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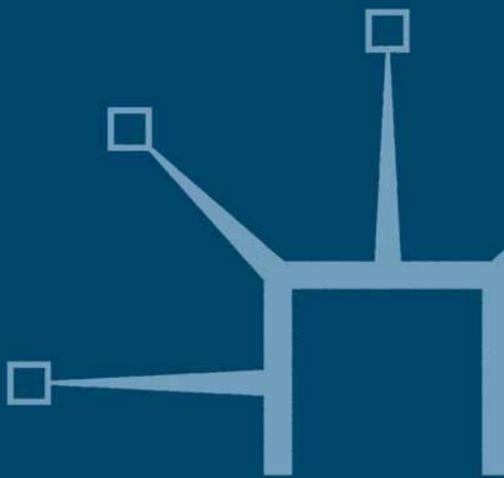
# Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia

Essays in Honour of James D. White

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Edited by

Ian D. Thatcher



# Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia

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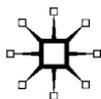
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# Notes on Contributors

**David Brandenberger** is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Richmond. He is the author of the very influential monograph *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (2002).

**Mary Hannah Byers** completed her PhD dissertation under the supervision of James D. White. She is currently Exhibitions Manager at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

**Paul Dukes** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Aberdeen where he taught for many years at the Department of History. A long-standing colleague of James D. White, sharing interests in Scots-Slavs links, he is the author of numerous seminal books, including *World Order in History: Russia and the West* (1996) and *Paths to a New Europe: From Premodern to Postmodern Times* (2004).

**Anya Hillyar** is an Independent Scholar and the co-author, with Jane McDermid, of *Women and Work In Russia, 1880–1930* (1998), *Midwives of the Revolution* (1999) and *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870–1917* (2000).

**John Keep** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto. He is the author of numerous path-breaking monographs, from *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (1963) to *Stalinism: Russian and Western Views at the Turn of the Millenium* (2004).

**Jane McDermid** is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Southampton. She completed her doctoral dissertation under the supervision of James D. White. As well as several co-authored books with Anya Hillyar, she is author of *The Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Victorian Scotland* (2005).

**Christopher Read** is Professor of History at the University of Warwick. A one-time student of James D. White, he is the author of several important and original studies, including most recently *Lenin* (2005).

**David Saunders** is Professor of History at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A long-standing colleague of James D. White, sharing an interest in links between Britain and Revolutionary Russia, his publications include *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801–1881* (1992).

**Jonathan D. Smele** is Senior Lecturer in History at Queen Mary, University of London. A one-time student of James D. White, he is Editor of the

journal *Revolutionary Russia* and most recently co-editor of *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (2005).

**Geoffrey Swain** holds the Alec Nove Chair at the University of Glasgow. A long-standing colleague of James D. White, sharing an interest in the Baltic in the revolutionary period, he is the author of many books and is currently completing a biography of Trotsky.

**Ian D. Thatcher** is Reader in History at Brunel University. He completed his MLitt and PhD theses under the supervision of James D. White. His most recent books include *Trotsky* (2003) and *Late Imperial Russia: problems and prospects* (2005).

**Rex A. Wade** is Professor of History at George Mason University. He is a leading expert on the Russian Revolution and the author of numerous books, including *The Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War* (2001), *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (2000), *Red Guards and Workers' Militia in the Russian Revolution* (1984) and *The Russian Search for Peace, 1917* (1969).

# 1

## Introduction

*Ian D. Thatcher*

Two things immediately spring to mind when mention is made of James D. White: Glasgow, and the Russian Revolution. The city and the event are of course linked through the names of the great Scottish radicals who earned Glasgow the name of the 'Red Clyde' in the first decades of the twentieth century. By the time the young Ayrshire student went to 'the University', Glasgow was still minded towards socialism, even if the revolution seemed a more distant prospect. As an undergraduate White took courses in Russian studies wherever they were offered. Most importantly, he also found the doors of the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies. This had the privileged position of housing its own library and librarians, as well as a range of émigré and homegrown scholars of the USSR and Eastern Europe. It was the Institute that was to be White's home for a PhD. It was also the Institute that offered a tenured position, in which White progressed from Lecturer to Reader and eventually full Professor.

Rudolf Schlesinger, a colourful German ex-communist, whose English was full of inventions ('off-jump' rather than 'off-spring') and whose strong accent was often difficult to comprehend, supervised White's doctorate. This was on the relatively little studied M.N. Pokrovsky. It was a good choice of a PhD, for it enabled White to establish his expertise in the related issues of the Russian Revolution and its historiography. It also contains White's method of historical investigation, 'clarifying doctrines as a philologist might arrange his materials, noting their origin, their branches and their lines of development'.<sup>1</sup> The doctorate is thus a clear exposition of Pokrovsky's intellectual biography and the various influences exerted upon it, as well as a study of the interaction between Soviet politics and Soviet historical scholarship. These themes remain central to White throughout his career.<sup>2</sup>

White quickly established a reputation for highly original article studies that continue to this day. They have made major contributions to several aspects of our study of Russia in the revolutionary period. The defining feature of the article research is the ability to use existing sources (White has not been inside an archive) to overturn established orthodoxy.

## 2 Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia

First, there are studies of 1917, beginning with the February Revolution. Here White's target has often been the Soviet inspired view of the February Revolution as a 'spontaneous', 'unplanned' event. The 'evidence' that is often taken as the starting-point for the interpretation of a 'spontaneous' February is a speech, made by Lenin, in the January of 1917. Its concluding remarks made reference to the possibility that 'We the old shall perhaps not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution'. This phrase has been used by influential historians to present a Lenin completely unaware of the fact that a revolution was about to occur in Russia, that the tsar was to be replaced by a liberal Provisional Government. In actual fact White points out that the phrase is ambiguous. After all, one might read it to suggest that Lenin knew that a revolution was in the offing, but that he might be dead when final victory was assured. Indeed, White demonstrates that there is a compelling case that Lenin was not only aware of a probable liberal revolution in Russia, but that he tried to prevent it! In December 1916 Lenin published a document, 'Disposition No. 1', in the journal *Sbornik Sotsial-Demokrata*. A Committee of National Salvation had issued 'Disposition No. 1' in Moscow in September 1915. Lenin received a copy from the German General Staff. Lenin thought it a timely publication because he hoped to alert the Russian authorities of a major plot to replace the tsar. The potential plot was significant because it was led by the Moscow industrialists who viewed patriotic Moscow as the centre of what could be a unified national campaign to win the war, and because it offered a vision of an alternative Cabinet to the tsar, one that would represent the major social forces: L'vov (landed interest), Guchkov (industrialists) and Kerensky (labour). Lenin was thus able to predict the composition of a government to replace Nicholas II with some accuracy *before* the February Revolution, basing his predictions on material supplied by the Germans. The Germans and Lenin had good reason to be frightened of a government of L'vov, Guchkov and Kerensky; the former because it may have led to a more efficient Russian war effort, the latter because it may have hindered the attempt to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. The link between Lenin and the Germans in the winter of 1916–17 was not 'to encourage a revolution in Russia, as has often been thought, but to try to *prevent* revolution'.<sup>3</sup>

If Lenin could not use his publications to forestall the February Revolution from afar, he had little or no control over events in Petrograd. In another ground-breaking article, White's focus is not émigré revolutionaries or Russia's political elites, but Petrograd's workers. In particular White was interested in a peculiarly Russian form of workers' organisation, the *zemlyachestvo*. This was a collective composed of migrant workers from the same district. It operated as a contact network in a strange environment, in which peasants could maintain the collectivism characteristic of village institutions in the towns and factories. The tsarist authorities permitted the formation of *zemlyachestva* precisely because they were per-

ceived as agents that protected the peasants from becoming fully-fledged workers interested in the urban sins of trades unionism and socialism. White notes, however, that the *zemlyachestvo* were not necessarily conservative bodies, in which the forces of modernity were resisted. They were subject to change and could be a force for radicalism. This was true, for example, of the Sormovo-Nicolaev *Zemlyachestvo*. The members of this collective had developed radical politics in their locality, for example in the engineering works at Sormovo; a radicalism that was transferred into the capital. Above all, the members of the Sormovo-Nicolaev *Zemlyachestvo* were keen to ensure that a revolution in Russia would be a radical workers' revolution that would take Russia out of the war. They considered one of the main obstacles in carrying out this task to be the socialist intelligentsia. These latter were thought of as defencist in outlook and ready to abandon the workers at the first sign of defeat, which happened after the 1905 Revolution. The story of the Sormovo-Nicolaev *Zemlyachestvo* in the February Revolution unearthed by White is one in which workers' political activity clashes fundamentally with Lenin's assumptions. Lenin argued that the worker elite was a conservative force, bought off from radical socialism by the capitalists. The Sormovo-Nicolaev *Zemlyachestvo* showed the worker elite to be the very opposite. They insisted that the emancipation of the working class belonged to the workers themselves, and discussed political questions without the aid of Lenin's ideological guidance. They were Social Democrats nonetheless but of a pre-Leninist kind. Indeed, White illustrates how the *zemlyachestvo* provided a network of kinship and influence that was much broader than that of any narrow political party: 'The *zemlyachestvo* was capable of producing not only leaders, organization and political direction, but also coordination between various political parties and groups, in particular the internationalist element within them'.<sup>4</sup> The *zemlyachestvo* were thus an influential form of working-class organisation in the February Revolution. They have not appeared in its history because subsequent Soviet historiography had no interest in detracting attention away from Lenin and Leninism. By placing key texts of the 1920s in their proper political context, White was able to rediscover the *zemlyachestvo* and demolish the concept of a 'spontaneous February' from another angle.

The movement of the revolution from February to October was as short as it was eventful. The 'Kornilov Affair' is the one of the most consequential and enigmatic episodes in the political drama of the summer of 1917. It was both a mark of the fear in ruling circles of an assault on power from the Bolsheviks, and an indication of the confusion that reigned in the Provisional Government. The prime minister Kerensky and his chief-of-staff General Kornilov engaged in lengthy negotiations about how best to deal with the prospect of a potential Bolshevik *coup d'état*. The resulting fiasco, in which Kornilov's appearance as a 'saviour-dictator' was scuppered by a lack of adequate planning and firm allies, was an important turning-point in the

return of the Bolsheviks as a political force following the repressions and arrests of the 'July Days'. White's first published article sought to answer key questions of the 'Kornilov Affair'. What was the exact nature of the relationship between Kerensky and Kornilov? Why had Kerensky appointed Kornilov to the position of chief-of-staff, against the advice of some military experts? White placed due emphasis on the lack of any shared commitments and understandings between Kerensky and Kornilov. Conflicting ambitions ultimately soured a potential alliance. However, the unique aspect of the interpretation was the emphasis upon the industrial circles of Petrograd and Moscow. The social history of the Russian bourgeoisie has been much neglected but, for White, one must understand its importance and inner-dynamics and conflicts. Kerensky desired the backing of these key industrial groups. It was to please the leading industrialists that led Kerensky to Kornilov. But competition between the industrialists of Moscow and Petrograd meant that they did not unite behind Kornilov. Ultimately, White noted, 'One might justly conclude that the real force which defeated the Kornilovists was not so much the Petrograd workers from without as the mutual jealousies of the financiers from within'.<sup>5</sup>

Leon Trotsky was one notable beneficiary of the aftermath of the Kornilov affair. Released from prison he was able to rejoin the revolutionary fray. White for long sought an answer to what Trotsky's exact role in 1917 had been. The answer is not as easy as it might seem at first glance. For despite an autobiography and a massive three-volume history, Trotsky helps to obscure his own participation in the Great October Socialist Revolution. This, according to White, is because Trotsky's primary concern was polemical, seeking to counter the presentation of himself in Soviet historical writing as anti-Leninist and heretical, who had played no special part in the October Revolution. Trotsky maintained the general interpretation of a planned October contrasting with a spontaneous February typical of Soviet historiography, but changed the heroes to himself and Lenin. The main purpose of the three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution* was to show that, acting independently, only Lenin and Trotsky had reached the same conclusions on the future course of the revolution. And, as White points out, 'if one subtracts the rhetoric, the similes, the historical analogies, the polemical sallies, the cosmic generalizations and poses the prosaic question: what is it exactly that happened in October 1917, one is left with nothing very precise'.<sup>6</sup> This is true above all of Trotsky himself. The *History* does not go beyond what Trotsky had stated elsewhere. On the night of 24<sup>th</sup> October Trotsky shared a room with Kamenev, answering questions and giving orders by telephone. White's inference that, 'while other members of the Military Revolutionary Committee went off to engage in some kind of revolutionary action, Trotsky was left behind with Kamenev – who had opposed the insurrection – to answer the telephone'<sup>7</sup> drew a furious response from one reader. 'From a general at a command

post, giving orders on the basis of the latest incoming information, [White] has reduced Trotsky to a clerk at a telephone answering service!<sup>18</sup>

It was through a careful reconstruction of the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region (CSNR) that met in Petrograd from 11–13 October, that White was to discover what Trotsky's real contribution to a successful revolution had been.<sup>9</sup> Trotsky made several key speeches at the CSNR. He devoted much time and effort to ensuring that the CSNR achieved its goals, for these were important parts of Trotsky's strategy of how the revolution would occur. Trotsky thought that power should pass from the Provisional Government to the Soviets when the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met in Petrograd on 20<sup>th</sup> October (it actually met on the 25<sup>th</sup>). The main obstacle would be a German invasion or the abandonment of Petrograd by the Provisional Government. In order to prevent either threat to the Second Congress, Trotsky and others favoured the creation of a defensive ring around Petrograd. This would prevent any approach on the capital to crush a transfer of power. The CSNR was an important part of this strategy, for it created a plan of coordinated action for the regional soviets around Petrograd. Each regional soviet would follow the recent example of the Petrograd soviet and establish a Military Revolutionary Committee without whose approval troops could not be moved or ordered into battle. This reveals that the planning that went into the October revolution was quite extensive, covering not only the capital but the broader region and military context. As White points out, 'the road to power which lay through the CSNR was Trotskii's road, and...it was the road that led to the desired destination'. And yet when Trotsky composed his *History*, he included only scattered references to the CSNR. This was because Lenin was demanding a very different strategy. Rather than a defensive strategy in which power would be taken by stealth and without bloodshed, Lenin wanted the CSNR to launch an offensive attack on the capital. It was Lenin's rather reckless and dangerous strategy that Zinoviev and Kamenev found so objectionable. Fortunately the revolution occurred according to Trotsky's schema, not Lenin's. White's brilliant detective work around the CSNR answers his own question of what Trotsky was doing in 1917. It also inverts the vast majority of historical accounts of October, in which the revolution occurred because Lenin demanded that it happen.

As well as enriching our understanding of the events of 1917, White has reflected extensively upon its historiography. Several of the articles mentioned thus far involve a careful unpicking of Soviet memoir and historical literature. White is convinced of two points: first, that there was not a time in which Soviet historiography was not dominated by political concerns; and (ii) Western historians have tended to accept the findings of much Soviet historiography in an uncritical fashion. This is illustrated most brilliantly in an article study of the very first Soviet historical interpretations of the Russian Revolution. Here White contests the notion that Soviet sources

published prior to 1924 were relatively free of distortion and falsification. In actual fact he illustrates how the very first Soviet histories established the practice of political concerns dominating how history would be written. The first history of the October Revolution was written by Trotsky during the negotiations with Germany to take Russia out of the First World War. Trotsky's pamphlet, *The History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk*, was intended to refute accusations current in the foreign press, and above all in Germany, that October was a *coup d'état*. It therefore stressed the defensive nature of October, in which the Bolsheviks followed the wishes of the workers. That the Bolsheviks had ended-up dominating the government was no fault of their own, but through an unwillingness of the Mensheviks and others to share power. Trotsky's interpretation was then repeated in John Reed's influential *Ten Days That Shook the World*. This book was produced on the basis of materials supplied by the Soviet authorities. Reed was also a member of the Department of International Revolutionary Propaganda headed by Trotsky. The Trotsky-Reed interpretation had to be dropped however in 1920 when a new political imperative came into play. By 1920 the Bolsheviks had won the Civil War and were seeking to cement their position as head of the world communist movement. Their claim to leadership would rest on the fact that they had successfully carried out a revolution and that this method could be replicated elsewhere. The interpretation of the Revolution would therefore have to change to the product of a highly organised Bolshevik Party: No Bolshevism, no October. This was the line set out by Lenin in '*Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*'; a pamphlet that was distributed to delegates attending the Second Congress of the Comintern. The history of the Revolution henceforth became the history of the Bolshevik faction, and in particular the correctness of Lenin's views. Lenin therefore played a central role in ensuring a Lenin-centred history of the Russian Revolution, well in advance of an official Lenin cult. Indeed in 1920 Lenin established a historical commission, subsequently called 'Istpart', that was given responsibility for collecting all materials relating to the history of October. In this way the party could control how histories would be written by controlling the release of source materials. In 1922 Trotsky was quite content to produce reminiscences of October that met current requirements of a planned revolution. 1922 was also the year in which an official version of February was constructed as a revolution in which the working class could not be victorious because it lacked organisation from Bolshevik intellectuals. This served the political function of refuting the claims of Bogdanov and the Workers' Opposition that the intelligentsia was establishing an authoritarian regime over the working class. For Leninism, there could be no dictatorship of the proletariat outside the leading role of the party intelligentsia. The history of the failure of an unorganised working class in the February Revolution was meant to reinforce this message. White therefore discerned a previously

hidden fact: 'in the practice of manipulating the historical record there was a high degree of continuity between the Stalin era and the first years of Soviet rule'.<sup>10</sup>

White has not only noted the influence of Soviet historiography upon the general historiography of the revolution, he has also sought to break down and work outside the limits set by the Soviet regime. This is evident in several articles that examine the intellectual history of Russian social democracy more broadly.<sup>11</sup> A.A. Bogdanov has been a notable victim of Soviet historiography's practice of writing history from a specifically Leninist viewpoint. Soviet historians ignored the tradition in Russian social democracy represented by Bogdanov because of Lenin's philosophical and political differences with Bogdanov. Given that a documentary study of Russian social democracy's history was so heavily influenced by what was released and written in the Soviet Union, Bogdanov became a marginalised figure in historical works. And yet, as White makes clear in several studies, one cannot understand the history of Russian social democracy if one omits Bogdanov. Indeed, White's most daring conclusion is that it is 'Lenin rather than Bogdanov' who represents 'a deviation from the Russian Marxist tradition'.<sup>12</sup>

For Bogdanov, as for Marx, the key problem facing humanity was its alienation from its social essence. Bogdanov shared Marx's inspiration in German philosophy that sought to reunite a fragmented humanity into an integrated human community. Bogdanov's main intellectual preoccupation was to identify a single underlying principle of all physical and psychic phenomena. And for Bogdanov, as for Marx, the workers would be the group to reintegrate humanity. There is a clear affinity between Bogdanov's conception of Marx and Marx's works that were unpublished in Bogdanov's lifetime. Bogdanov's Marxism is thus much closer to Marx than Lenin's Marxism.

White makes it clear that Lenin, following Plekhanov, broke with much of Marx's central viewpoints.<sup>13</sup> If, for Marx, materialism was about human society and its reintegration under socialism, for Plekhanov and Lenin materialism was knowledge of the economic prerequisites of socialism and the objective laws of historical development that move society from capitalism to socialism. Bogdanov, in contrast, did not participate in the debates between the Russian 'Marxists' and Narodism in which Plekhanov and Lenin's view of materialism was promoted. Bogdanov's evolution into Marxism retained many features of his previous Narodism. Bogdanov was not concerned with the questions of historical stages and economic materialism that dominated the writings of Plekhanov and Lenin in their polemics against Narodism. The type of 'dialectical and economic materialism' espoused by Plekhanov and Lenin that came to be accepted as Marxism was as an anathema to Marx as it was to Bogdanov. To know of these fundamental differences in understanding the meaning of 'materialism' is crucial,

because for White herein lies the explanation of two very different trends in Russian social democracy.

One, epitomised by Lenin, argued that armed with knowledge of an abstract truth, socialist intellectuals would guide the workers to socialism. The other, embodied by Bogdanov, denied the existence of eternal and abstract truths and saw intellectuals as isolated figures engaged in mental activity only. They were therefore part of the fragmentation of society and its division into authoritarian and subordinate groups. The workers were the key to socialism for Bogdanov, for it was precisely the working class and its collectivist spirit that would overcome the social fragmentation typical of a capitalist civil society. Workers were anti-authoritarian and could by their position lead the rest of society towards reintegration. The solutions to contemporary problems were suggested to workers by 'life itself'. It was in the light of workers' demands that Bogdanov, for example, altered his own thoughts and wrote his first work of philosophy. This was thanks to the way in which he had entered the workers' education circles, at the invitation of real workers. Bogdanov was content to play a supplementary role in the socialist movement, aiding the workers' self-movement towards socialism. Intellectuals could not run ahead of the workers and create socialism outside the workers' own sense of what was possible. Hence Bogdanov's continuous efforts to foster an independent working class, taking control of its own liberation. This is evident in Bogdanov's role in the party schools Capri and Bologna before the revolution or in the Proletkult movement after October 1917.

Bogdanov's conception of socialism was thus the opposite of Lenin's. It was more demanding and would take considerably longer to realise. Bogdanov warned of the dangers of trying to create socialism when authoritarian modes of thought typical of a fragmented society were clearly still dominant. White sees Bogdanov as a particularly intelligent critic of the Leninist Bolshevik experiment in Russia, an early observer of its likely dictatorial outcome. For Bogdanov, Lenin's form of Bolshevism embodied an authoritarian principle. Unfortunately, it was Leninist Bolshevism that held power and the winners wrote Marx's true intellectual heir in Russia out of the history books. White's work on Bogdanov helps us not only to comprehend the intellectual biography of an important thinker; it also presents a non-Leninist form of anti-authoritarian Bolshevism that was a more humane alternative to what succeeded.<sup>14</sup>

An obvious feature of the revolutionary movement in the late imperial empire was its multi-national dimension. It is also an aspect that is difficult for historians to grasp, given the demands of working with original source material in so many different languages. White has focused mainly upon the Baltic nationalities. Some essays recount the general history of the Baltic national movements. Here White's special contribution is to illustrate the interrelations between the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian

national movements. They shared, for example, a conception of the nation derived from contemporary German thinking; each movement wanted education in its own language and was keen to show that Baltic culture was on a par with general European culture; in each land class coincided with nationality, with peasants being the Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians; and, finally, each attempted an alliance with the Russian government to counter the influence of the dominant German or Polish culture.<sup>15</sup> Other essays focus on White's special interest in the Russian Revolution and its connection with the Baltic.

In 1905 the Revolution in the Baltic shared some features with developments in Russia.<sup>16</sup> There was the role of the general strike in the major urban centres; disturbances in the rural estates with some baronial manor houses attacked and burnt; and the discussion and dissemination of liberal and radical political programmes. There was also a shared experience of violence, both from the regime and from society. Tsarist troops shot at demonstrators in the Baltic, creating a series of mini-Bloody Sundays. Indeed, the Baltic revolutions, as the Russian, were brought to a halt by military force. Ultimately the alliance between the Baltic elites, most notably the Baltic Germans and the tsarist court, was cemented in particularly brutal repressions against Baltic radicals. At the same time there were aspects of the revolution peculiar to the Baltic, as well as differences between Estland, Livland and Kurland. At a general level, soviets of workers' deputies were not established as in Russia. Socialists in the Baltic thought that the soviets were not needed as an organisational focus since the majority of workers were members of political parties. At a specific level, the Latvians were far more radical and violent than the Estonians and Lithuanians. Politics in Estonia was more liberal than socialist; in Lithuania socialism grew alongside Roman Catholicism that helped to moderate Lithuanian radicalism.

The relationship between the Baltic and the revolutions of 1917 is not unimportant in White's view, but it is not a subject that lends itself easily to detailed historical investigation. This is partly because of the tendency of historical works to be written from a nationalist perspective. Baltic and Russian historians have focused on their narrow histories rather than the interrelations and interconnections between the national groups in the Russian empire. It is also a consequence of the politicisation of historical writing in the Soviet era (the emphasis on Lenin and the Bolshevik Central Committee) and the fact that many potential memoirists were executed in the 1930s. Despite these difficulties White has written several important studies of the Baltic in the revolutionary period.

White has incorporated the activities of Baltic émigrés into his general interpretation of the February Revolution as far more planned than some historians would admit. There was a significant influx of Baltic people and materials into the Russian interior as a result of the German offensive in

1915, adding to already existing migrants. Latvian and Lithuanian radicals formed their own political groups, some of which became district sections of the Bolshevik movement. It was the Latvian and Lithuanian sections of the Bolsheviks that provided much of the organisation of street demonstrations of the February Revolution. What the Latvian and Lithuanian sections of the Bolshevik party did not do was to formulate a clear objective of what the revolution's end point should be. This was a failing of the Bolshevik St. Petersburg committee in general. The Bolshevik St. Petersburg committee did meet on 26<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the general goal, but the police broke up the meeting and arrested its participants. However, White argues that what is significant about the meeting is that it was held in the belief that the Bolsheviks could have an impact on the revolution's outcome; a belief no doubt shared by the authorities who took action to prevent it reaching a conclusion. Had it been allowed to continue there is no guarantee that the Bolsheviks would have decided on the need for a new Soviet, an initiative eventually taken by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. Certainly the Latvian and Lithuanian sections had not altered their view of 1905 of the soviets as unnecessary. A close study of the Latvian and Lithuanian sections of the Bolshevik party in February 1917 therefore reveals the extent of Bolshevik organisation and leadership and its limits. The mistakes made in February were not to be repeated eight months later.<sup>17</sup>

Baltic émigrés moved not only east into Russia but also west to Britain and the United States. The largest part of the Lithuanian community in Britain resided in Scotland, especially in the towns of the central industrial belt. The history of a Baltic community in White's own backyard would be an obvious interest. White has shown how important the Scottish Lithuanian community became to the Russian revolution as well as to Lithuanian radicalism and nationalism. In July 1917, for example, as a result of an agreement concluded in Petrograd, Russian citizens residing in Britain were to be given a choice of returning to Russia to join the fighting there or to be mobilised into the British army. As technical Russian citizens the British Lithuanian community protested against the agreement but its swift implementation saw over a thousand Lithuanians dispatched back to Russia in the summer of 1917. By the time the Lithuanians had reached their destination the Provisional Government had fallen. Moreover, situated in some of the Russian Civil War's most important fronts in Siberia, the exile Lithuanians joined the Reds and made significant contributions to the Red cause. In this way Lithuanian men from small Lanarkshire towns ended up fighting for Soviet power in Siberia.<sup>18</sup>

The Scottish Lithuanian community also plays an important role in the biography of the leading Lithuanian radical Vincas Kapsukas, President of the Soviet Lithuanian republic in 1918–19. Kapsukas escaped from Siberian exile in early 1914. By the end of the year he arrived in Scotland. There

were many stopping off points, including in Poland, where he met Lenin, with whom he was not particularly impressed. Kapsukas saw no need for the Bolshevik-Menshevik split and thought that the Party should be united. Once in Scotland, there began a very eventful period in Kapsukas's political biography. He edited a Lithuanian socialist newspaper; he became acquainted with the leading Scottish radicals, including John MacLean; he joined forces with Russian émigrés such as G. Chicherin who in London had organised a Russian Political Prisoners' and Exiles' relief Committee. In this context Kapsukas wrote exposes of the horrors of Russia's prisons. The themes of these newspaper articles were later expanded in a book, *In the Tsar's Prisons*, published at the end of the 1920s. Above all, Kapsukas voiced an internationalist, anti-war message in as many forums as possible. He also attempted to politicise Lithuanian women, establishing a specifically women's socialist organisation.<sup>19</sup>

While White has succeeded in drawing attention to little known aspects of Kapsukas's biography, it is as President of the short-lived Soviet Lithuanian republic of 1918–19 that Kapsukas is perhaps best known. White has increased our knowledge of the failure of this and similar experiments in the Baltic. In tracing the origin and demise of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic, for example, White brings out the complex interplay of factors relating to the state of the German forces on the Eastern front and in particular the multiple and conflicting levels of decision making between the soldiers committees, the High Command, and the government in Berlin; the desire of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to see the Russian revolution spread westwards; the tensions between the recently formed Baltic communist parties that promoted international proletarianism and Moscow that for tactical reasons wanted a more nationalist agenda; and the role of Baltic and Polish nationalists. The fact that Soviet Lithuania was only established in the eastern part of the country was a consequence of a change in influence over policy. Earlier the German soldiers' committees had decided that the best and most peaceful option for their withdrawal was to allow a transfer of power to local Lithuanian soviets. Following the defeat of the Spartakist uprising in Berlin in January 1919, the High Command won more influence and ordered German troops still in Lithuania to back Augustinas Voldemaras's nationalist regime, which was then able to establish itself in the western part of the country.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent crushing of Soviet Lithuania is largely a story of military force. At a period in which the Red Army was tied up in the Civil War, the militias loyal to the local soviets in Lithuania were short on arms and supplies. Ultimately they could not match the opposing forces led by Germans, Poles, and Lithuanian nationalists.

As well as placing due emphasis upon a complex and changing international context, White also focuses upon the internal aspects of Lithuania's Soviet regime. White sees this as an experiment not so much of Leninist

Bolshevism but of Left communist thinking. The internationalist principles espoused by the Lithuanian leadership, including close ties with the Russians and the presence of Jews in the government, clashed with the predominantly nationalist, anti-Russian and at times anti-Semitic sentiment of the population. The principled nature of the Lithuanian Left communists also brought them into conflict with the country's vast majority of middle peasants. In its agricultural policy, Soviet Lithuania refused to abandon the view that there should be a purely proletarian revolution in the countryside. This left the revolution relying on a numerically small section of the agrarian labour force. As White points out, the 'refusal to come to terms with the middle peasants was eventually to contribute significantly to the downfall of Soviet power in Lithuania'.<sup>21</sup>

White's interest in Russia's borderlands has concentrated mainly on the Baltic. However, he has also extended his view to the Far East, employing his knowledge of Chinese and other Asian languages. In the period 1903–11 White has illustrated how Chinese reformists and revolutionaries were not influenced by events in Russia. Indeed, Chinese radicals interpreted events such as the 1905 Russian Revolution through the prism of Chinese conceptions. In this way they distorted the real significance of Russian developments, seeking support only for pre-existing views of what needed to be undertaken in China. There are several factors that explain the limited impact of Russian revolutionary thought and practice on Chinese contemporaries. There was little direct contact between the two movements. Few Chinese knew Russian. Chinese students acquired knowledge of the history of the Russian revolutionary movement at universities in Japan. The ideological differences between Russian revolutionaries and their stress on economic and social matters were not replicated in the Chinese revolutionary movement. Indeed, class as such was not a major concept in Chinese revolutionary thought. The main concern of Chinese radicals was the issue of national consciousness; they differed only in how best to promote a national reawakening. Chinese reformists sought the establishment of a constitutional monarchy as the best way to safeguard China from economic domination from the western powers. Chinese revolutionaries argued that China needed to overthrow the alien Ch'ing dynasty, an act that in and of itself would resolve the issue of national strength. It was only after the collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty that Chinese radicals developed new interpretations of the Russian revolutionary movement.<sup>22</sup>

The level of interaction between Soviet and Chinese communism was radically different in the latter half of the twentieth century. The Chinese revolutionaries post-1945 tended to accept a Moscow-centred view of communism so that, for example, the version of communism presented in Stalin's *Short Course* was accepted in an uncritical fashion in official Chinese publications. In the 1980s, however, the Chinese developed a different reading of Bukharin's thought than that promoted during Gorbachev's

*perestroika*. This had little to do with a disinterested study of Bukharin's thought and the context in which it was produced. Chinese scholars began a re-evaluation of Bukharin in closed-circulation journals in the 1970s as the Chinese Communist Party sought justification for market-orientated reforms with a communist pedigree. Chinese interpretations of Bukharin, even when they reached a broader audience in the 1980s, stressed the Leninist credentials of Bukharin's economic proposition that the path to a planned communist economy lay through a transition of market relations. Furthermore, Chinese studies on Bukharin stressed that Bukharin did not envisage fundamental political reform; the dictatorship of the proletariat would be maintained in Bukharin's model. A Chinese reading of Bukharin signaled an intention to pursue economic reform without political liberalisation. In the USSR, in contrast, Bukharin's rehabilitation was part of the opening-up of the past to various interpretations; it was one aspect of the CPSU's renunciation of its monopoly on truth. Pluralism in the historical discipline accompanied the CPSU's ending of its role as the vanguard of Soviet society. Although the Chinese and Soviet re-evaluations of Bukharin took place at different tempos and in different contexts, White considers that the Chinese may well have come up with a more believable interpretation of Bukharin's thought. Bukharin's differences with Stalin were more economic than political. Indeed, in a conclusion that will be uncomfortable reading for those who are convinced that China is on an inevitable road to economic and political pluralism, White reasons:

The Chinese interpretation of Bukharin serves as a reminder that the Western identification of economic liberalism and political pluralism was not a conception that Bukharin shared; and Chinese practice suggests that there is no compelling reason why it should be true.<sup>23</sup>

White began to publish monographs relatively late in his academic career. The first was written at the request of a publisher, who wanted a unique and maverick, although general account of the Russian Revolution. He chose wisely in White. Reviewers could be bemused by this history, complaining mainly about the lack of reference to secondary works.<sup>24</sup> This is to miss the point of White's approach. For White, the best way to make an original study is to focus on primary sources, particularly those that have been overlooked. Given linguistic skills, he could incorporate sources that were little known, but which helped to place the revolution into a much broader context. The textbook included the findings of White's article-based research, as well as a concluding chapter that charts the historical writing of the Revolution, pointing out how and when the major interpretations and misrepresentations were produced. It is the best one-volume introduction not only to the main events of the Russian Revolution but how to study the Russian Revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The next monograph to be published is in many ways the most important and cherished of White's scholarly endeavours. *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism* was some 20 years in the making. It is a monumental work of meticulous research, in which White traces the origins and development of Marx's thought to its incorporation in a distorted form in Plekhanov's version of Marxism or 'dialectical materialism'. It ties together many of the conclusions reached in individual article studies, particularly on the nature of Russian Marxism, in a grand overarching framework, looking at the relevant aspects of the history of political thought from the late eighteenth- to the early twentieth-century. Great care is taken to understand the terminology as it was used at the time; there is no modern reading back into the past. Scholars of Marxism have rightly praised White's achievement.<sup>26</sup> It addresses three main themes. The intellectual heritage out of which Marx's ideas developed, most notably illustrating how the importance of Romantic thinkers became obscured, largely thanks to the Young Hegelians. Second, to trace the evolution of Marx's studies, noting in particular the importance of his work on Russian economy and society and how this led him to modify or abandon the idea of the inevitable universality of capitalism. Finally, to establish how Plekhanov adopted aspects of Marx's thought that Marx himself was abandoning. Moreover, Plekhanov's influential conception of 'dialectical materialism' was in fact the antithesis of Marx's ideas, for whereas 'Marx placed real human Society at the centre of his system and made it the motive force of history, "dialectical materialism" made human nature a variable, and placed the driving force of history outside man'.<sup>27</sup> *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins* is the most profound examination of its subject in the English language based upon an outstanding knowledge of primary materials. It displays White's talent for the exposition of complex ideas in their full intellectual context to its greatest extent.

It is somewhat ironic that given White's view that it was Lenin that represented the perversion of Marxism in Russia that he should add to the monographs on Lenin rather than write a volume study of Bogdanov or Pokrovsky. To this extent White himself fell victim to the Lenin cult. The publisher wanted a book on Lenin for a series in 'European History in Perspective'. On the other hand, White was extremely well qualified to make an original contribution to the stock of books on Lenin. He had recently made important background discoveries such as the real significance of Aleksandr Ulyanov's (Lenin's brother) involvement in the attempt to assassinate Alexander III in 1887 and of Alexander's influence on the young Vladimir's political development.<sup>28</sup> There was also the long-standing interest in Lenin's intellectual thought, including White's correction of the common misconception that Lenin had formulated the phrase 'the chain of imperialism breaks at its weakest link' (this belonged to Bukharin).<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, a work on Lenin made sense as a natural exten-

sion of *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins*. It was after all Lenin who continued the Plekhanov-inspired interpretation of Marxism, with profound consequences for subsequent understandings of Marxism once Lenin was head of the Soviet state and the Soviet inspired world communist movement.<sup>30</sup> Although White admits the central role that Lenin played in twentieth-century history, there is a biting critique of Lenin's practice and theory of revolution.

As a thinker, White sees Lenin as uninterested in producing all-round and all-encompassing analyses. Lenin was concerned only with 'evidence' that suited the current purpose at hand. In *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), for example, Lenin omits to mention the peasant commune and its economic impact because he excludes any discussion of 'social institutions'. Lenin's researches not only give a very inaccurate picture of the structure of the Russian economy and its dynamic, it also contains the seeds of Lenin's mistaken assumptions of peasant life, that tables of inequality amounted to class stratification in the countryside. Similarly, in his political struggles, Lenin was content to construct one-sided interpretations of his opponents' case so as to more easily demolish them in harsh polemics. Lenin never fully and fairly answered nor addressed a rival's point of view, as, for example, in the misrepresentation of Bogdanov's philosophy in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (1908). Indeed, Lenin's political alliances went from cooperation to eventual alienation and hostility in exactly such polemics, a sign that Lenin 'could not tolerate rivals'.<sup>31</sup>

Lenin's failings as a thinker and leader did not bode well for a Bolshevik-led experiment in Russia. This came about not because of Lenin's genius or even because of a political organisation that Lenin had created. Lenin's plan of revolution was not followed. The people who actually conducted the revolution belonged mainly to the Mezhraionka body that had only recently joined the Bolsheviks: 'In view of the Mezhraionka affiliations of these key figures in the October revolution, to speak of a "Bolshevik" seizure of power may be something of a misnomer'.<sup>32</sup> Once power had been arranged for him, Lenin led a government that quickly degenerated into a regime of repression and terror. This was because Lenin had no clear idea of how to construct socialism, or because the plans that he did have were inoperable. The gap between policy and reality that should have led to Lenin's downfall was bridged by bodies such as the Cheka and by policies such as the elimination of basic civil liberties and the ban on factions within the Bolshevik party.

Lenin's positive reputation had to be guaranteed by none other than Lenin himself. A key turning point was 1920. Lenin's pamphlet *Left-Wing Communism. An Infantile Disorder* presented the history of the October Revolution as the history of a Bolshevik party that had existed since 1903. An institute of party history was set-up to guarantee that Soviet historical scholarship and its publications would not challenge the version of history

promoted by Lenin. At the Second Congress of the Communist International of the same year Lenin elaborated 21 conditions of entry that required foreign communist parties to follow a Leninist, Bolshevik form of organisation. For White, 'Lenin was in effect imposing on foreign communist parties not the pattern of the Russian revolution, but of a mythical revolution that had not occurred anywhere'.<sup>33</sup> It was an incredibly effective strategy for the 'Lenin legend' created by Lenin to be accepted and followed by Western as well as Soviet historians. The great contribution of White's scholarship is that it helps to 'clear away the confusion that Lenin and his successors have created'.<sup>34</sup>

The essays presented here in White's honour pay tribute to his method by reproducing the spirit of his intellectual endeavours: to challenge orthodoxy through a critical reading of primary materials. They are written by former students, by those whose themes touch upon some of White's central interests, and given White's reluctance to travel (he has not visited the United States), by admirers from afar.

John Keep and Jane McDermid offer two contrasting approaches to the study of terrorism in the Russian liberation movement. Keep focuses largely upon the impact of terror in 1905, but he also concludes with a fascinating comparison of terrorism now and then. McDermid charts the rise and fall of revolutionary heroine. Both Keep and McDermid tackle the problem of ethics and terror tactics. David Saunders and Rex Wade address key historiographical questions of the Russian Revolution. Saunders adds to the increasing emphasis on the importance of World War I in ending tsarism, placing himself in the 'McKean' rather than the 'Haimson' camp.<sup>35</sup> Wade adds to the increasing interest in the significance of the Constituent Assembly,<sup>36</sup> arguing that its dissolution in January 1918 marks the end of the Russian revolution. Geoffrey Swain examines one of the most famous but obscure issues in Trotsky's political biography; what was the People's Commissar for War's contribution in the Civil War? Swain also helps us to understand why Trotsky lost to Stalin in the power struggle following Lenin's death. The technocrat Trotsky was no match for the party man Stalin. Christopher Read and McDermid and Anya Hillyar take up White's challenge to rethink Lenin beyond the Lenin legend. Read's concern with the 'historical' over the 'mythical' Lenin results in a more ordinary, more fallible Lenin, close to what Robert Service has recently achieved in a biography of Stalin.<sup>37</sup> McDermid and Hillyar highlight Krupskaya's own preference for 'behind-the-scenes' work to explain why she remained in her husband's shadow and why female Russian Marxists contributed to the continuation of gender roles. Jonathan Smele and Paul Dukes bring out the shock caused to international relations by the Bolshevik revolution. Mary Hannah Byers offers a fascinating account of the imposition of 'dialectical materialism' at the State Tretyakov Gallery. David Brandenberger takes us back to the beginning, with the most up-to-date account of why and who

started the anti-Pokrovsky campaign. The continuing relevance of White's interests and his historical method is clear.

## Notes

1. James D. White, 'Preface' to *M.N. Pokrovsky and the Origins of Soviet Historiography* (Glasgow University, 1972).
2. White went on to publish two further articles on Pokrovsky. See, James D. White, 'Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties', *Critique*, 1(1), 1973, pp. 42–54; James D. White, 'The origins, development and demise of M.N. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Russian history' in Ian D. Thatcher (ed.), *Late imperial Russia: Problems and prospects* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 168–88.
3. James D. White, 'Lenin, the Germans and the February Revolution', *Revolutionary Russia*, 5(1), 1992, p. 18.
4. James D. White, 'The Sormovo-Nikolaev *Zemlyachestvo* in the February Revolution', *Soviet Studies*, 31(4), 1979, p. 501. The findings of this article became part of a broader discussion some nine years later. See: Michael Melancon, 'Who Wrote What and When?: Proclamations of the February Revolution in Petrograd, 23 February–1 March 1917', *Soviet Studies*, 40(3), 1988, pp. 479–500; James D. White, 'The February Revolution and the Bolshevik Vyborg District Committee (In Response to Michael Melancon)', *Soviet Studies*, 41(4), 1989, pp. 602–24; D.A. Longley, 'The Mezhraionka, The Bolsheviks and International Women's Day: In Response to Michael Melancon', *Soviet Studies*, 41(4), 1989, pp. 625–45; Michael Melancon, 'International Women's Day, the Finland Station Proclamation, and the February Revolution: A Reply to Longley and White', *Soviet Studies*, 42(3), 1990, pp. 583–9.
5. James D. White, 'The *Kornilov* Affair – A Study in Counter Revolution', *Soviet Studies*, 20(2), 1968, p. 205. White returned to the theme of the Russian bourgeoisie in James D. White, 'Moscow, Petersburg and the Russian Industrialists. In Reply to Ruth Amende Roosa', *Soviet Studies*, 24(3), 1973, pp. 414–20. The political role of the Moscow industrialists is also of obvious importance to the article 'Lenin, the Germans...discussed above'.
6. James D. White, 'Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*', *Journal of Trotsky Studies*, 1, 1993, p. 13.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 17, fn. 35.
8. Paul N. Siegel, *Journal of Trotsky Studies*, 4, 1996, p. 130.
9. James D. White, 'Lenin, Trotskii and the Arts of Insurrection. The Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region, 11–13 October 1917', *Slavonic & East European Review*, 77(1), 1999, pp. 117–39. This important article is reprinted in Rex A. Wade (ed.), *Revolutionary Russia. New Approaches* (London, 2004), pp. 187–210.
10. James D. White, 'Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution, 1918–24', *Soviet Studies*, 37(3), 1985, p. 350.
11. This section is to focus on White's work on Bogdanov. There is also an interesting study of Lev Mechnikov. Mechnikov exerted some influence on Plekhanov, but because the implications of his thought were more applicable to the liberal cause in Russia, his work in general has suffered from neglect. See James D. White, 'Despotism and Anarchy: The Sociological Thought of L.I. Mechnikov', *Slavonic & East European Review*, 54(3), 1976, pp. 395–411.
12. James D. White, 'The First *Pravda* and the Russian Marxist Tradition', *Soviet Studies*, 26(2), 1974, p. 204.

13. For a brief account of how Plekhanov subverted Marx but nevertheless became a major source for the interpretation of Marxism see James D. White, 'Marx and the Russians: The Romantic Heritage', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 2, 1983, pp. 51–81; James D. White, 'Plekahnov, Georgii Valentinovich (1857–1918)' in Edward Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Volume 7 (London, 1998), pp. 451–6.
14. James D. White, 'From Karl Marx to Bogdanov', *Co-existence*, 15, 1978, pp. 187–206; James D. White, 'Bogdanov in Tula', *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 22, 1981, pp. 33–58; James D. White, 'Bogdanov, Alexander Alexandrovich' in Paul D. Steeves (ed.), *Modern Encyclopedia of Religions in Russia and the Soviet Union*, vol. 4 (Gulf Breeze, 1992), pp. 137–42; James D. White, 'Sources and Precursors of Bogdanov's Tektology' in John Biggart et al. (eds), *Alexander Bogdanov and the Origins of Systems Thinking in Russia* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 25–42.
15. James D. White, 'Nationalism and Socialism in Historical Perspective' in Graham Smith (ed.), *The Baltic States. The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 13–40; James D. White, 'The origin of the national movements in Russia's Baltic provinces in the latter half of the nineteenth century', *International Politics*, 33, 1996, pp. 67–83.
16. James D. White, 'The 1905 Revolution in Russia's Baltic provinces' in Jonathan D. Smele and Anthony Heywood (eds), *The Russian Revolution of 1905. Centenary perspectives* (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 55–78.
17. James D. White, 'Latvian and Lithuanian Sections in the Bolshevik Party on the Eve of the February Revolution', *Revolutionary Russia*, 3(1), 1990, pp. 90–106.
18. James D. White, 'Scottish Lithuanians and the Russian Revolution', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 6(1), 1975, pp. 1–8; James D. White, 'Lithuanians in Scotland, 1900–1920', *Coexistence*, 29, 1992, pp. 199–210.
19. James D. White, 'Vincas Kapsukas and the Scottish Lithuanians', *Revolutionary Russia*, 17(2), 2004, pp. 67–89.
20. James D. White, 'National Communism and World Revolution: The Political Consequences of German Military Withdrawal from the Baltic Area in 1918–19', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46(8), 1994, pp. 1349–69.
21. J.D. White, 'The Revolution in Lithuania 1918–19', *Soviet Studies*, 23(2), 1971, p. 195.
22. James D. White, 'Early Encounters between the Revolutionary Movements of Russia and China (1903–1911)', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 1, 1983, pp. 5–36.
23. James D. White, 'Chinese Studies of Bukharin', *Soviet Studies*, 43(4), 1991, p. 745.
24. See, for example, R.B. McKean's review in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47(4), 1995, pp. 717–18.
25. James D. White, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921. A Short History* (London, 1994).
26. Vincent Barnett, 'White's Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism', *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*, 18A, 2000, pp. 311–18; Michael Levin, 'From Marxism to Communism: A Review Article', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49(8), 1997, pp. 1519–28; David McLellan in *Political Studies*, 46(1), 1998, pp. 214–15.
27. James D. White, *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 365.
28. James D. White, "'No, we won't go that way; that is not the way to take": The Place of Aleksandr Ul'ianov in the Development of Social-Democracy in Russia', *Revolutionary Russia*, 11(2), 1998, pp. 82–110. In this important article

White brings out the broad connections the would-be assassins had with the wider revolutionary movement. The failure and consequences of the failed assassination also led to a change in revolutionary tactics, to that of peaceful propaganda amongst the workers. The social democratic movement that Lenin was to join had already resolved to abandon the sorts of tactics advocated by Aleksandr Ulyanov.

29. James D. White, 'Theories of Imperialism in Russian Socialist Thought from the First World War to the Stalin Era', *Co-existence*, 30, 1993, pp. 87–109.
30. One reviewer of *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins* even chastised White for ending his account of Soviet Marxism with Plekhanov. Should he not have extended his account at least to Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, especially given Neil Harding's favourable evaluation of this Lenin text? (Levin, 'From Marxism to Communism', pp. 1523–4).
31. James D. White, *Lenin. The Practice and Theory of Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 68.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
35. For more on this see Thatcher (ed.), *Late Imperial Russia*.
36. See for example Nikolai N. Smirnov, 'The Constituent Assembly' in E. Acton *et al.* (eds), *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution* (London, 1997), pp. 323–33.
37. See for example R. Service, *Stalin* (London, 2004), pp. 603–4.

# 2

## Terror in 1905

*John Keep*

### I

On 4 March 1905, just a hundred years ago, the grand duke Sergei Alexandrovich, uncle to the tsar and governor-general of Moscow, was crossing Senate Square in the Kremlin in his carriage when suddenly a young man approached. Ivan Kalyaev, a young poet aged 28, son of an army NCO and a Polish woman, was known to his friends as author of religious poetry which blended Nietzschean and socialist ideas. But for three years he had been a member of the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (PSR) 'Combat Squad', and it was in this capacity that he entered history, for the bomb he threw utterly destroyed the target vehicle. The grand duke's head was severed from the rest of his body and rolled some way off, to be mocked by youths in the crowd that quickly assembled. The public reaction to the killing was one of indifference, or even approval, for Sergei had made himself unpopular in Moscow by his repressive policies. He symbolised the Romanov dynasty's increasing isolation from 'society' after a year of unsuccessful warfare against the Japanese, and especially in the wake of the 'Bloody Sunday' fiasco two months earlier.

Kalyaev, who was wounded in the attempt, was taken into custody, tried and sentenced to be hanged. He seems to have expected such a fate, for when the grand duke's widow, Elizabeth, came to his cell and suggested interceding on his behalf he politely rejected her offer, saying he preferred to die: here presumably his reading of Nietzsche made itself felt. The grand duchess, who possessed a moral high-mindedness rare among the Romanovs, subsequently entered a convent and devoted herself to charitable causes – which did not, alas, prevent her from being shot by the Bolsheviks in 1918, along with most other members of the former ruling dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

This spectacular terrorist *coup* was the prelude to hundreds of others during the revolutionary years 1905–7, directed against less eminent targets. But I do not wish to exaggerate the significance of the terrorist

threat in Russia at that time. Political assassination was less important than mass action – strikes and demonstrations by workers and national-minority activists, peasant riots and arson of landlords' estates – that was to a large extent guided by structured organisations (left-wing political parties, soviets, trade unions).

But terror was not just an incidental factor either. The assassins achieved their stated purpose of disorganising ('destabilising') the absolutist regime. It was so weakened by pressure from below that Nicholas II was forced, against his will, to yield much of his autocratic power by issuing the Manifesto of 17 October 1905, which promised civil liberties and constitutional rule. But this concession created a situation that deprived terrorism of its *raison d'être*. Later attacks were directed less frequently against symbolic representatives of state power than its humble servants, such as policemen, as well as porters, guards, bank cashiers and so forth. This trend showed that the terrorists had ceased to be high-minded idealists, if indeed they ever were, and were in many cases scarcely distinguishable from common bandits. They lost the support they had initially enjoyed among liberally inclined members of the educated public; having forfeited legitimacy, they were reduced to a marginal phenomenon, on the defensive against the forces of 'law and order' in a country that had now embarked, however hesitantly, on a constitutional experiment.

In February 1905 Adriana Tyrkova, in later years a prominent figure in the Kadet (Constitutional Democratic) party, noted in her diary that 'the Tsar should be killed to stop him throttling Russia'.<sup>2</sup> Such attitudes were common at the time in 'society', so great was the contempt for autocracy; it found expression in acts of benevolence towards terrorists, such as harbouring 'illegals' seeking to escape police surveillance. As late as January 1907 the Kadet leader Paul Milyukov rejected prime minister P.A. Stolypin's demand that the Kadet's formally renounce terrorism in exchange for legalisation of its status.<sup>3</sup> This was a mistake, as Milyukov later admitted, since it led to the premature dissolution of the II Duma by a virtual *coup d'état* that signalled a monarchist comeback and the end of the 'first Russian revolution'. Neither the liberals, in the centre of the political spectrum, nor the socialists on the radical left saw the choice of violent, as distinct from peaceful, methods of struggle as a matter of principle, which with a century's hindsight we can see that it undoubtedly was. In 1905 progressives considered that violence was a natural, justified response to a brutal and repressive autocratic regime; moral considerations were dismissed as irrelevant.

Of course it is always wrong to judge historical actors from a later perspective; we have to look at them in their contemporary context. And in the generally peaceable and optimistic Europe of the early twentieth century enlightened people tended to assume that violence, both within and between states, was on the wane thanks to progressive political and

social changes. Violent methods of struggle might be a regrettable necessity in the continent's more backward regions like Russia or the Balkans, where obscurantist regimes held sway, but in the more advanced countries of western and even central Europe the drive for human betterment could and should be carried on by more civilised means, such as parliamentary or trade-union action. This self-assured, patronising assumption would be rudely shaken in 1914.

Among recent Western historians of Russia's 1905 revolution the American scholar Anna Geifman stands out for her innovative revisionist approach. Seeking to 'demystify' revolutionary terrorism, to dispel the romantic aura that for long enshrouded it, she has delved into the sources more thoroughly than anyone before her and shifted the landmarks in interpretation of the subject. Whereas most earlier writers were prone to accept at face value the radicals' own self-estimation, to look on them sympathetically as courageous fighters for social justice, the current trend is to view the revolutionaries as dangerous utopians and to see merit in efforts to maintain public order irrespective of the cost. Such a 'policeman's outlook' reflects contemporary concerns in an age of terrorism and is refreshing up to a point; it has yielded several useful studies of the tsarist political police, or Okhrana;<sup>4</sup> but it entails a risk that we may lose our sense of historical perspective. It smacks of prejudice to write off the radical socialists as egoists or deviants, concerned above all with gratifying their lust for power.<sup>5</sup> There were indeed psychopaths in the radical camp, but should one take their behaviour as normative and play down social and political factors in accounting for its success in winning popular support? The revolution's 'seamy side', the resort to criminal behaviour that was so pronounced in 1906–7, was in my view less a product of inbuilt psychic failings than of frustration at the failure to transform the country's socio-political order. In sum, while a dose of scepticism may be in order we also need balance and human sympathy – such as one finds, for instance, in Orlando Figes's splendid *A People's Tragedy*.<sup>6</sup>

It is notoriously difficult to say just what terror(ism) is,<sup>7</sup> but I would plead for it to be limited to 'violent individual or group action deliberately designed to kill or harm persons seen, rightly or wrongly, as members or supporters of an oppressive ruling establishment, or to raise funds for such a purpose'. This narrow definition would rule out, say, death or injury inflicted during street fighting between strikers and Cossacks (this might be described, fashionably, as 'collateral damage'). Terror is thus a specific form of political violence, and not just another term for it. Study of such violence is perfectly legitimate, but this is a different, much broader, topic. More contentiously perhaps, I would also rule out the popular term 'state terrorism', which is fine in polemic but not really fitting in scholarly inquiry; it is better to call this simply 'repression'. So by definition terror(ism) is something that comes from below, from enemies of the established order.<sup>8</sup>

## II

In addressing the terrorist problem in 1905, we naturally think first of the agrarian PSR, formed clandestinely in 1901, and the most important radical party in terms of numbers of adherents and impact on events. But there is a risk of deformed vision here, in so far as the number of victims of PSR terrorism, although considerable, was only a part (and probably the smaller part) of the total number, as we shall see in a moment; the PSR was only one player in the game. It set up the famous Combat Squad (*Boevaya Organizatsiya*) as a secret autonomous unit within the party, a kind of conspiracy within a conspiracy. Supposedly this was under control of the Central Committee (CC), but the latter could seldom impose its authority effectively. In principle the CC decided on the targets and left it to the Combat Squad (CS) to make all the practical arrangements: timing, weaponry, tactics and so forth.<sup>9</sup>

The PSR leaders were deeply divided as to the merits of terrorist acts, and the CC changed its mind on several occasions, notably calling a truce after the October Manifesto but repudiating it at its First Congress in January 1906; another temporary suspension followed during the first session of the State Duma (April–June 1906). The line taken on terror was ambivalent. The relationship between the CC and the CS is somewhat akin to that between Sinn Féin and the IRA, although in the Irish case the ‘mother party’ operates legally, which was not the case in Russia, and clandestinity made effective control virtually impossible.<sup>10</sup> The nexus of the relationship was money: the CC collected funds, notably from wealthy sympathisers such as Maxim Gorky or Nikolai Rubakin,<sup>11</sup> as well as from working people, and allocated a certain portion to the CS, whose members were not above pocketing some of it to meet their own needs; the accounting system seems to have been very lax, as is only to be expected in a clandestine party.

The CS’s first *coups* in 1901–4 had a spectacular impact. The victims included several governors (little tsars in their province), one minister of Education, and two successive ministers of Interior, D.S. Sipyagin and V.K. Plehve. This produced a state of panic at the heart of the bureaucracy. Plehve in particular was most unpopular and his elimination evoked a positive, indeed exalted, response in ‘society’.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes the assassin managed to escape, as did Ye. Dulebov, who in 1902 killed the governor of Ufa, N.M. Bogdanovich. At the same time, as Geifman rightly reminds us, a number of attempts were unsuccessful. The elderly Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, escaped the fate marked out for him by the PSR and died peacefully in his bed.<sup>13</sup>

It was now that the terrorists learned to perfect their technique. They acquired conspiratorial apartments where they could prepare their explosive devices, or hole up in when pursued; they worked in small groups to spy out their putative victims’ movements, and had several agents ‘on

station' so as to remain flexible and call off an action if they noticed they had been spotted by police 'surveillants' (*filery*). The favourite weapon was now no longer the revolver, as in the 1870s, but the bomb, and several Squad members had learned enough chemistry to make 'infernal machines' – even though occasionally they went off prematurely, killing the activist concerned (as happened to M. Shreider in the Hotel Bristol, St. Petersburg, in February 1904).

These initial successes were partly due to inefficiency on the part of the 'security services', if one may use the anachronistic modern term, for at the time the police apparatus was delightfully simple. This was an age when townspeople moved about in horse-drawn carriages and the telephone was still a rarity. Plehve had an eight-man bodyguard, but contemporaries thought this excessive.<sup>14</sup> The entrance to the St. Petersburg Okhrana building was open to all and sundry, such as undercover agents reporting, so their movements could be watched by the revolutionaries – and they were probably better at this than the poorly educated *filery*, of whom there were anyway far too few. Their main job was to keep watch at the terrorists' clandestine rendezvous (apartments, but more especially tea-rooms or taverns). They tended to be older and less 'street-wise' than their foes; the reports they filed were often banal, of limited use to the detectives in charge.

These officials were certainly more professional than their predecessors in the 1870s – they now kept a card index of suspects, for example – thanks to a reform pushed through in the 1890s by Sergei Zubatov, who displayed unusual initiative in penetrating and covertly controlling the revolutionaries. In May 1903 the Okhrana scored a major success by arresting, at Kiev railway station, the CS's principal activist, M. Gershuni, known to his comrades as 'the tiger of the revolution',<sup>15</sup> but by and large the agency reacted to events instead of trying to forestall them, which would have required a larger staff. In 1905 there were only 64 officers in the Special Department, whose job was to keep track of revolutionaries' movements.<sup>16</sup> On the empire's western border the controllers were mainly concerned with catching smugglers rather than subversives, who could get in or out of the country without much trouble.

This brings us to the key and still disputed issue of the role played by Evno Azef, the celebrated 'double agent' – if that is really what he was. The traditional picture we have of him, largely from police chiefs A.I. Spiridovich and V.A. Gerasimov as mediated by B.I. Nikolaevsky,<sup>17</sup> is of a clever manipulator of others, who worked simultaneously for the Police Department and the CS, of which for a time he was actually in charge as Gershuni's successor. Occasionally he would betray a comrade and then eliminate some leading functionary so as to keep up his revolutionary credentials. This image may need revision. In a new biography, Geifman advances the theory that Azef was no more than a cowardly egoist who

remained loyal to his police masters – one of whom (P. Rachkovsky), however, did not trust him and suspended him for a time from duty.<sup>18</sup> As realists they accepted that Azef could not tell them all he knew about terrorist operations, and they did not always act promptly on his tips – hence Sergei's assassination. This interpretation rather strains the evidence, and other writers on the subject (J.W. Daly, K.V. Gusev, M. Hildermeier, P. Koshel, W. Laqueur) adhere to the conventional view. A key point is that Azef could not be sure that his police handlers would be sufficiently careful in using information he provided; if, for instance, they arrested 'prematurely' someone he had denounced, Azef would very soon be identified as the source of the leak and be put to death by his comrades. Readers of spy stories will appreciate his predicament in being unable to trust his own side. Azef had good reason to fear betrayal, since a senior police official (A.A. Lopukhin) was indeed 'turned' and leaked secret information back to the revolutionaries, and this is why eventually, in 1908, he was exposed.<sup>19</sup>

The last word on the man has yet to be said. If Geifman is right, and he was indeed loyal to the police, then we must give the Okhrana high marks for efficiency: thanks to this highly placed secret agent (and another spy, N. Tatarov), they managed to paralyse centrally directed terrorism by the PSR at the crucial juncture. For after the assassination of Sergei no more top-ranking individuals fell victim to attack by the CS during the rest of 1905 or, indeed, later. (In April 1906 Admiral F.V. Dubasov, who put down the Moscow insurrection in December 1905, survived an attempt on his life, although his ADC was killed).<sup>20</sup>

The total number of casualties among officials from February 1905 to May 1906 was just over 1000 (1068 or 1075), of whom 204 were of middling or senior rank.<sup>21</sup> For example, on 28 April the CS's Nikiforov killed the police chief in Nizhniy Novgorod, and a month later his opposite number in Kiev was wounded. His wife died from the shock, but he survived to write the most informative early account of the struggle against terrorism. It was not the CS but the Maximalists, a breakaway group, who were responsible for the calamitous attack on prime minister Stolypin's villa in August 1906, which killed 27 and wounded 70 persons (including his son and daughter), but by this time the focus had moved to low-level operations carried out under the auspices of *local* PSR committees or Anarchist groups.

The PSR's central leadership directly authorised only about 5% of all these attacks, though it gave political cover, so to speak, for them, knowing that it could not check this so-called 'factory' or 'agrarian' terror, i.e., assaults on business men, landlords and so on. The CC looked on all this with a mixture of concern and approval, mostly the latter. The more extreme advocates of violence within the PSR formed a separate group, the 'Union of SR Maximalists'.<sup>22</sup> Led by M.I. Sokolov, they were responsible not only for the attack on Stolypin's home but also for several robberies,

so-called 'expropriations', one of which, in the spring of 1906, netted 800,000 roubles. These funds came in handy for attracting new members now that highly-placed donors had become rarer. The local groups were sometimes known as 'brotherhoods' or 'flying squads'. The targets, as mentioned earlier, were now as a rule junior officials, guards hired to protect landlords' estates, foremen, shop- and tavern-keepers, or, last but not least, bank cashiers, who were killed not because of anything they might have done but simply because they had ready cash in the till.

Maureen Perrie offers some data on the age structure and social composition of these groups.<sup>23</sup> Terrorism was definitely an affair of adolescents and young adults. Out of 73 individuals whose age is known, 16 were under 19 and another 33 under 25, or over two-thirds of the total. In 1905 the average age was only 20! As for social origin, out of a larger sample of 179, ten were schoolboys or – girls, and another 13 students; roughly one-third were of middle-class or intelligentsia origin and most of the rest working-class. There was a surprisingly large share of women, such as a schoolgirl named Galetsky, who tried to kill a policeman at Nezhin (Nizhyn), or L. Ezerskaya, who wounded the governor of Mogilev<sup>24</sup> – both of them evidently Jewish.

Seen geographically, about 70% of the attacks were carried out in the western regions of the empire. The areas worst afflicted stretched from Finland and the Baltic provinces through Russian Poland to Bessarabia and Transcaucasia. In each of these areas terrorist activities had specific features that have yet to be studied systematically.<sup>25</sup> National allegiance was clearly important: Armenians, Poles, Finns and Jews each had plenty of reasons to resort to violence against the central power. The Armenian Dashnyaks (Unionists) had long been engaged in terrorist operations in the Ottoman empire. From 1904 on they put this experience to use against the tsarist authorities, *inter alia* blackmailing wealthy fellow nationals to provide money and killing those who refused. Baku was yet another city where the governor fell victim to a bomb (May 1905). His name, Prince Nakashidze, indicates that he was a Georgian and so particularly vulnerable in this city, riddled as it was by ethnic tensions.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most ethnically mixed city in the empire was the port city of Odessa, which, along with Batumi, served as an entry point for weapons smuggled in from the Balkans. Russian terrorists forged contacts with fellow extremists in Bulgaria and elsewhere who backed the cause of Macedonian autonomy. But the differences between Russia and the Balkans appear to have been more significant than the similarities. Macedonian terrorists, in so far as they cared about ideas, were little interested in the social issues that loomed so large among Russian radicals; they were better organised, usually in *cetas*, groups of 15 or more, and had established strong roots in various village communities; above all, they were far more likely to serve extraneous (Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian) interests.<sup>27</sup>

Returning to the Odessa scene, the Jewish element in the population was particularly active, for although the influential Jewish workers' organisation popularly known as the 'Bund' had dropped its initial endorsement of terror, its local cadres were of another mind. This has to be recognised because it shows that there was *some* substance to the ultra-right stereotype of the revolution as the work of non-Russians, especially Jews, a charge to be considered in a moment. The small towns in western and southern Russia that formed part of the Jewish pale of settlement experienced a great deal of terrorist activity; politically, most of those involved appeared to have followed the Anarchists. In Russian Poland one socialist party, the PPS, advocated terrorism on principle, while the other engaged in it sporadically.

This latter group was Social-Democratic by ideological affiliation. It is important to realise that, since party-political allegiances were extremely tenuous, a number of Social Democrats were attracted to terror, regardless of Marxist ideological constraints. These were anyway none too strict in the case of the Bolsheviks, whom Lenin explicitly urged in the summer of 1906 to form 'small groups of five or three' to wage an energetic armed struggle on the people's behalf.<sup>28</sup> This tendency was most marked among local committees in the Urals, but the phenomenon was nation-wide. In Odessa one SD, Vasiliï Podvysotsky, got tired of waiting for capitalism to mature, or so he said, and with some comrades formed an independent combat squad which robbed the local rich<sup>29</sup> – and so became effectively an Anarchist.

The Anarchists' role in revolutionary terrorism has traditionally been understated.<sup>30</sup> These ultra-extremists numbered in all about 5000 to 7000, but had several thousand more sympathisers. There were three principal tendencies, the most violent being the 'Individualists' and the 'Communists', whereas the Syndicalists were ambivalent about terrorism; each tendency contained several sub-groups, for it was in the nature of Anarchists to fragment. The 'Black Flag' flew in Warsaw, Bialystok, and Vilnius in the west as well as in Yekaterinoslav and Odessa in the south; it was in the latter city that Syndicalists succeeded in blowing up several steamships and killing their captains.<sup>31</sup> Of particular interest are the so-called 'motiveless' terrorists (*bezmotivniki*), who preached and practised random violence against anyone whom they deemed 'bourgeois' and thus a class enemy. They targeted not just specific individuals but places, such as restaurants, where their foes might be likely to meet. One of these was the Café Libman in Odessa, bombed in December 1905. Today this sort of atrocity brings to mind the Palestinian Hamas or Hizbollah.

To convey the flavour of the times, it is worth quoting from a pamphlet put out after this deed, addressed 'to all working men and women':

On 17 December there was a thunder clap! The Anarcho-Communist bombs tore into the lair of the bourgeois, a place where they had grown fat on money stolen from the workers, where they indulged in luxury

and relaxed, while hundreds of thousands went hungry, were homeless, ragged and forgotten. For them this place of gluttony turned into a place of death... The Libman café, ... where the workers' blood was turned into tasty dishes for the enjoyment of bloodsuckers, ... should speak louder to workers than the words of all those Red shouters (i.e., SDs and SRs).<sup>32</sup>

In fact the café was patronised by intellectuals rather than businessmen.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly at this point indiscriminate terror does indeed degenerate into banditry. Denizens of Russia's criminal underground, former jailbirds or vagabonds joined the revolutionary movement because it offered the prospect of easy loot under cover of a veneer of respectability. Some thieves were recruited because they had experience with cracking safes.<sup>34</sup> In so far as the victims were chosen arbitrarily, or sequestered funds appropriated for the perpetrators' own ends, it is legitimate to consider such activity purely criminal, whatever fancy political label the activists concerned may have adopted. We get a foretaste here of the banditry endemic in Ukraine in 1918–19, when the partisan bands of atamans Nikifor Grigorev and Nestor Makhno temporarily wrought havoc over entire regions. Geifman provides much intriguing detail on the operations of these obscure local groups, but is inclined to press the charge of criminalisation too far. It should not serve as a substitute for historical analysis, for in all political systems only a thin line distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate conduct. In the Russia of 1905–7 it might be best to speak of a 'terrorist scene' (a term taken from the theatre that reflects many perpetrators' self-dramatisation) – a stage which people drifted on to or left at whim, driven on to it by material interest as much as by ideology, and off it by arrest or fear of vengeance from the far right.

### III

Quite early on the violence of the left engendered a riposte by counter-revolutionaries. The evocative label 'Black Hundreds' conjures up images of gangs of baton-wielding thugs firing from cover on columns of demonstrators or wrecking and plundering Jewish homes and shops. This counter-terrorism was in origin a 'gut reaction' at street level rather than an organised movement, although the first such group, 'Russian Assembly', appeared as early as 1900 and so predated the first major terrorist *coup*. By 1905 there were several contenders for leadership: the Monarchist party, the League of St. Michael and (the best known) the Union of the Russian People (URP).<sup>35</sup> These succeeded in attracting a large if loose following, estimated by the Police Department (early 1908) at around 360,000<sup>36</sup> – perhaps too high a figure that includes sympathisers, indeed anyone prepared to resist actively what was regarded as provocation by radicals, or for that matter by the establishment.

The most intriguing aspect of 'Black Hundred-ism' is its ambivalent relationship with the powers-that-be. These men (there were few women!) saw themselves as patriots and monarchists. They advocated a strong, ethnically homogeneous state power, even though in practice their activities undermined respect for the legal order and embarrassed the government. This paradox or contradiction – A. Bokhanov calls it a 'hopeless symbiosis'<sup>37</sup> – prevented the Rightist movement from evolving into outright fascism, although it is not far-fetched to see it as proto-fascist: there are ideological similarities, notably anti-Semitism (but no *Führerkult*), and the same focus on street violence.<sup>38</sup> The Russian Rightists' strength lay in the timid endorsement they received from certain officials in the administration, especially at local level. They also enjoyed the sympathy of some senior officials and even the tsar himself, who did not conceal his friendly feelings for A.I. Dubrovin, a physician and founder of the URP, while simultaneously (e.g. in communications to governors) giving formal sanction to the official line that such activities were illegal and should be repressed. Prime minister S.Yu. Witte and his eventual successor P.A. Stolypin were both antagonistic towards the extreme Rightists (who indeed marked out the former as a potential target, but botched the assassination attempt), whereas P.N. Durnovo, Interior minister in 1905–6, was personally close to Dubrovin.<sup>39</sup>

The Rightists' terror was diffuse in the selection of targets, being directed against intellectuals (especially students) as well as ethnic aliens, in the first place Jews, whom they blamed for all the empire's ills. Instances of specific targeting were the assassination of two liberal Jewish Duma deputies, M.Ya. Herzenstein and G.G. Iollos, both of whom had conspicuously non-Russian names. Herzenstein, a distinguished scholar and a leading Kadet economist, was actually Orthodox by religious affiliation, but this was of no account to his killers, who objected to his frank criticism of anti-Semitic discrimination in the Duma. Iollos was shot down in broad daylight in Moscow in March 1907; to their credit, some 20,000 people turned out to honour him at his funeral. Stolypin ordered a thorough investigation into the murder, but according to Abraham Ascher 'the authorities did not look too hard ... for fear of uncovering links between the (URP) and the government'.<sup>40</sup> Death threats were sent to over 40 opposition leaders, most of them Jewish.

But it was mass pogroms that were the Union's hallmark. The first serious outbreak occurred late in April 1905 at Zhitomir, where two-thirds of the population was Jewish; they offered stout resistance to the Black Hundred gangs, so that most of the 29 victims appear to have been non-Jewish! But 100 Jews lost their lives in Kiev in July. All told, between February and mid-October there were 57 pogroms, and thereafter, as a reaction to promulgation of the Manifesto, a rash of massacres broke out all over the empire. The worst of these occurred in Odessa, where over 500 were killed.

According to Stepanov, Jews comprised 711 (43%) of those killed during October, and 1207 (34%) of those wounded.<sup>41</sup> In all there were 690 outbreaks at this time in which 876 people were killed and more than 7000 injured; property losses were put at 62 million roubles (£6m. at current rates of exchange).

Often police and soldiers looked the other way, and occasionally they joined in the marauding. The local authorities were not always diligent in preserving public order. The governor of Odessa, D.M. Neidhardt, issued an ambiguously worded statement that, intentionally or not, inflamed tempers among the trouble-makers.<sup>42</sup> But it is a far cry from this to the assertion, widely credited at the time, that the pogroms were deliberately organised by the government to deflect popular wrath away from the regime. Recent studies do not bear out this interpretation, but what they show is bad enough. Indifference and sympathy for the extreme right in high places helped to create a climate that facilitated such attacks, and so the tsarist authorities do bear a measure of *indirect* responsibility for what occurred.<sup>43</sup>

#### IV

After it had more or less regained control of the country by the end of 1905, the government unleashed a wave of repression that contemporaries called (from the French precedents) a 'White Terror'. Ten 'punitive expeditions' were sent to Siberia, the Baltic provinces and Transcaucasia, whose commanding generals in effect had power of life and death over the inhabitants. (At one station on the Trans-Siberian line Meller-Zakomelsky arrived, killed 17 and wounded 22 suspects, arrested 80 others, and then blithely reboarded his train.) Some 3000 to 5000 lives were lost in five months as a result of this extra-judicial repression, which was particularly severe in the Baltic (a figure of 1170 victims is found in the sources). It was, however, less sanguinary than the 'White Terror' that followed repression of the French *communards* in 1871, which cost some 20,000 lives.<sup>44</sup> Tens of thousands of suspects were rounded up and sent into administrative exile. Field courts-martial gave some of these operations a quasi-judicial veneer. Set up in August 1906 and disbanded eight months later, they provided for summary proceedings that allowed the accused no real chance of defence; typically, the edict provided that sentences could not be appealed and had to be carried out within 24 hours, so that their intimidating purpose is abundantly clear. They sentenced 1144 people to death and 329 to exile with hard labour (*katorga*); only 71 accused were acquitted. The field courts-martial were bitterly contested in the Duma and the press, and the adverse response of the educated public was the main reason why Stolypin allowed the law to lapse. He had from the start had misgivings about it, and so it is rather unfair that his name came to be indelibly attached to it as a symbol of tsarist ruthlessness. Like Putin today, Stolypin stood in principle for the

rule of law, yet 'lawless conduct by the government ... served as a bad example and impeded the emergence of a genuine sense of citizenship'.<sup>45</sup>

Simultaneously the regular courts were kept busy, too, but this aspect of the repression has received much less attention from historians. As yet we lack a close analysis of the way the tsarist judicial system actually functioned during the revolutionary years. Initial leniency was short-lived. Geifman reproduces an estimate of 16,440 convictions by civil and military courts in 1908–9, of which 3682 sentences were to death and 4517 to exile with hard labour, but adds that many death sentences were subsequently commuted.<sup>46</sup> Dittmar Dahlmann, who has examined archival records of one major trial of PSR activists in St. Petersburg in 1907, points out that Russia still had some way to go before it could claim to be a *Rechtsstaat*.<sup>47</sup> The political trials were heard before a 'special bench' (*osoboe prisustvie*) of the regular courts, which comprised four professional judges and three representatives of the various social estates. The court would appoint a defence attorney if the accused did not have one of his own. Many of these lawyers were sympathetic to the accused; they could (and did!) speak freely during the proceedings, which were reported in the press. Sentences were as a rule to terms of exile: four to six years for the two individuals in this case found guilty of keeping bombs in their apartment. This does not sound unreasonable, for although they had not personally committed a terrorist act they were, so to speak, 'in the wings' of the terrorist 'scene'. Sentences might be reduced on appeal.

Those sentenced to *katorga* had a very tough time by contemporary European standards (less so, of course, when judged in the light of the Gulag!). In prison, too, conditions were highly disagreeable, due in part to overcrowding but also to abuse; political prisoners were liable to be clapped in irons and subjected to corporal punishment for alleged misdemeanours. A number of prisoners committed suicide, and many more died of disease. Life was slightly better for exiles, who if they were lucky might even escape (as Trotsky did!) and reach sanctuary abroad.

Only the most serious offenders were actually put to death. If one adds to these the victims of pogroms (around 1000), one asks oneself how these figures compare with those for victims of revolutionary terror. Geifman offers a figure for the latter of 17,000 for the whole period 1900–1916, which includes bystanders, and over 9000 for the year beginning in October 1905.<sup>48</sup> Even if one adds victims of street clashes, this is higher than the combined fatality figure for rightist counter-terror plus state repression. But then the death toll is not necessarily the best measure. Physical and psychological damage may have been more important.

What of the enduring legacy of terror? This is not really in doubt, but a separate investigation would be needed to establish just what role the terrorists of 1905–7 played after 1917. Geifman writes that during the Soviet epoch 'numerous practitioners of terror found themselves employing their skills in political murder and coercion, their actions demonstrating a

certain continuity in the Russian extremist tradition'.<sup>49</sup> But this begs several questions. On *prima facie* evidence, the most prominent PSR activists opposed the Bolshevik takeover: Boris Savinkov, who was close to Kerensky in 1917, played a significant role in the Kornilov affair; and Mariya Spiridonova, as leader of the Left SRs in and after 1917, espoused terrorist methods to protest at the Brest-Litovsk treaty (and eventually suffered death at Stalin's hands in 1941). But how typical was such a trajectory for 'rank-and-file' PSR or Maximalist terrorists? Among former Social-Democrat activists are such familiar personages as Stalin and Feliks Dzerzhinsky, the Cheka chief. But the brutal violence of the post-October era cannot fairly be laid at the door of the men and women extremists of 1905–7. It has surely much more to do with the cataclysmic situation unleashed by World War I – a point well brought out in the recent study by J. Sanborn.<sup>50</sup> Thus the earlier terrorists anticipated but were not responsible for Soviet-era variants, still less for the problems of the contemporary world.

The parallels and differences between then and now still raise larger issues that would repay detailed consideration elsewhere. Here by way of conclusion we offer a few fairly obvious points:

(i) *Terrorist aims*. In 1905–7 the SRs and Anarchists justified their acts by claiming that they were 'the people's avengers', who by their readiness for self-sacrifice were helping to achieve a new just social order; whereas today's terrorists are more concerned with national rights and dignity. This development was anticipated in the national-minority regions of the Russian empire in 1905–7.

(ii) *Tactics*. Though suicide bombings by terrorists were not unknown in 1905–7, most of those who died did so accidentally. The kidnapping of prominent persons for ransom was discussed at the time but does not appear to have been widely applied; today it has become a staple weapon in the terrorist arsenal.

(iii) *Weaponry*. Terrorists have advanced from the relatively simple dynamite bomb to sophisticated mine-laying, remote-controlled car bombs etc., and if the pessimists are to be believed may even 'go nuclear'.

(iv) *Mobility*. In 1905–7 terrorists were able to move rapidly from town to town within Russia or to emigré centres abroad; today's terrorists have a much more far-reaching international, almost world-wide range of contacts and support.

(v) *Finance*. Funds were then limited and obtained from a few known sources (in the main from individual well-wishers and then 'expropriations'); today vast resources are kept in impersonal offshore banking centres, by 'charitable' organisations etc.

(vi) *Propaganda*. The development of TV, satellite phones and other modern devices has broadened immensely the potential impact of terrorist acts. In 1905–7 Russian revolutionaries had access only to print media (pamphlets,

news-sheets), which reached in the main a limited local readership, whereas today the 'audience' is global.

(vii) *Victims*. In 1905–7 only the *bezmotivniki* targeted ordinary civilians, whereas today they are generally considered fair game. The ethical aspect of terror receives less attention than it (sometimes!) did a century ago.<sup>51</sup>

Where should historians go from here? I doubt whether we need bother too much with the ideological justifications that were advanced, although this aspect received much attention in the earlier literature. Perhaps the current vogue for cultural history offers the most promising approach: building on Geifman's work, we need an in-depth study of the revolutionary milieu as an example of 'small group dynamics': in the material sense, how terrorists (and other radicals) were accommodated and fed, supplied, transported and so forth; in the psychological sense, the forging of ties of comradeship versus the danger of isolation, of trust versus the ever-present fear of treachery, which made for emotional unbalance and high vulnerability to the lure of violence. Or, as the French Anarchist ditty put it,

*Vive le son  
De l'explosion!*

## Notes

1. P. Koshel, *Istoriya nakazanii v Rossii; Istoriya rossiiskogo terrorizma* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 301, 311; A. Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 55–6, 70–3 (Geifman, TSK); O.V. Budnitsky, *Terrorizm v russkom osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii: ideologiya, etika, psikhologiya: II-aya pol. XIX – nach. XX v.* (Moscow, 2000), p. 162.
2. Cited by S.V. Tyutyukin and V.V. Shelokhayev, *Marksisty i russkaya revolyutsiya* (Moscow, 1996), p. 13; cf. M.I. Leonov, *Partiya Sotzialistov-revolutsionerov v 1905–1907 gg.* (Moscow, 1997), p. 132; A. Geifman, 'The Kadets and Terrorism, 1905–7', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 36, 1988, pp. 248–67.
3. V.V. Kozhinov, 'Chernosotensy' i revolyutsiya: opyt bespristrastnogo issledovaniya (Moscow, 1998), p. 69.
4. J.W. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege: Security Police and Opposition in Russia, 1866–1905* (DeKalb, 1998); C. Ruud and S. Stepanov, *Fontanka 16: The Tsar's Secret Police* (Montreal, 1999); F.S. Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police Abroad: Policing Europe in a Modernising World* (Basingstoke, 2003) a sequel *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1881–1917* (Basingstoke, 1996). An interesting earlier study was N. Schleifman, *Undercover Agents in the Russian Revolutionary Movement: The SR Party, 1902–1914* (Basingstoke, 1988).
5. Notably by Geifman in her introduction to A. Geifman (ed.), *Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894–1917* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 1–15.
6. O. Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* (London, 1996). For a thoughtful review of Geifman's TSK, see O.V. Budnitsky in *Otechestvennaya istoriya*, 5, 1995, p. 188.
7. W.Z. Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick NJ, 2001), p. 5; Budnitsky, *Terrorizm*, p. 5.

8. One problem with this definition is that it excludes right-wing terror directed against real or suspected revolutionaries, which one should therefore call 'counter-terror'. The 'Red terror' of 1918 and later, and the Jacobin terror of 1793, might best be termed 'revolutionary repression'. These verbal niceties are admittedly unlikely to gain many adherents.
9. Geifman, *TSK*, pp. 45–58, 68. Its membership varied from ten to 30; a total of 80 individuals passed through it during the period: V.V. Shelokhaev (ed.), *Politicheskie partii Rossii: konets XIX – I-aya tret' XX v.: entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1996), p. 436.
10. M. Perrie, 'Politische und ökonomische Terror als taktische Waffen der russischen SR Partei vor 1914' in W.J. Mommsen and J. Hirschfeld (eds), *Sozialprotest, Gewalt, Terror: Gewaltanwendung durch politische und gesellschaftliche Randgruppen im 19. und 20. Jhd.* (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 98.
11. Leonov, *Partiya*, p. 127.
12. Budnitsky, *Terrorizm*, p. 153.
13. Geifman, *Entangled in Terror: The Azef Affair and the Russian Revolution* (Wilmington, 2000), p. 52; Geifman, *TSK*, p. 51.
14. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, p. 148.
15. Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, pp. 51, 54; Koshel, *Istoriya*, p. 289, adds that when Gershuni was put in irons he kissed them in exaltation.
16. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, p. 156.
17. A.I. Spiridovich, *Partiya Sotsialistov-revolutsionerov i yeyo predshestvenniki, 1886–1916* (Petrograd, 1918); V.A. Gerasimov, *Na lezviu s terroristami* (Paris, 1985); B.I. Nikolaevsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool*, tr. G. Reavey (Garden City, 1934).
18. Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, pp. 54, 62, 65, 90–1.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 117. Another official, L. Men'shchikov, went over to the revolutionaries several years later: see A.Yu. Bakushin, 'Odiseya Leonida Men'shchikova, ili Azef naoborot', *Otechestvennaya istoriya*, 5, 2004, pp. 162–76.
20. Geifman, *TSK*, p. 56.
21. Daly, 'The Security Police and Politics in Late Imperial Russia' in Geifman (ed.), *Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 228.
22. Perrie, 'Politischer ... Terror', pp. 91–5; A. Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, vol. 2, *Authority Restored* (Stanford, 1992), pp. 142–3, 243–4; A. Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Late Imperial Russia* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 137–9. I have not seen *Soiuz SROv-maksimalistov 1906–1924 gg.* (Moscow, 2002).
23. Perrie, 'Politischer ... Terror', pp. 80–99, esp. p. 87; Budnitsky, *Terrorizm*, p. 260.
24. Koshel, *Istoriya*, p. 315 (cf. pp. 291, 306, 328, 334, 337 for other women terrorists).
25. Geifman, *TSK*, pp. 23–35 makes a useful beginning.
26. Shelokhaev (ed.), *Politicheskie partii*, pp. 177–8; Geifman, *TSK*, pp. 24–5.
27. IMRO's most spectacular feat, the Ilinden uprising of August 1903, antedated the Russian revolution. N. Lange-Akhund, *The Macedonian Question, 1893–1908, from Western Sources* (Boulder, 1998), pp. 95–100, 118–35, 201–4, 224–6 offers the best description in English of bandit operations. See also M. Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804–1999* (London, 1999), pp. 202–4; D.P. Hupchick, *The Balkans* (New York, 2002), pp. 298–302.
28. V.I. Lenin, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1930–1), vol. 10, p. 12.
29. Geifman, *TSK*, p. 141; A. Geifman, 'The Anarchists and "Obscure Extremists"' in Geifman (ed.), *Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 101.
30. P.H. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, 1967) was first in this field and is informative if somewhat indulgent; but see now Geifman, 'The Anarchists ...',

- pp. 93–110 (also in Geifman, *TSK*, pp. 123–53); Budnitsky, *Terrorizm*, pp. 218–42; Shelokhaev (ed.), *Polit. partii*, pp. 32–6; V.V. Kriven'kiy, 'Anarkhisty', in Yu.P. Sviridenko et al. (eds), *Politicheskie partii Rossii: istoriya i sovremennost'* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 210–26 offers a conventional account.
31. Geifman, *TSK*, p. 135.
  32. V.V. Shelokhaev et al. (eds), *Anarkhisty: dokumenty i materialy*, vol. I, 1883–1916 gg. (Moscow, 1998), pp. 167, 630. Three bomb-throwers were executed, two were sentenced to 17 years *katorga*; the chief organiser, K.M. Erdelevsky (a former SD), seems to have escaped unharmed.
  33. Laqueur, *History*, p. 42.
  34. Geifman, 'The Anarchists ...', p. 99.
  35. S.A. Stepanov, *Chernaya sotnya v Rossii* (Moscow, 1992); D.C. Rawson, *Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905* (Cambridge, 1995).
  36. A. Bokhanov, 'Hopeless Symbiosis': Power and Right-Wing Radicalism at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century' in Geifman (ed.), *Russia under the Last Tsar*, p. 204.
  37. *Ibid.*, pp. 199–213.
  38. H. Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Basingstoke, 1986), pp. 214–15.
  39. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, pp. 142–4.
  40. Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, vol. 2, p. 249. The assassin, Fedorov, was under the impression that he was killing a 'reactionary', for so he had been told by Kazantsev, the URP activist who hired him for 1000 roubles; those responsible were eventually pardoned by the tsar. V. Kozhinov attempts to justify these murders on the grounds that as Jews the victims were allegedly negligent of Russia's true interests. Kozhinov, '*Chernosotentsy' i revolyutsiya*', pp. 75–6; cf. Rawson, *Russian Rightists*, p. 134.
  41. Kozhinov, '*Chernosotentsy*', p. 105, citing Stepanov, *Chernaya sotnya*, pp. 56–7.
  42. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, p. 174; Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, vol. I, *Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, 1988), p. 260.
  43. A.I. Spiridovich, the former security chief, roundly denied this in memoirs written when he was in emigration between the two World Wars, published with an introduction by J.W. Daly in *Voprosy istorii*, 8, 2003, pp. 3–36. For a balanced analysis see S. Lambroza, 'The Pogroms of 1903–6' in J.D. Klier and S. Lambroza (eds), *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 240.
  44. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege*, pp. 181–2.
  45. Ascher, *Revolution of 1905*, vol. 2, pp. 245–9, 326; Ascher, *Stolypin*, pp. 138–47.
  46. Geifman, *TSK*, p. 228.
  47. D. Dahlmann, 'Ein politischer Prozess im vorrevolutionären Russland: Sozialrevolutionäre vor Gericht' in H. Haumann and S. Plaggenborg (eds), *Aufbruch der Gesellschaft im verordneten Staat: Russland in der Spätphase des Zarenreiches* (Frankfurt, 1994), pp. 217–41.
  48. Geifman, *TSK*, p. 21.
  49. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
  50. J. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War and Mass Politics, 1905–1917* (DeKalb, 2003).
  51. According to Savinkov, before he killed Grand Duke Sergei, Kalyaev had an opportunity to throw a bomb at his carriage but refrained because his putative victim was accompanied by his wife and children. The story is often repeated but does not appear to be corroborated.

# 3

## Mariya Spiridonova: Russian Martyr and British Heroine? The Portrayal of a Russian Female Terrorist in the British Press

*Jane McDermid*

In his biographical notes to *The Russian Revolution 1917–21*, James D. White records that Mariya Aleksandrovna Spiridonova (1884–1941) attempted to assassinate General Luzhenovskii in 1906 as reprisal for his brutal suppression of local peasant disturbances in Tambov.<sup>1</sup> Anna Geifman suggests that this assassination is particularly noteworthy due to the fact that it was widely publicised and received a great deal of attention both inside Russia itself and abroad, mainly because Spiridonova was reportedly beaten by the general's guards, then tortured and sexually assaulted during interrogation.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there was what might be described as a lurid press campaign in support of Spiridonova which influenced western public opinion to see her as a martyr rather than a terrorist, as a victim rather than an assassin. Spiridonova came to epitomise the Russian female revolutionary, as reflected in Jaakoff Prelooker's 1908 publication *Heroes and Heroines of Russia*, and 90 years later, in Margaret Maxwell's *Narodniki Women: Russian Women Who Sacrificed Themselves for the Dream of Freedom*.<sup>3</sup> As a British reviewer of Prelooker's book wrote, 'whilst Russian women give not only themselves, but their daughters to the holy war (does not Maria Spiridonova's mother call herself "the proudest mother in Russia"?) it must triumph'.<sup>4</sup>

Prelooker recorded the wave of indignation which swept Russia over the case of Spiridonova, with the liberal press demanding that those men who had inflicted 'tortures and outrages upon Marie' be punished and that her death sentence be commuted. The attention paid to Spiridonova was unprecedented. One liberal newspaper, *Rus*, sent a journalist to Tambov to cover her case after publishing a letter detailing her experience and justifying her action, which Spiridonova had managed to smuggle out of prison. Moreover, the journalist, Vladimirov, quickly published his writings on Spiridonova in a separate book, with an appendix of letters written in her

defence from private individuals and international organisations. Other Russian newspapers promptly followed up on the *Rus* scoop. Not all were in defence of Spiridonova, but what caught the West's imagination was her champions' portrayal of a beautiful young woman, determined to sacrifice her life on the 'altar' of the revolutionary cause by attacking a sadistic oppressor of the peasantry, a selfless heroine who subsequently suffered torture at the hands of ruthless gendarmes.<sup>5</sup> Given the widespread unrest in Russia, such a sensational story was quickly taken up by the foreign press. Prelooker noted that an appeal was made to 'the women of France and other countries', and that some famous French men of letters (including Anatole France) gathered a petition of protest which was signed by politicians, academics and other people of distinction. 'Under the influence of this agitation the death sentence was commuted to one of penal servitude for life'.<sup>6</sup> This suggests the importance of foreign pressure, particularly coming from the Tsar's greatest creditor, France, at a time when the Russian government's finances were in a parlous condition. In the first quarter of 1906, during which Spiridonova carried out the assassination, was tortured, tried and sentenced, there was much talk of Witte's efforts to negotiate a loan with France as the main creditor.<sup>7</sup> Henry Nevinston reported for *The Daily Chronicle* that Witte was trying to raise £32,000,000.<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, which was the first British daily to print a translated version of Spiridonova's account of her torture, noted liberal concerns that a successful French loan would result in the continuation of the present policy of reaction.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the new liberal daily, *The Tribune*, argued that 'English financiers should not participate' as the granting of financial aid would shore up the regime against the people. When the loan was agreed, the editor expressed his severe disappointment: 'Europe has armed the party of reaction, supplied funds for further repressions, and, it may even be, fresh official massacres, and filled the war-chest of the men who carried out the wholesale shooting of Liberal suspects in Moscow and the devastation of the Baltic provinces'.<sup>10</sup> This was a minority view, however, as the loan came to be seen as necessary to counteract the growing threat to British interests from Germany.

Richard Stites also noted both the public uproar in Russia over Spiridonova's treatment, and that 'protests were arranged as far away as Trafalgar Square'.<sup>11</sup> Those in Britain who sympathised with actions such as Spiridonova's tended to excuse terrorism as the mirror image of tsarist tyranny, reflecting a strong strain of Russophobia. Still, the British press showed more concern over domestic affairs than actively campaigning for the likes of Spiridonova. Her case arose during a general election in Britain, when attention was on issues such as unemployment, immigrant Chinese labour, and relations with Germany. Whereas the apologist for the tsarist regime, Olga Novikova, had in the past succeeded in influencing the Liberal leader Gladstone by comparing 'Nihilism' with 'Sinn Feinism', Irish

Home Rule was not an issue in 1906 (though it resurfaced in the 1910 election, to the detriment of the Liberal Party).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, while there were demonstrations to commemorate 'Bloody Sunday' on 22 January 1906 in several European cities, the press in Britain was preoccupied with the general election.<sup>13</sup> There was, however, a 'Red Sunday' memorial meeting in Manchester, presided over by Emmeline Pankhurst, and one in London. Mrs Pankhurst declared 'it was appropriate that a woman should preside, as women were to the forefront in the struggle for liberty in Russia'.<sup>14</sup> Rather at odds with that stance, Sylvia Pankhurst later recorded that her sister, Christabel, and by implication their mother, dismissed what was happening in Russia in 1905–6 as a 'men's movement', seeing the representatives of the Duma who came to London appealing for the support of British democrats as merely 'old Liberals'.<sup>15</sup> This was more a reflection of the tactical as well as the growing political (and personal) differences between Sylvia on the one side, and Christabel and Emmeline on the other, and an attempt by Sylvia to highlight the socialist background of her mother, who had indeed been impressed by such militant heroines of the 1905 Russian revolution as Spiridonova.

In May 1907, the weekly review, *The New Age*, recalled the Spiridonova affair in an editorial on 'Socialist Foreign Policy', which criticised the British Government's 'friendly understanding' with 'the tormentors of Maria Spiridonova'. She was taken as the key example of the 'deliberate torture and outrage of young girls' sanctioned directly by the Tsar's government.<sup>16</sup> For the *New Age*, there should be no dealings with the 'torturers of Maria Spiridonova'.<sup>17</sup> Its editors, A.R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson, who acquired the review in 1907, used Spiridonova as a stick with which to beat the Liberal Government, already under fire from the suffragettes, as well as to berate the Opposition in the House of Commons, for unprincipled willingness to deal with such a brutal regime:

It is difficult for a patriotic Englishman to speak or write of the disgrace which Sir Edward Grey has brought upon the name of his country. The shameful agreement between our Liberal rulers and the Tsar – an agreement repugnant alike to the people of England and to the people of Russia and carefully with-held from us till Parliament had risen – has been signed. Doubtless the people of these islands have largely themselves to thank. We believe that they are as little disposed to hold out the right hand of friendship to the torturers of Maria Spiridonova as we are. But their minds move slowly, and it was apparently impossible to convince them of the imminence of the danger or the need of such prompt and effective protest as would have made the Foreign Secretary pause. Now that the evil thing is done it is but a poor consolation to think that it will probably cost the government dear at the polls. Indeed, though the Ministers must bear the gravest responsibility, no party is

quite free from participation in their shame. The Tory party, whose traditional hostility to the Russian Government was one of the few redeeming points in its record, appears to be acquiescent where it is not enthusiastic. Nor can we acquit the Labour members of blame for not having made their indignation visible and audible to all as soon as they knew that such a project was in the air. But, whatever may be the effect upon British politics, nothing will prevent the agreement being used by the Tsar to prop the tottering fabric of his Tyranny. On the strength of our friendship he will raise money; by our aid he will buy arms; the blood of every Russian patriot slain, of every Russian woman tortured and outraged by the agents of despotism, will be required at our hands. And unless the nation, by one signal and unanimous protest, repudiates the action of its rulers, we shall have forfeited forever the friendship and respect of the great Russian people soon, one hopes, to come to its own. The terms of the agreement are not yet published – but they do not matter. They cannot soften our shame, and nothing but idle curiosity would make us enquire into the exact value of the thirty pieces of silver for which we have sold a people rightly struggling to be free.<sup>18</sup>

*The New Age* defined itself as *An Independent Socialist Review of Politics, Literature, And Art*. It did not support terrorism, but it sought to distinguish between the oppressed and the oppressor, a position which was generally held by liberal newspapers as well as the labour movement. Thus, an editorial in *The Manchester Guardian* declared in January 1906 that the Moscow revolt had ‘certainly proved what no one who knew the Russian character ever doubted, that the men and women who enter the revolutionary parties are capable of a self-sacrifice and a heroism which know no limits or reserves’.<sup>19</sup> Only a month later, however, the same paper was denouncing ‘the inconsiderate actions of extremists’ for providing the government with justification for responding with ‘organised terrorism’.<sup>20</sup> A similar ambivalence was expressed by the Trades Union Congress which met in September 1906, and passed a motion extending ‘its hearty sympathy with the Russian people in their gallant struggle for political and industrial freedom’. On the one hand, the President who spoke in favour of the motion declared his certainty that ‘none of us sympathise with the methods of [the] bomb or other outrages to bring about a better state of things’; on the other hand, the Vice-President, who seconded the motion, declared:

He was not going to make any apology for bombs or dynamite under such conditions as these. The bureaucracy of Russia had had its chance, and missed it, and their blood was upon their own heads. Living in a comparatively free land like England, his hearers could realise the comparison between their conditions and that of the Russian people; and it was odious in the extreme.

Rather than eulogise the terrorists, however, he concluded with the rallying cry: 'Vive la Duma!'<sup>21</sup>

*The New Age* went further, condoning, indeed glorifying, such acts as the murder of tsarist officials, while it singled out Spiridonova herself for greatness. The editors held that the death sentence meted out to Spiridonova (in March 1906) was commuted to 20 years' hard labour 'in deference to public opinion which had been aroused by knowledge of her torture'.<sup>22</sup> It is ironic that while Spiridonova desired the death penalty and was angry at being denied her ultimate act of sacrifice, the British press saw the tsarist authorities as torturing her by with-holding news of the reprieve until the last minute. T.H. Harley reported on this for the *Labour Leader*:

They have not dared to execute the outraged Russian heroine, Marie Spiredonova [*sic*]; but they have done their best to kill her by mental and moral torture. No announcement was made to her that her sentence was reprieved. Every day she expected that the governor was coming to lead her off to a welcome death. Once there was a loud knock at her cell door. She listened and expected to hear the cold voice of the executioner. But instead of that it was her own mother and sister coming to have an interview with her. These sudden transitions from anxiety to joy are simply shattering every nerve in the body of this devoted young Russian girl, who for ten days has lived in the hourly presence of death.<sup>23</sup>

Revelations of the ill-treatment of political prisoners were frequent in British papers, reflected in *The Tribune's* headline for 2 March 1906: 'Torture in Russia – Terrible Treatment of Prisoners – Girls Burned'. The report stated that in the police stations of Kharkov, men, women and children were all subjected to torture, while there were 'especially shocking' cases of the torture of young girls at Minsk and Tambov (whose governor Spiridonova had assassinated and where she was currently imprisoned): 'in some instances, it appears, hairs have been torn from their heads one by one and in others the fire torture was resorted to, lighted cigarettes being applied to their naked bodies'.<sup>24</sup> Both episodes carried echoes of Spiridonova's treatment, as recounted in a report in *The Manchester Guardian*, dated 31 March 1906:

She was left almost naked in a cold damp cell. Her torturers crept in upon her, crouching like tigers, pounced upon her, kicked her from side to side, knelt upon her, beat her in every part of her body, beat her face, tore the skin from her wounds, whispered in her ears the foulest language, and when she tried to cover her nakedness with her long hair tore the hairs from her head one by one.<sup>25</sup>

By the time of her trial, there were reported to be around 72,000 persons in prison for political offences throughout the Russian Empire, and the trend was upwards.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, *The Tribune* suggested that nearly 10,000 people had been shot without trial in the Baltic provinces 'for no offence more overt than possession of a ticket which showed that they were members of the Social Democratic party, for attending a public meeting, or for reading a Liberal newspaper'.<sup>27</sup> In such conditions, Spiridonova provided a focus for outrage against the tyrannical regime.

Russia has so many martyrs that one must be very great to be specially noted. Yet a word of notice is surely due to the incomparable Maria Spiridonova, now happily reported to be dying. It is almost exactly two years ago that Maria Spiridonova shot General Lonzhensky [*sic*], the brutal Governor of Tambov. For this she was sentenced to exile in Siberia, but her way thither was a triumphal process, so greatly had the story of her life and sufferings affected the people of Russia. Murder is terrible, and the methods of Russian revolutionaries are only less horrible than the methods of their rulers. But in the history of mankind, when it comes to be written and read with the insight of love, the memory of murders on behalf of the rights of Man will be sweetened by time. Lonzhensky was a murderer, albeit official; but who in all the world to come will honour his name with Maria Spiridonova's?<sup>28</sup>

*The New Age* even allowed itself some humour at the victim's expense. Noting that the general took a month to die, it quoted the assassin: 'I gave him five bullets,' said Marie, 'I did not know he was so thick as to need a cannon'.<sup>29</sup> As *The Manchester Guardian* reported, it was an extremely painful death, but the peasants saw his agony as God's judgement, and Spiridonova as their deliverer. Spiridonova certainly believed her action was justified. Luzhenovskii was seen by her party, the Socialist Revolutionaries, as a liberal lawyer who had abandoned his principles and 'killed his soul'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, an American writer who interviewed Spiridonova when she was still under sentence of death recorded that even the chief of police in Tambov sympathised with her: 'while I cannot countenance assassination, I must say that [Luzhenovskii] was a very bad man and deserved all he got'.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, *The New Age* was not able to influence public opinion in Britain to anything like the same extent as the campaign in the liberal Russian press had achieved. Indeed, reporting her case in 1907–8, *The New Age* did not mount a campaign to free her. Even when it (falsely) claimed that she had escaped from Siberia, it was to recall the circumstances of 'this brave woman's arrest for assassinating the tyrannical Governor of Tamboff early in 1906', rather than to discuss her subsequent incarceration.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, at least a few readers of *The New Age* were impressed by the

Spiridonova story. Rebecca West was one: indeed, Spiridonova was held up as a Russian martyr in West's unfinished first novel *The Sentinel*, begun around 1909 when she first became active in the female suffrage movement in Edinburgh, where she attended meetings of Mrs Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).<sup>33</sup> *The Sentinel's* suffragette heroine, Adela Furnival, recovering after her first imprisonment, was struck by a 'great dark picture' of 'a very young girl, a pale slip of flawless but insignificant beauty. Her immature body seemed to be cowering, wracked with pain and suspicion of pain, in the loose folds of her black robe'.<sup>34</sup> Implicit in this brief reference to Spiridonova is the association of the brutal treatment of a lover of 'Liberty [who] suffered all things for its sake' at the hands of a cruel tyrant with the force-feeding of hunger-striking suffragettes by the Tsar's friend, the British Liberal Government, targeted by the WSPU as the enemy of the suffragette movement.<sup>35</sup>

What won sympathy, then, was not so much the actions of Russian terrorists (nor indeed of British suffragettes), but what happened to them as a result. As Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, herself no fan of 'the hysterical Maria Spiridonova', pointed out, she won fame 'not so much as a bold terrorist as by those insults and tortures to which she was subjected by the gendarmes'.<sup>36</sup> Of course, Spiridonova was by no means the only woman who suffered ill-treatment for opposing the tsarist regime. Indeed, many were brutally treated for much less. In the same month that the Spiridonova torture hit the headlines in both Russia and Britain, *The Jewish Chronicle*, which had not carried the Spiridonova story, published a report from Riga:

The vilest case of torture that has come to my ears is that of a young Jewess, a schoolgirl of sixteen, who was arrested for attending political meetings and associations with Social Democrats. The girl is highly educated, her family is wealthy and respected. Her father has just received a letter, dated from the citadel, in which his daughter implores him to pay her tormentors any sum of money they may ask if only they will promise to kill her outright.<sup>37</sup>

The following month, when Spiridonova was awaiting trial, Henry Nevinson recorded the tale of another two anonymous Jewish women, arrested as accomplices of a man already executed for making bombs:

Governor-General Skallon gave it out that it went against his feelings of humanity to shoot women, and accordingly he offered to appeal to the Tsar himself on behalf of these two, if they would only promise never to take part in the revolution again. They both replied that if they were ever released, they would fling themselves into the movement with more enthusiasm than ever. So both were shot.<sup>38</sup>

These cases were not widely reported in the British press, however, perhaps because the victims were Jewish, though there were many reports of pogroms and accusations of tsarist officials being complicit in them, reflected in headlines in *The Tribune* for 13 March 1906: 'Jewish Massacres – Russian Government's Responsibility – Fresh Outbreaks Feared'.<sup>39</sup> Reporting on the British Government's waiving of restrictions imposed by the recent Aliens Act (1905) to admit refugees fleeing a pogrom in January 1906, *The Manchester Guardian* recorded that the women had been 'outraged' in frenzied attacks by soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Anti-semitic sentiments, however, could be held by the same people who cited the violent attacks on Jews both to confirm the barbarity of the tsarist regime, and to criticise the British Government's attitude towards immigrants and its relations with Russia: the Jews could be victims, but not heroes. In *The Sentinel*, one revolutionary, Ignaz Lodovsky, who escaped prison and fled to 'this liberty-loving land of Britain', was dismissed as a 'damned sycophantic Jew' for voicing such a sentiment by none other than 'Mr G.H. Shells, the great Socialist novelist'.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, the Russian Spiridonova had already become the symbol of the victims of a cruel and despotic regime. She 'possessed all the attributes that seemed to hold the greatest public appeal: youth, beauty, maidenhood, good breeding, and a Russian surname'.<sup>42</sup> Hence all the attention paid to her by the Russian press. As *The Manchester Guardian* reflected in April 1906, Spiridonova had come to represent 'The Return of Hope – A New Spirit Throughout Russia – A Heroine of the People':

Only [six] weeks ago the revolutionaries were disheartened and embittered, the Liberals worked on with the doggedness of despair, and reactionaries triumphed after their dull, unilluminated fashion. ... There were so many hundreds of martyrs that it was impossible to find tears for them all. ... But now a symbol has been found, and the people's wrath is concentrated around a single name. The extraordinary influence exerted by the very name of Marie Spiridonoff [*sic*] is entirely intelligible, for Marie Spiridonoff actually impersonates the martyrdom of the people. There is no story in Dostoevsky so full of grief as hers.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, though 21 years of age in 1906, Spiridonova was consistently described as a schoolgirl, so that she also represented youthful idealism, which the regime sought to crush. Thus soldiers stopped and searched people trying to flee the fighting in Moscow 'with customary brutality':

the old people were beaten, the young insulted. The soldiers thrust their hands into the girls' breasts and under their skirts. One girl was passed from soldier to soldier and searched six times within about twenty yards. 'God spit at them!' muttered the women as they crawled away.<sup>44</sup>

As reported in *The Daily Chronicle*, there were many women, indeed school-girls, who were stripped and flogged. Henry Nevinson, a confirmed supporter of the suffragettes who wrote for both *The Daily Chronicle* and *The Tribune*, was not an eye-witness to such events, but believed that the girls received fewer lashes than the boys.<sup>45</sup> However, in reporting on the fighting in Moscow in December 1905, he had noted that 'even to red-cross girls no mercy was shown'.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, Nevinson, who in 1935 pronounced Spiridonova a 'courageous and high-souled woman, who has suffered so terribly as a champion of freedom in conflict', first under tsarism and then under communism, did not mention her case in his account of the revolution, which was based on his reports for *The Daily Chronicle* and published in 1906.<sup>47</sup> What he did comment on was the 'woman revolutionist', who had played 'so fine a part in the long struggle of the past' and who enjoyed a 'working equality and comradeship with men, whether in martyrdom or in triumph, such as no other nation has yet realised'.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, he insisted that the soldiers showed no mercy to female students whom they dismissed as 'those damned *Kursistki*'. Nevinson described the most revolutionary of these young women as wearing a cap with no brim, 'plain like a man's; for a brim is compromise, and at the bottom of the slope of compromise lies ignoble peace'.<sup>49</sup>

While none of these women received the publicity that Spiridonova did, not all remained anonymous. Writing in 1907 about his experiences in *Red Russia* during the revolution, John Foster Fraser recorded the treatment of a woman accused of insulting the Army when she had protested against the attack by mounted troops on an unarmed crowd in St Petersburg, with the soldiers using swords on women and children:

'You brutes,' screeched a young woman; 'you are brave when you have defenceless women to fight. You were not so courageous when you had the Japanese before you'.<sup>50</sup>

This was not a new accusation. *The Times* reported that it was heard after Bloody Sunday: 'our officers are braver against a defenceless public than against the Japanese in Manchuria', and 'ammunition may be scarce in the Far East, but it is plentiful here'.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, for this the woman, known, Fraser said, to all in St Petersburg as Anna Smirnoff, was ordered to be flogged immediately and in public:

Instantly the clothes are ripped from the woman. Not a shred is left upon her. She stands naked, as God made her, before the jeering officers and soldiers, in the dim light and bitter cold. She is flogged before them all.

There are clear echoes of the Spiridonova case, and indeed Fraser next recounted the story of another young woman, 'well reared and refined,

named Marie Spiridonoff', who was also 'over ardent, but stung by the ill-treatment and misery of those about her'. He went on to describe in some sensationalist detail what he did not himself witness:

The gendarmes took her to the barracks. Oh, a woman dressed as a man; or a man pretending to be a woman? Identity must be assured.

It was dead of winter – and the cold in Russia is not gentle. In a bare, icy barrack room the clothes were torn from her. The officers stood around, wrapped in their heavy coats, and smoking cigarettes. Marie Spiridonoff cowered before their leers, and trembled till her flesh was blue with the icy temperature.

'Cold, eh?' was the question of an officer, who thought it a mighty joke to press the lighted end of his cigarette upon the nipple of her breast.

She screamed.

A splendid joke. To make her squirm and jump and cry out from the pain was a pleasantry. They burnt her breast with their cigarettes. They – they did things with their smouldering cigarettes which no pen could write.

The prisoner was sent some distance to be tried. Stark naked she was subjected to the hellish caresses of those monsters, and to-day is the victim of an awful disease in consequence. One night those officers were shot dead. Her friends had avenged her.<sup>52</sup>

Spiridonova would not have been gratified by such garbled and exaggerated reporting of her own account, while her supporters insisted that throughout her ordeal she 'had remained silent and contemptuous of her tormentors'.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas the cult of Spiridonova revived in Russia after the next revolution which overthrew the tsarist regime, John Foster Fraser concluded his lurid account with the reflection that, after the triumphant journey of this heroine to her exile in 'the wastes of Yakutsk' in 1906, Spiridonova had 'bidden good-night to the world. Already she is beginning to be forgotten. For tragedies in Russia press hurriedly on one another in these days'.<sup>54</sup> Yet her name continued to evoke sympathy and outrage in certain quarters in Britain, notably as a symbol of suffering womanhood in ways which Spiridonova did not anticipate. Thus, Rebecca West hinted that, besides the famous and revered Spiridonova, there were many other young women prepared to die for their cause, in Britain as in Russia. Her teenage literary heroine Adela, who at sixteen was younger than the 'schoolgirl' Spiridonova, was told of the tragic story of Ignaz Lodovsky, who as noted above had found a haven in Britain, and his martyred sister, Paula. They too had devoted themselves to the peasantry, on whom they bestowed 'open medical attention and furtive political education'. Arrested for their pains, they were left for hours in the snow while waiting for a train to take

them to goal. With echoes of Spiridonova's treatment after she was taken into custody, Paula was forced by one of the officers into the hut in which the three lieutenants and the police were sheltering. Rather than share Spiridonova's fate, Paula 'with a forethought that the lieutenant sanctimoniously considered indelicate in so young [a] girl, had provided for that. Thanks to a thimbleful of arsenic, she mocked them with her writhings at their feet'.<sup>55</sup> Her brother revered his heroic sister, while these themes of risking sexual violation and sacrificing life for the sake of liberty, and of male violence against women, by both the individual man and the patriarchal state, pervade the novel. The experiences of the fictional Paula and the real, if idealised, Spiridonova serve as a backdrop to the violence meted out to those ladies on 'votes for women' processions, attacked by both male opponents and by the police, as well as to the horrible prison conditions, including strip searches and forcible feeding, endured by the suffragettes.

Likewise, although Spiridonova championed the cause of the 'people' rather than of women, the British press focused on the fact that she was a woman, and highlighted the sexual assault as a particularly heinous form of torture, and indeed one which was commonplace: 'the women revolutionaries carry their revolvers in their stockings, and the pickets do not scruple to investigate these garments on any female passenger whom they suspect – a trying ordeal for innocent and modest people'.<sup>56</sup> Yet men too, it was reported, were subjected to humiliating treatment. The flogging of a male student which had been reported in *Rus* by M. Kirilov, who claimed to have witnessed the event in Moscow, was repeated in *Free Russia*, the paper of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: soldiers ordered a male student to take off his trousers, and forcibly removed them when he refused, flogging and kicking him, and finally shooting him.<sup>57</sup> Occasionally, the treatment of male suspects was compared to that of Spiridonova:

The awful tortures inflicted upon the schoolgirl Spiridonova by two officers after her arrest for the assassination of the Vice Governor of Tamboff have been almost equaled by the treatment of two prisoners – two men – in Warsaw. The men were clubbed, deprived of water then forced to drink vodka, had their teeth knocked out, hair torn out, and they were 'bastinadoed' [the soles of their feet beaten by sticks]. Finally, they were stretched out on the floor and jumped on.<sup>58</sup>

Like most female victims, these men were not named, but the British press became fascinated by the case of Lieutenant Schmidt, identified as the leader of the Sevastopol mutiny. *The Times* juxtaposed the stories of 'the abominable outrage committed by two officers on Spiridonova' and the execution of Schmidt which 'evoked a general expression of popular

indignation, principally among the factories and schools'.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, it claimed that 'the girl student Spiridonova, who has been sentenced to death, and Lieutenant Schmidt now figure as national heroes. The newspapers raise a cry of shame at the condemnation of a girl while her ravishers are actually given promotion'.<sup>60</sup> On the capture of Lieutenant Schmidt, *Free Russia* repeated what a Russian 'Lady Correspondent' who claimed to have seen him wrote to the Liberal leader, Professor Milyukov: the lieutenant was 'posted' naked, with a broken leg, between two sentries in the mess room of the *Rostislavl* and abused by officers 'in the vilest fashion'.<sup>61</sup> The only 'mercy' shown to Schmidt was that the sentence of death by hanging was commuted to one of death by shooting. His execution provoked many protests throughout Russia, including strikes by school pupils.<sup>62</sup> So great was the outcry that orders were given by the naval authorities to destroy all pictures and illustrated postcards representing the rebel lieutenant.<sup>63</sup> Letters which Schmidt had written to his family and friends prior to his execution were confiscated. As the death sentence on Spiridonova was being considered, the bodies of the lieutenant and three other sailors who were executed at the same time were exhumed and buried again at sea, in order 'to put an end to the continuous pilgrimages to the graves and to the constant placing of flowers on them'.<sup>64</sup> The lieutenant was declared a Russian martyr by the British press, one who simply wanted universal suffrage for his beloved country:

He died as bravely as he had lived. He refused to be bound or to let his eyes be bandaged. His only sign of grief or regret was for the sailors who were to be shot with him. At the last moment he addressed the firing party from the gunboat *Teretz* and said, 'I have never killed a man nor been responsible for another's death. Now my dear brothers, adieu – and kill me'.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps the leniency shown to Spiridonova was an attempt to avoid another such popular outpouring of grief and anger over a named hero. As noted above, that she was spared the death sentence came as a severe blow to Spiridonova. Ironically, a leading Russian feminist, the journalist Zinaida Mirovitch, noted at the beginning of 1908 that:

We cannot help seeing that, until now, the only equal right which we, women, have gained under our so-called constitution is the equality before the scaffold. Thus, while capital punishment for women had been abolished years ago ... five women have been hung in the space of fifteen months (between 29 August 1906 and December 1907), all for political crimes, while at the same time hundreds of other women have been tortured and killed in the terrible executions in the Caucasus, in the Baltic provinces, etc.<sup>66</sup>

This was reported in *The Shield*, the official organ of the British Committee of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation on Vice. These cases, however, did not receive the same attention in the popular press as Spiridonova had, perhaps because, in British eyes if not her own, she seemed to defeat tsarism by evading execution, a symbol not just of revolutionary martyrdom, but of the growth in and strength of public opinion in Russia. Her courage and her suffering had made her the heroine of the Russian people, so that her very name was a warning to the tsarist regime, one which, *The Manchester Guardian* optimistically declared at the beginning of April 1906, was 'emphasised by the victories the Opposition is winning day after day in the elections'.<sup>67</sup>

Though accused by Russian conservatives of colluding with her act of terrorism through their sympathetic reports, Spiridonova's liberal supporters influenced the British press as a whole, which also never referred to Spiridonova's own dismay over their sensationalism. Russia was depicted in the British press as a unique case, where such actions were regrettably necessary in the struggle for justice. The victim, not the assassin, was responsible for his own death. Thus, the British press saw Spiridonova's shooting of a cruel representative of a corrupt regime as a moral act, the vengeance of a highly ethical person. Little attention was paid to her political affiliation; instead, the focus was on her female fragility and spirit of sacrifice.

Did this have any impact on the Russian government? Not specifically in the case of Spiridonova, but the Russian ambassador in London often reported on how the British press viewed events in the tsarist empire. Following a series of articles on the pogroms in 1903, the correspondent for *The Times*, D.D. Braham, had been expelled.<sup>68</sup> The ambassador, however, was particularly upset by coverage of Russian affairs in *The Tribune*, whose foreign editor from its beginning in 1906 until its collapse in 1908 was Herbert Perris, a founding member of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (1890) and a regular contributor to its journal, *Free Russia*.<sup>69</sup> The majority of radicals in Britain hated the tsarist autocracy, looking on Russia as a huge prison, whose inmates were routinely flogged.<sup>70</sup> Both conservatives and liberals were also deeply suspicious of the Tsar's imperial intentions. Not surprisingly, then, there was a great deal of sympathy with the 1905 Revolution across the political spectrum in Britain.<sup>71</sup> British correspondents in Russia assumed that tsarist repression would force the people on to the side of the revolutionaries. Yet as noted above, even while reporting on Spiridonova's ordeal, they expressed growing unease at the scale of violence, not all of which was deemed either justified or political. However much it sympathised with Spiridonova, the British press was much more ambivalent when it came to bombings and robberies. Thus, the murders of 'highly unpopular men' such as Spiridonova's victim Luzhenovskii, were reported as meeting with general approval because:

Rightly or wrongly, it was held that they deserved their fate. The assassins, however misguided, displayed a heroism and self-devotion worthy in itself of the highest praise, and no one suffered but the appointed victim. But terrorist acts such as the throwing of bombs in crowded streets, on the railways, at M. Stoleepin's [*sic*] residence in many cases with only robbery in view and quite regardless of how many innocent people – men, women and children – might suffer, have, coupled with the alarming increase of mere hooliganism, had the opposite effects, driving back hundreds and thousands to the Conservative, or at least to the mildly Liberal fold.<sup>72</sup>

The same could be said for the direction of the British press by the end of 1906, which reflected growing sympathy for Stolypin, particularly after that attempt in August to assassinate him in a bombing which killed over 30 people and wounded over 20, including the prime minister's son and daughter.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to Spiridonova's shooting of Luzhenovskii, this was considered an 'unjust' assassination: revolutionary violence was now viewed by the British press to be as indiscriminate as state repression, even if not on the same scale. Even so sympathetic an observer as Henry Nevinson commented on the increasingly violent criminality:

For some weeks the average of street murders was one a day. Barefooted, long-haired supermen of misery sprang out from dark corners, and I always thanked them heartily for their mistake in regarding my money as more valuable than my life. People walked wanly, kept one eye behind them, turning sharply round if they heard even the padding sound of galoshes in the snow. ... all were living in that haggard element of fear.<sup>74</sup>

That was the position in Moscow during the 'Days of Liberty' in the winter of 1905–6. Donald Mackenzie Wallace, who had reported on Russia for *The Times* since 1870, returned in July 1906, and was horrified by the extremism of the revolutionaries, both Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, while he considered the Kadets to be not only 'foolish' in their demands on the Tsar, but overly influenced by the SRs.<sup>75</sup> By this time, Spiridonova's type of 'ethical' terrorism had been completely overshadowed. What the British press hoped for was a 'frankly constitutional regime in Russia', to bring about a 'common language, in which England and Russia can converse freely', particularly in view of the growing threat from Germany.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, when reaction prevailed in Russia, Spiridonova's name disappeared from the pages of the British press. It resurfaced in 1917, when once again she was counted among the 'best and noblest children of Russia' who had been persecuted by the tsarist regime, though one of her

champions of 1906, *The New Age*, exhibited some confusion over her name when recalling:

men like Herzen, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Kropotkin, and women like Sophia Perovskya, Maria Brezhkovskya, Anna Spiridonova, and thousands of others who were tortured, exiled and banished to Siberia...<sup>77</sup>

This was before she had returned in triumph to the capital. When the Bolsheviks had taken power and Spiridonova, now leader of the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, had entered Government, there was renewed interest in her in the West, where she was regarded as a heroic survivor who had triumphed over her former tormentors. The American Louise Bryant reported early in 1918 that the 'inspired' Spiridonova had 'the greatest political following of any woman in the world'. In an interview, Spiridonova told Bryant that she was afraid of sounding 'like a feminist' in explaining why there were not more women holding public office. There had been, she explained, equality in Siberian exile between men and women; indeed in some years there were even more women than men incarcerated there. But whereas 'it needs temperament and not training to be a martyr', Spiridonova regretted that politicians are usually 'not very fine; they accept political positions when they are elected to them – not because they were especially suited to them. I think women are more conscientious. Men are used to overlooking their consciences – women are not'.<sup>78</sup>

The British press had great expectations of Mariya Spiridonova once she broke with Lenin in 1918. The aura around her name prompted some misplaced optimism, reflected in the headline 'A Significant Change – Marie Spiridonova Attacks The Bolsheviks', in *The Scotsman*, where it was claimed that;

Women played an important part in bringing the dictatorship of the proletariat into existence, and are playing an even more important role in hastening the end of the Soviet Republic, which has not realised their ideals. ... [Spiridonova's] challenge to the Bolshevik leaders in the All Russian Congress of July 4 will never be forgotten by the great audience which filled the Grand Opera House in Moscow.<sup>79</sup>

Such hopes were soon dashed, and though her break with the Bolsheviks led to 'her martyrdom [beginning] all over again', she quickly disappeared from the pages of the British press.<sup>80</sup> R.H. Bruce Lockhart, who was imprisoned with her in September 1918, described Spiridonova as looking 'ill and nervous, with great dark lines under her eye. She was clumsily and very carelessly dressed, but might have been quite pretty when young'.<sup>81</sup> She had not only lost those physical attributes which had made her such an

attractive heroine to the British press in 1906, but it was also reported that she had lost her 'virtue', and was even 'the mistress of a secret police employee'.<sup>82</sup> In contrast to her experience in 1906, there was no detailing in the British press of Spiridonova's ordeal at the hands of her communist guards.<sup>83</sup> Having once sided with the Bolsheviks in 1917, she was no longer an exemplary victim, merely one among a multitude.

## Notes

1. James D. White, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (London, 1994), p. 292.
2. Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917* (Princeton, 1993), p. 156. See also Amy Knight, 'Female Terrorists in the Russian Social Revolutionary Party', *Russian Review*, 38, 1979, pp. 150–1; Sally A. Boniece, 'The Spiridonova Case, 1906: Terror, Myth and Martyrdom', *Kritika*, 2003, pp. 571–606.
3. Jaakoff Prelooker, *Heroes and Heroines of Russia: True and Thrilling Stories* (London, 1908); Margaret Maxwell, *Narodniki Women: Russian Women Who Sacrificed Themselves for the Dream of Freedom* (Oxford, 1998).
4. *The New Age*, 3(5), 30 May 1908, p. 94.
5. Tatyana Kravchenko, *Vozlyublennaya Terrora* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 247–9. See also V.M. Lavrov (ed.), *Mariya Spiridonova: Terroristka i zhertva terrora. Povestvovanie v dokumentakh* (Moscow, 1996). Sally Boniece argues that while leading SRs regretted the journalistic sensationalism, they 'were likewise bent on popularising her martyrdom – as was, indeed, Spiridonova herself'. See 'The Spiridonova Case', p. 575, and pp. 593–4 for an examination of Vladimirov's account. For this notion of 'a peculiar disposition to sacrifice oneself on the altar of the revolution', see Sally A. Boniece, "'Don Quixotes of the Revolution'": The Left SRs as a Mass Political Movement', *Kritika*, 5(1), 2004, pp. 185–94.
6. Preluker, *Heroes and Heroines*, p. 301.
7. See for example, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 February 1906, p. 6.
8. *Daily Chronicle*, 8 January 1906, p. 7.
9. *Times*, 13 January 1906, p. 7. For the summary of Spiridonova's account which had been published in the liberal paper *Rus* earlier in February see *Times*, 26 February 1906, p. 5.
10. *Tribune*, 1 March 1906, p. 8; 13 April 1906, p. 6; 17 April 1906, p. 6.
11. Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Socialism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, 1978), p. 272.
12. Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–1990* (London, 1996), pp. 63–5. See also Madame Olga Novikoff, *Russian Memories* (London, 1917), pp. 199–200. W.T. Stead called her *The MP for Russia* (London, 1909). A convinced Russophile who had collaborated with Novikova since the late 1870s, Stead was routinely dismissed by fellow British journalists as an apologist for the Tsar, whom he interviewed in August 1905. See Joseph O. Boylen, *The Tsar's 'Lecturer-General': W.T. Stead and the Russian Revolution of 1905* (Atlanta, 1969).
13. *Labour Leader*, 2(43), 26 January 1906, p. 515.
14. *Ibid.*, 44(2), 2 February, p. 528. For London, see *The Fabian News*, xvii(2), February 1906, p. 7.
15. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* (London, 1931), p. 337.
16. *The New Age*, new series, 1(2), 9 May 1907, p. 25.

17. *Ibid.*, 1(13), 25 July 1907, p. 194.
18. *Ibid.*, 1(19), 5 September, 1907, p. 297. For Orage and *The New Age*, see S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left. Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (London, 1938), ch. 13; P. Selver, *Orage and the 'New Age' circle: reminiscences and reflections* (1959).
19. *Manchester Guardian*, 2 January 1906, p. 6.
20. *Ibid.*, 6 February 1906, p. 7; 1 March 1906, p. 8.
21. TUC 1906 Annual Report (St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, 1906), p. 43. The vote was unanimously in favour of the motion.
22. *The New Age*, new series, 2(24), 11 April 1908, p. 467.
23. *Labour Leader*, 2(57), 4 May 1906, p. 730.
24. *Tribune*, 2 March 1906, p. 7.
25. *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1906, p. 7.
26. See for example, *Daily Chronicle*, 7 March 1906, p. 5. *Manchester Guardian* and *Tribune* both reported 70,000 political prisoners, the former on 13 March, p. 7, the latter on 1 March, p. 8.
27. *Tribune*, 1 March 1906, p. 8.
28. *The New Age*, new series, 2(13), 25 January 1908, p. 242.
29. *Ibid.*, 2(24), 11 April 1908, p. 467.
30. *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1906, p. 7.
31. Kellogg Durland, *The Red Reign. The True Story of An Adventurous Year in Russia* (New York, 1908), p. 161.
32. *The New Age*, new series, 2(24), 11 April 1908, p. 467.
33. Kathryn Laing (ed.), *The Sentinel: An Incomplete Early Novel by Rebecca West*, (Oxford, 2002), pp. xiv, xxv. See also Kathryn Laing, 'Portraying History and Heroism in Rebecca West's *The Sentinel*', *Women's History Review*, 14(3), 2005, pp. 507–26 and 14(4), 2005, pp. 518–21.
34. *The Sentinel*, p. 83.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk: the first year of the Russian Revolution* (London, 1919), p. 353.
37. *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 February 1906, p. 32. The same report was published in *Tribune*, 15 February 1906, p. 3.
38. Henry W. Nevins, *The Dawn in Russia, or Scenes in the Russian Revolution* (London, 1906), p. 300.
39. See also *Times*, 7 September 1905, p. 3; 3 February 1906, p. 5; 13 March 1906, p. 5; 9 April 1906, p. 6; *Glasgow Herald*, 29 January 1906, p. 9; 4 April 1906, p. 9; 15 June 1906, p. 10; *Manchester Guardian*, 1 January 1906, p. 4; 14 February 1906, p. 8.
40. *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January, p. 12.
41. *The Sentinel*, p.89. This was before Rebecca West met H.G. Wells (1912), whose son she gave birth to in 1914. See Victoria Glendinning, *Rebecca West: A Life* (London, 1987).
42. Boniece, 'The Spiridonova Case', p. 585.
43. *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1906, p. 7. The report was dated 31 March.
44. Nevins, *The Dawn in Russia*, p. 188.
45. *Daily Chronicle*, 20 January 1906, p. 6.
46. Nevins, *The Dawn in Russia*, p. 50.
47. See Nevins's introduction to I. Steinberg, *Spiridonova, Revolutionary Terrorist* (London, 1935), p. xxi.

48. Nevinson, *The Dawn in Russia*, p. 26.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
50. John Foster Fraser, *Red Russia* (London, 1907), p. 8.
51. *Times*, 23 January 1905, p. 6.
52. Fraser, *Red Russia*, pp. 9–10. The story of Spiridonova being infected with syphilis as a result of the alleged rape was reported by the Russian journalist Vladimirov, much to the horror of Spiridonova and her comrades, though it gained her even more public support: see Boniece, 'The Spiridonova Case', p. 594.
53. See for example, Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York, 1970), vol. 2, p. 801.
54. Fraser, *Red Russia*, p. 11.
55. *The Sentinel*, p. 89.
56. *Times*, 19 January 1906, p. 4.
57. *Free Russia*, 17(1), January–April 1906, p. 6.
58. *Times*, 16 March 1906, p. 5.
59. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1906, p. 7.
60. *Ibid.*, 26 March 1906, p. 5.
61. *Free Russia*, 17(1), January–April 1906, p. 7.
62. *The Tribune*, 23 March 1906, p. 3.
63. *Daily Chronicle*, 23 March 1906, p. 5.
64. *Ibid.*, 30 March 1906, p. 6.
65. *Manchester Guardian*, 3 April 1906, p. 6.
66. *The Shield*, 5, 15 January 1908.
67. *Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1906, p. 7.
68. *The History of the Times: The Twentieth Century Test, 1884–1912* (London, 1947), p. 382. See also Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898–1914* (London, 1969), p. 187.
69. See for example, Barry Hollingsworth, 'Benckendorff's "Bête Noire": *The Tribune* and Russian Internal Affairs 1906–1908' in W. Harrison and A. Pyman (eds), *Poetry, Prose and Public Opinion: Aspects of Russia 1850–1970* (Letchworth, 1984), pp. 106–32.
70. See for example, the report on the 'Russian Reign of Terror' in Siberia, *Tribune*, 6 March, 1906, p. 3; and the denunciation of 'a perfect saturnalia of repression' in Warsaw in *Labour Leader*, 2(53), 6 April, p. 666.
71. See Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900–1921: The Origins of British Communism* (London, 1969), ch. 5; Ron Grant, 'The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (1890–1917): A Case Study in Internationalism', *Journal of the Scottish Labour History Society*, 3, November 1970, pp. 1–23.
72. *Edinburgh Review*, 205, January–April 1907, p. 216.
73. See W. Harrison, 'The British Press and the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, 7(7), 1974, pp. 75–95.
74. Nevinson, *The Dawn in Russia*, pp. 118–19.
75. See W. Harrison, 'Mackenzie Wallace's View of the Russian Revolution of 1905–07', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, 4, 1971, pp. 73–82.
76. Bernard Pares, *Russia and Reform* (Westport, 1973), p. 568.
77. *The New Age*, 21(8), 21 June 1917, p. 190.
78. Louise Bryant, *Six Red Months in Russia* (London, 1918), p. 169. Bryant was not convinced.
79. *Scotsman*, 10 September 1918, p. 5.
80. Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2, p. 802.

81. R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of A British Agent* (London, 1932), p. 335.
82. Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk*, p. 354.
83. Spiridonova herself compared her experience in 1906 with 1937. See Alexander Rabinowitch, 'Maria Spiridonova's "Last Testament"', *Russian Review*, 54, 1995, pp. 424–46.

# 4

## The First World War and the End of Tsarism

*David Saunders*

James D. White has reminded us how appalled Lenin was when, by voting in favour of war credits in August 1914, most of Europe's social-democratic parliamentarians made it easier for their countries to fight one another.<sup>1</sup> In a way, however, these parliamentarians advanced the socialist cause. Four empires disappeared at the end of World War I. One of them, the Russian, re-emerged under a socialist regime. Would that regime have arrived so soon without the war? What part did World War I play in the fall of tsarism?

For most of the last 40 years this issue has been on ice. Indeed, the 70-year-old Russian Series of the Carnegie Endowment's *Economic and Social History of the World War* may still be the most thorough account of what happened in Russia in World War I.<sup>2</sup> Michael T. Florinsky claimed in 1961 that, because Soviet scholars laboured under ideological constraints and western historiography in the Russian field was limited, the volumes in the Carnegie series 'present a picture of Russia during the war which has not been, and probably never will be, duplicated'.<sup>3</sup> Although the Soviet scholars A.L. Sidorov and A.M. Anfimov were publishing innovative work on Russia in the First World War at the very time of Florinsky's claim,<sup>4</sup> their studies turned out to be swallows that did not make a summer.<sup>5</sup> Although Anglophone literature burgeoned in the field of Russian history after the beginning of American and British academic exchanges with the Soviet Union at the end of the 1950s, most of it assumed that the collapse of the tsarist regime was inevitable and that therefore the role of the First World War was not worth dwelling on. The approach of the Anglophone writers owed a lot to an essay of 1964–5 by Leopold Haimson which emphasised, not the quiescence of the working class of the Russian Empire between 1907 and 1911, but the fact that it became febrile again after the massacre on the Lena goldfields in spring 1912.<sup>6</sup> The implications of Haimson's approach for the study of what happened in Russia in the First World War were clear. If the empire was tottering before the war broke out, undue historiographical concentration on wartime developments was unnecessary.

In the 1970s and 1980s only a few significant works appeared in English on Russia in the First World War.<sup>7</sup>

The fall of tsarism reappeared as a major subject of study only during and after the fall of the Soviet Union. The work of Leopold Haimson came in for criticism.<sup>8</sup> Russia's First World War became a historiographical growth area. Monographs appeared on Russian patriotic culture in the war, on refugees, financial policy, prisoners of war, the violence of the Russian Revolution and Civil War in the context of the World War, enemy aliens in war-time Russia, conscription, liberals, the Russian Empire's bureaucratic elite, the mentality of the unprivileged, and the tsarist regime's management of its borderlands.<sup>9</sup> At least one highly significant new documentary volume came out,<sup>10</sup> at least three important collections of essays,<sup>11</sup> and many free-standing articles.<sup>12</sup> Peter Gatrell incorporated much of the new literature in an over-arching study.<sup>13</sup>

It is too soon, however, to imagine that every question about Russia's First World War has been answered. In 2000 a Russian scholar could still call a new book about Russia's experience of the First World War *The Forgotten Tragedy*.<sup>14</sup> The subject is not yet as prominent in Russian historiography as the large recent books by Niall Ferguson, Hew Strachan and David Stevenson make clear that it is in the historiographical consciousness of western Europe.<sup>15</sup> The lack of continuity in the attention paid to Russia's experience of the First World War may even have impeded understanding of the subject permanently, for it is difficult to compensate retrospectively for the fact that World War I was not remembered in the Soviet Union except as an exemplar of the terrible things that could happen as a result of imperialism.<sup>16</sup> And even if scholars one day come to know everything about Russia's experience of the First World War, they will still not be able to assess the extent of its responsibility for the collapse of the tsarist regime without considering the time before the war as well as the war itself.

A key question about the time before the war is 'How much time?'. In all his studies of the last years of tsarism, Leopold Haimson rarely strayed outside the years 1905–17.<sup>17</sup> Nor, to add geography to chronology, did he often look far beyond St Petersburg/Petrograd. In the belief that nine pre-war years are too few and St Petersburg/Petrograd geographically too unrepresentative to permit an answer to the question whether or not the First World War represented a singularity for Russia, the present essay attempts to range more widely. Admittedly, I shall look at only a few of the topics whose pre-war and wartime configuration one might reasonably compare: work patterns, regional diversification, demography, population displacement, and the effectiveness of government intervention. Even then, I shall sometimes rely on pieces I have published elsewhere in order to expedite the discussion. But under each heading I shall go back further in time and look at more places than is conventional. The thesis will be that, if you take a rather broader view than has been customary, what happened in Russia

in the First World War ceases to look like an intensification of pre-existing centrifugal trends and starts looking much more like an equilibrium-punctuating catastrophe.

I argued a few years ago that patterns of work in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian Empire did not change as rapidly or extensively as many historians have supposed.<sup>18</sup> Because, on that occasion, I was studying long-term rather than short-term trends, I left out of account the disruptions to labour which occurred in Russia's wars. Indeed, at the end of the story I drew attention not to the changes which occurred in World War I but to the re-emergence of rural work-patterns which figured so significantly in the years immediately after the war. Without exception, however, Russia's wars necessitated innovations in patterns of work. Although, on the basis mainly of Petrograd (and mainly the Vyborg District of Petrograd), Haimson argued that in the First World War this was not the case,<sup>19</sup> his argument broke down both on the narrow geographical basis of his evidence and on the relative passivity of the 'traditional' working class (urbanised adult male metalworkers) on the key dates of 9 January, 14 February and 23 February 1917 when revolution was near.<sup>20</sup> So far as patterns of work were concerned, it is much easier to argue that Russia's wars in general and the First World War in particular tended to mark substantial disjunctures.

To illustrate this claim about war and work patterns I shall confine myself, in respect of the Russian Empire's nineteenth-century wars, to mentioning things like Senator Arshenevskii's industrial enquiry of 1811 (entirely motivated by the effects of Russia's adherence to Napoleon's Continental System) and the comparable industrial enquiries of the Crimean War.<sup>21</sup> In order, however, to highlight what was in store for the empire in respect of work patterns in the First World War, it may be worth singling out a few of the consequences for labour of the relatively short-lived and geographically remote Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. If even that war had a major impact on work, how much more likely was the First World War to do so? In Riga, carriage-builders and other metalworkers profited during the war with Japan, but employees in other occupations suffered.<sup>22</sup> Cement factories on the Black Sea coast got into trouble because, as a result of the war, their product was not required by its main consumers (who were in the Far East).<sup>23</sup> When, on 30 June 1904, the government asked factory inspectors to say whether changes in levels of production in the first half of the year were 'normal or occasioned by the special circumstances of the present time', most of the inspectors reported a downturn: piano and furniture factories in Petrograd cut their staff or their hours as the demand for luxury goods declined; the inspector in Tver' was unable to guarantee the maintenance of calm in view of 'the large quantity of proclamations aimed against the war with Japan and the sacrifices of workers to the needs of the war'.<sup>24</sup>

Remarks of this kind were only hints of what was to happen to labour a decade later. I shall illustrate changes in patterns of work in the Russian Empire in World War I solely on the basis of evidence from 1914 and 1915, leaving the reader to imagine how much more dramatic they were to be in the last complete pre-revolutionary year of 1916.<sup>25</sup> A circular of 1 August 1914 from the Ministry of Trade and Industry to the factory inspectorate made clear that the war began dislocating the economy immediately. Mobilisation had reduced the number of workers available to industry. Many industrial enterprises, especially small ones, were closing. As a result, 'fairly significant' numbers of workers – small in respect of each individual closure, but large in the round – were losing their jobs. Big factories were short of hands, whilst workers in small concerns were being laid off. The ministry asked the inspectorate to do all it could to let large employers know where they could find labour, and to let the unemployed know where they could find work. The inspectors were to operate as a sort of labour exchange.<sup>26</sup>

Specialised workers sometimes disappeared from the labour force altogether. In April 1915 Aleksandr Baranov, chairman of a 'Society for the Improvement and Development of Manufacturing Activity', asked the Minister of Agriculture to make peat-cutting a reserved occupation.<sup>27</sup> 'A very significant number of factories in the Central Industrial Region,' he said, 'use peat as virtually their only fuel'. Some 35,000 workers (not counting women) operated the special machines that extracted it. Any one of the small workers' associations in which they were organised would fall apart if even three or four of their members were conscripted. If the peat supply declined, the shortfall would have to be made up with coal. Furnaces designed for peat, moreover, would have to undergo 'fundamental reconstruction'. Baranov's plea fell on deaf ears; whether 'fundamental reconstruction' took place is unclear.

Reporting on the year 1915, the factory inspectors for the province of Petrograd pointed to many changes in the local factory labour force and in the relations of workers with employers.<sup>28</sup> For the outline of the story, one need only look at their figures for the end of the years 1914 and 1915 (some of which are to be found in Table 4.1). Children, adolescents, and especially women were playing a larger part in the factory labour force. The number of women in metalworking plants increased by a massive 392%, albeit from a very low baseline. The number of men in the factory labour force went up only 15.3%, but the number of men employed in metalworking went up 40.5%. Male metalworkers constituted 51.1% of all male factory-workers at the end of 1914, but 62.2% a year later. (Employment in metalworking usually gave protection from the draft). The increase in the size of the factory labour force was greater in the city and suburbs than in the province as a whole. According to the Factory Inspectorate, state orders and the war were the entire explanation of the

Table 4.1 Factory Workers in Petrograd Province

	1914		1915		% increase
	No	%	No	%	
Men	142,404	65.6	164,238	61.4	15.3
Women	56,207	25.9	78,544	29.4	39.7
Adolescents	16,534	7.6	21,562	8.1	30.4
Children	2,077	1.0	3,029	1.1	45.8
Total	217,222	100.0	267,373	100.0	23.1
Total in city of Petrograd and suburbs	185,834	85.6	241,996	90.5	30.2

Source: RGIA, f. 23, op. 19, d. 38, ll. 8–12.

increases; plants dedicated to metal, animal products, and chemicals grew more rapidly than the others. Inspectors had been unable to visit all the plants for which they were responsible because they had been so busy dealing with the opening of new plants, with the operation of ‘privileges’, and with strikes (‘more frequent in Petrograd province than anywhere else in the empire’). Factory managers asked inspectors to mediate on 90 occasions in 1914, but on 163 occasions in 1915. The main reasons for their requests had been disagreements on pay, factory regulations, overtime, the 1912 legislation on sickness insurance, and abrogation of contracts with workers before the specified date. Workers had turned to the inspectorate for most of the same reasons. Workers had made many more collective applications to the inspectorate than formerly (163 involving 18,065 workers in 1914, 249 involving 38,850 workers in 1915). The ‘increased demand for labour ... created favourable conditions for workers vis-à-vis the various demands they made and their insistence on their class interests’. Since workers turned to the Factory Inspectorate because taking employers to court was complicated and slow, ‘the establishment of special industrial courts with simplified procedure and organisation is highly desirable’. Children ought to be prevented from working more than six hours a day, and women and adolescents from working at night. The root cause of the ‘misunderstandings’ between employers and workers was economic: prices were rising faster than wages and some goods had become hard to obtain at any price (‘difficulties in the procurement of meat, flour, sugar, and other foodstuffs have depressed the condition of the majority of the working masses to a still greater extent [than formerly]’). Employers broke the law 898 times in 1914, but 1351 times in 1915. As usual, the major infractions lay in the fields of health and safety. The increased tempo of work accounted for the rise. The regime’s ban on hard liquor had worked as well in 1915 as in 1914, but gambling had

increased as a substitute. Worker entertainments ought to be organised, and workers ought to be given the chance to set up clubs and all sorts of sporting and professional societies. The sickness rate in the workforce had gone up because the fit had gone to war, accidents at the workplace had increased, the 'nervous condition of the labouring masses' was 'heightened', and the rate of opening of sickness schemes had declined (though existing schemes were operating effectively and broadening their range).

Changes in industrial labour patterns were not confined to the province of Petrograd. In Estland in 1915, 'A series of general reasons related to the war (difficulties in respect of cash flow and rail and water communications, a shortage of fuel and raw material, a shortage of workers and clerks because of the call-up) impinged heavily on factory-based industry ... and, with the exception of big metal-working plants, enterprises produced significantly less than usual'. Cement production was 56.5% lower than in 1914 and 69.2% lower than the total possible. Child labour was going up (especially at the enormous textile plant of Kreenholm). The employment of women was increasing not only at textile plants but by more than 200% in the metal-working sector.<sup>29</sup>

In the province of Kherson the factory inspectors spoke of more factory workers in 1915, fewer plants, and, again, a higher percentage of children, adolescents, and especially women in the workforce. Adult males in the factory workforce had gone up by 12.7%, but women by 47%; and the women were working in what to them were new types of factory. Nearly 60% of industry in the province worked metal and wood; in these sectors orders came entirely from the military. Not only the workforce, but also the length of the working day had increased (especially in defence industries). Wages had gone up by 50–100% for 'qualified' workers and 10–20% for the rank and file. Refugees and prisoners of war were not of much use locally, as they were mainly peasants. But sickness schemes were working well.<sup>30</sup>

In Elizavetpol' province in the Transcaucasus (which had had a factory inspectorate for only a year or two), industrialists were treating their workers particularly arbitrarily. The latter's access to judicial defence of their interests was even more limited than it was in the European part of the empire. Factory-owners often ignored recommendations from the factory inspectorate, and thereby undermined the latter's standing. For this reason the factory inspectors believed that some of their decisions ought to be made mandatory (provided those whom they affected had the right of appeal to a higher authority). Employment of Azeri ('Tatar') children under 12 for more than eight hours a day was common.<sup>31</sup>

Factory workers in the province of Vladimir seemed to be faring better in 1915. Their number went up by fewer than 1% (and consequently diminished from 94.9% of the number in the province of Petrograd at the beginning of the year to 77.8% at the end). Labour was not in short supply locally because large numbers of refugees had come to the province from

regions occupied by the enemy. The average annual wage of a factory worker went up 20% by comparison with 1914 (from 200.4 rubles in 1914 to 240.6 rubles in 1915). Workers were suffering fewer financial penalties (presumably because managers were reluctant to drive them out). The biggest single development was the change in the gender balance: the 'constant outflow of conscripted factory workers is being replaced, above all, by women'.<sup>32</sup>

In the province of Tver' in 1915, both the number of factories and the number of factory workers went down. The province was less highly industrialised than either Petrograd or Vladimir, with only 42,092 workers in all. Just under two-thirds of the workforce worked in the cotton industry (and fewer than 10% in metal). The proportion of women in the factory labour force went up from 42.2% in 1913 to 46.7% in 1914 and 50.1% in 1915. In the cotton industry, the proportion of women in 1915 was 67.7%. The proportion of adolescents and children was rising (and had been somewhat higher than in Petrograd province in the first place). Industrial accidents rose again, this time by almost 20%. 'The reason for this phenomenon must be attributed exclusively to inexperienced workers, who have replaced workers summoned to military service'. The average wage went up from 230.95 rubles in 1914 (higher than in Vladimir) to 266.40 rubles in 1915 (also higher, but not by so much). The Senior Factory Inspector considered this average rise of 15.3% 'paltry'. He explained it by pointing to the replacement of experienced workers by adolescents, the inexperienced, and, above all, women. The wages of experienced workers had gone up by 35–40%. No-one's wage rise, however, had been large enough to meet the rise in prices. 'As is well known, the prices of foodstuffs and consumer goods have risen during the war by 100–200%'. The various sorts of rye flour had in fact risen in price by between 72.9% and 87.5% in the 18 months from July 1914 to 1 January 1916; buckwheat by 131.6%; wheat by 111.1%; rye bread by 45.5%; and meat by 112.5%. Workers tolerated the rises because (1) they were more sober than in the past owing to the prohibition of hard liquor (though, as in Petrograd, card-playing had increased as a sort of substitute); (2) they realised most of the population was experiencing a degree of privation on account of the war; and especially (3) factory shops were now selling food at cost or even at a loss in order to keep the workforce sweet. The strike-rate had come down. Seventeen strikes occurred between 24 April and 20 October 1915, involving 6793 workers and the loss of 78,095 working days. A year earlier, strikes had involved 13,665 workers and the loss of 141,310 working days. However badly industry had been affected by the price rises and the labour shortage, their effects were nothing like as damaging as the chaos on the railways, which had 'introduced ... utter anarchy into industrial life'. The effectiveness of the three War-Industry Committees founded in the province in the summer of 1915 led the Senior Factory Inspector to believe that War-Industry Committees ought to be

maintained after the conclusion of peace. 'In conclusion I take the opportunity, as I have done for about ten years, to point out the need for a decision, at long last, on the thorny question of the procedure for opening industrial establishments'. The present impossible arrangements were 'very seriously holding back Russia's industrial development'. 'My twenty-five years in the service of Russian industry have left me firmly of the view that the "Provincial Authorities", who have total power where permitting the opening of industrial establishments is concerned, are not only not well disposed to industry, but positively hostile to it'. Medium and small enterprises, enterprises 'of whose development the country is in particular need', suffered especially badly from the red tape the provincial authorities put in their way.<sup>33</sup>

In Moscow province in 1915, where the factory labour force was about 400,000 (considerably larger than the factory labour force even of Petrograd, let alone of Vladimir), industry experienced many big difficulties, including what was perhaps the exceptional difficulty generated by the expulsion of industrialists who originated in the states with which the Russian Empire was at war. 'The labour of refugees was applied little, because fugitives went to work very reluctantly'. Women constituted 46.8% of the factory labour force as opposed to only 41.5% a year earlier, metalworkers 15% as opposed to only 10% a year earlier. Fewer workers turned to the factory inspectorate for help, as employers were trying harder to keep on the right side of them. Because of price rises, however, the number of strikes was still 'significant'. Workers found it less time-consuming to take their complaints to the inspectorate than to the courts, but 'the results of mediation are not very satisfactory during strikes'. Wages had gone up between 20% and 40% since the start of the war, but the cost of living 75%.<sup>34</sup>

Taken as a whole, these reports of the factory inspectors for 1915 show mainly that, as early as the first full year of the First World War, the composition of the empire's industrial workforce was in rapid transition (especially in respect of the man-woman ratio) and workers were beginning to experience significant economic hardship (the price-wage ratio). There was already a sense that the lid could come off the industrial pressure cooker.

Agriculture was also in trouble. A retired general wrote to the War Minister at the end of July 1914 to point out that mobilisation was taking place at harvest time. Because 'almost everything has stopped,' he said, 'most of the fields will not be sown for the winter and there will not be enough grain for sowing in spring'.<sup>35</sup> From this bad start, things got worse. In August 1915 the 'Kiev Association of Western Zemstva for the Purchase of Agricultural Machinery' wrote twice to the Ministry of Agriculture asking it to permit a factory that supplied agricultural machinery to place an order for iron. Otherwise the factory would have to close, putting its people out of work and depriving peasants of the machinery it made. 'The closure of a whole series of factories in the Kingdom of Poland and the almost com-

plete cessation of the southern factories' production is creating a completely impossible situation for the peasantry, who are manifesting the most enormous demand for machines because of the huge outflow of labour from the countryside'.<sup>36</sup> Again in August 1915, an empire-wide congress of agriculturalists wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture welcoming the decision of the War-Industry Committees to add agricultural representatives to their ranks but calling for the establishment of separate 'agricultural committees' to ensure that rural parts of the empire were properly represented in debates on the continuing reorganisation of the country's economic life. Despite enclosing a trenchant back-up memorandum on the way in which the war was having the effect of removing labour from the countryside, the congress failed to achieve its objective.<sup>37</sup>

Thus even in the first full year of the war patterns of labour were changing significantly in the Russian Empire. If, as I claimed some years ago, they had not been changing very dramatically in the century before the First World War, then, in this sphere of Russian life, the importance of the war among the reasons for the fall of the regime was very great.

Patterns of labour are only one of many spheres in which an argument about the end of tsarism can be structured in this way. I have claimed elsewhere that, although the tsarist regime managed to stay roughly on top of its problem of regional diversity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it failed to do so in World War I because the many centrifugal tendencies in its ecologically and ethnically variegated territories became particularly intractable in war-time conditions.<sup>38</sup> In respect of the non-Russian parts of the empire, this claim looks more respectable now that Daniel Brower has published an account of the Turkestan rebellion of 1916<sup>39</sup> and Aleksandra Bakhturina a survey of the regime's wartime handling of Central Asia, the Kingdom of Poland, the Baltic provinces, 'temporarily occupied territories' (Galicia, northern Bukovyna, Turkish Armenia) and Finland. Bakhturina makes clear that Russia's policy of not permitting local administrative variation had been in conflict with the emergence in the imperial borderlands of movements for 'self-definition' throughout the period from the mid-nineteenth century to 1917. But World War I, she says, played a particular part in the intensification of centre-periphery conflicts, for, on the one hand, the regime stressed imperial integration at that time when it tried to inspire its subjects with the idea of Slavonic unity, and, on the other, it encouraged ideas of liberation among subjects of the Russian Empire when it promised to free the Poles of Germany and Austria-Hungary.<sup>40</sup> Thus ethnic issues, already complicated, became more complicated still. Nor were they the only, or even the most important, indication of the empire's tendency towards geographical disintegration under the pressure of the war. In February 1915 the Chairman of the Moscow Stock Exchange wrote to the Minister of Trade and Industry to say that 'every province is turning into a sort of independent state'; in May

1915 the Mayor of Moscow called for the establishment of a 'Central Imperial Committee' to monitor supplies and distribution throughout the empire; in February 1916 the 'Council of Ministers on Providing Needy Parts of the Empire with Food and Fuel' advocated 'prevent[ing] the further development of factory industry in Petrograd' to reduce the need for continuing to supply the industrial northern part of European Russia with raw materials from the primary-producing south.<sup>41</sup> These were all manifestations of increasingly troublesome geographical strain in the mainly Russian (rather than the ethnic-minority) part of the empire.

The First World War occasioned sharp counter-cyclical developments in the demographic sphere. Broadly speaking, before the war broke out birth-rates and death-rates had both been falling in the Russian Empire, but because the latter had been falling more sharply than the former the population had been growing rapidly. During the war, by contrast, the birth-rate declined even more quickly than it had been declining in peacetime, whilst the death-rate, not surprisingly, went up. As a result, population growth slowed down. All wars, of course, depress the birth-rate (because young men depart for battle). Thus 'In 1878 the birth-rate came down by 6% by comparison with 1876' and 'In 1905 the birth-rate coefficient came down by almost 10% by comparison with 1904 ... [as a] result of the mobilization in 1904 of more than a million young men'. But 'The influence of the First World War was much more significant' in respect of the birth-rate than the Russian Empire's earlier wars had been. Having been 47 per thousand in 1913, births in the Russian Empire went down to 39.7 per thousand in 1915, 29.9 in 1916, and 23.9 in 1917.<sup>42</sup> All wars affect death-rates too, but again there is a point at which a difference in scale becomes a difference of kind. Some 289,000 soldiers of the tsar lost their lives in the principal battles with the French between 1797 and 1815; the empire lost massive numbers of people to plague in its war with the Ottomans of 1828-9; losses in the Crimean War were 40,551 dead in battle and 88,798 dead from illnesses; the number who died on the Danube front in the war of 1877-8 was 21,981 from fighting and another 45,791 from 'illness and non-military trauma' (including suicide).<sup>43</sup> Large though they were, these figures pale into insignificance when set alongside those for Russian deaths in World War I. A classic study of the subject estimates at one point that between 600,000 and 700,000 inhabitants of the Russian Empire died in battle and of wounds between August 1914 and December 1917, and at another that the empire's total war dead were perhaps 1,477,000 (800,000 on the field of battle, 285,000 in hospital, 107,000 from illness, accident, and suicide, and 285,000 from illness and wounds in captivity).<sup>44</sup> A recent study gives the impression that these estimates need to be revised upwards.<sup>45</sup> They relate, furthermore, only to the military, but the death-rate of the civilian population was going up as well. Admittedly, the raw figure for deaths per thousand civilians went on falling, from 30.2 in 1913

to 27.6 in 1917.<sup>46</sup> Because, however, the sharp decline in the war-time birth-rate meant that there were many fewer people in the age-group most susceptible to early death (children in the first year of life), a fall in the death-rate of the civilian population as a whole was more or less inevitable. If one considers only people aged one and above, then the civilian death-rate was rising, from 19.6 per thousand in 1913 to 22.3 in 1917.<sup>47</sup> Part of the explanation for the rise lay in the deterioration of war-time civilian medical services. The empire had a grand total of about 25,000 doctors in 1913, but whereas the military had only 3560 doctors in 1910, it had 14,620 on 1 October 1916.<sup>48</sup> Civilians, therefore, were even less likely to be able to see a doctor during the war than they had been in peacetime.

The references earlier in this essay to war-time dysfunction on the railways and the value (or worthlessness) of refugee labour implied a strong degree of physical displacement between 1914 and 1917. Peter Gatrell has written the key study in this sphere,<sup>49</sup> but it is worth recalling some figures in order, then, to set them in their long-term context. The tsar's Military-Sanitary Administration reckoned that the empire had two and a half million troops under arms in 1914–15 and around four million in 1916–17; the General Staff that there were something under three million soldiers in 1914, three to four and a half million in 1915, and over six million for most of 1916 and 1917.<sup>50</sup> One authority says that the empire recruited a total of just over 15 million troops during the war, another that the total was 16 million.<sup>51</sup> Whereas military recruits went mainly west and south, people who were displaced mainly to the east and north included prisoners of war (more than two million in 1917), forcibly displaced ethnic minorities, and civilians who simply left the western danger zones for the interior of the empire.<sup>52</sup>

To contextualise this degree of displacement, one needs to bear in mind that at any one time in the Crimean War the Russian Empire had only about 400,000 troops under arms.<sup>53</sup> The 16 million mobilised in World War I have been said to be 'more than twelve times more' than the number mobilised in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 and to have equalled '40% of all men aged between twenty and fifty'.<sup>54</sup> The total number of people in the Russian Empire who were displaced by World War I was almost certainly more than 10% of the entire population of the empire, which stood at about 175 million in 1917.<sup>55</sup> This is a figure of the same order as the 18,368,000 'non-local inhabitants of all categories' who were enumerated by the imperial census of 1897.<sup>56</sup> In other words, it could be argued that in a few short years the First World War displaced as many people in the Russian Empire as tended to be displaced in peacetime by all other considerations put together at all points in people's lives.

It can also be argued, however, that the enthusiasm of Russians for physical mobility is almost legendary,<sup>57</sup> and that after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 it was growing. Whereas only a fourteenth of the proverbially mobile population of the province of Iaroslavl' was to be found in the cities

of St Petersburg and Moscow at the turn of the 1870s,<sup>58</sup> those people whom the 1897 census called 'non-local inhabitants of all categories' amounted to nearly a seventh of the entire population of the empire.<sup>59</sup> The government's promotion of peasant migration to Siberia in the 1890s and 1900s, its abolition of the peasants' redemption payments in 1905 and its weakening of peasant communes in 1905–7 further epitomised or tended to encourage population movement. Perhaps, therefore, it is wrong to dwell on the degree of physical displacement which the First World War occasioned in Russia.

A little reflection, however, suggests that dwelling on it may not be mistaken after all. Apart from the fact that, statistically speaking, geographical mobility remained fairly small in pre-1914 Russia relative to the total size of the population, the government had tried hard for most of the period 1861–1906 to keep it within certain limits. Indeed, it actually made mobility more difficult in one important respect at the time it was reducing some of the other constraints on peasants in the 1860s. Under an edict of 15 December 1866, 'all financial assistance for migration from the state treasury was abolished, and migration on the part of former state peasants was made dependent on governmental permission'. Under 'temporary rules' of 10 June 1881 the government retained the right to grant or withhold permission for economically motivated migration. Only on 7 December 1896 was 'each family given the right to send scouts to places of settlement in order to inspect and choose a plot of land and familiarise themselves with local conditions'.<sup>60</sup> Migration for the purpose of permanent re-settlement, furthermore, was only one sort of movement to which the late-imperial authorities related equivocally. To judge by their retention of the almost ineffably complicated internal passport system, they were not enthusiastic even about temporary absence. The passport system could be circumvented, of course,<sup>61</sup> but at least until 1906 it often caught out the unwary. 'In 1896 in St Petersburg, in a population of 1.2 million inhabitants, there were 23,000 arrests for passport violations, compared to 46,000 for criminal offences'.<sup>62</sup> Thus the voter in the province of Archangel who undertook a round-trip of 1000 kilometres in 1912 in order to cast his vote in the elections to the Third Duma<sup>63</sup> seems atypical. It is more sensible to hold on to the point that the vast majority of the large numbers of people who experienced physical displacement in Russia in the First World War were experiencing it for the first time.

I have argued that patterns of work, geographical diversity, demographic developments and population displacement support the view that the First World War was significantly a more stressful period than any other in the history of the later Russian Empire. It is probably important to make clear, by way of conclusion, that the empire's government in the First World War appears to have been even less good at monitoring and channelling developments like these than it had been in Russia's earlier wars. This point may seem unnecessarily condemnatory in view of the fact that a govern-

ment could hardly be expected to perform hyper-efficiently in a conflagration as big as the First World War. By 1914, however, Russia's rulers could not really be excused for failing to realise that military entanglements imposed domestic strains on the empire. Alexander I had eventually defeated Napoleon, but returning officers had played a significant part in Decembrism; Russia's defeat in the Crimean War had played a part in the government's need to concede the end of serfdom; Alexander II had come as close as any Russian monarch to capturing Constantinople in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8, but it was partly on account of that war that he had had to engage shortly afterwards in the mixture of clamp-down and concession which goes by the name of Loris-Melikov's 'Dictatorship of the Heart'; poor performance in the Russo-Japanese War had played a part in generating the revolution of 1905. Military repression of the empire's Polish minority in 1830–1 and 1863–4, the quarter-century of conflict with Shamil and other Caucasians between the 1830s and 1850s, intervention in the Danubian Principalities and Hungary in 1848–9 and the bloody annexation of Central Asia between the 1860s and 1880s had offended and alarmed some of Russia's international rivals and imposed significant strains on the Russian treasury.

Despite these connections between war and domestic difficulty, the imperial government gave little sign of turning in the direction of pacifism. On the contrary, the empire's leaders appear to have gone on thinking that war was a risk worth taking. Even in peacetime, it seems, they were willing to risk trouble for the sake of remaining in a position to achieve their military objectives. Thus, under serfdom, they maintained a recruitment system which could engender order-threatening wakes.<sup>64</sup> Officials charged with the arbitrary division of state peasants into groups of a thousand for recruitment purposes in 1831 wondered whether the new policy was advisable.<sup>65</sup> The authorities may have been prepared to countenance the abolition of serfdom in 1861 because they were determined, in the wake of the Crimean War, to move from a long-service to a short-service army.<sup>66</sup> Even-handed in their pursuit of their military priorities (if in little else), they were willing even to challenge the standing of nobles when they removed their exemption from the draft at the time of the introduction of universal conscription in 1874. Military requirements, in other words, frequently over-rode other major state policies. In 1902 the Minister of War took on the Minister of Agriculture in the case of some ex-Cossacks in the province of Tobol'sk who, according to recent immigrants from the European part of the empire, had too much land. He held that the ex-Cossacks had to retain 'an abundance of landed resources' because it might be necessary at some point in the future to turn them into Cossacks again; the Minister of Agriculture was furious.<sup>67</sup>

A government whose commitment to war and preparation for war was so considerable could have been reasonably expected, by the time of

World War I, to have systems in place for the effective management of war. But it did not. The proliferation of conflicting governmental and quasi-governmental agencies in the Russian Empire in the First World War is one of the war's best-known features. If, as we have seen, the factory inspectors of Tver' responded positively to the establishment of War-Industry Committees in their province in 1915, officials in other traditional agencies were less open to the spirit of administrative innovation and collaboration. When, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture turned down the proposal that agricultural committees be established to match the War-Industry Committees (also mentioned above), it did so on the grounds that it was hostile to 'the idea of creating yet another set of councils'.<sup>68</sup> It was in no position, however, to stand in the way of administrative centrifugalism in general, which continued more or less unchecked. So eventually a massive confusion of powers played its part in the regime's demise alongside all sorts of massively exaggerated social trends. But the principal emphasis of this essay has been on the massively exaggerated social trends. The Romanovs' biggest war had the biggest consequences, and needs to be given greater weight than it has sometimes been given in explanations of their fall.

## Notes

1. James D. White, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 108–9.
2. In alphabetical order of author, the 12 volumes in the Carnegie series (published by Yale University Press) were: Alexis N. Antsiferov *et al.*, *Russian Agriculture During the War* (1930); Mikhail Timotheevich Florinsky, *The End of the Russian Empire* (1931); Nikolai Nikolaevich Golovin, *The Russian Army in the World War* (1931); Paul P. Gronskey and Nicholas J. Astrov, *The War and the Russian Government* (1929); Paul N. Ignatiev *et al.*, *Russian Schools and Universities in the World War* (1929); Eugene M. Kayden and Alexis N. Antsiferov, *The Cooperative Movement in Russia During the War* (1929); Stanislav Kohn and Alexander F. Meyendorff, *The Cost of the War to Russia: The Vital Statistics of European Russia During the World War, 1914–1917* (1932); Alexander M. Michelson *et al.*, *Russian Public Finance During the War* (1928); Boris Emmanuilovich Nol'de, *Russia in the Economic War* (1928); J. Tikhon Polner, *Russian Local Government During the War and the Union of Zemstvos* (1930); P.B. Struve *et al.*, *Food Supply in Russia During the World War* (1930); and S.O. Zagorsky, *State Control of Industry in Russia During the War* (1928).
3. Michael T. Florinsky, *The End of the Russian Empire* (New York, 1961), unpaginated preface.
4. A.L. Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny 1914–1917* (Moscow, 1960); A.M. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaya derevnya v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–fevral' 1917g.)* (Moscow, 1962).
5. But note the following late-Soviet books on Russia in the First World War: V.S. Dyakin, *Russkaya burzhuaziya i tsarizm v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917)* (Leningrad, 1967); Yu.I. Kir'yanov, *Rabochie yuga Rossii (1914–fevral' 1917g.)* (Moscow, 1971); A.L. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1973); V.A. Emets, *Ocherki vneshnei politiki Rossii v period*

- Pervoi mirovoi voiny: vzaimootnosheniya Rossii s soyuznikami po voprosam vedeniya voiny* (Moscow, 1977); A.Ya. Avrekh, *Raspad tret'eyunskoi sistemy* (Moscow, 1985); T.M. Kitanina, *Voina, khleb i revoliutsiya (prodovol'stvennyi vopros v Rossii 1914-oktyabr' 1917g.)* (Leningrad, 1985).
6. Leopold Haimson, 'The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917', *Slavic Review*, 23(4), 1964, pp. 619–42; 24(1), 1965, pp. 1–22.
  7. Perhaps most notably Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914–1917* (London, 1975), and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914–1917: A Study of the War-Industries Committees* (Basingstoke, 1983).
  8. Robert McKean, *St Petersburg between the Revolutions: Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907 – February 1917* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 21–2, 185–6, 208, 310–11; Richard Pipes, '1917 and the Revisionists', *The National Interest*, Spring 1993, p. 71; Dominic Lieven, 'Western Scholarship on the Rise and Fall of the Soviet Régime: The View from 1993', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29(2), 1994, p. 203.
  9. Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, 1995); Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I* (Bloomington, 1999); S.G. Belyaev, P.L. Bark *i finansovaya politika Rossii 1914–1917gg.* (St Petersburg, 2002); Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford, 2002); Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, 2002); Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, 2003); Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics 1905–1925* (DeKalb, 2003); F.A. Gaida, *Liberal'naya oppozitsiya na putyakh k vlasti (1914–vesna 1917g.)* (Moscow, 2003); S.V. Kulikov, *Byurokraticheskaya elita Rossiiskoi imperii nakanune padeniya starogo poryadka (1914–1917)* (Ryazan', 2004); O.S. Porshneva, *Krest'yane, rabochie i soldaty Rossii nakanune i v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 2004); A.Yu. Bakhturina, *Okrainy rossiiskoi imperii: gosudarstvennoe upravlenie i natsional'naya politika v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917gg.)* (Moscow, 2004).
  10. B.D. Gal'perina *et al.* (eds), *Sovet ministrov Rossiiskoi imperii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny: bumagi A.A. Yakhontova (zapisi zasedanii i perepiska)* (St Petersburg, 1999).
  11. V.L. Mal'kov (ed.), *Pervaya mirovaya voina: prolog XX veka* (Moscow, 1998); N.N. Smirnov *et al.* (eds), *Rossiya i Pervaya mirovaya voina* (St Petersburg, 1999); and the 'Discussion' section in *Slavic Review*, 59(2), 2000, pp. 267–342.
  12. Emily E. Pyle, 'Peasant Strategies for Obtaining State Aid: A Study of Petitions during World War I', *Russian History*, 24(1–2), 1997, pp. 41–64; Barbara Alpern Engel, 'Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I', *Journal of Modern History*, 69(4), 1997, pp. 696–721; A.N. Kurtsev, 'Bezhtentsy Pervoi mirovoi voiny v Rossii (1914–1917)', *Voprosy istorii*, 8, 1999, pp. 98–113; Scott J. Seregny, 'A Wager on the Peasantry: Anti-Zemstvo Riots, Adult Education and the Russian Village during World War One: Stavropol' Province', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 79(1), 2001, pp. 90–126; L.A. Bulgakova, 'Privilegirovannye bednyaki: pomoshch' soldatskim sem'yam v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny' in R.Sh. Ganelin *et al.* (eds), *Na puti k revoliutsionnym potryaseniyam: iz istorii Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX veka* (St Petersburg, 2001), pp. 429–93; A.B. Astashov, 'Russkii krest'yanin na frontakh Pervoi mirovoi voiny', *Otechestvennaya istoriya*, 2, 2003, pp. 72–86; Yannis Kotsonis, "'Face-to-Face": The State, the Individual, and the Citizen in Russian Taxation, 1863–1917', *Slavic Review*, 63(2), 2004, pp. 221–46 (for the build-up to the war-time introduction of income tax).

13. Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War, 1914–1917: A Social and Economic History* (Harlow, 2005).
14. A.I. Utkin, *Zabytaya tragediya: Rossiya v Pervoi mirovoi voine* (Smolensk, 2000).
15. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998); Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1: *To Arms* (Oxford, 2001); David Stevenson, *1914–1918: the History of the First World War* (London, 2004).
16. Aaron J. Cohen, 'Oh, That! Myth, Memory, and World War I in the Russian Emigration and the Soviet Union', *Slavic Review*, 62(1), 2003, pp. 69–70, 78–83.
17. Haimson elaborated on the thesis he put forward in 1964–5 in Leopold Haimson and Éric Brian, 'Changements démographiques et grèves ouvrières à Saint-Petersbourg, 1905–1914', *Annales*, 40(4), 1985, pp. 781–804; Leopold H. Haimson and Ronald Petrusha, 'Two strike waves in Imperial Russia, 1905–1907, 1912–1914' in Leopold H. Haimson and Charles Tilly (eds), *Strikes, wars, and revolutions in an international perspective: Strike waves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 101–66; Leopold H. Haimson and Eric Brian, 'Labor Unrest in Imperial Russia during the First World War: A Quantitative Analysis and Interpretation' in Leopold Haimson and Giulio Sapelli (eds), *Strikes, Social Conflict and the First World War: An International Perspective* (Milan, 1992), pp. 389–451; Leopold H. Haimson, "'The Problem of Political and Social Stability in Urban Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution" Revisited', *Slavic Review*, 59(4), 2000, pp. 848–75; and Leopold H. Haimson, *Russia's Revolutionary Experience, 1905–1917: Two Essays* (New York, 2005), pp. 109–229.
18. David Saunders, 'The static society: patterns of work in the later Russian Empire' in Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service (eds), *Reinterpreting Russia* (London, 1999), pp. 126–41.
19. Haimson and Brian, 'Labor Unrest in Imperial Russia during the First World War', esp. pp. 436–8.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
21. St. Petersburg, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), *fond* (f.) 18, *opis'* (op.) 2, *delo* (d.) 30 (Arshenevskii); *ibid.*, *dela* (dd.) 1517–18 (massive files on the condition of factories in various provinces in 1856).
22. *Ibid.*, f. 23, op. 30, d. 3, l. 5.
23. *Ibid.*, l. 180.
24. *Ibid.*, d. 9, ll. 1, 172, 263.
25. The best synoptic account of Russian workers and peasants in the war as a whole is now Gatrell, *Russia's First World War*, pp. 67–76.
26. RGIA, f. 23, op. 19, d. 298, ll. 88–9.
27. *Ibid.*, f. 395, op. 2, d. 2961, ll. 38–9.
28. *Ibid.*, f. 23, op. 19, d. 38, ll. 8–17 (from which all the information in this paragraph is taken).
29. *Ibid.*, ll. 2–4.
30. *Ibid.*, ll. 18–23.
31. *Ibid.*, ll. 58–63.
32. *Ibid.*, ll. 64–74.
33. *Ibid.*, ll. 75–81.
34. *Ibid.*, ll. 86–8.
35. *Ibid.*, f. 395, op. 2, d. 2961, l. 5.
36. *Ibid.*, ll. 59 and 66.
37. *Ibid.*, ff. 60–4.
38. David Saunders, 'Regional Diversity in the Later Russian Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 10, 2000, pp. 143–63.

39. Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London, 2003), esp. chs 1, 6.
40. Bakhturina, *Okrainy*, pp. 335–41.
41. Saunders, 'Regional Diversity', p. 162.
42. B.Ts. Uralnis, *Rozhdaemost' i prodolzhitel'nost' zhizni v SSSR* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 20–1.
43. L.S. Kaminskii and S.A. Novosel'skii, *Poteri v proshlykh voynakh (1756–1918): Spravochnaya kniga* (Moscow, 1947), pp. 18, 21–3, 26–7.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–2, 60.
45. Yu.A. Polyakov and V.B. Zhiromskaya (eds), *Naselenie Rossii v XX veke: Istoricheskie ocherki* 3 vols (Moscow, 2000–), 1, p. 78.
46. Uralnis, *Rozhdaemost'*, p. 84.
47. *Ibid.*
48. K.G. Vasil'ev and A.E. Segal, *Istoriya epidemii v Rossii* (Moscow, 1960), p. 345.
49. Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*.
50. Kaminskii and Novosel'skii, *Poteri*, pp. 48–51.
51. Vasil'ev and Segal, *Istoriya epidemii*, p. 345; Uralnis, *Rozhdaemost'*, p. 21.
52. Apart from Gatrell, *Whole Empire Walking*, see on these groups Rachamimov, *POWs*; Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*; Kurtsev, 'Bezhtentsy'; and S.A. Solntseva, 'Voennoplennye v Rossii v 1917g. (mart-oktyabr)', *Voprosy istorii*, 1, 2002, pp. 143–9.
53. Kaminskii and Novosel'skii, *Poteri*, p. 23.
54. Uralnis, *Rozhdaemost'*, p. 21.
55. V.M. Kabuzan, 'O dostovernosti ucheta naseleniya Rossii (1858–1917gg.)', *Istochnikovedenie otechestvennoi istorii 1981* (Moscow, 1982), p. 116.
56. B.V. Tikhonov, *Pereseleniya v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIXv.* (Moscow, 1978), p. 159.
57. The outstanding recent work on Russians' penchant for moving into new lands is Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, 2004).
58. Yu.E. Yanson, *Sravnitel'naya statistika Rossii i zapadno-evropeiskikh gosudarstv*, vol. 1: *Territoriya i naselenie* (St Petersburg, 1878), p. 369.
59. The total population of the Russian Empire in 1897 was 125,640,021: N.A. Troinitskii (ed.), *Obshchii svod po imperii rezul'tatov razrabotki dannykh pervoi vseobshchei perepisi naseleniya, proizvedennoi 28 ianvarya 1897 goda* 2 vols (St Petersburg, 1905), vol. 1, p. 1.
60. All quotations from A.I. Gozulov, *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoi statistiki* (Moscow, 1972), p. 108.
61. See, for example, Ivan Stolyarov, *Zapiski russkogo krest'yanina* (Paris, 1986), pp. 28–9 (on the dubious travel documents of pilgrims in the Voronezh countryside in the 1890s).
62. Steve Smith, 'Writing the History of the Russian Revolution after the Fall of Communism', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46(4), 1994, p. 574.
63. RGIA, f. 23, op. 17, d. 528, ll. 18–19.
64. Rodney D. Bohac, 'The Mir and the Military Draft', *Slavic Review*, 47(4), 1988, pp. 652–66.
65. RGIA, f. 379, op. 2, d. 118, esp. ll. 15, 40.
66. This is part of the argument of Alfred J. Rieber's celebrated article, 'Alexander II: A Revisionist View', *Journal of Modern History*, 43(1), 1971, pp. 42–58.
67. RGIA, f. 391, op. 1, d. 171, ll. 153–5.
68. *Ibid.*, f. 395, op. 2, d. 2961, l. 60.

# 5

## The October Revolution, the Constituent Assembly, and the End of the Russian Revolution

*Rex A. Wade*

When we say ‘the Russian Revolution’, what time period, and thus what events are we indicating? The answer we give may make a variety of statements, explicitly or implicitly, about our interpretation not only of the revolution, but of modern Russian history. What was the revolution? When did it end? When did it begin? What constituted the Bolshevik seizure of power and what was its nature, meaning, and significance? How does it relate to what is sometimes called ‘the Bolshevik Revolution?’ How does the revolution fit into the broader, tumultuous history of modern Russia? Yet, the many books that have been written about the revolution, often with the words ‘the Russian Revolution’ in the title, cover greatly different time periods and subjects. Rarely, however, do authors address the question of why they use the time period that they do for the revolution. Readers attempting to learn about the Russian Revolution can legitimately feel confused about the subject, given the wide range of time periods encompassed under that title in various books. Just when was it? This essay will examine the issue of the chronological definition of the Russian Revolution, first reviewing briefly some of the periodisations used by historians and then proposing a specific one as ‘the best’. In particular it will argue for a rarely used time, January 1918, and specific event, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, as marking the end of the Russian Revolution in the specific sense of the term.

Central in any definition of the ‘Russian Revolution’ are the two revolutions of February and October, 1917, by which the Romanov monarchy was overthrown and then the Bolsheviks took power. Many use ‘the Russian Revolution’ to mean specifically the period from February to October. This is the most basic, and most narrow, definition. It highlights first the overthrow of the monarchy and then, especially, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October as historical turning points. It suggests that the Bolshevik seizure of power in the October Revolution marked a distinct boundary between the

old Russian and new Soviet eras. Implicit, perhaps, is an assumption that everything that followed in the Soviet/Communist era flowed exactly from that event. The emphasis upon October (the 'Great October Socialist Revolution') as a epoch-defining turning point was the guiding ideology of Soviet historiography, but many of the Soviet Union's opponents, Russian and foreign, also accepted such an interpretation (they differed, of course, on whether to assign it a negative or positive assessment).

The main objection to the February–October periodisation has been to claim that it is too narrow and that the period after October must be included. There is little agreement, however, on how far beyond October to carry it. Some authors find a date somewhere in 1918 to mark the end: the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March or some date in the spring or summer, usually based on the beginning of significant civil war fighting or else the end of some trend in political affairs or local developments. A significant number of authors include the entire civil war period from 1917 to 1921. Even those that do so in their title and content, however, often make distinctions in their text between a revolution in 1917 and the civil war thereafter.

Other authors pick a significantly later date. Some choose 1924, Lenin's death, as marking an end to the revolution. Some carry it through the New Economic Policy (NEP) era of the 1920s and end before the 'Stalin Revolution' of about 1928–32, while others take the end of the Stalin Revolution to mark the revolution's own end, arguing, implicitly or explicitly, that the political, economic, social, and/or cultural controversies unleashed by the revolution are not settled until Stalin's particular resolution of them in the early 1930s. Probably the latest date for the end of the revolution is the second edition of Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Russian Revolution*, which extends it to the great terror of 1937–8.<sup>1</sup> Authors of these longer dates seem to be focusing on something that might be the 'Bolshevik Revolution', i.e., the Bolshevik project to use their government power and ideology to transform fundamentally Russia and the world. Sometimes 'Russian Revolution' and 'Bolshevik Revolution' are used interchangeably, but these probably are quite different concepts.

Although we are concerned with the end of the revolution, we should note that authors also use different beginning dates. Most use the February Revolution (with a background chapter or two on the coming of the revolution), but some push the beginning back earlier. They begin the revolution in the 1880s or 1890s, 1905, or 1914. There has been something of a trend in recent years to 'cross the revolutionary divide' of 1917 and include the years before and after 1917, although, again, without agreement on the dates.

I suspect that in fact most of us use the term 'Russian Revolution' in a multiplicity of ways in different contexts. What, however, if you must be precise and definite? What, for example, if you are asked to write a book or

give a lecture 'The Russian Revolution'? Intellectual as well as practical demands require that our author grapple with and resolve the question of what is 'the revolution'. There must be some chronological logic based on the topic itself. This means especially deciding when does the revolution end (there is more authorial consensus that it begins in February 1917, and the beginning is easier to be less precise about because so much can be folded into the 'background' on the 'coming of the revolution'). Indeed, aside from an author's or lecturer's needs, it is a legitimate question for scholars generally, who should after all have reasonably agreed upon chronological definitions for the historical terms we use. What might that be for 'The Russian Revolution'?

I would like to propose that the end of the revolution is best found around January 1918, and if a specific date and event is needed, the end of the revolution is best marked by the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on 6 January. By dispersing the Constituent Assembly, the Bolshevik-Left SR Soviet government broke the most basic shared assumptions about the revolution and the purposes of political power and made Civil War unavoidable. If it could not be voted from power, then its opponents had little alternative except to resort to arms. At that point, I would argue, the Revolution ends and the Civil War begins. I base this on one general proposition, buttressed by several specific ones.

The basic proposition is simple: the period from February 1917 to January 1918 has a certain internal coherence which gives a unity to the period and marks it as a single period, 'The Russian Revolution', whereas the action of dispersing the Constituent Assembly fundamentally changed that and ushered in 'The Civil War', something very different from what had preceded. Inherent in this interpretation is the corollary that the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October, the 'October Revolution', marked not the end of the revolution but rather a different phase of a single revolutionary period, much the way the earlier April Crisis, July Uprising, and Kornilov Affair marked off important stages of the revolution. In contrast, the Civil War was not simply a new stage of the revolution, but a very different period not only because of its extreme violence but also because the issues, operating assumptions, and methods of struggle were fundamentally different. Let us elaborate.

From February 1917 to January 1918 Russians engaged in a vigorous political struggle for power. It was a multi-faceted struggle, with many issues as well as groups involved. Nonetheless, there was a fundamental underlying unity of assumptions, issues, and actions which makes this a coherent period. The basis of this was a belief, shared by virtually all actors on the grand stage that was the revolution, that the February revolution had overthrown the autocracy and ushered in a new democratic era that would culminate in the election of a Constituent Assembly on the 'four tail' suffrage of secret, direct, equal, and universal elections. The Constituent Assembly

would, on the basis of election, have full legitimacy and would set the basic political structure of the new Russian state, resolve authoritatively the fundamental social and economic issues confronting the country (including land reform), and establish a new, fully legitimate, democratic government. The Constituent Assembly would be the legitimate, authoritative, supreme decision maker that would resolve the issues arising out of the revolution.

The concept of the Constituent Assembly came to Russia as part of the legacy of the French Revolution, but because of the autocratic system and lack of civil society it took on a broader and larger meaning than in the West, acquiring a social-philosophical as well as political meaning. By the second half of the century, L.G. Protasov argued, it became 'a kind of symbol of the country's radical renovation, the elimination of its historical backwardness, and a solution to all its pressing social problems'.<sup>2</sup> It also came to be linked to the achievement of constitutional government. The idea of a Constituent Assembly became an integral part of the mentality of the intelligentsia, especially the liberal and radical intelligentsia.

The ideal of a Russia reconstituted via a Constituent Assembly seemed to have triumphed entirely in 1917. All four compositions of the Provisional Government – March, May, July, and September – included its convocation as central to their programmes. Both General Lavr Kornilov on the right and V.I. Lenin on the left justified their attempts to seize power (unsuccessfully and successfully, respectively) as essential to guaranteeing the convening of the Constituent Assembly. Even the Bolshevik government formed by the October Revolution initially declared its decrees to be in effect until the Assembly met. Similarly, the Petrograd Soviet and provincial soviets regularly called for its convocation. Resolutions from soldiers, workers, peasants and others consistently included calls for its speedy convocation.

To be sure, there were differing views of the Constituent Assembly. For the upper and middle strata of society its task was to create a law-governed state while solving the problems facing the country within a constitutional, peaceful, reformist framework. For the lower classes the Constituent Assembly was attractive as a means of carrying out a radical social-economic revolution and meeting their aspirations in the social and economic realm as well as the political goals of democracy. For peasants it was where the land issue would be resolved in their favour finally and authoritatively. Many nationality group spokesmen saw the assembly as the means for ratifying their rights or autonomy within a federal state. The aspirations of different groups determined what they expected from the Constituent Assembly. For all, however, it was central not only for the meeting or validation of individual aspirations, but for maintaining the democratic values of the revolution and, through its inherent legitimacy, maintaining the increasingly fragile political unity and peace within the country.

The months after February witnessed a vigorous competition of ideas and groups as they sought to advance their visions of what the new society

would be and to garner support for that, and to be in a position to dominate or influence the decisions of the Constituent Assembly. The issues over which they fought were often social, economic, cultural, ethnic or other, but they used the political forum provided by the post-February system, and this would lead to their resolution at the Constituent Assembly. The period was not entirely peaceful, but the violence was relatively small-scale and did not change the basic operating assumptions. People continued to expect that the Constituent Assembly would bring the revolution to a successful close by establishing a new legitimate and stable government. It was a sort of Holy Grail at the end of the revolutionary quest which would resolve all problems.

Newspaper articles and editorials throughout 1917 regularly asserted the need, whatever the particular issue or crisis was at hand, to make it to the Constituent Assembly. In mid-June 1917, for example, just as expectations of a relatively smooth progress for the revolution were evaporating and people were becoming aware of how deeply divided the country was and how difficult it would be to resolve problems, two quite different newspapers re-emphasised the importance of the Constituent Assembly. *Russkaya Vedomosti*, a long-standing paper of liberal-moderate conservative outlook, editorialised on 16 June that 'the speediest possible convocation of the Constituent Assembly is for Russia the most crying necessity, for the Constituent Assembly alone can command that political and legal authority that is indispensable for the establishment and consolidation of the new governmental order'. *Izvestiya*, the official newspaper of the Petrograd Soviet, which represented a very different political outlook, wrote on the same day that 'Not only will the Constituent Assembly act as the supreme body of national sovereignty, establish all the laws of the Russian state, resolve the basic issues of government – but [it] will also [act] as the authoritative body, recognised by all, around which all the revolutionary forces of the democracy will gather and to which all its energies will be directed'.<sup>3</sup> There might be disagreements about its decisions, even social turmoil, but the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly and the government and fundamental public order which it would create would not be in doubt. Revolution would come to a successful end. As historians, we realise that this latter might not necessarily have followed, but it was the expectation of 1917. Enthusiasm for the Constituent Assembly might have waned somewhat as the year progressed, (as did all political participation), but it still remained for most the sole, hopeful, vehicle for resolving the revolution in a non-violent, 'lawful', manner. This persisted even beyond the Bolshevik seizure of power in the October Revolution.

The Bolshevik assumption of power in the name of the Soviets in October severely tested but did not change this basic set of assumptions. After all, the Bolsheviks had been among the loudest in their demands for the convening of the Assembly and had criticised the Provisional Government for

failing to hold the elections promptly, even charging it with delaying the elections for the assembly in order to thwart the people's right to express their will. On 3 October the main Bolshevik newspaper wrote that 'In order for the Constituent Assembly to take place ... in order for decisions of the Constituent Assembly to be fulfilled ... the Congress of Soviets ... must] take into its hands both power and the fate of the Constituent Assembly'.<sup>4</sup> Nor was there any good reason at the time to assume that the new Bolshevik government would *not* go ahead with first the elections and then the convening of the Constituent Assembly and accept its authority. The new Soviet government initially referred to itself as provisional: the statement of its creation, written by Lenin, declared it a 'provisional workers' and peasant's government, to be known as the Council of Worker's Commissars, to govern the country *until the Constituent Assembly is convened* (emphasis mine). This used the very same word, *vremennoe*, that was used for the Provisional Government (*Vremennoe pravitel'stvo*). This suggested that it was a continuation of the series of provisional governments that Russia had already seen in 1917 – it was in fact the fifth or sixth government, depending on how you count. Additionally, many of the early decrees of the new government specified that they were to be in force until the Constituent Assembly acted on the matter. Moreover, despite some misgivings by some Bolshevik leaders, Lenin especially, it did proceed with the already scheduled Constituent Assembly elections in November. The specific 'provisional' government obviously had changed dramatically, but it was not so obvious that the underlying political assumption of the entire revolution – the sanctity and role of the Constituent Assembly and the temporary, provisional, nature of any government before it – had changed.

Something similar can be seen in provincial cities where the local Bolsheviks and radicals immediately seized power in the name of the local soviet and recognised the government in Petrograd. The Saratov Soviet endorsed the new government in Petrograd and declared itself the government in Saratov on 26 October. It followed this early on the 27<sup>th</sup> with a decree about steps to be taken locally, including as number 6, 'Preparations for the election to the Constituent Assembly are to continue as before'. The same meeting issued a local decree distributing the land among the peasants that stated that disagreements among groups would be referred to the Saratov Soviet, 'whose decision is binding until resolution by the Constituent Assembly'.<sup>5</sup>

One might raise objections about this emphasis on the perceived continuity and provisional nature of the new government, pointing to the violence attending the change of government in October as well as the latter's radical character. Yet, how different in fact was this from what people by then were accustomed to and to how the revolution had unfolded since February? First of all it is worth remembering that all the major transformations of the government between February and October were preceded or

accompanied by violence. After the first Provisional Government was formed during the upheaval of the February revolution, it underwent three major reconstructions before October associated with violence and armed men in the streets of the capital: those formed during or immediately after the April Crisis, the July Days, and the Kornilov Affair (the first two with greater casualties than the revolution of 24–25 October in Petrograd). There also were other reshufflings of the government's membership from July to September and continuous talk of expected future changes; February–October was hardly the period of political stability that the single term 'the Provisional Government' might imply. Nor did the October revolution mark the last change of government in 1917; it was reorganised again on 12 December with the addition of Left SRs, not to mention the major restructuring of the Central Executive Committee in November. In all, 1917 saw approximately seven different governments, all but the last of them lasting two months or less, and all of them proclaiming their loyalty to the idea of the Constituent Assembly (except maybe the last one in December).

Moreover, these reorganisations of the government involved a distinct radicalisation. The first, on 5 May, saw the removal of P.N. Milyukov and A.I. Guchkov, two of its members most resistant to the rising influence of the socialists in public affairs, and the entry of prominent socialists from the Petrograd Soviet into the government. Socialists in the government (beyond Kerensky) was a momentous change in a country that only two months earlier was governed by an ultra-conservative, semi-autocratic monarchy and after that by a basically liberal-moderate conservative government. A comparison of the content of the programmatic statement of this new 'coalition' (socialists and liberals) government and that of the first (primarily liberals) cabinet of the Provisional Government shows a definite shift leftward. The second reconstruction of the government, in July, brought a socialist – Alexander Kerensky – to head the government, a first not only for Russia but for any major European power. These were momentous changes, moving the government in a steadily leftward, socialist direction. Indeed, Prince Lvov, head of the government from March to early July, explained his resignation on the grounds that he could not accept the policies that the new socialist members were putting forth, policies that were a 'usurpation of the authority of the Constituent Assembly ... and an attempt to confront it with a *fait accompli*'. Socialists became the politically dominant force in the national government just as they were in local city, town, and provincial governments across the country (indeed, they completely dominated local government across the country). In addition, on both the national and local levels the soviets (completely socialist) had become more powerful than the formal governments. The brief, superficial rightist revival in the high politics of July and August should not be allowed to obscure the more fundamental and ongoing leftward radicalisation which occurred in Russia in 1917.

In some ways the next logical step was an all-socialist government, which is exactly what was meant by the increasingly popular slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets'. This was a call for a government composed entirely of socialists and excluding the liberals. This was widely discussed for months before October without any assumption that it meant the end of the revolution or preempted the Constituent Assembly. A more radical, all-socialist government was hardly a novel idea by October, and was widely discussed on the streets, in meetings and speeches, in newspapers, and in political circles. The Democratic Conference in September came very close to establishing such a government. Indeed, by October it seemed almost a foregone conclusion that a soviet-based, all-socialist government, would happen soon. The only question was how and of exactly what nature. The October Revolution achieved that.

In one sense, what the 'October Revolution' did was bring into being a government of a type that had been extensively discussed and increasingly accepted as inevitable – a soviet based all-socialist government. Indeed, the elections for the Constituent Assembly that followed quickly in November gave the socialist parties an overwhelming majority, with a strong radical representation, guaranteeing that the assembly would be dominated by and almost certainly form a government of the socialist parties, the parties represented in the soviets. Thus the new Bolshevik government's avowedly socialist composition and policies were not so radical a departure from the general trend of politics in 1917 generally and September–November especially, nor of what could be expected from the Constituent Assembly. Indeed, many had argued before the Congress of Soviets in October that convening it was unnecessary precisely because of the nearness to the elections for the Constituent Assembly and its certain socialist, indeed relatively radical, composition. The unexpected aspect of the Congress of Soviets was that it produced a single party and later, temporarily, two-party government, and drawn exclusively from the most radical socialists.

It is important to remember the extent to which *all* governments formed in 1917 were the result of deals among a fairly small group of political leaders representing various political factions, and this did not end with the October revolution. In retrospect we can hardly term the Bolshevik seizure of power via the Congress of Soviets as simply another of those reshufflings, but it did have some features of the kind of changes that had characterised, and continued to characterise, politics in 1917. While the Second Congress of Soviets could make some, imperfect, claim to fairly wide if indirect electoral representation, its outcome had more to do with ongoing quarrels and agreements among party chieftains than with the Congress itself. When the Menshevik and SR leaders led their delegations on a walkout, that decision, not elections or armed force, gave the Bolsheviks control of the congress and led to an all-Bolshevik, and more radical, government than most people expected from the Congress of Soviets. Moreover, while the Menshevik and SR leaders vigorously

denounced the Bolshevik actions as dangerous and unwarranted, they quickly fell into the by now established pattern of negotiations to restructure the government by agreement among party chieftains. Underlying the so-called Vikzhel negotiations of 29 October–2 November on reorganising the government as a multi-party government was the assumption that party leaders could, by mutual agreement, once again remake the government, despite what had been done at the Second Congress of Soviets. These political leaders apparently did not see the October ‘revolution’ as ending the Russian Revolution or even as marking all that obvious a departure from the political culture of the revolution. Rather, they (including some Bolsheviks) hoped to limit the potential damage of an all-Bolshevik government and the possibility of degeneration into civil war. This they intended to accomplish by another governmental reorganisation to create a new ‘provisional’ all-socialist ‘government that will have ... enough prestige to retain power until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly’.<sup>6</sup> The Constituent Assembly, however, was to be fundamentally different than these negotiated governments: it would be a popularly elected, fully legitimate, democratic government. Hence its importance in the revolution and the significance of its destruction on 6 January 1918.

The process of the spread of ‘Soviet power’ to the provinces reinforces that the post-October Bolshevik government was perceived as a new temporary government. As we have seen from the Saratov example, some places where the local soviet immediately supported the Bolshevik seizure of power and declared their own assumption of power locally, also declared that their authority extended only until the Constituent Assembly met. Other parts of the country did not initially accept, or accept fully, the new Bolshevik government, seeing it as in any case temporary. Instead they arranged various local power structures until the Constituent Assembly gave renewed legitimacy to the national government. In Kharkov, for example, the local soviet, controlled by a basically leftist but not Bolshevik majority, accepted the overthrow of the Provisional Government but condemned the Bolsheviks for an armed seizure of power. They created a multi-party Military Revolutionary Committee to hold power locally until the Constituent Assembly met. In the Caucasus, local leaders formed a multi-ethnic Transcaucasian Commissariat to hold power until the Constituent Assembly met and determined Russia’s political system.<sup>7</sup> Here and elsewhere local power structures looked upon the Bolsheviks as only temporary until the Constituent Assembly met, whether or not they accepted the Soviet government in Petrograd as legitimate or authoritative in the interval.

In brief, then, in the country as a whole it was widely assumed that this new government was another temporary one, soon to be replaced, finally, by a legitimate one established via the Constituent Assembly. The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the October Revolution occurred in the

midst of the electoral campaign for the Constituent Assembly and just before the voting took place. This, perhaps more than anything, explains the relative lack of open resistance to the new Bolshevik government.<sup>8</sup> For the bulk of the politically conscious population, there was no need for armed action against it. One could support it and its actions, could condemn it, or could – as many, perhaps most, did – condemn it for the unnecessarily hasty and dangerous action but generally approve of its legislation. Few people of whatever political view felt much need to resist it forcefully – it was temporary! Its presumed life span would be about two months, the approximate length of the various provisional governments before it. Newspapers reporting on activities and decrees of the new government regularly reminded their readers that this government and its decrees were temporary – SR newspapers especially took this approach. What changed that perception and the nature of opposition to it, changed the whole basis upon which political struggle had been fought out since February 1917, and turned the revolution to the long dreaded civil war, was the decision to dissolve the Constituent Assembly.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly in November upheld predictions of a Bolshevik loss. Overall, the Bolsheviks received only about a quarter of the vote, while about half went to the SRs (in their various manifestations) and the rest to other opponents of the Bolsheviks.<sup>9</sup> Faced with the reality that they would be a minority at the Assembly and would have to relinquish power to whatever group could assemble a majority there (SRs initially), some Bolsheviks and Left SRs began to explain away the Assembly and prepare for violence against it. Although prior to the October Revolution Lenin had criticised the Provisional Government for not convening the Assembly promptly and argued that ‘if the Soviet were to win [power], the Constituent Assembly would be certain to meet; if not, there would be no such certainty’.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, on 13 December, he published a series of ‘theses’ against the Constituent Assembly. He declared that a republic of soviets was a ‘higher form of democracy’ and that because of ‘the divergence between the elections...and the interest of the working and exploited classes’, the only function for the Constituent Assembly now would be to endorse the October Revolution and the actions of the Soviet government since then.<sup>11</sup> Other Bolsheviks also attacked it. The Left SRs, members of the government since December 12, also began to challenge the need for the Constituent Assembly and to suggest that it might be dispersed if it went beyond endorsing the activities of the Soviet government.

The Constituent Assembly opened on 5 January 1918 and elected the SR leader, Victor Chernov, its president. It rejected the Soviet government’s demand to limit its authority and proceeded to debate the problems facing the country. During this first meeting it issued a land decree, declared Russia a republic, and approved the armistice with Germany. These actions showed its socialist orientation and also that earlier Bolshevik policy initiatives on

the big issues of dispute in 1917 were not far out of line with the outlook of the Constituent Assembly majority. Acceptance by the Bolsheviks and Left SRs of the Constituent Assembly would have still allowed a socialist government that was radical by comparison with any in Europe or the world. This government would almost certainly have continued important socialist social-economic reforms, although probably not as radical or as swift as those of the Bolshevik-Left SR government. It would have involved continued significant Bolshevik participation and influence in the new political system, including probably the government.

What acceptance of the Constituent Assembly would not do was maintain the Bolsheviks' dominant position in the government. Lenin, committed as he was not just to radical socialist restructuring but to his own particular versions of that (as were other Bolshevik leaders such as Leon Trotsky), was not willing to relinquish power, even at the risk of civil war. Some Left SRs supported them. Therefore, before the Assembly could open its second meeting on 6 January, the Bolshevik-Left SR government ordered its dissolution. Red Guards and Kronstadt sailors prevented the delegates from reentering the meeting hall and broke up the rather feeble attempts to rally support for the assembly.

The Constituent Assembly's suppression marked the end of an era – indeed, the end of the revolution. What followed was fundamentally different and must be so called. There are many reasons for distinguishing the period which follows as something different from the revolution, with the late-December to January period surrounding 6 January marking a fundamental break in the revolutionary process and transition to civil war.

First, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly meant that civil war was inevitable, for this declaration that the Bolsheviks could not be voted out of office meant that their opponents, of whatever political persuasion, had either to retire permanently to the sidelines or take the field with arms. Not merely politically marginal groups of army officers and conservative politicians, but now wide sectors of society, especially educated society, were driven to armed opposition. This included socialists as well as conservatives and liberals.<sup>12</sup> That some socialists, especially Mensheviks, continued to try to function within the soviets and to behave as if electoral decisions were possible and would be respected, does not change the reality that civil war was the only meaningful alternative available to the Bolsheviks's opponents. Indeed, the Bolsheviks forcibly negated all electoral victories by socialist opponents in local soviets and elsewhere, underscoring the point that only armed resistance was viable. At the same time, the Bolsheviks' use of force against socialist opponents who did sometimes win electoral victories in soviets and elsewhere only deepened the Bolsheviks' movement toward dictatorship and away from the democratic ideals and practices of 1917. Whatever time lag occurred before serious fighting started, as each side sorted out the situation and mobilised armed forces, civil war effec-

tively began here. Whatever the continuities between the Revolution and the Civil War, and all epochs are connected to their predecessors and successors, civil war is a much different thing than revolution. Dispersing the Constituent Assembly effectively marked the end of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the beginning of the Civil War.

Second, although on one level the Bolsheviks had simply avoided a serious threat to their hold on power, on a much more fundamental level what they had done was to set the party irrevocably upon the course of dictatorial rule; the act committed the Bolsheviks to rule by force and to the development of an authoritarian political system. The new Soviet regime had its basic political origins in this act, when it rejected the fundamental democratic principle that a government must accept electoral defeat, much more than in the events of October 1917 or even in the initial repressive measures in November and December 1917 (press censorship and establishment of the Cheka in particular). It destroyed the democratic aspirations and principles that were at the heart of the revolution and revolutionary expectations late-December to January period surrounding 6 January does represent in several ways a time of a fundamental break in the revolutionary process and transition to civil war.

Third, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly provoked large scale secession among the national minority populations, fundamentally different than what had preceded. Although nationality based movements had been growing in strength during 1917 and increasingly demanding autonomy within a federal state, and although some took advantage of the October Revolution to strengthen their position locally, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly changed their relationship to the central government. Throughout 1917 the Provisional Government (and Petrograd Soviet) had insisted that only the Constituent Assembly could resolve the issue of their status and the question of federalism. Most nationality leaders accepted that and looked to it for creation of a federal republic shaped along nationality lines. With the assembly's dispersal, however, that could no longer happen and they had to act on their own. Moreover, for them the dispersal broke the last sense of the legitimacy of the central government in Petrograd, whatever its composition or name. For many, there no longer was sufficient reason for staying within a Russian state of whatever name and government. One might compare the Ukrainian Rada's Third Universal following the Bolshevik seizure of power, which still assumed membership in a federal state, with its Fourth Universal's declaration of independence on 9 January, three days after the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>13</sup> In the Caucasus region a multi-ethnic, multi-party Transcaucasian Commissariat had held power after October until the Constituent Assembly and only after the latter's dispersal did the leaders there move toward complete independence. In Central Asia, one political activist elected to the Constituent Assembly later wrote 'Thus the Constituent Assembly, on which

the hopes of all the peoples of Russia had been pinned, perished...We set out on the road of struggle for complete national liberation, for a free independent Turkestan...'.<sup>14</sup> Finland and the Baltic states broke away between December and February. Some of this activity must be attributed to developments within those nationality areas, but the break of legitimacy represented by the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly helped propel them to a break away into full independence rather than autonomy and federalism.

Fourth, I would suggest that the social and economic reforms and decrees of the first two months of the Soviet government represented the enactment of reforms which had been widely discussed and were supported by most political parties during 1917, especially the socialist ones. By bringing the more radical among the Soviet parties to power, and especially by abandoning 'coalition' government with the liberals, the various roadblocks to enactment of these reforms were swept aside. The reforms of 26 October–early January were largely in keeping with the general direction of political trends in 1917 and with what the Constituent Assembly would do: land, peace, major social reforms. Indeed, during its one day, the Constituent Assembly did affirm both the land distribution and the military armistice enacted by the Soviet government. Most other early Bolshevik decrees regarding abolition of social estates, restructuring of the judicial system, reform of marriage and divorce laws, etc., were in keeping with the views of the socialist parties generally, and even of many liberals. Even the one truly socialist decree, the nationalisation of the banks, was acceptable to most socialists. In other words, the social and economic legislation of the time was within the framework of the issues (and their potential resolution) that had been debated in the revolutionary political forum throughout 1917. Then, after this flurry of legislation between 26 October and early January, the process ends, not to be resumed for several months, and even then not at such a pace or of a type which had such broad support. Instead, increasingly there are measures to prepare for civil war, starting with the formal establishment of the Red Army on 15 January, and continuing with the civil war economic policies that came to be known as 'war communism'.

Fifth, even the peace process fits into this time-frame better than one might think at first. The armistice in December 1917 was the truly decisive event, not the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. With the armistice the war issue was effectively resolved; the continuation of the war and the discontent of the troops would, for the first time since the February Revolution, no longer be a central political issue, perhaps *the* central issue, of Russian life. On the other side of the coin, the armistice helped drive a significant portion of educated society into active opposition, including armed opposition and civil war. The exact terms of the peace treaty would continue to be a major source of controversy for and within the Bolshevik leadership, but it was the official and *de facto* end of fighting in December that was decisive for political and social life in the country at large. In late December and January the army demobilised itself.

These several factors support the notion of January 1918 as the breaking point between the revolution and the civil war. Among them, however, it was the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly that was the decisive factor. The revolution to then had been characterised by a primarily political struggle, even when based on social and economic issues, in which there was a certain body of shared assumptions about the purposes of political power and how the revolution would end. The Constituent Assembly was the focus of that. The dispersal of that Constituent Assembly, not the Bolshevik-Left SR seizure of power in October, was the key event which destroyed the shared assumptions of the revolutionaries and the politically conscious people of the Russian empire. It transformed a political struggle into a military struggle, revolution into civil war.

## Notes

1. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford, 1994).
2. L.G. Protasov, 'The All-Russian Constituent Assembly and the Democratic Alternative: Two Views of the Problem,' *Russian Studies in History*, 33(3), 1994–5, p. 69.
3. Both are given in Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917* (Stanford, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 447–8.
4. *Rabochii put'*, 26, 3 October. It had replaced *Pravda* after the July Days.
5. *Triumfal'noe shestvie Sovetskoï vlasti*. Chast' I. (Moscow, 1963), pp. 376–8.
6. Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 249.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 260–2, 268.
8. It is perhaps worth remembering that the pre-Constituent Assembly attempt to organise armed opposition to the new government came primarily from those groups – mostly higher army officers and conservative political figures – opposed to all socialists and disinclined to distinguish Bolsheviks from SRs or Mensheviks. They were also the groups who had the least to hope for at the Constituent Assembly.
9. The data on the election returns are difficult to evaluate with any precision, although the general outlines are reasonably clear. The two best analyses of the election returns are to be found in L.G. Protasov, *Vserossiiskoe Uchreditel'noe sobranie: istoriya rozhdeniya i gibeli* (Moscow, 1997) and Oliver Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls: The Elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917* (Ithaca, 1989).
10. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1964), vol. 25, p. 197.
11. *Ibid.*, vol. 26, pp. 379–83.
12. There has been a tendency to overlook the role of the moderate socialists, especially Socialist Revolutionaries, in the early armed as well as political opposition to the Bolshevik government. This is emphasised particularly well in Geoffrey Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War* (London, 1996).
13. Given in Taras Hunczak (ed.), *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 387–95.
14. Mustafa Chokaev, *Otryvki iz vospominaniy o 1917 g.* As translated in <http://www.uea.ac.uk/his/webcours/russia/documents/chokaev2shtml>

# 6

## Trotsky and the Russian Civil War

*Geoffrey Swain*

This chapter argues that Trotsky's organisational abilities won the civil war for the Bolsheviks, but that aspects of the organisational principles he used were thoroughly un-Bolshevik and foreshadowed the disputes of the 1920s which would ultimately see him removed from the Bolshevik hierarchy. Starting at the Sviyazhsk campaign on the Volga in August 1918, but continuing throughout the civil war, Trotsky's skills as organiser and inspirer turned the prospect of defeat into victory. Yet his insistence on using military specialists and limiting the Party's voice when it came to strategy and tactics, led him into a running confrontation with the other Bolshevik leaders, who repeatedly sought ways to extend Party control into the army. In Sviyazhsk Trotsky addressed all the major issues of the civil war. For him it then became simply a matter of generalising from the experience gained on the Volga to every other front of the civil war. This chapter therefore considers Sviyazhsk in some detail, before turning to the conflicts Trotsky faced in persuading the Party that the lessons he had learned there were indeed correct.

### **Learning lessons at Sviyazhsk**

When the Czechoslovak rebellion began on the Volga Trotsky was slow to appreciate that a civil war had begun. Ever since his appointment as Commissar of War Trotsky had his eyes firmly fixed on the threat from Germany and the need to reconstruct a professional army; for support he drew on the services of General M.D. Bonch-Bruевич. This was the era of 'parallelism' in the Russian Army's command structure. The construction of a new army able to confront Germany was the task allotted to the Supreme Military Council; any internal fighting was the concern of the Operations Section of the Commissariat for Military Affairs (*Operod*). Trotsky was, of course, responsible for both, but in practice the Supreme Military Council had to be at the top of his agenda. It was only after Muraviev's rebellion on the Volga on 8 July that Trotsky began to appreciate the seriousness of the

situation. On 10 July he ordered I.I. Vacietis to replace Muraviev. Yet when Vacietis went to call on Bonch-Bruevich to receive detailed orders, he was amazed that he was asked to wait while Bonch-Bruevich concluded discussions with the French Military Attaché about the German threat. Bonch-Bruevich had no detailed plans and simply told him to take whatever troops could be spared: 'there is nothing serious on the Volga; take your Latvians, arrest the Czechoslovak bandits, put them in a prison camp, and that will be the end of the matter'. With great difficulty Vacietis won permission to take with him his old regiment, the 5<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment.

Once in Kazan, where he arrived on 16 July, Vacietis found low morale and insubordination everywhere; the 4<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment unilaterally withdrew from Syzran which had recently been re-conquered and refused to advance towards Simbirsk. On 1, 2, and 3 August Vacietis sent daily appeals for reinforcements, but to no avail. Instead he was accused by Bonch-Bruevich of insubordination because he refused to accept the official position that all troops raised in Kazan were to form part of the anti-German screens to defend Petrograd and Moscow. The People's Army began its assault on Kazan on 5 August and by the 6<sup>th</sup> it had captured the station; at ten in the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> Vacietis only controlled the upper story of his headquarters building.<sup>1</sup> It was partly to get an up-to-date assessment and partly to end the growing feud between Bonch-Bruevich and Vacietis that Trotsky decided to visit the Volga.<sup>2</sup> His train pulled out of Moscow on the night of 7–8 August with the Commissar of War unaware that his destination, Kazan, was no longer in Bolshevik hands.

As Trotsky recalled in his memoirs, when he got to the front-line, the town of Sviyazhsk, on the other side of the Volga from Kazan, no one knew where Vacieitis was and there was panic everywhere: 'the situation looked hopeless.. the fate of the revolution was hanging by a thread'. Trotsky's assessment was confirmed by Larissa Reissner, a radical journalist who had volunteered to fight on the Volga. 'Further retreat meant the beginning of the end; the death sentence on the Republic of Soviets'. The situation was indeed desperate. During his first inspection of the Red artillery, Trotsky found himself diving for cover as his position came under bombardment. No sooner had he returned to his carriage than it came under attack from an enemy airplane. Trotsky's first report to Moscow was full of self-criticism: reinforcements had been promised, they had not arrived and this had created 'a state of psychological collapse'.<sup>3</sup> Morale was worst in the 4<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment. The commander and chairman of the regimental committee demanded a period of rest and recuperation lest there be 'consequences dangerous to the revolution'. Summoned by Trotsky to his train, the two men repeated their statement, at which point Trotsky had them both arrested by the communications officer of his train. As Trotsky recalled: 'there were only two of us on the train staff;

the rest were fighting at the front; if the men arrested had shown any resistance, or if their regiment had decided to defend them and had left the front line, the situation might have been desperate; we should have had to surrender Sviyazhsk and the bridge across the Volga'.<sup>4</sup>

Supplies were clearly the key to the situation, but obtaining supplies meant challenging Bonch-Bruевич's assessment that the events on the Volga were a sideshow. As soon as Trotsky arrived he reminded Bonch-Bruевич that it had already been agreed in principle that troops could be moved from quiet spots in the screens defences to other duties; such troops would now be moved to the Volga. Troops and supplies were what he was after. On 11 August he requested horses and aviation fuel from Moscow; the next day he learnt of 'a huge quantity of supplies' in Nizhny and demanded its transfer; the day after that he demanded that sailors with artillery experience be sent to him; by 22 August it was field telephones and field guns, both inexplicably delayed up the supply chain in Nizhny.<sup>5</sup> Reissner noticed the impact of these actions.

The rainy August days thus passed one by one. The thin poorly equipped lines did not fall back; the bridge remained in our hands and from the rear, from somewhere far away, reinforcements began to arrive...Real telephone wires began to attach themselves, some kind of enormous, cumbersome, lame apparatus began to operate...Here all of Trotsky's organisational genius was revealed, he managed to restore the supply lines, got new artillery and a few regiments...Newspapers arrived, boots and overcoats came...Trotsky was able to show this handful of defenders a calmness icier than theirs'.<sup>6</sup>

It was not just a question of hustling for supplies. Trotsky was ready to improvise to get things done. The ability of the enemy to bomb his headquarters at will had convinced him of the importance of air power. As he put it in his memoirs: 'it was necessary to organise an aviation service; I called up an engineering pilot, Akashev, who, though an anarchist by conviction, was working with us; Akashev showed his initiative and quickly rounded up an air squadron'. It was improvised, the planes were old and the pilots had no proper clothes, but it worked. After a week Trotsky could tell Lenin 'we have concentrated substantial forces of aviation here, which are terrorising bourgeois Kazan by dropping large quantities of dynamite on it; air intelligence has started to yield fruitful results'. As he recalled later, the use of airplanes enabled Vacietis both to gain an overall picture of the deployment of enemy forces and to make contact with isolated Red Army units operating to the North East. Trotsky had discovered that airmen could 'substitute for infantry, cavalry and artillery'. On 25 August he called for the transfer of the Pskov air group to the Kazan front to reinforce his make-shift units.<sup>7</sup>

Trotsky was determined to restore morale. Supplies would help, but more was needed. To improve the welfare of his soldiers he sent for both a dentist and a good band.<sup>8</sup> However, morale was also to be restored by re-imposing discipline. The commander and regimental committee chairman of the 4<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment were accused of treason and brought before a Revolutionary Tribunal; to avoid provoking a mutiny they were not sentenced to death, but the tribunal made clear this would be the last case of clemency.<sup>9</sup> Trotsky was as good as his word, for the next case of treachery was dealt with determinedly. The Red Army launched an offensive on 11–12 August which, while only partially successful, did forestall enemy action and restore a degree of stability to the front.<sup>10</sup> Trotsky felt secure enough to move his headquarters from his exposed position in the Sviyazhsk railway siding to a steamboat on the Volga. However, the arrival of this steamer on 14 August prompted some of the reinforcements newly sent from Petrograd to see an escape route; they seized control of the boat and tried to sail up river to the safety of Nizhny. Trotsky had the ringleaders, the commander and the commissar brought before a tribunal and executed. Trotsky insisted that there could be no compassion shown to the communist commissar Panteleev, since he had made no attempt to prevent the mutiny and had participated in it fully.<sup>11</sup>

Discipline was also restored by using 'special mounted squads, ten men strong'. Trotsky informed Lenin about this on 15 August in a report which also stressed that the troops were fighting well and 'we have effected a great improvement'. A week later he wrote a more detailed report on these units, recommending that they be generalised throughout the army to cope with incidents of flight and panic. Initially they had developed a 50-strong unit made up of ten soldiers each, but the experiment had proved so successful that they were now organised as 'hundreds', ten units of ten men. Each of the 'tens' was headed by a reliable communist and assisted by two other communists; the remaining seven were made up of either communists or 'good, reliable' soldiers. Most 'tens' were mounted, although some were infantrymen with wheeled machine guns. At the head of each 'hundred' there was a communist cavalry officer. Everywhere, Trotsky said, such 'hundreds' 'will play a healthy and organising role' by confronting those ready to flee and forcing them back to the front.<sup>12</sup> It was not only the rank and file that needed to be disciplined, but the officer corps as well. At Sviyazhsk Trotsky was furious that, what he saw as 'a well conceived operation' was wrecked by the wilful refusal of two divisional commanders to obey orders; the officers concerned got together with their commissars and started criticising the tactics Vacietis was using. Trotsky recalled: 'I had both divisional commanders arrested; five commissars, Party members, came to see me to give explanations and to obtain protection; I handed them over to the courts for abandoning their posts without permission'. After this the conclaves of commanders and commissars against higher authority came to a stop.<sup>13</sup>

If Trotsky was harsh towards his own men, he equally showed no pity when it came to the enemy. In a leaflet dropped by air into working class districts of Kazan, Trotsky urged workers to leave the city with their families; the Red artillery and air force would concentrate their bombardment on bourgeois districts, but it was impossible to guarantee against 'accidents'.<sup>14</sup> Other leaflets reminded the inhabitants of Kazan that any town under 'Czechoslovak and White Guard occupation' remained subject to Soviet law: collaborators with the occupier would be shot when the city was recaptured; a subsequent leaflet entitled 'Remember Yaroslavl' reminded inhabitants that 'more than 350 captured White Guards were shot after the revolt had been put down'. When the SRs in Kazan announced that they would start to mobilise peasants and workers into their People's Army, Trotsky responded by designating it as a crime to respond to this call, but promising a full pardon to any soldier who changed sides; those who did not do so would be shot and their property transferred to wounded Red Army men or Red Army widows.<sup>15</sup>

The situation on the Volga remained precarious. As Trotsky explained to Lenin on 21 August 'the enemy's gunners are better than ours' even though the Red Army had more guns.<sup>16</sup> Then on 28 August the People's Army staged a surprise offensive. In a long range outflanking manoeuvre its elite forces crossed the Volga, circled round Sviyazhsk and cut the railway line to Trotsky's rear; Sviyazhsk was isolated and the armoured train first sent to break the encirclement was captured. Panic followed. Troops rushed to the river to try and escape by steamer, the enemy's armoured train advanced almost into Sviyazhsk station, only Vacietis' staff stood firm, along with the staff of Trotsky's train. Larissa Reissner was convinced that the only thing that saved the Bolsheviks on that day was that the enemy was exhausted after its long march and simply did not appreciate that 'opposing them was only a hastily thrown together handful of fighters'.

After such a close shave, the question of discipline had to be addressed one more time. When order was restored the next day 20 deserters were shot, among them several communists. Reissner justified the execution of 'good comrades' on the grounds that 'the whole army was agog with talk about communists ... [who] could desert with impunity'. As the official account of the executions put it: 'the first to go were commanders and commissars who had abandoned positions entrusted to them; next, cowardly liars who played sick; finally, some deserters from among the Red Army men who refused to expiate their crime by taking part in the subsequent struggle'. However, disloyal communists were not the only target. On the same day Trotsky decreed that in view of the albeit rare incidents of betrayal by officers, the families of unreliable officers should be detained as hostages.<sup>17</sup>

The reliability of former officers was something that caused Lenin increasing concern. It was not a concern Trotsky shared. Trotsky was full of

praise for 'the young General Staffers' who helped him construct the army; he said as much in a report to Moscow dated 11 August. So when Lenin raised with Trotsky the question of excluding General Staffers from the high command, Trotsky replied on 23 August in fury.

It is essential to make the entire military hierarchy more compact and get rid of the ballast by means of extracting those General Staff officers that are efficient and loyal to us and not on any account by means of replacing them with Party ignoramuses.<sup>18</sup>

This spat between Lenin and Trotsky about the reliability of General Staff officers had arisen as part of a broader discussion about the future organisation of the army and its relationship to the Bolshevik Party, for by 27 August Soviet Russia had finalised a trade deal with Imperial Germany; this minimised the danger of a German advance and brought into question the future role to be played by Bonch-Bruевич and the Supreme Military Council.

On 20 August Trotsky decided to abolish the distinction between those troops which were part of the anti-German screens defence and those that were not; all troops were henceforth brought under the control of the Supreme Military Council. While this might seem to give more power to Bonch-Bruевич, actually it was designed to undermine his position. He resigned on 21 August and Lenin and Trotsky agreed that the Supreme Military Council should be reconstituted as the Revolutionary Military Soviet (RVS), a decision formalised on 2 September; Bonch-Bruевич would be replaced with Vacietis once Kazan had been recaptured. Trotsky, however, argued that if Vacietis, who was not a Bolshevik, was made Commander in Chief, then he should have a free hand to appoint other non-Bolshevik officers; Lenin thought rather the reverse, that his choice should be constrained to politically reliable officers.<sup>19</sup> On 30 August Lenin wrote to Trotsky:

If we do enjoy superiority and the soldiers do fight, then special measures must be taken against the senior commanding staff. Should you not announce to them that from now on we shall adopt the example of the French Revolution and commit for trial and even sentence to be shot the senior commanders in the event of operations meeting with delay or failure.

Originally this sentence had read 'even sentence to be shot Vacietis and the Army commander at Kazan', but this was subsequently scored out. Lenin advised bringing in 'a large number of those known to be energetic' from Petrograd and other places away from the front. Clearly Lenin felt the failure to re-capture Kazan was still to be explained in great part by the unreliability of non-communist command staff.<sup>20</sup>

The reconquest of Kazan began on the night of 7–8 September. On the eve of the assault Trotsky was supremely confident:

Propaganda, organisation, revolutionary example and repression produced the necessary change in a few weeks. A vacillating, unreliable and crumbling mass was transformed into a real army. Our artillery had emphatically established its superiority. Our flotilla controlled the river. Our airmen dominated the air. No longer did I doubt that we would take Kazan.<sup>21</sup>

It was not an easy victory. Larissa Reissner recalled that ‘hundreds of soldiers lost their lives’ in the battle, while Trotsky remembered ‘great losses’. But Lenin summed up the situation accurately when Trotsky visited him to report his triumph in person. In Lenin’s words ‘the game is won’.<sup>22</sup>

### Teaching the lessons of Sviyazhsk

The pattern of events at Sviyazhsk was to be repeated many times during the Civil War. Looking back Trotsky commented ‘I almost never had occasion to accompany a victorious army... I retreated with troops but never advanced with them’. Trotsky’s great ability was to turn around the retreating soldier.

Even after defeats and retreats, the flabby, panicky mob would be transformed in two or three weeks into an efficient fighting force. What was needed for this? At once much and little. It needed good commanders, a few dozen experienced fighters, a dozen or so of communists ready to make any sacrifice, boots for the barefooted, a bath-house, an energetic propaganda campaign, food, underwear, tobacco and matches. The train took care of all this. We always had in reserve a few zealous communists to fill the breaches, a hundred or so of good fighting men, a small stock of boots, leather jackets, medicaments, machine guns, field-glasses, maps, watches and all sorts of gifts.

When the rout had stopped, it was just a question of supply and discipline.

However, nothing was left in central depots after spring 1919 and constant improvisation was needed to keep supplies coming. Trotsky proved a past master at organising improvisation.<sup>23</sup> A few examples of the endless supply crises he faced will suffice. In mid October 1918 he bombarded Moscow with concerns about the shortage of petrol and the poor quality of armour plating.<sup>24</sup> At the same time he discovered that 40,000 binoculars had been found in a supply dump in Perm, evacuated there during the First World War; all such dumps should be searched in case they contained essential supplies, he instructed.<sup>25</sup> While touring the Southern Front in mid

November 1918 he reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> that there had been no tea on the Southern Front for over a month, and once again that there was no petrol which meant armoured cars could not be used.<sup>26</sup> At the end of December 1918 he informed Moscow that he had been made aware that in Yaroslavl there were supplies of 133 million rounds of ammunition, badly needed at the front;<sup>27</sup> but that was only half the problem, the lack of lubricants which meant 'machine guns will no longer fire'. In April 1919 he complained that the 'wounded are transported in cattle trucks',<sup>28</sup> while there was no tobacco on the Eastern Front. The same month he was appalled to discover that in the stores of the Peter Paul Fortress there was a huge quantity of abandoned and unused field telephones, despite the critical shortage in the Eastern Front.<sup>29</sup> As late as August 1919 he could complain that between one third and one half of the troops in Ukraine were without boots and underwear.<sup>30</sup>

As to discipline, combating desertion among the rank and file and ensuring that officers implemented orders, Trotsky returned to these matters throughout the civil war. Again a couple of incidents will suffice. On 14 October 1918 Trotsky issued an order explaining that he had recently received several telegrams from brigade and division commanders on the Southern Front, complaining about the action of other commanders; bickering like this, he said, had to stop, 'the Red Army needs co-operation and collaboration'.<sup>31</sup> At the end of November the issue was deserters. Repeating the message of Sviyazhsk Trotsky wrote:

I declare that from now on an end must be put to this, by ruthless means: 1) Every scoundrel who incites anyone to retreat, to desert or not to fulfil a military order, is to be shot. 2) Every soldier of the Red Army who voluntarily deserts his post is to be shot. 3) Every soldier who throws away his rifle or sells part of his uniform is to be shot. 4) Battle-police units are to be stationed along the entire front line zone, in order to catch deserters. Any soldier who tries to offer resistance to these units is to be shot. 5) All local soviets and committees of the poor are obligated, on their part, to take all measures to catch deserters. Deserter-hunts are to be carried out twice in every 24 hours, at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Captured deserters are to be handed over to the HQ of the nearest unit or to the nearest military commissariat. 6) Persons guilty of harbouring deserters are liable to be shot. 7) Houses in which deserters are found will be burnt down.<sup>32</sup>

Neither the improvisation of supply nor the ruthless restoration of discipline caused dissent within the Bolshevik hierarchy. Where Trotsky ran into trouble was with his support for military specialists, officers from the old army, in particular General Staffers. Trotsky had always supported the use of military specialists. As early as 28 March 1918 he had told the Moscow City Party

Conference that 'in the sphere of command, of operations, of military actions, we place full responsibility upon military specialists and consequently give them the necessary powers'. He gave the same message to the Fifth Congress of Soviets on 10 July.<sup>33</sup> This was indeed the culture that Trotsky began to develop within the Supreme Military Council, but a very different culture had emerged among the forces sent by *Operod* to combat counter-revolution, forces symbolised by those Stalin assembled at Tsaritsyn.

The abolition of the Supreme Military Council and the decision to bring all military forces under the control of the new RVS meant that Stalin's forces were to be brought into line with Trotsky's policy on military specialists. Stalin was suspicious of military specialists. As soon as he arrived in Tsaritsyn he discovered a counter-revolutionary plot involving military specialists, prompting him to put all his faith in bringing on young pro-Bolshevik non-commissioned officers to form a new officer corps. At the same time, Stalin had institutionalised a system whereby Bolshevik political commissars were able to influence decisions on purely military matters, a form of collective decision-making which contradicted Trotsky's promise that officers would have absolute authority in military matters. Trotsky felt at home with the old elite and trusted them; Stalin distrusted them and wanted to create a new elite; he had already written to Trotsky in mid July criticising the work of military specialists.<sup>34</sup>

Having established a RVS at national level, designated the Republican RVS, Trotsky envisaged a series of subordinate RVSS on the individual fronts. Similarly, having appointed Vacietis Commander-in-Chief, he had designated a series of front commanders. Stalin was in no hurry to establish a RVS for the Southern Front or even, when it was established on 17 September, to coordinate his actions with the new commander of the Southern Front. Although talks took place with Stalin, nothing was tied down in a formal decision. On top of this, routine requests for intelligence reports were systematically ignored. Trotsky left the Eastern Front on 2 October, had a hasty meeting in Moscow on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and then travelled on south, explaining his standpoint in a message sent from his train on the 4<sup>th</sup>. He informed Sverdlov, the *de facto* secretary of the Bolshevik Party at this time, that he would of course 'be careful with the Tsaritsyn people', but the essence of the conflict was this: Stalin 'had established a collective command, which we have categorically rejected and which, independently of the personality of the commander, leads to a dissipation of command and anarchy; here is the crux of the matter'.<sup>35</sup>

He was equally blunt in a letter to Lenin sent the same day which attacked not only Stalin but Klim Voroshilov, one of the non-commissioned officers Stalin was so keen to promote.

I categorically insist on Stalin's recall. Things are going from bad to worse on the Tsaritsyn Front, despite the superabundance of military

forces. Voroshilov is able to command a regiment, but not an army of 50,000 men. Nonetheless, I will retain him as commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Tsaritsyn Army on condition that he places himself under the orders of the Commander of the Southern Front, General Sytin. ... [Because autumn is approaching] there is no time for diplomatic negotiations. Tsaritsyn must either obey orders or get out of the way. We have a colossal superiority of forces but total anarchy at the top. This can be put right within 24 hours given firm and resolute support your end.

To reinforce the point Trotsky forwarded to Lenin the next day a telegram from Vacietis demanding 'Stalin's military order no. 18 must be countermanded since the actions of Stalin are destroying all my plans'.<sup>36</sup>

Stalin had written to Lenin about Trotsky's behaviour in a similarly forthright manner on 3 October.

The point is that Trotsky, generally speaking, cannot get by without noisy gestures. At Brest he delivered a blow to the cause by his incredibly 'Leftist' gesturing... Now he delivers a further blow by his gesture about discipline, and yet all this Trotskyist discipline amounts to in reality is to the most prominent leaders on the war front peering up the backside of military specialists from the camp of the 'non-party' counter-revolutionaries and not preventing them from wrecking the front. (Trotsky calls this not interfering in operational matters.) In general, Trotsky cannot sing without descant, act without gestures... Remove Trotsky, since I am afraid that his unhinged commands, if they are repeated, will put the front into the hands of so-called military specialists who merit no trust at all.<sup>37</sup>

On 5 October Stalin insisted in a message to Sverdlov that Trotsky had been insulting and had suddenly broken off the talks aimed at reconciliation. The problem was that there had been a series of contradictory and confusing orders sent by Trotsky, some sent openly rather than in code, and that while 'accepting that centralisation was essential' it was impossible to submit to just anyone. The issue should be shelved until Stalin had a chance to come to Moscow.<sup>38</sup>

The outcome of this famous dispute is well-known. Sverdlov used all his diplomacy to get Stalin removed from the Southern Front, while saving his *amour propre*. Once tempers had cooled Trotsky told the Sixth Congress of Soviets in Moscow on 9 November.

On the Southern Front our army has been put together in a different way, as compared to the other two fronts. The enemy here is different and the course of operations has developed differently. Until recently the Southern Front was, so to speak, our step child: our attitude was almost one of letting things slide.

The troops on the Southern Front, Trotsky went on, were hardened fighters with experience of the campaigns in Ukraine and on the Don, but that experience had a down side: 'these units brought with them the negative features of the guerrilla period of the war' and it was 'hard to turn these units into regular formations'. However, Trotsky concluded the establishment of a centralised military system was essential and those who continued to obstruct military decisions would be repressed.<sup>39</sup>

Trotsky's clash with the 'Tsaritsyn people' sewed the seeds for the development of the Military Opposition, with Voroshilov in its vanguard, as preparations began for the Eighth Party Congress on 18–23 March 1919. They were determined to challenge what they saw as Trotsky's undue reliance on military specialists. To many Bolsheviks Trotsky's support of the military specialist could seem cavalier. Although on 2 October he learnt of the betrayal of a certain Lebedev and ordered the arrest of his family, it was more usual for Trotsky to intervene to get arrested officers released. On 4 October he asked the Tver *cheka* to release a certain Sulimov who he argued was needed at the front. A week later he wrote two telegrams on the subject of arrested specialists: the first was to Zinoviev, responding to the arrest of 16 communication officers and asking for the release of those 'for whom there were not individual charges'; the second was to Dzerzhinsky, the head of the *cheka*, asking for the release of the Tver Aviation Group commander, who had been arrested 'just because he was a former officer'. On 16 October he complained about the action of the Nizhnyi *cheka*, which persecuted army officers in the town while going about their legitimate business of touring barracks and bases; the *cheka*'s duty, he reminded them, was not to interfere with the work of military officers, but to keep tabs on the families of those suspected of being unreliable and arresting those families should the need arise. A few days later he was again contacting Dzerzhinsky asking for the release of officers.

Early in November he took up the case of an officer arrested by the Tsaritsyn *cheka* while Stalin was in charge. Since no individual charges had ever been brought, he had simply been arrested as a former officer, Trotsky got him released and appointed him a supply officer working for the Southern RVS.<sup>40</sup> At this time Trotsky made the following proposal to both Lenin and Dzerzhinsky.

On this I propose the following. In those cases where there is no direct, serious charge against the arrested officers, that the question be put to them: do they agree to serve the Red Army and Red Fleet. That, in the event of an affirmative answer, they be put at my disposal. That, at the same time, their family position be ascertained and they be warned that, in the event of treachery or desertion to the enemy's camp on their part their families will be arrested and that a signature to this effect be obtained from them. By this means we shall lighten the load on the prisons and obtain military specialists, of whom there is a great shortage.

He also asked that 'General Staff officers held as hostages' should be put at his disposal.<sup>41</sup>

Trotsky's concern for specialists came across very clearly in a letter he wrote on 28 December 1918. Trotsky had appointed Akashev to head aviation on the Southern Front on 1 December 1918.<sup>42</sup> He quickly learnt that, despite the 'unconditional loyalty and reliability' he had shown at Kazan, Akashev found himself 'in a rather false situation, since, as a non-Bolshevik, people relate to him with a deal of suspicion, which puts him in a difficult situation vis-à-vis the other pilots'. Trotsky pointed out that 'pilots are an uncommon breed; you have to know how to cope with them, otherwise it is easy to drive them off to Krasnov and Akashev knows how to cope with them'. With pilots 'you have to respect their individuality, approach them as individuals, and our commissars cannot do that', Trotsky added, demanding that the commissar attached to Akashev should be dismissed forthwith. Furthermore Akashev should not only have responsibility for operational matters, but 'should be made responsible for the political side of things, the reliability of the pilots'. This implicitly called into question the need for political commissars.<sup>43</sup>

Understandably, the Military Opposition began to argue that Trotsky was not only soft on officers, but also persecuted Bolshevik commissars. His decision to execute Panteleev while in Sviyazhsk suddenly became important. Documents from the RVS of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army, which Trotsky's critics had studied, revealed that no individual charges had been brought against Panteleev. Trotsky was forced to explain to Lenin that Panteleev had not been executed because his regiment had deserted, but because he too had deserted and tried to seize the steamer and escape to Nizhny; there were no individual charges because there was nothing individual about his conduct, he was just another deserter. It was not only those close to Voroshilov and Stalin who made such charges. Zinoviev too had concerns, and a commissar close to him, M.M. Lashevich, protested at the end of October when Trotsky put the blame for the way the Red Army had faltered and then retreated on the Eastern Front at this time on poor work by commissars; not surprisingly the commissars blamed disloyal officers.<sup>44</sup>

In these rows Trotsky did not back down. At the end of December he issued a special appeal 'To commissars and military specialists' noting recent clashes and criticising the attitude adopted by some commissars; the military were to have full freedom of action in the sphere allocated to them and commissars should show them due respect and deference. On 30 December he expressed the hope that he was turning to this issue 'for the last time' and protested at the 'wholesale and frequently unjustified attacks on the military specialists'. But a member of Voroshilov's staff attacked him publicly in *Pravda* on 25 December and Lashevich insisted on raising the Panteleev case in the Politburo. On 11 January Trotsky wrote a long exposition of the Panteleev case, sending it to Sverdlov and the editorial board of *Pravda*.<sup>45</sup>

Under insistent criticism from the Military Opposition, Lenin began to doubt whether Trotsky was right. He decided to back Trotsky only towards the end of February. Trotsky was back in Moscow to prepare for the Eighth Party Congress and during a government meeting Lenin passed Trotsky a note saying 'what if we fire all the specialists and appoint Lashevich as Commander-in-Chief'; Lashevich had some military experience, having been a sergeant during the First World War. Trotsky passed back a note with the words 'infantile nonsense'. When Lenin later asked Trotsky why he had been so dismissive, Trotsky asked Lenin how many officers from the old army were serving in the Red Army. Lenin confessed he had no idea and was astonished when Trotsky explained that 76% of officers had served in the Tsar's Army and only 12.8% were 'fledgling red commanders'. From that point Lenin backed Trotsky on the issue of military specialists.<sup>46</sup>

However neither Lenin nor the Party as a whole were fully in support of Trotsky when it came to the role of commissars. In an order issued on 2 March Trotsky noted that the internal service regulations of the Red Army made no mention of the rights and duties of commissars. Trotsky explained that this was completely logical since it was clear that 'the institution of commissar is not a permanent institution'; sooner or later, he believed 'one-man management in the sphere of administration and command' would be established, in other words commissars would be abolished leaving officers in total command.<sup>47</sup> Although the Eighth Bolshevik Party Congress defeated the Military Opposition to the extent that it put an end to the baiting of military specialists, it did not abolish commissars but reinforced their position. Moves by both Stalin and Zinoviev ensured that Trotsky should be instructed to pay more attention to communist opinion in the army.

Zinoviev sent Trotsky a copy of the minutes of the Central Committee meeting of 25 March which made clear that unanimity at the congress had only been achieved by passing resolutions which were not made public. These were to reorganise the General Staff; to clarify the role played by Field Headquarters; and to establish regular monthly meetings between Trotsky and leading commissars. Trotsky's response was one of incandescent rage. Did this decision mean he should stop touring the fronts and direct the war from Moscow, he demanded of Lenin? Trotsky also rejected Zinoviev's view that the Military Opposition had accepted Trotsky's stance on military specialists. According to Trotsky, the Military Opposition still existed and represented 'a plebeian protest at the "wooing" of military specialists' which expressed the political attitude 'not of a triumphant class become its own master and its own builder' but merely reflected 'instinctive hatred towards a stratum which used formerly to occupy a leading position in society'.<sup>48</sup> He would continue to favour commander over commissar.

## The command crisis

In May 1919 a new front suddenly opened up in Russia's civil war. General Yudenich sent a force against Petrograd and this surprise attack very nearly succeeded. Stalin was ordered to Petrograd on 17 May and from the moment of his arrival on the 19<sup>th</sup> instigated a number of desperate measures to save the former capital. At once he sensed that counter-revolutionary intrigue was part of the problem, something he had long suspected and had raised with Lenin before. Stalin sent Lenin a long report on 4 June which detailed his suspicions and confirmation came a few days later when on 13 June two forts which protected the approaches to Petrograd rebelled; their action was supported by British motor launches operating from Finland called in by the British spy Paul Dukes, who had access to all the decisions made by the Northern Front RVS. It was a close shave for the Bolsheviks, but the loss of the forts proved to be the worst of the crisis; two days later the forts were recaptured and Stalin could return to Moscow.

Stalin had claimed in his report of 4 June that 'it is evident that not only the Chief of Staff of 7<sup>th</sup> Army [based near Petrograd] works for the Whites', but 'also the entire Staff of the Republican RVS', in particular those responsible for assigning reserves. It was, he insisted, 'now up to the Central Committee to draw the necessary inferences – will it have the courage to do it!' Among the suggestions he made was that 'Party workers who urge the military specialists on against the commissars' should be assigned to other duties since they 'demoralise the vital core of our army'. The Petrograd affair had produced ample evidence of treachery among the Petrograd command, Stalin's allegation that it extended further into the Republican RVS was more difficult to substantiate, but as Stalin commented 'the analysis of evidence is continuing and new "possibilities" are opening up'.<sup>49</sup>

Stalin's suspicions about the reliability of the Republican RVS coincided with growing tension between the Party leadership and Vacietis about which civil war front should have priority. Although Vacietis had first suggested as early as 7 May 1919 that it was time to concentrate on the danger posed by Denikin, at the start of June it was still the common currency of all Bolsheviks that Kolchak and the Eastern Front remained the more important. There were, however, differences of emphasis. In a telegram dated 1 June Trotsky made clear that, since it was 'clear we cannot at present advance to Vladivostok', the offensive should continue only until an agreed defensive line was reached. This was not the view of the Eastern Front Commander, S.S. Kamenev, who on 6 June submitted plans for an immediate advance on Krasnoufimsk en route for Ekaterinburg. Vacietis shared Trotsky's assessment and considered an advance on Krasnoufimsk as quite unrealistic, given the pressure on the Southern and Petrograd Fronts.

On 12 June Kamenev was ordered to establish a defensive line on the Kama and Belaya rivers, where his troops were currently deployed. Kamenev,

however, was supported in his ambitions by his military commissars, in particular Lashevich who had already clashed with Trotsky; Lashevich believed that, since plans for an insurrection in Kolchak's rear were already well advanced, the admiral really could be annihilated within a few weeks. So he decided to take up Kamenev's case when the Central Committee held a plenary session, in Trotsky's absence, on 15 June. This lobbying worked and Vacietis was instructed 'to continue the offensive against Kolchak'. Vacietis appeared to accept this, but on 22 June ordered Kamenev to shift the direction of his advance from due east to south-east, towards Zlatoust and away from Ekaterinburg, towards the railway network leading back to the Volga and the south. To Trotsky's fury, on 3 July Vacietis was dismissed by the Central Committee for failing to support its policy in the east and replaced by Kamenev.

The removal of Vacietis was absurd. The Party's attempt to impose its direction on the war meant that it sacked the Red Army's Commander-in-Chief for remembering the importance of the Southern Front, and ordering troops to march to a railway line linked to the south, just when Denikin's advance was accelerating alarmingly. Kharkov fell on 25 June, with Ekaterinoslav and Tsaritsyn following on the 30<sup>th</sup>. This, however, was not the only decision taken by the Central Committee at this fateful meeting. An issue left unresolved after the Eighth Party Congress was the location of the Field Headquarters of the Republican RVS; this was now moved from its base at Serpukhov to Moscow. At the same time the composition of the RVS itself was changed, reducing its size, removing some of Trotsky's allies and bringing in supporters of the campaign for an eastern offensive. Opposed to all these moves, and supported by no Politburo colleagues, Trotsky resigned, left the Central Committee meeting, slammed the door and took to his bed complaining of ill health.

The Central Committee did not accept his resignation when it met again on 5 July and in a series of conciliatory gestures made clear that its 'Orgburo and Politburo would do all in their power to provide for the work of the Southern Front' where Trotsky was urged to concentrate his efforts. Back there on 8 July Trotsky learned that Stalin's vendetta against Vacietis had succeeded and that the former Commander-in-Chief had been arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary activity. The charge was ludicrous. His most counter-revolutionary act was to write to Lenin on 18 April 1919 protesting in forthright terms at the way officers on the General Staff were constantly subject to arrest. Trotsky commented in his memoirs that 'perhaps before going to sleep, the chap had been reading Napoleon's biography and confided his ambitious dreams to two or three younger officers', for the only 'evidence' against Vacietis – as Lenin informed Trotsky on 9 July in response to the later's query – was that Vacietis had shared lodgings with a General Staff officer who had allegedly been linked to a conspiracy of other General Staff officers within Field Headquarters.<sup>50</sup>

Trotsky immediately went on to the offensive, not simply to get Vacietis released, which he soon was, but to prevent a new assault on military specialists. On 9 July 1919 he announced:

In connection with the treacherous conspiracy by a section of the commanding personnel on the Petrograd Front articles have appeared in the press which are being interpreted as a sign of a change in Soviet policy in military matters, particularly where the military specialists are concerned ... giving rise to feelings of alarm and uncertainty. I therefore consider it necessary to make clear Soviet policy in military matters remains unchanged.

When a Kharkov paper put the collapse of the Southern Front down to the treachery of officers who had gone over in droves to Denikin, Trotsky set the record straight and at a series of rallies on 11 and 14 July Trotsky pushed through resolutions stressing that policy towards military specialists should not and would not change.<sup>51</sup>

Tension between Trotsky and the rest of the Bolshevik Party leadership heightened as Kamenev turned his attention to the Southern Front. Saved by the last minute decision of Vacietis to divert forces to Zlatoust, he now proposed an assault on Denikin which would make use of these forces assembled on the Volga. He wanted a two-pronged assault, one on the right flank to the east of Kharkov, but the other more major attack on the left flank down the lower Volga and then, to Denikin's rear, into Kuban. Trotsky, supported by the discredited Vacietis, argued that Denikin had to be tackled head on in the Donets Basin, where there were large industrial towns that could be expected to rally to the Bolshevik side and where the Red Army would not find itself surrounded by hostile Cossacks. The Central Committee backed Kamenev on 23 July and called for the offensive to begin three weeks later.

For Trotsky this was the most difficult time of the civil war. He found it hard to support Kamenev's plan, but his reports to Moscow on the difficulties he faced persuading local commanders to accept it, and on the poor supply situation around the Don basin, were interpreted by Lenin as deliberate attempts to frustrate the Politburo's policy. Trotsky wrote angrily to the Central Committee on 7 August: 'you have again got things wrong as a result of your careless reading of telegrams...in future it will be a case of my having to express myself at greater length, so as to avoid misunderstandings with the Politburo, such as have been so frequent of late'. Writing two days later Trotsky complained that he had 'received not a single sensible answer' to his requests, adding 'I strongly request Moscow to give up its policy of fantastic apprehensions'.<sup>52</sup>

Yet, when the Kamenev offensive began, and as Trotsky had predicted, quickly ran into the sand, Trotsky could not resist writing to him urging

him to reconsider his priorities. On 6 September the Politburo expressed its astonishment at Trotsky's 'attempts to revise the basic strategy plan decided upon'. Trotsky refused to be put down, replying the same day to the whole Central Committee that the plan was disintegrating. The Politburo's response was to question not the plan but the loyalty of the commander of the left flank attack and accuse Trotsky on 18 September of failing to subject him to sufficient political surveillance.<sup>53</sup> However, towards the end of September the situation on the ground forced the Politburo to adopt a stance closer to that of Trotsky. The Central Committee Plenum of 21–6 September accepted that the two flanks of the earlier attack were now entirely separate, necessitating the creation of both a Southern and a South-Eastern Front. Because Denikin's advance in what was now the Southern Front was so alarming, this had to be considered the major front, something agreed by the Republic's RVS on 27 September and implemented by Kamenev on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Trotsky could therefore 'consign to the archives' the long memorandum he had planned to submit to the Politburo which went over once again the rationale behind his Donbas plan and the critical situation produced by it being ignored. The fall of Orel on 13 October finally convinced the Politburo to throw itself fully behind Trotsky once more. On 15 October he attended a Politburo meeting in person and insisted that, unless troops were moved from the South-East Front to the Southern Front, he would be forced to evacuate Tula; the Politburo agreed. Ten days later, while relations between Trotsky and Kamenev remained tense, Lenin was successfully mediating between them.<sup>54</sup> Victory was assured.

It had been a bruising time for Trotsky. He had been proved right, but in the process he had clashed bitterly with the Party conclaves in Moscow and their obsessive desire for Bolshevik organisational control over the army. Trotsky had evolved his own, rather different way of operating. As he recalled in his memoirs:

After making the round of a division and ascertaining its needs on the spot, I would hold a conference in the staff-car or dining car, inviting as many representatives as possible, including those from the lower commanding forces and from the ranks, as well as from the local party organisations, the soviet administration and the trade unions. In this way I got a picture of the situation that was neither false nor highly coloured. These conferences always had immediate practical results.

Observers noted that 'he spent at least six hours every day presiding over conferences of commissars, railway officials, factory men and even doctors'.<sup>55</sup>

This was not democracy, but neither was it the closet politics of administration. Trotsky believed in consulting with experts and taking their views seriously. It would be exactly the same after the civil war when the time came for planning and reconstruction. In December 1922 Lenin conceded

that Trotsky 'could be met halfway' and Gosplan given legislative powers. But Lenin was adamant that Gosplan itself should be overseen by a communist presidium to 'keep watch day in day out on the degree of devotion of the bourgeois scholars' running the organisation. Trotsky countered with a memorandum in mid January 1923 which likened the correct relationship between Gosplan and the government to that which had existed between the government and the army during the civil war: 'I would say that Gosplan would discharge the role of Staff HQ and the Council of Labour and Defence that of the RVS'.<sup>56</sup>

It was a telling analogy. As Trotsky's battles with the Party bureaucracy developed in autumn 1923, and he took to reading French novels during Politburo meetings, he repeatedly asserted: 'I cannot vote at the Politburo if experienced people, who know the matter inside out, have not worked on these questions'. Trotsky drew a distinction between 'real, true party leadership in solving all major problems' and 'occasional interference'.<sup>57</sup> The importance of that distinction became clear to Trotsky during the civil war and remained with him throughout the 1920s.

## Notes

1. For Muraviev, see Geoffrey Swain, 'Russia's Garibaldi: the Revolutionary Life of M A Muraviev' *Revolutionary Russia*, 2, 1998. For the 4<sup>th</sup> Latvian Regiment, see Geoffrey Swain, 'The Disillusioning of the Revolution's Praetorian Guard: the Latvian Riflemen, Summer–Autumn 1918', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 4, 1999; for Vacietis, see 'Vacietis: The Enigma of the Red Army's First Commander', *Revolutionary Russia*, 1, 2003.
2. Swain, 'Muraviev', p. 76; *The Military Papers of Leon Trotsky* (Microfilms from the Russian State Military Archive RGVA) *fond 1, opis 1, ed.khr.* 142 (hereafter RGVA 1.1.142) pp. 18–19, 23, 41, 50.
3. Trotsky, *My Life* (New York, 1970), pp. 396–400; L. Reissner, 'Sviyazhsk' in J. Hansen *et al.* (eds), *Leon Trotsky, the Man and his Work* (New York, 1969), p. 113; J.M. Meijer (ed.), *The Trotsky Papers* (Hague, 1964), vol. I, pp. 69–71.
4. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 401.
5. RGVA 1.1.147, pp. 1, 16, 126; 1.1.163, p. 75; 1.3.68, pp. 21, 37, 57.
6. Reissner, 'Sviyazhsk', pp. 114–15.
7. Trotsky, *My Life* p. 402; *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 81, vol. II, p. 27; RGVA 1.1.68, p. 98.
8. *Trotsky papers* vol. I, pp. 69–71; RGVA 1.1.68, pp. 100–1.
9. RGVA 33987.2.18, p. 53.
10. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 79
11. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 402; Trotsky also discusses the incident in his *Stalin* (London, 1969) vol. II, p. 89.
12. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 81; RGVA 1.3.68, p. 98.
13. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 333.
14. RGVA 33987.2.18, p. 22.
15. L. Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed* (New York, 1979), vol. I, pp. 314, 324; RGVA 33987.2.18, p. 50.
16. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 99.
17. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 403; Reissner, 'Sviyazhsk' pp. 116–17; *How* vol. I, p. 322; RGVA 4.3.200, p. 85.
18. RGVA 4.3.200, pp. 30, 39; *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 107.

19. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 99, 107.
20. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 117.
21. Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 405–8.
22. Reissner, 'Sviyazhsk' p. 117; Trotsky, *Stalin* vol. II, p. 103; *Trotsky's Diary in Exile* (London, 1988), p. 83.
23. Trotsky *Stalin* vol. II, p. 119.; Trotsky *My Life*, pp. 415–17.
24. RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 111.
25. RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 119.
26. RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 352.
27. RGVA 1.1.142, p. 115.
28. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 193, 211, 343.
29. RGVA 33987.1.130, p. 166.
30. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I pp. 651–5.
31. RGVA 33987.2.218, p. 277.
32. *How* vol. I, p. 487.
33. *How* vol. I, pp. 45, 425–7.
34. *Bolshevistskoe rukovodstvo: perepiska, 1912–27* (Moscow, 1996), p. 42; Stalin's activities in Tsaritsyn are dealt with by R. Argenbright 'Red Tsaritsyn: Precursor of Stalinist Terror', *Revolutionary Russia*, 2, 1991.
35. RGVA 1.1.142, p. 92.
36. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 135–7; the cancellation of Stalin's order is in Trotsky *Stalin* vol. II, p. 75 and RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 30.
37. R. Service, *Stalin* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 168.
38. *Rukovodstvo*, p. 54.
39. *How* vol. 1, pp. 457–8, 465.
40. RGVA 1.1.42, pp. 87, 90; 33987.2.40, pp. 117, 147, 179, 182, 281, 283, 290, 291.
41. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 149, 155.
42. RGVA 33987.2.41, p. 54.
43. RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 3.
44. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 155; RGVA 33987.2.40, p. 190.
45. *How* vol. I, pp. 183, 197, 199; I. Deutscher *The Prophet Armed* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 425–7.
46. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 447; L. Trotsky, *Stalin* (London, 1969), vol. II, pp. 60–1.
47. *How* vol. II, pp. 125–6.
48. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 321, 328–30.
49. Trotsky *Stalin* vol. II, p. 101; Trotsky, *My Life* p. 423; for the Petrograd campaign, see Geoffrey Swain, *Russia's Civil War* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 104–6.
50. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 595; Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 398; for the dismissal of Vacietis, see Swain 'Vacietis'.
51. *How* vol. II, pp. 135, 337; *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 597.
52. Trotsky *Stalin* vol. II, p. 111; *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 605, 613–15, 619, 643–7, 651–5.
53. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, pp. 667, 671.
54. *Trotsky Papers* vol. I, p. 682 (editorial note), 687; *How* vol. II, pp. 430–2 (this memo Trotsky consigned to the archives and then had published in *How*).
55. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 416; F. McCullough, 'Trotsky in Ekaterinburg', *Fortnightly Review*, 108, 1920, p. 541.
56. *Trotsky Papers* vol. II, pp. 801, 823.
57. V. Vilkova, *The Struggle for Power in Russia in 1923* (New York, 1996), pp. 152, 173.

# 7

## A Bolshevik in Brixton Prison: Fedor Raskol'nikov and the Origins of Anglo-Soviet Relations

*Jonathan D. Smele*

In 1918, Litvinov entered through the back door, if ever. Now Krassin drives up to 10, Downing Street, in a motor and is 'cinematographed'.

K.D. Nabokov, 1921<sup>1</sup>

In terms of military activity, 1919 was undoubtedly the most tumultuous year of the Russian Civil War. During that year, the White armies of Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich successively (and almost successfully) challenged the Bolsheviks' hold on central Russia. However, it may well have been that it was during the summer of 1918, on the Volga, that the decisive battles of the civil war were fought. That, certainly, was Trotsky's view.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it can be argued that it was in their destruction of all moderate alternatives to Bolshevism in the military coups of 1918 that the Whites sowed the seeds of their own destruction in the following year – not least by alienating liberal and moderate socialist opinion abroad.

Equally, in the traditional historiography and chronology of the civil-war period (both Western and Soviet), 1919 is seen as the apogee of the challenge between Western capitalism and Soviet communism. That year, after all, witnessed the high tide of the Allied intervention in Russia, as arms and other assistance was channelled to the advancing Whites from Europe, Japan and the USA, while a cordon of hostile successor states was established on Russia's western border by the Allied leaders meeting in Paris. Once again, however, that impression is misleading. In fact, it was during the summer of 1918, in the aftermath of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, that the deepest breach in Soviet Russia's relations with the Western governments was opened. The period from July to November 1918 witnessed the arrest and expulsion of Western agents and diplomats from Moscow following the so-called 'Lockhart Affair' and the reciprocal expulsion of Maksim Litvinov from London,<sup>3</sup> the widespread reporting in the West of

the 'Red Terror' (including the execution of Nicholas II and his family) in the wake of earlier sensational tales of 'German gold' having bought power for the Bolsheviks, and attacks on Allied property and personnel, including the murder of the British naval *attaché* Captain Francis Cromie by a 'Bolshevik mob' storming the former British Embassy in Petrograd. For its part, the Soviet government voiced suspicions that Allied agents had been behind everything from the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion to the assassination attempts on Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders. Hatred, suspicion and violence from both sides seemed to be reaching the point of outright war. Indeed, so achingly tense was the atmosphere, that the British government's move on 14 November towards the recognition of an alternative government in Russia, the All-Russian Directory (based at Omsk),<sup>4</sup> could properly be regarded as a prelude to a declaration of war against the Soviet regime. The diplomatic breach seemed absolute, as all official contacts were broken.<sup>5</sup> As a Narkomindel official later put it, 'The isolation of the Soviet republic reached its high point from 1918–19. The radio remained the only means of communication with the outside world'.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, just a year later, in late 1919, British prime minister David Lloyd George was beginning the dismantling of the Allied economic blockade of Soviet Russia and the British Foreign Office was negotiating directly with Soviet representatives for a formal exchange of prisoners in what amounted to a prelude to the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of March 1921. As Konstantin Nabokov noticed, something had changed between the uncomfortable existence and then expulsion of the first would-be Soviet ambassador to Britain, Maksim Litvinov, and the reception of Leonid Krasin at the head of the Soviet trade delegation. We should not necessarily go along with his explanation of why things had changed,<sup>7</sup> but it is certain that the road towards the normalisation of relations, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement and even Britain and other powers' *de jure* recognition of the Soviet regime had, indeed, been embarked upon in 1919, during what is generally held to have been the darkest year of the Russian Civil War. The process began, it is argued here, at least partly as a consequence of an accidental circumstance and a particularly odd episode in the quite extraordinary biography of the 'Red Admiral' Fedor Fedorovich Raskol'nikov that occurred just a few weeks after London's decision to recognise the Directory (and, not coincidentally, the end of the world war). Although quite literally relegated to a footnote in the standard history of Anglo-Soviet Relations in the civil-war period,<sup>8</sup> this episode – Raskol'nikov's capture by the Royal Navy in December 1918, his internment in London's Brixton Prison, and his exchange in May 1919 for a number of British officers and other ranks who had been held by the Bolsheviks – is not entirely unknown.<sup>9</sup> Until now, though, it has not been set fully in the context and chronology of his own biography, the civil war and Lloyd George's Russian policy.

## Midshipman Il'in: now you see him, now you don't

Unless primacy in the field is reserved for Lenin and Trotsky, Fedor Fedorovich Raskol'nikov (born Il'in) was never – although he was twice so designated – ‘a secondary Bolshevik’.<sup>10</sup> One of *Pravda's* founding editors in 1912,<sup>11</sup> deputy chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet in 1917 and marshal of the Baltic sailors' demonstrations during the July Days,<sup>12</sup> trusted by Lenin to proclaim the Bolsheviks' withdrawal from the Constituent Assembly, active on virtually every front of the Russian Civil War as a naval leader (from organising the defence of Petrograd against Kaledin's Cossacks in October 1917 and overseeing the scuttling of the Black Sea Fleet at Novorossiisk in June 1918 to commanding the successful Volga–Kama and Astrakhan–Caspian Flotillas and masterminding the capture of the White fleet at Enzeli from its British custodians in May 1920),<sup>13</sup> he was, in fact, one of the brightest stars in the Bolshevik firmament during the revolutionary period. He has also, as commander of the Baltic Fleet in 1920, been implicated as one of the causes of the resentments that blazed into rebellion at Kronstadt in 1921.<sup>14</sup> In the 1920s, his star did not wane: as the first Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, his propagandising activities largely inspired the ‘Curzon Note’ of 1923.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, he worked in the Eastern Department of the Comintern (under the pseudonym ‘Petrov’), edited literary and political journals, and wrote books, literary criticism, plays, short stories and memoirs. If all that was not enough, he could bask in the magnetic fame of his first wife, Larissa Reisner (the ‘Pallas Athena of the Russian Revolution’), whom he had married in 1918.

In 1937, however, at the height of the purges, by when he was Soviet ambassador to Bulgaria, Raskol'nikov was summoned back to Moscow by Stalin.<sup>16</sup> Knowing his fate should he obey, he repeatedly refused to return and then, in April 1938, fled to Western Europe. Consequently, on 17 July 1939, he was declared to be ‘outside the law’ by the Supreme Court of the USSR.<sup>17</sup> Having by then concluded that Stalin had betrayed the revolution,<sup>18</sup> he methodically refuted the charges of disloyalty against him (and others) in the article ‘How I Became “An Enemy of the People”’,<sup>19</sup> and followed this up with a blistering and widely circulated ‘Open Letter to Stalin’, written on 17 August 1939.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, it was reported that, apparently appalled by the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, Raskol'nikov had tried to throw himself out of the window of his hotel in Grasse in southern France,<sup>21</sup> although his wife strongly denied this, insisting that ‘There was no attempt at suicide’ and that Raskol'nikov was, rather, ‘seriously ill’ (but in no sense unbalanced).<sup>22</sup> Even back in May 1939, though, Raskol'nikov had struck Ilya Erenburg (who had known him since the mid-1920s) as unlike any ‘non-returner’ he had ever come across: ‘He seemed confused, really suffering’, the author recorded.<sup>23</sup> Whatever was the truth of the matter, on 23 September 1939 Raskol'nikov died in a delirium

at a nursing home in Nice. For the émigré newspaper *Poslednie novosti*, it was 'The agreement between Stalin and Hitler [that] finally cut down [*podkoshil*] this man, one of the last remaining representatives of the old Leninist guard'.<sup>24</sup> But according to the defector A.G. Barmin (the former Soviet *chargé d'affaires* in Athens and a friend and correspondent of Raskol'nikov), he was, 'in the opinion of friends, poisoned'.<sup>25</sup>

Raskol'nikov's post-mortem biography, his afterlife, is almost as remarkable as his life and the circumstances of his death. Although he had been published widely in the Soviet Union until 1937,<sup>26</sup> and had received due credit in historical accounts of the revolution,<sup>27</sup> for two decades after the events in Nice, he became the classic 'unperson' of high-Stalinist historical writing. His volumes of memoirs on 1917 and the civil war disappeared from circulation,<sup>28</sup> there is no mention of him in works in which he should have featured prominently,<sup>29</sup> and he is missing too from the 1950s edition of the *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*. When his name did appear in print, it was for him to be excoriated as a treacherous 'old Trotskyite' who had deliberately provoked the Kronstadt rebellion.<sup>30</sup> It was only during the beginnings of the thaw in Soviet historical writing in 1957 that he began to be mentioned in some anniversary histories of the revolution and the Baltic Fleet, but his key role in events was not explained, his memoirs were not republished – unlike, for example, albeit in an adulterated form, those of his contemporary Dybenko<sup>31</sup> – and there were gaps.<sup>32</sup>

Following the Twenty-Second Party Congress of 1961, though, Raskol'nikov's head momentarily re-emerged from under the ice. Having previously appealed (in 1961), without success, to the Soviet Writers' Union for assistance in clearing her husband's name, in 1963, Raskol'nikov's widow, his second wife, Muza Kanivez-Raskol'nikova, appealed from her home in Strasbourg to the CPSU Central Committee for his rehabilitation, and the process was duly set in motion.<sup>33</sup> On 26 August 1963, by order of the Supreme Court of the USSR, he was formally rehabilitated.<sup>34</sup> A brief biographical sketch of him that subsequently appeared in a collection on 'Heroes of the Civil War' and another, in the party historical journal (praising his attacks on the 'cult of personality'),<sup>35</sup> were followed, in 1964, by the publication of a new (albeit abridged and crudely censored) edition of his memoirs,<sup>36</sup> and an admiring biography by a leading Leningrad historian of the day: in it, Aleksandr Konstantinov deemed Raskol'nikov's 'Open Letter' to have been just, pronounced its author to have been 'a fiery patriot of his socialist Motherland' and declared him 'fully rehabilitated and posthumously restored to the Party and to Soviet citizenship'.<sup>37</sup>

At the invitation of the Writers' Union, his widow and his daughter were even allowed to visit the USSR in the summer of 1964. There, they handed over papers from Raskol'nikov's personal archive to the union, which had already established a commission on his literary heritage.<sup>38</sup> However, although Roy Medvedev would subsequently utilise Raskol'nikov's unpub-

lished diary in a work published outside the Soviet Union,<sup>39</sup> after the fall of Khrushchev in October 1964, a man who had so publicly denounced Stalin – and a ‘non-returner’ to boot – soon fell foul of the re-Stalinisation of the Brezhnev period. Those wishing to purchase the 1964 books by and about Raskol’nikov found that they were suddenly ‘out of stock’.<sup>40</sup> As Brian Pearce neatly put it, ‘he had been, so to speak, de-rehabilitated’.<sup>41</sup>

This time, though, the historical Raskol’nikov did not altogether or immediately disappear. For example, in S.S. Khesin’s *Oktyabr’skaya revoliutsiya i flot* he is listed among the trusted Bolsheviks sent to Kronstadt in March 1917 to organise party cells and his political activities during July and October are described in a neutral fashion: there is no direct criticism of him (even for being too headstrong in July) and, even, some implied praise.<sup>42</sup> However, by the time that Khesin published the popular history *Moryaki v bor’be za Sovetskuyu vlast’* in 1977, Raskol’nikov had vanished once more.<sup>43</sup> In some obscure documentary collections on the civil war published in the Brezhnev era one can – albeit not without effort – spot the odd document signed by him,<sup>44</sup> but there was no mention of him again in key monographs and reference books until his ‘re-rehabilitation’ in the era of *glasnost’*.<sup>45</sup>

Echoing the events of 1963–4, the first time that Raskol’nikov re-emerged in the late 1980s was in a compendium of ‘Heroes of the Civil War’.<sup>16</sup> But, indicating the limits of ‘openness’ in official history in 1987, both this brief, factual entry and the subsequent one in a major encyclopaedia avoided mention of difficult topics such as his breach with the Soviet government or the circumstances of his death. Moreover, the encyclopaedia entry concludes with a subliminal negative twist: from all the aspects of Raskol’nikov’s multifaceted and brilliant career, the editors chose to highlight that ‘In 1920–1, at the time of the debate on trade unions, he was a supporter of Trotsky’s platform’.<sup>47</sup> Very soon, though, during the period of ‘high *glasnost’*’, Raskol’nikov was reclaimed as a hero of the now reformist Party and its struggle for ‘Leninist norms’: the text of his ‘Open Letter’ appeared in *Nedelya* in 1988 (No. 26/1, 474); in 1989, an approving article by V. Arkhipenko appeared on him in *Sovetskii voin* (No. 14); in 1990, his *Kronshtadt i Piter* was reprinted in its original (1925) unadulterated form (with notes by V.V. Krylov and an introduction by V.D. Polikarpov that refuted the charges of Trotskyism);<sup>48</sup> and numerous other laudatory materials appeared in the official presses.<sup>49</sup> Finally, in 1991, the memoirs of his widow were published.<sup>50</sup> Official moves were even made to have his remains returned from France to the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup>

None of this renewed interest in Raskol’nikov, however, threw much light upon our central concern here, his London sojourn,<sup>52</sup> even though – albeit unwittingly – his enforced visit to Britain should rank among the most significant events of his career.

## From the Baltic to Brixton...

The circumstances of Raskol'nikov's capture by the Royal Navy off Reval (Tallinn) on 27 December 1918 have been closely documented elsewhere and will not be dwelt upon here.<sup>53</sup> It will suffice to note that, following service as commander of the Reds' Volga–Kama Flotilla from August 1918, during which time he assisted in the recapture of Kazan and pressed White river squadrons back to Ufa, in September 1918 Raskol'nikov was made a member of the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) of the Republic (and Chief Commissar of its naval section) and a member of the RMC of the Baltic Fleet. Then, in late December, in the operational capacity of Deputy Commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Red Army (with responsibility for naval units), he was ordered by Trotsky to undertake an active reconnaissance mission along the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, as commander of a special naval detachment that was investigating the possibilities for naval support for the 7<sup>th</sup> Army in its battles against Estonian nationalist forces, with orders too to engage with any British ships in the area who were supporting them,<sup>54</sup> when his flagship, the destroyer *Spartak*, was chased, run aground at Divel Shoal (Kuradimunda) and captured by the British light cruiser *Wakeful*, one of five British ships that had been at anchor in Reval harbour.<sup>55</sup> When the Soviet crewmen were transferred to the British cruiser and taken into Reval, Raskol'nikov remained unrecognised amongst them, having been dressed in the garb of a naval rating and given the papers of an Estonian sailor by his men. On 28 December, though, he was identified by one ex-Lieutenant Oskar Fest, a fellow graduate of the naval cadet school in Petrograd, who, by chance, was with the British.<sup>56</sup> Raskol'nikov was certain he was going to be shot – perhaps having in mind the rumoured fate at the hands of the British of Stepan Shaumian and the '26 Commissars' in Transcaspia – but he was not. Instead, he was taken, on board *HMS Cardiff*, to Rosyth in Scotland and thence, under police guard, was escorted via Edinburgh to London.<sup>57</sup> On 'the damp and foggy morning' of Friday 10 January 1919, Raskol'nikov arrived in the British capital.<sup>58</sup>

At Reval Raskol'nikov had become enmeshed in one branch of British policy in Russia – and one in which the Baltic loomed large. As early as 18 October 1918, Lord Robert Cecil (Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) had informed the War Cabinet that, as the world war drew to a close, 'there were two big Russian questions that demanded immediate attention'. The first of them was 'the question of the small Baltic states'. The second – note, the second – was 'the question of intervention in Russia'.<sup>59</sup> Even before the Estonian government requested assistance in fighting off Bolshevik advances towards Narva and Reval in late November 1918,<sup>60</sup> a Foreign Office conference in Whitehall had concluded that if the emerging independent Baltic governments should show signs of stability they should be supported 'with military material'.<sup>61</sup> In a memorandum of

29 November by Arthur Balfour (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), the policy was spelt out: 'For us no alternative is open at present than to use such troops as we possess to the best advantage; where we have no troops, to supply arms and money; and in the case of the Baltic provinces, to protect, as far as we can, the nascent nationalities by the use of our fleet'.<sup>62</sup> A week earlier, on 22 November, Rear Admiral Sinclair had received orders to proceed into the Baltic with a squadron of cruisers, destroyers and minesweepers (which were carrying supplies of arms).<sup>63</sup> In response to a request for clarification of their mission, an Admiralty telegram of 29 November then informed commanders in the Baltic that British interests were:

To prevent the destruction of the Esthonian and Livonian provinces by external aggression, and the only external aggression which at present threatens them is that by Bolshevik invaders. You should support Esthonian resistance to the Bolsheviks by sea, but military operations should be avoided...[However], wherever we are in a position to resist by force of arms Bolshevik attacks on friends of the Allies we shall unhesitatingly do so. A Bolshevik man-of-war or armed auxiliary of any kind operating off the coast of the Baltic Provinces should be assumed to be doing so with hostile intent and should be treated accordingly.<sup>64</sup>

The largest part of the Baltic squadron went to Reval, where 5000 rifles were handed over to the Päts government and naval support offered in the struggles around Narva.<sup>65</sup> Hence Raskol'nikov's capture.

Although, as Richard Ullman states, there was much sympathy in London for the Estonians' plight, as well as concern for the future of the longstanding British trading interests in the region,<sup>66</sup> like so much else in British interventionist policy in Russia, the Baltic incursion had actually been prompted by Germany. The British had noticed with great alarm that, immediately after the Armistice, as the Bolsheviks launched an offensive against Estonia, German forces in the region had withdrawn. This was contrary to Article XII of the Armistice, which had determined that all German forces on the Eastern Front should remain in position until the Allies deemed the moment for their removal to be suitable, 'taking into account the internal situation of these territories'. This withdrawal, it was held in London, was carried out 'systematically, and by agreement with the Bolsheviks': in fact, in the opinion of Whitehall, 'the Bolsheviks were assisted in every way by the Germans, and nothing [was] left undone to hinder the defensive organisations of the newly formed National governments'. The Germans, it was charged, had three aims: to create anarchy in the region, in order to justify their own future intervention; to allow Bolshevik atrocities to deter anyone from arguing for a re-incorporation of the Baltic region into Russia; and 'to secure German domination from East Prussia to Petrograd'.<sup>67</sup> Even when

political sympathy for the reformist Estonian government was cited as motivating military intervention, it was underpinned by anti-Germanism: as Lloyd George himself put it to the War Cabinet on 14 November, 'The sooner the [Estonian] peasants get on the land the better, as peasants in possession of the land would constitute a strong anti-Bolshevik nucleus. The [Baltic] German landowners had been a curse to the country and had been used by the German Government as an alien garrison'.<sup>68</sup>

\* \* \*

In London, meanwhile, Raskol'nikov rightly feared that he might yet become a sacrificial victim of British hostility to Soviet Russia. Taken directly from King's Cross Station to the Admiralty, he was immediately interrogated by 'a stout, clean-shaven, red-cheeked admiral of about 50'. Alarmingly, the first question put to him was 'What can you tell us about the murder of Captain Cromie?'<sup>69</sup> When he refused to co-operate, he was put in solitary confinement in Brixton Prison. Had he been aware of the new War Minister Winston Churchill's views on this matter, Raskol'nikov would have had every reason to fear for his life. Having seen a report from the Danish minister in Petrograd that 'Captain Cromie's corpse was treated in a horrible manner' by his killers, Churchill had drafted a paper for the War Cabinet urging that Britain should 'mark down the personalities of the Bolshevik government as the objects upon whom justice will be executed'.<sup>70</sup> There could be little doubt of Churchill's distaste for Lenin's regime. On the hustings at Dundee, on 26 November 1918, he had proclaimed that 'Russia is being rapidly reduced by the Bolsheviks to an animal form of Barbarism'<sup>71</sup> and, having been granted the War portfolio in the new cabinet, he campaigned tirelessly in the first months of 1919 for an expansion of the Allied intervention.<sup>72</sup> On 23 January, on hearing of the 'Prinkipo Proposal', he even dashed overnight by car and boat from London to Paris (becoming involved in an accident en route), burst into the prime minister's suite as Lloyd George was shaving, and bawled 'One might as well legalise sodomy as recognise the Bolsheviks!'<sup>73</sup>

Nor was Churchill alone in regarding any form of contact with the Soviet authorities as being unthinkable. From the Russian embassy in London, Konstantin Nabokov broadcast his opinion that Prinkipo was nothing less than 'the most pitiable act that has ever disgraced the pages of world history',<sup>74</sup> while a Foreign Office memorandum for the consideration of the War Cabinet that was drafted on the eve of Raskol'nikov's arrival in London had specifically stated that it was 'impossible to do business' with the Bolsheviks because 'they never keep their word'. It urged, instead, the recognition of the Kolchak regime as the *de jure* government of Russia (with a concomitant seat at the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference) and the raising of a huge 'Allied volunteer army' to support the Whites.<sup>75</sup>

Lloyd George, however, was far more ambivalent in his attitude to the Soviet government. He was, as one recent biographer notes, 'not averse to extirpating Bolshevism on the cheap, if that proved possible'<sup>76</sup> – indeed, as A.J.P. Taylor once put it, 'Lloyd George was against intervention [in Russia] when it was not succeeding but he had bouts of enthusiasm for it whenever things were going well'.<sup>77</sup> That much was to be demonstrated in April–June 1919, when, after having enraged anti-Bolsheviks everywhere with the Prinkipo Proposal, he urged the Allied leaders in Paris to recognise Admiral Kolchak as the legitimate ruler of Russia as the Whites advanced westwards across the Urals, only then to back away from recognition once Kolchak's forces ground to a halt and were repulsed short of the Volga.<sup>78</sup> In January 1919, however, Lloyd George was as far away as he ever was to be from believing that armed force – still less foreign intervention – in Russia could be successful in unseating Lenin. Moreover, it was fortunate indeed for Raskol'nikov that he had arrived in London at a point in time when, as the prime minister and his supporters saw it, a whole set of other circumstances, at home and abroad, argued in favour of 'doing business' with the Bolsheviks, at least with regard to exchanges of prisoners. Perhaps even more fortunately, as the Whites' efforts in Russia waxed in the spring of 1919, the arguments for allowing Raskol'nikov to return to Russia in exchange for the release of British servicemen held in Moscow, were actually being read in London as all the more compelling and urgent.

### ... and back again

There were those in London who would have done all sorts of deals to get British prisoners of the Bolsheviks home. When a Norwegian Red Cross worker approached the British minister in Copenhagen, Sir Charles Marling, with a scheme (already endorsed, he pledged, by the Bolshevik authorities) that would permit a British couple to leave Russia if permission could be obtained for him to import 'a small quantity of herrings, say 10 tons' into Petrograd, one Foreign Office official in London suggested that the exchange be sanctioned: 'If we could get all the BSS [Britons] in Russia out at the rate of 5 tons of herring a head we should do well!' commented Mr O'Malley of the Russia Department. Lord George Curzon (Acting Foreign Secretary from January 1919), however, demurred, finding this not to be in accord with the 'dignified' manner in which HMG liked to conduct its affairs and, tellingly, expressing suspicions because Marling had reported that negotiations for the deal would be conducted in Berlin.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, the pressure to do something to get British prisoners home was very strong by the time of Raskol'nikov's arrival in London. On 9 January 1919, the Foreign Office had been informed via Copenhagen that, with all official contacts with the Soviet government having now been broken, the situation of Allied citizens who remained in Petrograd was

'critical',<sup>80</sup> while other reports that week confirmed the 'murder' by the Bolsheviks of a British engineer (Alexander Smith Dredge) at Ekaterinburg<sup>81</sup> and the arrest of all foreigners in Khar'kov, including several Britons and a former British consul.<sup>82</sup> The following month brought news that conditions in Moscow's Butyrki Prison were 'critical for want of food' and that a Captain Gracey had died there.<sup>83</sup> From that prison, Major Goldsmith, the unfortunate Gracey's commanding officer and the head of a British military mission that had been captured by the Bolsheviks on 7 October 1918 at Vladikavkaz, sent word (on 27 January, via the Danish legation) of the 'deplorable' conditions in which his men were being held: 'I urgently request that immediate action be taken to negotiate our exchange', he implored.<sup>84</sup>

In fact, spurred by the recent confirmation that the officers and men of the Caucasus mission, who had been feared lost, were being held in Moscow, on 10 January 1919, the very day of Raskol'nikov's arrival in London – even as he was being questioned at the Admiralty and then at Scotland Yard and then transferred to Brixton Prison – the Foreign Office had prepared a 'Proposal to Exchange Bolshevik Naval Commissary against Allied Prisoners still in Russia'.<sup>85</sup> Further impetus was given by the receipt in London, on 24 January, of a radio message from the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgii Chicherin, proposing an exchange of prisoners.<sup>86</sup> That such an exchange, along the lines of that proposed by Chicherin, was not affected until the end of May 1919, when Rakol'nikov and Ninyuk were swapped for the Caucasus Military Mission and six other British prisoners (18 men in all) on the Finnish border,<sup>87</sup> was a consequence of several factors. One was the difficulties in communication: there was no official British representative in Russia, only a representative of the Red Cross, Mr Archibald Parker, who did not enjoy the full confidence of the Foreign Office (and who only arrived in Moscow on 17 March). Moreover, there was no telegraphic link to Soviet Russia, meaning that messages between Curzon and Chicherin had to be broadcast by radio telegram, from the Eiffel Tower and from Tsarskoe Selo, in the hope that someone at the other end would pick them up (if atmospheric conditions allowed them to get through at all). A more subjective factor, however, was that Curzon's Foreign Office, believing it had an ace in its hand in the shape of Raskol'nikov, was initially determined to secure the best deal possible: the release of one Red Admiral (plus Ninyuk), it was reckoned, would be worth the liberation of 'all British civilian, military and naval prisoners' held in Russia (plus, for good measure, one Captain Schoojems, the Belgian captain of a British trading vessel taken by the Bolsheviks in the Baltic).<sup>88</sup> When Parker reported in mid-March that, shortly after his arrival in Moscow, he had met L.M. Karakhan (Chicherin's deputy) and struck a deal whereby all Britons held in Russia would be released if the British freed not only Raskol'nikov and Ninyuk but also all the Soviet prisoners they held in

North Russia and elsewhere, he received an immediate response refusing to treat on that basis. This was sent *en clair*, so that Parker might show the Soviet authorities. At the Foreign Office, though, Cavendish Bentinck had minuted Parker's communication to the effect that 'one or more of the Bolshevik officials held at Archangel' might be thrown in to sweeten the deal, if the Soviets refused to exchange all the Britons for just Raskol'nikov and Ninyuk, and sent a cipher telegram to that effect to Parker on the tail of the blanket refusal that was for public consumption.<sup>89</sup>

Eventually, however, the Foreign Office had to yield much more and by mid-April it was agreed that Raskol'nikov and Ninyuk would be exchanged not for all Britons held in Russia but for a much more limited party of prisoners. Richard Debo comments that 'It is difficult to establish the reason for this change in attitude. Nothing in the record points specifically to the reasons underlying it', but then goes on to suggest that it was in March–April 1919 that the British government came to a conclusion that the Bolshevik regime was more than a temporary phenomenon and would have to be dealt with, no matter how distasteful it might be to negotiate with such a rabble. Debo argues too that the Foreign Office's 'acute awareness' that it 'could not ignore the welfare of British subjects imprisoned abroad' played a major role.<sup>90</sup> Other – and quite different – factors inciting this change of attitude, though, may be adduced.

Leaving aside the fact that the Foreign Office's humanitarian concerns were not as pure as they might have appeared,<sup>91</sup> undoubtedly a cause of this softening of British policy towards Soviet Russia was that, in the first quarter of 1919, prime minister Lloyd George (whose name does not once appear in Debo's account) was not only at the nadir of his faith in the efficacy of armed resistance to Russian Bolshevism but was also at the summit of his authority in government and therefore able to slap down ministers who opposed him – including those, like Churchill, who, when it was suggested that deals could be done with the Bolsheviks, blanched at the thought of grasping 'the hairy paw of the baboon'; and those, like Curzon (the former Viceroy of India), who stubbornly clung to the hope of using intervention to establish a permanent British presence in the Caucasus to protect British imperial interests in Asia.<sup>92</sup> This was, in fact, the culmination of a two-year process in which the prime minister had eroded the grip of the Foreign Office and other ministries over policy-making, preferring 'private' advice from trustees such as Philip Kerr and Arthur Balfour.<sup>93</sup> Back in November 1918, Lloyd George had already agreed with Balfour that 'a military crusade against Bolshevism was impossible', as it would involve Britain in 'military operations of unknown magnitude'.<sup>94</sup> Upon hearing, at a stormy War Cabinet meeting on 10 December, that there were already 10,000 British troops in North Russia he was appalled and stated bluntly that 'Great Britain could not go on keeping troops in North Russia to protect some of the inhabitants from their fellows'. When

Lord Milner (Minister of War) and Sir Henry Wilson (CIGS) ventured that Britain owed a debt of honour to those anti-Bolshevik Russians who had remained loyal to the Allies after Brest-Litovsk and that there would be a massacre of 'the people friendly to us' if Allied forces were withdrawn and argued that they should stay put until the White governments were in a position to defend themselves, the prime minister said that he 'doubted they [i.e. the Whites] could do this for some time to come': it was quite possible, he opined, 'that the same argument might be brought forward in twelve months' time' – or even 'four years' time', he added – and, clearly exasperated, 'protested against anyone taking it for granted that we could retain troops in North Russia until 3000 Karelians [sic.] could beat 50,000 Bolsheviks'.<sup>95</sup>

Although, in view of the forthcoming general election, which was being eyed nervously by the Liberal–Conservative coalition government,<sup>96</sup> no change in policy was decided upon at that meeting, Lloyd George's central concerns were apparent from his closing remarks: 'If we continue to keep troops in so many places', he said, 'there would be discontent in the Army'. He had just heard of some 'ill-feeling' at Damascus because of delays in demobilisation.<sup>97</sup> When the new War Cabinet reconvened after the election he was faced with signs of 'ill-feeling' much closer to home: as its meeting of 8 January 1919 opened, Lloyd George informed his ministers that 1500 mutinous men of the Army Service Corps had just arrived at Downing Street – having evaded a police cordon on the Edgware Road – and were demanding to see him!<sup>98</sup>

Three days later, the prime minister was in Paris, making the case for 'inviting the representatives of all sections of Russia to appear before the Peace Conference' that had been agreed at the Imperial War Cabinet on 31 December.<sup>99</sup> When that initiative failed (due largely to Clemenceau's opposition to receiving a Bolshevik delegation in France), he moved on to preparing the ground for the Prinkipo Proposal instead. When that failed too, due to the Whites' intransigence, he threw his support behind the Bullitt mission's efforts to secure a peace with Soviet Russia.<sup>100</sup> Churchill and Curzon remained implacably opposed to such policies, but now, post-election and at the zenith of his political career, Lloyd George could safely ignore them: not only had he won the 'coupon election' of December 1918, but he had seen 133 of his own Liberal followers returned to parliament, whilst his chief anti-coalition rival in the party, Herbert Asquith, lost his seat, together with some of his major allies.<sup>101</sup> Keen to restore peace and prosperity to a shattered continent, deeply pessimistic as to the Whites' political aims, convinced that half-hearted intervention in Russia (which was all the Allies could afford) was akin to 'poking with sticks into the kennel to infuriate the dog', and already with one eye on the prospects for aiding Britain's economic recovery by establishing trade links with Russia that he hoped would turn around the recent precipitous drop in the export

of basic industrial goods,<sup>102</sup> Lloyd George hardly needed the men of the ASC to remind him of how much was at stake in Russia for social peace in Britain. As he later put it,

Organised labour viewed the rule of the proletariat in Russia with a certain measure of sympathy, and some hankering after a change everywhere in the particular class that exercised dominion. This sentiment, coupled with the genuine distaste for another war, was strong enough to ensure that if demobilisation had been stopped in order to divert the troops from France to Odessa or Archangel, there would have been a mutiny.<sup>103</sup>

But, if he did need a reminder, it was presented to him in the sharpest possible form soon after his departure for Paris.

In the December 1918 election, under the slogan 'Hands Off Democracy', the British Labour Party had waged its most successful campaign to date and had won over 20% of the vote. That, however, had translated into a mere 57 seats in the House of Commons and, by the New Year, in the face of a post-war slump, frustrated workers and miners were rallying in increasing numbers behind the proponents of direct (i.e. extraparliamentary) action.<sup>104</sup> The most famous of the consequent events took place, of course, in Glasgow, when tanks and 10,000 troops had to be deployed on the city's streets to restore order on 'Red Clydeside', after John MacLean (the man Lenin had named as 'Soviet Consul in Scotland') led a siege of the City Chambers on George Square on 31 January 1919 ('Bloody Friday'), demanding a cut in working hours, that had turned into a riot following violent baton charges by the police.<sup>105</sup> This, however, was hardly an isolated event: it is notable that in the minutes of the War Cabinet meeting of that day discussion of the disturbances in Glasgow (and Belfast) was followed by agenda items on 'Unrest of Troops at Calais' and 'Demands of the Coal Miners'.<sup>106</sup> After spending a month back in London to deal with the domestic unrest,<sup>107</sup> Lloyd George would return to Paris to inform the British delegation there that 'the whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution'.<sup>108</sup> By then, though, he was more certain than ever that any attempt to use armed intervention to crush it in Russia would at best be cripplingly expensive and at worst only counter-productive.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, before leaving again for Paris, on 4 March he obtained the War Cabinet's agreement to the total withdraw of British troops from North Russia before the end of the summer of 1919 and began the process that would lead to a similar decision regarding the units in the Caucasus.<sup>110</sup> On 7 March, at a meeting with Clemenceau in Paris, he passed on that information and then ridiculed the plans of Marshal Foch for 'invading Russia with Czecho-Slovaks, Finns, Poles and released Russian prisoners'.<sup>111</sup> Although he agreed at that meeting to continue support for the Allies' arming of Denikin, there seems little reason to

doubt the veracity of his later statement that, by the spring of 1919, 'Personally, I would have dealt with the Soviets as the *de facto* Government of Russia'.<sup>112</sup>

The surviving records fail to indicate whether Lloyd George intervened in the question of the Raskol'nikov exchange directly, and the matter was not discussed at War Cabinet meetings. The knowledge, though, that the re-elected and dominant prime minister had, by March 1919, made his mind up on ending the military intervention in Russia could not other than have helped push the Foreign Office towards an accommodation with the Soviets on this issue. On top of that, the Foreign Office was under growing pressure from the Admiralty to stop raising 'difficulties' and to undertake 'more vigorous and sympathetic efforts' to finalise an exchange of prisoners,<sup>113</sup> while campaigns in favour of an exchange that had been undertaken by some of the prisoners' families (taken up by the press and leading to questions from the floor of the House) were becoming an embarrassment<sup>114</sup> – particularly after news broke (despite Curzon's efforts to keep it secret) that Raskol'nikov was being held in Brixton Prison and reports that the French government seemed to be taking more strenuous efforts in repatriating its nationals from Russia.<sup>115</sup> Finally, in giving its sanction to the final details of the exchange in mid-May, the Foreign Office was able to find comfort in the consideration that, as the Soviet government was offering eight officers, eight other ranks and two civilians in exchange for Raskol'nikov and Ninyuk, 'HMG cannot be accused of giving officers preferential treatment'.<sup>116</sup>

The crucial factor, though, may have been that in March–April 1919, despite the British commitment to ending the intervention that was founded on pessimism with regard to the Whites' chances, it began to look as though the anti-Bolsheviks might triumph after all, as Kolchak's forces poured across the Urals and Denikin prepared his offensive. A few days before the London newspapers began to herald 'The Tide of Victory in Russia' and predict the imminent collapse of the Soviet government,<sup>117</sup> while Lloyd George in Paris began to press for the *de facto* recognition of the Kolchak government,<sup>118</sup> advice that a deal on the prisoners should be completed *post haste* with such an urbane representative of the Soviet government as Chicherin, before military defeats could empower the 'extremists' among the Bolsheviks, who were capable of any sort of 'mad dog act', arrived in Whitehall from an interesting source. On 24 April 1919, Arthur Ransome (who had recently returned from Moscow, where he had visited the Butyrki prisoners) wrote a letter to an acquaintance at the Foreign Office warning that 'Somehow or other the prisoners must be got away before the moderate Bolshies, who are willing to exchange, lose their influence, or their heads'.<sup>119</sup> His offer to return to Russia himself to undertake negotiations was politely rebuffed,<sup>120</sup> but such advice by a man known to be well acquainted with the Soviet leaders could not be ignored.

A month later, the exchange took place and a further series of direct negotiations between Moscow and London were initiated<sup>121</sup> that led, albeit not unswervingly, to a formal Anglo-Soviet agreement on the exchange of prisoners at Copenhagen on 12 February 1920.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, Debo was right that there was no definite British policy to embark on such a course and that everything about this process was haphazard and unorthodox,<sup>123</sup> but perhaps not for the reasons he supposed. It is true too that, even as this course was embarked upon, the second half of 1919 saw the temporary tightening of the economic blockade of Russia. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the prisoner exchange in May led directly to the re-establishment of official contacts between Soviet Russia and the West and that this was precisely what Lloyd George – who then moved quickly to initiate the start of trade talks – had intended.<sup>124</sup> After the ruptures of 1918, then, 1919 was the year in which bridges began to be built between Moscow and the Western democracies. Quite by chance, at the centre of it was the remarkable figure of Fedor Raskol'nikov. As he trudged across the border into Soviet Russia on 26 May at Beloostrov, at the very spot where he had been amongst the select group of Bolsheviks to greet Lenin on his return from exile two years earlier, few could have guessed that, two decades later, as Stalin prepared to sign an agreement with Nazi Germany that would almost fatally rupture those bridges, Raskol'nikov would be pursued to his death by the regime which on that day welcomed him home as a hero.

## Notes

1. Constantine Nabokoff, *The Ordeal of a Diplomat* (London, 1921), p. 316.
2. L.D. Trotsky, *Stalin* (London, 1947), p. 310. See also the chapter by Geoffrey Swain in this volume.
3. See FO 371/3337 on these events.
4. CAB/502 Meeting of 14 November 1918.
5. In November 1917, Allied leaders in Paris had agreed to maintain unofficial contacts with the Soviet government – hence the missions of Lockhart, Jaques Sadoul, Raymond Robbins and others. Following Lockhart's expulsion, however, such agents and other consular representatives of the Allied and neutral powers began to leave Russia. Meanwhile, the Soviet representative to the Netherlands (Rosen) was refused entry, Sweden requested the withdrawal of the Soviet agent in Stockholm (V.V. Vorovskii) and Norway and Denmark also cut all official links with the Soviet government. See Teddy J. Uldricks, *Diplomacy and Ideology: The Origins of Soviet Foreign Relations, 1917–1930* (Beverly Hills, 1979), pp. 25, 51.
6. *Desiat' let sovetskoi diplomatii: akty i dokumenty* (Moscow, 1927), p. 10.
7. According to Nabokov (*Ordeal*, p. 305), 'After November 11, 1918, and all through 1919, the British Government carried out the policy that was dictated by the extremist section of the Labour and Socialist parties'.
8. Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1968), p. 340 (note 114).

9. See, especially, Richard K. Debo, 'Prelude to Negotiations: The Problem of British Prisoners in Soviet Russia, November 1918–July 1919', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 58(1), 1980, pp. 58–75. Raskol'nikov's own version of the events forms the longest chapter in his entertaining memoirs: see 'A Prisoner of the British', in F.F. Raskolnikov, *Tales of Sub-Lieutenant Ilyin* (London, 1982), pp. 66–115.
10. Norman E. Saul, 'Fedor Raskol'nikov, a "Secondary Bolshevik"', *Russian Review*, 32(1), 1973, pp. 131–42. Saul drew this designation from Nikolai Sukhanov, who listed Raskol'nikov among those 'secondary Bolshevik leaders' who were arrested after the July Days (in comparison to those party 'generals' who escaped) – see Nikolai Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution, 1917: A Personal Record* (Princeton, 1984), p. 486 – and seems to endorse it, describing Raskol'nikov as one of the "unsung heroes" of...the secondary echelon of party stalwarts'.
11. Ralph Carter Elwood, 'Lenin and *Pravda*, 1912–1914', *Slavic Review* 31(2), 1972, p. 361.
12. Sukhanov (*Russian Revolution*, pp. 441–51, 461–7) repeatedly called the Kronstadt sailors 'his [i.e. Raskol'nikov's] army', while Trotsky praised Raskol'nikov's role in the July Days in his *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London, 1934), pp. 564–5. See also Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt, 1917–1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 112–28. Also bearing witness to Raskol'nikov's prominence at this time is that, for his part in the July events, he was charged by the Provisional Government, alongside the eminent Lenin, Zinov'ev and Kollontai, with having 'organised an armed uprising against the existing order' (*Izvestiya*, 22 July 1917). Unlike them, he was imprisoned. Trotsky planned to defend him, had he ever come to trial: Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (New York, 1976), p. 31. The Kadet leader Pavel Milyukov, for one, specifically regretted that Raskol'nikov had not been kept in prison, so as to have deprived the Bolsheviks of such an effective leader in October: P.N. Milyukov, *The Russian Revolution*, vol. 3 (Gulf Breeze, 1987), pp. 169–70.
13. On Enzeli, see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 3, pp. 354–67; and A. Vakstut, 'Konets Kaspiiskoi flotilii vremeni grazhdanskoi voiny pod komandoi Generala Denikina', in S.V. Volkov (ed.), *Flot v Beloi bor'be* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 396–406. Raskol'nikov's civil-war service won him two Orders of the Red Banner.
14. *Kronshtadtskaya tragediya 1921 goda: dokumenty v dvukh knigakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1999), pp. 48–50.
15. Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Harold H. Fisher, *Soviet Russia and the West 1920–1927: A Documentary Survey* (Stanford, 1957), p. 186.
16. Only now do we now precisely why. On 2 June 1937, under NKVD interrogation regarding the 'Tukhachevskii affair', L.M. Karakhan (once a friend of Raskol'nikov) had spoken fancifully of the 'traitors' plans to use Bulgaria as a base for an attack on the Soviet Union. At that point in the margin of the record of Karakhan's questioning Stalin wrote: 'Recall Raskol'nikov from Bulgaria': see V.N. Khaustov *et al.* (eds), *Lubyanka: Stalin i glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD. Arkhiv Stalina. Dokumenty byvshikh organov partiinoi i gosudarstvennoi vlasti, 1937–1938* (Moscow, 2004), p. 225. A month earlier, Raskol'nikov had already been denounced in a note from the leading Comintern activist Henryk Walecki to Ezhov: Walecki, recalling his dealings with Raskol'nikov in 1925–7, charged that 'I came to the conclusion, on the

- basis of different hints, anecdotes, etc., that R[askol'nikov] was at that time an active Trotskyist and already a double-dealer. I am not an expert in literary currents, but I remember that his literary entourage...consisted of people who now have been exposed as enemies and long-time double-dealers': see William J. Chase, *Enemies within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven, 2001), pp. 434–5. It is possible that Stalin had nurtured suspicions of Raskol'nikov since 1932, when the latter had allegedly sent him a letter warning that collectivisation was leading to famine: see James E. Mace 'The Famine: Stalin Imposes a "Final Solution"', <http://www.ukr-weekly.com/Archive/1984/278421.shtml>; and James E. Mace, 'The Man-made Famine of 1933 in Soviet Ukraine: What Happened and Why' <http://www.ukr-weekly.com/Archive/1983/078320.shtml>, citing Leonid Plyushch, *History's Carnival: A Dissident's Autobiography* (London, 1979), pp. 40–1.
17. The charge read that he had 'deserted his post, gone over to the camp of the enemies of the people and refused to return to the USSR': see A. Artizov, *et al.* (comps), *Reabilitatsiya: Kak eto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy. Tom II. Fevral' 1956 – nachalo 80-x godov* (Moscow, 2003), p. 440. Raskol'nikov told Ilya Erenburg, whom he visited in Paris in May 1939, that his decision not to return to the USSR was prompted not by fear for his own life, but for that of his young wife: I. Erenburg, *Lyudi, gody, zhizn'* (Moscow, 1990), vol. 2, p. 199.
  18. 'He is the traitor, not any of his victims', Raskol'nikov informed an émigré journalist in Paris in the Spring of 1939: I.M., 'Raskol'nikov soshel s uma', *Vozrozhdenie*, 1 September 1939.
  19. The article, dated 22 July 1939, first appeared in *Poslednie novosti* on 26 July 1939.
  20. It was first published in *Novaya Rossiya* on 1 October 1939.
  21. *Poslednie novosti*, 27 August 1939.
  22. *Poslednie novosti*, 1 September 1939.
  23. Erenburg, *Lyudi, gody, zhizn'*, vol. 2, p. 199.
  24. *Poslednie novosti*, 24 September 1939.
  25. Alexander Barmine, *One Who Survived* (New York, 1945), p. 274. Elsewhere in his book (p. 21), Barmin lays the direct charge that Raskol'nikov was 'poisoned by the G.P.U.' See also 'Smert' Raskol'nikova', *Vozrozhdenie*, 29 September, 1939. Apart from the article by Saul and the memoirs and biographies mentioned in notes below, the best sources on Raskol'nikov's life are: 'Fyodor Fyodorovich Raskolnikov (autobiography)', in G. Haupt and J.-J. Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution* (London, 1974), pp. 202–8; 'Raskolnikov, Fedor F.', in B. Lazitch and M.M. Drakovitch (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, 1986), pp. 386–7; and 'Ex-Insider, V', 'Raskolnikov', *Survey*, 53, 1964, pp. 119–28. See also K.A. Zaleskii, *Imperiya Stalina: biograficheskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 2000), pp. 384–6; and the Khronos biography on <http://hronos.km.ru/biograf/raskolnikov.html>.
  26. For a detailed list of Raskol'nikov's published and unpublished works (including the various editions of his memoirs) see Muza Raskol'nikova, *Ten' bystrotechnoi zhizni: povest'* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 172–5. The degree of official trust he enjoyed is exemplified by his credit as one of the editors of the original *Malaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1929–31). There was not even an entry about him in the second edition, published from 1937.
  27. See, for example, the treatment of Raskol'nikov's part in the scuttling of the Black Sea Fleet in a book for which he supplied the Forward: V.K. Zhukov, *Chernomorskii flot v revolyutsii* (Moscow, 1931), p. 277ff.

28. It was on finding out that his *Kronshtadt i Piter v 1917 godu* (Moscow, 1925) had appeared on a list of banned books in 1937 that Raskol'nikov had decided to refuse to return home. He was, of course, unaware of the denunciations of him detailed above (in note 16).
29. For example, in R.N. Mordvinov, *Volzhskaya voennaya flotitsiya v grazhdanskom voine (1918–1920gg.)* (Moscow, 1952), which instead heaps praise on Frunze and Ordzhonikidze (although, intriguingly, an undated painting by O. Kartashova featured in the book appears to show Raskol'nikov sitting at a table, next to Ordzhonikidze, as plans for the Enzeli operation are being discussed).
30. K. Zhakovshchikov, *Razgrom Kronshtadtskogo kontrrevolyutsionnogo miatezha v 1921 godu* (Leningrad, 1941), p. 62. Trotsky had been an admirer of Raskol'nikov in 1917 (see above, note 12) and, naturally, the two had worked closely together during the civil war. However, in the power struggles of the 1920s they were far from allies and, by the late 1920s, Raskol'nikov fell in with the Party line and moved from criticism to calumny in his writings about Trotsky, for which he earned the latter's scorn: see Trotsky's 'Letter to the Bureau of Party History (Part 1)', in L. Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York, 1979), pp. 6–9; and Brian Pearce, 'F.F. Raskolnikov', in Raskolnikov, *Tales*, pp. xi–xii. It should be stated here that Raskol'nikov was no saint: one of the tasks he performed for Trotsky in 1918, for example, was to assist in the framing of Captain Shchastny, the commander of the Baltic Fleet who was illegally executed in June of that year: Alexander Rabinowitch, 'The Shchastny File: Trotsky and the Case of the Hero of the Baltic Fleet', *Russian Review* 58(4), 1999, pp. 627–8. Trotsky also ominously insisted (having failed to secure his services in December 1918) that Raskol'nikov be amongst those sent to Astrakhan in June 1919 to 'mete out punishment on the spot' to those responsible for the reported 'passivity' of the Caspian Flotilla: Jan M. Meijer (ed.), *The Trotsky Papers, 1917–1922*, vol. 1 (Hague, 1964), pp. 198–9, 534–5.
31. P.E. Dybenko, *Iz neдр tsarskogo flota k velikomu oktyabryu* (Moscow, 1958).
32. Notably in, for example, P.E. Dybenko, *Revolutsionnye Baltiitsy* (Moscow, 1959) and the memoir of the July Days by P. Zaitsev, 'V Kronshtadte', *Novyi mir*, 33(7), July 1957, pp. 166–72, in which Raskol'nikov is not mentioned.
33. A. Artizov, *et al.* (comps), *Reabilitatsiya*, pp. 420, 453. Raskol'nikova seems to have written more than one appeal in 1963: a CC Commission document dated 13 May 1963 in Artizov *et al.* mentions a letter from her; and in Raskol'nikova, *Ten' bystrotechnoi zhizni*, pp. 168–70, the text of a letter from her to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet dated 5 June is reproduced. (She and Raskol'nikov had been married in 1930, following his earlier separation from Reisner.)
34. 'Spravka o reabilitatsii Raskol'nikova F.F.', in Raskol'nikova, *Ten' bystrotechnoi zhizni*, p. 170.
35. V. Tikhomirov, 'Fedor Raskol'nikov', in T.K. Gladkov (comp.), *Geroi grazhdanskoй voiny* (Moscow, 1963); V.S. Zaitsev, 'Geroi Oktyabrya i grazhdanskoй voiny', *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 12, 1963, pp. 90–4.
36. F.F. Raskol'nikov, *Na boevykh postakh* (Moscow, 1964). This volume includes materials from both *Kronshtadt i Piter* and *Rasskazy michman Il'ina*. On the differences between the various editions of Raskolnikov's memoirs see Brian Pearce's expert annotations of his English-language translations of the memoirs: Raskolnikov, *Tales*; and F.F. Raskolnikov, *Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917* (London, 1982).

37. A.P. Konstantinov, *F.F. Raskol'nikov* (Leningrad, 1964), pp. 153–4. See also V. Tikhomirov, 'Krasnyi admiral', *Izvestiya*, 1 April 1964; and *Izvestiya*, 2 April 1964, in which Admiral V. Grishanov wrote that Raskol'nikov's letter was a credit to its author. On the rehabilitations of this period, see Samuel A. Oppenheimer, 'Rehabilitation in the Post-Stalinist Soviet Union', *The Western Political Quarterly*, 20(1), 1967, pp. 97–115.
38. See the Forward, by V. Tikhomirov, to F.F. Raskol'nikov, 'Revolyuitsiya, den tretii', *Ogenek*, 41, 4 October 1964, p. 25.
39. Roy A. Mededeve, *Let History Judge* (London, 1972), pp. 329–30.
40. Saul, 'Fedor Raskol'nikov', pp. 141–2.
41. Pearce, 'F.F. Raskolnikov', p. xii.
42. S.S. Khesin, *Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya i flot* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 58, 127–8, 135, 282, 366, 398.
43. S.S. Khesin, *Moryaki v bor'be za Sovetskuyu vlast'* (Moscow, 1977). In a review of this volume, Peter Kenez wrote that it 'exemplifies the worst in Soviet historiography. Khesin has little respect for the truth': *American Historical Review*, 84(1), 1979, p. 215.
44. For example: *Baltiiskie moryaki v bor'be za vlast sovetov v 1919g.* (Leningrad, 1974), p. 322; and *Voennye moryaki v bor'be za vlast sovetov na Severe, 1917–1920* (Leningrad, 1982), pp. 120–1.
45. Raskol'nikov is, for example, conspicuous by his absence in Kh.Kh. Kamalov, *Uchastie Morskoi pekhoty v zashchite zavoevaniia Oktyabr'skoi revolyutsii i sotsializma* (Leningrad, 1975) and makes no appearance in the editions of 1964, 1973 and 1985 of the *Diplomaticheskii slovar'*, the 1975 edition of the *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, the *Sovetskaya voennaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1976–80), the *Grazhdanskaya voina i voennaya interventsii v SSSR: entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1987) or *Geroi Sovetskogo Soyuza: kratkii biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1988). That the lengthy Introduction (by B. Brainina) to Larisa Reisner, *Izbrannye proizvedeniya* (Moscow, 1958) should be bereft of mentions of Raskol'nikov is perhaps unsurprising. That he makes no appearance either in the detailed chronicling of its subject's civil-war service on the Volga and the Caspian in E. Solovei, *Larisa Reisner: ocherk zhizn' i tvorchestva* (Moscow, 1985), is more surprising. That the author of that book then manages to discuss Reisner's years in Afghanistan without mentioning her husband the ambassador is quite a *tour de force* of Stalinist double-think. For a more enlightening treatment of Raskol'nikov's first marriage see Cathy Porter, *Larissa Reisner* (London, 1988).
46. *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, 2, 1987, pp. 49–50.
47. *Velikaya Oktyabr'skaya Sotsialisticheskaya Revolyutsiya: entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1987), pp. 434–5. In fact, although he briefly supported Trotsky, Raskol'nikov soon adopted Lenin's platform.
48. F.F. Raskol'nikov, *Kronshtadt i Piter v 1917 godu* (Moscow, 1990). Polikarpov had been among the first to take up the cause of Raskol'nikov in the 1980s: see *Ogenek*, 26, 1987, pp. 4–7.
49. Two admiring biographies appeared in three years: Z.B. Grebel'skii, *Fedor Raskol'nikov* (Moscow, 1988); P.S. Kol'tsov, *Diplomat Fedor Raskol'nikov* (Moscow, 1990). Kol'tsov's is the longer, but is somewhat impressionistic; Grebel'skii's is more historical and boasts fuller references. See also: I.P. Kossakovskii (ed.), *Fedor Raskol'nikov o vremeni i o sebe. Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. Dokumenty* (Leningrad, 1989), which includes some previously unpublished materials; and V.K. Arkhipenko, 'Raskol'nikov, Fedor Fedorovich', in

- A.P. Nenarkov (ed.), *Revvoensovet Respubliki, 6 sentyabrya 1918g.–28 avgusta 1923g* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 297–317. Raskol'nikov even became the focus of studies beyond the frontiers of the USSR: see Filip Panaiotov, *Istinata, v koiato nikoi ne poviara* (Sofia, 1990).
50. See above, note 25. A decade later, Raskol'nikov's relationship with Larissa Reisner formed the focus of a semi-fictionalised account of his life, which reproduced extracts from their correspondence: Vladimir Savchenko, *Otstupnik: drama Fedora Raskol'nikova* (Moscow, 2001).
  51. *Moskovskie novosti*, 22, 1990.
  52. Grebel'skii devotes just a few lines to these events (pp. 44–6), Kol'tsov (pp. 134–8) barely more.
  53. Geoffrey Bennett, *Cowan's War: The Story of British Naval Operations in the Baltic, 1918–1920* (London, 1964), pp. 29–46; Edgar Anderson, 'An Undeclared Naval War: The British–Soviet Naval Struggle in the Baltic, 1918–1920', *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 19(3), 1959, pp. 49–50; Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 2, pp. 51–5. See also: ADM 116/1864 Memorandum on 'The Baltic Provinces', 10 June 1919.
  54. For full translations of Raskol'nikov's orders, that had been taken from him upon his capture, see FO371/3954/7089.
  55. For the official report of the action by the British officer in charge at Reval, Captain B.S. Thesiger, see FO 371/3954/7089 Thesiger to Sinclair 28 December 1918. The issue of Raskol'nikov's personal culpability for these events remains unresolved, but cannot be dwelt upon here. Suffice to note that although Anderson's description of him – as 'energetic, but inexperienced' and 'a poor organiser' (p. 48) – betrays an ignorance of his work on the Volga and, perhaps, an over-reliance on Stalin-era literature, its thrust is mirrored in the generally perceptive memoirs of the experienced naval *attaché* Dmitry Fedotoff White: 'Raskol'nikov did not impress me as an administrator. He had picked up a smattering of naval information [as a cadet]...but had not real knowledge that might enable him to form an independent opinion on any important point of naval policy'. See D.N. Fedotoff White, *Survival Through War and Revolution in Russia* (Oxford, 1939), p. 177. As commander of the mission, he certainly must shoulder some of the blame for its failure, but it was Trotsky who had insisted that Raskol'nikov be appointed to that post and who had said, in a telephone call to Reisner, 'Tell Raskolnikov that these [British] ships [in the Gulf of Finland] must be sunk come what may' (underlined, presumably for emphasis, in the original), even though, in the opinion of Admiral V.M. Al'tfater (Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Naval Forces), the mission had to be regarded as 'risky' when 'considering [that] so far we have not yet [obtained] scouting information [about] what in fact is on the sea and what forces are operating there': FO 371/3954/4476. Certainly it is true that Raskol'nikov seemed to be out of his depth (albeit not, ultimately, at Diver Shoal) in commanding a fleet on the high seas: the expedition was poorly prepared, not up to compliment (the destroyer *Avtroil* that was supposed to accompany *Spartak* could not be readied in time for the mission's commencement and was delayed leaving Kronstadt), lacked fuel, and lacked intelligence of enemy deployments. Consequently, as Anderson put it, Raskol'nikov's 'ships were spread all over the Gulf of Finland' and were easily picked off by Royal Naval vessels capable of three times their speed. What is certainly untrue is the charge made during Stalin's time that the 'myrmidons of American and British imperialism', Trotsky and Raskol'nikov, conspired in

- 'surrendering the vessels': G.I. Naan, *Istoriya Estonskoi SSR* (Tallin, 1952), p. 352.
56. Raskolnikov, *Tales*, p. 79. According to Raskol'nikov, his unmasking by Fest was preceded by his having been discovered, during a general search, in 'a tiny compartment containing the steering gear' on the *Wakeful*, where his men had persuaded him to hide. In contrast, the unpublished memoirs of Captain Thesiger have it that the search was made specifically for Raskol'nikov (implying that he had already been betrayed) and that 'the Russian First Lord of the Admiralty' was discovered – minus his dignity as well as his uniform – 'under twelve bags of potatoes': see Bennet, *Cowan's War*, pp. 44–5. It is unclear from which source that Anderson ('An Undeclared Naval War', p. 49) derived the information that Raskol'nikov was discovered 'under a pile of empty sacks in a potato locker'.
  57. Taken to London with Raskol'nikov was Yakob Nynnyuk, chief commissar of the *Avtroil*, which had also been captured by the British. They were fortunate. All the other prisoners from the two vessels (over 250 officers and men) were handed over to the Estonian forces and imprisoned on Nargen Island. Two months later, some 40 'Bolsheviks' among them were executed; many others died of cold and hunger. See John Silverlight, *The Victors' Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War* (London, 1970), p. 295; Konstantinov, *F.F. Raskol'nikov*, p. 133; and Grebel'skii, *Fedor Raskol'nikov*, p. 44. This was despite the fact that Admiral Sinclair had been informed by the Estonian commander who had taken charge of them ('mostly I think to procure their boots', noted Sinclair) that 'it was probably the case' that both the officers and the men on the two ships 'are not Bolsheviks but are forced to serve the Bolsheviks': F0 371/3954/4476 Sinclair to the Admiralty, 29 December 1918. *Spartak* and *Avtroil* (renamed *Vambola* and *Lennuk*) became the nucleus of the Estonian Navy.
  58. Raskolnikov, *Tales*, pp. 80–8.
  59. CAB 23/489.
  60. WO 106/606.
  61. CAB 23/127, 14 November 1918.
  62. CAB 23/511.
  63. Lord Robert Cecil had suggested this move in a memorandum to the King and the War Cabinet of 20 November, following a meeting that day with an Estonian delegate: CAB 1/27/20.
  64. ADM 116/1864 Admiralty to Cowan, 29 November 1918; also Bennett, *Cowan's War*, p. 34.
  65. Silverlight, *Victors' Dilemma*, pp. 294–5; Bennet, *Cowan's War*, pp. 36–7; Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 2, p. 55. Apart from landing Estonian forces in the rear of the Bolshevik lines, the British ships bombarded Red positions and transported Finnish volunteers across the gulf to aid the Estonians: ADM/1864 Memorandum on the Baltic Provinces, 10 June 1919.
  66. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 2, pp. 52–5. Balfour went as far as to state that the populations of the regions along Russia's western borders should be aided because they 'were, on the whole, more civilised and cultured than the Great Russians': CAB 23/502.
  67. ADM 116/1864: 'Memorandum on the Baltic Provinces, 10 June 1919'; and 'Secret Memorandum giving a Narrative Account of Events in the Baltic States' [no date].
  68. CAB 23/502.

69. Raskolnikov, *Tales*, p. 88. We have only Raskol'nikov's published version of what transpired during this and subsequent interrogations at the Admiralty and at Scotland Yard (where his interlocutor was none other than Basil – later Sir Basil – Thomson, Assistant Commissioner of the Special Branch and, from May 1919, Director of Intelligence): regrettably, the notebook Raskol'nikov kept whilst in prison (*RGASPI f. 562, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1–39*) contains no additional information of importance (consisting mostly of his translations of articles from British newspapers), while neither the British Security Service nor the Metropolitan Police have been able to find any records of the interviews conducted with Raskol'nikov (or of the surveillance of him during his time in London). There must certainly have been records of the questioning and tailing of the most senior Soviet official to fall into Allied hands, but they have not been preserved. On the questioning of aliens and suspected enemy and Soviet spies in general at this time see *The Security Service, 1908–1945: The Official History* (Kew, 1999), p. 51.
70. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 4 (London, 1975), pp. 224–5. Raskol'nikov would have had equal cause for concern had he known that a report to the Admiralty of his capture (dated 8 January), in which he was identified as the 'Bolshevist First Civil Lord', claimed that he was 'responsible for the atrocities committed against Russian Naval Officers': FO 371/3954/4476.
71. Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 4, p. 227.
72. See, for example, his report to the War Cabinet on 12 February 1919: CAB 23/531.
73. Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 4, p. 235. In the 'Prinkipo Proposal', broadcast from the Eiffel Tower on 22 January 1919, the Allies invited all warring parties in Russia to meet on the Prinkipo Islands, in the Sea of Marmara, for a peace conference. See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1959), pp. 45–6. The Bolsheviks accepted the invitation; the Whites refused even to consider it: see Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918–1920* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 207–8.
74. Nabokov, *Ordeal*, p. 286.
75. CAB 1/28/6. On 17 April Curzon again pressed for the recognition of Kolchak in a note to Balfour, adding that, 'by a curious coincidence', the Secretary of State for War had circulated a note to the War Cabinet that same day 'to the same effect': CAB 1/28/18.
76. Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George* (Oxford, 1992), p. 111.
77. *The Observer*, 1 November 1970.
78. See Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 210–15.
79. FO 371/3941/83779 Marling to Curzon, 29 May 1919.
80. FO 371/3938 Lord Kilmarnock to FO, 9 January 1919.
81. FO 371/3938/8838 Alston (Vladivostok) to FO, 10 January 1919. Two weeks later Alston passed on the news that Smith had been shot 'solely because he was a British subject' and that two Britons at Perm had suffered the same fate: FO 3713938/18953 Alston to FO, 1 February 1919. See also FO 371/3938/12332 Cavendish-Bentinck, 'British Prisoners of War in Russia', 21 January 1919.
82. FO 371/3938/22727 Naval Intelligence Department Report.
83. FO 371/3938/3167; FO 371/3938/37778. The skeleton Danish Red Cross organisation in Moscow provided the prisoners with some food, but only irregularly: FO 371/3938/438.

84. FO 371/3938/15742.
85. FO 371/3938/48289.
86. Debo, 'Prelude to Negotiations', pp. 63–4. Although his first message did not reach the Foreign Office until early February, Chicherin had actually proposed an exchange of prisoners with Britain in a telegram sent via Christiania (Oslo) on 28 December 1918: FO 371/3938/23617. This was just one aspect of the multifaceted Soviet peace offensive in late 1918, on which see Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918–1921* (Montreal, 1992), pp. 22–33. On the part in the policy that, it was hoped, the use of prisoner exchanges might play see Fritz T. Epstein, 'Aussenpolitik in Revolution und Bürgerkrieg, 1917–1920', in D. Geyer (ed.) *Osteuropa – Handbuch: Sowjetunion, Aussenpolitik, 1917–1955* (Cologne, 1972), pp. 89–92, 100–2.
87. Although there were further disagreements on the precise methods of the exchange (see Debo, 'Prelude to Negotiations', pp. 69–70), the terms of the agreement were settled through Parker on 25 April: FO 371/3940/689923 Parker to Curzon (received 4 May 1919). All other British prisoners were to be released from prison and held under house arrest, whilst preparations were made for their future exchange for all Soviet prisoners held by the British in North Russia, Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, Turkestan and Persia. Although by now the Soviet government had firm information that the 26 Commissars were dead and had issued a protest accusing the British authorities of complicity in this 'brutal murder' (*Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, vol. 2, pp. 141–2), they chose not to allow this to interfere with the prisoner exchange. Raskol'nikov, meanwhile, was allowed out of prison, moved into the Mills's Hotel on Gower Street and received financial support via the Danish Legation that had been arranged for him by his wife: FO 371/3940/73011.
88. FO 371/3938/12548 Memorandum by Cavendish Bentinck, 23 January 1919; FO 371/3940/5200 Memorandum by H. Crookshank [on the history of the negotiations], 1 April 1919. By the end of 1918, there were reported to be more than 50 Britons in Soviet hands: FO 371/3338/130845; FO 371/3938/438. More than 200 more were interned or refused permission to leave the country over the coming months: FO 371/3941/91815 'Memorandum on the Proposed Exchange of Prisoners of War and British Civilians still in Russia', 21 June 1919.
89. FO 371/3939/43501. Parker had been given authority to negotiate for an exchange before his departure: FO/371/3938/438.
90. Debo, 'Prelude to Negotiations', pp. 67–8, 73–4.
91. Although reports of the desperate conditions in Russia undoubtedly caused concern, at least as much anxiety in London seems to have been roused by news that the other ranks of the Caucasus mission were being taken out every day 'to see the advantages of Bolshevik rule' and indoctrinated at a 'propaganda school' adjacent to their prison, prior, it was suspected, to being sent home 'to propagate their theories in this country and to act as Bolshevik agents': FO 371/3939/36395; FO 371/3939/38366. Curzon minuted the latter file, 'I am keeping careful note of the names of those British prisoners who are suspected of being turned pro-Bolshevik', while Parker was asked to report on any Britons in Russia who might have been 'turned': FO 371/3939/43502.
92. K.O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Cabinet, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 135–8; Wrigley, *Lloyd George*, p. 111. On Curzon see: John Fisher, "'On the Glacis of India": Lord Curzon and British Policy in the Caucasus, 1919', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8(2), 1997, pp. 50–82.

93. See Roberta M. Warman, 'The Erosion of Foreign Office Influence in the Making of Foreign Policy, 1916–1918', *The Historical Journal*, 15(1), 1972, pp. 133–59.
94. CAB 23/502 Meeting of 14 November 1918.
95. CAB 23/511.
96. Not least because there had been no election since 1910 and, meanwhile, electoral reform had doubled the number of those entitled to vote (partly through the extension of the franchise to women): David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol. 2 (New Haven, 1939), pp. 94–5.
97. CAB 23/511.
98. CAB 23/514.
99. Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp. 214–17.
100. On the semi-official peace mission to Russia of William Bullitt, a member of the American Colonel House's staff, see Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, pp. 34–54.
101. Wrigley, *Lloyd George*, p. 122. Only 23 of Asquith's supporters were returned.
102. On British hopes for the economic penetration of post-revolutionary Russia see, for example, A.W.F. Kolz, 'British Economic Interests in Siberia during the Russian Civil War', *Journal of Modern History*, 48(3), 1976, pp. 483–91. For contemporary concerns that the USA, Germany and Denmark might take advantage of the civil war to usurp Britain's trading position in Russia see FO 608/205/8092 and FO 608/205/14031.
103. Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 210. Much of the press too was opposed to the intervention: on 3 January 1919, echoing Bismarck, the *Daily Express* had stated 'We want to see our sons home again. In fact we want peace. The frozen plains of Eastern Europe are not worth the bones of a single British grenadier'.
104. M.H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labor, 1917–1921* (Boulder, 1984), pp. 30–1; S.R. Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917–1924* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), pp. 66–7. See also CAB 23/521 for the report of Sir Robert Horne (Minister of Labour) on the nationwide growth of industrial unrest.
105. At a War Cabinet Meeting that day the Secretary of State for Scotland, R. Munro, had declared that 'it was a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike – it was a Bolshevik rising': CAB 23/523.
106. *Ibid.* Likewise, at the meeting of 4 February (CAB 23/525) the discussion of the 'Strike Situation in Glasgow and Belfast' was followed by items on the 'Tube Strike' and the 'Threatened London Electrical Strike'. Interestingly, at this and later meetings considerable attention was devoted to the solution to industrial unrest offered by the next item on the agenda: 'Increased Supply of Beer'! It is equally amusing (and enlightening) that when, in June 1919, the Foreign Office intercepted a radio message from Moscow containing a Russian Telegraph Agency interview with Raskol'nikov (who was by then back in Russia), in which he described the Britain he had recently witnessed as 'seething with unrest' and on the brink of revolution, it was blithely minuted by an official that 'Raskolnikoff's interview is not of great value: any body who reads the newspapers would have said much the same': FO 371/3996/84154.
107. Lloyd George arrived in Paris on 11 January 1919 and returned to London only once for any length of time – from 8 February to 6 March to deal with the industrial unrest: Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition, 1918–1922* (New York, 1990), p. 17.
108. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism*, p. 34.

109. CAB 23/531 Meeting of 12 February 1919. Having told this meeting that he thought only the despatch of a million men to Russia could guarantee victory, 'The Prime Minister said that the Russian non-Bolshevik armies were inferior to the Bolsheviks neither in men nor guns and if the Russian population had been behind them they would certainly have made headway. For months the Bolsheviks had had none of the essentials of a disciplined army, yet the [anti-Bolshevik] Russians had made no effective advance'.
110. CAB 23/541.
111. Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 191.
112. Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 218.
113. FO 371/3940/51832 Anderson (Admiralty) to the FO, 2 April 1919. The Admiralty regarded Raskol'nikov and Ninyuk as naval prisoners and worked to have various seamen held in Moscow added to the Caucasus mission in the exchange: FO 608/202/9457 Curzon to Derby, 7 May 1919.
114. Debo, 'Prelude to Negotiations', p. 60.
115. See, for example: FO 371/3939/43927 (letter of April 1919 to the Foreign Office from the Royal Scots Association); FO 371/3940/51982: (letter from prisoner Howe to his brother in Grimsby of 4 March 1919); FO 371/3940/68923 (note on a meeting of representatives of the DNI, DMI, Scotland Yard, the War Office and the Foreign Office of 5 April 1919). Both the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*, having picked up the information from the Soviet press, reported on 10 March that Chicherin was willing to exchange the British prisoners for Raskol'nikov. The prisoners' families had also heard directly from them of visits to the Butyrki by Litvinov and Chicherin, who had stressed their own efforts to secure an exchange.
116. FO 371/3940/74234. For a full list of the Britons exchanged see FO 371/3940/81337 Bell (Helsinki) to FO, 26 May 1919.
117. *Times*, 30 April and 5 May 1919.
118. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 210–13.
119. FO 371/3940/64566.
120. A minute on Ransome's letter notes laconically that 'Now that he has returned to England, I am sure the W.O. would consider that he had better stay here'.
121. *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939 (First Series)*, vol. 3: 1919 (London, 1958), pp. 343–4, 359–60, 401, 417, 457.
122. Cmd. 587 (Russia No. 1 [1920]) *Agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government of Russia for the Exchange of Prisoners*.
123. Richard Ullman (*Anglo-Soviet Relations*, vol. 2, p. 340) concurs that the move towards the Litvinov–O'Grady agreement at Copenhagen 'was the result of no particular policy decision' on the part of the British government.
124. Richard K. Debo, 'Lloyd George and the Copenhagen Conference of 1919–1920: The Initiation of Anglo-Soviet Negotiations', *Historical Journal*, 24(2), 1981, pp. 429–41.

# 8

## Retrieving the Historical Lenin

*Christopher Read*

### **Steps towards the construction of an 'historical Lenin'**

According to the headline of an article by a well-known British historian writing in a popular newspaper in 1989, the apogee of Thatcherism and Reaganism, Lenin was 'the monster who sired the evils of our time'. The article claimed that 'Lenin and his twisted ideology gave rise to the evil that was Nazism...When Mussolini triumphed in Italy, or Hitler in Germany, it was because of two things, both to do with Lenin. The first was that fascism was a reaction to him, and the second was that it learned from him everything that it did'.<sup>1</sup> This was one of the last throws of the traditional cold war dice. At exactly the same time, on the fast-crumbling Soviet side, calls for the revision of Lenin's reputation had, purportedly, gone out from the Central Committee.<sup>2</sup> For decades, equally caricatural, but obviously more positive images of Lenin had permeated Soviet reality in schools, workplaces, military units, public meetings and public squares. His image could even be found in outer space, on the moon and on distant planets. That image was kindly, humane, intelligent and infallible. For both sides in the cold war the image of Lenin was central, his authority and leadership unquestioned. The Bolshevik party was 'a party of a new type', super-organised, super-disciplined and all-pervasive from very early on, coming quickly to have a 'leading role' in the revolution and in Soviet society. Most observers either revered Lenin or despised him but all focused their attention on him and on his supposedly all-powerful leadership. The concept of 'Russian jacobinism' emerged in the west and Nechaev's 'Catechism of a Revolutionary' was published and used to depict a psychological type of which Lenin was supposed to be one realisation. Nechaev's revolutionary forsook home, family, friendship, career to become a totally devoted tool of revolution. No scruples were to stand in the way of the revolutionary calling. Certain characteristics of Lenin were deemed to prove his association with this stereotype. Gorky's anecdote about Beethoven was frequently quoted to link Lenin to the monastic fanaticism of a Nechaevist.

The beauty of Beethoven's music made Lenin 'want to say sweet stupidities and stroke the heads of people' able to create such wonders 'but', he continued, 'it is necessary ... to hit without mercy, even though, in our ideal we are against using violence against people'.<sup>3</sup>

Even before the end of the Soviet era these certainties were being undermined. Early revisionists, largely influenced by the sixties and the spectacle of American blundering in Vietnam, began to see a less totalitarian revolution and a less disciplined party. Other actors, at first only 'advanced workers', were chosen but they were eventually followed by peasants, other workers and, though they were incorporated in the above groups, most recently women. National variations in the revolution were also pointed out.<sup>4</sup> A more complex, deconstructed vision of the revolution had emerged but the picture of Lenin had been less systematically revised. For about 20 years no one-volume biography of Lenin appeared. Great work was being done but by only a few people, notably Neil Harding on Lenin's political thought, Robert Service on his political biography and James White on his early ideas and on his role in the October revolution.<sup>5</sup> However, like buses, around 2000 several one-volume biographies turned up at once, or at least within several years of each other.<sup>6</sup> Much of this work was done in Britain. It was only later that North American scholarship, which had largely turned towards the Stalin or post-Soviet years, came back to discussing Lenin in a big way. Articles by Anne Krylova, Leopold Haimson and Lars Lih re-opened the Lenin question.<sup>7</sup> In particular, Lih called upon us to retrieve the 'historical Lenin'. I take this to mean a picture of Lenin rooted more in historical sources and less in political polemic. Indeed, as the Soviet system is increasingly absorbed into 'history' rather than current politics the call is timely. Whether Lih appreciated it or not great strides had already been made to achieve the objective he called for. This chapter will focus on a number of steps towards creating a more historical picture of Lenin. Obviously, within its confines, it is not possible to explore all the themes fully or even in equal depth. It will concentrate more on those which seem to be less developed but, nonetheless, important. Most of them are touched on in the recent crop of biographies of Lenin but all are still evolving in the light of new evidence and ongoing discussions about him.

## The young Lenin

'Psychoanalysing' Lenin has long been a popular pastime. The aim is usually to show that 'the child is father of the man'.<sup>8</sup> Soviet myths depicted a helpful, obedient, increasingly politically-committed child. Anti-Soviet biographers looked for dictatorial and Machiavellian characteristics in the young 'compulsive revolutionary'.<sup>9</sup> In recent times Lenin has been depicted as a cruel, selfish and authoritarian child who, perish the thought, 'often

told lies and cheated at games'.<sup>10</sup> In truth, there is little reliable evidence about Lenin's childhood. Apart from the obvious, that the arrest and execution of his elder brother Alexander radicalised him and *may* have fired up a personal element in his hatred of autocracy, we can say very little. Thanks to Service we know much more about his family background but we cannot translate that with any certainty into the forces propelling Vladimir Ulyanov to become Lenin. However, we do know more about his ideas once he moved tentatively into public life in the early 1890s, the period of his earliest surviving writings. White, in particular, has illuminated his links to the Marxist discourse of his time, concluding that at one point his populist opponents were closer to Marx than he was.<sup>11</sup> Less substantial in terms of evidence but equally interesting, is the question of the degree to which Lenin was and remained a 'populist'. No one seriously doubts Lenin was initially a populist before discovering Marxism. However, one might surmise that, throughout his career, Lenin retained populist features. Krupskaya several times emphasises his defence of the older populist generation and it is remarkable how, at key moments in his career, Lenin's writings revert to populist categories of 'the masses' or 'working people' or even 'the people' (*narod*) rather than sticking rigidly to the leading role of advanced workers. There are a number of interesting examples of this. In his increasingly agitated campaign of September and October 1917 to persuade his party to support the seizure of power he uses key terms very loosely. Close class analysis making a real distinction between the revolutionary role of advanced workers and others is dropped even though it had been made so emphatically earlier in the year in, for example, his *Lecture on the 1905 Revolution*, given on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday just before he left Switzerland, or, in slightly less clear form in *The April Theses*. In his letters and articles of autumn, workers as a whole, soldiers, sailors and even peasants are seen as the source of the revolution at different times. Remarkably, no class analysis of the composition of the military – arguably the main active group in 1917 – is offered at any point even though Lenin acknowledges its leading significance. Perhaps the most striking example comes on the very eve of the seizure of power in a final frantic letter he wrote from his safe house in Petrograd which stated that power should be taken by 'the armed people' and 'the masses', classic populist formulations.<sup>12</sup> Here, as elsewhere, within the calculated rationality of the Marxist intellectual and analyst there lay an instinctive 'populist' who saw the masses as a whole as the revolutionary class. In moments of stress the rational integument would rupture and this instinctive populist would burst into view. While it might be said that such stressful moments of aberration should not be taken too seriously, in fact it is often at such less guarded moments that we reveal who we are in ways our normal role-playing tries to conceal. While this does not greatly alter our vision of Lenin it does confirm that, in many ways, even Bolshevism was a variant of populism in

Russian conditions and that populism was a key component of a wide stratum of the Russian revolutionary mentality. One might even more speculatively link it to other peasant-populist strains of Marxism-Leninism in the developing world, notably China and Indo-china.

### From orthodoxy to heresy

A key point shared by Soviet and anti-Soviet views of Lenin was that 1902 and 1903 marked a decisive moment in Lenin's career, one in which he nailed his own colours to the mast, snubbed the senior party figures and forged ahead to split the party and set up his own, more or less separate, party, the Bolsheviks. While 1902, the year of publication of his great polemic *What is to be Done?*, and 1903, the year of the Second Party Congress held in Brussels and London, are certainly important, their exact significance has been more precisely elucidated by late- and post-Cold War scholarship. Two issues are closely intertwined here. First, when, if at all, did Lenin become a 'heretic' standing outside the mainstream Marxist orthodoxy of his time? Second, how distinctive were Lenin's views on party organisation and to what extent were they reflected in practice? While they cannot be easily separated I will first take a brief look at the polemics of 1902 and 1903 and then reflect at greater length on the issue of party organisation in Lenin's later career.

In the pamphlet *What is to be Done?* Lenin called for a 'disciplined' party of 'professional revolutionaries' whose 'advanced consciousness' would disabuse the working class of its sympathy for 'trade unionism'. What did he mean? According to Cold War interpretations, and here Soviet and western views coincided, he was calling for a massive, jacobin, conspiratorial party. The image of the professional revolutionary was, among Lenin's critics, equated with Nechaevist fanaticism. For his admirers it meant a kind of disciplined army. An examination of Lenin's text gives no support to such views. His examples of 'professional revolutionaries' are drawn from the leading figures of the most orthodox and leading Marxist party of the time, the German Social-Democratic Party. The long-accepted view overlooks this. It also overlooks two other crucial factors. First, the German Social-Democratic Party had undergone its own underground period when it was proscribed by Bismarck. In this period the party had to adapt defensive features to enable it to survive in its illegal state. For Lenin, too, the issue of an open party was wrong not because it made the party accessible to the masses but, in his words, because while it 'is supposedly most "accessible" to the masses...[it] is actually most accessible to the gendarmes and makes revolutionaries most accessible to the police'.<sup>13</sup> Lenin's defence of 'conspiratorial', closed means was both a derivation of German practice and a response to specifically tsarist conditions. Lenin clearly states it was not a universal model. 'Here and further on' he says 'I, of course, refer only to absolutist Russia'.<sup>14</sup>

Second, in 1902, the major argument on the left was about the evolutionary socialism of Eduard Bernstein. In Russia a group, known as the Economists were the leading figures promoting Bernstein's views. In brief, Bernstein argued a revolutionary outcome to socialist struggle was neither desirable nor necessary. Socialism could be reached by incremental means without needing a final cataclysmic transition. This undermined all schools of orthodox Marxism which worked towards the final revolutionary moment. Failure to distinguish the evolutionary from revolutionary socialists has not only distorted interpretation of *What is to be Done?* but has also led to a common assumption that the Mensheviks, for example, were revisionists. However, when Lenin's pamphlet was published, it was hailed by the Russian and German luminaries of Marxism as a brilliant re-statement of orthodoxy and refutation of revisionist illusions. No sign of heresy was detected in it. It was Neil Harding who first alerted the scholarly community to this fact. It was slow to percolate beyond specialists such as Williams, White and Service who all reflected this view in their biographies of Lenin. More recently, it has been developed in greater detail by Lars Lih who not only followed up the immediate argument but expertly unveiled the channels by which the pamphlet became a 'classic' expression of an argument it did not actually contain. The first stages of re-reading *What is to be Done?* came the year after its publication when Lenin began his more directly disruptive activities in the party. As he upset more and more of the socialist movement's grandees, so they came to detect more heretical strains in his earlier writing. It was not reading Lenin's pamphlet that caused them to see him as a heretic, it was his growing apparent heresy which led them to re-evaluate his pamphlet. The key to Lenin's increasing marginalisation in Russian social democracy did not arise from his theoretical writings but from his practice.

### **The role and organisation of the party**

The issue of Lenin's supposed construction of a 'conspiratorial' party of a 'new type' is one of the great red herrings of Lenin's career. The concept has always been fraught with ambiguities. The first is that, in the crucial vote on Lenin and Martov's formulae for party membership Lenin's formula lost. However, by 1906 it was accepted by all the party. In addition, in terms of actual practice, it would be hard to distinguish the day to day activities of Bolshevik and Menshevik groupings no matter what period and circumstances one examines. In the 1905 revolution, exile, wartime and revolutionary year of 1917 the actual structure and *modus operandi* of both groups were indistinguishable. In 1917 the Bolshevik party was open to all who wanted to join. Only after October did real signs of the emergence of a 'party of a new type' begin to emerge, driven largely by the logic of other Lenin fundamental principles. This is not to say Lenin did not

have distinctive views on the party but rather that they did not have the effect they are often thought to have. They do not explain the split in the party nor do they reveal the secret of Bolshevik success. Both these propositions were the stock-in-trade of Cold War polemic according to which Lenin led a conspiratorial party of devoted fanatics, his skilled leadership of the group enabling him to manipulate his way into power. Neither is sustainable today.

If the Second Congress was important in the development of Lenin's breach with the established figures of the party it was his abominable tactics which caused more hostility than his writings and propositions. The story of how he manipulated the meeting by chicanery, by challenging delegates credentials, insulting others who left the Congress in high dudgeon, has been told many times and does not need repeating. His actions left a much more bitter taste than the written word. In a sense, this great abrasiveness arose as much from Lenin's honesty as it did from deception. In Lenin's mind, what was at issue here was that the moment had come for the party to turn its back on its past as largely a polite, cultured intellectual circle – the spirit of the nineteenth century represented by Plekhanov and Aksel'rod – and become an active party pressing, if not for power, at least for influence. The rapid growth of the Socialist Revolutionary party (SRs), actively engaged in twin policies of political construction and terror, threatened to marginalise the Social Democrats (SDs). Contrary to the assumptions of many later analysts, the SRs had a large working-class constituency then and, indeed, throughout the revolutionary period which often outnumbered that of the SDs. This is not surprising when we consider the close links between peasant and worker identity throughout the 'long decade' of revolution (1905–17). Lenin was trying, first and foremost, to drag the party into a position which would enable it to challenge the SRs more successfully. If one also adds the more measured evolution of the liberal groupings into the Constitutional Democratic party (Kadets) then one can see how the revolutionary vision was being blunted by further division. While it should be remembered that all these groups shared, according to their programmes, a determination to destroy the autocracy as a prelude to all further reform, the spirit of the three entities was becoming more and more distinct and the question of joint action to overthrow the autocracy becoming more and more problematic. Lenin was, however, completely convinced that the party needed to bring itself up to date to face these challenges and it was frustration at the slowness of the leading figures to share his vision which helped bring out Lenin's full determination to get his way. In practice Lenin's tactics were hardly Machiavellian, if that is taken to mean subtle, secretive and deceitful. Lenin's tactics then, and throughout his career, tended to be the opposite – obvious, crude and predictable. Lenin used the sledgehammer not the stiletto to get his way. The corollary of this is that Lenin either disdained to

use secretive tactics, which was the case most of the time, or used them in such a transparent way that they failed to deceive. Everyone who knew Lenin knew what he stood for at that time. Lenin behaved this way because of the importance he attached to what he was doing and the monumental certainty that he was right. There was rarely any room for real dialogue in Lenin's discourse.

While *What is to be Done?* has been analysed many times and has become one of Lenin's best known, though not best understood, writings the more revealing text of the period is *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* written in 1904 out of frustration at the ineffectiveness of the Second Congress. One reason for it being little known is its near-unreadability. In it Lenin goes through the decisions of the party line by line and shows how they have not been implemented. This is not a gripping approach for today's reader. It does, however, bring into focus some key features of Lenin's thinking and it is, in some ways, the work in which certain of the features of 'Leninism' supposedly visible in *What is to be Done?* can be more readily traced. In it he defends authoritarianism, bureaucracy and centralisation as key features of party organisation and attacks those who, he believes, will weaken the party through insistence on autonomy, reformism, anarchism and even democracy. Fearsome though this sounds, Lenin still used contemporary German Social-Democratic Party (SDP) practice as his model. Fundamentally, what he was insisting on was that the party should emerge from its intelligentsia circle mentality and rapidly transform itself into a party with a powerful centre and strong leadership – like the German SDP.<sup>15</sup>

## 1905 and after

Perhaps nothing exemplifies the gap between the mythical Lenin and a more realistic image than his activities in the 1905 revolution. If one were to look at Lenin's role in 1905 it would be almost impossible to deduce what we think of as 'Leninism' from it, even though the positions he arrived at by 1906 closely resemble those he took in 1917. First of all, the day-to-day activity of his grouping – it is too small to be called a party in its own right – shows little by way of organisation that could be considered distinctive. As ever, Lenin prioritised publication and focused his life on writing for the newspapers and journals of others or, even better, setting up his own. As has frequently been pointed out, for Lenin the main everyday form of politics was journalism. His other main focus was on left-wing congresses and meetings of various kinds. In 1905, as in 1917, Lenin did very little by way of direct involvement in recruiting members, participating in street activities or becoming involved in representative institutions, notably soviets. He did address a number of mass political meetings but they were not a major part of his activity. He was still tied up with writing

the revolution rather than leading or organising it. In fact, the gap between the party factions narrowed for a while and a nominal reconciliation took place based on the recognition by both sides that a full-scale split would consign both wings to political oblivion in the face of the larger and influential SR movement. For Lenin and the leaders the truce was very uneasy but at lower party levels the distinctiveness of the two was blurred and remained so until at least 1912 and probably 1917.<sup>16</sup> The precise twists and turns of the party dispute in 1904–6 are too detailed for us to take up here. They go from one extreme to the other – Lenin, after the Third Party Congress (London, April 1905) acting as though his faction was the party to an extraordinary article of 1906 in which he declared the split formally over and talked about the ‘former Bolshevik faction’ in response to the Reunification Congress held in Stockholm in April/May 1906.<sup>17</sup> Despite this complex dance, reminiscent of some of nature’s more elaborate courtship rituals, consummation was less the objective than consumption, in the sense of the fate of the unfortunate male in certain species of spider. Alongside ‘reunification’ the terms ‘Bolshevik’ and ‘Menshevik’ came into more common, almost universal use, to describe the groupings. But even then they could not be considered fully independent competing parties. The vital imperative of party unity remained a key issue for many more years yet, even though the split became more and more difficult to bridge. But even in 1917 the first reflex of most leaders was for joint action. It was largely Lenin’s intervention in April 1917 that re-emphasised separateness. The key to understanding Lenin’s approach to these tangled affairs is to remember that, yes, he wanted unity, but, it could only be on his terms. Compromise on key points was unthinkable. In his view, unity meant acceptance of his views by the whole party. Almost everyone else was prepared to compromise. Lenin was rarely in the mood for it.

Finally, 1905 was an important influence in consolidating Lenin’s ideas on revolution. As in 1917, the concept of an armed uprising led by the proletariat remained a tantalising possibility but Lenin began to see it, as he did in 1917, as something of a last resort. His favoured objective was a ‘revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry’, though Lenin warned extensively against relying on a bourgeoisie he expected to be weak, pusillanimous and ultimately counter-revolutionary. As in 1917, he argued that democratic methods were to be favoured but one had to be ready to react to violence if (or more likely when) the counter-revolutionaries almost inevitably turned to it to suppress the revolution as the latter became stronger. He also argued as in 1917, that the first task of the worker and peasant government would be to enforce the bourgeois and democratic revolution, the bourgeoisie itself being too weak and dependent on tsarism to follow it through itself. Socialism would not and could not be implemented immediately. Many of these positions found their way into Lenin’s key texts of 1917, especially the *April Theses* which

show similar distrust of the bourgeoisie and the need for a worker and poor peasant and labourer coalition to lead the struggle for democracy while sidelining the goal of the 'immediate' introduction of socialism. The idea that the *April Theses* constituted a doctrinal revolution has to be discarded though it should be recognised that there were new emphases in it, notably on abolishing the existing state machinery though this too was not without some precedent. Other themes of the *April Theses* were consistent with further positions that developed during the war, notably the unarguably imperialist nature of the war. This last concept takes us on to another aspect of Lenin's activity that needs to be clarified. Many of his major writings can be read with a specifically Russian subtext to them. Not only *What is to be Done?*, which we have already examined, but *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, *Imperialism* and even, to a lesser degree, *State and Revolution* have such an important subtext not always obvious to the reader.

### Universalism and Russianness

Both versions of the Lenin myth portrayed him as a universal figure. Supporters tried to export 'Leninism' to a variety of situations around the globe from 'advanced' capitalism to peasant subsistence economies. Opponents, on the other hand, used the example of Lenin and of 'his' revolution as symbols of the dangers of socialism in general and Marxism in particular. Indeed, Lenin and his colleagues also came to see what they were doing as universally applicable to a degree. Obviously, to some extent all parties had a point. Like any other set of ideas and experiences Leninism had the potential to inspire and stimulate and to demonstrate pitfalls. After all, much of the interest of studying the past is to try to learn the 'lessons' of history. Leninism and the Russian revolution are no exception. They too are an important store of human experience. However, the tendency to universalise Lenin has led to many of his ideas being set free from their essentially Russian moorings. Even Lenin's best known and most analytical works had a place in internal Russian polemics, which is often now lost but which were the most obvious aspects to contemporaries. This point does not need to be laboured but a few examples might help.

Perhaps Lenin's most scholarly and deeply-researched work is *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Ostensibly a treatise on how deeply capitalism had penetrated into the Russian economy, rural and urban, the volume owes its existence not to simple intellectual curiosity but to establishing a central plank in the Social Democratic view of Russia. The founding argument of Russian Marxism was that populism would not lead to revolution or socialism. Without going into the issue in great detail, a key component of populist ideology was that, given the proto-socialism of the communal peasant and the collectivist tendencies of worker *artely* then

Russia, under certain conditions, could hope to avoid entirely the capitalist stage of historical development. From his earliest writings Lenin had challenged this view. Ironically, as we have seen, James White has shown convincingly in the most deeply-researched study of early Russian Marxism to have appeared, the populists were more Marxist than Lenin on this point.<sup>18</sup> However, explaining why one was not a populist was a key element of Marxist discourse from Plekhanov's demonstratively if unimaginatively titled *Our Differences* through Lenin's early article 'What the "Friends of the People" are and How they Fight against the Social Democrats' to *Development of Capitalism in Russia* itself. The polemical point buried fairly deeply in the text was that the issue of skipping capitalism had been resolved not by argument but by history. The capitalist stage, underdeveloped as it was, had, none the less, taken hold in Russia and was strengthening fast. While Lenin retained no illusions about Russia jumping to any kind of advanced capitalism – the essential prerequisite for Marxist revolution – he considered the populist argument to be irrelevant. Like it or not Russia was moving towards capitalism and revolutionary politics had to adjust to this, notably to the parallel emergence of a bourgeois revolution. Incidentally, the formative nature of the polemic with populism on the Lenin generation goes considerably deeper and had catastrophic consequences. Since the whole point of Russian Marxism as it developed was that peasants were not revolutionary but workers were, party thinkers, including Lenin, often started with a discourse about the peasants that did not always conform to reality. Its most baneful consequence was to claim, for polemical purposes, that the peasantry was not a class but could be meaningfully divided into classes in the Marxist sense. In a country where workers were so scarce, comprising at most 10% of the population at the time of the revolution, Marxists had to find 'allies' to broaden the base of the revolution to make it credible. It came naturally to Lenin to largely apply the Marxist class grid – bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, proletarian – to the peasantry. This caused untold ambiguities and shifts in Lenin's thought. At times, only agricultural labourers and rural proletarians were potentially revolutionary. At other times it was poor peasants. The vast middle peasantry was at times deemed hostile at others as a crucial group that could potentially be 'won over' to the socialist cause. However, the rural demon, the kulak, stalked through the Marxist revolutionary vision to the extent that the kulaks existence became a self-fulfilling prophecy. During the Civil War and Collectivisation party cadres were geared to expect 'kulak resistance' in the villages. When they found resistance it was inevitably labelled 'kulak' no matter where it actually originated. The tragic consequences of this discourse were immense. Perhaps one of Lenin's, and Bolshevism's, greatest weaknesses was its ignorance of the actual countryside. Its principles were derived more from Marx's, in themselves faulty, writings on the supposed actions of the French peasantry in 1848 and the Louis Napoleon era than

they were from careful observation of peasant society itself.<sup>19</sup> Even to show deep interest in the peasants led many analysts to be deemed 'populists' in the eyes of Communist Party ideologists right into the Stalin era.

Perhaps no text of Lenin enjoyed a more universalist status than his pamphlet on *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. For decades it was pored over as a major theory of imperialism. Even more than the writings of Marxists like Bukharin and Luxemburg and non-Marxists such as Hobson and Hobhouse on whom many of the ideas were based, it was taken as a key text. Indeed, Lenin was an intelligent man and a brilliant socio-economic analyst and there are many aspects of the work that merit scholarly attention. However, once again, its main purpose was not academic analysis but promoting Bolshevik practice. The essence of the account was that imperialism had evolved into a world system. In one of the phrases most frequently attributed to Lenin, the chain of capitalism was now such that it could be broken at its weakest link. In other words, the initial attack on capitalism no longer had to come from an advanced country as Marx had supposed. The national element in capitalism had given way to monopolies, cartels, and finance capital that roamed the world without a passport. For revolutionaries, this meant that the overthrow of capitalism was on the cards on a world scale. Specifically, it meant Russia could be the starting point. In this way, Lenin made up for the 'backwardness' of Russia. His scenario for revolution, a Russian spark igniting a European and world conflagration, was bolstered by his account of imperialism. This was the aspect Lenin believed he was establishing, not a classic theory of imperialism. The fact that the key phrase about 'the weakest link' was not his, but derived from Bogdanov via Bukharin, as White has shown,<sup>20</sup> only underlines the potential for misunderstanding surrounding supposed exegesis of Lenin's writings. We have already seen how *What is to be Done?* has frequently been universalised even though Lenin argued his principles were derivative and applicable only to the Russian situation. While his other major work, *State and Revolution*, does have a wide appeal it, too, was firmly rooted in the immediate circumstances of 1917. The main influence on it was the almost forgotten figure of Rudolph Hilferding who created the seminal Marxist arguments of the period about the development of what he called finance capital. Capital itself was organising. While at one level this made it more formidable as an opponent, it also laid it open to decapitation. Since banks now controlled investment, controlling the banks would give control over capital flows, hence over capitalism and the capitalist economy. Amalgamating and nationalising banks could effectively destroy capitalism by putting it under democratic rather than plutocratic control. It was this that influenced Lenin to call precisely for amalgamation and nationalisation of the banks in the *April Theses*. *State and Revolution* was a kind of meditation on these principles. Taking over banks gave crucial control over capital-

ism. Banks were dominated by trained bureaucrats and managers who did not own the money they invested but were able to decide what to do via a routine comparable, as Lenin famously argued, to the functioning of the German post office. Hence state control of capitalism was facilitated by its increasingly organised condition. Read in close harmony with the *April Theses*, *State and Revolution* was yet another justification for revolution in Russia. In a Russia of banks, monopolies and cartels capitalism could be beheaded and democratic political control exercised over it by soviets. This is the core argument of both texts and of Lenin's practice in 1917. It was not designed as a model though the temptation to turn the Bolshevik experience into a universal model bedevilled post-October international socialism and was rapidly institutionalised in separate communist parties and the 21 conditions of admission into the Third Communist International. Ironically, the Bolshevik model was being institutionalised just at the moment that it was being crucially modified, or, to be less polite, had collapsed. The transition envisaged in the *April Theses* did not materialise. Instead, Lenin had to improvise. This leads us into another major element in restoring the historical over the mythical Lenin.

### **Improviser or planner?**

Lenin has an almost unparalleled reputation as a leader and planner. It goes with the heroic picture and also with the Machiavellian view. Lenin was in charge and had to lead whether it was in order to be a victorious revolutionary general or to manipulate and deceive. In reality, however, Lenin's career was not categorised by farsighted planning. He was not, as he is often portrayed, a kind of revolutionary chess player, always a number of moves ahead of the slow-witted opposition. For Lenin as for many others a week was a long time in politics. There are few examples of his long-term plans coming to anything. Instead, his genius was for flexibility and improvisation rather than for foresight and planning. Of no period is this more true than of 1917. In certain key areas this theme has been developed for several decades by 'revisionist' scholars such as Alexander Rabinowitch, Robert Daniels, Robert Service, Steve Smith and numerous others. Mainly this has focused on Lenin's political opportunism and improvisation surrounding the July Days, the post-Kornilov conjuncture and the campaign for a seizure of power in September. Allied to this the Bolshevik party has been characterised by quarrelling and major disagreement. In no way was it a disciplined quasi-military organisation rapidly and undeviatingly following the orders of its far-seeing chief. While there is no need to emphasise this there is one, in some ways more important, area in which Lenin's lack of planning and foresight has attracted less attention. Very little of Lenin's writing and activity was focused on the problems of transition, that is what to do once power had been taken. In a

way this is no criticism of Lenin. He had his hands full with the remote possibility of gaining power. What would be done with it once it was acquired was barely considered, not least because the exact circumstances of a takeover were as unknown as they were unlikely. However, as the seizure of power moved from the status of aspiration to that of reality some thought had to be given to the problem.

In the short space of time from April 1917 to March 1921 Lenin devised three radically different plans for transition. Not surprisingly the first was the most sketchy since when Lenin first announced it the prospect of it ever being implemented was still a distant one. None the less, *The April Theses* did contain the embryo of a transition which was still in Lenin's mind during his autumn campaign to persuade the party Central Committee to work for an armed uprising. Perhaps the most striking of the *April Theses* is the one stating 'It is not our *immediate* task to "introduce" socialism'. There is no reason for us to be surprised. It was entirely consistent with what Lenin had been saying, at least since 1905, that Russia was not ready for socialism. He did not differ one iota from Mensheviks on this point. At no point in his life did Lenin see socialism as anything other than a distant goal for Russia. While this has sometimes been acknowledged the implications have not. In particular it raises the issue of exactly what was guiding Lenin's strategic policies. His tactics are more accessible and more freely dissected. However, what was behind them is often less clearly presented. The first transition was essentially contained in the rest of thesis eight. What was to be introduced was Soviet supervision (*kontrol'* in Russian) of production and distribution. These few words give us food for meditation way beyond the space available here but we can pick out a few essential implications. First, political takeover only led slowly to economic change. In other words, the first transition would be a socialist oriented political leadership persuading and cajoling and at times terrifying a continuing capitalist elite to serve its new master. With the significant exception of nationalising banks, already discussed, there is no mention of expropriating capitalists or any real discussion of how political supervision of distribution would affect the market. It may even be that Lenin did not realise the phenomenal implications of these few words. In his autumn campaign and early Soviet months, he supplemented them by polemical calls to 'take away all the bread and boots from the capitalists' and urging exemplary punishment of a few industrialists to lead the rest to see 'reason', accept the futility of their struggle and surrender to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the opponents – the Bolshevik-led masses. At best these ideas are naïve. However, Lenin seems to have taken them seriously. By handing power to the masses they would instinctively know what to do. '[T]he workers, soldiers and peasants will deal better than officials, better than the police, with the difficult *practical* problems producing more grain, distributing it better and keeping the soldiers better sup-

plied'. This would uncover vast hidden reserves: 'the resources both spiritual and material, for a truly revolutionary war in Russia are still immense'. That was as far as Lenin got with transition. There was no analysis of the market, of taxation policy, of how factories would be 'supervised', no 'economic' principles at all, just a political formula. State supervision of an unspecified kind, increasingly backed up by coercion implemented by the Cheka from December, would solve all problems. Not surprisingly, this sketchy and superficial policy collapsed rapidly. The capitalist elite refused to accept defeat. Opponents of Bolshevism at many levels, including railway workers early on and state and bank employees, took all available steps to resist the purported transition. Not only owners but engineers and managers fled Bolshevik areas taking such assets as they could as they went. Workers, as has been well-known for many years, counteracted by nationalising industries and instituting workers control from below, less as an ideological step but as a desperate practical measure to try to ensure survival. Such acts further alienated the managers and owners and a vicious vortex had begun which sucked in whole economic sectors. The result was the impending collapse of industry, of central government and of infrastructure such as transport. By the end of the year all of these were in deep crisis. Only the fact that, incredibly, they still had much further to fall by 1921, prevents us from calling it actual collapse. The only force that pulled the country through this period was the peasantry which, for the first six months of Soviet power, was left pretty much to its own devices. It also became the 'welfare' safety net into which urban victims threw themselves if they could, leading over the next three years to a major fall in the population of Russia's main cities.

By spring 1918, Lenin had realised that the semi-spontaneous, natural transition had entirely failed. Instead, he began to talk about 'iron proletarian discipline'. If *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* is the often overlooked key text of Lenin's pre-revolutionary career, then *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* (April 1918) has a claim to be the equivalent in his post-October career. It, too, is a daunting read, dependent for its impact on a context which is hard to re-create today. However, for our purposes several points are clear. Lenin was reigning in initiatives from below. Not surprisingly, the masses had not come up with 'natural' answers to the problems of transition. A complex, modern economy, especially its industrial and service sectors, was not amenable to tactics inspired by the jacobin miracle in revolutionary France. Instead, the centre had to take control and, though the word has many meanings, 'dictatorship' had to be exercised. A vestige of the old plan did however remain. If members of the old elite were none the less willing to participate in the new circumstances no effort should be spared to encourage, cajole or force them to do so. Special pay rates, conditions, rations, powers were made available to former specialists in industry, transport, civil service and, not least, the military who were

prepared to return to their jobs. This was transition number two. It is better known as 'war communism' which masks its transitional aims. While there has been much discussion about ideological drivers versus pragmatic conditions of civil war producing centralisation, looking at developments from this perspective does change the framework of analysis. When transition number two was adopted, shortly after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been signed, a period of peaceful transition seemed to be in prospect. It was believed that the acute phases of external *and* civil war were now over. In other words, the key steps to centralisation and dictatorship did not coincide with rising military priorities. Instead, they were the outcome of the failure of Lenin's first, naïve and sketchy, plans for transition. They had already been adopted before the surprise return of major civil war in July which, of course, eventually added to the dictatorial and centralising process.

The failure of 'war communism' or, in our terminology, the second plan for transition, is very well known and requires no further attention here other than to place it, and the ensuing New Economic Policy (which is transition plan number three) into the new interpretive framework. During the Civil War anti-Communist protest by workers and peasants had been muted for fear of indirectly aiding and abetting the Whites. As the White threat receded the suppressed discontent came to the surface. Eventually, Lenin got the message and his genius for improvisation came to the fore once again. Grain requisitioning was abandoned, a tax-in-kind introduced and partial market relations were restored. Co-operatives were permitted to set up small enterprises in production and services. Central distribution of resources was abandoned. NEP was born. Where was the transition to socialism?

Lenin had no doubt that NEP was not the fruit of forethought but of responding to events. None the less, his claims for it were very ambitious. In some of his last important writings he defended the 'back-to-front' nature of the revolution, that is starting with the seizure of power and then moving on to develop the 'prerequisites' of socialism, and NEP as a means of socialist construction. 'Why', he wrote, 'could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of landowners and the Russian capitalists and then start moving towards socialism'.<sup>21</sup> It would, he had written slightly earlier, 'take a whole historical epoch to get the entire population into the work of the co-operatives through NEP. At best we can achieve this in one or two decades'.<sup>22</sup> Clearly Lenin did not expect socialism in Russia anytime soon. Nor did he live to see the difficulties of NEP as it evolved in the 1920s. We do not know how he would have dealt with its critics who pointed to what they saw as its failure to create a dynamic path towards socialism. We do know that the next attempt at developing yet another path of transition to socialism was in the hands of another great improviser, Stalin.

## Final struggle, final reflections

Perhaps no single set of documents about Lenin has had more impact on our view of him than the striking photographs of him at Gorky during his final illness. In some of them he looks like a child's doll in a wicker basket chair. His impish smile remains but the vigour and energy of his body has wasted away to next to nothing. Robert Service was one of the first biographers to seriously research Lenin's health and to point to its impact on his life. Contrary to many assumptions Lenin did not have the constitution to work hard uninterruptedly. Almost all major political crises in his life – 1903; 1905–6; Spring 1917; the October revolution and so on – took a toll on his health and brought on medical crises. Under Krupskaya's guidance frequent convalescent trips to the countryside restored his shattered nerves. Once he was in power this became more difficult and his necessarily prolonged periods of activity made ever greater demands on his body, not helped by being shot in 1919. This time when the collapse came it was beyond the recuperative powers of country breaks and Lenin fell into a cycle of strokes whose effect is caught so graphically in the photographs. Could a person in that state of health have retained his judgment? Was his last struggle, to supposedly unseat Stalin, a genuine expression of his clear political foresight? Stalin's defenders have long argued Lenin was no longer Lenin when he urged Stalin's removal from the General Secretaryship. There may be more truth in this than opponents have been willing to admit. There have always been weaknesses in the dramatic 'what if?' narrative of a failing Lenin trying, with Trotsky, to use his last ounce of strength to thwart one of the monsters of the twentieth century. Even without new evidence the story was by no means definitive. Lenin's testament did not call for a complete break with Stalin (at the point where he had done this Stalin had apologised profusely) nor even that he should be thrown out of the leading cadres, only that he was insufficiently subtle and tactful to be General Secretary. In any case, Lenin had quarrelled severely with almost everyone else at one time or another and, a characteristic also overlooked, was usually prepared to make up if the political situation demanded it. The dispute with Stalin was out of line with the rest of their relationship, Lenin holding Stalin's practical abilities in high esteem. Factoring in the illness also weakens the case for a dramatic break.

In his final years Lenin was, as he had been for most of his life, cocooned in a web of loving friends and family. Thanks to the work of students of James White such as Katy Turton, we know more about the Ulyanov family. It was exceptional in that almost all members of it were active in the revolutionary movement. This was more than a response to the difficulties of being related to an executed terrorist. Many families of political offenders tried to forget such ties. The Ulyanov's did not. The family context was vital to Lenin's well-being and also distances him from the

Rakhmetov or Nechaevist model of a terrorist eschewing all human feeling and subordinating it to the political imperative. No doubt he was, first and foremost, a political animal but, beyond the stereotypes, Lenin's close family and his vulnerability to illness humanise our view of him more than the standard images allowed. Piece by piece a less hagiographic/demonic interpretation of Lenin is forming. In place of a mythical iron man a more nuanced picture of a more human, more fallible and for that, in many ways more extraordinary, person is emerging.

## Notes

1. *Daily Mail* 22 January 1994.
2. V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (Princeton, 1990) p. 239.
3. Quoted in Bertram Wolfe, *The Bridge and the Abyss: The Troubled Friendship of Maxim Gorky and V.I. Lenin* (London, 1967) p. 157.
4. It is invidious to choose but leading figures included Ronald Suny, William Rosenberg, Diane Koenker, Steve Smith and Robert Service.
5. Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought* 2 vols (London, 1977; 1981); Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life* 3 vols (London, 1985; 1991; 1994); James D. White, *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism in Russia* (Basingstoke, 1996); James D. White, 'Lenin, Trotskii and the Arts of Insurrection: The Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region 11–13 October 1917', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 77(1), 1999, pp. 117–39.
6. Beryl Williams, *Lenin* (London, 2000); Robert Service *Lenin: A Biography* (London, 2000); James D. White, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution* (London, 2001); David Marples, *Lenin's Revolution* (Harlow, 2000); Christopher Read, *Lenin: A Revolutionary Life* (London, 2005).
7. Anna Krylova, 'Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm: Class Instinct as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis', *Slavic Review*, 62(1), 2003, pp. 1–23; R. Zelnik, 'A Paradigm Lost? A Response to Anna Krylova', *Slavic Review*, 62(1), 2003, pp. 24–30; Lars Lih, 'How a Founding Document was Founded, or One Hundred Years of Lenin's *What is to be Done?*', *Kritika*, 4(1), 2003, pp. 5–49; Leopold Haimson, 'Lenin's revolutionary Career revisited: Some Observations on Recent Discussions', *Kritika*, 5(1), 2004, pp. 55–80.
8. The quote is from William Wordsworth's poem 'Tintern Abbey'.
9. S.T. Possony, *Lenin: the Compulsive Revolutionary* (London, 1966).
10. O. Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy. The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London, 1996), p. 144.
11. See White, *The Intellectual Origins*; White, *Lenin*, pp. 7, 12.
12. Read, *Lenin*, p. 182.
13. V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works* vol. 1 (Moscow, 1963), p. 196.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
15. For a fuller discussion see Read, *Lenin*, pp. 68–74.
16. See Geoffrey Swain, *Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement 1906–14* (London, 1983).
17. See Read, *Lenin*, pp. 77–86; C. Read, 'Lenin and the 1905 revolution' in Jonathan D. Smele and Anthony Heywood (eds), *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (London, 2005), pp. 218–40.
18. White, *The Intellectual Origins*.

19. On the misperceived revolution of 1848 and after see R. Magraw, *France 1815–1914: The Bourgeois Century* (London, 1983), Chapter 4; R. Magraw, 'The Second Republic and French "Republican Socialism" 1848–51' in Guy Thomson (ed.), *The European Revolution of 1848 and the Americas* (London, 2002), pp. 19–45; Peter McPhee, *The Politics of Rural Life: Political Mobilization in the French Countryside, 1846–1852* (Oxford, 1992).
20. White, *Lenin*, p. 121.
21. V.I. Lenin, 'Our Revolution' in *Selected Works* vol. 3 (Moscow, 1967), p. 768
22. 'On Co-operation' in Lenin, *Selected Works* 3, p. 760.

# 9

## In Lenin's Shadow: Nadezhda Krupskaya and the Bolshevik Revolution

*Jane McDermid and Anya Hillyar*

Almost invariably, Nadezhda K. Krupskaya is referred to as 'Lenin's wife', and indeed occasionally her name is not mentioned, only this position.<sup>1</sup> This is not surprising, given the prominence of Lenin in histories of the Russian Revolution and in the debates over the shaping of the Soviet state. Their marriage is described in prosaic terms as being 'in the best traditions of the Russian revolutionary movement very much a working partnership', with Krupskaya giving him 'the support and help that he needed to devote his entire energies to the cause'.<sup>2</sup> A post-Soviet Russian publication paints a similar picture of their marriage during Lenin's last illness: Krupskaya became Lenin's 'irreplaceable aide, his link to the outside world, his most reliable source of information'.<sup>3</sup> Not every historian agrees that Krupskaya submerged her identity to become Lenin's obedient secretary. Robert Service has declared that Lenin did not intimidate her, and that she 'did not always do his bidding', while there were areas 'such as educational theory (and perhaps educational practice too), where she probably thought herself his better'.<sup>4</sup> However, he offers no evidence, and the more widely held view is that of Dmitri Volkogonov, that Krupskaya was in Lenin's 'shadow, her life having meaning only because she was linked to him'.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, an examination of Krupskaya's life and work helps us understand not only what she contributed to both the revolution and the construction of the Soviet state, but also the role of female Marxists in the Russia of her time as well as Soviet policy towards women.

Volkogonov claims that while a case might be made for Krupskaya's importance in Soviet educational history, all of her ideas 'were based on her husband's comments'.<sup>6</sup> Yet Krupskaya's interest in education predated her commitment either to Marxism or to Lenin. In 1887, at the age of 18, Krupskaya wrote to the celebrated author, Tolstoy:

Recently I began to feel more and more acutely how much effort and energy was used up by so many people for me to benefit from the fruits

of their labour. I used them partially to accumulate knowledge which I thought I could later pass on to help others. But now I see that others may not need the knowledge which I have acquired, and that anyway I do not know how to use it to redress the wrong I have committed by doing nothing. I don't even know where to start.<sup>7</sup>

Tolstoy had suggested that young women who had the privilege of an education had a duty to teach the masses, and that they could do some immediate practical work by assisting in correcting and proof-reading inexpensive literature for those who were already literate. This Tolstoyan insight, that teaching people to read was not enough, that they had to be provided with the tools to exercise and maintain that skill, remained with Krupskaya and influenced her educational work of the 1920s and 1930s, as will be discussed below. In her youth, however, she was soon aware that proof-reading would not give her direct contact with the masses. Moreover, since she considered that much of the literature which Tolstoy urged be made available for them was for entertainment (she was asked, for example, to work on a Russian edition of Alexander Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*), Krupskaya judged that it would not raise their consciousness, either culturally or politically. That, she had decided by the time she was 20, would come through a Marxist approach to the enlightenment of the masses, a belief which underpinned her life's work.

Thus, having rejected a friend's attempts to win her for the People's Will, Krupskaya became involved with a Social Democratic circle in St Petersburg in 1889, but she found that an early request to lead one of the workers' study circles was refused. She accepted the explanation that:

Such illegal circles were few and far between. In fact there were more people wishing to lead a circle than there were circles available. Thus I, a quiet, shy young woman who had only just begun to understand Marxism, could hardly hope to get one.<sup>8</sup>

She shared this desire to serve the people with many other young women of her class. Like many of them too, her turn to revolutionary politics was not a revolt against her parents; indeed her father's military career suffered from his apparently liberal political views. Moreover, though born into a gentry family in St Petersburg in 1869, her parents were not well-off, and after her father died, Krupskaya, then aged 14, and her mother lived on various sources of irregular income, including giving private lessons and taking in lodgers. In common with so many of her social background, Krupskaya felt that, despite her own poverty, she owed a debt to the people: hence her initial receptiveness to Tolstoy's ideas. Her next step, of devoting herself to Social Democracy, teaching workers in evening classes and Sunday schools, got her the direct contact with the

masses which she desired. However, she soon realised that, given the very low educational level of the workers, only a tiny minority could be reached in this way. She learned, moreover, that while Social Democrats emphasised the need for class solidarity, women workers were usually taught apart from men, since the female educational experience was generally inferior to that of the male. This early separate work with women again represented the experience of politically active Marxist women since the 1880s. Like Krupskaya, they were not feminists, and indeed as Social Democrats were suspicious of feminism as a divisive force in the class struggle. Krupskaya seems typical of many socialist women, including for example Alexandra Kollontai and Inessa Armand who both turned to Marxism in the early twentieth century, in insisting on the necessity of working-class unity while acknowledging the need for special efforts to be made both to include women in the political struggle and to improve their position in society.<sup>9</sup> Unless women workers were involved in the class struggle, Social Democrats like Krupskaya worried that they would serve as a brake on it. Krupskaya also believed that participation in the revolutionary movement would bring sexual equality, and though she did not define what she meant by this, she emphasised equality in education from infancy.<sup>10</sup>

Thus like many other female Social Democrats, while she was improving her own Marxist education, Krupskaya devoted herself, through both teaching and setting up clandestine libraries, to raising the cultural levels of urban workers. From 1891 to 1896, she worked in a number of schools in St Petersburg, and she recalled the experience as very positive for her own development as well as that of her pupils, reinforcing her early belief in the necessity for popular education.<sup>11</sup> Krupskaya represented those gentry women who struggled to overcome their youth and inexperience, as well as their social position and their sex, and succeeded in convincing their students to take them seriously.

However, as Krupskaya's personal experience showed, police surveillance and repression meant that any contacts made in this way with workers tended to be of a brief duration. Krupskaya was arrested during the strike wave of 1896, imprisoned for six months and then exiled for three years. It was in this period that she married Lenin (in 1898), whom she had known for four years. From 1901 they lived abroad, where she played a key role in developing the Bolshevik organisation. Certainly, she left the role of theorist to Lenin, but nevertheless her contribution to building and maintaining the organisation which he led was considerable. Her work is generally portrayed as a selfless act of service to a male leader (and a male-dominated cause), but at least before 1917 she played a central role. As a Soviet biographer noted, 'correspondence became one of the most important methods of party work in directing and leading clandestine activity' and in this Krupskaya was 'unsurpassed'.<sup>12</sup> Trotsky described Krupskaya's work for

the émigré Social Democrats, in particular as secretary to the editorial board of *Iskra*, the group's journal:

She was at the very centre of all the organisation work; she received comrades when they arrived, instructed them when they left, established connections, supplied secret addresses, wrote letters, and coded and decoded correspondence. In her room there was always the smell of burned paper from the secret letters she heated over the fire to read. She often complained, in her gently insistent way, that people did not write enough, or that they got the code all mixed up, or wrote in chemical ink in such a way that one line covered another, and so forth.<sup>13</sup>

Barbara Clements reinforces Trotsky's portrait of 'an extraordinarily diligent, competent woman, who could write 300 letters a week (most in code), keep track of the addresses and aliases of people almost constantly on the run within Russia, and maintain financial accounts'.<sup>14</sup> She also found time to continue developing her own interests, studying and writing about educational theories and practices, which underpinned her work after Lenin's death. Krupskaya's reminiscences of Lenin, however, give the impression of her always putting his (and by implication the revolution's) interests first. For example, in her description of their life in exile in Munich in 1901–2, where they lodged with a working-class family in a cramped apartment, she says that she decided to cook for her husband, while he composed *What is to be done?*, pacing 'briskly from one corner of the room to the other' as he muttered to himself what he was going to write. She never, she recorded, spoke to him when he was writing, but 'afterwards, when we went out for a walk, he told me what he was writing and what he was thinking'.<sup>15</sup> There is a hint here that he found her a valuable sounding-board for his ideas, though she is very much in his shadow, tiptoeing quietly round him so as not to disturb his thoughts. Still, by the time she recalled her life with Lenin, the cult of his personality, which she had initially opposed, was so strong that it made any other representation of their marriage impossible.

Three years later, she returned with Lenin to Russia after revolution had broken out, continuing her organisational work in St Petersburg:

At that time I was secretary of the Central Committee [C.C.] and immediately plunged headlong into the work. The other secretary was Mikhail Sergeievich Weinstein. My assistant was Vera Rudol'fovna Menzhinskaya. That was our secretariat. Mikhail Sergeievich was engaged more on the military organisation, and was always busy carrying out the instructions of Nikitin [L.B. Krassin]. I was in charge of appointments and communication with committees and individuals. It would be difficult to picture what a simplified technique the C.C. secretariat made shift with. I remember

that we never attended C.C. meetings, no one was 'in charge' of us, no minutes were taken, ciphered addresses were kept in match-boxes, inside book-bindings, and in similar places.

We had to trust to our memories. A whole crowd of people besieged us, and we had to look after them in every way, supplying them with whatever they needed: literature, passports, instructions, advice. It is difficult to imagine how we ever managed to cope with it all, and how we kept things in order, being controlled by nobody, and living 'of our own free will'.<sup>16</sup>

This suggests Krupskaya preferred revolutionary action to theory, implementation of policy to argument over it. She conveys the excitement of such an environment for revolutionaries in a way that Lenin's writings never did, while showing a confidence in her own role. However, since she was writing about Lenin after his death and deification as founder of the Soviet state, she underplayed her contribution through the, by then, ritual reference to Lenin's authority even in his absence: 'Usually on meeting with Ilych I told him in detail about everything'. Nevertheless, while the hierarchy in this relationship is clear, she also implies that it was a partnership: 'the most interesting comrades on the most interesting business we sent straight to the Central Committee'.<sup>17</sup>

She went abroad again with Lenin in 1908 to escape arrest, only returning to Russia after the outbreak of the next revolution which this time achieved the overthrow of tsarism. After their arrival in Petrograd in April 1917, Krupskaya concentrated her efforts on organising women workers and youth, recognised as two key volatile constituencies for the Bolsheviks, while Lenin spent months (from July to October) away from the capital in hiding from the government. The few historians who consider Krupskaya's role in 1917 note that, in contrast to the male Bolsheviks who returned to Russia after the February Revolution, she did not put herself forward for a top leadership position, focusing instead on grassroots organisation and education.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, historians use Krupskaya's writings and reminiscences as a source for what happened (as distinct from what she did) after Lenin's return in April 1917, for example pointing to her acute observations on the resentment of men of the Machine-Gun Regiment who were disarmed and disgraced after the failure of the July Days.<sup>19</sup> However, her prescient warning of revolutionary turmoil is often overlooked. From Switzerland she had written to a comrade on 6 (19) February 1917:

You'll have to get to Russia right away or else you won't get in on 'the beginning'. In all seriousness, the letters from Russia are filled with good news. Just yesterday one came from an old friend, a highly experienced person, who wrote: 'The difficult period is passing, a turn for the better can be seen in the mood of the workers and educated young people.

Organisation is poor because all the adults are either at the front or subject to call-up. The influx of women and adolescents into the workforce is lowering organisational capacity but not the mood. Even so the organisations are growing.<sup>20</sup>

Instead, since most historians agree that no one either expected or was prepared for the overthrow of tsarism in February 1917, they prefer to quote from the memoir of Nikolai Sukhanov, who had then been present in Petrograd: 'Not one party was preparing for the great upheaval... Revolution – highly improbable! Revolution! – everyone knew that this was only a dream – a dream of generations and laborious decades'.<sup>21</sup> Yet a close reading of the sources supports Krupskaya's perspicacity, revealing that not only was there evidence of organisation at the grassroots level, but that women played a significant part. Female activists, both Bolsheviks and from the Inter-District Committee (the latter sought to unify the factions of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party), cooperated to organise women workers and soldiers' wives in an anti-war demonstration to commemorate International Women's Day (23 February/8 March). They did not expect the outcome to be the fall of tsarism, but like the émigré Krupskaya, these female revolutionaries in Petrograd realised that revolution was on the agenda; and like Krupskaya since the early 1890s, they did not worry about organising female workers and soldiers wives apart from their men. Their demands, after all, were not feminist, but were in line with Bolshevik policy; the aim was to draw the backward women workers into the class struggle, to resolve the woman question through solidarity with male workers. Indeed the women workers who demonstrated insisted that their male counterparts support their action.<sup>22</sup>

By not pushing herself forward into a prominent role on her return to Russia in 1917, it is argued Krupskaya confirmed that 'like the other Bolshevik women, she was content to allow the men to run the most important organs of power'. This is the view of Krupskaya's biographer, Robert McNeal, though he has also suggested that Krupskaya did not meekly follow Lenin's line on their return to Russia in April, and that Lenin reacted by withdrawing his support for her career in the Party secretariat. For McNeal, Krupskaya turned to work in the educational and youth sectors in a working-class district of Petrograd because she doubted that the socialist revolution which Lenin called for would occur soon. McNeal dismisses her work as 'reformist', and not part of 'the real business of the Bolshevik Party in 1917: the seizure of power'.<sup>23</sup> Clements disagrees, suggesting instead that Krupskaya may have wanted to regain contact with the Russian workers.<sup>24</sup> McNeal's assessment of Krupskaya's work assumes that city-wide roles always took precedence over local activities in the Bolshevik drive for power. Yet throughout 1917, as Lenin repeatedly complained, the Bolsheviks seemed to be running behind the increasingly militant masses,

which is what Krupskaya realised through her concentration on those two turbulent sectors, youth and women workers.

Of course, she might have remained in a secretarial role, but it did not have the same attractions for her as it had possessed in emigration, or indeed in the 1905 Revolution. Instead, she sought to use the expertise she had developed in the field of education to build up the Bolshevik organisation from the grassroots. Thus, she requested that she be based in Vyborg, the district which was the cradle of the revolution, and prepared for her assignment by closely observing what was happening and listening to what was being said on the streets, paying particular attention not only to female and young workers, but to teachers whose conference she had attended soon after her arrival in the capital. She did not however limit her efforts to Vyborg, as she wrote extensively for the Bolshevik press. In May, she also took over the running of the Vyborg Committee for the Relief of Soldiers' Wives, another key constituency for the Bolsheviks. In June she was elected to the Vyborg district *duma*. Her main responsibility was education, and as in the early 1890s, she concentrated on setting up literacy classes and libraries for workers, asking employers to help, and organising workers' protests if they refused.

On her return to Russia in April, Krupskaya had been asked by a female comrade who met her at the railway station to address women workers, but the still rather reticent Krupskaya had pleaded that she could not.<sup>25</sup> Her reminiscences show that thereafter she gradually gained in confidence, through working in the Vyborg district and drawing strength from the women there. She had been one of the original editors of *Rabotnitsa*, the Bolshevik journal directed at women workers, during its brief early period in 1914, until it was suppressed once war had broken out. She resumed an editorial position when it was revived in May 1917. *Rabotnitsa* did not challenge traditional gender roles. Instead, its focus was on 'women's' issues related to pregnancy and childcare, as well as protective labour legislation.<sup>26</sup> Krupskaya also saw the journal as having an educational role, in raising women's class consciousness as well as their cultural level; but given the context of severe economic problems caused by the war, she accepted that it concentrate on those issues which had sparked the February protests, notably the food and fuel shortages, for these remained uppermost in the minds of poor women. While some unsympathetic observers had dismissed the February demonstrations as riots about 'bread and herring', and feminists had insisted that the revolution could not be reduced to a question of bread, consumption (or the lack of it) remained a key political concern.<sup>27</sup> Since procuring and preparing food was above all the responsibility of the working-class wife and mother, the Bolshevik aim was to keep them active in criticising the government, but without antagonising their men. Hence, while Krupskaya recorded that some of the revolutionary youth had radical ideas on domestic issues, like the other female

Bolsheviks in 1917 her propaganda work among adult women focused on the obstacles they faced in performance of their traditional roles, and the reforms which would both make it easier and accord it respect.

Krupskaya had written the first Marxist analysis of the position of women workers in Russia, but the role of 'Bolshevik feminist' is generally reserved for Alexandra Kollontai.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Kollontai wanted to create new women, Krupskaya drew her strength from the traditional *babas*, the 'sellers of sunflower seeds, cider, etc.' who not only made their voices heard in 1917, but gave Krupskaya, a revolutionary for nearly three decades, a new confidence to speak in public.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as Norma Noonan has argued, in the social chaos of the 1920s, it was Krupskaya's notion of the 'worker-mother' which prevailed.<sup>30</sup> Both women survived Stalin's purges.<sup>31</sup> Whereas Kollontai is regarded as having been 'exiled' to the diplomatic service, Lenin's death pushed Krupskaya to the political sidelines: as his widow, whatever the threats to that status (see below), the childless Krupskaya took on the symbolic role of 'mother' or 'grandmother' of the revolution.<sup>32</sup>

Krupskaya cared for Lenin during his illness from 1922 to his death in January 1924, a private act which was also a public service. Nor was it narrowly domestic, for she reverted to her role as his secretary, keeping him informed about the proceedings of party conferences as well as state and world events, summarising for him information from recent publications and other media, much to the annoyance of Stalin.<sup>33</sup> During this time, there was the famous confrontation with Stalin, whose rudeness to Krupskaya so angered Lenin and led him to reappraise Stalin's attitude towards someone who was not only his wife but a veteran revolutionary. As Krupskaya herself said in a letter to Kamenev about the incident, 'I didn't join the Party yesterday'.<sup>34</sup> At the time, Lenin's sister, Mariya, suggested that both her brother and his wife had over-reacted to Stalin's attack, which may explain why Mariya, then holding a key post at *Pravda*, effectively censored any criticism Lenin wrote of Stalin in 1923. Later, however, when Mariya sided with Bukharin and was herself undermined by Stalin (she suffered both smears and marginalisation), she revised that opinion.<sup>35</sup> Krupskaya gave the impression that in his last months Lenin and she were increasingly isolated, writing in May 1923:

Everybody has left us – they express sympathy but are afraid to call on us. The only thing that keeps me going is that Volodya is glad to see me in the morning, he takes my hand, and sometimes we exchange a few words about things for which however there are no words.<sup>36</sup>

After Lenin's death, Krupskaya appeared for a short time to be a focus for opposition to Stalin, but her dislike of factionalism within the Communist Party, as well as her recognition of Stalin's capacity for political intrigue led her to retreat further into the shadows, to concentrate her energies on less

controversial areas. One reason for this may be that her standing as Lenin's wife and guardian of his legacy was challenged by Lenin's sisters, Anna and Mariya, both Old Bolsheviks.<sup>37</sup> Krupskaya was also intimidated by Stalin and his supporters. Thus, Ordzhonikidze threatened her in 1925: 'Do you want to lose the [Communist Party's] respect? The Party loves you not because you are a great individual, but because you were a close person to our great Lenin'.<sup>38</sup> Khrushchev bears this out in his memoirs, where he writes that Stalin 'had very little respect' for either Krupskaya or Mariya Ul'yanova. Khrushchev's memory of Krupskaya is of 'a broken old woman' whom people avoided and whom Stalin kept under close surveillance. Indeed, Khrushchev claimed that Stalin 'used to tell his inner circle that there was some doubt as to whether Nadezhda Konstantinovna was really Lenin's widow at all', and that if necessary 'he would declare another woman was Lenin's widow'.<sup>39</sup> This was a serious threat to Krupskaya, who spoke always of fulfilling Lenin's instructions to justify her own ideas and campaigns.

Indeed, even when acknowledged as Lenin's wife, Krupskaya is often overshadowed in historical accounts by Inessa Armand, who is widely assumed to have been Lenin's lover, and even the love of his life.<sup>40</sup> Although there is some disagreement over this, Armand is usually portrayed as beautiful and elegant in contrast to the plain, dowdy Krupskaya.<sup>41</sup> A recent Russian study of Krupskaya and Armand gives the usual source for this, the liberal Ariadna Tyrkova, who wrote in her memoir that when young Krupskaya 'was not popular with the stronger sex'.<sup>42</sup> Tyrkova seems to have judged Krupskaya by the standard of her own youthful beauty and preference for the personal over the political, grudgingly acknowledging that the young Krupskaya had a more serious attitude to life, choosing to concentrate on her own education and on social problems. Tyrkova sees this attitude as Krupskaya compensating for her plainness. As for her appearance before illness (thyroid and heart problems) took its toll, this was not always so disparaged: when a young woman she was described as having 'bright eyes, ... a tall and slender figure, and a very special and unforgettable voice – all this predisposed exiled revolutionaries in her favour'.<sup>43</sup> Another source for the Lenin-Inessa affair is Margarita Fofanova, who delivered Lenin's correspondence to comrades in 1917. She claimed that Lenin's letters to Armand 'were of a personal nature'. However, Fofanova also recorded that Lenin broke with Armand after an ultimatum from Krupskaya that he choose between them.<sup>44</sup> A third often-quoted 'witness' is Angelica Balabanoff (Balabanova), who recorded Lenin's behaviour at Armand's funeral: 'I never saw such torment'. However, if Balabanoff's testimony is looked at closely, she is hardly flattering in her depiction of the beautiful Armand who was, Balabanoff asserted, 'the perfect – almost passive – executrix of [Lenin's] orders'. Balabanoff went on: 'This does not imply that she had no personality or will of her own, I merely want to say that she was so saturated with the master's authority

and infallibility that the possibility of any divergence was inconceivable to her. She was the prototype of the perfect Bolshevik of rigid, unconditional obedience'.<sup>45</sup> Balabanoff, however, portrays Krupskaya in a rather different light, not as simply her master's voice. It seems that the wife did not live up to the lover's model of obeisance, but even missed meetings Lenin expected her to attend. Indeed, Balabanoff claims that on one occasion Krupskaya 'very nearly received an official reprimand' because of this truancy.<sup>46</sup> Krupskaya's reasons for absenting herself are not given, but as we have seen she made time to pursue her own interests in emigration as well as work for the social democratic movement. We have also heard her own testimony that she gladly avoided Central Committee meetings even during the revolution of 1905.<sup>47</sup>

Inessa Armand, however, was dead by 1920, and Lenin by 1924. After Lenin's death, Krupskaya sometimes expressed views that went against Stalin's interpretation of Leninism. She disapproved of Stalin's use of Lenin's name to denigrate his opponents.<sup>48</sup> When she was finally able to concentrate on her memoir of Lenin, the first part of which appeared in 1925, she did not write a hagiography. Indeed, although always sympathetic to Lenin, James White notes that she was 'scrupulous in following the twists and turns of Lenin's fortunes, recording his defeats as well as his victories'. Moreover, Krupskaya presented 'a full and judicious account of her husband's life and preoccupations':

A notable feature of Krupskaya's account is the dispassionate way in which she describes Lenin's political adversaries ... [who] are all spoken of sympathetically, sometimes even with admiration.<sup>49</sup>

She was more circumspect in the later two parts of the memoir, but still the relative absence of Stalin from her account of Lenin's life provoked some harsh reviews, including from Lenin's older sister, Anna, whose own reminiscences of her brother were held by Stalin's supporters to be superior to Krupskaya's.<sup>50</sup>

Krupskaya looked for the causes of social problems not just in the tsarist past but also in the Soviet present.<sup>51</sup> Thus of the problem of the millions of abandoned children after the Civil War and famine of 1921, she said: 'Inasmuch as revolution is the destruction of the old outdated order, of old family and social relations, it is also one of the causes of *besprizornost'*'.<sup>52</sup> She sided with Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1925, but as we have seen concern over potential splits in Lenin's party, and possibly fear over the response of Stalin's supporters (she was heckled whenever she addressed the Party Congress in December 1925), led her to distance herself from the Opposition.<sup>53</sup> In 1929, she criticised Stalin's policy towards the peasantry, pointing out that the drive against the kulaks was hurting the middle and poor peasants as well, writing in *Pravda*, that 'a revolution in agriculture

from above is impossible'.<sup>54</sup> This may have brought her politically closer to Mariya Ul'yanova, who supported Bukharin in 1929, but nevertheless, Krupskaya did not persist in her criticisms, nor voice them outside of the Communist Party. Krupskaya may have been aware that from her first support for Zinoviev, Stalin viewed her as 'a splitter' and one who 'really needs a beating as a splitter if we wish to conserve party unity'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, one biographer of Stalin has concluded that as early as 1926 she was 'a pathetic figure', dedicated to Lenin's memory and to the cause of revolution but with 'no understanding of politics...she was constantly outmanoeuvred by Stalin'.<sup>56</sup> She was hardly unique in this, and like many people who survived the Great Terror, she compromised her integrity.

Yet she did try to intercede for some of her old colleagues. Bukharin's widow, Anna Larina, recounts the story of Krupskaya and Mariya Ul'yanova together privately pleading for Zinoviev and Kamenev, on trial in 1936. Stalin is reported to have screamed 'who are you defending? You are defending murderers!', while the two women had to be almost carried from his office, so shocked and frightened were they by Stalin's response. Larina commented that the strained relations between Lenin's wife and his successor were 'well-known', but asked: 'Yet to whom did the women turn for help in the battle against despotism? And before whom did they defend the honour of the Party and plead, as a bare minimum, for the lives of Zinoviev and Kamenev? The criminal dictator himself'.<sup>57</sup> Yet this was a typical response to arrests during the purges, and Bukharin himself pleaded with Stalin firstly for these two old Bolsheviks, and then for himself. By then, according to Larina, neither Krupskaya nor Mariya Ul'yanova felt able to support Bukharin, though there is an account which claims that they did intercede for him with Stalin.<sup>58</sup> Not only did they fail, but this time Stalin made them complicit in the case against the man once deemed by Lenin to be the Party's favourite by forcing them in a Party forum in 1937 to deny Bukharin's claims of a close relationship with Lenin.<sup>59</sup>

B.V. Sokolov insists that if she had not married Lenin, Krupskaya would not have merited a biography, that at most her name would have appeared 'only in specialist literature devoted to the pre-revolutionary history of the Bolshevik Party', and that after the revolution, she would have remained a middle-ranking Party functionary 'who may even have been a victim of Stalin's purges without the protection of Lenin's name'. Clearly not enamoured of his subject, Sokolov dismissed Krupskaya as having no special talents: 'she was not good at anything, not even at housekeeping'.<sup>60</sup> Richard Stites puts this in a more positive light, suggesting that Krupskaya's 'willingness to act as Lenin's revolutionary helpmate and comrade was no doubt fortified by her confessed distaste for housework'.<sup>61</sup> As far as Lenin was concerned, Krupskaya compensated for his own shortcomings: for example, in 1922 he admitted to being a poor judge of character, relying on his wife and his younger sister to make up for that failing.<sup>62</sup>

Volkogonov does not dismiss Krupskaya in such withering terms as Sokolov, but nevertheless holds the view that her main claim to a place in history are her notes entitled 'the last six months of the life of V.I. Lenin'.<sup>63</sup> Certainly, the impression of Lenin as being single-mindedly focused on revolution and power is generally offset in biographies (both his and hers) by that of his wife as his personal assistant. Krupskaya herself contributed to this image, which historians have for the most part accepted. As we have seen, however, she had already arrived at Marxism and was politically active in the revolutionary movement before they met in 1894. Her interest in education, both as a teacher and a theorist, was long-standing and much of her work on education was published after Lenin's death. Volkogonov claims that her ideas on education were 'based on her husband's comments'.<sup>64</sup> In contrast, historians of the development of librarianship in the Soviet Union see her contribution as much more than continuing her husband's legacy. Indeed, one accords her an important role in transforming Russian librarianship into a distinctly Soviet model, providing it with a Marxist theoretical foundation, as well as a basis in the Leninist principle of *partiinost'* (the notion that the interests of the Communist Party took precedence in the formulation of policy).<sup>65</sup> This in turn reveals her post-Tolstoy, pre-Lenin belief that the masses needed to be enlightened through, firstly, a carefully regulated literacy and then a polytechnical education.<sup>66</sup>

John Richardson has pointed out that Krupskaya was 'the first person to formalise library science and bibliographical training in Russia', while he revealed that she was open to non-Marxist and non-Russian influences, though she took care to adapt them to Soviet purposes.<sup>67</sup> For Krupskaya, the library system was to be integral to the literacy campaign and the wider enlightenment of workers. She had a narrow, generally prescriptive view of the latter, and did not scruple in purging libraries of works she considered anti-Soviet. Books for Krupskaya were weapons which could empower the masses, and librarians steeped in Marxism would contribute to the construction of socialism and the making of the New Soviet Man and Woman. In her view, the library system was to play a crucial political role in directing the cultural revolution along Party lines. Krupskaya thus agreed with and did not simply defer to Lenin's insistence on the need for centralising the library system. As in her previous organisational roles, Krupskaya concentrated her efforts on implementation, developing a Marxist training for librarians and giving much thought to their role as propagandists for the Soviet state: they were to be Red Librarians.<sup>68</sup> She went into great detail on, for example, the question of annotation about which she spoke in December 1936:

I remember what arguments there used to be with publishing houses, which would have led us to believe that annotation ought not to include any kind of political evaluation, that objectivity was important.

This must depend on what kind of annotation is being made, and for what purpose. It may be that a simple annotation is sufficient merely for arranging books, but that side by side with this annotation there ought to be a Marxist evaluation of the book.<sup>69</sup>

Hence the importance she attributed to the ideological as well as the professional training of librarians, and to catalogues, recommended reading and accessibility in the library service. Thus, as Lenin is considered to have paved the way for Stalin's dictatorship, so Krupskaya advocating a Marxist educational role laid the basis for the Stalinist approach to libraries as a site of struggle in the 1930s. Whereas Krupskaya cautioned librarians against leading the reader 'by the nose', however, Stalin expected them to do precisely that.<sup>70</sup>

Krupskaya was one of only four women among the 56 Bolsheviks identified as *Makers of the Russian Revolution*.<sup>71</sup> She was typical of the women who joined the Social Democratic movement before the 1905 Revolution: they showed an interest in politics and philosophy in their late teens and joined the revolutionary movement in their early twenties; they had a more uniform background than the men, were more likely to come from the upper classes and have had experience of higher education.<sup>72</sup> Once a professional revolutionary, Krupskaya did not support herself through paid employment, but relied on the generosity of family and friends, while after the Bolsheviks took power she worked for the state. Bolshevik women were, like Krupskaya, less likely than their male counterparts to perform a leadership role or participate in ideological debates. Kollontai was an obvious and isolated exception. Krupskaya's preference for work behind the scenes was more typical, and something she had in common with Lenin's sisters, Anna Elizarova and Mariya Ul'yanova.<sup>73</sup> Both sisters, but especially Anna, took on domestic tasks to make Lenin's life comfortable.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the activities of all three women were crucial not just for Lenin's well-being but for the survival and effectiveness of a clandestine organisation whose leader spent many years in emigration, returning to Russia only for revolutions which had already begun.

As many scholars have pointed out, the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 did not constitute a feminist (let alone, some would add, a socialist) revolution. Indeed, Elizabeth Wood argues that the Bolsheviks, including its female members, always had a negative view of women workers as the most conservative, even reactionary, part of their class.<sup>75</sup> Hence the perceived need to mobilise women in 1917 and to guide their enlightenment once the Bolsheviks were in power. The Soviet regime appealed to and glorified women's domestic responsibilities, thus ensuring that the new political order retained the traditional notions of gender while claiming to solve the woman question through equal (though in practice different) opportunities in education and work. True, Krupskaya expressed concern about women

being diverted into stereotypical female jobs, but she did not dispute that women had a special responsibility for the home, while her view that this was as much a public as a domestic role underpinned Soviet policy towards women.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, although she spoke in favour of decriminalising abortion and advocated contraception, the 'sexual revolution' of the 1920s seems to have confirmed her sexual conservatism.<sup>77</sup> Krupskaya contributed significantly to the construction of a gendered society in everything that she did, without needing direction from Lenin.

Krupskaya's concluding sentence to an autobiographical sketch – 'All my life since 1894 I have devoted to helping Vladimir Ilyich Lenin as best I could' – has convinced many that the long years of collaboration between them robbed Krupskaya of her independence.<sup>78</sup> In another autobiographical entry she was even more self-effacing, writing in the third person.<sup>79</sup> This preference for toiling in the shadows was consistent throughout her political career, though after Lenin's death it may also have been a means of self-preservation which in addition allowed her to continue her life's interest in education. Krupskaya was a committed revolutionary in her own right, and played a significant part in the survival of the Bolshevik organisation in the difficult years of emigration as well as building it from the grassroots in 1917. Like most female Bolsheviks she opted for influence over power, a reflection of her acceptance of a gendered division of labour, which is in turn seen in her choice of work, both for the revolutionary movement and the Soviet state. Her preference for living and working in Lenin's shadow, then, was not a negation of herself, but a true reflection of who she was, and of the role women would play in the new state. In common with most other Bolshevik women, rather than be centre stage, Krupskaya preferred to help set the scene for the revolution and work in the wings of the new experimental theatre it created.

## Notes

1. See for example, James D. White, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (London, 1994), p. 112. There are exceptions. See for example Norma C. Noonan's entries on Krupskaya in Archie Brown (ed.), *The Soviet Union: a biographical dictionary* (London, 1990), where Krupskaya is introduced as 'a noted revolutionary and educator' (p. 190) before recording that she was also Lenin's wife; and in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Gulf Breeze, 1973–93, 60 vols), vol. 18, p. 111 where she is described as a Soviet educator and Party and government figure, before it is noted that she was also the wife of V.I. Lenin.
2. Beryl Williams, *Lenin* (Harlow, 2000), p. 29.
3. V.A. Kumanev and I.S. Kulikova, *Protivostoyaniye: Krupskaya-Stalin* (Moscow, 1994), p. 14.
4. Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life. Volume 1* (Basingstoke, 1985), p. 56.
5. Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (London, 1994), p. 35.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
7. E.B. Nikanorova (ed.), *Naslednitsa: stranitsy zhizni N.K. Krupskoi* (Leningrad, 1990), pp. 60–1. Krupskaya described her path towards Marxism in a letter to

- Mariya Ul'yanov, on 22 August 1899: 'I remembered how I was in turmoil at your age. At one point I decided to become a village teacher, but failed to find a place...After the Bestuzhev Courses were founded, and I began attending them, I thought that there I would hear about everything I was interested in, but when I could not get what I wanted there, I stopped attending them. In short, I was helplessly looking for something'. See Yu.A. Akhapiin and K.F. Bogdanova (eds), *Lenin-Krupskaya-Ul'yanovy. Perepiska (1883-1900)* (Moscow, 1981), p. 287.
8. Nikanorova (ed.), *Naslednitsa: stranitsy zhizni N.K. Krupskoi*, pp. 69-70; G.D. Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya* (Moscow, 1988), p. 12.
  9. See for example A.M. Kollontai, 'Avtobiograficheskii ocherk', *Proletarskaya revolyutsii*, 3, 1921, pp. 261-302, especially pp. 268-78.
  10. *Kommunistka*, 8-9, 1921, pp. 22-6.
  11. Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya*, p. 287. See also N. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin* (London, 1930), p. 102.
  12. Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya*, pp. 45, 47.
  13. L. Trotsky, *My Life* (New York, 1970), p. 152. While still in exile, after Lenin had been released and had moved to Pskov, Krupskaya had set up the first support group for *Iskra*, in Ufa in 1899. Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya*, p. 39.
  14. Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 110.
  15. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 43.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
  17. *Ibid.*, our italics.
  18. See for example Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 139.
  19. N.K. Krupskaya, *Vospominaniya o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine* (Moscow, 1968), pp. 471-3. See White, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 112.
  20. Quoted in E.N. Burdzhilov, *Russia's Second Revolution* (Bloomington, 1987), p. 87.
  21. N.N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917: A Personal Record* (Princeton, 1984), p. 5.
  22. See for example, I. Gordienko, *Iz boevogo proshlogo, 1914-1918gg.* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 56-7. For female Bolsheviks' accounts of women workers in 1917, see A.M. Kollontai, *Rabotnitsa za god revolyutsii* (Moscow, 1918); L. Stal', 'Rabotnitsa v Oktyabr', *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, 10, 1922, pp. 297-302. Male Bolsheviks were considerably more circumspect about organising women on International Women's Day: see V. Kaiurov, 'Shest'dnei fevral'skoi revolyutsii', *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, 1, 1923, pp. 150-70.
  23. McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, p. 73.
  24. Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 140.
  25. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 257.
  26. See for example *Rabotnitsa*, 1 September 1917, p. 9. For a history of *Rabotnitsa* see A.F. Bessonova, 'K istorii izdaniya zhurnala *Rabotnitsa*', *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4, 1955, pp. 27-39.
  27. P. Sorokin, *Leaves from a Russian Diary* (London, 1950), p. 3; M. Pokrovskaya, 'Revol'yutsii i gumannost', *Zhenskii vestnik*, 5-6, 1917, pp. 67-9.
  28. Sablina (Krupskaya), *Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa* (Geneva, 1901); Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist: the life of Alexandra Kollontai* (Bloomington, 1979). Note in contrast the title of Krupskaya's biography by Robert H. McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution: Krupskaya and Lenin*.
  29. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, pp. 269-70. For Kollontai's views see her *Novaya moral' i rabochii klass* (Moscow, 1918).

30. Norma C. Noonan, 'Two Solutions to the Zhenskii Vopros in Russia and the USSR – Kollontai and Krupskaya: A Comparison,' *Women and Politics*, 11(3), 1991, pp. 177–99.
31. There is some speculation that Krupskaya may have been poisoned to prevent her using her birthday celebrations (1939) to make a public attack on Stalin. See Jeanne Vronskaya with Vladimir Chuguev, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Soviet Union, 1917–1988* (London, 1989), p. 210. Radzinsky also suggests that Mariya Ul'yanova may have been murdered on Stalin's orders in 1937: *Stalin*, p. 203.
32. For example, children addressed letters to her requesting 'maternal help'. See Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov (eds), *Stalinism as a Way of Life* (New Haven, 2000), p. 411.
33. Kumanev and Kulikova, *Protivostoianii: Krupskaya-Stalin*, p. 43.
34. See Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (London, 1969), pp. 71, 85, 103; 152 for the quotation.
35. Yuri Buranov, *Lenin's Will: Falsified and Forbidden* (Amherst, 1994), pp. 170–4.
36. Edward Radzinsky, *Stalin* (London, 1996), p. 198.
37. See Katy Turton, 'After Lenin: The Role of Anna and Mariia Ul'ianova in Soviet Society and Politics from 1924', *Revolutionary Russia*, 15(2), 2002, pp. 106–35.
38. Kumanev and Kulikova, *Protivostoyaniye: Krupskaya-Stalin*, p. 113. See also Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya*, pp. 208–9.
39. N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (London, 1971), pp. 42–6.
40. See for example, Alexei Barinov, 'Krupskaya, Armand i snova Krupskaya', *Argumenty i fakty*, 21 February 2005.
41. For doubts about Lenin's relationship with Armand, see R. Carter Elwood, *Inessa Armand: revolutionary and feminist* (Cambridge, 1992). See also Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, 1991), p. 324.
42. B.V. Sokolov, *Armand i Krupskaya. Zhenshchiny Vozhdia* (Smolensk, 1999), pp. 29–30. See also Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk* (London, 1919).
43. Obichkin, *Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya*, pp. 26–7.
44. Sokolov, *Armand i Krupskaya*, pp. 223–4.
45. Angelica Balabanoff, *Impressions of Lenin* (Ann Arbor, 1964), p. 14.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
47. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 104.
48. See Kumanev and Kulikova, *Protivostoyaniye: Krupskaya-Stalin*, ch. 4.
49. See James D. White, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 188.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 189–90. For Anna Elizarova's criticism, see Kumanev and Kulikova, *Protivostoyaniye: Krupskaya-Stalin*, p. 177.
51. See for example *Kommunistka*, 6, 1926, p. 10.
52. Quoted in Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened* (Berkeley, 1994), p. 1.
53. Sokolov, *Armand i Krupskaya*, pp. 361–7.
54. Kumanev and Kulikova, *Protivostoyaniye: Krupskaya-Stalin*, p. 137. For the quotation, see Victor Margolin, 'Stalin and Wheat: Collective Farms and Composite Portraits', *Gastronomica*, 3, 2003, pp. 14–16. Krupskaya was also outraged by the drive against 'class enemies' whose children were expelled from school. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford, 1999), p. 118.
55. For the quotation, see Robert Service, *Stalin* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 246. Turton argues that previous divisions between Krupskaya and her two sisters-in-law

- were not personal, but caused by political disagreements. Turton, 'After Lenin', pp. 112–14.
56. Ian Grey, *Stalin* (London, 1978), p. 214.
  57. Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget* (New York, 1993), p. 286.
  58. Radzinsky, *Stalin*, p. 215. Turton suggests that this audience with Stalin, and possibly the one recounted by Larina where they sought clemency for Zinoviev and Kamenev, may not have happened, but admits that she is 'not entirely sure': see 'After Lenin', p. 133, n. 112.
  59. Radzinsky, *Stalin*, p. 356. That year (1937), Krupskaya was recorded as complaining of 'the abnormal atmosphere, poisoning everything': see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, p. 214.
  60. Sokolov, *Armand i Krupskaya*, p. 392.
  61. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p. 240.
  62. L. Shatunovskaya, *Life in the Kremlin* (New York, 1982), pp. 36–7.
  63. Volkogonov, *Lenin*, p. 102.
  64. *Ibid.*, p. 35. See also S. Simsova (ed.), *Lenin, Krupskaya and Libraries* (London, 1968), where the structure of the work gives the impression that Krupskaya was only following Lenin's lead.
  65. Boris Raymond, *Krupskaya and Soviet Russian Librarianship, 1917–1939* (Metuchen, 1979), p. 2.
  66. See Krupskaya's *Pedagogicheskie sochineniya* (Moscow, 1957–63, 11 vols).
  67. John Richardson Jr., 'The Origin of Soviet Education for Librarianship: The Role of Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, Lybov' Borisovna Khavkina-Hamburger, and Genrietta K. Abdele-Derman', *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 41(2), 2000, p. 106.
  68. N.K. Krupskaya, *O bibliotekhnom dele* (Moscow, 1924).
  69. Simsova, *Lenin, Krupskaya and Libraries*, pp. 48–51.
  70. Raymond, *Krupskaya and Soviet Russian Librarianship*, p. 182.
  71. The other three women were Elena Stasova, Alexandra Kollontai and Larissa Reisner. See G. Haupt and J.J. Marie (eds), *Makers of the Russian Revolution: Biographies of Bolshevik Leaders* (London, 1974). For the main source of this collection see *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar' Russkogo Bibliograficheskogo Instituta Granat* (Moscow, 1927–29), especially volume 41, or *Deyateli SSSR i revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya Rossii: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Granat* (Moscow, 1998) – see pp. 236–7 for Krupskaya's entry.
  72. See Clements, *Bolshevik Women*. See also A. Hillyar and J. McDermid, *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870–1917* (Manchester, 2000); B. Fieseler, 'The Making of Russian Female Social Democrats, 1890–1917', *International Review of Social History*, 34, 1989, pp. 193–226.
  73. See for example, I. Kunetskaya and K. Mashtakova, *Mariya Ulyianova* (Moscow, 1979); Akhapikin and Bogdanova (eds), *Lenin-Krupskaya-Ulyianovy. Perepiska*. See also Katy Turton, 'Forgotten Lives: the Role of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia Ul'ianova in the Russian revolution, 1864–1937', PhD, Glasgow University, 2004.
  74. For example, during the October Revolution Anna took him hot meals and Mariya supplied him with pillows and a clean collar. See *Geroi Oktyabrya: biografii uchastnikov podgotovki provedeniya Oktyabrskogo vooruzhennogo vosstanie v Petrograde* (Leningrad, 1967, two vols), vol. 1, p. 375; Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 327, 337.
  75. Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade* (Bloomington, 1997).

76. *Kommunistka*, 5, 1920, p. 6. Krupskaya was on the editorial board of *Kommunistka* from its establishment in 1920. See Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, p. 95.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
78. See for example Haupt and Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution*, p. 157.
79. See Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (eds), *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 111–12.

# 10

## Soviet 'Foreign Policy' and the Versailles-Washington System

*Paul Dukes*

Before 1914, imperial Russia was an integral member of the global system of international relations. Its policies have often been held responsible for the outbreak of World War I.<sup>1</sup> Later, in the period leading up to 1939, the Soviet Union was on the periphery of this global system. Yet, it has been blamed for the outbreak of hostilities leading to World War II, and for the Cold War afterwards.<sup>2</sup> In or out, apparently, Russia possesses qualities that make it a liability in world affairs. However, neither assertion is acceptable, since the purpose of the study of international relations is not to attribute praise or blame, but to investigate the manner in which all the parties involved made their contribution to the maintenance of peace or the outbreak of war.

Here, we shall seek to investigate the appropriateness and accuracy of this proposition with special reference to the development of the so-called Versailles-Washington system, especially in the years 1919–22. In a sense, international relations form a seamless web, one thing always leading from as well as to another. However, these two dates not only possess their own significance but also may be said to mark the beginning and end of a discrete formative period. While 'system' is a word to be used with caution in any period, there can be little doubt that such framework as there was for the conduct of international relations during the 1920s was constituted by the treaties signed at Versailles or nearby in 1919–20 along with those signed at Washington in 1921–2. They attempted to institute a new order mostly in Europe and East Asia respectively, and thus together for much of the world. Stretching from one continent to the other, Soviet Russia was particularly interested in the outcomes of the two conferences even though it was excluded from both of them.

We must examine the two conferences and the treaties produced by them, with special reference to their implications at first for the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic) constituted in January 1918 and then for the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) formed in December 1922. (All too often, even academic writers refer to the Soviet Union in dis-

cussion of the period before it was created, or to Soviet Russia afterwards). But, in order to show how the years 1919–22 introduced a new system, we must begin by examining the systems that preceded them, with special reference to the part played in them by tsarist Russia. Equally, we must not neglect the evolution of the Versailles-Washington system throughout the 1920s, and beyond. Thus, this essay will consist of an introduction, an exposition and a conclusion.

## Introduction

Modern international relations are normally said to begin with the Treaty of Westphalia concluding the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Westphalia, the name of a province, was used as an overarching term for treaties drawn up in two neighbouring cities, Münster and Osnabrück, religious divisions preventing the parties involved from meeting in one place. Therefore, there is a strong case for saying that the year 1648 is not the best year in which to begin a consideration of modern international relations, since Westphalia was most concerned not only with religious divisions but also with dynastic claims. Moreover, Russia and Britain were peripheral to Westphalia. Treaties involving them both, as well as broad economic interests, were not to be found before the eighteenth century. The Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 aimed explicitly at 'a just Balance of Power (which is the best and most solid foundation of mutual friendship and a lasting general concord)' and this concept was extended to the whole continent in the years following, although far from obtaining the force of law.<sup>3</sup>

The first clear pointer to the international relations of the period following World War I and the Russian Revolution came with the French Revolution. On the one hand, there was the Emperor Leopold proposing to his fellow sovereigns to vindicate Louis XVI and 'to set bounds to the dangerous extreme of the French Revolution, the fatal example of which it behoved all the governments to suppress'.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, there was the new army comprising the nation in arms, appealing to the peoples of the world for support. The Napoleonic period constituted a curious mixture of the dynastic with the populist, from the point of view of both Napoleon and the opposition to him, notably in Spain and Russia. 1812 brought to the fore Russia's own version of the *levée en masse*.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, after 1815, the dynastic 'Holy Alliance' was accompanied with the emergence of the broader idea of a 'Concert of Europe' with the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1822 constituting, in the view of Charles Webster, 'the first ever held by the Great Powers of Europe to regulate international differences in time of peace'.<sup>6</sup> Tsar Alexander I took advantage of the meeting to put forward ideas of disarmament, an international army and an international union of governments against further revolution. In a sense, the Concert system continued until 1914, albeit

intermittently, and not helped by the phenomenon of Russophobia intensified by the Crimean War of 1854–6, the later action by the tsarist army against Turkey in the Balkans and the ‘Great Game’ of empire played out by Russia and Great Britain on the roof of the world in and around Afghanistan and Tibet. There were occasional conferences of considerable significance beyond those convened at the conclusion of wars, for example the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 on tropical Africa attended by the European powers including Russia, and by a rising power across the ocean, the USA. The last of such meetings before 1914 was held in London in 1912–13, after the second Balkan War. The editors of the British documents on this meeting observed: ‘During the Balkan wars the Concert of Europe became a real thing. It failed to prevent the smaller Powers from going to war; it succeeded in making peace possible between the Great Powers.... For once Europe was a reality’.<sup>7</sup> However, such ‘reality’ was diminished by the absence from the Conference of the Central Powers, Germany and Austro-Hungary.

Arguably, too, by the eve of World War I, Europe could not be a meaningful reality because the Great Powers were no longer exclusively European. There were two more, once smaller perhaps, but now without doubt Great: the USA and Japan. This is not the place to describe their emergence at any length, but to put the point simply if somewhat crudely, the USA made its full entry into the ranks of the Great Powers as a consequence of the war with Spain in 1898, Japan with its victory over Russia in the war of 1904–5. Both these conflicts, furthermore, gave clear notice that the Pacific and Far East region was becoming more than a focus for colonial rivalry. Of course, this rivalry was still evident, notably in China. However, Russia and Britain were able to sink their differences and to join with France in the *Entente Cordiale* opposed to the pretensions of the Central Powers.

Before 1914, the question of peace was the theme of considerable discussion, notably at the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 first proposed by Tsar Nicholas II as a way towards reducing the burden of armaments and the risk of war. Already, however, it was apparent that there were forces in the world opposed not only to armaments and war, but also to the governments themselves. That is to say, the revolutionary movement with fraternal links especially in Europe was growing in strength even before the outbreak of hostilities. At the beginning of World War I, patriotism overtook internationalism for the most part, but there were some extremist exceptions, including those exemplified by Lenin.

As the war dragged on, more conventional minds were turning to thoughts of peace, too, perhaps an improved form of the Concert of Europe, perhaps indeed an organisation with wider concerns. In the UK, for example, schemes were advanced by such bodies as the Fabian Society and in the House of Lords, by such individuals as Lord Bryce, General Smuts

and J.A. Hobson. The US President Woodrow Wilson was aware of many of these schemes as he put forward his Fourteen Points on 8 January 1918. No fewer than eight of these, it needs to be said, were concerned with specific territorial changes in Europe. Among the more general assertions, colonial claims, secret treaties, naval rivalries, competition in armament and trade were all problems that needed to be addressed, but the most important point of all was the proposal to set up a 'general association of nations... under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike'.

In the preamble to the Fourteen Points, conscious that the new Soviet regime had itself put forward a challenge with its insistence on open diplomacy and self-determination, Wilson declared that the time had come for a general statement about the conditions of peace. Referring in particular to the negotiations conducted with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk, Wilson observed: 'The Russian representatives were sincere and earnest'. Moreover, there was 'a voice calling for those definitions of principle and purpose' which was 'more thrilling than any of the many moving voices with which the troubled air of the world is filled', that of the Russian people. In the sixth and longest of the Fourteen Points, Wilson proposed:

The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.<sup>8</sup>

President Wilson did not use the word 'Soviet'. But, ever since the October Revolution, from the Decree on Peace onwards, the new Russian government had insisted not only that its representatives were 'sincere and earnest', but also that its conception of international relations was something new. The brief statement on this subject by the first People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, L.D. Trotsky, is well known. According to S. Pestkovsky, Trotsky said: 'I have accepted the post... just because I wanted to have more leisure for party affairs. My job is a small one: to publish the secret documents and to close the shop'.<sup>9</sup> During the negotiations with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk early in 1918, Trotsky and his comrades were to discover that the shop might be refitted but it

certainly could not be closed. As Richard K. Debo puts it, 'The dominant characteristics of Soviet foreign policy after February 1918 were definitely those of expediency, realistic calculation, and classical diplomacy'.<sup>10</sup> Appropriately, Trotsky's successor as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs was G.V. Chicherin, a former official in the tsarist Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described by E.H. Carr as 'a singular figure in the Soviet constellation... whose attachment to Marxism was rooted in his subtle and highly trained intellect rather than in his emotions'.<sup>11</sup>

## Exposition

The Paris Peace Conference of the 'Allied and Associated Powers' ran from January 1919 to January 1920. It produced a number of agreements, the most important of which was the Versailles Treaty signed in June 1919 by all the major powers that had participated in World War I except the USA which chose not to and Soviet Russia which was not invited to. The major provisions concerned the reduction of Germany and its empire, together with the imposition of responsibility for the war and reparations. The treaty also included the Covenant of the League of Nations advocated by President Wilson but rejected by the US Senate. Soviet Russia received scant mention in the Versailles Treaty, although Brest-Litovsk and all else entered into by Germany with 'the Maximalist Government' was expressly annulled, while the inviolability of Russia as constituted on 1 August 1914 was to be recognised by Germany.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Soviet government was not invited to take part in the Paris Peace Conference, it was asked, albeit indirectly, to come to Prinkipo Island in the Sea of Marmara for a discussion of Russian problems. The proposal was formulated in January 1919. A US State Department official named Buckler was ordered to go to Copenhagen where he had three long discussions with Litvinov. The deputy Foreign Commissar said that foreign debts owed by the Tsarist and Provisional Governments might be paid if the creditor powers were prepared to trade in machinery and manufactures. Litvinov also agreed that propaganda against foreign powers would cease when peace was agreed, adding the explanation that 'the war declared on Russia by the allies called forth that revolutionary propaganda as a measure of retaliation'. Moreover, Litvinov accepted, 'Russians realise that in certain western countries conditions are not favourable for a revolution of the Russian type'. At about the same time, Lloyd George suggested a 'truce of God' between 'all of the different governments now at war within what used to be the Russian Empire'. Woodrow Wilson supported the idea. The French and Italian delegates were far from enthusiastic, but were won over by Wilson's reading out of Buckler's report. On 24 January, an invitation was issued by radio to 'all organised groups exercising or attempting to exercise power in any part of former Russian territory' to attend a conference at Prinkipo.<sup>13</sup>

Lenin told Trotsky that Wilson wanted to establish a claim to Siberia and part of the South. Trotsky agreed that every effort should be made to forestall Wilson, while suggesting that Chicherin should be sent to Prinkipo in due course. Chicherin found it strange that the allies should now offer their arbitration to help bring the civil war to an end when they themselves had supported the Whites through their intervention. For their part, the anti-Bolshevik representatives in Paris were angry with the Prinkipo proposal as the Bolsheviks themselves accepted it.<sup>14</sup>

Chicherin sent the official Soviet response on 4 February 1919. His government was prepared to give way on the question of the loans, offering to pay interest on them in the shape of raw materials. It was prepared to grant concessions in mining, timber and other enterprises, provided that the economic and social order of Soviet Russia was not threatened. It would not insist on the exclusion from negotiations of 'the question of the annexation of Russian territories by the Allied Powers'. However, Chicherin added, the extent to which his government would give way would depend on the internal situation of Soviet Russia, which was improving remarkably. As far as international revolutionary propaganda was concerned, it would be prepared to make to the Allied Powers 'an undertaking not to interfere in their internal affairs' with the reservation, however, that it could not 'limit the freedom of the revolutionary press'.<sup>15</sup>

The Prinkipo proposal collapsed in the face of opposition from the French and the Whites and lack of persistence on the part of Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson. Further Soviet response could be seen in March 1919, when the First Congress of the Third International or Comintern met in Moscow. One of the explicit reasons given for the formation of the Comintern was 'the danger that the alliance of capitalist States which are organising themselves against the revolution under the hypocritical banner of the "League of Nations" will strangle this revolution'. On 15 April, Lenin himself asserted in 'The Third International and Its Place in History':

The imperialists of the Entente countries are blockading Russia in an effort to cut off the Soviet republic, as a seat of infection, from the capitalist world. These people, who boast about their 'democratic' institutions, are so blinded by their hatred of the Soviet republic that they do not see how ridiculous they are making themselves. Just think of it: the advanced, most civilised, and 'democratic' countries, armed to the teeth and enjoying undivided military sway over the whole world, are mortally afraid of the *ideological* infection coming from a ruined, starving, backward, and even, they assert, semisavage country.<sup>16</sup>

At the beginning, the Third International and other such bodies spoke the language of world revolution as if its realisation was imminent. By the spring of 1921, however, with the introduction of the NEP, the Soviet

government as a whole had been through the painful educational experience of the Civil War and Intervention, and of many difficulties in international relations, too. Already in November 1920, Lenin declared: 'So long as we remain, from the economic and military standpoint, weaker than the capitalist world, so long...we must be clever enough to utilise the contradictions and oppositions among the imperialists...which are explained by the most profound economic causes'.<sup>17</sup> While the Communist International kept the banner of world revolution flying, the Soviet government would attempt to establish relations with the capitalist world of a more 'normal' variety. An important milestone here was the Trade Agreement between the RSFSR and the United Kingdom, signed on 16 March 1921 in London. Before then, virtually all the treaties involving the Soviet Republic had been with the Central Powers and others bordering on the former tsarist empire in Europe and Asia.<sup>18</sup> In August 1921, in an interview with *The New York Times*, Chicherin insisted that the policy of world revolution was used by the Soviet government 'in the first few months of its existence and then only as a war method, the same as both sides in the last war used propaganda to weaken their enemies'. A distinction should be made between the Soviet government and the Third International.<sup>19</sup> Then, the Third International did indeed cool down its rhetoric at the behest of the government as relations between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries became more 'normal'.

'Normalcy' was the watchword of Warren G. Harding, the President of the world's leading economic power, the United States of America, in his inaugural address of 4 March 1921. Domestically, this would mean reduction of government activity, and therefore of taxation and expenditure. Meanwhile, there would be a minimum of interference in the outside world, too. The League Covenant produced at Paris could have no sanction from the USA, since 'a world supergovernment is contrary to everything we cherish'. To retain American sovereignty inviolate was not selfishness but sanctity: neither aloofness nor suspicion of others. Nevertheless, Harding declared, his government would confer and take counsel with other nations in order 'to recommend a way to approximate disarmament and relieve the crushing burdens of military and naval establishments'.<sup>20</sup> To this end, he sent out invitations in July 1921 to an international conference to convene in November in Washington DC.

The Washington Conference had two official aims: one was Limitation of Armament; the other was a settlement of Pacific and Far Eastern Questions. Disarmament on land was quickly set aside because obstacles to its achievement were indicated by the delegates from Europe. At sea, emphasis was given to the size of the world's major fleets, while in the Far East, there was emphasis on the problems of Japan and China.

As to Paris, Soviet Russia was not invited to Washington. On 21 July 1921, a note about this omission was sent out to the governments of Great

Britain, France, Italy, the USA, China and Japan. Chicherin began by pointing out that the Soviet government had learned of the forthcoming Conference from the foreign press. As a sovereign power with an interest in the Far East, Soviet Russia complained not only about its exclusion but also about the declaration by the other powers that they themselves would bear in mind Russian interests, 'reserving to themselves to invite eventually a new Russian Government replacing the present government to accede to the resolutions and agreements which will be adopted there'.<sup>21</sup>

Here was the nub. The US administration in particular did not expect the Soviet regime to last indefinitely. Indeed, it feared the consequences of its dissolution, including a division of the former empire among the European powers and Japan. This would lead to a nullification of the American 'Open Door' policy – free access to all markets together with no interference in any government that would accept the policy. Therefore, in a sense, by resisting the creation of spheres of influence by the other powers, the USA made a distinctive contribution to the formation of the USSR. Its dominance was established by the major treaties of the Washington Conference, establishing a ratio for the battleships of the world's major navies, bringing to an end the Anglo-Japanese alliance first agreed in 1902 and establishing the 'Open Door' in China.<sup>22</sup>

The most urgent problem in the Far East for Soviet Russia was the continued intervention by Japan. In order to counter this threat, the government in Moscow had supported the creation of a Far Eastern Republic (FER) centred on Chita east of Lake Baikal. Denied representation at the Washington Conference, the FER adopted the stratagem of a Trade Delegation to the US capital, where it made an energetic attempt to represent its own interests along with those of its patron in Moscow.<sup>23</sup>

On 23 January 1922, in the shape of a meeting of a Committee on Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs, the Washington Conference at last gave its attention to the problem of Siberia. Baron Shidehara, the leader of the Japanese delegation, argued that the delay in the termination of the intervention had been caused by the necessity to protect 10,000 Japanese lawfully resident in the Russian Far East before 'the Bolshevik eruption' and to forestall Korean conspiracies to mount invasions via China. On 24 January, US Secretary of State Hughes gave a response. Recognising that the USA had begun its intervention along with Japan, he inclined strongly to 'the belief that the public assurances given by the two Governments at the inception of the joint expedition nevertheless required the complete withdrawal of Japanese troops from all Russian territory'. Acknowledging Japan's special difficulties, Hughes nevertheless regretted that it should find necessary 'the occupation of Russian territory as a means of assuring a suitable adjustment with a future Russian government'. He recalled that in a communication of 31 May 1921, the US government had expressed to its Japanese counterpart its belief that 'in the present time of disorder in Russia, it is more than ever

the duty of those who look forward to the tranquillisation of the Russian people, and a restoration of normal conditions among them, to avoid all action which might keep alive their distrust and antagonism towards outside political agencies'. On 28 January 1922, the delegation of the Far Eastern Republic conveyed to Hughes its confidence that the USA would not tolerate 'the oppression of a kindred-spirited, democratic people by a military absolutism'.<sup>24</sup>

Even after the closure of the Washington Conference, the FER continued discussions with Japan about the intervention at the two Manchurian towns of Dairen near Port Arthur and Changchun south of Harbin up to the end of September 1922. The FER's aim was to keep the subject before the world's attention and to bring the intervention to an end. On 15 November, the question of Japanese evacuation from the Russian Far East settled, the FER was merged with the RSFSR, a month and a half before the creation of the USSR on 30 December. Meanwhile, however, media attention had largely switched back to Europe. Little attention was paid to the Soviet treaty with Mongolia on 5 November 1921.<sup>25</sup>

Even before the end of 1921, when the Washington Conference had yet to make some of its key decisions, *The New York Times* considered on 24 December the possibility of 'a European conference to deal with the European impasse on the same lines as Washington adopted so successfully about the Pacific impasse'. On 9 January, the same newspaper reported that American terms had been accepted for Soviet Russian entry into the international family of nations in the declaration of the Allied Supreme Council: 'it is not possible to place foreign capital in order to help a country until the foreigners who provide the capital have the certitude that their property and rights will be respected, and that the fruits of their enterprise will be assured'. The rule of law must be firmly established. With suggestions of this nature in mind, no doubt, Chicherin wrote to Lenin on 20 and 22 January 1922 asking him to consider amending the Soviet Constitution to allow some form of representation of non-working class elements in the government if the Americans insisted since they found the deprivation of the entire bourgeoisie of political rights 'shocking'. Lenin wrote the word 'crazy' in the margin of Chicherin's memorandum and suggested that he be sent to a sanatorium at once.<sup>26</sup>

The meeting to consider European security duly convened in Genoa on 10 April 1922. More than 30 countries were represented, including the two major powers that had been excluded from the Paris and Washington Conferences, Germany and Russia.

A major absentee was the USA, even though the League of Nations was excluded from the promotion of the Genoa Conference in order to encourage American participation. According to British Ambassador Sir Auckland Geddes, the US Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes thought that the Genoa Conference was a grave error that could serve only to bolster up dis-

integrating Bolshevism and encourage Lenin's government to persist in its error. Nevertheless, in the assessment of Merlo J. Pusey, a biographer of Hughes, 'the Secretary made it plain that any move on the part of the powers to take advantage of Russia's prostration would meet with sharp disapproval in America'.<sup>27</sup>

From the beginning, Chicherin made it clear that limitation of armaments should be pursued as well as improvement in economic relations, implying that Genoa should be a sequel to Washington. He referred expressly to the observation made at Washington by the leader of the French delegation Aristide Briand that disarmament in Europe was impossible because of the size of the Russian army. There was widespread protest at Chicherin's suggestion, even the proposal from Briand's opponent and successor as French Prime Minister, Raymond Poincaré, that discussion be limited to the repayment of debts and other aspects of the economic predicament of Soviet Russia with no mention even of German reparations. Lloyd George had to employ his silvery tongue to the full to ensure adherence to the economic agenda, while conceding that there would be time enough for the all-important USA to arrive if the conference became universal in its coverage.<sup>28</sup>

At the first meeting of the conference's Political Commission, Chicherin argued that Romania should not be present because it occupied Bessarabia which he deemed to be an integral part of Russia. He also asserted that the presence of Japan was of 'abnormal character' because it occupied part of the territory of the Far Eastern Republic which was Russia's close ally. For their part, France and Belgium opposed the inclusion of Russia and Germany in the Political Commission because their conduct had made them ineligible. These two pariah powers responded to such treatment by going off to nearby Rapallo and agreeing mutual recognition and collaboration on 16 April. Again, Lloyd George had to ascend heights of oratory in a speech to anxious journalists from the UK and USA. Nobody in America or Europe would deny that the Washington Conference had been fully worthwhile, he claimed, and the same might be said of Genoa. Undoubtedly, Genoa would have benefitted from the presence of the USA, which commanded 'authority' and 'influence' unattainable by any other country. Inevitably, in any future conflict, the USA would be drawn in as she had been in the previous war. Meanwhile, Europe had to strive to solve its problems in its own way. Of course, there was the distinct possibility of 'a hungry Russia, equipped by an angry Germany'. But the best solution was to include these two powers in the conference, not exclude them.<sup>29</sup>

For the most part, however, most of the discussion of Russia at Genoa concerned its peculiar economic system. In particular, the delegates of other countries focused on the Soviet government's refusal to take on the debts of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments, its insistence that loans should be advanced to the state rather than to individuals or corporations.

On the debt question, Chicherin and his comrades gave as good as they got, making use of historical precedent. In the USA for example, had not the victory of the North in the Civil War resulted in freedom for the slaves without compensation for their Southern owners? With the introduction of prohibition in 1919, what compensation had been given to those involved in the manufacture of strong drink? In its response of 11 May to a Memorandum of 2 May concerning unpaid debts and alienated property, the Soviet delegation puts its system in historical perspective:

The Russian Revolution needs no justification before an assembly of powers, many of whom count more than one revolution in their own history. Revolutions, which are violent ruptures with the past, carry with them a new juridical status in home and foreign relations. Revolutionary Governments are not bound to respect the obligations of governments which have lapsed. The French Convention proclaimed in 1792 that 'The sovereignty of peoples is not bound by the treaties of tyrants'. The United States repudiated the treaties of their predecessors, England and Spain ... Russia cannot therefore be compelled to assume any responsibility towards foreign Powers and their nationals for the cancellation of public debts and the nationalisation of private property ... The principle of nationalisation without indemnities is a slogan dear to all Russian hearts. Our people believe that private property is a form of privilege analogous to the feudal rights which obtained before the French Revolution or to the serfdom in Russia before the time of the Tsar Alexander II. These ancient privileges having been abolished, we wish the same to be done with private property. Upon this point we cannot give way.

There was a concession, however, albeit of a nature unwelcome to the other delegations at Genoa. The Soviet government would assume the Tsarist and Provisional debts if 'the powers which supported counter-revolutionary movements in Russia or blockaded her are responsible for the damage done'.<sup>30</sup>

The leader of the Soviet delegation provided ready responses on political as well as economic questions. For example, the question was raised about Soviet misrule in Georgia. Chicherin followed his denial with a request that the other powers should address what he claimed to be real, not imaginary causes of bloodshed and oppression. He gave many instances ranging from the Japanese in the Far East through the Poles, Romanians, Yugoslavs and Greeks in Europe to the French, British and Italians overseas.<sup>31</sup>

The Genoa Conference provided no resolution of the differences separating the Soviet government from its 'bourgeois' counterparts. Nor did a successor at the Hague in June and July 1922.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the year, a Conference at Lausanne devoted to Near Eastern questions provided

Chicherin with a further opportunity to put his government's case. Again, he made use of the historical perspective in a discussion of Turkey, for so long a bone of contention between Russia and other European states:

In former days people used to talk of 'Russian advance in Asia'...is it not now a case of 'British advance in Europe'? The best traditions of British conservatism were to establish a partition wall between the Russian and British spheres of influence, and this is what we now propose to do – laying the foundations of this wall on the freedom and sovereignty of the Turkish people.

A new treaty on the Straits leading from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean would amount to no more than 'an expression of forces operative in the realm of fact'. Thus, the result would be 'the perpetuation of disturbance instead of peace'. There would be two further consequences: one – 'the necessity for Russia to arm, arm, arm'; the other – 'the complete collapse of the Washington Naval Disarmament Treaty'. Chicherin insisted: 'Russia welcomes the idea of the Washington Conference to which, unfortunately, she was not invited. We shall be happy to participate in any general agreement for naval disarmament, but the opening of the Straits would render general naval disarmament impossible'. In a passionate peroration, Chicherin addressed Lord Curzon as a representative of old-style imperialists:

The Russian Revolution has transformed the Russian people into a nation whose entire energy is concentrated in its Government to a degree hitherto unknown in history; and if the war is forced upon that nation it will not capitulate. You are uneasy because our horsemen have reappeared on the heights of the Pamirs, and because you no longer have to deal with the half-witted Tsar who ceded the ridge of the Hindu Kush to you in 1895. But it is not war that we offer you, it is peace, based on the principle of a partition wall between us and on the principle<sup>33</sup> of the freedom and sovereignty of Turkey.

## Conclusion

As at the beginning so towards the end, we need to recognise that international relations constitute a seamless web. Of course, there are moments which at first appear to mark a clean break. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was one of them. However, during the years 1919–22, the new order took on a shape clearly composed to a considerable extent of pieces of the old order. The Versailles-Washington system in process of formation during these years was foreshadowed by earlier systems. For a period whose length is open to debate, it continued its existence through

the 1920s and possibly beyond. In this essay, we shall approach a conclusion by considering the views of two radically opposed analysts of the point reached by the mid-1920s, the revolutionary Trotsky and the conservative Lord Balfour.

Before then, however, a few more words about the year 1922 which ended with the formation of the USSR. The most significant of the conferences held during the year was at Genoa, notable for the first appearance at such a venue of Soviet Russia and the attempt to look forward as well as backwards. Its greatest drawback was the absence of the USA, which took considerable interest in the proceedings, especially the discussion of debts, but from its vantage point on the other side of the Atlantic. However, the Harding administration took a step backwards in the shape of the Fordney-McCumber Act of September 1922, which set up tariffs protecting the American economy. As Walter LaFeber observes: 'Europeans could not repay their debts if they could not sell their goods in the rich U.S. market'.<sup>34</sup> Regarding Russia in particular, the suggestion of an American exploratory economic mission thither faltered after Chicherin insisted that the mission stay out of Soviet internal affairs and come to Russia 'only under condition of the admittance in America... of our representatives for investigation of the American market'.<sup>35</sup>

On 25 July 1922, the USA took a significant step in the recognition of the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The explanation was given that, while the USA had consistently asserted that 'the disturbed conditions of Russian affairs may not be made the occasion for the alienation of Russian territory', the principle was not infringed on this occasion because the Baltic governments had been 'set up and maintained by an indigenous population'.<sup>36</sup> The same principle could be applied to the loss of Poland, Finland and Bessarabia, no doubt. All in all, the Soviet loss of territory previously incorporated in the Tsarist empire was as significant as that incurred by its Rapallo partner from the German Empire. Thus, the Soviet Union formed on 30 December 1922 was exposed to the West as the Weimar Republic was to the East. Looking back from our present vantage point, we can see here some of the origins of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939, and of the ensuing war.

A post-Soviet historian has asserted that, far from being the result of expansionism on the part of Lenin and his comrades, pressure for the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics came from many quarters, the Far East, Central Asia and Transcaucasia among them, 'for the creation and formation of a strictly and uniformly centralised, unitary state, succeeding in its own way to the [Tsarist] idea of "a unified and indivisible Russia"'.<sup>37</sup> Already, then, there could be evidence of continuity in internal as well as in external affairs. Throughout 1922, there was evidence of the Third International losing some of its original impetus, a further pointer in the same direction.

On 12 December 1922, Chicherin's deputy Litvinov made a response at a Disarmament Conference held in Moscow to the collective declaration of the Polish, Finnish, Estonian and Latvian delegations, all former subjects of the Russian Empire. It was well known, he asserted, 'that the League of Nations, managed by the Great Powers which form part of the so-called Entente Cordiale, has systematically rejected and still rejects all proposals, even the most modest, bearing on a real reduction of armaments, that it even rejects resolutions of a similar character, and that it prefers palaver on so-called "oral disarmament" to real work'. Playing the principal part in these negotiations though it was, France was increasing rather than reducing its armaments. It had not yet ratified the Washington agreement. It was threatening to strangle Germany.<sup>38</sup>

Just over three years later, at the beginning of 1926, Trotsky set out his views on the international situation. He began with an analysis of 'American Pacifism in Practice', the 'most graphic expression and exposure' of the essence of which he found in the Washington Conference, where the UK had surrendered its naval superiority without a fight. Pacifism of a sort had resulted from the USA's 'monstrous economic superiority'. The way had been prepared 'peacefully' for US military superiority 'in the subsequent historical period'.

As for the Dawes Plan of 1924 drawn up by the banker Charles G. Dawes to solve the problem of reparations stemming from Versailles, Trotsky commented that, for a bargain price of 800 million marks, 'Wall Street placed its Controller astride the neck of the German people'. At about the same time, the Americans had also established a financial stranglehold on Great Britain and France. Stanley Baldwin was not only the British Prime Minister; he also held the post of 'chief tax collector for America in a province called Europe'. Giving way to the USA on the question of oil, Great Britain was also obliged to lower the price of rubber. Trotsky declared:

It is to this United States, who brooks no obstacle on her path, who views each rise in prices of raw materials she lacks as a malicious assault upon her inalienable right to exploit the whole world – it is to this new America, wildly on the offensive, that dismembered, divided Europe finds itself counterpoised – a Europe, poorer than before the war, with the framework of its markets still more restricted, loaded with debts, torn by antagonisms and crushed by bloated militarism.

Of course, for Trotsky, there was no escape for European capitalism and the only way out of the continent's difficulties was revolution, to which in any case American capitalism was driving it. In Great Britain in particular, there would soon be a strike of miners and transport workers as 'the economic situation of England brings nearer the hour when the English working class

will sing the *Internationale* at the top of their voices'. The situation was no better in France and Germany, and the way was opening for the victory of Europe's revolutionary proletariat.

Meanwhile, the USA was 'compelled to base its power on an unstable Europe, that is, on tomorrow's revolutions of Europe and on the national-revolutionary movement of Asia and Africa'. Requiring an ever larger outlet to maintain equilibrium at home, the USA would bring in more elements of disorder and thus pave the way towards her own revolution. En route, 'The Soviet United States of Europe, together with our Soviet Union, will serve as the mightiest of magnets for the peoples of Asia...In alliance with the insurgent Orient, the European proletariat will wrest from American capital the control of world economy and will lay the foundations for the Federation of Socialist Peoples of the whole earth'.<sup>39</sup> Apocalyptic in his prognosis, Trotsky made some shrewd points in his analysis of the global situation at the beginning of 1926.

A year earlier, the veteran British statesman Lord Balfour had made a statement concerning the pacific settlement of international disputes. Although his outlook was much more conservative and restricted than Trotsky's, he was nevertheless forced to face the great changes that had come over international relations since 1919. The League of Nations had been hampered by the absence from it of several of the world's most powerful nations, in particular the USA. As a consequence, it could not activate its Covenant to anything like a full extent. In 'extreme cases', arising from 'deep-lying causes of hostility, which for historic or other reasons divide great and powerful States', the League was incapable of action. The Covenant 'provided no specific remedy for certain international differences' and 'objections to universal and compulsory arbitration might easily outweigh its theoretical advantages'. However, where it could do nothing, it was better for the League not to worry, as it was for a human being not to brood about the possibility of an illness requiring a major operation. Balfour concluded:

that the best way of dealing with the situation is with the co-operation of the League, to supplement the Covenant by making special arrangements in order to meet special needs. That these arrangements should be purely defensive in character, that they should be framed in the spirit of the Covenant, working in close harmony with the League and under its guidance, is manifest. And... these objects can best be attained by knitting together the nations most immediately concerned and whose differences might lead to a renewal of strife by means of treaties framed with the sole object of maintaining, as between themselves, an unbroken peace.<sup>40</sup>

Certainly, like Trotsky, although less explicitly than the revolutionary leader, the Conservative peer was taking a global view. In the estimate of

Alfred Zimmern, however, Balfour drew the inspiration for his ideas less from Geneva, the ostensible focus of his observations, than from Washington. There were three respects, Zimmern argued, in which the Washington treaties constituted a system superior to that in operation pre-war: they were not exclusive, against any power or group of powers, but inclusive; they provided for 'full and frank communication' amounting to obligatory consultation; and they promoted at least some disarmament. However, regular conferences, as implied by the letter of Versailles and the spirit of Washington, had not occurred.<sup>41</sup>

This was largely because of the USA's reluctance to involve itself in such meetings. A further weakness in the international systems, of course, was the belated inclusion of the Soviet Union in the League of Nations in 1934, the year after Germany and Japan had left it. Early in 1935, V.M. Molotov, deputy to Litvinov who had succeeded Chicherin as Foreign Commissar in 1930, spoke to the Seventh Soviet Congress. Germany and Japan had withdrawn from the League in order to build up their arms and get ready for war, he argued. Similarly, the Washington agreement had collapsed because of the race for naval armaments and preparation for war in the Pacific. There was open talk of war against the Soviet Union in Japan, while the Nazi Party in Germany had 'frankly proclaimed its historical mission to be the seizure of territories in the Soviet Union'.<sup>42</sup>

Whatever system there had ever been in Versailles and Washington was by this time no more. By this time, too, Stalin's purges had begun following the assassination of Kirov in December 1934. These two developments were intertwined. For just as Lenin's revolution was intimately connected with the rise of the 'Versailles-Washington system', so was Stalin's revolution similarly tied to its fall. Once again, compartmentalisation in academic investigation is shown to have unfortunate consequences. The exclusive concentration on either foreign or internal policy leads to distortion.

Equally, to concentrate on one part of the world to the exclusion of others also leads to distortion. Thus, talk of a 30-year European civil war from 1914 to 1945 can be misleading in the extreme if lacking in wider awareness. At the very least, the Versailles-Washington system is a concept comprehending Asia and the Pacific as well as Europe and the Atlantic, with the role of the USA supereminent in importance.

To finish on a modish note, an investigation of the 'Versailles-Washington system' via Google has produced no fewer than 87 'hits', one of the more interesting coming from Russia itself in the shape of an article 'Back to the Concert: Global This Time'. The author, Vyacheslav Nikonov, calls for a return to the leading concept of the nineteenth century, but now not just European but global in coverage, with a still significant role for post-Soviet Russia.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, any world system without the participation of Russia still bestriding Europe and Asia today would be as inadequate as was the Versailles-Washington system in the 1920s.<sup>44</sup>

## Notes

1. For example, L.C.F. Turner, *Origins of the First World War* (London, 1970).
2. A footnote on this point could be almost endless. For example, see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997).
3. Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power* (London, 1996), p. 16.
4. Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918–1935* (London, 1936), p. 66.
5. For example, see Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon, 1799–1815* (Oxford, 2002).
6. Zimmern, *The League*, p. 68.
7. G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley (eds), *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914* (London, 1934), vol. ix, part ii, p. vi.
8. James B. Scott, *President Wilson's Foreign Policy* (New York, 1918), pp. 354–63.
9. In *My Life*, Trotsky himself put the point more succinctly: 'I will issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world and then shut up shop.' Pestkovsky and Trotsky quoted in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, (London, 1953), p. 16.
10. Richard K. Debo, *Revolution and Survival: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1917–1918* (Liverpool, 1979), p. 420.
11. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 68.
12. Scott, *Wilson's Foreign Policy*, pp. 354–63; J.M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 400–2. See also Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* (London, 1968).
13. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, pp. 110–11.
14. Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918–1921* (Montreal, 1992), pp. 37–41.
15. For Chicherin's letter of 4 February, see Jane Degras (ed.), *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, vol. 1, 1917–1924 (London, 1951), pp. 137–9.
16. Degras (ed.), *Soviet Documents*, vol. 1, p. 136; J. Riddle (ed.), *Founding the Communist International* (New York, 1987), pp. 31–3, with Lenin's own italics.
17. From a speech to a Moscow party conference in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 276.
18. Robert M. Slusser and Jan F. Triska, *A Calendar of Soviet Treaties, 1917–1957* (Stanford, 1959), pp. 1–20.
19. Yelena Belevich and Vladimir Sokolov, 'Foreign Affairs Commissar Georgy Chicherin', *International Affairs*, Moscow, 3, 1991, p. 95.
20. *Congressional Record*, 4 March 1921.
21. Harold J. Goldberg (ed.), *Documents of Soviet-American Relations*, vol. 1, *Intervention, Famine Relief, International Affairs, 1917–1933* (Gulf Breeze, 1993), pp. 262–3.
22. Paul Dukes, *The USA in the Making of the USSR: The Washington Conference, 1921–1922, and 'Uninvited Russia'* (London, 2004), pp. 30–4, 38–43.
23. *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–7.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–3, 106–10, 115–22.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
27. Michael J. Fry, *Illusions of Security; North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918–1922* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 193–4; Merlo J. Pusey, *Charles Evans Hughes*, 2 vols (New York, 1951), vol. 2, p. 525.
28. J. Saxon Mills, *The Genoa Conference* (London, 1922), pp. 66–9; Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 359.

29. Mills, *The Genoa Conference*, pp. 117–21, 137.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 214, 401–15; Stephen White, *The Origins of Detente: The Genoa Conference and Soviet-Western Relations, 1921–1922* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 180–2. White suggests that the uncompromising nature of the memorandum could have been influenced by Lenin's objections to earlier vacillations.
31. Mills, *The Genoa Conference*, pp. 181, 184; White, *The Origins*, p. 190.
32. *Papers relating to the Hague Conference, June–July 1922* (London, 1922), Cmd. 1724, records that there was no agreement on property, debts and credits.
33. *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922–1923: Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace* (London, 1923), Cmd. 1814, pp. 148–9.
34. Walter LaFeber, *The American Age* (New York, 1989), p. 325.
35. Katherine A.S. Siegel, *Loans and Legitimacy, The Evolution of Soviet-American Relations, 1919–1933* (Lexington, 1996), pp. 71–2.
36. Dukes, *The USA*, p. 115.
37. L.N. Nezhinskii, 'U istokov bol'shevistsko-unitarnoi vneshnei politiki (1921–1923gg.)', *Otechestvennaya istoriya*, 1, 1994, p. 89.
38. Degras (ed.), *Soviet Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 351–2.
39. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1926/1926-europe.htm>.
40. *Statement by the Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain MP on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to the Council of the League of Nations, respecting the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, Geneva March 12 1925* (London, 1925), Cmd. 2368, pp. 4–10. Zimmern, *The League*, p. 357, points out that the statement was attributed to Austen Chamberlain, who 'publicly acknowledged the real authorship' of Balfour.
41. Zimmern, *The League*, pp. 360–2.
42. *Soviet Documents*, vol. 3, p. 104.
43. Reproduced from the journal *Russia in Global Affairs* as at <http://eng.global-affairs.ru/numbers/1/447.html>.
44. Many thanks to Cathryn Brennan for her comments and suggestions.

# 11

## From 'State of the Art' to 'State Art': The Rise of Socialist Realism at the Tretyakov Gallery

Mary Hannah Byers

'Museums are not to be the result of simple administrative acts but rather the natural outcome of the Marxist-Leninist struggle'

Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, curator at the State Tretyakov Gallery,  
1929–32

Between 1928–32, the State Tretyakov Gallery (STG) in Moscow rearranged most of its permanent display galleries to reflect a revised history of Russian art based on principles of Marxism-Leninism, transforming itself from a pre-revolutionary institution embodying the bourgeois values of the Moscow merchant class to a bastion of Marxist-Leninist ideals. Viewed in this new context, works of art were not experienced from a simple aesthetic standpoint but rather as fragments of an overall mosaic representing a history of class struggle.

The Marxist-Leninist method of museum display developed by the STG was eventually championed by *Narkompros* (People's Commissariat of Enlightenment) and used as a model for all other displays of fine art throughout the USSR. The Dialectical Materialist content and design of these exhibitions were critical in helping to form the style that came to epitomise Soviet visual culture: Socialist Realism. The reorganisation of the STG reveals one way the theory and practice of a proposed advent in Marxist-Leninist thought was gradually adopted by the government only after the movement's tenets had been developed by others, a finding very much in sympathy with our current, more nuanced understanding of Soviet culture.

The term Dialectical Materialism holds two meanings when applied to the history of Russian art. History can be revised and retold in specifically Marxist terms, through class struggle and the gradual rise of the working class. In 'Marxist art history', works of art illustrate epic struggles rather than being original creations of genius or a personal artistic vision.

Marxist art history lends itself well to a textbook but requires more finesse in the display of art in a museum setting. Instead of arranging paintings chronologically or by artist, the works on display are selected for their ability to depict a particular aspect of the class struggle. If the message is too subtle or obscure, additional signposting in the way of added labels and explanations becomes necessary. To present an art collection in a Marxist way, the visitor must read through the display, almost like reading a book except that the illustrations are real paintings or objects. The Dialectical Materialist display is not to be confused with the Dialectical Materialist painting style, though the former gave rise to the latter. The Dialectical Materialist painting style is an attempt to paint a picture from a Marxist point of view, depicting some aspect of the class struggle and, ideally, showing a progression of time whereby conditions of life are seen to be noticeably improving. Although it is quite impossible to separate the Dialectical Materialist approach to painting from the exhibition displays that gave rise to it, this chapter will focus on the STG's arrangement of its permanent collection between 1928–32 based on the freshly minted principles of Marxist-Leninist Dialectical Materialism.

The STG is the ideal venue for such a case study as it later became the Central Museum of Art of the USSR and is generally credited with early innovations in Soviet museum administration. There were four institutions the Communist Party charged with the task of 'creating collections and literature surrounding exhibitions from 1917 onwards'.<sup>1</sup> These were the STG, the State Russian Museum, The Repin Institute, and the Union of Artists. The latter two were studio schools, specialising in the technical training of artists. The former two were, and remain, important museums of Russian art. Both the STG and the State Russian Museum were formidable collections that made significant strides in the shaping of Socialist Realism, and, to a large extent, their exhibitions' policies complemented one another. However, for much of the Soviet era, the STG functioned as the nerve center of the Soviet art world with regional museums often acting as satellites to its centralised model.

### **Approaches to display and rise of the temporary exhibition**

The founder of the Tretyakov Gallery, Pavel Tretyakov (1832–98), displayed his collection in the so-called 'salon style', fashionable across Europe. Named for the hanging scheme of the annual French Salon, where paintings were hung from floor to ceiling in several tiers, masterpieces were usually placed at eye level, with lesser works hanging nearer to the floor or closer to the ceiling. In the salon hang, the emphasis is on technical mastery, or perhaps subject, but not chronology. Also, the works of a single artist are more likely to be placed according to size and subject, rather than being grouped together to show the artist's full range.

The salon style of Pavel Tretyakov's day changed radically only when the gallery became the official property of the Soviet government in 1918. Before then, in accordance with Tretyakov's bequest of August 31, 1892, the Gallery had fallen under the auspices of the Moscow City Duma.<sup>2</sup> Between bequest and nationalisation, the Gallery did not pursue a consistent approach to collection presentation. Most notably, in 1913, the new Gallery Director Igor Grabar initiated a chronological salon hang to the presentation of the collection, meant to guide visitors through the development of Russian art, starting with antiquity and ending with contemporary work. Eventually Grabar's chronological displays were credited for producing innovations in contemporary style and technique, as the clear line of historic progression had been established.

Following the October Revolution, all significant private collections of artwork were nationalised, and many collections of Russian artwork were given to the STG. Indeed, the unprecedented number of acquisitions between 1918–21 made proper documentation impossible. The Gallery could no longer feature the entire permanent collection, necessitating a more selective approach to display, for example in the temporary exhibition. Grabar's chronological scheme was dismantled and many works were put in long-term storage, making room for revolving displays of recently acquired paintings, shown in the context of the core collection. This dynamic system of ever-changing displays allowed for fresh comparisons and new discoveries for artists, curators and critics. It laid the foundation for innovations in contemporary painting and helped to shape an emerging Soviet art form. In general, there was a radical shift from showing all the work, floor to ceiling, to selectively featuring a single school, artist or subject in a 'themed' exhibition, in some cases encouraging a deeper, more nuanced understanding of particular styles and innovations in the history of Russian painting.

### **Proletkul't and Narkompros**

Although *Proletkul't* (devoted to proletarian culture) is generally thought of as the most influential organisation in formulating the theory behind Soviet cultural policy, in reality *Narkompros* was more important as far as museums were concerned. *Proletkul't* had been conceived of as an independent organisation to promote proletarian art, based on purely Marxist principles, which stated that the art of the proletariat should be a spontaneous yet tasteful expression arising from class-based awareness, totally divorced from all bourgeois antecedents.<sup>3</sup> The STG was firmly rooted in bourgeois aesthetic antecedents as a former bastion of middle-class merchant tastes. *Proletkul't* tended to view all pre-revolutionary cultural institutions with disdain and appealed to them to incorporate Marxist-Leninist theory into their various missions. It was *Proletkul't* who first outlined the need to create a Marxist-

Leninist version of art history. The STG understood the importance of reinterpreting its entire permanent collection based on *Proletkul't's* vision to create a theoretical-historical context from which to launch proletarian culture. A simultaneous and mutual mistrust and dependency pervaded relations between *Proletkul't* and the STG.<sup>4</sup>

Grabar remained Director of the Gallery and was eager to reconstitute his original chronological displays, as in 1913, but with a firm theoretical grounding, and with some rooms devoted entirely to temporary exhibitions. He met with *Glavnauka*, a section of *Narkompros* responsible for research institutions, to discuss ways in which the STG could adopt a more scientific approach to arranging its displays. *Glavnauka* emphasised the need to exploit the educational potential of the museum and play down its role as aesthetic arbiter. *Glavnauka* suggested that special departments be created within the Museum to focus on current agricultural and economic issues. These would create a context for other didactic display materials, such as placards and posters outlining the economic tasks facing socialist countries.<sup>5</sup> While fully implementing these ideas would take years, the genesis for the Marxist-Leninist display is here in Grabar's discussion with *Glavnauka* in 1924.

The following year, under Anatoly Lunacharsky's leadership, *Narkompros* announced that art is a third 'front' in the battle for socialism, the others being defence and the economy. Art should fortify the first two fronts. For Lunacharsky, a 'cohesive theory for the future development of this culture' must get underway.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the basic concept for Marxist art history was in evidence by 1925. Prominent Marxist historian, Gauzenstein suggested that art become a 'prism' through which the whole of society could be reflected.<sup>7</sup>

In 1926, Lunacharsky then published *Ocherki Marksistkoi teorii iskusstv* (*Notes on a Marxist Theory of Art*) in which he outlined a well-devised strategy for a Marxist reinterpretation of Russian art. Lunacharsky argued that Marx had correctly identified art as a determining factor in human interaction.<sup>8</sup> The form of art a society produced indicated the type of labour network it was based on. Lunacharsky suggested that for Marx art was a natural embodiment of the economic base of a society. If the economic conditions of socialism were in place, as in Russia, art style should reflect this fact.

The STG became so involved in reworking its displays according to Lunacharsky's ideas and on feedback from *Glavnauka*, that only two exhibitions were staged in 1926 (less than in any year during either World War). All of the Gallery's resources were channeled into the redisplay of its collection based on the Marxist-Leninist art history that was currently being written. From 1928, the results of these efforts were apparent in exhibitions. Marxist-Leninist displays would require more supplementary text than any exhibition before or since. Curatorial staff published a guide for

internal use, *Izuchenie muzeinogo zritelya* (*A Study of the Museum Audience*), to assist staff in writing theoretically-sound Marxist-Leninist explanations of the works on display. Gallery curator Lazar V. Rosenal asks, 'How can we determine what a painting means to an observer? Is there an objective way? Can we create attitudes? The answer is, "Probably" ...with lots of extra words'.<sup>9</sup> Another curator, E.A. Tyurin put it more explicitly in his contribution, 'The Museum Audience in the Process of Artistic-Education Work', the first to insist that shaping the visitor's reaction by using text alongside each painting was more effective when describing realism, as the masses responded more favorably to realism. If they responded to the painting, they were more likely to read the description, hoping for a narrative explanation, as opposed to reading explanations of abstract work, which they believed would be more esoteric and possibly pretentious. Tyurin thought that it was the exhibition's responsibility to get the audience to look at a painting from an 'objective, Marxist standpoint', rather than focusing on 'artistic, subjective' elements.<sup>10</sup> He added, 'We can shape both perception and taste with words. People like realism'.<sup>11</sup> While not empirically grounded, Tyurin's observation was probably accurate. The Gallery did have a new audience of workers from organised factory excursions, largely unfamiliar with art and tending to prefer subjects that looked life-like or that were sentimental or nostalgic. Subjects such as Ilya Repin's 'Boathaulers of the Volga' with its toiling human beasts-of-burden wearily struggling to lead a boat against the river's current, lend themselves easily to a Marxist interpretative narrative, with obvious metaphors about class struggle. Applying the same principles to Malevich's 'Black Square', a reductive minimalist composition of a black square painted onto a white background, is considerably more difficult. Realism became the preferred art form for both the STG staff and their visitors once the need to politicise the accompanying narratives was paramount.

The drawback of this approach was that the formal aspects of any given painting, i.e. the artist, technical mastery, stylistic innovations, colour scheme – in short, all of those attributes that make a painting an original masterpiece, ceased to be relevant. If the works were subsumed by explanatory labeling describing how the subject matter fit into the Marxist-Leninist history of class struggle, the efficacy of the displays depended not on the aesthetic experience of the painting, but on the political message conveyed by describing it. Curators and politicians were not long in realising that this type of narrative exhibition could take place anywhere, such as workers' clubs, collective farm meeting halls, and so on, with the same texts, but using photomechanical reproductions. Museums were subtly undermined by the transforming of paintings into political documents, reproduced and disseminated for their message. Their only recourse was to become the creators of such exhibitions and with helping to provide a context and platform on which to launch contemporary styles.

The Gallery Commission set up to create Marxist-Leninist art history was led by Aleksei A. Fedorov-Davydov (the pre-eminent Soviet art historian), with Yu. Druzhinin serving as Secretary. Other curators and critics in the Commission included N. Kovalenko, M. Alpatov, G. Zhidkov, A. Grech, N. Morgunov, M. Konoplev, and M. Kolpach. From the outset it was deemed critical that the visual culture of the peasant and working classes be given equal, or even more, prominence than that of the middle and upper classes. As the STG had never been in the business of acquiring folk art, a vast number of acquisitions became necessary.<sup>12</sup> The Commission's premise was '*bor'ba stilei = bor'ba klassov*' (the struggle for [art] style is the class struggle). The Marxist reorganisation of Gallery displays sought to present evidence of class struggle over the last several centuries, making it seem as if the lower classes had been attempting to break their aesthetic chains since the Middle Ages. Slowly the idea of struggling for art style would come to be equated with the economic class struggle, culminating in the visual/economic triumph of socialism/Socialist Realism. These two struggles – class equality and realism in art – were to be juxtaposed and made to seem as if they corresponded directly with one another, justifying contemporary realism as the 'natural' result of the revolution and the visual victory of the working class.

### **A brief Marxist-Leninist version of the history of Russian art**

The STG Commission produced an outline of art history. Art, it was stated, started becoming a legitimate means of expression for the peasantry and working classes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the end of the eighteenth century, a certain moralistic strain in painting became evident, encouraging the paternalistic, benign treatment of serfs. The visual culture of the Orthodox Church went hand-in-glove with the monarchy, however, the sole aim was to reconcile the masses with the symbols of power wielded by the regime. (The Gallery Commission planned to cite the example of the Cathedral of the Savior in the Krasnopresenskii District of Moscow, constructed at great expense and back-breaking labour, built to commemorate the War of 1812 and to glorify the government's role in the war). During the late nineteenth century, following the emancipation of the serfs, art began to reflect the values of the recently formed petty-bourgeoisie or class of factory owners. This resulted in only a sentimentalised, artificial view of peasant life. The class stratification of the countryside was accompanied by 'capitalist divisions within the peasant economy, creating the kulak (land-owning peasant) and the proletarianisation of the peasant – all recorded in the art of the petty bourgeoisie'.<sup>13</sup>

In the Marxist reading of early-twentieth century painting styles, all of the so-called socially-aware paintings of village life carried implicit approval of kulak strength in the countryside. But, according to the Gallery

Commission, there were peasant revolts and much opposition between the kulak and the proletarian peasants. As the class conflicts of village life became increasingly evident, painting turned from this difficult subject to more purely formal concerns. The 'art for art's sake' mantra of *Mir Iskusstva* (*World of Art*), using contrived subject matter, and rich, vivid colours was cited as an art style divested of social critique and social utility and therefore devoid of meaning.<sup>14</sup>

After 1917, the proletariat had used art in the 'class struggle against capitalist elements in the countryside and as a means for inciting the impoverished lower-middle class peasant into collaborating with the collectivisation and industrialisation of agriculture'.<sup>15</sup> In formulating a visual language that expressed the ideas of the victorious working class, the avant-garde sensibilities of Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism and Rayism, were recast into emblems of the working people, though this charade could hardly continue indefinitely. After all, these images confused most people unless they were combined with words, such as El Lizzitsky's iconic work 'Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge', whereby the meaning of a geometric suprematist design literally had to be spelled out to convey its revolutionary message to the masses. In more recent times, a return to realism had been fostered and encouraged as the art style understood by all, provided the subject could be supplemented by lengthy Marxist-Leninist inspired explanations.

## **Marxist-Leninist art history and the interpretation of the Rococo Age**

To ensure ideological correctness, the planned Marxist-Leninist reorganisation was implemented in stages. The first phase of the plan was to focus on the art of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Rococo era. The first hall of the proposed Marxist displays would be dedicated to the 'growth of commercial capital and the birth of industry as the first steps in the deterioration of feudal art with its religious abstractness'.<sup>16</sup> The narrative would explain that as the economy had evolved out of the feudal era into the industrialised age, art began to move away from the church and towards individualised portraits of specific people or character 'types', indicative of a growing sense of individuality and ownership associated with increased capital. The second exhibition space would be devoted to art of Peter the Great's reign, demonstrating the ways in which visual culture strove to propagate serfdom. These displays would feature the achievements of Old Russian Masters as well as foreign artists who studied and lived in Russia between 1750–1800. The placard for 'The Art of the Nobility' would read: 'In the second half of the eighteenth century the Nobility was the ruling class who monopolised the means of production, taking charge of the commercial economy. Art celebrated the Nobility, its

“valor” and “splendour”, and served as propaganda, justifying the rulers. A highly sumptuous art form was required. Rococo achieved these ends very well.<sup>17</sup> The spaces that followed sought to educate visitors on hallmarks in the development of Russian painting of the Rococo era, illustrating how aesthetic developments were linked to economic developments.

Next in the Commission’s chronology was the growth of the market economy, resulting in the class struggle evident in the Pugachev Rebellion. The growth of capitalism led to the dominance of a bourgeois outlook, which ultimately weakened the aesthetic and visual hegemony of the aristocracy. The ruling class’s accommodation of bourgeois views, however, actually led to revitalisation of country estates and village life and the system of serfdom on which they depended, all of which served to reinforce the powerful role of the tsarist autocracy. Moving on through the century, the next hall would take the audience to the end of the eighteenth century and of the Rococo era, by showing the art of contemporary ‘progressive middle nobility, freeing itself from its past and creating realist, intimate portraits being very far from the splendor of the court though it remained subordinate to this ruling style’.<sup>18</sup>

### **Floor plan of the Marxist-Leninist displays of the Rococo period**

The first section of the display, ‘Origins’ (*Zarozhdenie*), focused on mid-eighteenth century court portraiture. Portraits of the Empresses Elizabeth the First, and Catherine the Great, along with Tsar Peter II, were featured beside portraits of young princesses and other minor members of the Romanov Court. These spaces are interesting for what they failed to show. All other areas of the exhibition abound with contemporary examples of decorative art that serve to situate the fine arts in an overall environment suggestive of the period. In this regard, this first room is perhaps the least impressive of the entire display. Placed onto bare walls, stripped of their context of grandeur, the regal sense of class power conveyed in these paintings is diminished as much as possible.

The next hall focused on art of the minor nobility. Out of keeping with the other rooms, these spaces feature landscape instead of portraiture. Placed alongside an Italianate chair, and a piece of classical statuary, the paintings suggest a reliance on the classical Italian landscape shared by many Russian artists of this period. Subsequent spaces returned to the specifically Russian subject matter. Mikhail Shibanov’s *Celebrating the Marriage Contract* of 1777 hung awkwardly from the lintel of the doorway of room number 9, requiring the visitor to duck beneath the painting to enter into the rooms beyond. This painting depicts the moment when a young peasant couple made a marriage contract. Another romanticised version of peasant life is again poignantly illustrated in Aleksei Venetsianov’s *In the Fields. Spring*. Venetsianov was

himself a noted Petersburg portraitist who painted his serfs engaged in daily labour while dressed in their Sunday finery. In Venetsianov's work, no aspect of the workaday drudgery of peasant lives is revealed. A sprightly maiden dressed in what is likely her wedding-day apparel, appears to lead the horses through the muddy fields with effortless grace. Other paintings included Vasili Tropinin's *The Lacemaker* (1823). This painting depicts a pretty young girl engaged in creating a work of elaborate fine lace. The dreadful working conditions of lacemakers, the long-hours and fine needlework that caused eyesight to prematurely deteriorate, had been well documented in French social literature of the time, excerpts of which were quoted in a free-standing text panel. As the panel explained, all of these depictions of labour are characteristic of how the ruling classes preferred to conceptualise serf-life, as romantic and idealised, completely divorced from its darker side. A display case beneath the paintings pointed to a diametrically opposed view of serf life, including sticks used to beat serfs, manacles and other instruments of torture and confinement.<sup>19</sup> The disparity between the idealised peasant life depicted in the paintings contrasted sharply with the more grim realities of serfdom as seen in the objects placed below. As the free-standing panel of copious texts explained, all the paintings were selected for their deliberate distortion of peasant life.

The next spaces were dedicated to art of the court bureaucracy. Placement of elaborate candelabra and Greco-Roman statuary indicated the popularity of mythological subject matter. Portraits of grand ladies, landscapes and historical subjects contribute to the *mélange* of objects and tastes preferred by administrators of the court. The final section of this display featured art of the 'upper nobility'. Display cases interspersed with overstuffed furniture of the period added to the meaning of the paintings on view by suggesting the original environment in which they would have hung. A large, nearly mural-size canvas depicting a mythological battle scene dominated the wall in the last room on the art style of the court bureaucracy. Vapid, baroque renderings of cupids are placed over the flanking portals.

Attempts to illustrate the continuity between peasant and aristocrat were realised most effectively in the Gallery's portrayal of eighteenth-century peasant life. One year later, Fedorov-Davydov reflected on the Gallery's successes in reorganising the Rococo era displays:

Peasant painting does not cease to be painting just because it decorates the base of distaffs rather than pictures. The crudest *lubok* doesn't stop being art, however much it 'offends' the aesthetic gaze of the snobbish art historian. These *lubki*, oleographs, embroideries and such like are necessary in order to reveal the 'insular' position of aristocratic and bourgeois art, to destroy the illusion that the art of a given period is purportedly confined to the 'high art' of easel painting; to show how the

ruling class uses art to mould and suppress the consciousness of the repressed classes.<sup>20</sup>

The primitive painting style of a series of nine portraits of peasant subjects, dressed in the garb of various regions, indicate that they were painted by serf artisans. As well as more *lubki* (wood-block prints), wooden details typical of more prosperous peasant homes, with textiles and stylized tools were also featured. A horse-motif ran across the bottom of an embroidered cloth placed atop a chest. Colourful distaffs for spinning, in distinctive styles of various regions, were poised on top of the chest. A window surround (*nalichnik*) of the Nizhni Novgorod region dominated the centre of the wall. Carved friezes taken from the interior and exteriors of wealthier peasant homes completed the display.

The next section of the displays was dedicated to the middle bourgeoisie. The rooms were dominated by portraiture and paintings of family scenes and middle-class interiors. Although additional text was minimal, the lines between peasant and middle-class art were sharply drawn. The middle bourgeoisie clearly aspired to the art style of the nobility, its members having profited from serfdom as well as the aristocracy. Featuring art of the civil service sector of society, genre scenes of a county *zemstvo*, a town square and a Sunday market were visible. Pavel A. Fedotov's *The Major's Marriage Proposal* depicts an army major of good standing but without means arriving to offer a proposal of marriage to a wealthy merchant's daughter, hoping to improve his circumstances. Marriage as a business arrangement was a prominent theme in Fedotov's scathing portrayal of merchant life. A forerunner of the *Peredvizhniki*, this type of social-critical genre scene became increasingly popular towards the end of the nineteenth century and would be integral to the development of Socialist Realism. The last spaces were dedicated to the art of the upper nobility, where the work of Karl Bryullov was featured extensively. A placard of graphs describing the growth and proliferation of capitalism was placed in the doorway leading out of the exhibition.

All of the displays incorporated a super-abundant labeling scheme for the correct interpretation of the 'economic, social-political outlook and ideology of different classes'. The texts used quotations from contemporary artists and theoreticians, and, whenever possible, integrated excerpts from Marx, Engels and Lenin. The exhibition spaces were divided with large font-size, overarching slogans placed on the walls and over each doorway. A text panel in each room outlined the social-economic conditions and politics of each period, and explaining the class-specific attributes of each art style. Gallery Director, Mikhail Kristi stated: '...we know art is one of the strongest means of propaganda...it is a direct line to will...To give a representation and understanding of the dialectical and social economic premise to any work of art is impossible without labeling, or text added to

the exhibition; the ideological significance is not properly conveyed to the next generation'.<sup>21</sup> Most wall texts accompanying the Marxist-Leninist display featured economic data in diagrams and maps. Texts outlined class characteristics and class struggles in the words of contemporaries, taken from governmental decrees and personal recollections in order to, according to Kristi, 'give a view of the meaning art has had in class struggles, and how it played an agitational role in the development of the attitudes of the lower classes. These quotations help open art and its class direction and also form the idea of art as a socio-ideological process'.<sup>22</sup> In most cases, the labels provided by the Gallery were exceptionally lengthy. It was difficult to link all of the art works to the theme of class struggle and it was generally assumed that an uneducated audience was incapable of interpreting the works independently. As curator Nina Kovalenskaya stated, 'The most abundant textual material did not get the artistic components mixed up. The explanatory labels are the most important items hanging on our walls'.<sup>23</sup>

## Phase II

After the success of its Rococo period re-hang, in early 1930 the STG reorganised its entire collection of eighteenth-century and part of its nineteenth-century works according to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, with art as the visual embodiment of economic class struggles. This emphasised the fact that the skills of artists of middle-class or serf origin had been utilised to glorify their masters in much of eighteenth-century portraiture. Even after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, portraiture as a form of eulogy for the ruling elite resonated in late-nineteenth-century painting. Despite the success of the earlier revamping, Marxism-Leninism continued to regard nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fine art as primarily a bourgeois concern. Featuring paintings so deeply rooted in the bourgeois aesthetic was challenging to integrate into the Marxist-Leninist exhibition. The paintings themselves could not be altered. A grand portrait of a royal personage was still grand and therefore, anathema to socialism. In 1930 the display technique became even more elaborate as the presentation of the paintings could be altered by using other objects, images and texts to convey the atmosphere of oppression of the eighteenth century and the context in which the pictures were painted, resulting in a fresh, though more somber interpretation of works that had been displayed in the Gallery for many years. The technique came to be known as the *kompleksnaya vystavka* or ensemble exhibition.

In 1932 the decision was made to revamp the remainder of the permanent displays as the Rococo period had been, extending the art historical chronology to the contemporary period. All the displays were based on the ensemble type. As curator Fedorov-Davydov subsequently pointed out:

The greatest struggle focused on the principle of the ensemble, i.e. the combined display of various kinds of art. The museum fuddy-duddies made fun of the ensemble and deliberately distorted the idea behind it. They accused us of trying to kill painting, destroy art. They claimed that we wanted to hang engravings rather than paintings in museums, to set up beds and washstands and similar nonsense. This was but cheap demagoguery that had little to do with reality. First and foremost the ensemble was...the only way we could reveal and convincingly show the unity of a class's artistic ideology at a given stage in the class struggle, to show at times the very essence of a style, for of course it is not arbitrary or fortuitous that the art of a particular [class] should be geared toward paintings or decorative art. Without the ensemble we cannot show whether a style is monumental or intimate, whether it tends toward synthesis or differentiation, we cannot fully reveal whether it is far removed from life or whether it is dominated by the goals of serving everyday purposes (as does the poster, newspaper graphics, etc.). Only in the ensemble can the art of the 'lower social classes' be shown and compared with the art of the ruling classes.<sup>24</sup>

An analysis of these rooms, which were ordered chronologically from the turn of the nineteenth century onward, present a refinement of the earlier Marxist exhibition dedicated to the Rococo age. Presenting a polarity of class interests was achieved by listing opposing opinions side by side, in some cases giving a more truly representative view of the era. One of the first rooms the visitor entered as part of the late-nineteenth-century displays was that of the 'art of the bourgeois', which addressed ways in which the bourgeoisie had used art to ensure its predominance. The first wall of this room had a top heading reading, 'In the struggle with the developing worker and peasant revolutionary movements the nobility supported itself on the upper bourgeoisie, employing art to strengthen the autocratic-political regime'. Directly below was a facsimile of Pavel Tretyakov's decision to bequeath his art collection to the city of Moscow, demonstrating his patriarchal benevolence as a merchant collector and member of the bourgeoisie. Tretyakov's letter ostensibly functioned as an example of how the nobility depended on the class directly beneath them for moral and financial support. Other pieces on display included a needlework representation of peasant women dancing, renditions of large and lavish dwellings of the merchants and bourgeoisie, along with churches and a large portrait of the Romanov family. This ensemble style display was actually designed by Fedorov-Davydov and considered exemplary of the integration of Marxist-Leninist material into a series of art displays.

Anti-religious displays were included to show how the bourgeoisie had employed art for the 'religious poisoning and oppression of the masses'. A Madonna was shown along with a diagram of all the churches of the

Moscow Kremlin, both images that had been used to preserve the auto-cracy. A substantial quotation from Lenin read:

He who all his life works and is in need, religion teaches to submissively bear this earthly life, offering the comforting hope of a heavenly reward. Religion is a kind of spiritual home-brew in which slaves sink their human appearance, but the slave realises his slavery and rises in the struggle for liberation or else remains a slave. Workers conquer their religious prejudices and make a better life here on earth.

A placard below was based on an opposite point of view by art-historian, A. Prakhov, asserting that only the church could educate the masses.

The final area of the revamped chronological displays was devoted to the abstract movements that had been popular prior to the Revolution. These works were placed on black walls to indicate their 'inferiority' to other types of art that were more realist. By placing what had become controversial works, all excellent examples of Russian Neo-Primitivism and Cubism, onto 'black walls', they could still be easily viewed and integrated into the development of Russian art, yet treated as something different to be set apart as an anomaly, not to be copied or reinterpreted by contemporary artists under any circumstances. Here works by Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin and Liubov' Popova were visible. An accompanying text declared: 'Formalism and materialism – Cubism transformed into a self-imposed, perpetual game of the formal and technical approach to art'. A placard placed above the doorway, leading the visitor to the next room read, 'Deteriorated capitalism landed art in a daze of formalism and aimlessness. The victorious October Revolution led artists from this daze toward a new blossoming of the arts'. The lack of social meaning in abstract art was meant to be emphasised here, showing that a purely technical approach would result in a degenerate art form.

### **Criticisms and changes**

Over time, the prevailing criticism of officials and visitors alike of the Rococo and the remaining eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century displays, was that the Marxist-Leninist display technique deprived art of all 'emotional significance' by transforming paintings into objects used merely to punctuate the historical narrative. Curator Kovalenskaya maintained that art appreciation was at the core of the exhibition's mission, and not the illustration of class struggle. She wrote that supplementary material was intended to provide an explanation of the works and not overwhelm them.<sup>25</sup> However, some members of the Tretyakov staff contradicted her by arguing that if aesthetics were at the core of the exhibition then the emotional significance of 'high' art would only be perpetuated. For instance, an

impressive court portrait of Catherine the Great would continue to inspire awe and reverence in Soviet times unless the work was accompanied by a prominent text pointing to the ills and class struggles of her reign. Curatorial staff jointly wrote, 'It is clear that we need to expose the serf nature of art; if this weakens its direct influence then so be it. Only a critical attitude to past culture will adequately suit the present moment'.<sup>26</sup> Aesthetics would have to take a second place to depiction of the class struggle. If the emotive qualities of the painting were sacrificed as an end, the opportunity to instill ideas of class-consciousness was justified as a means. It was decided in 1930 that only a critical reinterpretation of past culture could adequately suit the Soviet future.<sup>27</sup>

There was a 'class struggle' in the Gallery; Kovalenskaya and Fedorov-Davydov on opposing sides. Those staff employed before 1917 thought, for the most part, of the art museum as purveyor of aesthetic convention. Art should be presented in a chronological fashion to show the progression of art history, highlighting key moments or innovations, and the pivotal artists who defined them. More recent employees championed the 'creative potential of revolutionary Marxism' and strove to create traveling exhibitions that stoked the fires of revolutionary fervor. Fedorov-Davydov likened the Tretyakov's situation with the larger struggle in society between lingering elements of bourgeois thought and that of the Soviet future.

Much wall space was devoted to explaining the differences between 'high' art (art of the exploiters), such as traditional easel painting and the classical architectural styles propounded by the academies of Western Europe, and 'low' art (art of the exploited), such as folk art, *lubki*, wooden carvings and so on. The superiority of 'low' art was asserted for its ability to reflect class struggles. The adornment of household goods and farm equipment, traditionally practiced by the peasantry, was more functional than 'high' art, portrayed as superfluous and decadent in its hackneyed glorification of the aristocracy.<sup>28</sup> This line of reasoning proved problematic in that, despite the Gallery's efforts to position folk art as the superior art form, inevitably the art of the aristocracy produced a more impressive overall effect. For example, a court portrait of the sitter in full regalia compared with a cheerfully painted farm tool was inherently unfair. After all, the original purpose of the painting was to communicate the subject's greatness to a wide audience. While the painted farm implement was not without its rustic charm, it was nearly impossible to make it look more impressive than the painting.

*Lubki*, spinning distaffs and window-surrounds did not possess the propaganda potential of the monumental works surrounding the Romanov court. Additionally, folk art carried negative associations of the recent past of serfdom. While the art of the oppressed can illustrate much about the class struggle, the general feeling of the time was that the Soviet era deserved a new style. The Marxist displays at the Tretyakov provided the

initial forum for experimenting with these ideas, for exploring the differences between 'high' and 'low' art and deciding what elements to take from both. The preeminent style that grew to define the Soviet era was derived from art of the aristocracy of earlier centuries and not the folk art of the peasantry to which it claimed a closer theoretical affinity.

Over the next several years, the Dialectical-Materialist display technique, with its juxtaposition of 'low' folk art with the 'high' decorative and fine arts of the middle and upper classes, proved ultimately unsustainable in spite of copious explanatory texts. Works of art based on an upper-class sensibility simply elicited a more favorable comparison. As the quality and efficacy of the bourgeois aesthetic became increasingly clear, an awareness emerged that perhaps the new style ought to resemble more closely that of the bourgeoisie and not align itself too closely with the folk tradition, as this art was too 'simple' and did not aptly reflect the majesty of the new regime. When Socialist Realism came into its own four years later, it remained indebted to the STG's initial experiments with Marxist-Leninist display techniques, in their exploration of the efficacy of comparative styles. Other museums followed the STG's experiments and sought to create their own Dialectical-Materialist displays. Overall, the Marxist-Leninist displays provide a telling description of the implicit collusion between art institutions and party organisations. STG initiatives would be sent in report form to *Narkompros*, who would often recast these initiatives into *prikazy*, *rezolyutsii*, *instruktsii*, or *dekrety*, to be sent back to the STG. By the time orders were received their requirements had long been met.

At this point the displays were deemed sufficiently effective to warrant hiring new staff members well versed in Marxism, and who officially belonged to the Communist Party. The new staff would help reorganise the remainder of the permanent collection along Marxist-Leninist lines.

### **Dialectical-Materialist displays and Dialectical-Materialist painting**

The Dialectical-Materialist style of painting that emerged in the early 1930s had its roots in the Marxist transformation of the permanent exhibitions at the STG. Ostensibly, the Dialectical-Materialist displays shaped the theme and style of contemporary painting in that they promoted a shift in class awareness by revealing social, economic, historic, and cultural meaning in the class struggle. In fact, once the Dialectical-Materialist exhibition had reached the end of its chronological historical progression, it demanded that contemporary painting point to class struggle in a more explicit and pre-determined fashion than any of its historic antecedents. The Dialectical-Materialist museum display required Dialectical-Materialist contemporary art in order to show the continuum

between the art of the past and art of the future. However, in 1931 there were not many truly Dialectical-Materialist paintings available for acquisition. Aside from Sokolov-Skalya and Deineka, few artists were seen to successfully portray the 'objective realism' of industry and the juxtaposition between old and new required by the style. The Tretyakov desperately sought Dialectical-Materialist works for its collection. As there were so few canvases available, curatorial staff resorted to soliciting the efforts of amateur painters. In doing so, the Gallery became one of the first institutions to begin collecting work from self-taught individuals who had learned to paint through factory schools. These efforts, while primitive, were, for a time, considered by many critics to more closely resemble an authentic Marxist 'by-product' of a Socialist society than the rigorous academic paintings of professional artists.

### **The STG as model of centralised museum administration**

By the end of 1931 museums in the Soviet Union were striving to create their own version of the Marxist displays the STG had pioneered the year before. The First Museum Congress on Planning and Methodological Work met early in 1931, agreeing that all museums should establish a Dialectical-Materialist approach to their permanent displays. In language firmly couched in Five Year Plan terminology museums were charged to 'outstrip and overtake museums in capitalist countries so that they might witness the exciting and independent development of museums in the USSR'.<sup>29</sup>

Early in 1932 a general tribune of 'art museum workers' met as part of the Five Year Plan. Their agenda was to assert to the vitality of museums in the Plan through the development of Marxist-Leninist approaches to display. Though the STG had begun planning its Marxist-Leninist reorganisation at least five years before, seemingly of its own volition, the critical and ideological success of this endeavor resonated with the times, effectively becoming the only plausible way for museums to rid their staff and their collections of bourgeois antecedents and remain relevant in Soviet life, serving the 'political enlightenment of the people'.<sup>30</sup>

In mid-1932 the STG altered its mission statement, proposing to place greater emphasis on 'the point of view of Dialectical-Materialism with regard to the intrinsic political enlightenment work in the art education of the masses'. The redefined aims of the Gallery were to work on: (1) the over-all conception of Russian art, from all eras beginning with ancient feudalism to the transition to the capitalist era, culminating in socialism; (2) a complete re-hang of the STG based on this notion; (3) an expansion of political enlightenment work in the Gallery; (4) the creation of a curatorial staff that are aware of all the latest methods of research for art museums.<sup>31</sup>

## Marxist art? A conclusion

In the post-modern, post-Soviet period, it is clear that Marxist art has not existed since class equality has not been achieved. Each social class creates its own distinct art form informed by the social realities of its period. With the rise of industrialisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bourgeois aesthetic superseded all else just as the bourgeoisie, as a class, began to rule society. Supposedly, the peasant and proletariat cultivated their own aesthetic, waiting and watching for the inevitable day when proletarian power, accompanied by its art, would take over, pushing away the bourgeois power and vision. The Marxist-Leninist displays of the STG were a supremely contrived and forced implementation of this view of art history. Understandably, it was easy to confuse working-class imitations of bourgeois art with independent proletarian experiments. The emerging tastes of the Soviet regime were increasingly bourgeois regardless. It is no wonder that the Marxist-Leninist method of display was abandoned entirely after several years. Nonetheless, these displays present a useful study in many regards, providing a telling glimpse at early attempts to create a coherent Soviet visual culture and world view. They are a unique experiment of Marxist-Leninist theory put into practice, and also an interesting case-study for museology and art administration in general. The Dialectical-Materialist underpinnings of both displays and painting styles were critical to the construction of the Soviet visual consciousness.

## Notes

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2. A.P. Botkina, *Pavel Mikhailovich Tret'yakov v zhizni i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1995), p. 247.
3. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 20.
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5. STG Archive, 8 II 47, *Protokoly i perepiska s Narkomprosom*.
6. A.V. Lunacharsky, *Zadachi prosveshcheniya v sisteme sovetskogo stroitel'stva* (Moscow, 1925), pp. 4, 5.
7. Gauzenstein, 'Sotsial'nye osnovy iskusstva; rech', proiznesennaya pered sobranie kommunistov MK RKP (b)', *Novaya Moskva*, 1925, p. 43.
8. A.V. Lunacharsky, *Ocherki Marksistskoi teorii iskusstv* (Moscow, 1926), p. 9.
9. L.V. Rozental, 'Tsirkulyatsiya publiky po galleree', *Izuchenie Muzeinogo zritel'ia*, p. 82.
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12. STG Archive, 8 II 302, *Sobranie materialov s marksistkoi vystavki 1929–1930*, p. 1.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, Section III B.
15. *Ibid.*, Section IV.

16. Ibid., Section 1 of exhibition, 7.
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19. N. Kovalenskaya, 'Opyt marksistskoi vystavki v gosudarstvennoi tret'iakovskoi galeree' *Sovetskii Muzei*, p. 55.
20. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Sovetskii Muzei*, Translation by Wendy Salmond, [http://www.x-traonline.org/vol5\\_1/soviet\\_art\\_museum.html](http://www.x-traonline.org/vol5_1/soviet_art_museum.html)
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30. E. Klemm, 'Tribuna rabotnikov muzeya', *Sovetskii Muzei*, 2(1), pp. 116–18.
31. STG Archive, 8 1/177, 'Ot NKPa 3/8/32, Ot sekretarya muzeinykh rabotnikov, Lagazidze. 'Informatsiia iz protokola kongressa nauchnogo sektora', p. 108.

# 12

## Politics Projected into the Past: What Precipitated the 1936 Campaign Against M.N. Pokrovsky?

*David Brandenberger*

One of the earliest professionally-trained Marxist historians to be associated with the Russian revolutionary movement, M.N. Pokrovsky was enormously influential as a teacher, pedagogue and scholar. He was also a prominent administrator, serving as Deputy Commissar of the Enlightenment and head of the Communist Academy and Institute of the Red Professors from 1918 until his career was cut short by cancer in 1932. That said, his reputation outlived him by only four years before coming under a withering official assault in the days and weeks after 27 January, 1936. Much of the literature on the Stalinist state's suppression of the so-called 'Pokrovsky school' contends that this campaign was the inevitable outcome of a 'Great Retreat' on the historical front that had been foreshadowed in party and state decrees since the early 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Archival evidence, however, indicates that the shift caught many on the ground by surprise. A.V. Shestakov, one of the most prominent court historians of the Stalin period, was bombarded at public lectures during the late 1930s by questions from audience members struggling to understand the regime's break with the materialist internationalism that Pokrovsky had popularised during the first 15 years of Soviet power.<sup>2</sup> Some, recalling Lenin's endorsement of the academician's seminal *Russian History in its Most Condensed Form*, asked why the party's founder would have endorsed an unMarxist, anti-historical school of thought.<sup>3</sup> Others inquired about the timing of the sea-change in official historiography, a certain Vasiliev in Leningrad asking: 'Why have people begun to talk about Pokrovsky's errors only in the past two years?' Another added bluntly: 'What triggered the denunciation of M.N. Pokrovsky's "school?" Who among our historians started the fight against it?'<sup>4</sup>

The landmark study on the 1936 campaign against Pokrovsky, authored by M.V. Nechkina, identifies the person responsible for launching the pogrom as none other than I.V. Stalin. Nechkina, a former student of Pokrovsky's, witnessed the affair first-hand and her interpretation has

become a fundamental part of the literature on the subject.<sup>5</sup> Particularly popular has been her attribution of the campaign; somewhat less well-received has been her dating of the historiographic coup itself to 1936 rather than to the 1932–4 period, as is often claimed.<sup>6</sup> This chapter reexamines the wane of Pokrovsky's authority and Stalin's role in the launching of the 1936 campaign, revealing the sequence of events to have been considerably more complicated than is generally assumed. Indeed, although prominent historian-ideologists began to deemphasise Pokrovsky's contributions to the official historical line shortly after his death in early 1932, their transition away from the Pokrovsky school was a slow and inconsistent one, lasting some four years. Moreover, the circumstances surrounding the official denunciation of Pokrovsky in January 1936 suggest the complicity of a whole cast of characters aside from Stalin himself.

\* \* \*

Probably best known during his lifetime for textbooks like his *Russian History in its Most Condensed Form*, Pokrovsky's fate (or at least the posthumous fate of his school and reputation) was also tied to these famous volumes.<sup>7</sup> As an author and pedagogue, Pokrovsky rejected national-patriotic histories that focused on individual heroes and villains in favor of a more materialist approach oriented around Marxist economic stages of development and class conflict. This approach was revolutionary; it also proved to be very abstract and difficult to master for much of the society at large. In the early-to-mid 1930s, the introduction of a comparatively traditional historical curriculum in the public schools led to repeated calls for a new generation of textbooks which would do more to prioritise accessibility.<sup>8</sup> During this search, Pokrovsky's text underwent something of a gradual marginalisation, a 1932 article in *Za kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie* typifying this evolving position:

Is the curriculum furnished with a single general textbook? No. M.N. Pokrovsky's four volume set and his condensed course are on the curriculum's list of basic literature and this is the best that we have in terms of general overviews on the history of Russia. But it is not enough, of course.<sup>9</sup>

Months later, I. Tonkin argued that it was time to abandon the previous decade's schematic, materialist view of history, something which contemporary observers have interpreted as an Aesopian attack on Pokrovsky.<sup>10</sup> Although Pokrovsky's beloved reader weathered this assault and others like it at a consultative session convened at the Commissariat of the Enlightenment in March 1934, it was subjected to a series of increasingly unenthusiastic reviews. A. Fokht, who had referred to the text warmly in an article

earlier that year now confessed that the textbook was far from ideal. As she told the consultative session, 'we have essentially one standardised textbook – Pokrovsky's text – which is put together in a difficult way'. Fokht concluded that although the text was not 'too difficult for students to master', it was still necessary to develop more accessible alternatives.<sup>11</sup>

If historians would debate this point over and over during the next few years, the controversy became considerably more politicised within days of Fokht's comments. At a March 20, 1934 Politburo discussion devoted to the on-going textbook crisis, Stalin decried the schematic and abstract nature of existing texts and called for fundamental changes to be made in the official historical line. According to the diary of one of the historians present, the general secretary paused during his tirade to identify Pokrovsky as personally responsible for the shortcomings in question, declaring: 'Pokrovsky's scheme is not Marxist and this whole mess [*vsya beda*] stems from the time of Pokrovsky's influence'.<sup>12</sup> Unable to defend himself, the late Pokrovsky made an ideal scapegoat for the shortcomings of the entire discipline.

Apparently more of a passing shot than an articulate directive, Stalin did not elaborate on his frustration with Pokrovsky. His criticism of the late academic was not reported in the press, nor was it reflected in any concrete measures designed to purge Soviet society of Pokrovsky's influence. True, the set of party and state resolutions on public school history instruction that emerged from these discussions called upon historians to embrace a new set of historiographic priorities emphasising chronology, narrative and a populist cast of historic personages at the expense of materialist theory and schematicism.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, however, Pokrovsky's works remained in circulation and most of his former students retained their leading positions in academia and the leading professional journals.<sup>14</sup> Unsure about how to proceed, many historians opted to hybridise Pokrovsky's stress on materialism with the new focus on historical personalities and chronological narratives, producing a clumsy genre of historical writing that pleased no one. Particularly elusive was a winning formula for a new mass-appeal history textbook, in spite of the efforts of dozens of scholars between 1934 and 1935 working under the supervision of a blue ribbon party commission chaired by Stalin himself.<sup>15</sup>

Such problems led to the formation of a new commission in mid-January 1936 that was to assess the previous years' failures and prepare a new initiative.<sup>16</sup> Chaired by A.A. Zhdanov under the joint authority of the Central Committee and Sovnarkom, this commission consisted of leading party ideologists and functionaries: A.S. Bubnov,<sup>17</sup> K.Ya. Bauman,<sup>18</sup> V.A. Bystrianskii,<sup>19</sup> N.I. Bukharin,<sup>20</sup> P.O. Gorin,<sup>21</sup> Ya.A. Yakovlev,<sup>22</sup> F.U. Khodzhaev,<sup>23</sup> I.M. Lukin,<sup>24</sup> K.B. Radek,<sup>25</sup> A.S. Svanidze<sup>26</sup> and V.P. Zatonskii.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, Stalin – who had had been deeply involved in the Soviet 'search for a usable past' since at least 1934 – did not take a direct part in the commission's proceedings, apparently unable to spare the time.<sup>28</sup>

At their first meeting on January 17, 1936, the commission members (and an invited consultant, G.S. Fridliand)<sup>29</sup> discussed the fate of two draft textbooks on elementary Soviet history that had been heavily criticised between 1934 and 1935.<sup>30</sup> Frustrated, the commission decided to launch a press campaign that would publicise both the party's official position on the textbooks' deficiencies and its ambitions for historical pedagogy in general.<sup>31</sup> Nothing had come of hybridising historical materialism with a greater emphasis on chronology and famous personalities; a new approach was needed that would endow future textbooks with truly mass appeal.

Important for our investigation, the commission members at this meeting decided to criticise Pokrovsky in public for the first time in order to illustrate the degree of change needed on the historical front. Although it is not possible to reconstruct who was responsible for this initiative because of the lack of a stenographic record, the commission concluded the meeting by assigning newspaper articles to key participants in the discussion. Perhaps tellingly, Bukharin agreed to write a major piece on 'the mistakes of Pokrovsky's historical conceptualization' for *Izvestiya* that would be complemented by more general articles by Radek and Bystryanskii in *Pravda*.<sup>32</sup>

Approaching his assignment as more than just a routine matter, Bukharin worked feverishly for several days on a manuscript that quickly swelled to over 20 pages in length. More of an exposé than a critique, Bukharin accused Pokrovsky of subjectivity, a poor understanding of dialectics and frequent recourse to mechanistic sociological formulas and anti-historical universalism. He also criticised the late academician for allowing Peter the Great and a variety of non-Russian ethnic groups only a marginal role in Russian history.<sup>33</sup> Still working on the piece on January 21, he sent a draft to Zhdanov, noting in his cover letter that he also planned to send a copy directly to Stalin 'in view of its importance and the character of the issues contained therein'.<sup>34</sup>

Such a pattern was not unusual for Bukharin, who since his fall in 1929 had attempted to rebuild his relationship with Stalin by inundating the general secretary with obsequious notes and memos whenever he had new information, gossip or a question to pass on.<sup>35</sup> In this case, Bukharin began his cover letter to Stalin by reminding the general secretary that he was serving on the textbook commission and then proceeded to ask him to authorise a major new campaign against the Pokrovsky school – an initiative that Bukharin advanced as his own:

Dear Koba,

At the Zhdanov commission I was charged with quickly writing two articles that will serve as historical supplements:

- 1) an editorial (about history) for *Izvestiya*,
- 2) an article about Pokrovsky.

The latter has turned into a harsh pogrom. Please read through this article, within which I've laid out all the questions theoretically and in a very sharp form. For two days now I have been reading Pokrovsky without stopping for so much as a stretch, reveling in it and then writing straightaway afterward.

I've sent the article to C[omrade] Zhdanov in Leningrad, noting that it still requires editing. I am sending it to you tonight (it's now 4:20 in the morning) so as not to waste time, as C[omrade] Zhdanov is thinking of devoting a whole page [in the central press] to history on 24 Jan[uary].

Best regards. Having read all of 'Pokrovsky's' tricks, I'm once more convinced by just how profoundly right you were about the need for an about-face 'on the historical front.'

Yours, N. Bukharin<sup>36</sup>

Acting on the vaguest of directives, Bukharin had transformed his routine 17 January assignment into a major bid to dethrone the late academician, taking personal responsibility for both the nature of the assault and the tone in which it was to be expressed. As his cover letter makes clear, Bukharin suspected that Zhdanov lacked the authority to approve such a piece and appealed to Stalin for permission to publish it. Apparently nervous about the ideological coup that he was proposing, Bukharin even attempted to preempt objections that Stalin might raise to the piece by framing his essay as a hastily-written draft and by reminding the general secretary of his earlier statement about the need for change in the official historical line.<sup>37</sup>

As it turned out, Bukharin need not have worried, as both party bosses liked what they read. Zhdanov, who had been writing a general statement on history textbook priorities on behalf of the commission, included a rather vague but mean-spirited reference to Pokrovsky's errors in his communiqué after reading Bukharin's essay.<sup>38</sup> Stalin sharpened this formulation on 26 January before authorising the communiqué's publication the following day in *Izvestiya* and *Pravda*, alongside Bukharin's and Radek's pieces.<sup>39</sup> Important to note here is that the party hierarchs joined the campaign against Pokrovsky only after reading Bukharin's essay. Zhdanov had never blamed Pokrovsky for problems on the historical front prior to the commission's 17 January meeting.<sup>40</sup> Stalin had not said so much as a word in public about Pokrovsky in two years and even now limited his participation to merely authorising the campaign and strengthening Zhdanov's rhetoric, rather than adding any original content of his own. This is evident from an examination of Stalin's editing of Zhdanov's communiqué, reproduced here:

The fact that the authors of the cited textbooks continue to insist on historical definitions *and conditions grounded in the well-known errors of*

*Pokrovsky*, which have been repeatedly exposed by the party as incorrect and patently worthless, cannot be seen by Sovnarkom and the Central Committee as anything other than evidence that among some of our historians, especially historians of the USSR, views have taken root that are anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, essentially liquidatorist and anti-scientific, ~~the exceptional meaning of which for the liberation of the proletariat from the capitalist yoke has been continuously underscored with special emphasis in the fundamental works of Marxism-Leninism.~~ Sovnarkom and the Central Committee ~~contend~~ *underscore* that these injurious tendencies and attempts to liquidate history as a science are *especially related above all* to the propagation of *erroneous* historical ~~conceptions~~ *views* among our historians typical of the so-called 'historical school of Pokrovsky' ~~which serves as the source for the cited erroneous historical conceptions.~~<sup>41</sup>

The fact that Zhdanov and Stalin based their communiqué on Bukharin's narrow historiographic critique indicates that they were essentially signing-off on an agenda developed outside of the party hierarchy during mid-to-late January 1936.

Confirmation of Bukharin's decisive role in initiating the campaign and defining its initial content is visible in the degree to which the campaign changed focus in the months following the publication of his essay. Bukharin structured the campaign almost exclusively around theoretical and historiographical issues, giving only passing mention to factual problems with Pokrovsky's account or his disdainful treatment of the Russian national past. Such priorities are not surprising, as Bukharin was more of a theoretician than a historian and appears to have shared Pokrovsky's scathingly critical view of tsarist Russia. Moreover, he probably knew that Zhdanov and Stalin had decided to publish observations that they had sent to two textbook brigades in 1934 alongside the newer January 1936 directives – observations that made approving mention of Pokrovskyan formulations labeling the old regime a 'prison of peoples' and an 'international gendarme'.<sup>42</sup> Such rhetoric likely reinforced Bukharin's decision to focus his essay on theory and historiography and may have also inclined him to echo aspects of Pokrovsky's disdain for the prerevolutionary past in two other unrelated articles that he published at this time.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately for Bukharin, such sentiments – although a staple of party propaganda since before the revolution – had recently faded from fashion in the wake of Stalin's December 1935 call for a halt to such russophobic talk.<sup>44</sup> *Pravda* immediately pounced upon Bukharin's indiscretion and made an example of him, perhaps in part to publicise the party hierarchy's changing attitude toward the Russian national past and correct any false impressions created by the publication of the 1934 observations.<sup>45</sup> The scandal spread quickly as other newspapers joined the fray; by mid-month,

a beleaguered Bukharin would beg Stalin to halt the attacks, writing that even obscure newspapers like *Food Industry* were now hounding him.<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, Bukharin was forced to salvage what was left of his career by demonstratively embracing the Russian national past and issuing a public apology.<sup>47</sup>

Such after-the-fact concessions may have allowed Bukharin to temporarily retain his position at *Izvestiya*, but they could not correct his flawed launch of the anti-Pokrovsky campaign. In his efforts to expose Pokrovsky's shortcomings as a theorist, Bukharin had failed to criticise the late academician's dismissive treatment of the Russian national past – something Stalin and Zhdanov apparently realised only in hindsight. Although Soviet authorities never specifically denounced Bukharin's essay or his definition of the scope of the campaign, they spent the next 18 months reconfiguring the campaign's central focus to bring it into tighter conformity with the emerging party line on Russian history. By early 1938, Bukharin's narrow, arcane indictment of Pokrovsky's historical methodology had metamorphosed into a broad, populist condemnation of his anti-Marxist tendencies, 'national nihilism' and lack of patriotic sensibilities – judgments that would enjoy canonical status until the end of the Stalin period.<sup>48</sup>

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In the final analysis, it is impossible to state definitively who initiated the criticism of M.N. Pokrovsky in January 1936. That said, it is clear that Bukharin took charge of the issue and developed it into a full-blown campaign, precipitating Pokrovsky's posthumous purge. Perhaps Bukharin really believed Pokrovsky's historical methodology to be obsolete. Perhaps he aimed to rehabilitate his reputation as a specialist in Marxist dialectics by bringing down a rival theorist. Or perhaps he recalled Stalin's 1934 critique of Pokrovsky and realised that he might curry favour with the general secretary by publicly scapegoating the late academician for the weaknesses of the Soviet historical line.<sup>49</sup> Whatever the case, the circumstances surrounding the launch of the campaign and its later adjustment undermine Nechkina's claim that Stalin took a leading role in the campaign from its inception.

But if Nechkina was wrong about Stalin's launch of the campaign, she was right to date it to January 1936. Although Stalin's parenthetical remarks in March 1934 and the party and state decrees that followed triggered a gradual devolution of Pokrovsky's authority behind the scenes, they did not inevitably lead to the public campaign two years later, nor did they prepare public opinion for this about-face.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, indecision appears to have dominated the party hierarchy and historical establishment after 1934 until Bukharin's lobbying from outside the party's inner circle precipitated the decision to break with the Pokrovsky

school in early 1936. Even then, it would take many months for Bukharin's campaign to acquire all the hallmarks of official Stalinist policy. While Pokrovsky's passing in 1932 spared him the dishonour of this 'second death,' the campaign ruined his life's work as well as the lives of many of his former students.<sup>51</sup> It also accelerated the decline of the internationalist, materialist historiography popularised by his school and allowed a stridently russocentric, etatist line to assume a dominant position in Soviet historical scholarship and propaganda.

## Notes

The title of this chapter stems from M.N. Pokrovsky's maxim that 'history is politics projected into the past'. A preliminary version of this piece appeared nearly ten years ago: 'Who Killed Pokrovskii (the second time)? The Prelude to the Denunciation of the Father of Soviet Marxist Historiography, January 1936', *Revolutionary Russia*, 11(1), 1998, pp. 67–73. Research was supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United States Department of State, which administers the Russian, Eurasian, and East European Research Program (Title VIII). The chapter likewise benefited from communication with colleagues including George Enteen, Erik van Ree, A.M. Dubrovskii, O.V. Volobuev, A.A. Chernobaev and Katya Dianina.

1. Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat* (New York, 1946), pp. 252–3; John Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928–1932* (London, 1981), p. 139.
2. Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk (hereafter Arkhiv RAN), f. 638, op. 3, d. 333, ll. 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, 23, 25, 40, 41, 50, 66, 68, 140, 141.
3. Arkhiv RAN, f. 638, op. 3, d. 333, ll. 2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 20, 22, 24, 26, 50, 128. Lenin's congratulatory letter to Pokrovsky was printed in some editions of Pokrovsky's *Russkaya istoriya v samom szhatom ocherke*.
4. Arkhiv RAN, f. 638, op. 3, d. 333, ll. 2, 9, 15, 16, 50, 71, cites on 15, 71.
5. Nechkina's article, based on a February 1962 talk at the Academy of Sciences' Institute of History, was flagged by the censor in 1966 and published only 24 years later – see M.V. Nechkina, 'Vopros o M.N. Pokrovskom v postanovleniakh partii i pravitel'stva 1934–1938 gg. o prepodavanii istorii i istoricheskoi nauki', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 118, 1990, pp. 232–46. Nechkina is often assumed to have learned of Stalin's personal role in the anti-Pokrovsky campaign from her brother-in-law, Ya.A. Yakovlev (1896–1938), a former commissar of agriculture and the head of the Central Committee agricultural department in 1936. Although Nechkina's diary confirms that she talked with Yakovlev in mid-January about developments 'on the historical front', these conversations appear to have concerned the fate of a textbook manuscript that she had authored rather than more general questions concerning Pokrovsky's legacy. See 'Dnevnik akademika M.V. Nechkinoi', *Voprosy istorii*, 6, 2005, p. 142.
6. A.N. Artizov gives A.A. Zhdanov a role in the affair in his 'Kritika M.N. Pokrovskogo i ego shkoly (k istorii voprosa)', *Istoriya SSSR*, 1, 1991, pp. 102–3, but returns to a restatement of Nechkina's thesis in his subsequent 'V ugodu vzglyadam vozhdya [konkurs 1936 g. na uchebnik po istorii SSSR]', *Kentavr* [the former *Voprosy istorii KPSS*], 1, 1991, p. 128. A.A. Chernobaev generally supports Nechkina's focus on Stalin while noting the importance of N.I. Bukharin's and

- K.B. Radek's participation in the denunciation in his '*Professor s pikoi, ili Tri zhizni istorika M.N. Pokrovskogo* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 202–4; as does James D. White, 'The Origins, Development and Demise of M.N. Pokrovsky's Interpretation of Russian History' in Ian D. Thatcher (ed.), *Late Imperial Russia: Problems and Prospects* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 168–88. Roy Medvedev erroneously attributes the campaign to L.M. Kaganovich in *Let History Judge* (New York, 1989), p. 304. Only Timasheff credits Bukharin and Radek with starting the campaign as independent actors in *The Great Retreat*, p. 253.
7. For more on this seminal text, see White, 'The Origins, Development and Demise'.
  8. *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, 8th issue (Moscow, 1934), pp. 350–60; 'O prepodavanii grazhdanskoj istorii v shkolakh SSSR', *Pravda*, 16 May 1934, p. 1; 'O strukture nachal'noi i srednei shkoly v SSSR', *Pravda*, 16 May 1934, p. 1; *Sobranie zakonov i rasporiazhenii SSSR*, 1935, 47, art. 391; *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, 9th issue (Moscow, 1935), p. 137.
  9. 'Prepodavanie istorii v pedvuzakh – uzkoje mesto', *Za kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie*, 22 April 1932, p. 2.
  10. I. Tonkin, 'O bol'shevistskoj partiinosti istoricheskoi nauki', *Bor'ba klassov*, 9–10, 1932, pp. 38–70. Tonkin's attack was repeated in similar terms in A. Lomakin, 'Leninskii etap istoricheskoi nauki', *Istoriik-marksist*, 1934, 1, pp. 3–4. Generally, see George M. Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M.N. Pokrovsky and the Society of Marxist Historians* (University Park, 1978), pp. 188–9.
  11. 'Stenogramma soveshchaniya istorikov i geografov pri Narkome tov. Bubnove A.S.' (8 March 1934), Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (the former Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii), f. 2306, op. 69, d. 2177, l. 29; A. Fokht, 'O rabote nad uchebnikom po istorii', *Istoriya v srednei shkole*, 1, 1934, pp. 23–31.
  12. S.A. Piontkovskii, a participant in the exclusive March 20, 1934 Politburo history conference and a later victim of the purges, left a diary behind which remains sealed in the former NKVD archives, Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Federal'noi sluzhby besopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii, r-8214. It is excerpted in Aleksei Litvin, *Bez prava na mysl': istorik v epokhu Bol'shogo terrora – ocherk sudeb* (Kazan, 1994), p. 57. E.M. Yaroslavskii's mention of a similar comment of Stalin's – 'it is not possible to call Pokrovsky's work Marxist' – probably refers to the same Politburo session. See the December 8, 1938 letter from E.M. Yaroslavskii to I.V. Stalin at Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI), f. 89, op. 8, d. 630, l. 25.
  13. 'O prepodavanii grazhdanskoj istorii v shkolakh SSSR'; 'O vvedenii v nachal'noi i nepolnoj srednei shkole elementarnogo kursa vseobshchei istorii i istorii SSSR' in *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, 9th issue (Moscow, 1935), p. 137.
  14. Note the late publication date of a host of titles: M.N. Pokrovsky, *Russkaya istoriya v samom szhatom ocherke*, 2 vols (Moscow, 1934); *Metodicheskoe posobie po istorii Rossii i SSSR* (Moscow, 1934); *Imperialisticheskaya vojna: sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1934); *Ob Ukraine: sbornik statei i materialov* (Kiev, 1935); *Leninizm i russkaya istoriya* (Moscow, 1936).
  15. David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 251–5, appendix.
  16. On the production of Soviet history textbooks in the 1930s, see Artizov, 'V ugodu vzglyadam vozhdya', pp. 125–35; A.M. Dubrovskii, 'A.A. Zhdanov v rabote nad shkol'nym uchebnikom istorii' in *Otechestvennaya kul'tura i istoricheskaya nauka XVIII–XX vekov: Sbornik statei* (Bryansk, 1996), pp. 128–43; A.M. Dubrovskii, 'Veskie uchebniki' i arkhivnye materialy', *Arkheograficheskii zhe-*

*godnik za 1996* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 181–95; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, appendix.

17. Head of the RSFSR People's Commissariat of the Enlightenment.
18. Central Committee's department head.
19. Director of the Leningrad party committee's Institute of Party History.
20. Editor of *Izvestiya*.
21. Deputy chair of the TsIK committee on the direction of scholars and scholarly institutions.
22. Head of Central Committee agricultural department.
23. Chair of the Uzbek SSR Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom).
24. Director of the USSR Academy of Science's Institute of History.
25. Editor of *Pravda*.
26. Deputy chair of operations at the USSR State Bank.
27. Head of the Ukrainian SSR People's Commissariat of the Enlightenment.
28. Stalin was so preoccupied with a Central Executive Committee conference in early 1936 that he did not hold a single meeting in his Kremlin office between 10–29 January. He did not see Zhdanov between 9 December 1935 and 26 January 1936, suggesting that he was not even passively monitoring his lieutenant's work. See 'Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta I.V. Stalina: zhurnaly (tetradi) zapisi lits, priniatykh pervym gensekom, 1924–1953', *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4, 1995, pp. 17–18; 3, 1995, pp. 176–7.
29. Chair of Moscow State University's History Department.
30. For a discussion of these textbook projects, see L.A. Openkin, 'Mekhanizm tormozheniya v sfere obshchestvennykh nauk: istoki vozniknoveniya, factory vosproizvodstva', *Istoriya SSSR*, 4, 1989, p. 7; Artizov, 'V ugodu vzglyadam vozhdya', pp. 127–8.
31. 'Protokol No. 1 zasedaniya kommissii TsK i SNK po uchebnikam istorii ot 17 yanvarya 1936 goda', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 358, ll. 1–3.
32. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 358, ll. 2–3. Radek was assigned 'O znachenii istoricheskoi nauki dlya proletariata', Bystrianskii – 'Ob uchebnike Vanaga', Gorin – 'O sozdanii istorii narodov SSSR,' and Fridliand – 'Kak postavleno prepodavanie istorii v nashei shkole'.
33. Compare Bukharin, 'K likvidatsii negodnogo inventaria /o nekotorykh sushchestvenno vazhnykh, no nesostoiatel'nykh vzgliadakh tov. M.N. Pokrovskogo/' ([21 January 1936]), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 358, ll. 40–62, and Bukharin, 'Nuzhna li nam marksistskaya istoricheskaya nauka? (O nekotorykh sushchestvenno vazhnykh, no nesostoiatel'nykh vzglyadakh tov. M.N. Pokrovskogo)', pp. 3–4. Scholars differ over the legitimacy of Bukharin's critique – compare Enteen & Chernobaev to Roy Medvedev, *Nikolai Bukharin: The Last Years* (New York, 1980), pp. 102–3.
34. N.I. Bukharin to A.A. Zhdanov, 21 January 1936, at RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 358, l. 39.
35. See L. Maksimenkov, 'Ocherki nomenklaturnoi istorii sovetskoii literatury (1932–1946): Stalin, Bukharin, Zhdanov, Shcherbakov i drugie', *Voprosy literatury*, 4, 2003, pp. 251–3; 'Pis'ma N.I. Bukharina', *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 11, 1988, pp. 42–50; "'U menya odna nadezhda na tebya": Poslednie pis'ma N.I. Bukharina I.V. Stalinu, 1935–1937 gg.', *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 3, 2001, pp. 47–85.
36. N.I. Bukharin to I.V. Stalin between 21–3 January 1936, at RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 710, l. 90, published in 'U menya odna nadezhda', pp. 55–6.
37. The phrasing of Bukharin's notes to Zhdanov and Stalin and the fact that Bukharin did not visit Stalin in his Kremlin office between 16 December 1935

- and 27 January 1936 undermine the claim of Bukharin's widow that her husband had written the articles on Stalin's orders. See 'Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta I.V. Stalina: zhurnaly (tetradi) zapisi lits, priniatykh pervym gensekom, 1924–1953', *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 3, 1995, pp. 176–7; 4, 1995, pp. 17–18; Anna Larina (Bukharina), *Nezabyvaemoe* (Moscow, 1989), p. 32.
38. Zhdanov wrote the communiqué on 21 January, the same day he received Bukharin's draft – see 'V Sovnarkome Soiuza SSR i TsK VKP(b)', RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 3156, ll. 9–12, esp. 12.
  39. For Stalin's 26 January handwritten editing of Zhdanov's communiqué, see 'V Sovnarkome Soyuzo SSR i TsK VKP(b)', RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 3156, ll. 9–12. The piece was published as: 'V Sovnarkome Soyuzo SSR i TsK VKP(b)', *Pravda*, 27 January 1936, p. 2, as well as in *Izvestiya* and numerous other forums. It appeared alongside N. Bukharin, 'Nuzhna li nam marksistskaya istoricheskaya nauka? (O nekotorykh sushchestvenno vazhnykh, no nesostoiatel'nykh vzglyadakh tov. M.N. Pokrovskogo)', *Izvestiya*, 27 January 1936, pp. 3–4; Bukharin, 'Istoricheskaya nauka i ee prepodavanie', *Izvestiya*, 27 January 1936, p. 1; K. Radek, 'Znachenie istorii dlya revolyutsionnogo proletariata', *Pravda*, 27 January 1936, p. 3; Radek, 'Prepodavanie istorii v nashei shkole', *Pravda*, 27 January 1936, p. 1. V.A. Bystrianski's piece appeared four days later as 'Kriticheskie zamechaniya ob uchebnikakh po istorii SSSR', *Pravda*, 1 February 1936, pp. 2–3.
  40. On Zhdanov's post-January 17 change in rhetoric, compare 'Vystuplenie na byuro Leningradskogo gorkoma VKP(b) o nedostatkakh prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka v shkolakh g. Leningrada' (9 January 1936), RGASPI, f. 77, op. 1, d. 550, ll. 4–6, with 'Rech' tov. A.A. Zhdanova na otkrytii Leningradskoi shkoly propagandistov' (7 April 1936), RGASPI, f. 77, op. 1, d. 571, ll. 21–4.
  41. Stalin's editing is rendered here in italic and strike-out typeface – see 'V Sovnarkome Soiuza SSR i TsK VKP(b)', RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 3156, ll. 11–12.
  42. Initially issued as private communiqués to two textbook brigades working on modern history and the history of the USSR in August 1934, Stalin, Zhdanov and S.M. Kirov's 'Observations' appear to endorse the Pokrovskyan historiography of the 1920s with their denunciation of the tsarist state as a 'prison of the peoples' and an 'international Gendarme' – formulas popularised by the late academician in his vigorous critique of the prerevolutionary Russian treatment of domestic minorities and foreign neighbours. A close reading of the 'Observations' reveals, however, that their invocation of Pokrovsky's theses was tempered by a partial rehabilitation of the Russian national past as well. References to tsarist Russia as the international gendarme must be seen in light of Stalin's nuancing of this thesis in a July 1934 letter to the Politburo, in which he argued that because all European powers had been forces of reaction in the nineteenth century, Russia should not be singled out for special condemnation on account of its repressive actions. Moreover, the subtle rewording of Pokrovsky's formulae from 'Russia – prison of the peoples' and 'Russia as the international gendarme' into 'tsarism – prison of the peoples' and 'tsarism as the international gendarme' shifted the semantics of these epithets from a broad critique of an ethnic empire to a narrow critique of its administrative system. Such subtleties were of course lost on outsiders like Bukharin. See I. Stalin, A. Zhdanov, S. Kirov, 'Zamechaniya po povodu konspekta uchebnika po "Istorii SSSR"' and I. Stalin, S. Kirov, A. Zhdanov, 'Zamechaniya o konspekte uchebnika "Novoi istorii"', *Pravda*, 27 January 1936, p. 2; as well as the archival drafts at RGASPI, f. 558,

- op. 1, dd. 3156, 3157. Stalin's 1934 thesis on Russian imperialism is explicated in I. Stalin, 'O stat'e Engel'sa "Vneshniaia politika russkogo tsarizma"', *Bol'shevik*, 9, 1941, pp. 3–4; A. Latsyshev, 'Kak Stalin Engel'sa svergal', *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 22 December, 1992, p. 4.
43. Bukharin referred to Russians before 1917 as an impotent 'nation of Oblomovs' in an article about Lenin and contended in an editorial that the non-Russian peoples had reason to distrust their former colonialist brethren. See N. Bukharin, 'Nash vozhd', nash uchitel', nash otets' *Izvestiya*, 21 January 1936, p. 2; N. Bukharin, 'Mogushchestvennaya federatsiya', *Izvestiya*, 2 February 1936, p. 1. The reference to I.A. Goncharov's Oblomov had been especially prominent in early Bolshevik discourse – see Lenin's use of the formula in V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1958–1970), vol. 43, p. 228; vol. 44, pp. 365, 398; vol. 45, pp. 3–4, 13.
44. In a widely publicised speech at a gathering of Central Asian collective farmers, Stalin announced that one of the achievements of the revolution had been to replace non-Russian suspicion of Russians with a sense of trust and appreciation. See 'Rech' tov. Stalina na soveshchanii peredovykh kolkhoznikov i kolkhoznits Tadjikistana i Turkmenistana', *Pravda*, 5 December 1935, p. 3. This speech signalled the launch of an initially gradual rehabilitation of Russian historical heroes and the Russian people themselves between 1936–41 – see Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, chap. 3.
45. 'Edinaya sem'ya narodov', *Pravda*, 30 January 1936, p. 1; 'RSFSR', *Pravda*, 1 February 1936, p. 1; 'Ob odnoi gniloj kontseptsii', *Pravda*, 10 February 1936, p. 3; A. Leont'ev, 'Tsenneishii vklad v sokrovishchnitsu marksizma-leninizma', *Pravda*, 12 February 1936, p. 4.
46. Bukharin complained bitterly to Stalin that these attacks distorted his record on the national question. See the letter from Bukharin to Stalin, written after February 10, 1936, at RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 710, ll. 91–3ob, published in 'U menya odna nadezhda', pp. 56–8. Although this missive seems to have led Stalin to call a halt to Bukharin's hounding, it also irritated the general secretary enough from him to scrawl 'such a big baby [*bol'shoi rebenok*]' on the first page of the letter.
47. For his apology, see N. Bukharin, 'Otvét na vopros', *Izvestiya*, 14 February 1936, p. 1. Bukharin clumsily adopted the regime's russocentric line in early February, indicating that he had been tipped off about the emergent scandal before it broke. For Bukharin's new russocentrism in the press, see Bukharin, 'Mogushchestvennaya federatsiya'; Bukharin, 'Velikie traditsii', *Izvestiya*, 5 February 1936, p. 1; for unpublished later articles, see RGASPI f. 17, op. 120, d. 359 ll. 10–11; f. 77, op. 1, d. 829, ll. 12–15. These pieces contradict Stephen Cohen's determination that Bukharin resisted 'the neo-nationalistic rehabilitation of czarism' (Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: 1973), pp. 358, 468–9).
48. This shift is hinted at in P. Drozdov, 'Reshenie partii i pravitel'stva ob uchebnikakh po istorii i zadachi sovetskikh istorikov', *Istoriik-marksist*, 1, 1936, pp. 9–22; and made more explicit in 'Ot redaktsii', *Istoriik-marksist*, 2, 1937, pp. 23–9; 'Boevaya programma dal'neishego pod'ema istoricheskoi nauki', *Istoriik-marksist*, 3, 1937, pp. 142–7; A. Shestakov, 'Osnovnye problemy uchebnika "Kratkii kurs istorii SSSR"', *Istoriik-marksist*, 3, 1937, pp. 85–98; B. Grekov, 'Kievskaya rus' i problema genezisa russkogo feodalizma u M.N. Pokrovskogo', *Istoriik-marksist*, 5–6, 1937, pp. 41–76; A. Savich, 'Pol'skaya interventsiiya nachala XVII veka v otsenke M.N. Pokrovskogo', *Istoriik-marksist*, 1, 1938, pp. 74–110.

The official position was summarised in B. Grekov *et al.* (eds), *Protiv istoricheskoi kontseptsii M.N. Pokrovskogo* (Moscow, 1939); B. Grekov *et al.* (eds), *Protiv antimarksistskoi kontseptsii M.N. Pokrovskogo* (Moscow, 1940).

49. Although Bukharin was no longer regularly invited to Politburo meetings after 1929, he may have been present for Stalin's March 20, 1934 invective against Pokrovsky, insofar as it was at this session that he was appointed editor-in-chief of *Izvestiya*.
50. The surprise with which Shestakov's audiences responded to the anti-Pokrovsky coup indicate that the devaluation of the scholar's legacy was not visible to casual Soviet observers between 1932–6.
51. The lasting repercussions of the campaign are detailed in Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, pp. 187–99; Nechkina, 'Vopros o M.N. Pokrovskom', pp. 232–46; Artizov, 'Kritika M.N. Pokrovskogo', pp. 102–20; Chernobaev, 'Professor s pikoi', pp. 205–13.

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