Again on the Trade Unions*, *ibid.*, p. 100. Emphasis in original.

[184] Lenin, Draft Theses on Trade Unions (January, 1922), *C.W.*, 42, pp. 381-2.

were but "a drop in the ocean", he said. "We can administer only when we express correctly what the people are conscious of."[185]

Checks on State Power

The Sixth Congress of Soviets in November 1918, consisting for the first time almost entirely (98.1 per cent) of Bolsheviks, took steps to limit the powers of the Cheka, as well as passing a resolution "On Revolutionary Legality." The latter demanded a strict observance of the laws and gave citizens the right to appeal against officials neglecting or violating their rights.[186]

Lenin's concern to provide checks on the central power of the state also found expression in the letters written as he lay ill at the end of 1922. He was anxious, in the new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, about to be constituted, to give the non-Russian peoples "real defence against the genuine Russian Derzhimorda",[187] against "the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great Russian, the chauvinist, in substance a rascal and lover of violence, as the typical Russian bureaucrat is." He felt himself "very guilty towards the workers of Russia for not having interfered energetically enough and sharply enough" against Stalin's proposal to incorporate the other Soviet republics into the R.S.F.S.R. This, he believed, would place the non-Russian peoples at a disadvantage in relation to the Russian state apparatus which "we took over from tsarism and just tarred a little with the Soviet brush."[188] (Less than a week previously, in his famous "Testament", he had expressed his concern at the "unlimited authority" concentrated in Stalin's hands. He suggested that the Party should "think about a way of removing Stalin" from the post of General Secretary, to which he had been elected earlier that year.[189])

"Totalitarianism" . . . and Popular Initiative

Quoting a statement of Lenin's in the summer of 1918 that "we must organise everything", Mr. Bertram D. Wolfe comments: "Thus to the authoritarian trend inherent in an infallible doctrine, possessed and interpreted by an infallible interpreter who ruled an infallible party, from above, infallibly, Lenin added the further dream of an authoritarian doctrine and *apparat* with the determination to 'organise everything, take everything into our hands' —and totalitarianism was born."[190]

It is necessary to look no further than the page from which our prominent American expert takes his quotation to see the downright dishonesty of his argument. Lenin was speaking here of "all the thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of workers and the working peasants", who had "set about building a new Socialist edifice with their own hands." In the towns, he said, the thing was "to organise the factories" and pay attention to the distribution system disrupted by the war. "The workers are learning to do this," he went on, "and are forming central organs of administration . . . the trade unions are becoming the embryos of administrative bodies for all industry. . . . We must organise everything, take everything into our own hands, keep a check on the kulaks and profiteers at every step. . . ."[191] The "we" clearly refers to the "hundreds of thousands" of working people—not to Mr. Wolfe's sinister totalitarian "*apparat*"!

In this, as in so many other of Lenin's speeches and writings is reflected the "faith in the independent revolutionary activity of the masses" and in their "organising abilities"[192] that he had been emphasising since he first saw them roused to "fundamental historic creativeness" in the 1905 Revolution.[193] From the first days of Soviet power, Lenin had proclaimed: "Socialism cannot be decreed from above. Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach; living creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves."[194] In introducing workers' control over production the Bolsheviks "wanted to show that we recognise only one road—change from below." The workers needed to acquire more confidence in their own strength. "Age-old tradition has made them far too used to waiting for orders from above."[195]

The members of the government should be

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[185] Political Report to Eleventh Party Congress (March, 1922), *C.W.*, 33, p. 304.

[186] Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Volume 1, pp. 170-1.

[187] A coarse, bullying police official in Gogol's *Inspector-General*.

[188] The Question of Nationalities or of "Autonomisation" (30 December, 1922), in V. I. Lenin, *Letter to Congress* etc., pp. 22-4. (The translation here is, in general, more accurate than in *C.W.*, 36, pp. 605-6.)

[189] Letter to Congress (24 December 1922), *C.W.*, 36, pp. 594, 596.

[190] B. D. Wolfe, "A Party of a New Type", in M. M. Drachkovitch & B. Lazitch, Ed., *The Comintern—Historical Highlights* (New York, 1966), p. 35.

[191] Report to the Fifth Congress of Soviets (July, 1918), *C.W.*, 27, p. 517.

[192] Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* (March, 1906), *C.W.*, 10, p. 259.

[193] Lenin, "Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government", (April, 1905), *C.W.*, 8, p. 291.

[194] Reply to Question (November, 1917), *C.W.*, 26, pp. 467-9.

[195] Report to Third Congress of Soviets (January, 1918), *ibid*, pp. 467-9.

subject to "sharp criticism". They did "not claim to be infallible", he told the CEC.[196] Socialism could "not be implemented by a minority, by the Party."[197] The minds of tens of millions creating a new society would produce "something infinitely loftier than the greatest genius can foresee," he confidently declared.[198] So much for Lenin's "totalitarian" and "infallible" doctrine!

Combating Bureaucracy

Lenin was particularly disappointed, in March 1919, to have to record that, as a result of the low cultural level of the Russian masses, "the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*", had in fact become "organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole."[199]

The section of the workers who were governing was "inordinately, incredibly small." This exceptionally difficult problem, reflecting traditional Russian backwardness, could only be solved by "prolonged education" and by special measures "to enlist the workers in government"[200], as well as to "revive the Soviets."[201] Lenin had high hopes that the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, formed in February 1920, would play an important role here by gradually drawing all workers and peasants into "the struggle with bureaucratism and corruption in Soviet institutions." As Professor Carr points out, he never wavered in his belief in "direct democracy" as the antidote to the increasing concentration of authority that was taking place in the Soviet state.[202] When the W.P.I. did not prove equal to the task, Lenin proposed that it be reorganised and amalgamated with the Central Control Commission of the Party to form a new, independent, unified organisation for control over both Party and state institutions.[203] At the same time he sought to involve the mass of non-party workers and peasants in purging the Party of "puffed up commissars" and "bureaucrats",[204] recognising that "we have a bureaucracy not only in state but also in Party institutions."[205]

Lenin himself, in the most difficult periods, would go to hear the grievances of the workers and peasants, considering it his "duty to listen to everything said in criticism of the government and its policy." At one such meeting in October 1920 he told the peasants present: "Give vent to all your reproaches; censure us ten times more severely —that is your right and your duty." At the same time he used these opportunities to tell "the unvarnished truth" about the country's position and to ask for co-operation against the counter-revolutionary forces.[206]

Value of Free Discussion

Writing of the legalisation of the Mensheviks and S.R.s at the end of 1918 and beginning of 1919, Professor Schapiro grudgingly admits in his strongly anti-Soviet work, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*: "To some slight extent the Communist concession was probably due to the remnants of faith in the value of free discussion which certain sections of the Communist Party retained for some years."[207] The same "faith" lay at the root of the CEC decree of November 1919 which gave representation with a consultative voice in the Congress of Soviets to "all parties that have taken a decision to mobilise their members for the defence of the Soviet Republic."[208] This enabled the leaders of parties like the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, none of whose candidates had secured election, publicly to speak and table resolutions in opposition

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[196] Concluding Speech at CEC (November, 1917), *ibid.*, p. 317.

[197] Report to Seventh Party Congress (March, 1918), *C.W.*, 27, p. 135.

[198] Concluding Speech at Third Congress of Soviets (January, 1918), *C.W.*, 26, p. 474.

[199] Report to Eighth Party Congress (March, 1918), *C.W.*, 29, p. 183. Emphasis in original. cf. Gordon Leff, in his extremely superficial book, *The Tyranny of Concepts: A Critique of Marxism* (London, 1960), p. 192: "Government for the people is still not government of the people. . . . To Lenin the distinction was meaningless"!

[200] Lenin, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-4.

[201] Letter to Myasnikov, *C.W.*, 32, p. 508.

[202] Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Volume 1, pp. 226, 224.

[203] "How we Should Reorganise the W.P.I." (January, 1923), *C.W.*, 33, p. 482; "Better Fewer, But Better" (March, 1923), *ibid.*, pp. 490-6. Space does not permit a discussion in the present article of the efficacy of these proposals. Their intention is, however, clear enough.

[204] "Purging the Party" (September, 1921), *C.W.*, 33, pp. 39-40.

[205] Lenin, "Better Fewer, But Better", in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Moscow, 1964), Volume 45, p. 397. (This remark is toned down in the English translation in *C.W.*, 33, p. 494.)

[206] Concluding Remarks at Conference (October, 1920), *C.W.*, 31, pp. 334, 337-8.

[207] L. Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (London, 1956), p. 197. This statement contrasts strangely with the thesis put forward elsewhere by Professor Schapiro that Lenin's "promises" shortly before the October Revolution of allowing free discussion were an "exercise in demagogy" that "no one except the more naive Party members could have taken . . . very seriously." (L. Schapiro, "Putting the Lid on Leninism", *op. cit.*, p. 181.) It was, in fact, Lenin in 1918-19 who favoured 'legalising' the Mensheviks and S.R.s against some opposition within his own party!

[208] *Sobranie Uzakoneniy*, 1919, No. 557, p. 597. The decree specifies nine parties apart from the Bolsheviks and adds "etc." at the end of the list.

to the government.[209] When asked what was the point of allowing such hostile declarations, he made it clear that it was very useful that these parties' policies should be brought to the public's notice and their implications scrutinised.[210] Lenin preferred to debate openly with them and to defeat their arguments with the force of logic rather than the logic of force.[211]

At the end of his life, when effectively a one-party system had come into being in Russia, Lenin never sought to justify it as a normal feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, we find him in 1922, in the plan of an uncompleted article, "Notes of a Publicist", raising the question of once again legalising the Mensheviks.[212] Even Zinoviev, who was at this time the Communist leader most keen on referring to the Party's "monopoly of legality", did not represent it in his report to the Eleventh Party Congress (1922) as a permanent characteristic of the Soviet state, but only as a "phenomenon (which) will last for a number of years more."[213]

Not till years after Lenin's death was a one-party system proclaimed by Stalin to be a necessary feature of Socialism. It is hoped that the present article has shown how little this theory of Stalin's —and, even more so, his brutal measures aimed at the suppression of all dissent both inside and outside the Party—can claim to be Marxist. Drawing attention to the deeply democratic nature of Marx' and Lenin's views and the pluralistic elements that they contain, it has also endeavoured to show that any élitist or paternalistic interpretation of Marxism is a distortion of its very essence.

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[209] This arrangement continued up till December 1922. At the Tenth Congress of Soviets held then, there were, however, only five representatives of other parties present: 2 Poale-Zion, 1 Anarchist and 1 Caucasian Social-Federalist. (Gimpelson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.)

[210] Reply to Debate (December, 1920), *C.W.*, 31, p. 519.

[211] See A. Mikoyan in *Labour Monthly*, March 1970, pp. 131-3, for an account of such a debate between Lenin and the opposition at the Seventh Congress of Soviets in December 1919. (cf. Lenin, Concluding Speech, December 1919, *C.W.*, 30, pp. 232-242.) Comrade Mikoyan is, however, wrong in saying that this was "the last battle Lenin and the Communists fought with the Mensheviks and the remnants of right-wing opportunist parties." (p. 132.) In December 1920, at the Eighth Congress of Soviets, the Mensheviks and S.R.s tabled resolutions and attacked the government's policy and were answered by Lenin. (Lenin, Reply to Debate, *C.W.*, 31, pp. 519-524.)

[212] Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Volume 44, p. 505.

[213] *XI. S'ezd R.K.P. (b)*, pp. 391-2.

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