

Towards a New Marxism

*Edited
by*

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Hegelian Leninism

Raya Dunayevskaya

"The group of editors and contributors of the magazine *Under the Banner of Marxism* should, in my opinion, be a kind of 'Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics'."

—Lenin, 1922

During the disintegration of the entire world and of established Marxism in the holocaust of World War I, Lenin encountered Hegel's thought. The revolutionary materialist activist theoretician, Lenin, confronted the bourgeois idealist philosopher Hegel who, working through two thousand years of Western thought, revealed the revolutionary dialectic. In the shock of recognition Lenin experienced when he found the revolutionary dialectic in Hegel, we witness the transfusion of the lifeblood of the dialectic, the transformation of reality as well as thought: "Who would believe that this—the movement and 'self-movement' ... spontaneous, internally-necessary movement ... 'movement and life' is the core of 'Hegelianism,' of abstract and abstruse (difficult, absurd) Hegelianism?"¹

"The Dialectic Proper"

Lenin the activist, Party man and materialist underwent "absolute negativity." While reading "The Law of Confrontation," he concluded his new appreciation of the dialectic by saying: "the principle of all self-movement: The idea of universal movement and change (1813 *Logic*) was conjectured before its application to life and society. In regard to society it was proclaimed earlier (1847) than it was demonstrated in application to man (1859)."² The illumination cast here on the relationship of philosophy to revolution in Lenin's day is so strong that today's challenges become transparent and reveal the ossification of philosophy and the stifling of the dialectics of liberation. Russian philosophers refuse to forgive Lenin for this. Their underhanded criticism of his *Philosophic Notebooks* continues unabated even on the hundredth anniversary of his birth. They have blurred the distinction between the vulgar materialist photocopy theory of Materi-

1. The first English translation of Lenin's *Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic* appeared as Appendix A of my *Marxism and Freedom* (New York, 1958). This translation will hereafter be referred to as *M&F*. I will also cite parallel passages in the Moscow translation (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, 1961) and will refer to it as Vol. 38. Here, see *M&F*, p. 331; Vol. 38, p. 141.

2. *Ibid.* In this quotation, the date 1847 refers to the writing of *The Communist Manifesto* which, however, was published only in 1848. The date 1859 is the date of publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.

alism and Empirio-Criticism (1908) and Lenin's totally new philosophical departure in 1914 toward the self-development of thought.

In the *Notebooks*, Lenin wrote: "Alias: Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it."³ B.M. Kedrov, director of the Institute of History of Science and Technology, reduces Lenin's new appreciation of "idealism" to philistine semantics: "What is fundamental here is the word 'alias,' meaning otherwise or in other words, followed by a colon. This can only mean one thing, a paraphrase of the preceding note on Hegel's views. . . . If the meaning of the word 'alias' and the colon following it are considered, it will doubtless become clear that in that phrase Lenin merely set forth, briefly, the view of another, not his own."⁴ Professor Kedrov's zeal to deny that Lenin's 1914 *Notebooks* "are in fundamental contravention of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*" has led him to such cheap reductionism that "in defense" of Lenin, Kedrov can only attribute to Lenin his own philistinism: "Lenin categorically rejects and acidly ridicules the slightest slip by Hegel in the direction of ascribing to an idea, to a thought, to consciousness the ability to create the world."⁵ With this single stroke, Kedrov deludes himself into believing he has closed the philosophic frontiers Lenin opened.

The West's deafness to Lenin's break with his philosophic past (in which cognition had only the role of "reflecting" the objective or the material) has produced an intellectual incapacity to cope with Communist emasculation of Lenin's philosophy.⁶ However, anyone who invokes Lenin's name "favorably" should at least remember either "the objective world connection" to which Lenin incessantly referred or men's "subjective" aspirations, the phrase by which Lenin "translated" his concept of consciousness "creating the world": "the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity."⁷ Even independent Marxists have been sucked into the theoretical void following Lenin's death and have lazily avoided the rich, profound, concrete *Notebooks*. They bemoan the "jottings" which make the *Notebooks* seem so "scanty" that any attempt to understand them could only be "idle speculation." Sticking to "provable" politics as if that were sufficient, they call for "application" of the dialectic. No doubt, the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, and Lenin's "application" of the *Notebooks* was in politics. But were we to begin there

3. *M&F*, p. 347; Vol. 38, p. 212.

4. B.M. Kedrov, "On the Distinctive Characteristics of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*," *Soviet Studies in Philosophy* (Summer, 1970).

5. *Ibid.*

6. Professor David Joravsky senses that Lenin's comments on Hegel's *Science of Logic* are "tantalizingly suggestive of a new turn in his thought" in *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science, 1917-1932* (New York, 1961), p. 20. He exposes Stalin's transformation of Lenin's alleged "partyism" in the field of philosophy into pure Stalinist monolithism. Nevertheless, by excluding from his own work a serious analysis of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*, Joravsky leaves the door wide open for lesser scholars to write as if there were a straight line from Lenin to Stalin instead of a transformation into opposite. As for Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin himself was the one who stressed its political motivations. He wrote in his letter to Gorky, "The Mensheviks will be reduced to politics and that is the death of them." See the chapter "Lenin and the Partyism of Philosophy" in Joravsky's work.

7. Vol. 38, p. 213.

and dwell on politics apart from Lenin's new comprehension of the dialectic, we would understand neither his philosophy nor his politics. It is the interaction of the two which is relevant for today.

During the critical decade of war and revolution between 1914 and 1924, Lenin did not prepare the *Notebooks* for publication. However, his heirs had no legitimate reason to delay their publication until six years after his death. When they were published in 1929-1930, neither Trotsky, Stalin, Bukharin, nor "mere academicians" (whether mechanists or "dialecticians") took them seriously.⁸ A new epoch of world crises and revolutions and the birth of the Black dimension in Africa and the U.S. finally compelled an English publication in 1961.

Lenin began reading Hegel's *Science of Logic* in September, 1914, and finished on December 17. Even from his comments on the Prefaces and the Introduction, it is clear that Lenin's concrete concerns (to which he referred in his "asides" as he copied and commented on quotations from Hegel) were "the objective world connections," the Marxists and the Machists, and above all Marx's *Capital*. Reading Hegel's Introduction, in which he speaks of logic as "not a mere abstract Universal, but as a Universal which comprises in itself the full wealth of Particulars,"⁹ Lenin wrote: "cf. *Capital*. A beautiful formula: 'not a mere abstract universal, but a universal which comprises in itself the wealth of particulars, individual separate (all the wealth of the particular and separate)!! *Très Bien!*'"¹⁰ No matter how often Lenin reminded himself that he was reading Hegel "materialistically," no matter how he lashed out against the "dark waters" of such abstractions as "Being-for-Itself," and despite the fact that in his first encounter with the categories of the Doctrine of Notion (Universal, Particular, Individual) he called them "a best means of getting a headache," Lenin grasped from the outset not only the deep historical roots of Hegel's philosophic abstractions but also their historical meaning for "today." Therefore, Lenin sided with Hegel's idealism against what he called the "vulgar materialism" of his day: "The idea of the transformation of the ideal into the real is *profound*. Very important for history—Against vulgar materialism. NB. The difference of the ideal from the material is also not unconditional, not excessive (*überschwenglich*)."¹¹

The significance of Lenin's commentary is that he made it while he was still reading the Doctrine of Being. To all Marxists after Marx, including Engels,¹² the Doctrine of Being had meant only immediate perception, or the commodity, or the market, i.e., the phenomenal, apparent reality as against the essential exploitative relations of production. Even here, Lenin

8. The first publication of the *Philosophic Notebooks* was edited by Bukharin who, however, had nothing to say about it. The introduction of 1929 by Deborin and that of 1930 by Adoratsky appeared only in the Russian edition. See *Leninski Sbornik* (Moscow), Vol. XII. It is also worthwhile to consult Joravsky, *op.cit.*, pp. 97 ff., regarding Bukharin and Trotsky on the *Philosophic Notebooks*.

9. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (New York, 1929), Vol. I, p. 69.

10. *M&F*, p. 328; Vol. 38, p. 99.

11. *M&F*, p. 329; Vol. 38, p. 114.

12. The two letters of Engels to Conrad Schmidt dated November 1, 1891 and February 4, 1892 are most applicable; Engels cites "a good parallel" between the development of Being into Essence in Hegel and the development of commodity into capital in Marx.

escaped "vulgar materialism," which sought to erect impassable barriers between the ideal and the real. In Lenin's new evaluation of idealism, however, there was neither "sheer Hegelianism" nor "pure" Maoist voluntarism.¹³ Instead, Lenin's mind was constantly active, seeing new aspects of the dialectic at every level, whether in Being or in Essence. Indeed, in the latter sphere Lenin emphasized not the contrast between Essence and Appearance, but instead *self-movement, self-activity, and self-development*. For him it was not so much a question of essence *versus* appearance as it was of the two being "*moments*" (Lenin's emphasis) of a *totality* from which even cause should not be singled out: "It is absurd to single out causality from this. It is impossible to reject the *objectivity* of notions, the objectivity of the *universal* in the particular and in the individual."¹⁴ Reading the Doctrine of Notion, Lenin broke with his philosophic past. The break began in the Doctrine of Essence, at the end of Causality, when he began to see new aspects of causality and of scientism, which could not possibly fully explain the relationship of mind to matter. Therefore, he followed Hegel's transition to the Doctrine of Notion, "the realm of Subjectivity, or Freedom" which Lenin immediately translated as "NB Freedom = Subjectivity ('or') End, consciousness, Endeavor, NB."¹⁵

Lenin was liberated in his battles with the categories of the Doctrine of Notion, the very categories he had called "a best way of getting a headache." First, he noted that Hegel's analysis of these categories is "reminiscent of Marx's imitation of Hegel in Chapter I."¹⁶ Second, Lenin no longer limited objectivity to the material world but extended it to the *objectivity of concepts: freedom, subjectivity, notion*. These are the categories through which we gain knowledge of the objectively real. They constitute the beginning of the transformation of objective idealism into materialism. By the time he reached Hegel's analysis of the relationship of means to ends, he so exalted in Hegel's genius in the dialectic, "the germs of historical materialism,"¹⁷ that he capitalized, boldfaced, and surrounded with three heavy lines Hegel's statement that "in his tools man possesses power over external Nature even though, according to his ends, he frequently is subjected to it."¹⁸ In reaching that conclusion, Lenin had projected his new understanding of objectivity by writing: "Just as the simple value form, the individual act of exchange of a given commodity with another, already includes, in undeveloped form, *all* major contradictions of capitalism,—so the simplest *generalization*, the first and simplest forming of *notions* (judgments, syllogisms, etc.) signifies the ever-deeper knowledge of the *objective* world connections. It is necessary here to seek the real sense, significance, and role of the Hegelian Logic.

13. The pretentious French Communist Party philosopher Louis Althusser is working hard to kill the dialectic and at the same time to present himself as a "Leninist." But such absolute opposites cannot coexist, not even when one is inventive enough to add Mao and Freud to the hodgepodge. See especially his lecture to bourgeois French philosophers, since reproduced as a pamphlet, *Lenine et la Philosophie* (Paris, 1968).

14. *M&F*, p. 339; Vol. 38, p. 178.

15. *M&F, loc.cit.*; Vol. 38, p. 164.

16. *M&F, loc.cit.*; Vol. 38, p. 178.

17. *M&F*, p. 342; Vol. 38, p. 189.

18. Hegel, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

This NB."¹⁹ Thirdly, Lenin began striking out not only against Hegel but against Plekhanov and all Marxists including himself. Although Moscow's English translator omitted the emphasis in "Marxists," there is no way to modify Lenin's conclusion that "none of the Marxists understood Marx. It is impossible fully to grasp Marx's *Capital*, especially the first chapter, if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*."²⁰

Naturally, like the aphorism on "cognition creating the world," this cannot be taken literally. Long before Lenin seriously studied the *Logic*, no one had written more profoundly on economics, especially on Volume II of *Capital*, both as theory and as the concrete analysis of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Nevertheless, the world had changed so radically by the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of the Second International that Lenin became dissatisfied with everything Marxists had written before 1914 on economics, philosophy, and even revolutionary politics. These writings lacked the sharpness and the necessary absolutes of his dictum, "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war." Of course, Lenin did not bring a blank mind to the study of *Science of Logic*. Even as a philosophical follower of Plekhanov, who never understood "the dialectic proper,"²¹ Lenin was a practicing dialectician. The actual contradictions in Tsarist Russia prepared him for these new conceptions of the dialectic, the "algebra of revolution," which he now began to spell out as "subject" (masses) reshaping history. As Lenin prepared himself theoretically for revolution, dialectics became pivotal and ever more concrete to him. He had begun the study of the *Logic* in September, 1914, at the same time he completed the essay "Karl Marx" for the *Encyclopedia Granat*. Lenin was not fully satisfied with what he had written when he finished the *Logic* on December 17, 1914. On January 5, 1915, with the world war raging, he asked Granat if he could make "certain corrections in the section on dialectics. . . . I have been studying this question of dialectics for the last month and a half, and I could add something to it if there was time. . . ." By pinpointing the time as a "month and a half," Lenin indicated the specific book, *Subjective Logic*, which had opened his mind to new philosophical frontiers. The *Notebooks* themselves, of course, make clear beyond doubt that it was while reading the Doctrine of Notion, directly after the section of the Syllogism, that Lenin exploded with criticism of turn-of-the-century Marxists for having made their philosophic analyses "more in a Feuerbachian and Buchnerian than in a Hegelian manner;" and with the realization that it was "impossible fully to grasp Marx's *Capital*, especially the first chapter, if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*."²²

The Russians ignore that Lenin not only concentrated on *Subjective Logic* as a whole but also devoted fifteen pages to the final chapter, the Absolute Idea. But they have to acknowledge that "Lenin evidently assigned

19. M&F, p. 329; Vol. 38, p. 179.

20. M&F, p. 340; Vol. 38, p. 180.

21. M&F, p. 354; Vol. 38, p. 277. Cf. "On Dialectics," in Vol. 38.

22. *The Letters of Lenin* (New York, 1937), p. 336.

23. M&F, p. 340; Vol. 38, p. 180.

great significance to Hegel's *Subjective Logic*, since the greater part of his profound remarks and interesting aphorisms are expressed during the reading of this part of the *Logic*.²⁴ But in the three decades since the first publication of the *Notebooks*, Russian philosophers have not drawn any conclusions from this fact; much less, in their favorite phrase, have they "applied" it. Instead, they have taken advantage of Lenin's philosophic ambivalence and have refused to see his philosophic break in 1914 with his Plekhanovist past. Certain facts, however, are stubborn. One such fact is that whereas Plekhanov, the philosopher of the Second International, reverted to the materialist of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Lenin eventually came to concentrate on Hegel. Lenin regarded Hegel as crucial to the task of the Russian theoreticians. Lenin saw the need to "arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics" which, though it was to be done from a materialist standpoint, was not to be reduced to mere interpretation. Also, it was necessary to "print excerpts from Hegel's principal works."²⁵ Another stubborn fact is that Lenin's advice to Russian youth to continue studying Plekhanov cannot alter the task he set for himself: "Work out: Plekhanov wrote probably nearly 1,000 pages (Belov + against Bogdanov + against Kantians + basic questions, etc. etc. on philosophy (dialectic). There is in them *nil* about the Larger Logic, its thoughts (i.e., dialectic proper, as a philosophic science) *nil*!"²⁶ The third stubborn fact which Communist philosophers disregard is the significance of Lenin's swipe (which included Engels) at "inadequate attention" to dialectics as the unity of opposites. "The unity of opposites is taken as the sum total of examples (for example, a seed, for example, primitive Communism)."²⁷ Lenin forgave Engels this defect because he wrote deliberately for popularization. However, this cannot touch the deeper truth that, although he always followed Marx's principle that "it is impossible, of course, to dispense with Hegel," Engels considered that "the theory of Essence is the main thing."²⁸ Lenin, on the other hand, held that the Doctrine of Notion was primary because, at the same time that it deals with thought, it is concrete. It is subjective, not merely as against objective but as a unity in cognition of theory and practice. Through the Doctrine of Notion, Lenin gained a new appreciation of Marx's *Capital*, not merely as economics but as logic. Lenin now called *Capital* "the history of capitalism and the analysis of the notions summing it up."²⁹ Lenin, and only Lenin, fully understood the unity of materialism and idealism present even in Marx's strictly economic categories.

Marx founded historical materialism and broke with idealism. But he credited idealism rather than materialism for developing the "active side" of "sensuous human activity, practice."³⁰ On the road to the greatest

24. *Leninski Sbornik, op.cit.*, Introduction by Deborin to Vol. IX.

25. Lenin, *Selected Works* (New York, 1943), Vol. IX, p. 77.

26. *M&F*, p. 354; Vol. 33, p. 277.

27. Lenin, *Selected Works, op.cit.*, Vol. XI, p. 81. "On Dialectics" also appears both in Vol. 38 of the *Collected Works* and in Vol. XIII (1927) as an addendum to *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*! It is also wrongly attributed there to "sometime between 1912 and 1914."

28. Engels to Conrad Schmidt, November 1, 1891.

29. *M&F*, p. 353; Vol. 33, p. 320.

30. I have used the latest Moscow translation of the "Theses on Feuerbach" in *Marx and Engels—The German Ideology* (1964), pp. 645 and 647.

material (proletarian) revolution, Lenin likewise saw the indispensability of the Hegelian dialectic. He summarized in an article what he had just completed in the *Notebooks*: "Dialectics is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the 'aspect' of the matter (it is not 'an aspect' but the essence of the matter) to which Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists, paid no attention."³¹ Having reestablished continuity with Marx and Hegel, Lenin fully grasped what was new in Marx's materialism: its human face. He was not, of course, familiar with the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in which Marx defined his philosophy as "a thoroughgoing naturalism or humanism."³²

At the opposite pole stand the official Russian philosophers. There is, of course, nothing accidental about this situation: it has deep, objective, material roots. It is outside the scope of this article to discuss the transformation of the first workers' state into its opposite, state-capitalism.³³ What must be stressed is the new quality which Lenin discerned in the dialectic. Because he lived in a historical period entirely unlike Engels', Lenin did not stop at essence versus appearance but proceeded to the Doctrine of Notion. Because the betrayal of socialism came *from within* the socialist movement, the dialectical principle of transformation into opposite, the discernment of counterrevolution within the revolution, became pivotal. The uniqueness of dialectics as self-movement, self-activity, and self-development was that it had to be "applied" not only against betrayers and reformists but also in the criticism of revolutionaries who regarded the subjective and the objective as separate worlds. Because "absolute negativity" goes hand in hand with dialectical transformation into opposite, it is the greatest threat to *any existing society*. It is precisely this which accounts for the Russian theoreticians' attempt to mummify rather than develop Lenin's work on the dialectic. They cannot, however, bury Lenin's panegyric to the dialectic: "the living tree of living, fertile, genuine, powerful, omnipotent and absolute human knowledge."³⁴

The contradictory jamming up of the opposites, "absolute" and "human," is *true*. Toward the end of *Science of Logic*, Lenin stopped shying away from "Absolute" and grasped that the true "Absolute" is "absolute negativity." Absolute lost its godlike fetishism and revealed itself as the unity of theory and practice. The dialectical development through contradiction, which is an "endless process, where *not* the first but the *second* negativity is the 'turning point,' transcends opposition between Notion and Reality." Since this process "rests upon subjectivity alone,"³⁵ Lenin adds, "This NB: The *richest* is the most *concrete* and most *subjective*."³⁶ These are the actual forces of revolution, and we will now turn to the dialectics of liberation just as Lenin turned then to the practice of dialectics.

31. Vol. 38, p. 362.

32. *M&F*, p. 313.

33. See chapter 13, "Russian State Capitalism vs. Workers' Revolt," *M&F*. For the development of the state capitalist theory from its birth in 1941 until the present, see the Labor Archives, Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Wayne State University.

34. Vol. 38, p. 363.

35. Hegel, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p. 447.

36. Vol. 38, p. 232.

Dialectics of Liberation

Until 1915, Lenin was satisfied with Marxist economic studies of the latest stage of development of capitalism, which had first been analyzed by the bourgeois liberal economist Hobson in his 1902 book, *Imperialism*. The first Marxist study of the new phenomenon was *Finance Capital* by Hilferding (1910). It was praised for singling out a new feature, bank capital, and for asserting that this highly developed stage of capitalism made it easier for the dictatorship of the proletariat "to take over" the organization of industry. Like the categories of Essence, the new economic categories all led to Absolute Substance. Hilferding's analysis disclosed *no new beginning, no self-developing Subject that would determine its own end*. No Marxist noted this deficiency, however. There seemed to be no need of any deeper awareness of the dialectic, of an awareness that the jamming up of opposites is far more complex and more concrete than the general counterposition of labor against capital.

In 1913, Rosa Luxemburg published *Accumulation of Capital*, concentrating on the relationship of capitalism to non-capitalism, that is, on colonialism. What began as a supplement to Marx's *Capital*, an updating of "primitive accumulation of capital" to comprehend the actual ongoing accumulation of capital, ended as a *revision* of Marx's greatest theoretical work.³⁷ Lenin opposed Luxemburg's underconsumptionism and wrong counterposition of theory to reality. However, what concerns us here is that despite claims by Paul Sweezy and youthful exponents of the "Third World" that colonial people are "the only revolutionaries," Rosa Luxemburg denied that she had unearthed a new subject either in theory or in fact. She insisted that "long before" capitalism could exhaust itself by running out of non-capitalist areas to exploit, the proletariat would overthrow it.

In 1915, Bukharin published *Imperialism and World Economy*. Lenin was very satisfied with this updated study, which lashed out against the betrayers and their apologetic Kautskyian theory of "ultra imperialism" as merely "bad policy" instead of as the actual stage of world economy. He wrote an introduction for Bukharin's book without realizing that it treated the proletariat like an "object" or, as Bukharin expressed it, a "substitute" for "finance capital." As with Hilferding, for Bukharin it was merely a question of "taking over" capitalist economy instead of totally uprooting it.

Suddenly, Lenin became dissatisfied with all other studies of imperialism. His uncompromising stand against betrayers and reformists extended even to his Bolshevik co-leaders. He decided to embark on his own dialectical study. Empiricists without method cannot recognize method in others. They still consider the economic analyses of imperialism so similar in all Marxist studies that to them the dispute during the same period on national self-determination seems "only political." In fact, the first thing disclosed in Lenin's *Notebooks on Imperialism* (begun immediately after completion of the *Philosophic Notebooks*) is that they are by no means limited to the

37. My 1941 study of Luxemburg's work has been republished as an appendix to the pamphlet *State Capitalism and Marxist Humanism* (Detroit, 1967).

economic study of the latest phase of capitalist development but also include outlines of articles on the war, on the National Question, and on "Marxism and the State" (which later became *State and Revolution*). Even an inspection of the "strictly economic" work alone, which was published by itself in 1916 as *Imperialism, A Popular Outline*, shows that the methodologies of Lenin and Bukharin are poles apart. As opposed to Bukharin's concept of capitalist growth in a straight line, or via a quantitative ratio, Lenin was fiercely loyal to the dialectical principle of transformation into opposite. Tracing the self-development of the *subject* (not an "objective" mathematical growth) makes it possible to see transformation into opposite both in the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly capitalism and of a part of the labor force into a labor aristocracy. Also, such a study makes clear that this transformation is only the "first negative." The development through *this* contradiction compels analysis toward the "second negative" or, as Marx expressed it, "lower and deeper" into the masses, to find the *new* revolutionary forces. Thus, Lenin held that *just when* capitalism had reached this high stage of "organization," i.e., monopoly (which extended itself into imperialism), the time had grown ripe for new national revolutionary forces to act as "bacilli" for proletarian revolutions.³⁸ Whereas Lenin saw in imperialism a new urgency for national self-determination, Bukharin vehemently opposed the latter as "impossible of achievement" and "reactionary." Nothing short of a *direct* road to socialism was acceptable to him. This plunge from concretely developing revolutionary forces to abstract revolutionism, which Hegel would have considered a jump into the "absolute like a shot out of a pistol" and which politicians called "ultra-leftism," was to Lenin "nothing short of imperialist economism."³⁹

On the surface, it seems fantastic for Lenin to apply that designation to a Bolshevik co-leader. Yet Lenin continued to use it against revolutionaries including "the Dutch" (Pannekoek, Roland-Holst, Gorter), whom he characterized in the same breath as the "best revolutionary and most internationalist element of international Social Democracy." Long before the National Question emerged as his final battle with Stalin, whom Lenin accused of "Great Russian Chauvinism" and whose removal as General Secretary he demanded in his *Will*,⁴⁰ long before Lenin thought that a proletarian revolution would succeed in backward Russia and that national and world revolutions would become questions of the day, and at a time when the horrors of imperialist war were everywhere and no emergent proletarian revolution was in sight, Lenin became uncompromising in his struggles with Bolsheviks on self-determination. He saw it *not only* as a

38. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 303.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-263. See Gankin and Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War* (Stanford, 1940), pp. 222-223.

40. Lenin's *Will* was first published by Trotsky as "The Suppressed Testament of Lenin" (New York, 1935). Khrushchev quoted it in his famous "De-Stalinization Speech" in 1956. When it finally appeared in English in Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, in 1966, it was called "Letter to the Congress" (pp. 593-611) and included much more than the *Will*: there are the final battles between Lenin and Stalin on the Nationalities Question and on "Autonomization," i.e., the structure of the state. There is also a difference in the translations. On this dispute see Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1968).

"principle" (to which all Bolsheviks agreed) but as "the dialectic of history," the revolutionary force which would be the "bacillus" of socialism: "The dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat."⁴¹ The word *dialectic* kept springing up because Lenin recognized an old enemy, "Economism," which had never understood mass revolutionary struggle. All revolutionaries had fought Economism when it first appeared in Russia in 1902. It had been easy to recognize it as the enemy of revolution then because the Economists openly tried to limit the activities of the workers to economic battles on the ground that, since capitalism was "inevitable," "therefore" political struggles should be left to the liberal bourgeoisie. Yet in 1914, during an imperialist war, revolutionaries rejected the national struggles of colonial and oppressed peoples on the ground that self-determination was "impossible" and "therefore," as Bukharin put it, "utopian and reactionary." They would only "divert" the struggle for "world revolution." This super-internationalism proved to Lenin only that the world war had "suppressed reason" and blinded even revolutionaries to the fact that "all national oppression calls for the resistance of the broad masses of people . . ."⁴² Not even the great Irish Rebellion changed the abstract revolutionism of these internationalists, who were concerned with "imperialist economy" instead of the self-mobilization of the masses. Lenin fought them and branded their thinking "imperialist economism" *not* because they were against revolution but because they were so undialectical that they did not see in the throes of imperialist oppression the new revolutionary force which would act as a catalyst for proletarian revolution. Lenin extended his constant emphasis on the dialectical transformation into opposite to the transformation of imperialist war into civil war. The defeat of one's country became the "lesser evil." Whereas other revolutionaries including Luxemburg⁴³ and Trotsky⁴⁴ still thought of the struggle for "peace without annexations" as the "unifying force," Lenin was preparing for socialist revolution and for "the day after," when the population "to a man" would run society.

41. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 303.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

43. *Ibid.* See "The Pamphlet by Junius" and, of course, Luxemburg's own illegal pamphlet *The Crisis of Social-Democracy*, which she signed "Junius."

44. The full collection of Trotsky's articles on the war before the Russian Revolution appears only in the Russian edition *War and Revolution* (Moscow, 1923), Vol. I. The essays are concentrated against social patriotism, of course, but they are also hostile to Lenin's counterposing of "defeatism" ("Turn the imperialist war into a civil war") to the "struggle for peace": "Comrade Lenin adequately revealed, especially at the preliminary conference, as earlier in his essays and articles, that he personally has an entirely negative attitude to the slogan of the struggle for peace." English readers can see this to some extent in Gankin and Fisher, *op.cit.*, p. 17, which quotes Trotsky's reply to the Bolshevik call for a special conference of Russian revolutionaries: "Furthermore, under no condition can I agree with your opinion, which is emphasized by a Resolution that Russia's defeat would be a 'lesser evil.' This opinion represents a fundamental connivance with the political methodology of social patriotism. . . . What is necessary is a rallying of all internationalists, regardless of their group affiliation or of the tinge of their internationalism."

When the Russian proletariat smashed Tsarism and created a still newer form of self-mobilization, the Soviets, Lenin further concretized his revolutionary perspective: "No police, no army, no officialdom. *Every worker, every peasant, every toiler, everyone* who is exploited, the whole population *to a man*" must run production and the state; otherwise, no new society could be created. With the new concrete universal "to a man," Lenin completed his theoretical preparation *to be there*. As he phrased it when he found himself without time to finish *State and Revolution*, "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the experience of the revolution than to write about it."

According to Lenin, the smashing of the old state between October, 1917 and February, 1918 was the easiest part of the job. The difficult, decisive task followed. The population "to a man" must run the state and manage the economy, and thus it was "necessary to abolish the distinction between town and country as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers."⁴⁵ That, Lenin said, is the goal of genuine communism. The formula of genuine communism differed from the pompous phrase mongering of Kautsky, the Mensheviks, and the Social Revolutionaries and their beloved "brethren," in that it reduced everything to the *conditions* of labor.⁴⁶ To further stress that the role of labor was *the* proof of a workers' state, Lenin maintained that even the smashing of the old state, which marked the proletarian revolution, did not distinguish it: "The petty bourgeoisie in a frenzy may also want as much."⁴⁷ What did distinguish the socialist revolution was its accomplishment from below. "We recognize only one road, changes from below, we want workers themselves to draw up, from below, the new principles of economic conditions."⁴⁸

If the Communist party did not become bureaucratized and did not begin thinking it could do for the masses what only the masses could do for themselves, then, *and only then*, people could progress to socialism. "Every citizen to a man must act as a judge and participate in the government of the country, and what is most important to us is to enlist all the toilers to a man in the government of the state. That is a tremendously difficult task, but socialism cannot be introduced by a minority, a party."⁴⁹ There is not one critical question, from the National Question and the dominant role of workers in a workers' state to his own unique contribution on organization, the "Vanguard Party,"⁵⁰ that is not tested by the dialectics of liberation.

The aspect that concerns us most is Lenin's development of the relationship of the National Question to internationalism, where he set forth new theoretical points which are relevant today and where he fought his final battle with Stalin. Indeed, his declaration of "war to the death on dominant

45. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 433.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 439.

47. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 337.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

49. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 320.

50. I have stressed this point at length in chapters 11 and 12 of *Marxism and Freedom*, stressing the many changes Lenin introduced into the concept during 1902-1923. Here, I limit the discussion to the last two years of his life.

national chauvinism"⁵¹ was based not only on the Russian situation but on the state of world revolution. When the first German revolution was beheaded in 1919, Lenin wondered if world revolution could become a reality through Peking. Later, he reminded the White world that "in the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe."⁵² Lenin projected a totally new departure in theory⁵³ when he developed the dialectic of world revolution and said that Russia, although it had experienced a successful revolution, must be ready to subordinate its interests *if* it were possible to overthrow world capitalism through colonial revolutions. "Petty bourgeois nationalism declares the recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing else, to be internationalism, while preserving intact national egoism... proletarian internationalism demands, firstly, the subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggles in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale..."⁵⁴

Impatient academic Marxists like Marcuse notwithstanding, *the* theoretical departure for the dialectic of world revolution was laid down in 1920, nearly half a century before Marcuse. Trying to dispense with Marx's concept of proletarian revolution, such Marxists contend that Lenin saw national revolutions as only "auxiliary" whereas today, with the rise of the Third World, we can see matters "globally."⁵⁵ It is essential, dialectically and historically, in tracing Lenin's "Hegelianism" to grasp his philosophical and national heritage, part of which erupted spontaneously and part of which grew out of organization, and which he extended all the way to

51. It took over fifteen years to make public this letter of Lenin to Kamenev. See Moshe Lewin, *op.cit.*, p. 52. Trotsky reproduced some of these letters in *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York, 1937). But the official texts and some fuller ones did not appear in English until 1966, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 606. See especially the note on "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'": "the apparatus we call ours is, in fact, still quite alien to us; it is a bourgeois and tsarist hodgepodge and there has been no possibility of getting rid of it in the course of the past five years... unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaughts of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

52. "Better Fewer but Better," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX. I prefer the translation in Lewin, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

53. "Theses on National and Colonial Questions," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. X.

54. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. X, p. 235. The Black dimension first appeared in Lenin's work in 1912 in "New Data on the Laws of Development of Capitalism in Agriculture." See Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. XII, pp. 190-282. This work was often cited in the disputes in the United States among Communists, Trotskyists, and others as to whether the "Negro Question" was a National Question and whether there was a relationship between U.S. slavery and serfdom in Russia. In 1915, in *Notebooks on Imperialism*, Lenin had referred to the fact that the I.W.W. had a more correct position on the Negro Question than did the Socialist Party which, Lenin stressed, "BUILT separate locals for Negroes and whites in Mississippi!" The question arose a third time in Lenin's debates with Bukharin, whose reference to the Hottentots he criticized; finally, it was made into a new category which combined nationalism and internationalism in the "Theses on the National Question." See *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 311-367; and Vol. X, pp. 231-244. See also Claude McKay's speech to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International.

55. Herbert Marcuse, "Re-examination of the Concept of Revolution," *New Left Review*, 56 (July-August, 1969).

leadership and organization.

It was not only the Asian majority that became a new dimension of world revolutionary development. The Black dimension and minority problems in general became *moving* forces. Thus, in the "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," Lenin listed as revolutionary forces the Negro in the United States and the Jew in Poland.⁵⁶ The appearance of the Garvey movement gave new urgency to the Black dimension (which Lenin had long studied) just when the German revolution was failing. The central point in Lenin's new relationships of theory to practice had nothing to do with the old concept of practice as "the carrying out of a line" elaborated by the party leadership. Instead, the relationships involved the leadership listening to and *learning from mass practice*: theoretical advances must come *from* the one source of theory which is also its soul.

One thing the Lenin Institute did provide in their empty introductions to Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* is the list of Lenin's requests for books.⁵⁷ Clearly, he had not stopped studying the Hegelian dialectic once the revolution succeeded. Nor was this study "academic" or limited to his asking "the theoreticians" who edited the new theoretical organ *Under the Banner of Marxism* to act as "Materialist Friends of the Hegelian Dialectic" and to continue publishing Hegel's works. Lenin applied the dialectic in life, in theory, in battles with his co-leaders, and in his revolutionary perspectives.

Death of the Dialectic

There is no more tragic document in history than Lenin's *Will*. His criticism of his Bolshevik co-leaders was directed not only against Stalin, whom he asked to be "removed," and against Zinoviev-Kamenev, who by "no accident" published in the bourgeois press the date of the planned seizure of power, and against Trotsky's "administrative mentality"; also damning was Lenin's criticism of Bukharin. "Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theoretician of the party; but also may legitimately be considered the favorite of the whole party; but his theoretical views can only with the very greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxian, for there is something scholastic in him. (He has never learned, and I think never fully understood, the dialectic)."⁵⁸

56. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. X, p. 231.

57. The 1966 English publication of Vol. 38, although it claims to be more complete than the early Russian editions, does not repeat in its Introduction the listing of books Lenin requested. Therefore, see Adoratsky's Introduction to the first Russian edition (1930) of *Leninski Sbornik*, *op.cit.* "Despite the fact... [of] the extreme situation and the necessity to give all attention and all energy to practical questions, Lenin continued to interest himself in questions of philosophy. This is evident from his readings.... On June 24, 1921, he asked [for] ... a Russian translation of Hegel's *Logic* and *Phenomenology* [see *Notes of the Lenin Institute*, Vol. III, pp. 94-95].... Lenin not only read but wrote in that period on the questions of philosophy. Nine-tenths of the remarks on Bukharin's *Economics of the Transition Period* concern the question of method."

58. Compare this passage from the English edition of the *Will* published in 1935 by U.S. Trotskyists, to the corresponding passage from the Moscow translation (1966) in *Collected*

Writing the *Theses* and the *Will*, Lenin summed up a lifetime in revolution just as that movement was achieving the greatest proletarian revolution in history. In his last struggle, dialectics became the *pons asini* of Lenin's philosophical thought. It was no small, abstruse matter that the major theoretician of the party did "not fully understand" the dialectic, nor was it unimportant that *if* factional struggles reflected actual class divisions then nothing whatever could prevent the collapse of the proletarian state.⁵⁹ And nothing did. When the Russian revolution failed to extend even to Europe, world capitalism gained more than a breather. The isolation and bureaucratization of the workers' state led to its transformation into its opposite. The young workers' state based itself not on the creativity of the masses but on its authority over them; the determinant was not labor but the state plan. The state party and the monolithic state became isolated from the masses and the party was not checked by the "non-party masses,"⁶⁰ but was impelled by world production. The state had achieved a new stage of world capitalism: state capitalism. Lenin feared this movement "backwards to capitalism," and in his last speech to the Russian Party Congress he warned that history had witnessed many retrogressions and that it would be "utopian to think we will not be thrown back."

Because of this awareness, Lenin did not limit his critique of his Bolshevik co-leaders to the "politicians" but extended it to the "major theoretician," Bukharin. Lenin lay writing not only in physical pain but in agony over the early bureaucratization of the workers' state and its tendency to move "backwards to capitalism." He felt that Bukharin's theoretical positions on the National Question, the trade unions, and the economics of the transition period would stifle rather than release the creative powers of the masses. Lenin sensed "a passion for bossing" in revolutionaries who wielded state power. Unfortunately, in this state capitalist age the New Left, when it does not support the Russian state power, supports the Chinese. But uprisings, especially those in Eastern Europe, have shown that people hunger for freedom *from* the state party, *from* the state plan, *from* the state; what they hunger for is decentralization of rule as in workers' councils, intellectual councils, and youth councils.

Works, Vol. 36, p. 595: "Bukharin is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the Party; he is also rightly considered the favorite of the whole Party, but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics and, I think, never fully understood it)."

59. Trotskyism makes it necessary to say that if the factional struggle between Trotsky and Stalin had been a class question, it would have meant nothing as simplistic as Stalin "representing" the peasantry and Trotsky the proletariat.

60. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Fourth Russian Edition, Vol. 26, p. 475. "We are badly executing the slogan: arouse the non-party people, check the work of the party by the non-party masses." In English, the concept of the importance of the non-party masses checking the party is found in *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 253-254. The same volume contains Lenin's final speech to the Eleventh Party Congress (pp. 324-371), in which he invents words to describe his disgust for the party leadership and its "passion for bossing" and "Communist" (communist lies). See also "What Happens After," in *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 205, where I summarize Lenin's attitude on vanguardism. It was valid *only if* the party reflected "the actual spontaneous movement of the masses. *Outside of that relationship* the Party would become anything its worst enemies could think of. It did."

Mao Tse-tung has always been terrified of the objectivity of the "Hegelian" contradiction, the actuality of Left opposition to the communist state. Thus, in 1937 during the heroic Yanan period when he made his major contribution to dialectics (or, more accurately, to its revision), Mao invented a new distinction between the "principal" and a "principal aspect" of contradiction which neither Marx nor any Marxist had perceived. From this distinction he drew the conclusion that class conflict need not be the decisive contradiction. "When the superstructure—politics, culture, and so on—hinders the development of the economic foundation, political and cultural reforms become the principle and decisive factors."⁶¹ The practical reason for the invention was to fight "dogmatism" in the anti-Japanese struggle and to foist upon the masses "the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek." In 1957, Mao gave another twist to this philosophical contribution. This time, he drained contradiction of its class content in order to advise Khrushchev to crush the Hungarian revolution and to tell the Chinese masses that, since the contradictions in China were "non-antagonistic" and "among the people," they could be "handled."⁶² Similarly, in 1966, though it was supposedly a "Second Revolution,"⁶³ the resolution of contradictions depended entirely on the thought of one man, "The Great Helmsman, Chairman Mao." At the same time, although a "war to the end" is directed against "capitalist-roaders" like his co-founder Liu Shao-chi, it is no accident that the "revolution" is not against the actual rulers but is confined to "culture."

A hundred and fifty years ago Hegel pinpointed the inverted relationship of thought to reality which is characteristic of "culture." "Inversion of reality and thought, their entire estrangement of one from the other; it is pure culture."⁶⁴ And, "This only led to voluntarism, [for which] 'the world' is absolutely its own will."⁶⁵ Mao, of course, has long known that culture is only "the superstructure" as distinct from the determining production relations; thus, he has surrounded his "revolution" with the adjectives "Great, Proletarian, Cultural." It is no coincidence that impatient modern Marxists, who talk glibly of revolution, leave out the proletariat. Though they project nothing short of world revolution, their perspective for intellectuals is only "Radical Enlightenment of others."⁶⁶

What we need instead is "seriousness, labor, patience, and suffering of the negative"⁶⁷ on two levels. It must start where Lenin left off. That is the

61. Mao Tse-tung, "On Contradiction," in *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, Stuart Schram, trans. (New York, 1963), p. 133.

62. The whole question of "handling contradictions among people" produced the famous "One Hundred Flowers" struggle, for which see Roderick MacFarquar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York, 1960). Every issue of *Peking Review* carried documents from the Cultural Revolution, and these in turn were published in separate pamphlets by the millions. Some of the major documents can also be found in A. Doak, *China After Mao* (Princeton, 1967).

63. The expression is from K.S. Kuroi, *New Statesman* (September, 1966). He has since become so apologetic for Mao that he has hit out against Castro. See *The Course of the Cuban Revolution* (New York, 1970).

64. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind* (New York, 1931), p. 549.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 601.

66. Marcuse, *op.cit.*

67. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 81.

indispensable foundation, but not the whole. The new reality of our age cannot be considered a mere updating. Rather, the comprehension of what is new begins by *listening* to new impulses arising from below, from practice. This process, as opposed to the elitist practice of theoreticians "going to the peasants," involves theoreticians *learning from* the masses, at which point they begin to develop theory. For our era, the new reality first erupted in East Berlin on June 17, 1953, and has continued not only in Eastern Europe and throughout the Third World but also in the technologically advanced countries, in the May, 1968 revolt in France and in the new revolutionary forces in the United States.

These new forces of revolution, which begin from and always return to the Black revolution but also include the youth, women's liberation, Chicano, and Indian movements, are not a substitute for the proletariat but are in solidarity with it. The continuous, persistent, never-ending revolt of the Black revolution constantly emphasizes the vital struggle of labor and forms its most militant part.⁶⁸ At least verbally, Mao recognizes the role of labor. But what everyone notices is his voluntarism. As if one day could "equal twenty years!" Because so much of the New Left feeds, if not on Maoism, on the American bourgeois philosophy of pragmatism, it is necessary to contrast Mao's dialectics to Lenin's. "Mao's failure to grasp dialectic logic has nothing whatever to do with 'understanding philosophy.' Dialectic logic is the logic of freedom and can be grasped only by those engaged in the actual struggle for freedom. Therein lies the key to the fulfillment of human potentialities and therein lies that new relationship between theory and practice which could lessen the birthpangs of industrialization. Anything else is the type of subjectivism which hides Mao's compelling need to transform the struggle for the minds of men into a drive to brainwash them. . . . It is sad commentary on our times and exposes how totally lacking in any confidence in the self-activity of the masses are today's claimants to the title 'Marxist-Leninist.' Their militancy gains momentum only where there is a state power to back it up. . . . The challenge is for a new unity of Notion and Reality which will release the vast untapped energies of mankind to put an end, once and for all, to what Marx called the *pre-history* of humanity so that its true history can finally unfold."⁶⁹

Lenin began from this standpoint in 1917 and worked from it until his death in 1924. Mao's new revolutionary opposition, Sheng-wu-lien, tried to begin in a similar way in its Hunan Manifesto of 1968. "Contemporary China is the focus of world contradictions. . . . For the past few months, the class struggle has entered a higher stage. . . . It is 'to overthrow the newborn bourgeoisie and establish the People's Commune of China'—a new society

68. See Charles Denby, "Workers Battle Automation," *News and Letters*, 1960. See also his "Black Caucuses in the Unions," which is appended to the *News and Letters* Editorial Board Statement "American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard," *News and Letters*, 1970. Along with these statements by a Black production worker, see those of Black, Chicano, and white women and theoreticians in "Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices," *News and Letters*, 1970.

69. *Marxism and Freedom*, second edition (New York, 1964), pp. 329-330.

free from bureaucrats, like the Paris Commune."⁷⁰ As the Hunan Manifesto shows, it is impossible to bring about the death of the dialectic simply because the dialectic is not *merely* philosophy. Above all, it is *life*, the extremely contradictory life of *state as well as private* capitalism. The young Chinese and French revolutionaries, and in the United States the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Black revolution, and most recently women's liberation, all give the lie to rumors of the death of the dialectic. Neither Stalinism nor the "de-Stalinized" communists, much less the "vanguardists" who as yet have no state power but hunger for it, can stop the forward movement of the new generation of revolutionaries. It is imperative, therefore, to fill the theoretical void left by Lenin's death. Surely, future generations will marvel at the relentless resistance of today's so-called Marxists against "the dialectic proper" and the dialectics of liberation worked out by Lenin both while gaining power and after power (but not socialism) had been achieved. Lenin concluded that "socialism cannot be introduced by a minority, a party," but only by the population "to a man" taking control of their own lives. Only when this ideal ceases to be merely the underlying philosophy of revolution and becomes its *practice* as well will freedom no longer be "philosophy" but reality.

70. "The Hunan Manifesto" as well as three other documents of opposition within China, and the attacks upon the young group of revolutionaries by the official leaders of China's "Cultural Revolution," are reproduced in Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Aboard*, China Research Monographs (Berkeley, 1969).

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