

The October revolution of 1917 remains one of the most important historical events of this century. Although simplified and distorted by left and right alike into a seizure of power by the Bolshevik party in reality it was the culmination of years of struggle by the Russian working class.

It was a demonstration of the massive organising ability ordinary people have and of the extent to which they are transformed as a class by the experience of taking over the running of their own lives, workplaces and communities.

It took the Bolshevick and the white armies four long years to destroy this revolutionary spirit. This pamphlet looks at how and why the Bolsheviks felt it necessary for their party to become a dictatorship over the working class and how the class resisted. It demonstrates that freedom and socialism must go hand in hand if either are to be achieved.

Workers Solidarity Movement **£1.80**

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Stalin didn't fall from the moon!



Anarchist Reprint Series

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The *Anarchist Reprint Series* hopes to make more available a range of useful pieces relevant to anarchism today. Many of these will be drawn from previous *Workers Solidarity Movement* publications. 10% of the cover price will be put into the WSM international fund which is used to provide solidarity to anarchists active in the 'Global South'. Write to us at WSM PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland for a catalogue of pamphlets in this series. [<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/wsm.html>]

Marxism & Anarchism

MARXISM and Anarchism have been the two major theories of revolutionary socialism since the middle of the last century. Yet since then they have constantly been at loggerheads.. Do they, in fact, have anything in common?

Firstly it is essential to define both sets of ideas. What is anarchism? What is Marxism? For the moment I have decided to ignore all the latter-day disciples of both sets of ideas. So I will not talk about the various Stalinist, Leninist and social democratic developments of Marx's ideas. These have already been well dealt with in previous issues of this paper. Instead I wish to concentrate on the basic ideas of Marx and Engels.

For the anarchist point of view I will use the writings of Bakunin. He was Marx's consistent opponent and his basic arguments are accepted by most anarchists. Neither Marx or Bakunin were ever entirely consistent and the latter's writings are very fragmentary, however this seems to me to be the fairest method of comparison.

A lot of people who call themselves anarchists will probably be extremely annoyed when I say that the most striking thing is how much we have in common with Marxism. Both anarchists and Marxists are materialists. Both believe that the ideas in peoples' heads are shaped by the social and economic conditions in which we live. We see that ideas evolve and change through action. Thought leads to action and action provokes thought.

WHO CAN GET RID OF CAPITALISM

Both sides accept Marx's theory that labour creates value and that in production much of this is creamed off by the capitalist as profit, leaving a fraction as wages. Also shared is the view that only the working class by, virtue of their role in production, have the power to destroy capitalism.

Further, it is in their interest to do so. Workers have the power to create a classless society and would benefit from it's creation. Both Anarchists and revolutionary Marxists accept that only revolution can achieve this and that it must be international to succeed.

Marx's 'Capital' is a wide ranging, well researched and referenced assault on the capitalist system. In his own words a synthesis; incorporating a range of ideas from right-wing economists like Weber, Ricardo and Adam Smith to revolutionaries like Proudhon and the Irishman William Thompson. Anarchists accepted and welcomed

this critique. In fact Bakunin had begun a translation of the book into Russian (no mean feat if you've ever seen the size of this particular work).

So why don't we all just shake hands and let bygones be bygones?

Firstly there has always been a major disagreement on the nature of the state. By State we do not mean the country we live in. It is best described as the 'executive committee' of the ruling class, the mechanism that allows a minority to rule. Ultimately it defends its power through its monopoly of force, its powers of repression to protect the bosses' rule against challenges from below.

Anarchists have always seen it as non-essential for a classless society. However it is vital to the bosses in all forms of class society. It intervenes massively in the running of most average capitalist countries and in some cases may even embody the whole of the ruling class in a kind of collective exploitation (as in the former Stalinist bloc).

Marx and Engels, on the other hand have always been ambiguous about the State. At several stages they stressed that it was a neutral body which could be used by workers in revolution. In 1848, after the Paris uprising, they drafted the 'Communist Manifesto'. In this they repeatedly speak of The Worker's State which was to nationalise and centralise all production, finance, transport and communication. There is no mention of how the workers would be able to control their state.

However in 'The Civil War in France', written after the 1871 Paris Commune, Marx toyed with the idea of replacing the State with Communal Power and the self-government of producers, though without mentioning exactly how this was to come about. By the time of the publication of 'The Critique of the Gotha Programme' in 1875 he was back to the ambiguous concept of dictatorship of the proletariat .

In contrast Bakunin consistently and vigorously attacked the idea of a revolutionary role for the State. He predicted the tyranny of Leninism with uncanny accuracy in 'State and Anarchism' written in 1873;

The new social order (of Marx) should not be organised by the free association of peoples' organisations or unions, local and regional, from the bottom up in accordance with the demands and instincts of the people, but by the dictatorial power of the learned minority which presumes to express the will of the people.

In Russia in 1917 the Bolsheviks attempted to implement Marx's basic programme. As part and parcel of state controlled nationalisation from above, they closed down factory committees and soviets. All other left-wing parties were smashed. The result was the squalid form of State Capitalism which survived until the late 1980s. Bakunin was, unfortunately, all too correct in his predictions.

Ambiguities

At a deeper level there are ambiguities at the very heart of Marxism. In his early works like Thesis on Feurbach or The Holy Family people are seen as being active in changing history. However in his later works history and economics take over and are seen to sweep us along with them.

There are shades of this thinking in 'Capital'. In this he puts forward the idea that



capitalism would become a fetter on the further development of production and would be shuffled off in an unspecified way. He puts up the vague idea that capitalism would become so big and so planned that socialism, purely in terms of efficiency, would be the next logical step. Capitalism would rationalise itself out of existence as he put it in his 'Grundrisse' notebooks for 'Capital'.

This is very deterministic thinking. It removes workers from the stage as consciously moulding and changing the world. Socialism becomes a matter of waiting for capitalism to mature. This was the reason for some Marxists like the German Social Democrats believing there was no need for a revolution.

Marx, and then Engels after his death, did follow this through to its logical conclusion. They flirted with the idea of bringing about socialism through social democracy and the

ballot. In 1869 they supported the German Social Democratic Party's line of forming alliances with right-wing parties.

Bakunin poured scorn on these ideas. He described the democratic state as: State Centralisation and the actual submission of the sovereign people to the intellectual governing minority.

Soon after the Paris Commune Marx and Engels broke with the Social Democratic Party. But in 1895 the ageing Engels was back to his old tricks again and put the accent on using the ballot box to get into power to change society, (in his introduction to a new edition of 'The Communist Manifesto'). Marx also claimed, at one stage that it was possible to introduce socialism through the ballot box in advanced capitalist countries like Britain and America.

It appears that, except for a brief period around 1871, Marx and Engels never gave any serious consideration to the idea of workers managing society. Even then they didn't look into to the matter in any detail. In contrast Proudhon (with whom we would have our differences), Bakunin and Kropotkin did. Marx saw this as very much being a long-term aim.

Bakunin's rejection of Marx's determinism also gave him an insight into the role that small peasants could play in a revolutionary situation. Marx saw the peasants as a reactionary class who would generally not support workers. Bakunin believed that peasants could be revolutionary where they were influenced by revolutionary ideas. He put forward an excellent programme for the peasants in his work 'Letters to a Frenchman in the present Crisis' (1871).

His basic idea was to hand the land over unconditionally to small peasants. and to do away with conscription, taxes, rents and mortgages. With the abolition of the State and

by this the loss of inheritance rights the individual would be the only guarantor of his/her property. With a large amount of land suddenly becoming available and with anarchist propaganda pouring in from the city and from landless workers, a programme of voluntary collectivisation would soon suggest itself. This is exactly what happened in Spain in 1936 and the Ukraine in 1921. These ideas might still have relevance in many developing countries.

VOLUNTARY OR NOT AT ALL

He also warned about the dangers of forced collectivisation - it would have to be voluntary: collectivism could only be imposed on slaves and that kind of collectivisation would be the negation of humanity.

So there are important and major differences between anarchists and Marxists. Marx was no libertarian and took a very deterministic view of history and class struggle. His disciples from Lenin to Stalin and Mao picked up and expanded on Marx's bad ideas to come up with their theories of 'the party before all else', the rationale for their dictatorships.

On the other hand Marx and Engels have unfairly been demonised by a lot of anarchists. Most anarchists accept the much of the economic analysis put forward in 'Capital'. These ideas are a synthesis putting together the results of hundreds of years of research and struggle. As such they are not, properly speaking, the property of Marxists. One can accept a materialist method of analysis and Marx's critique of capitalism without accepting the politics of Marx and Engels. These ideas are not the property of theorists, either Marxist or Anarchist. They really belong to all the workers of the world and it is our job to spread them.

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Marx & the State

Indeed how do these people propose to run a factory, operate a railway or steer a ship without having, in the last resort, one deciding will, without single management they do not tell us"(1)
Engels

Since the Nineteenth century Marxism and anarchism have confronted each other as the two dominant strains of revolutionary thought. Some Marxists claim that in fact Marxism is not a statist or vanguardist ideology. Like all Marxists they also generally dismiss anarchism as utopian, marginal and non-scientific.

The aim of this article is to show that Marx and Engels were deeply ambiguous on the nature of the state and the party, and that the criticisms by anarchists of them were and remain valid. Far from being utopian anarchism has the same materialist origins as Marxism and, far from being marginal, has had a huge influence among workers since the nineteenth century. As Daniel Guerin put it:

"Anarchism and Marxism at the start, drank at the same proletarian spring"(2)

Since then many anarchists have, unfortunately, tended to demonise Marx. The genius of Marx and Engels was in the way they were able to combine the materialism of Hegel with various economic theories to come up with a critique of capitalism. By Marx's own admission Capital his major economic work is a synthesis of ideas from right-wing economists like Adam Smith to socialists like the Irishman William Thompson.

One of Marx's main contributions was to popularise the labour theory of value (though he was not the first to come up with this idea). Put crudely this is the idea that all material goods or commodities have another value besides their actual usefulness (or use-value). This value is determined by the amount of labour required to produce them. The capitalist does not pay this full value in wages (which only provide enough to feed and maintain the worker) the rest is held back as surplus value or profit.(3)

Thus workers have a real material interest in overthrowing capitalism. As well as this Marx pointed to capitalism's tendency to bring workers together in large workplaces where they can struggle together. This creates the social basis for labour organisation and the realisation of collective class interests.

Before Marx socialists were aware that workers were exploited but they had no explanation of the economic basis of this exploitation. The mechanics of capitalism were not understood.

Bakunin and his followers fully accepted this and other ideas in Marx's critique of capitalism. In fact Bakunin began the translation of Capital into Russian and the Italian anarchist Carlo Cafiero pub-

lished a summary of the same work in Italian.

With regards to materialism Bakunin begins his seminal work God and State(4) by clearly taking sides. He asks:

"Who are right, The idealists or the materialists? The question, once stated in this way, hesitation becomes impossible. Undoubtedly the idealists are wrong and the materialists are right"

What are the divisions between anarchists and Marxists? You don't need a degree in political science to figure out the major one:

The State

Marx and Engels saw the State as being a product of class struggle. It was the executive committee of the ruling class. It was an instrument by which one class rules another. In most of their writings they seem to see the State as a neutral tool. It can be taken and used by either workers or capitalists.

Their classical political statement is *The Communist Manifesto*(5). In its 10 main demands it calls for the centralisation of credit, transport and means of production under the State. This is justified (according to Marx) because:

"political power, properly called, is merely the instrument of one class for oppressing another"

Here we have the idea of the State as a tool to be used by either class (capitalists or workers).

In his Comments on Bakunin(6) Marx claims that the workers:

"must employ forcible means hence governmental means"

This is a common trend in Marx and Engels thinking (see also first quote). Kropotkin describes it well as:(7)

"the German school which insists on confusing the state with society"

Workers will probably have to use force in a revolution but why does this imply a government?

Bakunin vigorously opposed the Marxist conception of the State. The State was more than simply a product of class antagonism. If the programme of the manifesto was realised then a new bureaucratic class based on it rather than the market could arise. This for Bakunin would have nothing to do with socialism:

"The most fatal combination that could possibly be formed, would be to unite socialism to absolutism" (8)

Bakunin was right. Getting rid of competition and the law of value did not stop the Leninist states from being class societies. The state embodied the interests of the ruling class and extracted profit from workers by brute force and ruthless exploitation. The state failed to wither away. The prediction by Engels that the seizing and centralising of property would be the state's last official act(9) proved to be a sick joke on the workers of the Stalinist countries.

At the end of the day no state can encapsulate the interests of the masses better than the masses themselves. As Bakunin says in *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State*(10):

"where are those brains powerful enough and wide ranging enough to embrace the infinite multiplic-

ity and diversity of the real interests, aspirations, wishes and needs whose sum constitutes the collective will of the people?"

Marx the Libertarian?

Of course many libertarian Marxists will point out that Marx and Engels did sometimes move beyond the position of the Manifesto on the State. After the 1848 uprising in Berlin and the Paris Commune of 1871, for example. In The Civil War in France (1871) Marx says that the State has:

"assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour...of an engine of class despotism..."

Therefore:

"the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made State machinery and weld it for its own purposes"

and the liberation of the working class cannot come about without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class

He also calls for self-government of the producers and delegation from communes to higher organs of power by recallable delegates. However even here he fails to outline with any precision the forms of workers self-rule which might emerge: the ideas of worker's councils, militias, collectives on the land etc. (All of which are taken up by Bakunin in *Letters to a Frenchman* (1871))

In his 1850 *Address to the Communist League* (again a comparatively libertarian and revolutionary speech) Marx comes closest to outlining this by saying that workers must:

"immediately establish their own revolutionary governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of worker's clubs or worker's committees"

Marx the Democrat

However if you were to pick up the 1895 edition of this address you would be confronted by a new introduction by Engels. In it he informs us:

"The mode of struggle of 1848 is today obsolete in every respect"(11)

Why? Simple:

"They [the German workers] rendered a second great service to their cause...they supplied their comrades in all countries with a new weapon, and one of the sharpest, when they showed them how to make use of universal suffrage"

He quotes Marx(12) on how voting had been:

"transformed by them from a means of deception, which it was, into an instrument of emancipation"

"We are not so crazy as to let ourselves be driven to street fighting in order to please them" (the bourgeois) says Engels in 1895

However in Marx's 1869 Critique of the Gotha Programme and in an 1879 letter by the two to Bebel, the German Social Democratic Party is savagely attacked for supporting parliamentary elections:

"We cannot therefore co-operate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves"

Confused? You should be. Marx and Engels are about as consistent (in their writings on the state) as a Labour Party manifesto and at many stages actually sound like such a manifesto. We are treated to Marx the democrat, the communist, the partisan of workers control and Marx the fan of representative democracy. The state, to Marx and Engels was just the executive committee of a particular class. Once capitalism went so would the State.

"Do away with Capitalism and the State will fall by it-self says Engels" (On Authority 1872).

Tragically he was wrong. As we shall see Marx's and Engels ambiguity on this springs from deeper problems. In fact, there are major problems in their whole conception of socialism.

What is socialism?

The anarchist answer to this question is that socialism, at base, must be about freedom. A society run collectively to maximise the amount of choice available to the individual. A society based on satisfying the needs and wants of many and not on the profit of the few, with full participation at all levels.

A revolution is a conscious act by workers to liberate themselves from the constraints of class society. It is a subjective act.

There is a fundamental contradiction in Marxism between subjective and objective.(13) Humanity according to Marx goes through a series of distinct historical stages based on ever increasing levels of production. Certainly it is true that the level of production in a given society does determine the range of possibilities open to those trying to change it. However Marx tends to reduce all human development to this single cause. Just as feudalism gives way to capitalism, so capitalism gives way to socialism. He leaves out or minimises the importance of other variables like the role of political institutions, culture, ideology and individuals. To Marx all these 'subjective' things are totally conditioned by the 'objective conditions' of economic development.

Social and political systems rise and fall because of their ability or inability to materially improve the life of their populations. Each new order arises because it does a better job at improving production than the old one. The transition from socialism to capitalism is seen by him as coming about as inevitably as the change from slavery to feudalism. Here Marx is wrong. For the first time in history a transition from one social system to another requires mass participation. Capitalism, like feudalism and the systems that went before, already contains the seeds of its own destruction in that it creates its grave-diggers: the working class. But Marx in much of his later work went way beyond this and implied that the death of capitalism was inevitable:

"Capitalist production begets with the inexorability of a law of nature its own negation ..." (Capital Vol. I, p 837)

Further on, in the same chapter he even goes so far as to describe capitalism as:

"already practically resting on socialised production"

Or, as he puts it in Grundrisse (notes for Capital) :

"beyond a certain point, the development of the powers of production becomes a barrier for capital"

Its violent destruction must come about as a condition of its own preservation"

This is pure determinism. It takes away the central role of people in changing their own destiny. It removes workers, as thinking and acting individuals, from the centre stage. It ignores the very seeds which might blossom into revolution: the workers. If the destruction of capitalism is inherent in its own evolution then there is no reason to fight against it. If maximising production is the key then why not work harder to help it along?

In fact, historically, capitalism, with increasing productivity, has been very slow to disappear. Instead it has become more centralised and bureaucratic, with the state playing an increasing role. So the leopard has changed its spots a little. But the monopoly capitalism of today has no more resemblance to socialism than the free enterprise capitalism of Marx's time.

This idea was to be taken up and expanded on by Lenin who believed that:

"Socialism is merely a state capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and to this extent has ceased to be a state capitalist monopoly"(14)

As I have said already this is the exact opposite of socialism. Socialism is about freedom and collective participation, not some bureaucratic dictatorship or state capitalism.

Bakunin is particularly good on the topic of 'scientific' socialism:

"History is made, not by abstract individuals but by acting, living and passing individuals"(15)

He opposed the idea of the political scientists leading humanity by the nose to an enlightened dictatorship:

"What I preach then is, to a certain extent, the revolt of life against science, or rather against the government of science, not to destroy science, that would be high treason to humanity, but to remand it to its place so it cannot leave it again"

It is worth noting, to be fair, that the young Marx did consider the subjective element especially in works like his 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts where he declares that the political form of the destruction of private property will be Universal human emancipation

However the later writings of Marx and Engels concentrate more and more on the outcome of capitalist development and less and less on how to win workers to revolution. This combined with a blind respect for authority (see starting quote) leads Marxism to be a great recipe for incipient dictatorship even assuming the best intentions of the two authors.

The political ideas of Marx and Engels (despite their excellent economic analysis of capitalism) are ambiguous and contradictory. Even at their best they in no way approach the clarity and depth of Bakunin's conception of socialism.

FOOTNOTES

1 Engels On Authority (1872).

2 in Anarchism and Marxism (1973).

3 This is only a very simple picture. In reality there are a host of other factors such as competition that reduces prices, mechanisation that reduces the amount of labour, costs of raw materials and energy etc, but further explanation is outside the scope of this article.

4 Written in 1872.

5 First published in 1847 and continually reprinted in unaltered form. (If you disagree with an original position you usually change it in your next version!)

6 1874.

7 The State, its Historical Role (1897).

8 Bakunin on Anarchy (edited by Sam Dolgoff) p.4

9 Anti Duhring (1878).

10 Written just after the commune in 1871 and published in 1878.

11 Revolution, workers self government and all that

12 Preamble to the Constitution of the French Workers Party (1880).

13 Objective conditions are those over which the individual has no control. For example whether it rains or not tomorrow. One could, however, take the subjective decision to bring an umbrella.

14 Lenin, Collected Works Vol. 25 p358

15 Both quotes from God and State (1872)



10,000 armed Kronstadt sailors march into Petrograd to support revolution, July 1917

MARX & THE ANARCHISTS IN THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL

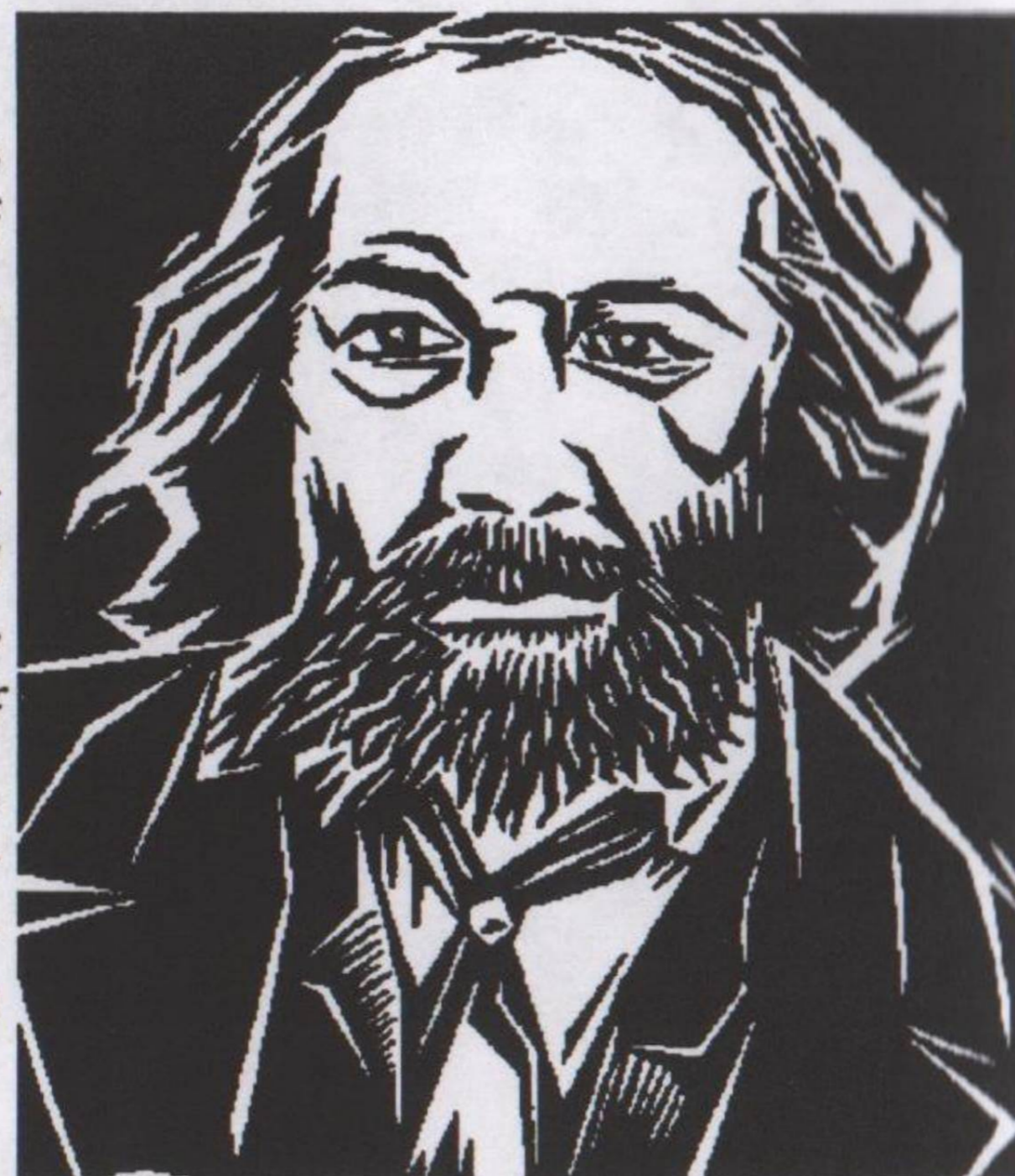
Bad theory leads to bad practice. Marx and Engels were well capable of intrigue and authoritarianism in practice. In February 1869 Bakunin's Alliance for Social Democracy put in a bid to join the international. It applied for membership as separate Swiss, Italian and Spanish sections. These were accepted. This was the high point of the international in terms of practical activity and Bakunin's influence was growing. Rather than take him on ideologically Marx and Engels opted for bureaucratic intrigue.

They held a special conference of delegates in London in September 1871 (up to then the International had open delegate congresses). This was stage managed with the 'delegates' being the London based Council of the International (dominated by Marx) and a few selected delegates. It was totally unrepresentative. This body then passed several constitutional amendments- that it had no power to do (only a full congress could do this- the council was supposed to look after administration). It passed a resolution that political action which previous congresses had defined as a subordinate instrument for social emancipation be linked indissolubly to it. This (party building, electoralism, etc) could not be accepted by the anarchists who could hardly remain in the international.

In 1872, delegates were hastily convened to a rigged 'congress' to which some sections were not invited and others (like the Italian) were boycotting due to actions of the London congress. This congress resolved that Bakunin's Alliance was a secret organisation attempting to impose a sectarian programme on the International. This was despite the fact that Bakunin's Alliance hadn't existed since 1869. Even Marx's own Committee of Inquiry had found insufficient evidence of its existence.

However condemnation and expulsion of Bakunin and his supporters was not enough. We continue in the words of Paul Thompson, himself sympathetic to Marx, from Marx, Bakunin and the International;

It was at this point-the vendetta against Bakunin having been concluded that Engels backed by Marx, Longuet and (some) other members of the general council, produced the bombshell of the Hague congress, moving that the seat of the general council be moved to New York. This motion, which was completely unexpected by the assembled delegates, was carried amid considerable (and understandable) confusion. Marx had destroyed the international in order to save it.



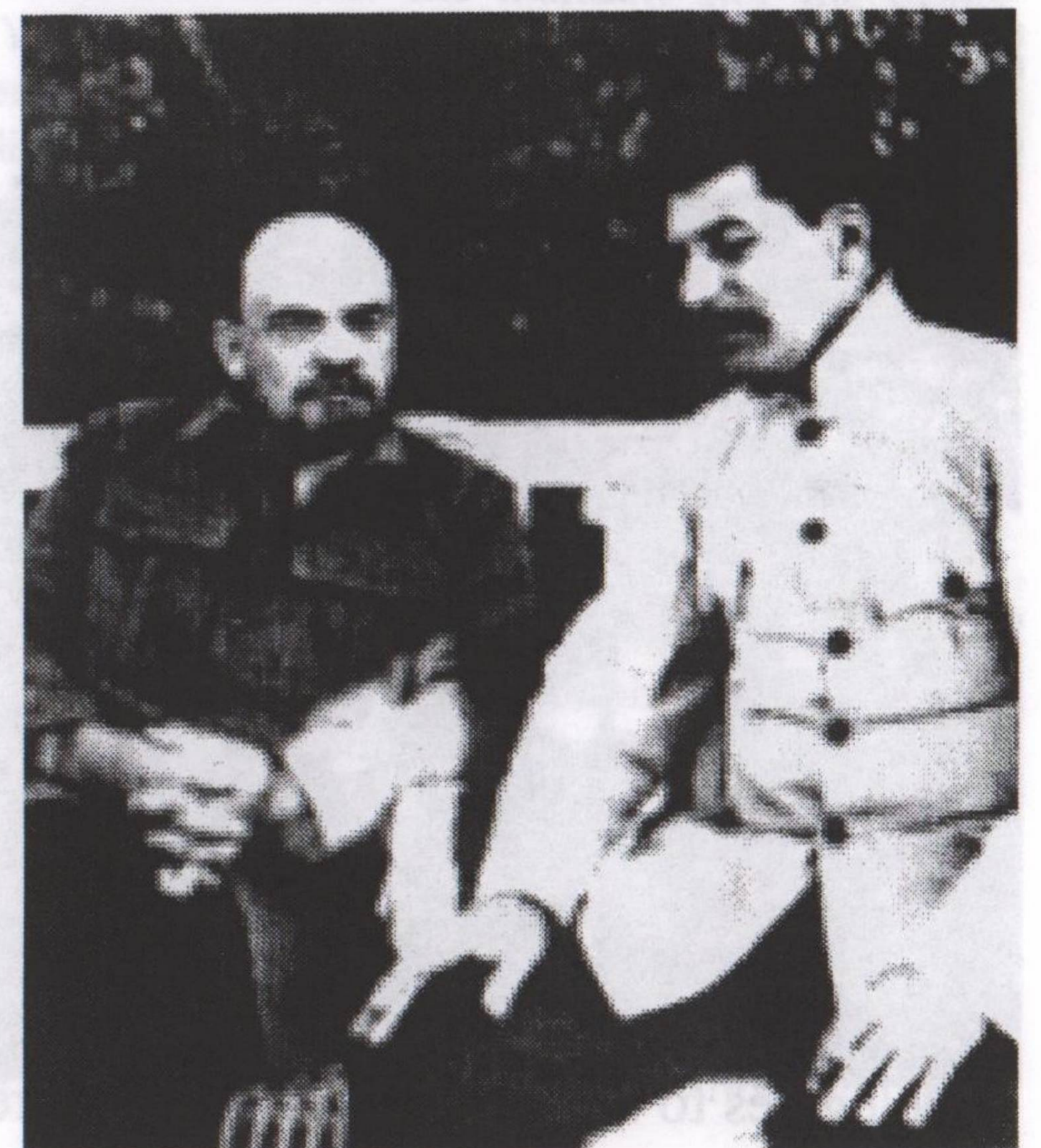
Stalin didn't fall from the Moon!

FOR THE LENINIST far left the manner of the collapse of the USSR should have led to questioning of some of their fundamental assumptions. If the Soviet Union really was a 'workers state' why were the workers unwilling to defend it? Why did they in fact welcome the changes?

What happened to Trotskys political revolution or bloody counter revolution? Those Leninist organisations which no longer see the Soviet Union as a workers state do not escape the contradictions either. If Stalin was the source of the problem why do so many Russian workers blame Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders too.

The mythology of Lenin, creator and sustainer of the Russian revolution is now dying. With it will go all the Leninist groups for as the Soviet archives are increasingly opened it will become increasingly difficult to defend Lenin's legacy. The Left in the west has dodged and falsified the Lenin debate for 60 years now. Now however there is a proliferation of articles and meetings by the various Trotskyist groups trying to convince workers that Lenin did not lead to Stalin. Unfortunately much of this debate is still based on the slander and falsifications of history that has been symptomatic of Bolshevism since 1918. The key questions of what comprises Stalinism and when did Stalinism first come into practice are dodged in favour of rhetoric and historical falsehood.

Stalinism is defined by many features and indeed some of these are more difficult than others to lay at the feet of Lenin. The guiding points of Stalin's foreign policy for instance was the idea of peaceful co-existence with the West while building socialism in the USSR (socialism in one country). Lenin is often presented as the opposite extreme, being willing to risk all in the cause of international revolution. This story like many others however is not all it seems. Other points that many would consider characteristic of Stalinism include, the



creation of a one party state, no control by the working class of the economy, the dictatorial rule of individuals over the mass of society, the brutal crushing of all workers' action and the use of slander and historical distortion against other left groups.

SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

The treaty of Brest-Livtosk of 1918, which pulled Russia out of World War I, also surrendered a very large amount of the Ukraine to the Austro-Hungarians. Obviously, there was no potential of continuing a conventional war (especially as the Bolsheviks had used the slogan peace, bread, land to win mass support). Yet, the presence of the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine, clearly demonstrated a vast revolutionary potential among the Ukrainian peasants and workers. No attempt was made to supply or sustain those forces which did seek to fight a revolutionary war against the Austro-Hungarians. They were sacrificed in order to gain a respite to build socialism in Russia.

The second point worth considering about Lenin's internationalism is his insistence from 1918 onwards, that the task was to build state capitalism, as "*If we introduced state capitalism in approximately 6 months' time we would achieve a great success...*"(1) He was also to say "*Socialism is nothing but state capitalist monopoly made to benefit the whole people.*" (2) This calls into question Lenin's concept of socialism.

ONE PARTY STATE

Another key feature many would associate with Stalinism was the creation of a one party state, and the silencing of all opposition currents within the party. Many Trotskyists will still try to tell you that the Bolsheviks encouraged workers to take up and debate the points of the day, both inside and outside the party. The reality is very different for the Bolsheviks rapidly clamped down on the revolutionary forces outside the party, and then on those inside that failed to toe the line .

In April 1918 the Bolshevik secret police (The Cheka) raided 26 Anarchist centres in



Delegates to the 1st all Russian conference of Factory Committees

Moscow. 40 Anarchists were killed or injured and over 500 imprisoned (3). In May the leading Anarchist publications were closed down(4). Both of these events occurred before the excuse of the outbreak of the Civil War could be used as a 'justification'. These raids occurred because the Bolsheviks were beginning to lose the arguments about the running of Russian industry.

In 1918 also a faction of the Bolshevik party critical of the party's introduction of 'Talyorism' (the use of piece work and time & motion studies to measure the output of each worker, essentially the science of sweat extraction) around the journal *Kommunist* were forced out of Leningrad when the majority of the Leningrad party conference supported Lenin's demand that "*the adherents of *Kommunist* cease their separate organisational existence.*"(5)

The paper was last published in May, silenced "*Not by discussion, persuasion or compromise, but by a high pressure campaign in the Party organisations, backed by a barrage of violent invective in the party press....*"(6) So much for encouraging debate!!

A further example of the Bolsheviks 'encouraging debate' was seen in their treatment of the Makhnovist in the Ukraine. This partisan army which fought against both the Ukrainian nationalists and the White generals at one time liberated over 7 million people. It was led by the anarchist Nestor Mhakno and anarchism played the major part in the ideology of the movement. The liberated zone was ran by a democratic soviet of workers and peasants and many collectives were set up.

ECHOS OF SPAIN

The Makhnovists entered into treaties with the Bolsheviks three times in order to maintain a stronger united front against the Whites and nationalists. Despite this they were betrayed by the Bolsheviks three times, and the third time they were destroyed after the Bolsheviks arrested and executed all the delegates sent to a joint military council. This was under the instructions of Trotsky! Daniel Guerin's description of Trotskys dealings with the Makhnovists is instructive "*He refused to give arms to Makhno's partisans, failing in his duty of assisting them, and subsequently accused them of betrayal and of allowing themselves to be beaten by white troops. The same procedure was followed 18 years later by the Spanish Stalinists against the anarchist brigades*"(7)

The final lid was put on political life outside or inside the party in 1921. The 1921 party congress banned all factions in the communist party itself. Trotsky made a speech denouncing one such faction, the Workers Opposition as "*having placed the workers right to elect representatives above the party. As if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers democracy.*" (8)

Shortly afterwards the Kronstadt rising was used as an excuse to exile, imprison and execute the last of the anarchists. Long before Lenins death the political legacy now blamed on Stalin had been completed. Dissent had been silenced inside and outside the party. The one party state existed as of 1921. Stalin may have been the first to execute party members on a large scale but with the execution of those revolutionaries outside the party and the silencing of dissidents within it from 1918 the logic for these purges was clearly in place.

THE WORKING CLASS UNDER LENIN

Another key area is the position of the working class in the Stalinist society. No Trotskyist would disagree that under Stalin workers had no say in the running of their workplaces and suffered atrocious conditions under threat of the state's iron fist. Yet again these conditions came in under Lenin and not Stalin. Immediately after the revolution the Russian workers had attempted to federate the factory committees in order to maximise the distribution of resources. This was blocked, with Bolshevik 'guidance', by the trade unions.

By early 1918 the basis of the limited workers control offered by the Bolsheviks (in reality little more than accounting) became clear when all decisions had to be approved by a higher body of which no more than 50% could be workers. Daniel Guerin describes the Bolshevik control of the elections in the factories *"elections to factory committees continued to take place, but a member of the Communist cell read out a list of candidates drawn up in advance and voting was by show of hands in the presence of armed 'Communist' guards. Anyone who declared his opposition to the proposed candidates became subject to wage cuts, etc."*(9)

On March 26th 1918 workers control was abolished on the railways in a decree full of ominous phrases stressing iron labour discipline and individual management. At least, say the Trotskyists, the railways ran on time. In April Lenin published an article in *Isvestiya* which included the introduction of a card system for measuring each workers productivity. He said *"..we must organise in Russia the study and teaching of the Talyor system. Unquestioning submission to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of the labour process...the revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of the labour process"* (10) in 1918. This came before the civil war broke out and makes nonsense of the claims that the Bolsheviks were trying to maximise workers control until the civil war prevented them from doing so.

With the outbreak of the Civil War things became much worse. In late May it was decreed that *"no more than 1/3 of the management personnel of industrial enterprises should be elected."*(11) A few highlights of the following years are worth pointing out. At the ninth party congress in April of 1920 Trotsky made his infamous comments on the militarization of labour. *"the working class...must be thrown here and there, appointed, commanded just like soldiers. Deserters from labour ought to be formed into punitive battalions or put into concentration camps"*(12) The congress itself declared *"no trade union group should directly intervene in industrial management."* (13)

ONE MAN MANAGEMENT

At the trade union congress that April, Lenin was to boast how in 1918 he had pointed out the necessity of *"recognising the dictatorial authority of single individuals for the purpose of carrying out the soviet idea."* (14) Trotsky declared that *"labour..obligatory for the whole country, compulsory for every worker is the basis of socialism"*(15) and that *"the militarisation of labour was no emergency measure"*(16). In *War Communism and Terrorism* published by Trotsky that year he said *"The unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interests of production above their own needs and demands."* It is impossible to distinguish between these policies and the labour policies of Stalin.

WORKERS REVOLTS

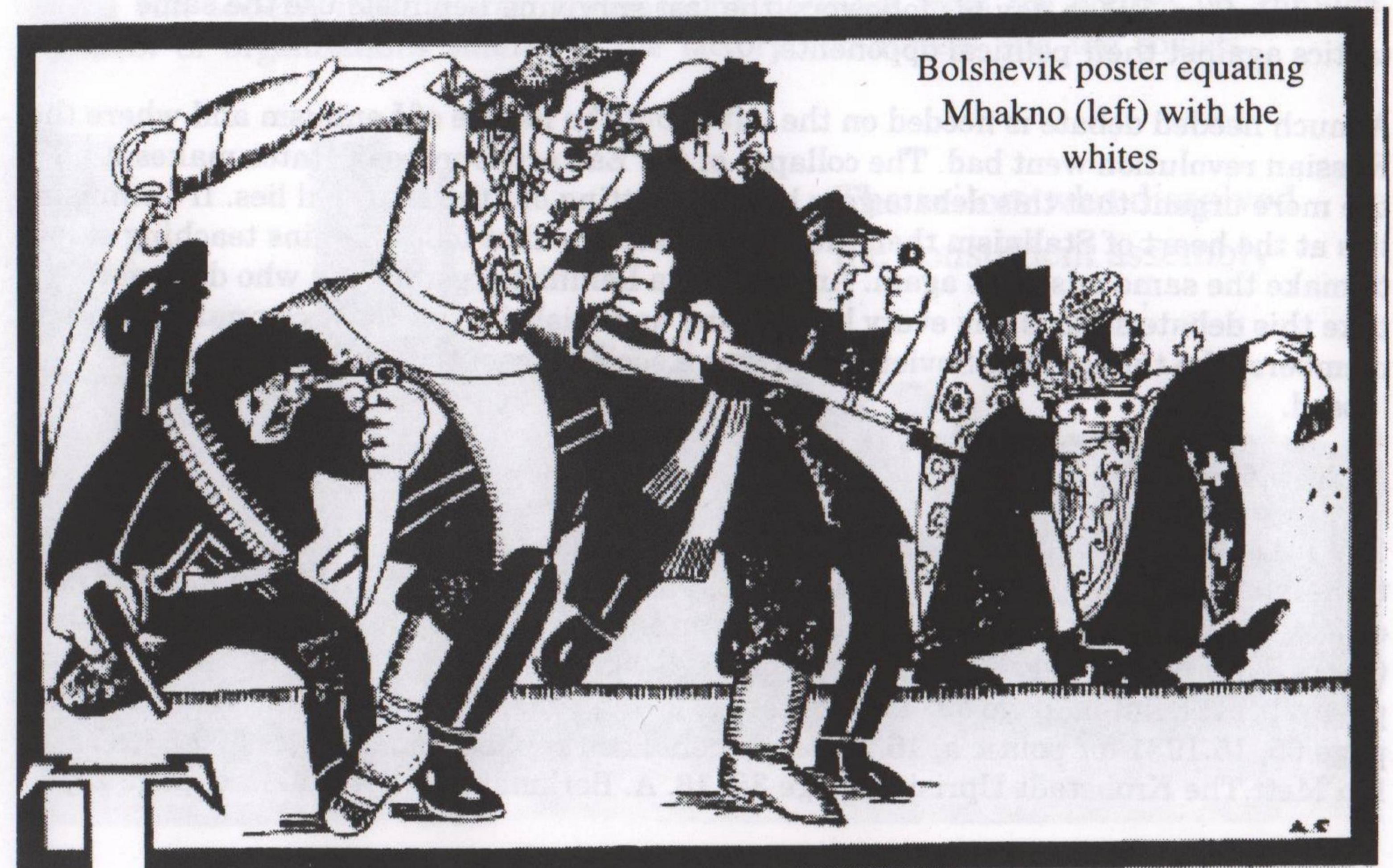
Perhaps the most telling condemnation of the Stalinist regimes came from their crushing of workers' revolts, both the well known ones of East Berlin 1953, Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 and scores of smaller, less known risings. The first such major revolt was to happen at the height of Lenin's rule in 1921 at Kronstadt, a naval base and town near Petrograd. The revolt essentially occurred when Kronstadt attempted to democratically elect a Soviet and issued a set of proclamations calling for a return to democratic soviets and freedom of press and speech for socialist parties.(17)

This won the support of not only the mass of workers and sailors at the base but of the rank and file of the Bolshevik party there as well. Leninist response was brutal. The base was stormed and many of the rebels who failed to escape were executed. Kronstadt had been the driving force for the revolution in 1917 and in 1921 the revolution died with it.

There are other commonly accepted characteristics of Stalinism. One more that is worth looking at is the way Stalinist organisations have used slander as a weapon against other left groups. Another is the way that Stalin re-wrote history. Yet again this is something which was a deep strain within Leninism. Mharko for example went from being hailed by the Bolshevik newspapers as the *"Nemesis of the whites"*(18) to being described as a Kulak and a bandit .

SLANDER

Modern day Trotskyists are happy to repeat this sort of slander along with describing Mharko as an anti-Semite. Yet the Jewish historian M. Tchernikover says *"It is undeniable that, of all the armies, including the Red Army, the Makhnovists behaved best with regard to the civilian population in general and the Jewish population in particular."*(19)



Bolshevik poster equating Mharko (left) with the whites

The leadership of the Makhnovists contained Jews and for those who wished to organise in this manner there were specific Jewish detachments. The part the Makhnovists played in defeating the whites has been written out of history by every Trotskyist historian, some other historians however consider they played a far more decisive role than the Red Army in defeating Wrangel(20).

Kronstadt provides another example of how Lenin and Trotsky used slander against their political opponents. Both attempted to paint the revolt as being organised and lead by the whites. Pravda on March 3rd, 1921 described it as "A new White plot"

Lenin in his report to the 10th party congress on March 8th said "White generals, you all know it, played a great part in this. This is fully proved." (21)

Yet even Isaac Deutscher, Trotskys biographer said in the Prophet armed "The Bolsheviks denounced the men of Kronstadt as counter-revolutionary mutineers, led by a White general. The denunciation appears to have been groundless"(22).

RE-WRITING HISTORY

Some modern day Trotskyists repeat such slander others like Brian Pearce (historian of the Socialist Labour League) try to deny it ever occurred "No pretence was made that the Kronstadt mutineers were White Guards"(23) In actual fact the only czarist general in the fort had been put there as commander by Trotsky some months earlier! Lets leave the last words on this to the workers of Kronstadt "Comrades, don't allow yourself to be misled. In Kronstadt, power is in the hands of the sailors, the red soldiers and of the revolutionary workers" (24)

There is irony in the fact that these tactics of slander and re-writing history as perfected by the Bolsheviks under Lenin were later to be used with such effect against the Trotskyists. Trotsky and his followers were to be denounced as Fascists and agents of international imperialism. They were to be written and air-brushed out of the history of the revolution. Yet to-day his followers, the last surviving Leninists use the same tactics against their political opponents.

A much needed debate is needed on the left about the nature of Leninism and where the Russian revolution went bad. The collapse of the Eastern European states makes it all the more urgent that this debate goes beyond trotting out the same old lies. If Leninism lies at the heart of Stalinism then those organisations that follow Lenins teaching stand to make the same mistakes again. Anybody in a Leninist organisation who does not take this debate seriously is every bit as blind and misled as all those communist party members who thought the Soviet Union was a socialist country until the day it collapsed.

Andrew Flood

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19. quoted by Voline The Unknown Revolution, page 572, 20. P. Berland, Mhakno, Le Temps, 28 Aug, 1934, 21. Lenin, Selected Works, vol IX, p. 98, 22. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, page 511. 23. Labour Review, vol V, No. 3. 24. I. Mett, page 51.

ON QUOTES AND MISQUOTES

The problem when writing an article covering this period of history is where you select your quotations from. Both Lenin and Trotsky changed their positions many times in this period. Many Leninists for example try to show Lenin's opposition to Stalinism by quoting from State and Revolution (1917). This is little more than deception as Lenin made no attempt to put the program outlined in this pamphlet into practise. In any case it still contains his curious conception of Workers control.

I have only used quotes from the October revolution to 1921 and in every case these quotes are either statements of policy, or what should be policy at the time. As socialists are aware governments in opposition may well say Health cuts hurt the old, the sick and the handicapped. It is however in power that you see their real programe exposed.



Freedom & Revolution

In 1922 Emma Goldman complained "*Soviet Russia, had become the modern socialist Lourdes, to which the blind and the lame, the deaf and the dumb were flocking for miraculous cures*"(1). The Russian Revolution was the first occasion where decades of revolutionary ideas could be applied to real life. What was theory was now practice. The struggle between the two concepts of revolution - the statist-centralist and the libertarian federalist - moved from the realm of the abstract to the concrete.

The question thrown up by the October revolution is fundamental. Once capitalism has been defeated, how is communism to be achieved? While there are certainly faults to be found with aspects of the anarchist movement, at least it cannot be criticised for getting the basics wrong. Anarchists have consistently argued that freedom and democracy are not optional extras. Rather they form part of the conditions necessary for the growth of communism.

What is socialism?

How does one create a communist society? The answer lies in our conception of socialism. What is meant by 'socialism'? The classic definition is that of society run according to the dictum from "*each according to his/her ability, to each according to his/her needs.*" To anarchists, material equality is one dimension to socialism, but there is another of equal importance, that of freedom.

The world has enough wealth to provide for all our material comforts. Socialism seeks to liberate people from the constant worries about mortgages or landlords, the rising cost of living and the numerous other issues, trivial yet vital that grind us down in our daily life. What's more, socialism must also give us the power to control our own lives, power to take control of our own destinies.

For our entire lives, from school to the workplace, we are forced to obey somebody else's order, treated like children or bits of machinery. Human beings have great potential but for most of us, only in a socialist society, will this potential be real-

ised.

So though socialism is about material equality it is also about freedom. Furthermore it is impossible to maintain one without the other. As long as power is distributed unequally, a section of society will continue to have privileges leading to material advantage. Ultimately society will again be divided into classes, into those who have and those who have not. Furthermore the experience of those attempts to manage the economy through an undemocratic centralised state has also shown that it is unfeasible to manage and control a complex system without democracy and accountability.

The revolution must achieve a number of things. It must defeat the ruling class, removing from them their economic and political dominance. In place of the bosses, the working class must in every sphere of activity make the decisions that ultimately affect them; in factories, communities, schools, universities, newspapers, television and film studios.

This is the sort of society that is worth fighting for. However it not the sort of society that can be achieved through the dictatorship of a minority over the majority. Even

some Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg recognised this. She said, "*Socialist practice demands a total spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois class rule. Social instincts in place of egoistic ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which overcomes all suffering, etc. etc.... The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the broadest and the most unlimited democracy, and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralises.*"(1)

The questions that face us are: what does revolution mean? Once capitalism has been overthrown how is society to be run? Who will control the factories, how will production be managed? How will the population be fed, how will the economy be organised? And finally, how will the revolution be defended against opposition and its survival ensured? If



communism is to become a reality, answers must be found.

1. Who's in charge?...running the revolution.

On midnight 25/26th of October, the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC), following the directions of the Petrograd Soviet (workers council), started the confused process of seizing the Winter Palace where Kerensky's cabinet was in session. The October Revolution had taken place. In contrast to the dramatic portrayal of the storming of the winter place by the Soviet film maker Eisenstien, there was practically no opposition to the take-over and hardly any bloodshed. Sergei Mstislavskii, a leader of the Left SR's (peasant-based party which briefly entered a coalition with the Bolsheviks) describes being woken up on the morning of the 25th by the "cheerful tapping of rifles.... 'Gird up your loins boss. There's a smell of gunpowder in the city..' Actually, the city did not smell of gunpowder; power lay in the gutter, anyone could pick it up. One did not have to gird one's loins, one needed only to stoop down and pick it up"(2)

The Bolshevik Myth is that the Bolsheviks, under the logical and scientific leadership of Lenin, guided the revolution over hurdle after hurdle. They argue that objective circumstances forced them to make difficult but ultimately correct decisions. Descriptions of the revolution like the following passage are frequently found:

"the bolsheviks..in the hour of crisis put aside all their indignation at the governmental persecutions and concentrated on the task of saving the revolution. The victory before the gates of Petrograd set free the energies of the masses throughout the country. Peasants revolted against their landlords, and in far-away industrial centres Soviets took power. The decisive hour was approaching. Would there be a force capable of directing the chaotic mass movements into one channel towards the correct aim?"(3)

Here it is implied that without the Bolshevik leadership the revolution would not have happened. The masses are portrayed as incapable of running a new society. The creative ability of the working class to build a new society is not present in the Leninist conception of a working class capable of only 'trade union consciousness'. The October Revolution was "not really so much a bold stroke by the Bolsheviks under Lenin as it was a culmination of months of progressive social revolution throughout the country, The ubiquitous growth of peasants and workers' committees and soviets sapped the power from the hands of Kerensky and the bourgeois provincial government, which surrendered without a fight as it's capacity to govern had completely dissolved"(4).

Bourgeois Democracy.

After the October Revolution, the Second Congress of Soviets elected an interim government (the Sovnarkom), pending the holding of elections to the Constituent Assembly. This provisional government on the 3rd of March undertook in a solemn declaration to summon a Constituent Assembly. Following elections the SR's had an overall majority, with the Bolsheviks winning only 175 out of the 707 seats.

It is with the decision to call for elections to the Constituent Assembly that the anarchists first diverged from the Bolsheviks. What lead them to take this decision and why did anarchists oppose it?

The western model of parliamentary democracy could more accurately be characterised as a '4-year dictatorship'. The crucial difference between 'representative' democracy and 'direct' democracy is that under the former, voters have no part in deciding policy and are unable to recall their representatives. Instead they have nothing more

than the illusion that by voting they are in some way able to control the political process.

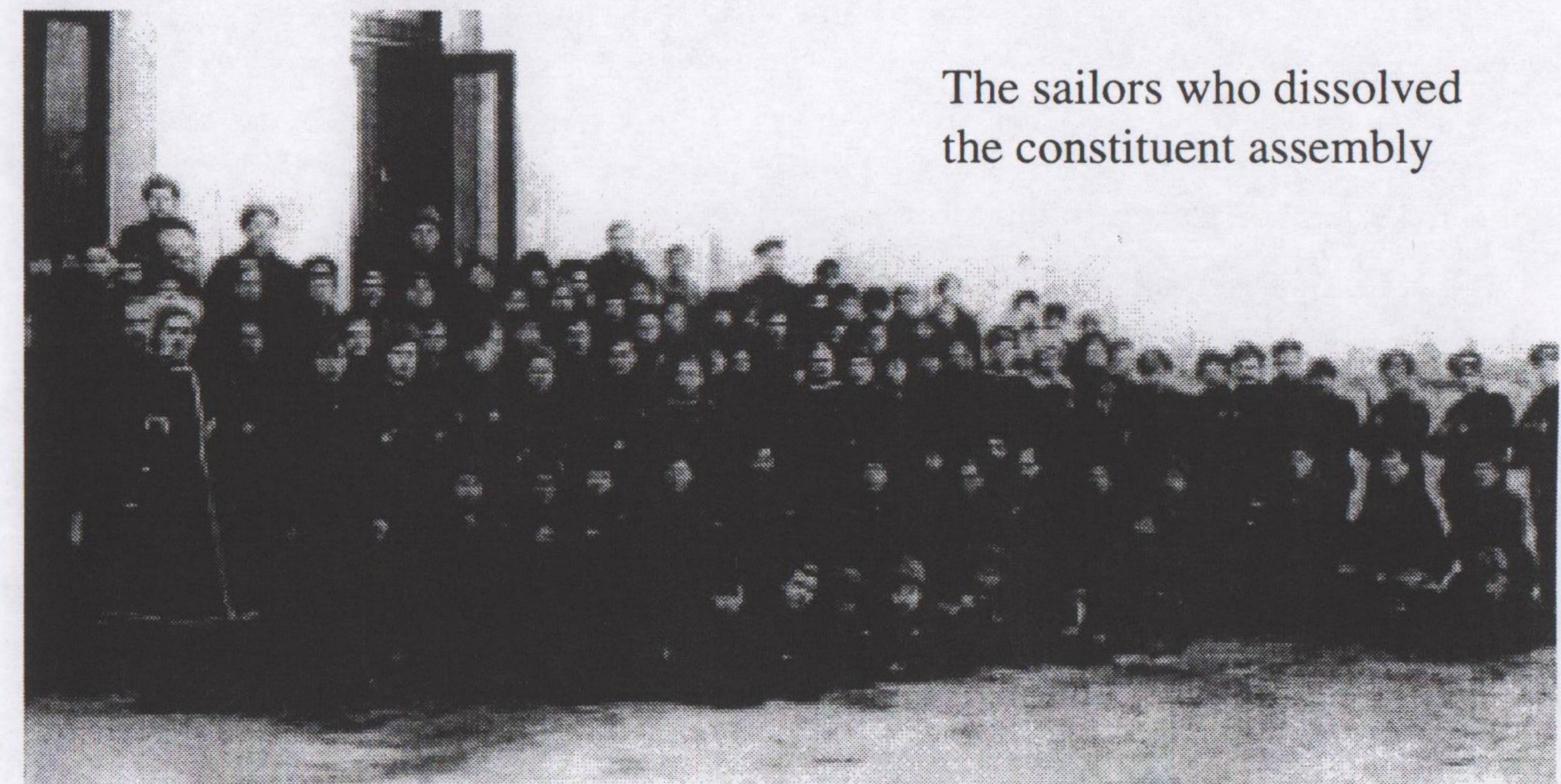
Once power lay in the hands of the Soviets, the Constituent Assembly became a redundant institution. Here was a country where control had been finally wrenched from the ruling class and was organised in the hands of the workers. The Bolsheviks decision to call for new elections was a step backwards. In terms of fighting for socialism, it made no sense to be supporting the authority of the Constituent Assembly over that of the masses. As anarchists said shortly afterwards:

"To continue the Revolution and transform it into a social revolution, the Anarchists saw no utility in calling such an assembly, an institution essentially political and bourgeoisie, cumbersome and sterile, an institution which, by its very nature, placed itself 'above the social struggles' and concerned itself only, by means of dangerous compromises, with stopping the revolution, and even suppressing it if possible.....so the Anarchists tried to make known to the masses the uselessness of the Constituent Assembly, and the necessity of going beyond it and replacing it at once with economic and social organisations, if they really wanted to begin a social revolution

.....We believe, in fact, that in a time of social revolution, what is important for the workers is for them to organise their new life themselves, from the bottom, and with the help of their immediate economic organisations, and not from above, by means of an authoritarian political centre"(5)

The party

One of the main differences between the anarchist and the Leninist tendency is in their differing attitudes to power and control. While both agree that the revolution should be made by the working class, they disagree on who hold the reigns of power afterwards. Leninists believe it is the job of the party to exercise control of society on behalf of the ruling class and like a parent, the party interprets what the best interests of the working class are. In contrast, anarchists believe that it is the working class who should run society, making and implementing decisions from the bottom up, through a system of organisations similar to the factory committees and the soviets.



The sailors who dissolved the constituent assembly

Often Leninists will counter this argument by saying, the party is made up of the best elements, the vanguard, of the working class. Although at the time of October the Bolsheviks were the largest working class party this was because of what they claimed to stand for ("*All power to the soviets*" etc.). There were still many advanced workers outside the party, so even then the 'vanguard' and the party were not identical. In the years that followed as the party came to be increasingly composed of bureaucrats, the advanced workers were often as not in opposition. The mistake the Leninists make is to assume October froze the 'vanguard' in one organisation for all time.

Leninists and anarchists agree that, unlike most others in the working class, they have both an analysis of how society works and practical experience drawn from involvement in struggles. These are the tools needed to effect a complete transformation of society. However anarchism and Leninism diverge on the ability of the working class to run society. They have differing estimations of how aware the working class are of their revolutionary potential. Anarchists believe that it is possible to convince the mass of the working class of our ideas. In contrast, Lenin said that most workers are capable only of "*trade union consciousness*". Naturally therefore, Leninists believe that since the working class is sensible only to its short term interests, it is vital that the Leninists are in power, in order for the revolution to succeed.

It was this line of thinking that led the Bolsheviks to initially call for elections to the Constituent Assembly and then, once it had been held, to call for its dissolution, as Alexander Berkman commented in 1921;

"They (the Bolsheviks) had advocated the Constituent Assembly, and only when they were convinced they could not have a majority there, and therefore not be able to take state power into their own hands, they suddenly decided on the dissolution of the assembly"

Lenin, in a signed Pravda article published on 22 December 1918, quoted approvingly from Plekhanov's speech at the Second RSDRP(6) Congress in 1903;

"If in a burst of enthusiasm the people elected a very good parliament...then we ought to make it a very long parliament and if the elections have not proved a success, then we should seek to disperse parliament not after two years but, if possible, after two weeks."(7)

Their opposition wasn't based, unlike the anarchists, on the essentially anti-democratic nature of the Constituent Assembly, instead it was on whether or not the Bolsheviks were the controlling force.

In a revolutionary situation the anarchists are alone in arguing that society should be organised from the bottom up, through a freely federated system of workers' councils. Decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level. Delegates are elected solely to represent the view of those who elected them, receive no more pay than the average worker, may act as a delegate for only a fixed amount of time and are recallable. If the working class has the power to overthrow capitalism, it certainly is capable of organising a socialist society afterwards.

2. Fighting the Counter Revolution

Once the capitalist power structure has been dismantled, the next immediate issue on the revolutionaries' agenda is to ensure the defence of the revolution while also fostering its growth. It is a mistake to characterise revolutions as inherently bloody.

In the October Revolution itself there were only 500 casualties. Many were surprised by the speed and ease with which the eastern European regimes fell in the 1980's. Similarly the dictatorship was bloodlessly toppled in Portugal in 1974. Bloodbaths, such as those which occurred following the Paris Commune, Chile in 1973 or Indonesia in 1965(8), are products of failed revolutions or more accurately, successful counter revolutions.

There is likely to be violent opposition to any attempt by the working classes to take power from the bosses. After all, the masses have everything to gain while the minority ruling class have everything to lose. The danger this poses depends on the relative strength of the bosses' reaction. However, whether the threat is large or small, it will be necessary to physically defend the revolution from opposition, both internally and externally.

This raises a number of issues. The corner stone of any justical system is access to open and fair trials, a full appeal process and sentence proportional to the gravity of the crime. While these are easily attainable in peace, in war, particularly civil war, curtailment of rights and civil liberties are more likely to occur. This should not be glorified (as Lenin tended to do), short term expediency is likely to lead to long term damage. The questions revolutionaries must ask is, are our actions necessary and 'objectively unavoidable' or can they be avoided? Furthermore, what effect will they have on the process of introducing socialism? Again, the answer given will depend on what socialism is considered to be.

The Secret Police

Only two months after the revolution (well before the start of the civil war) a secret police force known as the Cheka was founded, initially to inherit the security functions of the MRC(9). There were no external controls on its operation. No judicial process was involved in assessing the guilt or innocence of any of its prisoners. Punishments, including the death penalty, were arbitrarily applied. The Cheka was meant to be a temporary organisation, at first it was an administrative body designed to carry out investigative functions. It was not initially judicial and had no powers of arrest, however it grew up quickly. Nine days after its birth, it was granted the power of arrest. In January 1918 it was being assigned armed units, in February it was granted the power of summary trials and execution of sentences (which included the death sentence). At the end of 1917 it had 23 personnel, by mid 1918 it had over 10,000.

The Cheka was a police force. The role of a police force is to defend the interests of a ruling minority. These days the government will always defend the actions of the police, seen for example in the whitewashing of police involved in the Birmingham Six case in England. The same was true of the Bolshevik party's relationship to the Cheka. This is Lenin speaking to a rally of Chekists on 7th November 1918.

"It is not at all surprising to hear the Chekist's activities frequently attacked by friends as well as enemies. We have taken a hard job. When we took over the government of the country, we naturally made many mistakes, and it is only natural that the mistakes of the Extraordinary Commissions [the Cheka] strike the eye most. The narrow-minded intellectual fastens on these mistakes without trying to get to the root of the matter. What does surprise me in all these outcries about the Cheka's mistakes is the manifest inability to put the question on a broad footing. People harp on individual mistakes the Chekas made, and raise a hue and cry about them. We, however, say that we learn from

our mistakes...When I consider its activities and see how they are attacked, I say this is all narrow minded and futile talk....What is important for us is that the Chekas are implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in this respect their role is invaluable. There is no other way to liberate the masses except by crushing the exploiters by violence."

The quote begs quite a few questions; what are the mistakes being talked about? What has been learnt from these mistakes? And was the Cheka activity aimed solely at the old ruling class?

Revolutionary Terror

The Bolshevik policy of Red Terror began shortly after the beginning of the Civil War in the summer of 1918, and was mirrored by the White Terror. The policy promoted the use of mass execution and fear as a tactic to be implemented ruthlessly. Acts of violence, rather than being viewed as regrettable and destructive were glorified. Latsis, the head of the Cheka on the Eastern front, wrote "In civil war there are no courts of law for the enemy. It is a life or death struggle. If you do not kill, you will be killed. Therefore kill, that you may not be killed."(10) . The paper of the Red Army wrote after an assassination attempt against Lenin; "Without mercy, without sparing, we will kill our enemies in scores of hundreds. Let them be thousands, let them drown themselves in their own blood. For the blood of Lenin and Uritskii...let there be floods of blood of the bourgeois - more blood, as much as possible."(11) It's hard to see what this frenzied call for destruction and retribution could contribute to the task of building a new and freer society.

Collective punishments, categorical punishments, torture, hostage taking and random punishments - aimed at providing lessons - were all applied in the name of the revolution. Categorical punishments were punishments based not on what someone actually did, but on what class or political background they belonged to. On the 3rd of September 1918, *Ivestia* announced that over 500 hostages had been shot by the Petrograd Cheka, these were people convicted not because they had committed a crime but because they were unfortunate enough to come from the wrong background.

There are two interpretations that may be applied to the use of revolutionary terror; on the one hand, it may be aimed against counter-revolution, on the other it may be used to compensate for the regimes declining popularity. As Emma Goldman wrote in 1922, "...an insignificant minority bent on creating an absolute State is necessarily driven to oppression and terrorism"(12). The policy of revolutionary terror is in direct opposition to obtaining mass participation in the running of the society. While these tactics certainly consolidated the Bolshevik's power base, they undermined the socialism the revolution had been about in the first place.

In the countryside the Bolsheviks became the 'occupying army' instead of the 'liberating army', alienating the very population they should have been trying to convince. Terror is a doubled edged sword, it may be expedient but its use also discredits any regimes claim to fairness.

Furthermore as Malatesta the Italian anarchist wrote in 1919 "Even Bonaparte helped defend the French Revolution against the European reaction, but in defending it he strangled it. Lenin, Trotsky and comrades are certainly sincere revolutionaries, and they will not betray what they take as revolution, but they are preparing the governmental apparatus which will help those who follow them to profit by the revolution and destroy

it. They will be the first victims of their methods, and with them, I fear, the revolution will collapse. History repeats itself, mutatis mutandis: and the dictatorship of Robespierre brought Robespierre to the guillotine and prepared the way for Napoleon."(13) Perhaps Trotsky should have heeded Malatesta's words.

The Death Penalty

One of the first acts of the 2nd Congress of Soviets in October was the repeal of the death penalty that had been introduced by Kerensky. This was restored on the 16th June 1918. On 17th January 1920, The Bolshevik government abolished the death penalty except in districts where there were military operations taking place. To circumvent this order, the Cheka routinely transferred prisoners to the military areas for execution. In the following passage, the Bolshevik Victor Serge, describes how the Chekas reacted to the abolition of the death penalty

"while the newspapers were printing the decree, the Petrograd Chekas were liquidating their stock! Cartload after cartload of suspects had been driven outside the city during the night, and then shot, heap upon heap. How many? In Petrograd between 150 and 200; in Moscow it was said between 200 and 300."(14)

Neither of these actions can be justified by the necessities of civil war as they occurred well behind friendly lines. Nor were these actions the product of random events, they weren't mistakes, rather, as explained above, they were part of the policy of revolutionary terror

The Anarchists

On the 11th December Cheka and Lettish troops surrounded 26 anarchist strongholds in Moscow. The anarchists suffered 40 casualties and 500 were taken prisoner. On the 26th April similar raids were carried out in Petrograd. At this stage Dzershinsky (head of the Cheka) justified his action on the grounds that the anarchists had been preparing an insurrection and that in any event, most of those arrested proved to be criminal riff raff. He stressed that the Cheka had neither the mandate nor the desire to wage war on "ideological anarchists". Yet documents(15) dating from the 13th June outlined that the department for counter revolution investigative section and intelligence unit had sections allocated to dealing with anarchists. The fact that 'ideological' Anarchists were under Cheka surveillance gives lie to the Bolshevik claim that they were only opposed to a 'criminal' element within the anarchist movement rather than anarchism itself.

While Leon Trotsky was saying in July 1921 "We do not imprison real anarchists. Those whom we hold in prison are not anarchists, but criminals and bandits who cover themselves up by claiming to be anarchists"(16), 13 anarchists were on hungerstrike in Moscow. Fortunately a French Syndicalist trade union delegation in the city heard of their plight and the prisoners were released (all but three were expelled from the USSR). Not so lucky was Fanyan Baron, a young anarchist woman, shot without trial, along with several others, on trumped up charges of counterfeiting Soviet bank notes (it was later proven that the counterfeiting was done by the Cheka itself). Unlucky also were the 30 or 40 anarchists living near Zhmirink who according to the soviet press in 1921 had been "discovered and liquidated". The last great mobilisation of anarchists occurred at the funeral of Kropotkin in February 1921 when 20,000 marched with placards and banners demanding, among other things, the release of anarchists from prison. From then on the suppression of anarchists became thorough and complete.

While there was opposition to the Cheka abuses from within the Bolshevik party, there was no institutional attempt to change its mode of operation. In any organisation, there is both a human and a structural element. Perhaps it could be argued that the abuses of Cheka were due to individual mistakes. If individuals are given unlimited power, including power over life and death, with no accountability, it's inevitable that a measure of excess and corruption will occur. Where this occurs it is up to the revolutionary organisation to make changes to prevent the same mistakes from being repeated. This is not what the Bolshevik party did. They continued to entrust individuals with unchecked power. They did not make any structural changes to the Cheka. Instead they occasionally rooted out the rotten human element, closing down certain branches, while leaving the edifice that engendered these abuses untouched.

Emma Goldman said, on escaping from Russia in 1921, *"I have never denied that violence is inevitable, nor do I gainsay it now. Yet it is one thing to employ violence in combat as a means of defence. It is quite another to make a principle of terrorism, to institutionalise it, to assign it the most vital place in the social struggle. Such terrorism begets counter-revolution and in turn becomes counter-revolutionary."*(17)

3. Defending the revolution

The other side to defending the revolution is that of defending it from outside military attack. Here there are two forms of organisation open to the revolutionary; employing either a conventional military army or employing a militia. Again the Russian Revolution provides a concrete example, though initially a militia structure was adopted, by 1918 the conventional army structures had returned. The difference between the two is not, as is so often stated, one of efficiency or organisation (with the army being characterised as organised, while the militia is characterised as chaotic). The difference between the two is one of democracy.

Following the Brest-Litovsk treaty, Trotsky as Commissar of Military Affairs set about reorganising the army. The death penalty for disobedience under fire was reintroduced, as was saluting officers, special forms of address, separate living quarters and privileges for officers. Officers were no longer elected. Trotsky wrote *"The elective basis is politically pointless and technically inexpedient and has already been set aside by decree"*(18). Why did Bolsheviks feel there was a need to reintroduce military discipline? Why then was there a need for military discipline in Russia 1917 but not in the anarchist front lines in Spain in 1936?

The conventional army structure evolved when feudal kings or capitalist governments required the working class to fight its wars for them. These had to be authoritarian institutions, because although propaganda and jingoism can play a part initially in encouraging enlistment, the horrors of war soon expose the futility of nationalism. A large part of military organisation is aimed at ensuring that soldiers remain fighting for causes they do not necessarily believe in. Military discipline attempts to create an unthinking, unquestioning body of soldiers, as fearful of their own side as of the other.

But, there is another way of organising armies, that of the Militia. The only difference between the two is that in Militias, officers and generals are elected, and soldiers fighting are fighting out of choice rather than fear. This structure removes the necessity for the creation of a division between officers and soldiers that is reinforced artificially by measures such as saluting and differential privileges. These measures are no longer necessary because there is no need to frighten or order soldiers to fight when they

believe in the cause they are about to risk their lives for. There are many examples of militias successfully operating; the Boers fought with a volunteer army against the British. During the Spanish Revolution of 1936, militias in Anarchist controlled areas fought Franco. In 1936 the CNT declared:

"We cannot defend the existence of nor see the need for, a regular army, uniformed and conscripted. This army must be replaced by the popular militias, by the People in Arms, the only guarantee that freedom will be defended with enthusiasm and that no new conspiracies will be hatched from the shadows"(19).

Over the four years 1918-1921 the anarchist Makhno commanded militias who fought against the forces of the Hetman, White Generals Denikin and Wrangel, nationalists like Petliura and Grigor'ev and, of course, the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. At its height it had 30,000 volunteer combatants under arms. Makhno and his commanders won against odds of 30:1 and more, on occasion. The insurgent army was a democratic military formation. Its recruits were volunteers drawn from peasants and workers. Its officers were elected and codes of discipline were worked out democratically. Officers could be, and were, recalled by their troops if they acted undemocratically.

Those supporting conventional army structures argue that they are necessary because without them, in the heat of battle, soldiers will turn and rout. History has shown that people will give their lives in defence of a cause if it is great enough and if they believe in it.

Of course there are many more examples of operation of conventional military armies (W.W.I, W.W.II., Vietnam etc. etc.). These were conflicts where it was not necessary to obtain the consent of soldiers. The role of military discipline is to prevent conscripts from mutineering when faced with the horror of wars in which they had no interest in fighting. These were conflicts where human life was lost in great numbers. The generals directing the war effort were able to make mistake after mistake, wasting lives, with no accountability (see any military history of the Battle of the Somme, Gallipoli, etc.). These many examples give lie to the excuse that it is more efficient and that it is necessary, to organise along authoritarian lines. The function of hierarchies of rank and decision making is to ensure that the power of an army is directed and controlled by a minority.

4. Factories in Revolution

After the revolution there were two choices available to those running the economy, either to organise production in the hands of the state or in the hands of the workers. In order to achieve the former the Bolsheviks had to move against the latter. The factory committees were groups of workers elected at most factories before, during and after the October revolution. The delegates to these committees were mandatable and recallable. They were elected initially to prevent the individual bosses from sabotaging equipment. They quickly expanded their scope to cover the complete administration of the workplace and displaced the individual managers. As each workplace relied on many others, to supply raw materials, for energy and to transport their products, the Factory Committees tried to federate in November 1917.

They were prevented from doing so by the Bolsheviks through the trade union bureaucracy. The planned 'All Russian Congress of Factory Committees' never took place. Instead the Bolshevik party decided to set up the 'All Russian Council' of Workers Control' with only 25% of the delegates coming from the factory committees. In this way

the creative energy of Russian workers, co-ordinated outside Bolshevik control, was blocked in favour of an organisation the party could control. This body was in itself stillborn, it only met once. It was soon absorbed by the Supreme Economic Council set up in November 1917 which was attached to the Council of Peoples Commissars, itself made up of Bolshevik party members.

In November 1917 Golas Truada (the official organ of the Union for Anarchist Propaganda) warned:

"Once their power is consolidated and 'legalised', the Bolsheviks who are Social Democrats, that is, men of centralist and authoritarian action will begin to rearrange the life of the country and of the people by governmental and dictatorial methods, imposed by the centre. Their seat in Petrograd will dictate the will of the party to all Russia, and command the whole nation. Your Soviets and your other local organisations will become little by little, simply executive organs of the will of the central government. In the place of health, constructive work by the labouring masses, in place of free unification from the bottom, we will see the installation of an authoritarian and statist apparatus which would act from above and set about wiping out everything that stood in its way with an iron hand."

This is indeed what happened. The factory committees were merged with the Bolshevik controlled Trade Union movement. In a decree in March 1918 workers' control was supposed to return to the conception of monitoring and inspection rather than management, *"in nationalised enterprises, worker's control is exercised by submitting all declarations or decisions of the Factory or shop committee.. to the Economic Administrative Council for approval....Not more than half the members of the administrative council should be workers or employees."* Also in March 1918, Lenin began to campaign in favour of one-man management of industry. In 1919, 10.8% of enterprises were under one-man management, by December 1920, 2,183 out of 2,483 factories were no longer under collective management.

Control of the Economy

So within a few short months of October, the Bolsheviks had taken control of the economy out of the hands of the working class and into the hands of the Bolshevik party. This was before the civil war, at a time when the workers had shown themselves capable of making a revolution but according to the Bolsheviks, incapable of running the economy. The basis of the Bolshevik attack on the factory committees was simple, the Bolsheviks wanted the factories to be owned and managed by the state, whereas the factory committees wanted the factories to be owned and managed by the workers. One Bolshevik described the factory committee's attitude: *"We found a process which recalled the anarchist dreams of autonomous productive communes."*

Partly they did this to remove the threat of any opposition to Bolshevik rule, but partly, these decisions were a result of the Bolshevik political perspective. These policy decisions were not imposed on them by external objective factors such as the civil war. With or without the civil war their strategic decisions would have been the same, because they arise out of the Leninist conception of what socialism is and what workers control means. Their understanding of what socialism means is very different from the anarchist definition. At the root of this difference is the importance given to the *"relations of production"*. In other words the importance of the relationship between those who produce the wealth and those who manage its production. In all class

societies, the producer is subordinate and separate from those who manage production. The workplace is divided into the boss and the workers. The abolition of the division in society between 'order-givers' and 'order-takers' is integral to the Anarchist idea of socialism, but is unimportant to the Leninist.

The phrase *"workers control of the means of production"* is often used. Unfortunately it represents different things to different tendencies. To the anarchist it means that workers must have complete control over every aspect of production. There must be workplace democracy. They must have the power to make decisions affecting them and their factory, including hours worked, amount of goods manufactured, who to exchange with. As Maurice Brinton, author of *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* explains:

"Workers management of production - implying as it does the total domination of the producer over the productive process - is not for us a marginal matter. It is the core of our politics. It is the only means whereby authoritarian (order-giving, order-taking) relations in production can be transcended, and a free, communist or anarchist, society introduced. We also hold that the means of production may change hands (passing for instance from private hands into those of a bureaucracy, collectively owning them) without this revolutionising the relations of production. Under such circumstances - and whatever the formal status of property - the society is still a class society, for production is still managed by an agency other than the producers themselves"(20)

In contrast, the Leninist idea of socialism has more to do with the nationalisation of industry or State Capitalism than the creation of a society in which workers have control over their own labour power.

In *Can the Bolsheviks retain State Power?* Lenin outlined his conception of 'workers control':

"When we say workers control, always associating that slogan to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and always putting it after the latter, we thereby make plain what state we have in mind.. if it is a proletarian state we are referring to (i.e. dictatorship of the



proletariat) then workers control can become a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, extremely precise and extremely scrupulous **accounting** (emphasis in the original) of the production and distribution of goods". By 'accounting' Lenin meant the power to oversee the books, to check the implementation of decisions made by others, rather than fundamental decision making.

The Bolsheviks saw only the necessity for creating the objective conditions for socialism. That is, without a certain level of wealth in society, it is impossible to introduce all those things that socialism requires; free healthcare, housing, education and the right to work. Lenin said "Socialism is merely the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly" (21) or also "State capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism there are no gaps"(22).

The introduction of Taylorism and one man management in the factories in 1918 and 1919 displays a fixation with efficiency and productivity at the expense of workers' rights. They didn't see that without control over your own working life, you remain a cog in someone else's wheel. Workers' democracy at the point of production is as important as material wellbeing is to the creation of a socialist society.

However, there is yet another problem with the Bolshevik vision of a planned economy. The Bolsheviks thought centralising the economy under state control would bring to an end the chaos of capitalistic economies. Unfortunately they didn't consider that centralisation without free exchange of information leads to its own disasters. The bureaucratic mistakes of Stalin and Mao are legendary. Under Mao, the sparrows of China were brought to the brink of extinction to prevent them from eating the crops. Unfortunately this led to an explosion in the insect population (previously the sparrows ate the insects so keeping the numbers down) and resultant destruction of the harvest. In Russia huge unusable nuts and bolts were manufactured so quotas could be met. Industrial democracy did not exist. Plans were imposed on the population. It was not possible to question or criticise. Any opposition to the state was counter revolutionary, no matter how stupid or blind the state decisions were. Only with workers democracy can there be free exchange of ideas and information. Planning an economy in ignorance is like playing football blind, difficult if not impossible to do successfully. In short, it was bad politics, perhaps motivated by wishful thinking, that led the Bolsheviks to believe that holding the reins of state power could possibly be a short cut to socialism.

5. Learning the lessons of history

What unites all Leninist traditions (Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism) against the anarchists is their defence of the Bolsheviks in the period 1917-1921. It is this Bolshevik blueprint which they seek to recreate. The reasons variously given for the collapse of the revolution are the backwardness of Russia (either industrially or socially), the Civil War and the isolation of Russia. What Leninists argue is that the fault didn't lie with the politics of the Bolsheviks or with the policies they implemented but rather with conditions that were beyond their control. Even those who were critical of the Bolsheviks suppression of democracy, such as Victor Serge and the Workers Opposition group, ultimately defended the Bolsheviks' position. Their argument is that without the measures the Bolsheviks took, the revolution would have fallen to a White reaction and a return to the monarchy.

Our argument is that no matter what the objective factors were or will be, the Bolshevik route always and inevitably leads to the death of the revolution. More than this, defeat by revolutionaries is much worse than defeat by the Whites, for it brings the entire revolutionary project into disrepute. For seventy years socialism could easily be equated with prison camps and dictatorship. The Soviet Union became the threat of a bad example. Socialists found themselves defending the indefensible. Countless revolutions were squandered and lost to Leninism and its heir, Stalinism.

Freedom and utopia

In the following passage Engels outlines how revolution will lead to mankind's freedom;

"Proletarian Revolution - [is the] solution of the contradictions [of capitalism]. The proletariat seizes the public power, and by means of this transforms the socialised means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property. By this act the proletariat frees the means of production from the character of capital they have thus far borne and gives their socialist character complete freedom to work itself out. Socialised production upon a predetermined plan becomes henceforth possible. The development of production makes the existence of different classes in society henceforth an anachronism. In proportion anarchy [chaos] in social production vanishes, the political authority of the state dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of organisation, becomes at the same time lord over nature, his own master - free."(23)

In power, the Bolsheviks followed this program. They centralised production, removing from it 'the character of capital', yet the existence of different classes did not die out. Bolshevik party officials got better rations, accommodation and privileges. In time they were able to transfer their privileges to their offspring, acting just as the ruling class in the West. Chaos in social production didn't vanish, chaos in Stalin's time led to famine. The political authority of the state did not die out and the soviet people were not free.

The 'character of capital' is not the only force underpinning the structure in society. Power relations also have a part to play, and contrary to Engel's assumptions, power does not only come from ownership of capital. The members of the central committee may not have owned the deeds to the factories per se but they were in charge.

Freedom isn't just a goal, a noble end to be achieved but rather a necessary part of the process of creating socialism. Anarchists are often accused of being 'utopian'. Beliefs are utopian if subjective ideas are not grounded in objective reality. Anarchists hold that part of the subjective conditions required before socialism can exist is the existence of free exchange of ideas and democracy. To believe that revolution is possible without freedom, to believe those in power can, through their best and genuine intentions, impose socialism from above, as the Bolsheviks did, is indeed utopian. As Sam Faber puts it in *Before Stalinism*:

"determinism's characteristic and systemic failure is to understand that what the masses of people do and think politically is as much part of the process determining the outcome of history as are the objective obstacles that most definitely limit peoples' choices"(24)

The received wisdom is that there was no alternative open to the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks could have followed a more democratic route, but they chose not to. They were in the minority and their goal was to have absolute power. Their failure to

understand that socialism and democracy are part of the same process destroyed the prospect for socialism in the Soviet Union. Next time there are revolutionary upheavals in society, it is to be hoped that the revolutionary potential of the working class will not be so squandered.

Leaving the last word to Alexander Berkman;

"No revolution has yet tried the true way of liberty. None has had sufficient faith in it. Force and suppression, persecution, revenge, and terror have characterised all revolutions in the past and have thereby defeated their original aims. The time has come to try new methods, new ways. The social revolution is to achieve the emancipation of man through liberty, but if we have no faith in the latter, revolution becomes a denial and betrayal of itself."(25)

Aileen O'Carroll

Footnotes

- 1 Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, (1918)
- 2 Sergei Mstislavskii, Five Days which Transformed Russia, (1923)
- 3 Paul Frolich in his book Rosa Luxemburg , (1933)
- 4 Maurice Brinton, The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, (1970)
- 5 Voline, The Unknown Revolution, (1953)
- 6 The RSDLP was the name of the party that was to split into the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.
- 7 George Leggett, The Cheka, Lenins Political Police , (1981)
- 8 Where the US Government aided in the massacre of over half a million Communist Party supporters.
- 9 Military Revolutionary Committee. This group was initially set up by the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on the 12th Oct 1917 to organise for the October revolution. After the revolution the newly formed Second Congress of Soviets elected two interim bodies; the Sovnarkom (the government) composed only of Bolsheviks and the VTsLK (a legislative body). The Sovnarkom transferred the functions of the MRC to the Cheka.
- 10 George Leggett, The Cheka, Lenins Political Police , (1981)
- 11 George Leggett, The Cheka, Lenins Political Police , (1981)
- 12 Emma Goldman, My Disillusionment with Russia, (1922)
- 13 For Anarchism, edited by David Goodway, (1989) ,pp73
- 14 Samuel Farber, Before Stalinism, the rise and fall of Soviet democracy, (1990)
- 15 George Leggett, The Cheka, Lenins Political Police , (1981) p40
- 16 quoted by Voline, The Unknown Revolution, (1953)
- 17 Emma Goldman, My Disillusionment with Russia, (1922)
- 18 Leon Trotsky, Work, Discipline, Order, pp171-172
- 19 Vernon Richards, Lessons of the Soanish Revolution, (1983)
- 20 Maurice Brinton, The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, (1970)
- 21 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 25 page 358
- 22 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24 page 259
- 23 Engles, Socialism - Utopian and Scientific, (1880)
- 24 Sam Faber, Before Stalinism, pp198
- 25 Alexander Berkman, ABC of Anarchism, (1929)

A Fresh Look at Lenin

THE COLLAPSE of the regimes in Eastern Europe has thrown up all sorts of questions about socialism. So let's go back to the beginning. The Russian revolution of 1917 was, initially, a shot in the arm for socialists everywhere. It was possible, it existed and now it only remained to imitate it everywhere else.

But as time passed it became obvious that something had gone terribly wrong. Instead of being the inspiring picture of our future, Russia had turned into a squalid class-ridden dictatorship.

As purge followed purge and the new rulers allocated themselves the best of everything, the socialist movement in the West floundered as it sought explanations for what had gone wrong.

FLAT EARTH SOCIETY

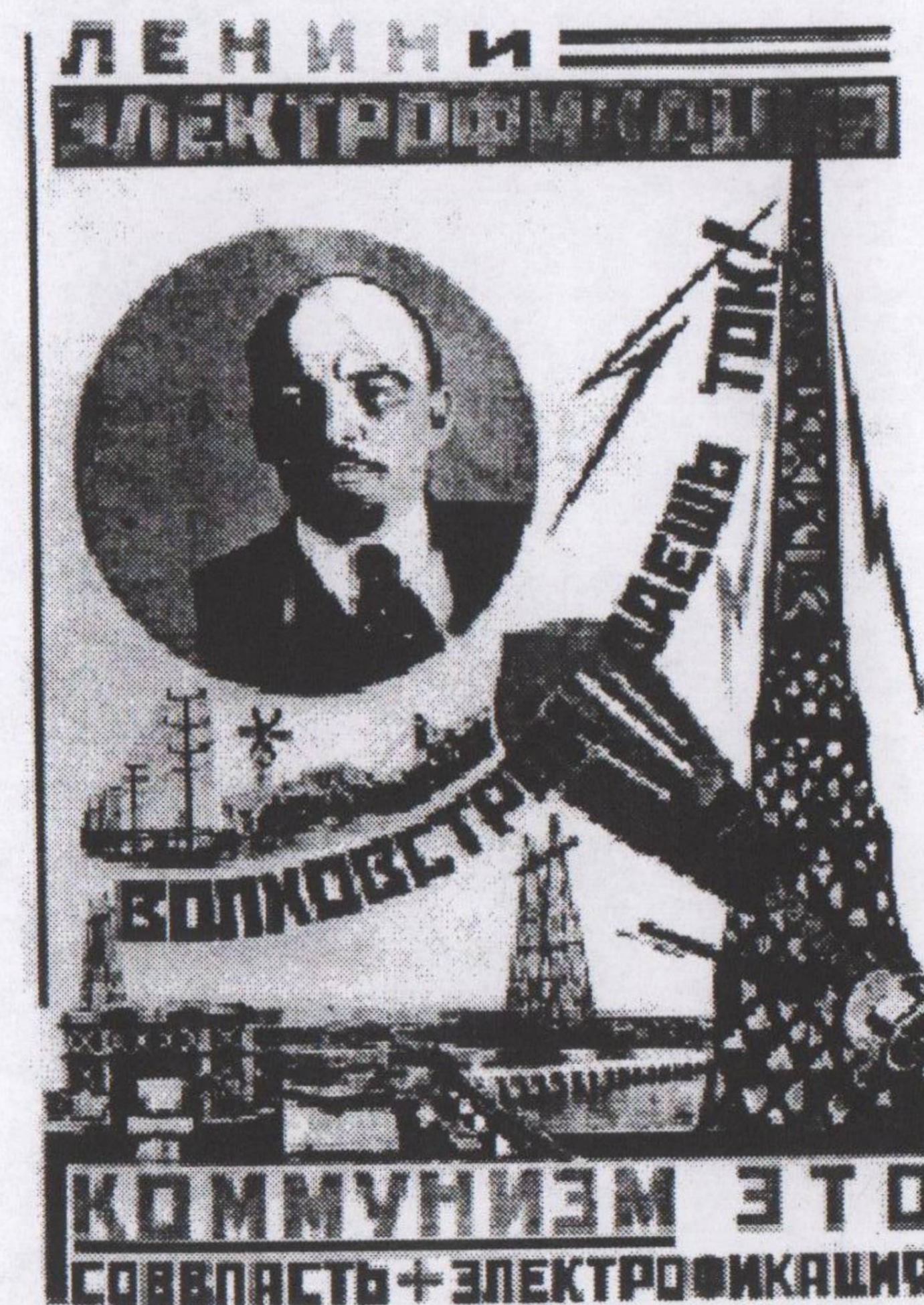
There were those who found the idea of an existing socialist society so attractive that they refused to believe all the evidence to the contrary. These were the people who wrote glowing articles about the mechanisation of agriculture while old Bolsheviks were being tortured in the cellars of Stalin's secret police.

With the upheavals in Eastern Europe most of these Stalinists with rose-tinted spectacles have had to start facing reality, albeit begrudgingly. Those who still refuse to do so are no different in attitude or degree of stupidity from the Flat Earth Society or the fanatics of the Bermuda Triangle.

Among those socialists who accept that something went badly wrong (and not just in the last year or two!), the debate continues. Why should a revolution led by dedicated followers of Lenin have produced an oppressive regime where workers had no rights and bureaucrats had all the power and privileges.

TROTSKY

Two explanations seem the most worthy of consideration. The first, put forward by Trotsky and his subsequent followers, comes down to this: no amount of dedication on behalf of the communists could offset the dreadful weight of the material difficulties.



In such a backward country, beset by civil war on all sides, with much of its working class destroyed in battle, degeneration was avoidable. Perhaps if Lenin had lived, or if Trotsky had replaced him as the no.1 leader, things might have been different - but it was not to be.

"Lenin certainly did not call for a dictatorship of the party over the proletariat, even less for that of a bureaucratised party over a decimated proletariat. But fate - the desperate condition of a backward country besieged by world capitalism - led to precisely this.

"Tony Cliff, Lenin, Vol.3, page 111.

"The proletariat of a backward country was fated to accomplish the first socialist revolution. For this historic privilege it must, according to all the evidences, pay with a second supplementary revolution against bureaucratic absolutism" Trotsky, The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology, page 278.

Thus according to the Trotskyists, it was hard material factors such as backwardness and the isolation of the young Bolshevik state which resulted in the tragic degeneration of the revolution. And don't forget fate - a most unusual term for 'scientific socialists' to use.

ANARCHISTS

An alternative explanation of events in Russia is provided by the anarchists, who see the prime cause of the revolution's failure in the ideas of the Bolsheviks. The anarchist argument has the great advantage that it was not constructed to explain events after they took place but was formulated before and during the revolution.

Anarchists had always gone in for dire predictions of what would happen if revolutionaries attempted to take over the state instead of smashing it at the first opportunity. They understood two things: firstly, either the working class has direct and absolute control or some other class does; secondly, the state only serves the needs of a minority class which seeks to rule over the majority. No party could claim the right to make decisions for the working class, this would be the start of their progress towards becoming a new ruling class.

Forty five years before 1917, Michael Bakunin, the leading anarchist in the International Working Mens' Association, warned of just such a prospect. He saw that the authoritarians would interpret the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to mean their own dictatorship which would be *"the rule of scientific intellect, the most autocratic, the most despotic, the most arrogant and the most contemptuous of all regimes. They will be a new class, a new hierarchy of sham savants, and the world will be divided into a dominant minority in the name of science, and an immense ignorant majority"* Paul Avrich, The Russian Anarchists, page 93.

While a small minority of anarchists thought it would be possible to co-operate with the Bolsheviks, the majority were positive that, though the Bolsheviks did not set out to create a new class system, this was precisely what they were achieving. The anarchist Sergven recorded in 1918 that *"The proletariat is being gradually enserfed by the state. The people are being transformed into servants over whom there has arisen a new class of administrators - a new class born mainly from the womb of the so-called intelligentsia. Isn't this merely a new class system looming on the revolutionary horizon."* Paul Avrich, The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution, page 123

And he could point a finger at the cause of this enserfment. *"We do not mean to say ...that the Bolshevik party set out to create a new class system But we do say that even*

the best intentions and aspirations must inevitably be smashed against the evils inherent in any system of centralised power" Ibid page 124.

In other words, unless centralised state power is immediately destroyed, the revolution is doomed to create a new ruling class. Either the masses have real power or the state does. For the anarchists it was a case of either a federation of workers' councils where the power came from below or the authority of the party/state giving orders to the masses. The two could not co-exist.

Thus the two most plausible explanations for the failure of the revolution are opposed to each other. On the one hand we have the Trotskyists who, being 'scientific socialists' see the cause of the failure in 'material circumstances' such as Russian backwardness, civil war and the failure of the revolution to spread across Europe. The Bolsheviks, had, it appears, understood Marxism and applied it correctly and yet were faced with events beyond their control that conspired to defeat them. Consequently the theory and party structure put forward by Lenin, remain, according to this school of thought, adequate today.

The Anarchists would agree that a revolution can't survive for too long if isolated in the middle of a sea of capitalism. They don't, however, believe that this explains everything that happened. What you end up with will be related to what you seek and how you fight for it. They argue that it was precisely the theory and party structures of Bolshevism that led to the bureaucratisation and death of the genuine liberatory revolution.

Neither argument is entirely satisfying. It is undoubtably true that the Bolsheviks had to face very difficult conditions when they assumed power. But according to their own mentor *"this will always be the case. ...those who believe that socialism will be built at a time of peace and tranquillity are profoundly mistaken: it will everywhere be built at a time of disruption, at a time of famine."* Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.27 page 517.

This makes sense. Revolution, by its very nature, involves some disruption and civil war (though not necessarily famine). If a party organised on Bolshevik lines cannot survive a period of disruption without degenerating into a bureaucratic monolith then clearly such a form of organisation must be avoided at all costs.

GRUBBY HANDS

Some anarchists tend to oversimplify the problem and see the Bolsheviks as setting out from day one to become an elite of privileged rulers. This is similarly unsatisfying. Are we really to believe that the whole Bolshevik party were only interested in making a revolution for the sole purpose of getting their grubby hands on state power so that they could make themselves into a new ruling class?

The briefest look at what they suffered in the Tsarist prisons, in Siberia, in exile and later in Stalin's purges suggests that such a notion is highly suspect! We must accept that most of them were courageous men and women with high ideals.

Nevertheless there is a great strength to the anarchist case. It points to errors in the theory and practice of Bolshevism itself. It says that no matter how honest their intentions, their politics still lead them to be objectively opposed to the interests of the working class. It turns our attention to the theories of those who led Russia from workers' control to Stalinism.

It is too often taken for granted among socialists that we know what the Bolsheviks stood for. Before we can understand why things went wrong in Russia we need to know

what exactly the Bolsheviks proposed to do on coming to power, what kind of structure they put forward, what form they thought the revolution would take, and what kind of society did they set out to create.

FROM LENIN'S MOUTH

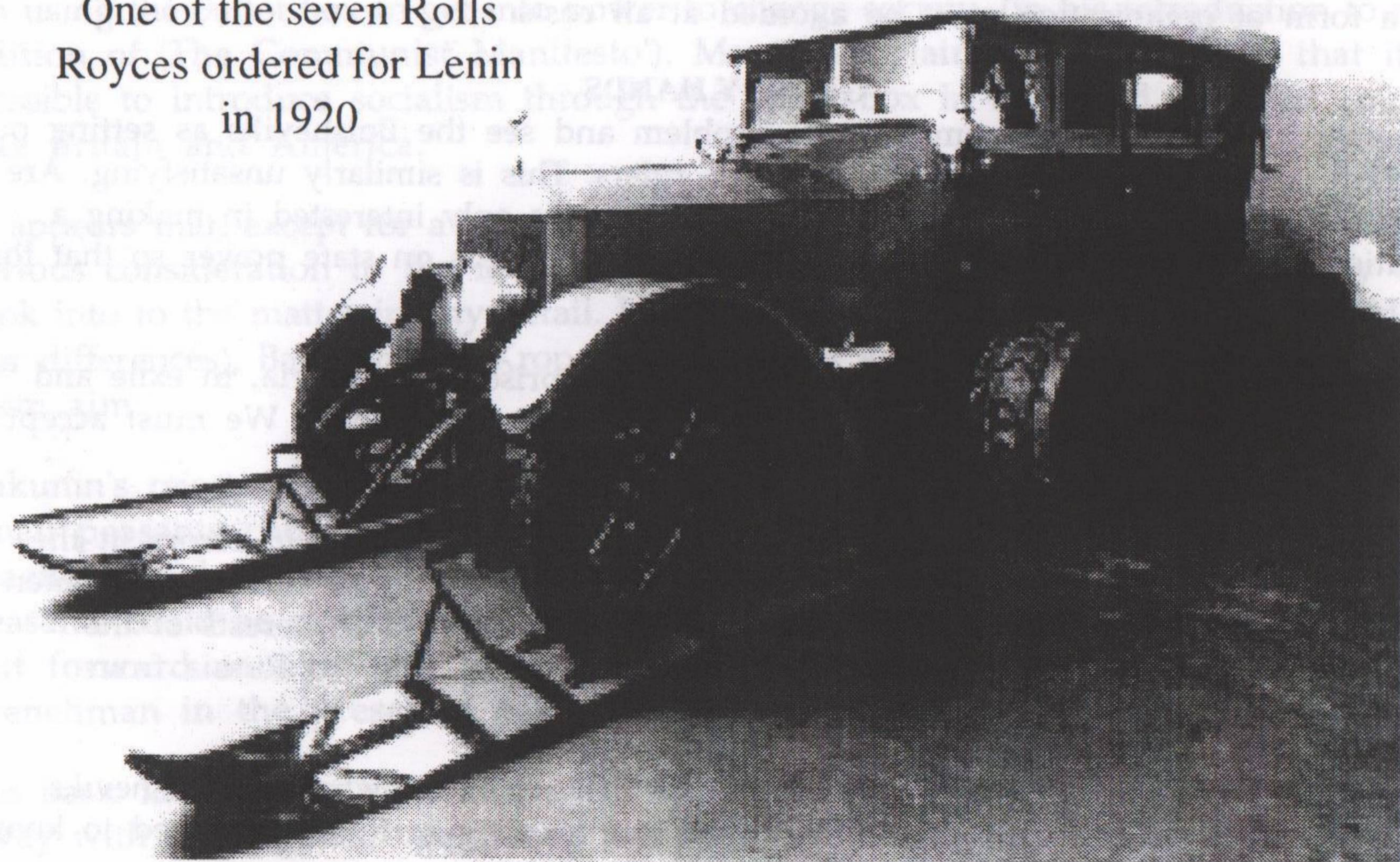
It is particularly interesting to look at the ideas of V.I. Lenin - he was the unquestioned leader of the Bolsheviks and is still regarded as the greatest ever socialist, after Marx, by the vast majority of those who see themselves as revolutionary socialists.

It can be a dangerous practice to pick quotations for use in an article such as this. Who is to say that they are not taken out of context. To allow the reader to make up his/her own mind all sources are provided so that the complete piece can be read if desired. It is felt necessary to use Lenin's own words lest there be an accusation that words are being put in his mouth.

The starting point must be Lenin's conception of 'socialism': *"When a big enterprise assumes gigantic proportions, and, on the basis of an exact computation of mass data, organises according to plan the supply of raw materials to the extent of two-thirds, or three fourths, of all that is necessary for tens of millions of people; when raw materials are transported in a systematic and organised manner to the most suitable places of production, sometimes situated hundreds of thousands of miles from each other; when a single centre directs all the consecutive stages of processing the materials right up to the manufacture of numerous varieties of finished articles; when the products are distributed according to a single plan among tens of millions of customers.*

....then it becomes evident that we have socialisation of production, and not mere 'interlocking'; that private economic and private property relations constitute a shell which no longer fits its contents, a shell which must inevitably decay if its removal is artificially delayed, a shell which may remain in a state of decay for a fairly long period ...but which

One of the seven Rolls
Royces ordered for Lenin
in 1920



will inevitably be removed "Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.22, page 303.

This is an important passage of Lenin's. What he is describing here is the economic set-up which he thought typical of both advanced monopoly capitalism and socialism. Socialism was, for Lenin, planned capitalism with the private ownership removed.

"Capitalism has created an accounting apparatus in the shape of the banks, syndicates, postal service, consumers' societies, and office employees unions. Without the big banks socialism would be impossible.

The big banks are the state apparatus which we need to bring about socialism, and which we take ready made from capitalism; our task is merely to lop off what characteristically mutilates this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality.

A single state bank, the biggest of the big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the socialist apparatus. This will be country-wide book-keeping, country-wide accounting of the production and distribution of goods, this will be, so to speak, something in the nature of the skeleton of socialist society." Lenin, Ibid, Vol.26 page 106.

HEY PRESTO!

This passage contains some amazing statements. The banks have become nine-tenths of the socialist apparatus. All we need to do is unify them, make this single bank bigger, and Hey Presto, you now have your basic socialist apparatus.

Quantity is to be transformed into quality. In other words, as the bank gets bigger and more powerful it changes from an instrument of oppression into one of liberation. We are further told that the bank will be made even more democratic. Not made democratic as we might expect but made more so. This means that the banks, as they exist under capitalism, are in some way democratic. No doubt this is something that workers in Bank of Ireland and AIB have been unaware of.

For Lenin it was not only the banks which could be transformed into a means for salvation. *"Socialism is merely the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly* "Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 25 page 358.

"State capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism there are no immediate rungs." Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 24 page 259.

This too is important. History is compared to a ladder that has to be climbed. Each step is a preparation for the next one. After state capitalism there was only one way forward - socialism. But it was equally true that until capitalism had created the necessary framework, socialism was impossible. Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership saw their task as the building of a state capitalist apparatus.

*"...state capitalism would be a step forward as compared with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic. If in approximately six months time state capitalism became established in our Republic, this would be a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year socialism will have gained a permanently firm hold and will become invincible in our country "*Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 294.

"While the revolution in Germany is still slow in coming forth, our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort in copying it and not shrink from adopting dictatorial methods to hasten the copying of it" Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 340.

The sole difference between state capitalism under the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the capitalism of other countries is that a different class would be in control of the state, according to Lenin's theory. But what, we are entitled to ask, is the difference between the two states if the working class does not control the Soviet state, becomes in fact controlled by it, and dictated to by it?

Anarchists have always held that the state, in the real sense of the word, is the means by which a minority justifies and enforces its control over the majority.

Lenin underlined this point when in March 1918 he told the Bolshevik Party that they must *"...stand at the head of the exhausted people who are wearily seeking a way out and lead them along the true path of labour discipline, along the task of co-ordinating the task of arguing at mass meetings about the conditions of work with the task of unquestioningly obeying the will of the Soviet leader, of the dictator during the work."* Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 270.

NO TIME FOR SOCIALISM!

Lenin could not accept that working class people were more than capable of running their own lives. He continually sought justifications for the dictatorship of his party.

In June 1918 he informed the trade unions that there are many *"..who are not enlightened socialists and cannot be such because they have to slave in the factories and they have neither the time nor the opportunity to become socialists"* Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 466.

The month previously he had written *"Now power has been seized, retained and consolidated in the hands of a single party, the party of the proletariat..."*. Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 346.

One could be forgiven for thinking that the party which had seized power was not a party of the proletariat when it so clearly distrusted them, dissolved their workplace councils, suppressed the rising of the Kronstadt workers in 1921, when it gradually strangled criticism from within its own ranks, and when its own leader flatly instructed the workers in October 1921:

"Get down to business all of you! You will have capitalists beside you, including foreign capitalists, concessionaires and leaseholders. They will squeeze profits out of you amounting to hundreds per cent; they will enrich themselves, operating alongside of you. Let them, Meanwhile you will learn from them the business of running an economy, and only when you do that will you be able to build up a communist republic." Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 33 page 72.

Lenin knew too much about socialism to simply drop all talk of workers eventually running the economy. As he once said, in a lucid moment: *"The liberation of the workers can be achieved only by the workers' own efforts"*. Lenin, Ibid, Vol. 27 page 491. He was too little of one to actually allow them to do so.

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