
PROBLEMS

**(formerly: Problems Of Capitalism & Socialism,
Problems Of Communism)**

New Series, Number 32

The October Revolution, 100 Years On

A World Without Bolsheviks?

by Gwydion M Williams

What would our world be like if the Bolsheviks had not taken power, displacing a Moderate Socialist government? Or if they had handed over power to the Constituent Assembly, in which they had 24% of the delegates?

The Russian Revolution

by Brendan Clifford

The Tsarist state had broken down. A landlord restoration was being prepared regardless of what Lenin had done. But the choice of peace with Germany was a key moment in deciding what the new state would be.

The Bolsheviks and Orthodox Christianity

by Peter Brooke

How the Bolsheviks tried variously to suppress, discourage or incorporate Russia's traditional religion

Printed and Published by Problems Of Communism Committee
33 Athol Street, Belfast BT12 4GX

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A World Without Bolsheviks?

by Gwydion M. Williams

The Lost Worlds of 1968

Let's suppose that in 1968, the Soviet Union had *not* invaded Czechoslovakia. That it had allowed the liberalising drift to continue. But that it had stopped short of a collapse of the system. That it had maybe not even accept as many Western values as Deng's China did. How then would history have gone?

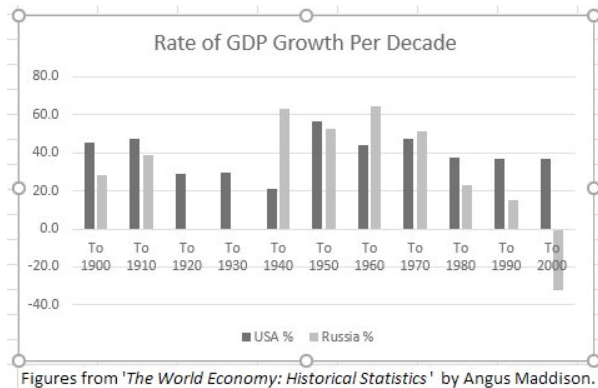
The Soviet Union in the 1960s was growing faster than the USA. It was also much poorer, but catching up. It had got into space first, though the USA had caught up by gigantic spending through a huge and often wasteful Federal agency, NASA. Still, it was a successful system. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union even seemed dominant. The USA grew

unsure of itself after being kicked out of South Vietnam in 1975.

The New Right get away with claiming that Leninism was always a failure. Much of the left, outraged that the Soviet Union was less than perfect, fail to remind people that very real gains had been made.

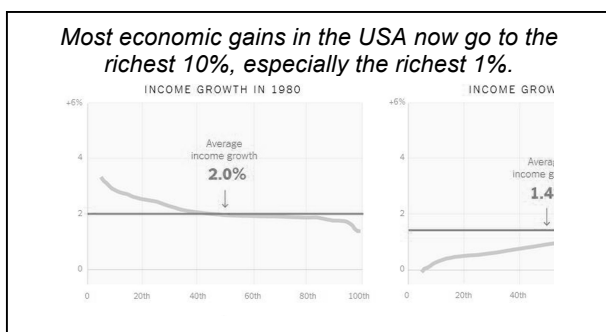
Moderate Socialists nowadays see no connection between the existence of the Soviet Union as an alternative system and an entire range of reforms Moderate Socialists made. Reforms that the ruling class allowed when they feared to lose everything. At the time they might say that it was 'us or the Communists'. They have since mostly lost the courage to say such things.

Common sense suggests that the ruling class *chose* to limit inequality when there was a global struggle. Were scared of the enormous Communist Parties in France, Italy etc., some of which threatened to win Western-style elections. Looked like becoming major coalition partners in Italy in the late 1970s, before the mysterious kidnapping and murder of leading Christian Democrat Aldo Moro. Whether this was a clever CIA stunt or authentic idiocy by some of the Far Left, it gives a flavour of the times.



Back then, Centre-Left parties demanded more socialism. Centre-Right parties like the Christian Democrats of Italy and West Germany, the Gaullists of France and the Liberal Democrats of Japan accepted semi-socialist economic controls as necessary for social peace.

(More accurately, they believed that the Lower Classes should be well looked after for as long as they stayed in what the rulers saw as their Proper Place. Many poor people accepted this and voted for a ruling class that seemed to share their own social values, which were often very conservative. They continue to vote for the New Right, who are not genuine conservatives and have let most of those values perish.)



It seemed obvious to me that the ruling class recovered its nerve when the Soviet Union faded. Grew bolder in its greed as the Western communist parties declined. Pushed for more and more privileges when both Centre-Left and Centre-Right lost faith in

planning and control during the 1970s crisis. I'd see it as wholly political: business given more power and taking selfish advantage.

Oddly, most economists, even many on the left, prefer to believe that the fall and rise of inequality has nothing to do with any conscious choices by an increasingly confident elite. That it happened because of mysterious factors entirely beyond human choice or control. Coincidentally or not, this does allow them to cater to popular discontent without alienating the rich individuals and corporations who have made a habit of funding economists who agree with them.

The 1970s crisis was a crisis within a highly successful system. A system in which a major cause of the crisis was a prosperous and self-confident young generation: people who thought that they could have whatever they shouted for. Yet the crisis-ridden 1970s were in many ways better than later New Right 'success'. Almost everyone had a job. It is bizarre that it has been branded a failure.

It mattered that so many young people got a dose of Trotskyism while growing up. The Trotskyist movement, having zero positive achievements since its emergence as a distinct creed in the 1920s, had to bad-mouth both 'Stalinism' and Social-Democracy. Had



to deny that either had real socialist achievements. **'A moan for all seasons'** – it helped make Trotskyism popular, given the general rejection of authority within 1960s radicalism. But only *briefly* popular, because Trotskyist were a collection of squabbling sects that each accused the others of shameless betrayals. And most people noticed that they couldn't sensibly explain why the Soviet Union had not been what they said it should have been.

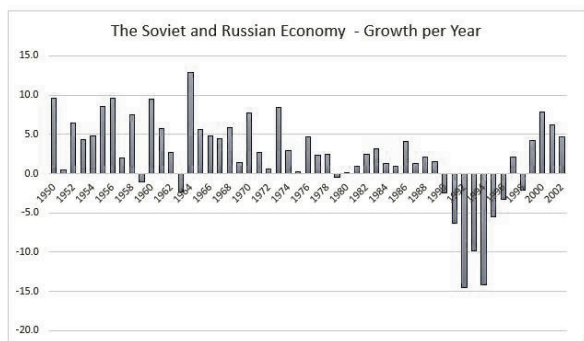
In parallel with this, Maoism also flourished, which must seem surprising today. But if 1960s radicals wanted personal freedom, they *also* wanted an end to greed and inequality. The Cultural Revolution also matched the

widespread and excessive hostility to the West's technocratic elite.

Unlike Trotskyism, Maoism produce some serious revolutionary movements. The Shining Path movement in Peru was for a time formidable. The Maoists of Nepal destroyed the old monarchical system and are now a major party in a Western-style government. In the Netherlands, a Socialist Party that began as a Maoist sect got 9% in the most recent elections, overtaking the once-dominant Labour Party. The short-lived radicalism of South Yemen might perhaps have turned the Arab World towards militant Marxism rather than Islamist terrorism. A functional and serious Arab Marxism might have bridged the religious and tribal differences that are currently tearing apart Yemen etc.

Pro-Moscow communists were the most numerous, widespread and powerful branch of Leninism. But even before their collapse, they never really adjusted to the broad rejection of authority by 1960s radicalism. Or at least not after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968. And they were reluctant to say that their system had been doing OK under Stalin and now was doing worse. Preferred also to play down the achievements of their rivals in the centre-left. They too cast fog and darkness on what should have been a clear case.

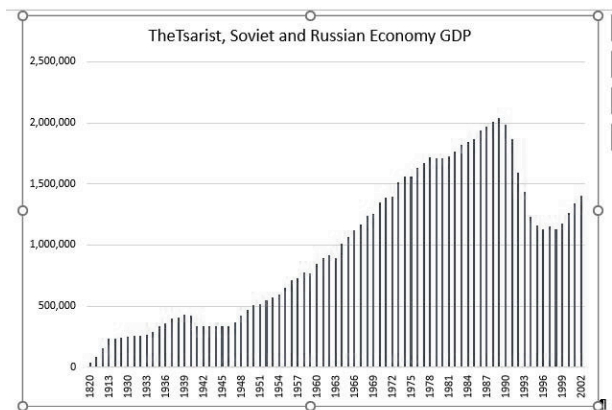
They were imperfect. But they were not the abject failures that people now claim.



If cornered on the matter of economic growth, the current generation of experts will change the subject and talk about political repression. Yet if it were true that markets were the only guide to success, non-market systems could not possibly have grown at all, regardless of how repressive the regime got. Yet this was clearly not the case.¹

¹ See also Problems 31: *Feed-the-Rich Economics*. Unless the chart indicates otherwise, the data comes from 'The World Economy: Historical Statistics' by Angus Maddison. I myself selected which details to show, and then turned the data into graphs using Excel. Better versions of some can be found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/45909111@N00/albums/72157688624702025>, free to use for anyone.

Obviously, the Soviet Union and Mao's China were much harsher with political opponents. But were they harsher than they needed to be, for their particular system to survive? Or for any government to last long in those countries. Most societies need time to accept the strange Western traditions of politics. Get used to rival political parties denouncing each other at elections, but then treating it as a game in which the opposition help the winners govern until the next election.



Leninist states were nothing like as harsh as European nations were in the 18th and 19th centuries, when they imposed their new system. Imposed it first their own peasantry, and then the rest of the world. Non-white colonies were ruled by foreigners imposed by foreign governments to look after foreign interests. Colonies with major settlements from the home country got limited self-government. Women in Europe only got the vote in the 20th century – 1918 in Britain, 1944 in France. Britain was not even loosely democratic until the 1880s, when about 60% of adult males got the vote, with the poor mostly excluded.²

The rise of Capitalism saw modern industry imposed on a reluctant population that had no right to say no. In Britain, it happened before the Great Reform of 1832. A reform which ended a corrupt system in which a couple of hundred rich families controlled a majority of House of Commons seats. A reform that then gave votes to men in the prosperous middle class, about a seventh of the population.

The First World War is nowadays claimed as a war for democracy and a war for self-determination. But Imperial Germany had a wider franchise than Britain in its national elections. It allowed all of its regions to have a better sort of Home Rule than the schemes that the Irish had repeatedly been denied. And the number of sovereign states in the

² <https://gwydionwilliams.com/40-britain/665-2/>

world was at an all-time low.³

It was not an equal world. China, the biggest non-white country not officially conquered, was in 1914 just beginning its prolonged era of suffering under warlords who were mostly dependent on foreign power. Foreign warships sailed up the Yangtze, the great river in the middle of China. They continued to do so right up until 1949, never challenged by the 'nationalists' of Chiang Kai-shek. That era ended only when the Chinese Communists first warned them off, and then defeated Britain's Royal Navy with land-based artillery in the famous *Amethyst Incident*.⁴

The world Lenin rebelled against could technically be called 'Capitalist Democracy', just like the modern world. But they were utterly different things. Between then and now, the West had to take in many things that no government other than the Bolsheviks wanted in 1917. What's *normal* now was radical then: I have detailed this elsewhere.⁵

Europe in 1917 could be technically called 'Capitalist Democracy', and likewise in 2017. By analogy, Champaign and Guinness are both alcoholic drinks. But even the least experienced drinker would not think that they were the same thing.

If Alternate Worlds really exist, most of us would feel horribly out of place in a world in which the same technology had developed, but the social values of 1917 still held. Even most modern white and able-bodied males would feel uncomfortable. Much more definite for non-whites and all women. It would make a nice Alternate-World drama.

(I'll leave out gays, because Leninist systems tried to suppress them. Whether they would have got equality or even been tolerated in a reformed Soviet system or a Soviet world state created by a Cold War victory is purely speculative.)

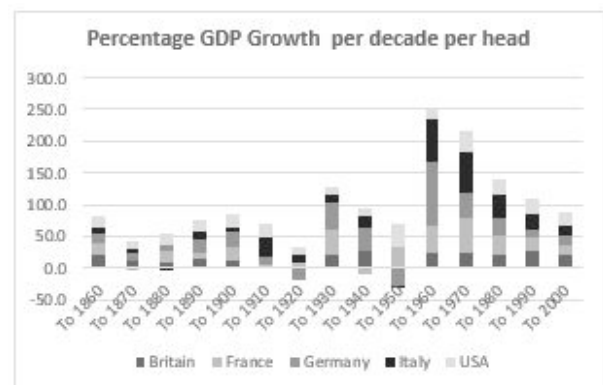
The West in the 1950s had no economic advantage over the Soviet system. So it sold itself as upholding Freedom. Also religion, but this has since been marginalised outside of the USA. But emphasising *Freedom* laid them open to 1960 protests against the actual limits on freedom in the West. Made them look especially bad with the USA conscripting unwilling young men for a Vietnam War that it

could easily have avoided or limited. That it was able to lose without disaster, discrediting the whole Technocratic system that had demanded it be fought.

This was a wonderful opportunity for the left. Sadly, a lost opportunity. A measure of Workers Control was a serious possibility, and might have meant that Britain would have avoided the growth of inequality that happened under Thatcher. (Which has been much milder on Continental Europe.) But Trotskyists fantasised about Revolution. The pro-Moscow Communists wanted a global Soviet victory. The left as a whole were lukewarm or hostile. It did not happen.

In the 1970s, the most economically militant Trade Unionists demand 'all or nothing'. Ended up with nothing. Less than nothing: ordinary people gradually lost the secure employment that the technocratic 'Keynesian' system had given them. They were tricked into thinking that more freedom for a business elite owning most of the means of production was similar to their own demand for more freedom in their personal lives.

They were also persuaded that more freedom for managers and markets would mean faster growth. This was simply untrue. The West never got back to anything as good at wealth-creation as the disorderly 1970s.



There were alternatives. Trade Union militants in Britain put enormous efforts into defeating Incomes Policy. Got their wish for Free Collective Bargaining, but had irritated the rest of the society, which disliked endless strife. Thatcher was able to create mass unemployment and break Trade Union power. She gave vast new wealth and power to a small elite, but could still win elections.

If you encourage greed and give spectacular rewards, you can hope that enough people will be hooked and elect the smooth servants of the rich. If you encourage corrupt media full of malicious gossip and soft-core pornography, you have much less need

³ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/46-globalisation/what-was-the-minimum-for-sovereign-states/>

⁴ Details included in <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/china-blue-ants-and-dangerous-reds/>

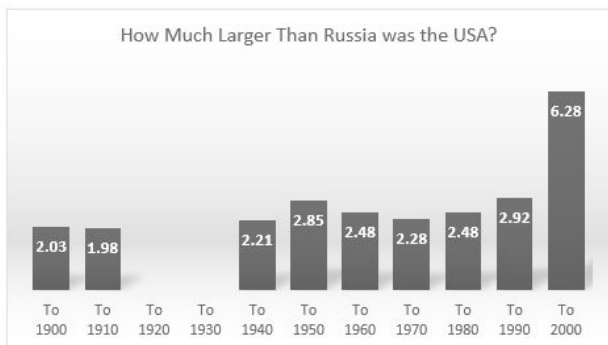
⁵ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>

to ban your critics. Everyone has a voice, but most of the voices get drowned out. That has been the substance of Western Freedom.

The Soviet Wrong Turn

It is an historic tragedy that the post-Stalin Soviet Union failed to soften as much as it should have. Khrushchev, like the Trotskyists, denounced Stalin's rule as monstrous. And like Trotsky, he was just as authoritarian when faced with the risks and dangers of actual authority. Khrushchev invaded Hungary, overthrowing a genuine left-wing alternative, whereas Stalin had held back from invading Tito's Yugoslavia. He let the East Germans put up the Berlin Wall in 1961. And it's a curious and little-noticed fact that Khrushchev in his early days had been close to Trotskyism. Managed to put such thoughts aside when he found Stalin keen to promote him, but perhaps never entirely stopped believing.⁶

Khrushchev also wanted to distance himself from Stalinist state planning, in favour of a peculiar system of 'Virtual Markets' that had been floated as an alternative.⁷ This system seems never to have actually worked: but it is hard to discover much because all of the 'experts' hang on like limpets to the notion that the Soviet system was always a failure despite somehow being a success under Stalin. Convinced that Deng introduced 'capitalism', rather than seeing it as a copy of Japan and Singapore's state-dominated systems.



Figures from 'The World Economy: Historical Statistics' by Angus Maddison.

Mainstream economic theory deals *only* with selfishness, leaving out the messy mix of duty and sympathy that real humans experience. It calls itself 'rational', but rationality is not the same as selfishness. People can and do make a rational decision that greed does not make them happy.

⁶ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/khrushchev-influenced-by-trotskyism/>

⁷ See <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/market-socialism-in-the-soviet-union/> and more at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/>

What is claimed to be 'Rational Economics' should be called *Transcendental-Selfishness Economics*. Usefully for the Right, it proves that Soviet success could not have happened. It allows them to sweep aside the awkward off-message fact that it actually did happen.

Transcendental-Selfishness Economics as a theory was extracted from the work of Adam Smith, who back in the 1770s was at least making a serious start to looking at what existed. But Adam Smith twisted the facts on many matters, including the actual social organisation of his famous example of pin-making. I wrote a book back in the year 2000 showing how he was wrong, but no one took much notice of the remarkable facts I found.⁸ One instance: pin-making actually had some sort of guild-like social organisation: but after much searching I failed to find what it was. Popular books will tell you all about Darwin's Finches, and other examples that mattered more. But the actual history of pin-making has not so far been written up by anyone.

Keynes, very sensibly, rejected Adam Smith's claim that markets were self-regulating. He insisted that state intervention could do a great deal of good. Since these methods broadly worked in the 1950s and 1960s, they became the new orthodoxy. And unwisely claimed to have solved everything.

Underground opposition to this consensus was found in characters like Hayek and Milton Friedman. Popularised in the USA by Ayn Rand, a lady who was always dishonest about her Russian-Jewish origins. (Whereas Isaac Asimov and others could be best-sellers without concealment.) The nonsense was given a fog of mathematical respectability by calculating how the economy would look if people existed just as economic agents with no motivations other than money. That the result looked nothing like any real economy did not prevent its virtuosos getting the so-called Nobel Prize in Economics. This prize is actually the *Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences*, created by a Swedish bank that persuaded the relevant Swedish academics to allow it.⁹ Interestingly, they also decided that no more new prizes should be allowed,¹⁰ perhaps to avoid additional temptation.

⁸ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/48-economics/2434-2/>, and more extensively in my book, *Adam Smith: Wealth Without Nations*. This book is shown as 'unavailable' by Amazon Books, but is actually available from <http://www.atholbooks.org/>

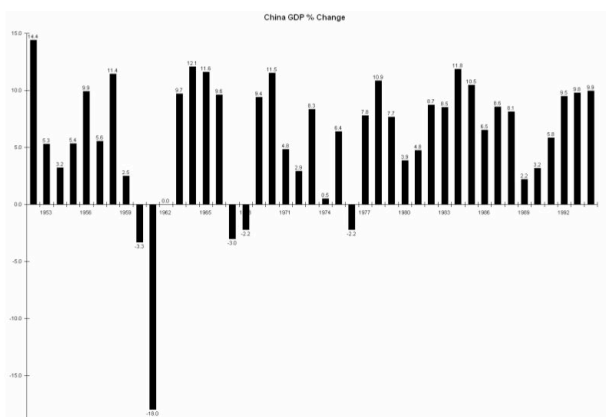
⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Memorial_Prize_in_Economic_Sciences#Creation_and_funding

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize#Prize_in_Economic_Sciences

I'll deal with all this in detail in a future article. For now, I'd remind everyone that Deng in China refused to go very far in criticising Mao. When I visited China in 1997, one thing I noticed was Mao placed first of four men on the top-value currency note: this diminished him to just the most senior of the 'First Generation' of leaders. When I went back in 2007, there was a new issue, and Mao stood alone. He was the only identifiable person on each currency note.

I had also changed my understanding of China in the interim. I'd actually been sympathetic to the rebels back in 1989. By 1997, I was much less certain: but I was ready to believe the widespread view that Jiang Zemin would not last long. In fact he had a successful period in office, and then handed over power. As of 2017, he remains a respected elder: an elder strong enough to openly look at his watch during President Xi's rather long speech at the 19th Party Congress.

By 2007, I was much clearer than post-Mao China was committed to Moderate Socialism.



Definite that the pro-Western dissidents were a bad joke. My thinking had been clarified a lot by doing a critical review of Jung Chang and Jon Halliday's biography of Mao. I quickly concluded that these were a pair of rats foolish enough to jump on board the sinking New Right ship.¹¹ Had been provoked to go looking for hard facts, and confirmed my memories that Mao's China had been a vast success. Had worked both in growing the economy with genuine independence and in vastly extending Chinese life expectancy.¹²

Leninism in China transformed successfully into Moderate Socialism. Became a more left-wing and more authoritarian version of the West's Mixed Economy: the system that won the Cold War.¹³ The system that the New Right dismissed as a disaster, while falling far below its actual achievements. The New Right lost Russia and failed to make much impact on China, whereas the Mixed-Economy or Keynesian system successfully

won over former enemies in West Germany, Italy and Japan, and in time subverted Franco's Spain.

I had been slow to notice how useless the Yeltsin regime was: I needed to be pointed in the right direction by Brendan Clifford. But by 2007, I was entirely clear. China in 1989 had a narrow escape. There had been immense suffering in Russia thanks to their swallowing New Right nonsense. Even worse for the unfortunate inhabitants of Ukraine, where a semi-fascist blend of Ukrainian nationalism has hybridised with New Right values.¹⁴

By then, I was also onto the New Right's trick of creating a false world-view by excluding most or all 'off-message facts'. This process of dishonestly leaving out major facts is something I call 'Bliaring', in honour of former Prime Minister Tony Blair and his utterly misleading claim that Saddam in Iraq could deploy '*weapons of mass destruction*' in 15 minutes. It turned out this was battlefield poison gas, which Saddam had been freely using against the Kurds for many years when the West pretended not to know about it. Blair was one of those guilty of inaction, and George Galloway at that time was trying to get the world to take notice. But 'Bliaring' happens all over. You find people going on at length about the disasters of the Khmer Rouge rule, for instance, without mentioning that this previously marginal group would never have amounted to anything without the USA organising a coup that destroyed the country's fragile politics by overthrowing its ancient and revered monarchy.

Shoving aside New Right nonsense, it is obvious that post-Stalin Russia *could* have had a successful transition of the sort that Deng arranged for China. Or other and perhaps better things might have happened. But Khrushchev definitely messed up, and set history on worse paths than it might otherwise have followed.

If the Soviet Union had softened, there would have been much less hostility to the left radicalism that peaked in Paris 1968. Most of the social demands of the young were conceded in the 1980s and 1990s, but it was done mostly through commercial sleaze. Former radicals pretended that nothing much had needed to be protested about: a nonsense I have exposed elsewhere.¹⁵

The false vision of the New Right was accepted as unwelcome truth. Even modern critics of inequality like Thomas Piketty won't see the Mixed Economy as a highly successful copy of the better features of the Soviet system. Won't oppose the current consensus that sees the Bolshevik Revolution as just a tragedy.

¹¹ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/42-china/42-1-chinese-politics/a-review-of-mao-the-unknown-story/>

¹² <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/mao-and-china/>

¹³ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/the-mixed-economy-worked-quite-well/>

¹⁴ See <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/2015-magazine/2015-07-magazine/2015-07-ukraine-illegally-removed-its-elected-president/> and <https://gwydionwilliams.com/46-globalisation/ukraine-kievs-five-day-war-machine/>

¹⁵ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>

If Lenin Had Failed...

The Liberal-Left prefer to think of things they'd have *liked* to have happened, rather than deal with the messy and brutal things that *actually* happened.

They treat improbable alternate histories as if they were *almost* certain, except that nasty men keep spoiling things for no better reason than greed and malice.

Trotskyism, for its Leninist pretensions, is part of this Liberal-Left.¹⁶ It gains glamour by claiming it can carry through revolution without anything too nasty. But that was the illusion of those who rejected the harshness needed to make the Bolshevik take-over a success.

Using standard political language, Trotsky during his years of grand achievement was being Stalinist. But **'Stalinism' vs real Leninism**. Lenin and Trotsky took the lead in deciding that their rule would be a dictatorship. Hopefully a Democratic Dictatorship: a dictatorship that is harsh with majority approval. But they never risked being voted out after they had grabbed power with a majority just in the big cities. Trotsky put this wonderfully clearly in his *Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky*,¹⁷ which I quote from later.

After discovering that he was not going to be Lenin's main heir, Trotsky refused to respect the limited democracy that the Soviet Union still had. He ignored the right of Party Congresses to make policy and even replace leaders at its five-yearly gatherings, but to have its decisions respected between times. This was the substance of Democratic Centralism, which he had denounced when Lenin invented it for an underground party. Which he endorsed when Lenin expanded the same system to swallow the entire society.

Democratic Centralism is system of crude democracy that can survive and get things done in harsh conditions. A goat that thrives where more delicate creatures would perish.

Western democracy did not thrive in the years between the two World Wars. Mussolini and Hitler both received their dictatorial power quite legally from parliament. So did the authoritarian governments of Imperial Japan. Poland, the country that Britain and France started the World War to defend, had been a popular dictatorship since 1926, when Pilsudski made himself boss of the Republic he had helped to create. May well have saved Poland from immediate collapse, but he also ran a right-wing regime with little of his original socialism implemented.

Poland's dictatorship was part of a trend. The same year saw the fall of the First Portuguese Republic, after nine presidents and 44 ministries in its 16-year history.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, parliamentary democracy had perished everywhere east of Berlin, excluding only Czechoslovakia, which was a Czech hegemony over many minorities. And as I mentioned in the last *Problems*, he was initially the 13th Chancellor of the short-lived Weimar Republic.¹⁸

Russia meantime did initially have a Collective Leadership after Lenin: first Zinoviev, Kamenev & Stalin and then Bukharin & Stalin. Trotsky helped push politics to extremes, refusing to be any sort of 'loyal opposition'. That was the crucial difference between him and Mao; Mao kept quiet when the Central Committee moved in on the Liberated Area that he and Zhu De had created.¹⁹ Kept a low profile while the Central Committee lost everything due to bad military tactics. Made his challenge when the main body of the Red Army were on the verge of being wiped out in the early stages of the famous Long March. Got himself put back in charge of military matters, and from there gradually rose to unchallenged power. Did this by being right most of the time, but also by keeping the necessary consensus within a Leninist party whose structures and discipline were needed to transform China.

Mao succeeded where Trotsky failed – his Cultural Revolution could be seen as the nearest real attempt at Trotsky's notion of Permanent Revolution. And unlike the earlier Great Leap Forward, Mao managed it without much damage to the existing system, which soon returned to normal levels of economic growth.²⁰ But Mao could do this because he had risen within Leninist norms, even if his reputation eventually became so large that he could ignore the rules when he felt like it. By contrast, Trotsky in opposition was always implicitly in favour of secret conspiracy. Implicitly seeking a coup, though only Marshal Tukhachevsky could have made it real. That was the context in which Stalin chose to wipe out all overt opposition, and others who quite plausibly might have been conspiring.

I see perfect continuity between Marx, Lenin and Stalin. All assumed that violence and a ruthless conspiratorial elite were needed to move history on to its necessary next socialist stage. Each was also willing to consider the chance of something else happening, but did not take it very seriously. By selecting your quotes carefully, you could make any of the three men sound different. But that is not the reality.

But was it all a mistake? Should the Centre-Left distance itself from Leninism, just as the Centre-Right distances itself from Fascism and White Power?

¹⁶ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/why-trotsky-politics-achieved-nothing-solid/>

¹⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1920/terrcomm/index.htm>

¹⁸ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/hitler-the-13th-chancellor/>

¹⁹ For more, see <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/china-nurturing-red-stars/>

²⁰ Details at <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/mao-and-china/>

The Anglo Centre-Right, whose short-term and practical judgements were excellent, did not distance themselves from Fascism before Fascism declared war on them. Nor from White Power until they needed Black Africa more than they needed home-grown White Racists. The USA saw Communism spreading among non-whites frustrated in a demand for equality within the system: Paul Robeson was just the most famous sympathiser.

The Left has nothing to apologise for. Or at least not for supporting the Soviet Union up until 1968, when Moscow rejected a path to salvation by crushing the Reformist Communism of the Prague Spring. Beyond Moscow's control, a similar post-Mao reform in China worked very nicely, and China remains a success. Remains a socialist state that upholds atheism and rational thought, even as India and the Islamic World move in the opposite direction. And contrary to what most Western experts suggest, China permits capitalism only for as long as it behaves itself.

But it was all violent, surely? Certainly. So is all power-politics. So is all radicalism that changes the basics of economic and social power. We may have to wait a long time for a utopia in which ruthless power-politics is no longer needed. We can hope to win by mild methods, only because so much of the 'heavy lifting' has already been done.

A preference for avoiding the messy and the brutal is entirely right, of course. It's not just moral: it is also practical. The messy and the brutal, even for good ends, spoil those ends more often than they win. Socialism in Europe no longer needs violence. But it needed it once.

If You Could Decide...

Suppose some freak of nature transported you back in time to before World War One. Knowing the future, you become rich and moderately influential. But not influential enough to stop World War One, or even change the way it unfolds.

What you *could* do is prevent the October Revolution. Lenin and his close followers got special treatment by being given a Sealed Train through Germany from neutral Switzerland to neutral Denmark. Then crossed neutral Sweden and Finland, not yet independent, to reach the city then known as Petrograd. The Swiss, Danes or Swedes would cause no great fuss in the middle of a World War if they had interned Lenin for the duration. It would have been bending existing law to treat them as belligerents, who mostly get detained if they enter neutral territory. But they were Revolutionary Socialists, and Lenin was already planning to overthrow the new Russia Republic. It could have happened. And without Lenin a successful Bolshevik Revolution would be very unlikely.

If you had that choice, would you take it? Change history, but without knowing what the outcome would be? Perhaps producing a future in

which the European Empires carry on ruling, as in Michael Moorcock's alternate history novel *The Warlord of the Air*? (Though this is based on supposing no World War One, and shows a poor grasp of history.) Or alternatively, do the Nazis still appear and do they triumph without a strong Soviet Union to defeat them? Two-thirds of the German Army fought on the Eastern front to the very last, and it is unlikely that the USA would have accepted the sacrifices necessary to defeat them without Soviet help. Or alternatively, the USA might still have got the atom bomb first and used multiple strikes to defeat the Nazis. Killed tens of millions through fallout, a danger not properly understood until later. Perhaps trigger a Nuclear Winter, a notion that had not then been thought of.

This is a thought-experiment: not something that need really be possible. Such things are useful. Einstein developed Relativity by trying to imagine that he could ride alongside a beam of light, and ended up proving that this was not even possible in principle. But he got insight.

I don't believe time travel is possible. But imagining it to be possible is a neat thought-experiment. A way to make people think about what they would do, if they had definite but limited power to change events.

If there is no October Revolution, things will probably go much the same in the short term, except that the Russian Republic remains one of the Allies. It probably ends up with more territory than the Soviet Union had between the two World Wars. Quite possibly this includes Finland and the Baltic Republics. Ukraine almost certainly remains ruled from Moscow. Maybe they get Constantinople, and the strong Turkish Republic never happens.

Fascism is likely to still develop. Benito Mussolini came from pre-Leninist Marxism, which in some cases had made allowances for nationalism that Marx and Engels never made. (Unless you count them as actually German Nationalists.) Mussolini took power by striking a balance between the demands of a rebellious population and the old elite. He did do quite a lot to raise living standards for ordinary people, as Hitler did later on. And the rebelliousness of left-wing Italians would almost certainly have been similar if Lenin had failed or had never become prominent.

Without Lenin winning power in Russia, Communism probably never develops in China. But those who think the Kuomintang could have done a better job should not also wish that Lenin had failed. The Kuomintang had a run of failures, until agents of Moscow showed it how to organise. They gave it a Leninist political structure, and set up an academy to train its military. The Whampoa Military Academy produced some of the best generals, both Kuomintang and Communist. It also gave Kuomintang forces a coherence that the Chinese warlords lacked.

Without Moscow, even the limited achievements of the Kuomintang from 1927 onwards might not

have happened. The Japanese conquest of China, facing only corrupt and divided warlords would almost certainly have been completed. Not stalled until the USA defeated Japan – and had the USA not supposed that China under the leadership of nominally-Christian Chiang Kai-shek was on course to become a nice yellow copy of the USA, they might never have imposed the trade embargos that caused the USA to attack them. And Japan would probably not have undermined European imperialism by overrunning South-East Asia. In short, it would definitely have been a worse world even if Chinese Communism were a mistake.

(I also disbelieve that Chiang could have transformed China, regardless.²¹ He succeeded in Taiwan, because Japan had already modernised it. Though with the benefit of hindsight, it might also have been wiser had Moscow ordered the then-tiny Communist Party to dissolve and become a Marxist faction within the Kuomintang. Or it might have been worse, with the Kuomintang still suppressing its own left-wing. The results of making Leninism global, I will discuss in a future article.)

It is easy to complain about the human suffering consequent of Lenin deciding to take power. But would things have been even worse if this hadn't happened? In the real world, you can evade the problem. That's why I began by imagining an unreal and perhaps impossible world, in which the responsibility actually was yours.

Imaginary worlds can be used to explore real and significant issues. Noted physicist George Gamow showed the truths of Einstein's Relativity in the first of his highly readable *Mr Tompkins* stories, imagining a world in which the speed of light is a mere 10 miles per hour. Incidents in *Star Trek* have been used for management training in the USA. And I myself thought of one based on *Lord of the Rings*. It ends with a fluke – Frodo cannot destroy the One Ring, and will also be unable to stop Sauron taking it from him and becoming all-powerful. But Gollum bites off his finger, gets the ring and then very conveniently loses his footing to fall into the molten lava and get the ring destroyed. All very neat – but supposing you were there and Gollum was not? Do you shove poor Frodo over the edge, to save the world? Or would that be too evil an act, regardless of the good consequences?

The Russian Revolution was imperfect, obviously. Some of its best hopes failed. But I notice that defenders of the current world order carefully avoid thinking about whether the values they currently cherish would ever have become dominant if the British Empire and the United States had not been constantly challenged by the alternative system of the Soviet Union.

Note also, Lenin was not overthrowing a democratically elected government. The Provisional Government was an inheritance from Tsarism and had been elected on a limited

franchise – even more limited than the United Kingdom, which gave votes to only 60% of adult men and no women till 1918. That used property qualifications, meaning it was probably less than 50% of adult males in much-poorer Ireland: Ireland went overwhelmingly Sinn Féin in the more democratic elections of 1918. In Tsarist Russia in November 1917, there had been a much bigger radicalisation. The unrepresentative government of the Russian Republic still dreamt of Constantinople, long since transformed into multi-faith and majority-Muslim Istanbul. To them it had vast importance as 'Tsargrad', the source of their Christian Orthodox culture.

The Provisional Government that took over in February 1917 might have survived had they done bold things like declaring that the government would buy out the landlords and give the land to the peasants, as Lord Balfour and a highly realistic Tory government had done in Ireland several years earlier. They might have made a separate peace with Imperial Germany, perhaps just surrendering the ethnic-Polish parts of Polish territory that the Tsars had taken when Poland was pulled apart in the late 18th century. But it didn't. The pointless slaughter of the World War could not be ended without ignoring the political norms that had survived from Tsarism. Without disobeying a parliament that had been elected under a restricted franchise, and anyway no longer represented popular opinion.

The supposedly democratic governments that lasted from February to November was slow to call a Constituent Assembly – it actually met in January 1918. Nearly 80% of the votes were for some sort of socialism, but only 24% for the Bolsheviks. To be exact, figures were:²²

Party	Votes (000s)	%
Socialist Revolutionaries	17,943	40.4
Bolsheviks	10,661	24.0
Ukrainian SRs	3,433	7.7
Constitutional Democrats ("Kadets")	2,088	4.7
Mensheviks	1,144	2.6
Other Russian Liberal Parties	1,261	2.8
Georgian Menshevik Party	662	1.5
Musavat (Azerbaijan)	616	1.4
Dashnaktsutun (Armenia)	560	1.3
Left SRs	451	1.0
Other Socialists	401	0.9
Alash Orda (Kazakhstan)	407	0.9
Other National Minority Parties	407	0.9
Total (counted votes)	40,034	90.0
Unaccounted	4,543	10.0
Total	44,577	
Total Socialist	34,695	78.1
Total Liberal	3,349	7.5
Minority Nationalities	1,176	2.7

Removing the 10% shown as 'unaccounted', it was 86.7% socialist to 8.4% liberal. Some of the national minority parties included socialists.

²¹ See <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/why-chinas-blue-republic-achieved-nothing/>

²² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Constituent_Assembly#/Election_Results_\(12/25_November_1917\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Constituent_Assembly#/Election_Results_(12/25_November_1917))

Experience of past revolutions suggest that the middle ground would have faded fast, regardless. The White Guard element as they developed were Far Right rather than 'Militarist-Liberal', though I assume they voted liberal at the time. What counted was the views of most of the officers from the Tsar's armies. When the Civil War against the Bolsheviks began, they soon booted out liberal, moderate and constitutional elements.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks ruled on the basis of a clear majority from multi-party elections to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. They got 60% of the delegates at the Second Congress, elected in November.²³ Their allies, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, had another 15.4% as against 9.2% for other Socialist Revolutionaries. Very different from the Constituent Assembly, and the justification for letting the Congress of Soviets become the basis of the new order.

It is a great pity that the experiment of a multi-party Congress of Soviets did not last. But this was not really the fault of the Bolsheviks. Quite possibly it would have lasted and become something excellent if the Germans had won the war.

A German victory in World War One might have been better overall. The 'unfair' Brest-Litovsk treaty actually split the Tsarist Empire into sovereign states very similar to those that emerged after the Soviet break-up in 1991. It included a smaller Poland that was solidly ethnic-Polish. It included an independent Ukraine. A German victory might have avoided much suffering and tens of millions of deaths. Hitler might have become an unimportant graphics designer – the swastika flag would look very nice if you could forget what it stood for. History might have been better overall. But it did not happen.

The victorious Allies *claimed* it had been a war for the rights of small nations and for democracy. But Tsarist Russia had not been a democracy. And when the anti-German alliance was reconfigured to include the United States, President Wilson's supposed commitment to self-determination was phoney. His famous *Fourteen Points* include a pledge that both Poland and Serbia should get access to the sea, even though this meant taking territory that would not have been theirs based on self-determination. Likewise, France was to get back 'Alsace-Lorraine', which had been created from 93% of traditional Alsace and 26% of traditional Lorraine.²⁴ The Germans had split the territories, based mostly on language. A free vote would have probably been a defeat for France.

It was taken for granted that self-determination was only for those seen as part of the White Race. Strict racial rules applied for the military in the First World War: segregated units and senior ranks reserved for those counted as White. Non-white soldiers were not treated well – an interesting book

called *For King and Another Country* details how it was for Indian Soldiers from Britain's empire.²⁵

The USA maintained White Racism for World War Two. The New Deal would not have been possible without Southern Democrats who liked welfare and state spending but were not going to allow attacks on strict segregation. And Woodrow Wilson in his private beliefs was close to the Southern Democrats, praising the glorification of the Klu Kluk Klan in the film *Birth of a Nation*.

The popular notion of an idealistic US President overwhelmed at Versailles by wicked Europeans is false. He could have used the US fleet to escort vitally needed food to the new German Republic. The rulers of the British Empire were keen to go on starving Germany, so that it could be forced to accept a grossly unfair peace terms. (Terms that Britain later let Hitler overturn at a time when the German armed forces were tiny, and he could have easily been stopped.) But it is deeply unlikely that Britain's rulers would have ordered the Royal Navy to attack the US Navy in order to go on starving Germany. They had fooled British public opinion up to a point, but that would have been absurd.

Wilson allowed Versailles, because it wasn't that different from what he'd been hoping for. (Different from what he let the US electorate think he wanted.) He also snubbed the Japanese demand for a formal declaration of racial equality. He might have sought a compromise and got it agreed that East Asians were equal to but different from Europeans: a position that many White Racists have accepted. He could also have got it agreed that racist exclusion of East Asians from the USA, Australia etc. could continue on an assumption of racial incompatibility. The Japanese themselves were racist, viewing other East Asians as much inferior. But the Japanese wanted assurance that Japan's status as a Great Power was accepted as valid, rather than seen as an anomaly that might one day be swept away as the Ottoman Empire was being swept away. They didn't get it, which encouraged aggressive imperialists and discouraged Japanese liberals.

Nor was the line even strictly White Racists. Rather, the core belief was a more complex hierarchy in which Irish were Inferior Whites and Jews were viewed with suspicion. Jews got a formally privileged position, with a guarantee of protection in the newly formed states in Eastern Europe. But it was perfectly predictable that Jewish minorities would not get along easily with peoples formerly ruled by Germans or Russians and seeking to establish a new identity. That it would not be acceptable for Jews to have so many middle-class jobs.

The viciously anti-Jewish beliefs of most of the anti-Bolshevik forces were largely ignored by the Allies who supported them, including the USA. Likewise numerous actual massacres of Jews.

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russian_Congress_of_Soviets#Second_Congress

²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alsace-Lorraine>

²⁵ *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914-18* by Shrabani Basu

Regarding Ireland, the 1918 election was a clear victory for Sinn Fein. It won 73 out of 107 seats on the island of Ireland, and went on to proclaim an Irish Republic. They were ignored and excluded. The USA did very little to discourage attempts by the British Empire to reconquer the majority-Republican parts of Ireland.

(Some Irish historians, keen to abase themselves before a partisan pro-Imperialist British view of history, have noted that Sinn Fein did not get a majority of the votes cast. But that was only because they won unopposed in 25 seats that were Sinn Fein strongholds.²⁶)

The Irish uprising was part of a general protest against colonialism and imperialism. There were mass protests in India also, but these were curbed in the short term by the Amritsar massacre:

"The Jallianwala Bagh [in Amritsar] is a public garden of 6 to 7 acres..., walled on all sides with five entrances. To enter, troops first blocked the entry by a tank and locked the exit. On Dyer's orders, his troops fired on the crowd for ten minutes, directing their bullets largely towards the few open gates through which people were trying to flee. The British government released figures stating 379 dead and 1,200 wounded. Other sources place the number of dead at well over 1,000. This 'brutality stunned the entire nation', resulting in a 'wrenching loss of faith' of the general public in the intentions of the UK. The ineffective inquiry and the initial accolades for Dyer by the House of Lords fuelled widespread anger, leading to the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920–22."²⁷

That was the world the Bolsheviks faced. They started out moderately, allowing most opposition and carrying through a proposed abolition of the death penalty.

The Good Terrorist Trotsky

I don't usually quote Trotsky. Both before and after his time working under Lenin's orders, he wasted his talents finding nice-sounding and unrealistic solutions to the problems of the day. But in a 1920 pamphlet called *Terrorism and Communism*,²⁸ he rejects the unrealistic criticisms of noted pre-Leninist Marxist Karl Kautsky.²⁹

Kautsky had been the world's leading Marxist theorist before 1914. He had been lukewarm about the war. Became increasingly ineffective after the war, when conventional multi-party and tolerant politics increasingly fell apart. He had to flee Hitler, first to Austria and then the Netherlands. Kautsky was maybe lucky to die in 1938: both his wife and his son ended up in concentration camps. His wife died in Auschwitz.

Trotsky, mostly better at reading the direction of

changes than finding ways to control those changes, had warned how things might go:

"In Germany, the civil war has been adopting an ever fiercer character. The external strength in organization of the old party and trade union democracy of the working class has not only not created conditions for a more peaceful and "humane" transition to Socialism – as follows from the present theory of Kautsky – but, on the contrary, has served as one of the principal reasons for the long-drawn-out character of the struggle, and its constantly growing ferocity. The more German Social-Democracy became a conservative, retarding force, the more energy, lives, and blood have had to be spent by the German proletariat, devoted to it, in a series of systematic attacks on the foundation of bourgeois society, in order, in the process of the struggle itself, to create an actually revolutionary organization, capable of guiding the proletariat to final victory. The conspiracy of the German generals, their fleeting seizure of power, and the bloody events which followed, have again shown what a worthless and wretched masquerade is so-called democracy, during the collapse of imperialism and a civil war. This democracy that has outlived itself has not decided one question, has not reconciled one contradiction, has not healed one wound, has not warded off risings either of the Right or of the Left; it is helpless, worthless, fraudulent, and serves only to confuse the backward sections of the people, especially the lower middle classes.

"The hope expressed by Kautsky, in the conclusion of his book, that the Western countries, the "old democracies" of France and England – crowned as they are with victory – will afford us a picture of a healthy, normal, peaceful, truly Kautskian development of Socialism, is one of the most puerile illusions possible. The so-called Republican democracy of victorious France, at the present moment, is nothing but the most reactionary, grasping government that has ever existed in the world. Its internal policy is built upon fear, greed, and violence, in just as great a measure as its external policy. On the other hand, the French proletariat, misled more than any other class has ever been misled, is more and more entering on the path of direct action. The repressions which the government of the Republic has hurled upon the General Confederation of Labor show that even syndicalist Kautskianism – i.e., hypocritical compromise – has no legal place within the framework of bourgeois democracy. The revolutionizing of the masses, the growing ferocity of the propertied classes, and the disintegration of intermediate groups – three parallel processes which determine the character and herald the coming of a cruel civil war – have been going on before our eyes in full blast during the last few months in France.

"In Great Britain, events, different in form, are moving along the self-same fundamental road. In that country, the ruling class of which is oppressing and plundering the whole world more than ever before, the formulae of democracy have lost their meaning even as weapons of parliamentary swindling. The specialist best qualified in this sphere, Lloyd George, appeals now not to democracy, but to a union of Conservative and Liberal property holders against the working class. In his arguments there remains not a trace of the vague democracy of the "Marxist" Kautsky. Lloyd George stands on the ground of class

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_general_election,_1918#Analysis

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jallianwala_Bagh_massacre

²⁸ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1920/terrcomm/intro.htm>

²⁹ Originally published in German as *Terrorismus und Kommunismus: Anti-Kautsky*.

realities, and for this very reason speaks in the language of civil war. The British working class, with that ponderous learning by experience which is its distinguishing feature, is approaching that stage of its struggle before which the most heroic pages of Chartism will fade, just as the Paris Commune will grow pale before the coming victorious revolt of the French proletariat.

"Precisely because historical events have, with stern energy, been developing in these last months their revolutionary logic, the author of this present work asks himself: Does it still require to be published? Is it still necessary to confute Kautsky theoretically? Is there still theoretical necessity to justify revolutionary terrorism?

"Unfortunately, yes. Ideology, by its very essence, plays in the Socialist movement an enormous part. Even for practical England the period has arrived when the working class must exhibit an ever-increasing demand for a theoretical statement of its experiences and its problems. On the other hand, even the proletarian psychology includes in itself a terrible inertia of conservatism – the more that, in the present case, there is a question of nothing less than the traditional ideology of the parties of the Second International which first roused the proletariat, and recently were so powerful."

Britain did get as far as electing a Labour government. Sadly, it showed an excessive

respect for 'Sound Finances'. It could have made a vast difference by trying its own version of the bold experiment of Roosevelt's *New Deal*. Some liberals were sympathetic to the idea. Sadly, Labour then was too conventional to risk the methods later known as Keynesianism. It applied them only when the world had been transformed by the powerful rivalry of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

With Blair and New Labour in the 1990s, the party easily went back to showing an excessive respect for 'Sound Finances'. With the challenge of the Soviet Union gone and China perceived as Capitalist, most of Europe's Social Democrats have made the same error. Most are in decline. Communist scorn for Moderate Socialism always had some justification.

But obviously things were tough in the new Soviet Union. Lenin died in 1924, after never fully recovering from an assassination attempt. Trotsky was by stages displaced from the leadership, which passed gradually to Stalin. This I will examine in a future article.

The Russian Revolution

by Brendan Clifford

Two interconnected events that happened 100 years ago this Fall have been affecting the course of world affairs profoundly ever since. The Russian Revolution set out to destroy Capitalism, and Britain, the main force of Capitalism in the world, awarded Palestine, which it had just conquered, to the Jews as the site of a Jewish state under British Imperial hegemony if they colonised it.

The Russian Revolution, which threatened the survival of Capitalism, was widely regarded amongst leaders of the capitalist world as being the work of an international Jewish conspiracy. That is how Winston Churchill saw it.

The deal made between the British Government and the Jewish nationalist movement about Palestine also presumed something in the nature of an international Jewish conspiracy. It is presumed that Jewry had considerable influence internationally as a nation dispersed amongst the nations, and it sought to gain that international influence for the British Empire.

Jews were deeply embedded in German life, both economically and culturally in 1914,

so much so that in the British (and Home Rule Irish) war mania they were treated as Germans. The immediate purpose of the Balfour Declaration was to alienate Jews from Germany and establish a German/Jewish antagonism. In that project it was all too successful.

The Bolshevik coup d'état in Russia in October 1917 (November according to the Papist calendar that was universally adopted soon after) survived against all expectations and became a force of social revolution which destabilised Capitalism in Europe in the situation, close to anarchy, that followed the Great War and was a result of it.

European Capitalism, with its accompanying civilisation, was saved by the emergence of Fascist politics.

Fascism was pioneered in Italy during the War by Britain's ally, Mussolini.

Mussolini was a revolutionary socialist before the war. When the European War begun in August 1914 the Italian Government declared itself neutral. It was supported in this stance by the Catholic Church and the main body of Socialists. But Mussolini, the

revolutionary Socialist, combined his Socialism with irredentist Nationalism. He advocated Italian entry into the war against Austria for the purpose of expanding the state by incorporating Austrian territory south of the Alps and on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Britain supported his agitation by means of a secret Treaty (the Treaty of London, 1915) offering to incorporate these territories into the Italian state when it broke up the Austrian Empire.

The essential thing about Fascism, when it came on the scene as a saviour of Europe from the Bolshevik international socialist revolution in the crisis of 1919-20, was this combination of radical socialism with assertive nationalism.

Britain offered to Palestine to the Jews for colonisation, offering to provide them with a framework of Imperial protection, but the work of colonising a territory that was already populated, and displacing that population, had to be done by the Jews themselves.

A moderate British socialist, Richard Crossman, later criticised the Government for not doing the necessary dirty work—was it a ethnic cleansing or genocide?—as an act of Imperial power. But the Government had to think of relations with all the vast Arab majority in the Middle East and therefore it left the dirty work to the Jews themselves.

The West European and American spokesmen of the Zionist movement did not care to dwell on the harsh realities of the project. They fantasised about ingenious means by which the foundations of the Jewish State could be fitted into spaces in existing Arab society without unduly disturbing the Arabs. If the project had been left in their hands, it would never have been realised.

The energy that carried through the colonisation, and then waged terrorist war against Britain for independence, came from Eastern Europe, disrupted by the collapse of the Tsarist Empire, the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the radically disorientating effect of the Bolshevik Revolution. Movements of the east European Jewry faced up to the fact that the colonisation of Palestine would be a conquest that would be resisted by the Arab population, and they got on with it. And they were not embarrassed by the strong resemblance between realistic Zionism and Fascism. In fact, some of these groups formally adopted a fascist position. And the post-1945 Jewish State, which is mainly their achievement, is still a work in

progress. It remains the state without borders, engaged in de facto expansion, and determined not to define its borders until the entire Irredenta, lost two thousand years ago, is redeemed.

The action of East European Jewry in realising the Zionist project in Palestine lent plausibility to the idea that the Bolshevik Revolution was the achievement of international Jewish conspiracy—but it wasn't. The Jews in the Bolshevik Party would never have made the October Revolution. The Jews in the Bolshevik leadership lacked the fierce realism in pursuit of their object that was shown by the East European Zionist leaders.

In Bolshevism everything depended on Lenin. If he had not managed to get back to Russia from Switzerland, across the European battlefield, in the Spring of 1917, there would have been no Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks who came out of prison in Russia after the February revolution and re-assembled in Petrograd and Moscow as the Bolshevik Party, intended to function as an opposition within the structures of the February Revolution, which was understood to be bourgeois revolution inaugurating an era of capitalist democracy. But, when Lenin was returned to Russia by Germany, he announced that the Bolshevik policy was to overthrow the bourgeois Government of the February Revolution and establish a Communist Government which would be a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The most eminent Jew in Russia in 1917 was Trotsky, who did not acknowledge himself to be a Jew because he was an atheist. He was an internationalist revolutionary journalist and orator who repudiated Judaism. Nevertheless he was regarded as a Jew, not only by anti-semites, but by the Jewish community. Judaism was clearly something more than simply a performance of religious formalities:

"Trotsky considered himself and all-out internationalist, but he was never successful in his attempt to cast his Jewishness overboard. Much to his regret, the Judaism he spurned proved to be with him an incurable 'disease'. He was identified as a Jew for better or worse..." (*Trotsky And The Jews* by Joseph Nedava, Jewish Publication Society of America 1972 (or 5732) p34).

Trotsky was the leading Jew in this situation but he was not a Bolshevik, and he did not have a party of his own. He had predicted, about ten years earlier, that when the Tsarist state fell and a bourgeois Government was

established in its place, the revolutionary turmoil set off by the fall of Tsarism would not calm down under bourgeois government, but would continue until there was socialist revolution.

Lenin had not predicted that the fall of Tsarism would lead to socialist revolution, skipping over the bourgeois phase. What he had done was organise a political party for the purpose of preventing the bourgeois revolution from settling down and for carrying out a socialist revolution against it by exploiting the peasant issue.

The vast majority of the population of Russia consisted of peasants living under a landlord system. Lenin reckoned that the urban middle class who came to power in the city as the bourgeois revolution would not be able to deal with the land question in the countryside, and that therefore a worker-peasant alliance could be formed for the purpose of overthrowing the limited bourgeois regime in the cities by means of a socialist revolution that would abolish landlordism and transfer the land into peasant ownership.

But the establishment of peasant ownership would itself be a bourgeois revolution. So Lenin's scheme was to overthrow the brittle bourgeois revolution in the cities by means of a bourgeois revolution in the country, and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat in the cities which would guide the peasantry towards Socialism.

Lenin organised for a socialist revolution that would trample over the bourgeois revolution. Trotsky predicted that something like this would happen. But Trotsky rejected absolutely the party organisation that was developed by Lenin for the purpose of making a socialist revolution. He said that what Lenin was doing was establishing a party that would act in place of the proletariat.

Implicit in Trotsky's criticism of Lenin was the assumption that in the revolutionary situation that would come about when Tsarism fell, the proletariat would take over political power from the bourgeoisie by a kind of spontaneous class action spurred along by revolutionary oratory.

That assumption came from seeing the socialist revolution is happening in much the same way as the French Revolution had happened.

In the Summer of 1917, Lenin was expanding his disciplined Party and watching for an opportunity to strike while Trotsky heated up the unstable atmosphere with

revolutionary speeches. And then it seems that Trotsky suddenly saw that this was not a replay of the French Revolution after all, and that directing the masses with speeches was not enough. He set aside his profound criticisms of Lenin's authoritarianism, joined Lenin's Party, and was publicly pre-eminent in the making of the Revolution both by effective speech-making and by defending Lenin's strategy and method against the strictures of orthodox Marxism. He became the most famous revolutionary in the world and a figure of historic significance in the course of world affairs:

"Trotsky's prominence as a Bolshevik leader... was received in Russian Jewry with mixed feelings. In the midst of total ruin, indescribable havoc, bloodshed, famine, homelessness and universal distress, Russian Jewry was confused, torn between conflicting loyalties and contradictory feelings, placed between hammer and anvil, and completely in the dark as to what the future had in store for it. Memoirists of those turbulent days reflect this state of ambivalence: 'On the one hand the Jews of Russia were proud that Trotsky stood at the pinnacle of heroic struggle against the pogromchiks, but, on the other hand, they feared lest, if the Bolsheviks were to fail, heaven forbid, they would have to pay for Trotsky-Bronstein'..." (Nedava, p160).

The orthodox view, most comprehensively expressed by the theorist of the mass Social-Democratic Party of Germany, Karl Kautsky, said that socialism would come about through a full development of capitalism, when capitalism began to be an obstacle to the further development of the productive forces of the economy. Socialism would take over from fully developed capitalism in a society in which the working class created by capitalism and exploited by it, had become the major social class. The transition from capitalism to socialism would be democratic because it would be the action of the class that was not only the most numerous but was also, when organised, the most powerful social body.

In Russia in 1917 there were clusters of capitalist economy, and in these clusters the working class of capitalism was intensively organised, but Russia as a whole was predominantly pre-capitalist and the industrial working class was a very small percentage of the total population. The preconditions for the construction of socialism as understood by Orthodox Marxism did not exist. But a revolutionary socialist party existed, and a revolutionary situation existed, and the political representatives of the weak capitalist force in the economy were conducting a weak

bourgeois state, and supporters of the overthrown Tsarist State—or, more accurately, the Tsarist state which had collapsed at the centre—were organising in the hinterland and preparing to restore the Tsarist state.

In these circumstances Lenin enacted a revolutionary socialist coup d'état against the ineffective bourgeois state, decreed that the land now belonged to the peasants who worked it, and prepared for civil war. But the civil war was not mainly fought between the Bolsheviks and supporters of bourgeois state which they had overthrown: it was fought between the Bolsheviks and the landlord forces that had been mobilising to overthrow the bourgeois state that had replaced Tsarism. The Bolshevik revolution pre-empted the Tsarist counter-revolution in its action against the bourgeois state.

The essentials of the Bolshevik policy were what would have been the policies of a competent bourgeois state, and in the Civil War with resurgent Tsarism many elements of the overthrown Bourgeois system were driven to the support of Bolshevism.

The Bolshevik Government gave the land to the peasants and made peace with Germany, having made it clear beforehand that it would do both of these things.

Its first crisis was caused by Lenin's peace deal with Germany. The German Government had transported him from Switzerland to Finland in 1917 in return for an undertaking that, if he succeeded in seizing power, he would end the war that the Tsar had launched on Germany in 1914. But, when the moment came to make a Peace Treaty with Germany, there was strong resistance to it within the Bolshevik leadership.

Bukharin, an Old Bolshevik, more of a theorist than a politician, advocated revolutionary war against Germany in order to stir up socialist revolution in Germany. The Bolsheviks had opposed the Tsarist war, and peace propaganda had played a large part of its agitation against the Provisional Government which had continued the Tsarist war, and they had made an Armistice with Germany soon after seizing power. Trotsky, the Foreign Minister, saw that they could not now summon up the military force needed to break the Armistice and launch a revolutionary offensive with any prospect of success, but he did not want to make a Peace Treaty with Germany either. He advocated a "Neither War, Nor Peace" stance to leave the situation open while waiting for the European

revolution, which most of the Bolshevik leaders were convinced was imminent, to break out. He gained a large majority against Lenin on the Central Committee for this policy.

Negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk went on for about three months, until March 1918. They were conducted in public and on the Bolsheviks side they consisted largely of propaganda on the rights of nations to self-determination, and they seem to have been effective in stirring up various nationalisms in the region, particularly in the Ukraine.

The Germans eventually indicated that the relationship must be either Peace or War. Lenin got his majority on the Central Committee. A Peace Treaty was signed in March. The German Army was transferred to the Western Front for the Ludendorff offensive. And "Socialism in one country", which became an issue of dispute within the Bolshevik leadership five or six years later, began de facto at that point. The Bolshevik State, having made a separate Peace, was not engaged in the European situation when the War ended in November 1918 and the chaos set in around Europe.

The Brest-Litovsk dispute also determined that the Bolshevik State was to be Leninist. Although Trotsky had only just joined the Party in the late Summer of 1917, his joining had something of the character of the merger of forces. He was publicly pre-eminent in the period of the seizure of power. Bolshevism was an affair of Lenin and Trotsky. But, during the long Brest-Litovsk dispute, Lenin schemed within the Party to exert pressure on the Central Committee—a thing Trotsky could not have done—and finally Trotsky abstained on a vote in order to let Lenin have his way. Thereafter there was no serious question but that Lenin's will was to be the directing force.

Brest-Litovsk also ended the period of Coalition Government. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries had joined the Bolsheviks in October, but resigned when the Treaty with Germany was signed. Single-party Bolshevik government became the norm.

The Civil War then began. It was not fought between the Bolsheviks and forces supporting the Provisional Government which had been overthrown. It was fought between the Bolsheviks and Tsarist forces which would probably have overthrown the Provisional Government if the Bolsheviks hadn't done so. The Western Allies intervened in support of the Tsarist reaction. This made it impossible for the bourgeoisie to act independently and

many were driven to support the Bolsheviks. The Socialist/Capitalist War was submerged in the Bolshevik war of defence against feudal reaction.

The Bolsheviks pressed ahead with socialist measures that were warranted by the necessity of mobilising all resources for the war of defence. There was a great leap forward into War Communism. The War ended in outright victory for the Bolshevik State. Lenin's strategy of adding the cause of peasant land ownership to the proletarian revolution paid off handsomely.

The situation in Russia at the start of 1921 is described as follows in a Preface, by an English socialist observer, to the first piece of Marxist political writing that I ever read. (I had read *Capital*, which is not political.):

"With Socialist leaders and organisations we and our fathers have been familiar for three-quarters of a century. There has been no lack of talent and even of genius among them. The movement has produced its great theorist in Marx, its orator in Jaures, its powerful tacticians like Bebel, and its influential literature in Morris, Anatole France and Shaw. It bred, however, no considerable men of action, and it was left for the Russians to do what generations of Western Socialists had spent their lives in discussing. There was in this Russian achievement an almost barbaric simplicity and directness. Here were men who really believed the formulae of our theorists and the resolutions of our Congresses. What had become for us sterilised and almost respectable orthodoxy rang to their years as a trumpet call to action. The older generations had found it difficult to pardon their sincerity. The rest of us want to understand their miracle.

"The real audacity of the Bolsheviks lay in this, that they made a proletarian revolution precisely in that country which, of all portions of the civilised world, seemed the least prepared for it by its economic development. For an agrarian revolt, for the subdivision of the soil, even for the overthrow of the old governing class, Russia was certainly ready. But any spontaneous revolution, with its foundations laid in the masses of the peasantry, would have been individualistic and not communistic. The daring of the Bolsheviks lay in their belief that the minute minority of the urban working-class could, by its concentration, its greater intelligence and its relative capacity for organisation, dominate the inert peasant mass, and give to their outbreak of land-hunger the character and form of constructive proletarian revolution. The bitter struggle among Russian parties which lasted from March 1917, down to the defeat of Wrangel in November, 1920, was really an internecine competition among them for the leadership of the peasants... Many circumstances explain the success of the Bolsheviks, who proved once again in history the capacity of the town, even when its population is relatively minute, for swift and concentrated action. They also had the luck to deal with opponents who committed the supreme mistake of invoking foreign aid. But none of these advantages would have availed without an immense superiority of character...

"This book is, so far, the most typical expression of the Bolshevik temperament which the revolution has produced. Characteristically it is a polemic, and not a constructive essay. Its self-confidence, its dash, even its insolence, are a true expression of the movement. Its author bears a world-famous name. Everyone can visualise the powerful head, the singularly handsome features, the athletic figure of the man. He makes in private talks the impression of decision and definiteness. He is not rapid or expansive in speech, for everything that he says is calculated and clear cut. One has the sense that one is in the presence of abounding and disciplined vitality..."

That is from H.N. Brailsford's Preface to the 1921 English translation of Trotsky's *Terrorism & Communism*, published under the title *In Defence Of Terrorism*.

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I was drawn into Marxist fringe politics in London in 1962 by Pat Murphy. Pat was interested in producing worthwhile socialist publications on Irish affairs and he asked me to go along with him to a discussion with a group of free-ranging Irish Marxists of various kinds. The core of the group consisted of Republicans who had taken some part in the 1956 invasion of Northern Ireland and had concluded that Republicanism needed a socialist dimension. They turned for guidance to the Connolly Association in London, which was attached to the Communist Party of Great Britain but found that it was strongly opposed to complicating pure-and-simple Anti-Partition propaganda with socialist ideology. They had gone to it because it had been denounced by the Irish Bishops. They turned from it in disillusionment to the Trotskyist movement, which was then springing up very vigorously, and they had contact with its three main forms, conducted by Gerry Healy (SLL), Tony Cliff (IS), and Ted Grant (The Week).

Our first meetings were held in the offices of *The Week*, in the Lighthouse building near King's Cross Station, at the point which is now part of the 5 Guys Burger Bar.

The group also included people who had been members of the CPGB for many years, were active on its behalf in the Trade Union movement, and had come to the conclusion that its influence had become bad for working-class development. Gerry Golden was one of these. He had tried to get the Party leadership to remedy the conduct of the Party functionaries in the Trade Unions before the ballot-rigging scandal in the ETU broke, and had got himself beaten up for his persistence. He had, as I recall, been a member of the Free State Army but was tolerant of those who had been members of the IRA and had not quite left it. I don't know if he was a Jew, as his name suggests. We had no interest in the religious aspect of things. (I wouldn't be surprised if one or two members were practising Catholics.)

On the sidelines, though he never took part in the meetings, was the Father of Irish Trotskyism, Joe Quinn, a very thoughtful person—too

thoughtful to write anything down—with whom I had many interesting conversations.

Pat Murphy was a thorough Dubliner, but was unique among Dubliners in his understanding of rural Ireland. He was comprehensively uneducated and had a unique ability to see what was going on around him and make sense of it. Like Pat, I was uneducated, but I had come straight out of peasant Ireland and was only lightly touch by urbanisation though I had been living in London for a few years

A wide range of experience was brought to bear on these discussions. As the group consisted chiefly of Trotskyists and CP members, the issue of the course of the Russian Revolution could not be set aside. Pat got a general agreement that we should go through it stage by stage to see how far we could go without disagreement, and then try to establish in the light of the facts of the situation, as far as we could discover them, what the ground of disagreement was.

The arrangement worked well for a while. There was no problem before 1922.

What was the case in 1921? The Bolshevik Party had absolute state power in a predominantly peasant society in which the peasants had been made landowners by the Bolshevik State. The industrial working class, which according to orthodox Marxism was the agent of social revolution as well as its subject, remained a very small fraction of Russian society, and the politically active working class of 1917 had been largely used up in the making of the Revolution. A new working class was being forged out of the peasantry under Bolshevik direction. There had been a kind of workers' revolt which had been suppressed by the proletarian State representing a working-class future, there being no substantial working-class present. The expectation of most Bolshevik leaders in 1917 was that capitalist Europe was on the verge of bursting into socialist revolution, and the revolution in Russia was undertaken on the assumption that international socialist revolution would soon break out. It was widely agreed that, the Russian Revolution could not maintain itself. But a Treaty had been signed with capitalist Germany giving borders to the Russian Revolution.

What happened at the end of the World War was not European socialist revolution but something very different. In 1920 Russia invaded Poland in an attempt to break out of isolation and into European affairs. The invasion was routed by the Polish national Socialist, Joseph Pilsudski — the only European socialist with whom James Connolly had expressed long-term agreement.

The Russian proletarian revolution was isolated in Russia with the problem of building socialism in an overwhelmingly peasant—petty bourgeois—society. And Lenin suffered a disabling heart attack in 1923 and died a few months later.

Rosa Luxemburg was probably the West European Marxist closest to Lenin in revolutionary spirit: but she was strongly critical of his peasant

policy as raising up an enemy of his socialist policy, of his policy of national self-determination, as being divisive of class unity, and of his disciplined and purposeful method of Party organisation as putting the Party into the face of the working-class, instead of being its representative.

In the course of 1918, she wrote in prison a pamphlet about the Russian Revolution which was published after her release in November. The first chapter was enthusiastically supportive of it. She was carried away by it. But all the following chapters repeated her pre-war criticism of Lenin's method of organisation and his strategy of adopting aims that were properly the business of the bourgeoisie: land distribution and nationality.

She was particularly furious that during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations—

"The formula of the right of the various nationalities to determine their fate independently... was proclaimed as a special battle cry of Lenin... and it constituted the entire platform of the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk."

She said that Lenin's obstinacy in the matter, after it had served its only useful function as a slogan for use against the Provisional Government, and the publicity it received during the months of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, was creating nations where none had existed before, and was thereby raising anti-Socialist forces. She mentioned the Ukraine particularly in this connection.

Lenin was disabled by a stroke in 1923 and died in 1924. Stalin held the Party to Lenin's obstinate course with results that are obvious today in the Eastern region of the European Union.

The Brest-Litovsk nation-states, in their independence within the vacillating bourgeois-Imperialist system of the inter-War era, were usually represented in fiction as comic-opera states. I think particularly of the influential thrillers of Eric Ambler.

They fell within the Leninist sphere in 1945, not by Russian conquest but by the Russian defeat of Nazi Germany which had been brought to European dominance in the War that resulted from the devious British manipulation of European affairs that it would be charitable to call 'bungling'.

The world was divided between Washington and Moscow, between Capitalism and Communism, and each was free to keep its own half an order as it saw fit. Nothing else was viable in the world at the end of Britain's second World War in forty years. Washington kept its half an order by regularly invading and overthrowing Governments that it considered to be deviant. The first, as I recall, was Guatemala in the early 1950s.

Moscow, which had a strong political base within each of the East European states, did it without invasion—until 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia. But in 1956 Leninism, under the name of Stalinism, had been denounced by Moscow, and the myth of Leninist democracy had been invented.

A few years ago the influential do-it-yourself Internet Encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, had an entry on the B&ICO, which said that we had supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia. A reference in the Irish Times was given as proof. BICO was classified as "Stalinist" because it held that Stalin continued Lenin's system.

What BICO did was to describe the Czech/Russian conflict as a conflict between two states that were reverting to capitalist political economy, one slightly faster than the other. We were surprised that the nation of the Good Soldier Schweik was behaving so rashly, and were inclined to assert the national principle in the situation, but we accepted the NATO/Warsaw Pact arrangement of Europe as stabilising and had no wish to precipitate the stand-off into war. It was only when the Warsaw Pact dissolved and NATO became a force of global aggression that we opposed it. In all of this we ran counter to the general Left.

The Irish Times, a Protestant Ascendancy Unionist paper that was surviving without visible means of support was trying to establish a base in nationalist Ireland by recruiting intellectually disabled Marxists to itself. If it did say what Wikipedia alleged, I assume the writing was done one of these lapsed Marxists whose dogmatic mindset, which could only understand stereotypes, had accompanied him in his metamorphosis.

The Brest-Litovsk nations were held within the region that the Red Army entered in the course of defeating the German Army and, in accordance with Lenin's fixed idea about nationality, they were organised as nation-states within the socialist culture of the State that had broken Nazi power in Europe. Each developed a sense of its national history under Soviet tutelage operating through the substantial Communist stratum that was present in each of them, but they did not have the freedom to leave the Warsaw Pact system and join NATO, any more than states in the Western capitalist segment of the world were free to go Communist and join the Soviet alliance. That was an absolute in the

condition of the world as it was during a long generation after the liberation/conquest of much of Europe by the Red Army in its resistance of the Nazi assault on Russia, which was a German assault.

If the matter had been left to the British Empire (the hegemonic Power under the Versailles/League of Nations system), or to Germany itself, the probability is that Europe would have settled down contentedly within the Fascist system that had sprung up everywhere independently of Nazism, and that was belatedly adopted in Germany when the ultra-democracy of the Versailles system was generating chaos.

Britain facilitated the restoration of German power in the form of the Nazi State for five years before suddenly, and capriciously, deciding to make war on it in March 1939 without any serious intention of waging that war itself. Nazism flourished under British handling of it, whether by collaboration until March 1939 or a merely provocative hostility thereafter. It was broken by Russia. After the Russian victory became a virtual certainty at the end of 1943, Britain scrambled back to the Continent did take over as much ground as possible from a wilting Germany—ground that would otherwise have been liberated/conquered by Russia.

The Continent was divided more or less where the Armies met. Antagonistic world systems were developed behind the frontier lines. There was no freedom on either side for any state to go over to the other side, and any serious attempt to do so would have led to war.

(What happened in Russia after 1922 will be returned to in a future article, along with discussion of it in the group that began to call itself the Irish Communist Group.)

This article first appeared in the November 2017 issue of Irish Political Review.

The Bolsheviks and Orthodox Christianity

by Peter Brooke

The centenary of the Bolshevik revolution is also the centenary of the institution of the Moscow patriarchate. The Bolshevik seizure of power took place on October 25th (November 7th) 1917³⁰ and the church council that was meeting in Moscow at the time voted to 'restore' the patriarchate two days later on October 27th (November 9th), the day the Kremlin fell to the Bolshevik forces. The actual choice of patriarch took place on November 4th

(17th). The choice fell on Tikhon³¹ (Belavin)³²,

³¹ There are many different ways of transcribing Russian words and names into the Western alphabet. For example:

Alexei may be spelt Alexey, Alexi, Alexii, Alexios, Alexius, Alexy, Alexiy, Akexis, Aleksey, Aleksi.

Sergey may be spelt Sergei, Serge, Sergios, Sergius, Serguei, Sergii

I have not myself settled on any given principle and in what follows transcriptions will vary according to the different sources I am using. (This includes 'Trotskii'.)

³² I am trying to observe the convention by which the family names of monastics are put in brackets. Monastics in principle have rejected their family connections. In the Orthodox Church all the Bishops are chosen from among those priests who have taken monastic vows.

³⁰ I am trying to observe the convention by which both Julian and Gregorian calendar dates are given until 14th February 1918, when the new government formally adopted the Gregorian calendar.

Metropolitan of Moscow. Actually Tikhon had only recently become Metropolitan of Moscow earlier in the year when, in the mood of the February (March) Revolution, Makary, Metropolitan of Moscow and Pitrim, Metropolitan of Petrograd³³ - both appointed by the Tsar under the influence of Grigoriy Rasputin - were deposed by 'diocesan assemblies' of local clergy and laity.

The First Moscow Patriarchate

A patriarchate of Moscow had been instituted in 1589, under the Tsar Theodore, son of Ivan IV ('the Terrible'). As the institution of the patriarchate in 1917 was immediately followed by the long battle with the Soviet government, a period of intense persecution, so the institution of the patriarchate in 1589 was soon followed by the 'time of troubles' - the Polish and Swedish invasions of the early seventeenth century which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Romanov dynasty.

The period of the seventeenth century patriarchate, even after the Polish invasion, was turbulent, marked by the violent schism with the 'Old Believers' or 'Old Ritualists' and by the claims of some of the patriarchs, notably Filaret (1619-1933), Nikon (1652-1658, but only replaced in 1667) and Adrian (1690-1700) to a form of co-sovereignty with the Tsar.³⁴ Indeed something of the kind may be implicit in the title 'patriarch'. On the one hand it suggests that the Church is independent of any other patriarchates - most particularly the Patriarchate of Constantinople with its claim to be the 'ecumenical' (by implication universal) patriarchate. Russia, or Rus', centred at the time in Kiev, was received into Orthodoxy under the aegis of Constantinople in 988 but it had been *de facto* if not *de jure* independent since Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

The other role of the patriarch was to preside as a single sovereign over the Church in a given national territory but this was a role that could also be claimed by the Tsar as previously, in the case of Constantinople, it was the prerogative of the Emperor.

The patriarchate was suppressed by Peter I ('the Great'). Initially, when Adrian, the last of the seventeenth century patriarchs, died in 1700, Peter simply declined to make the necessary arrangements for replacing him. He had only recently returned from his tour of the Netherlands and England and had been particularly impressed by conversations with Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of

Salisbury and one of the leading theorists of the 'Glorious Revolution' of the Dutch William III. Peter would undoubtedly have seen parallels between the religious turbulence of England and of Russia in the seventeenth century, drawing the conclusion that the Church should not be allowed to act as a power independent of the state.

In the absence of a patriarch, Peter launched a series of measures designed to break the spirit of the Bishops. For example in 1718, following the defection of his son and heir, Alexei, to Vienna 'All the bishops with whom Alexei had communicated in any way were brought to Petersburg. Submitted to violent torture they confessed having formed a plot to restore the old traditions in Russia upon Peter's death. The Metropolitan of Rostov was broken on the wheel, the Metropolitan of Kiev died while being transported to Petersburg in chains, and several bishops were exiled in chains to distant monasteries.'³⁵

Finally, in 1721, Peter instituted a 'Spiritual Regulation' drawn up by Feofan (or Theophan) (Prokopovich), a professor in the Kiev Academy. The Kiev Academy in the seventeenth century was on the fault line between the Catholic world and the Orthodox world. On the one hand it held the line for Orthodoxy against the 'Uniate' tendency (churches which practised the same rites as the Orthodox churches but acknowledged the ecclesiastical sovereignty of the Pope); but on the other it adopted a very western-influenced scholastic theology, taught in Latin. Feofan himself had studied in Catholic colleges and in Rome but had turned violently anti-papist, and, by extension, strongly opposed clerical power within the Orthodox Church. According to George Florovsky: 'Theophan wasn't close to Protestant theology, he was totally part of it.'³⁶

A Captive Church

The Spiritual Regulation replaced the Patriarch with a 'Holy Synod' completely dominated by an 'overprocurator' appointed by and responsible to the Tsar. This was the system that prevailed until 1917. According to Dmitri Pospelovsky:

'Externally, the pre-revolutionary Church appeared to be very powerful. She was the official state Church, and until 1905 other religions were legally tolerated only as faiths of national minorities. Orthodox religion was an obligatory discipline in all general schools for all pupils born of the Orthodox faith, and children born of mixed marriages in which one of the parents was Orthodox had to be baptised Orthodox ... In 1914 the Orthodox Church of the empire officially had 117 million members organised into 67 dioceses with 130 bishops and 48,000 functioning parishes with a

³³ St Petersburg became 'Petrograd' during the war for much the same reason that the Saxe-Coburg family became the Windsors.

³⁴ Filaret's claim was especially strong since he was actually the father of the first Romanov Tsar, Mikhail. He had been forcibly tonsured and imprisoned in a monastery under Boris Godunov. According to the Wikipedia account: 'From 1619 to 1633 there were two actual sovereigns, Tsar Michael and his father, the most holy Patriarch Filaret. Theoretically they were co-regents, but Filaret frequently transacted affairs of state without consulting the tsar ... His most important domestic measure was the chaining of the peasantry to the soil, a measure directed against the ever-increasing migration of the down-trodden serfs to the steppes, where they became freebooters instead of taxpayers.'

³⁵ Dmitri Pospelovsky: *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, Crestwood NY, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998, p.110.

³⁶ Georges Florovsky: *Les voies de la théologie russe*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1991, p.134. My translation from the French, the only copy I have to hand though an English translation does exist.

total of over 50,000 clergy of all ranks. It ran 35,000 primary schools ...' (p.20)³⁷

However:

'The bishops in this system, living in an external luxury, were in fact like captive birds in a golden cage: a hierarch could not leave his residence to visit peripheral parishes in his diocese without theoretically having the tsar's and practically the overprocurator's special permission, requested and granted via the channels of the Ruling Synod in St Petersburg. The priests were in a particularly contradictory position. On the one hand they depended for most of their livelihood on the donations of their parishioners (which in many rural areas were extremely meagre because of the poverty of many peasants) and on the harvests from the piece of land allotted to the parish which they farmed like any other peasant. On the other hand, legally and according to the oath given at the time of their ordination, they were *ex officio* agents of the state, required to supply the Ministry of Defence with information on prospective recruits for the army and, in theory, obliged to inform the authorities on all confessions of an anti-state nature - even though the church canons ban this on the pain of immediate defrocking. Obviously, in this constrained position the Church as an institution could offer little moral leadership to the nation.

'After the nationalisation of the monastic estates by Catherine II in 1763-1764, the Church as an institution became economically poor, receiving from the state but 10 per cent of her former annual income from those properties as compensation. It was only since the 1890s that a substantial regular state subsidy to support the clergy in the poorer parishes began to be paid. By 1916 it reached 18.8 rubles - 58 million short of making the Russian clergy economically independent from their parishioners.' (pp.19-20)

It is hardly surprising that under such circumstances a movement for reform had developed within the Church. In the aftermath of 'Bloody Sunday', January 1905, the event that sparked the 1905 revolt, a group of 32 priests in St Petersburg, with the approval of their Metropolitan, Antony (Vadkovsky), published a memorandum calling for the immediate convocation of a council in which all sections of the Church would be represented:

'We must hear the voice of the Russian church, the voice of ecclesial conscience that will embrace, under its authority, pastors and flock alike. For 200 years we have no longer heard that voice. For 200 years, the Russian Church has not assembled in a local

council, even though for a long time the necessity of such a council has been felt and is now urgent.'³⁸

The proposal had the support of Sergei Witte, President of the Committee of Ministers, Nicholas II's most important adviser at the time, who was behind the 'October Manifesto', instituting the Duma and converting Russia, in theory at least, into a constitutional monarchy. In December, Nicholas asked Metropolitan Antony, together with the Metropolitans Vladimir of Moscow and Flavian of Kiev, 'to determine the time for the convocation of this council, earnestly desired by all the faithful members of the Church' (Destivelle, p.33).

A preconciliar commission was established which (in a report that ran to six volumes) proposed among other things the restoration of the patriarchate, working in conjunction with a council in which (albeit on a purely consultative basis) lower clergy and laity would be represented.

According to Destivelle (p.44): 'On April 25, 1907, the Emperor ratified the commission's decisions, the most important being the convocation of a local council of the Russian Church.' But according to Pospelovsky (p.23): 'these hopes and dreams ... were, however, dealt a heavy blow by the refusal of Nicholas II to permit its convocation in the foreseeable future. This resolution by the Tsar was issued on April 25, 1907.

The Council And The Revolution

Whichever of these two versions is closer to the mark, the fact is that the pressure of external events towards any sort of democratic reform had ceased and the democratic movement had been severely repressed under Pyotr Durnovo as Minister of the Interior, followed in 1906 by Stolypin. Stolypin was interested in economic reform but not particularly in Church reform. In 1917, however, after Nicholas's abdication, some sort of Church reform was inescapable and the council envisaged in 1905 was authorised by the Provisional Government and finally opened on August 15th/28th (Feast of the Dormition). It was constituted on a basis that gave lower clergy and laity a vote, while giving the Bishops alone the final say. This was a principle that had been proposed in the 1905-7 discussions by Archbishop Sergii (Stragorodskii), then Archbishop of Finland, now Archbishop of Vladimir, and destined to play an important role in what follows.

The *sobor* (council) continued to meet until September 1918 making many decisions on the right ordering of the Church now that it was independent of the state, but since all power was taken out of their hands by the Bolshevik revolution, the only decision that really mattered was the creation of the patriarchate. One of the first decrees Lenin issued, on January 10th/23rd 1918, after the suppression of the Constituent Assembly

³⁷ Dmitry Pospelovsky: *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982, Volume 1*, Crestwood NY, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984. This is my major source for writing this article and page references will be given in the text not in footnotes.

³⁸ Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P. (translated from the French by Jerry Ryan): *The Moscow Council (1917-1918)*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2015, p.26.

on January 6th/19th (The Feast of the Theophany, as it happens):

'separated the Church from the state and nationalised all former Church property (houses of prayer, schools, seminaries, monasteries, candle factories, charity institutions etc.). It also deprived the Church of the status of a legal person and of the right to acquire property in the future, banning at the same time state subsidies for all religious bodies. Henceforth, property needed for religious use was to be leased by the local government bodies to individual religious associations free of charge but only when and if the local government body found that it could dispose of vacant property for this purpose. Once leased, the property was subject to regular taxes levied on private enterprise ... A decree of January 28th nationalised all bank accounts belonging to religious associations.

'The decree of January 23rd also banned the teaching of religion in all general education schools, whether state or private, and forbade the Church to open any schools of a general nature, or even Sunday schools, to teach exclusively religious subjects. "Citizens may teach and be taught religion [only] privately." The term "citizens" would henceforth always be interpreted as adults only ... Since only groups of laymen were recognised as the contractual party in the leasing of church property, the clergy, including bishops and the patriarch, became legally superfluous, retaining authority with the faithful only as long as the latter agreed to accept them and to fulfil their bishops' orders, which now became more like petitions than orders. This situation obviously invited all sorts of schisms, which were not slow to appear.' (Pospelovsky, pp.31-2)

All this was quite in line with the reference to 'absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the state' referred to by Lenin in an article written as early as December, 1905, in the context of the 1905 revolt:

'Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding.

'We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned.

'Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule.

'Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. These should become absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the state.

'Only the complete fulfilment of these demands can put an end to the shameful and accursed past when the church lived in feudal dependence on the state, and

Russian citizens lived in feudal dependence on the established church, when medieval, inquisitorial laws (to this day remaining in our criminal codes and on our statute books) were in existence and were applied, persecuting men for their belief or disbelief, violating men's consciences, and linking cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church. Complete separation of Church and State is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church ...

'However abject, however ignorant Russian Orthodox clergymen may have been, even they have now been awakened by the thunder of the downfall of the old, medieval order in Russia. Even they are joining in the demand for freedom, are protesting against bureaucratic practices and officialism, against the spying for the police imposed on the "servants of God".

'We socialists must lend this movement our support, carrying the demands of honest and sincere members of the clergy to their conclusion, making them stick to their words about freedom, demanding that they should resolutely break all ties between religion and the police.

'Either you are sincere, in which case you must stand for the complete separation of Church and State and of School and Church, for religion to be declared wholly and absolutely a private affair. Or you do not accept these consistent demands for freedom, in which case you evidently are still held captive by the traditions of the inquisition, in which case you evidently still cling to your cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes, in which case you evidently do not believe in the spiritual power of your weapon and continue to take bribes from the state. And in that case the class-conscious workers of all Russia declare merciless war on you ...

'No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.

'That is the reason why we do not and should not set forth our atheism in our Programme; that is why we do not and should not prohibit proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from associating themselves with our Party. We shall always preach the scientific world outlook, and it is essential for us to combat the inconsistency of various "Christians". But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to first place, where it does not belong at all; nor does it mean that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate opinions or senseless ideas, rapidly losing all political importance, rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development.

'The revolutionary proletariat will succeed in making religion a really private affair, so far as the state is concerned. And in this political system, cleansed of medieval mildew, the proletariat will wage a broad and open struggle for the elimination of economic slavery, the

Bolshevik Intentions

The clearly expressed ambition of the Bolshevik government was, so far as humanly possibly, to end religious belief and practice as being incompatible with the scientifically based Communist society they wanted to build. But there were two possible strategies for achieving this aim (both of them implicit in Lenin's 1905 article) - through administrative and legal measures making life uncomfortable for the Church, as given in the decree of 23rd January, or through gentler methods of persuasion in the conviction that as the new society developed its advantages would be obvious and the old order would wither away. The two approaches were not incompatible, but the emphasis could shift from one to the other. In the first years, dominated by civil war and famine, from 1917 to 1923, we can say the emphasis was on administrative measures. Then it shifted to a subtler, more 'cultural' approach.

The picture though is complicated by the real danger that the Church could serve as an organising centre for opposition to the new order. Traditionally, at least for the previous few centuries, the Orthodox churches, both in Russia and in the East under the Ottomans, had been politically passive, seeing their role as first and foremost the correct performance of the liturgy, regardless of external political circumstances. But with the Moscow Council, the establishment of the patriarchate, and the role of the church in the nationalist agitations in the Balkans, the signs were that they were aspiring to a more active role in worldly affairs, participating in the mood of intellectual and political liveliness that had produced the Bolsheviks themselves. Lenin's decree of January was aimed at preventing the ambition of the Moscow Council to endow the Church with an independent moral existence. The fact that the Moscow Council continued meeting until September 1918, making detailed arrangements for an independent self-governing all-Russian church was an indication that they did not believe the Bolshevik government would last. Tikhon spoke out against the suppression of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 and again against the Bolshevik takeover on the first anniversary of the October/November seizure of power. By September 1919, however, he had decided on a policy of staying out of politics. Though, in the chaos of the civil war, large numbers of clergy were killed and churches vandalised he refused to send even secret blessings to the White army - though nor did he express any support for the forces of the actually existing (Red) government.

A number of priests and bishops, led by Antony (Khrapovitsky), Metropolitan of Kharkov during the

Moscow Council, appointed Metropolitan of Kiev during the brief period of Ukrainian independence, had supported the White armies and gone with them into exile, forming a Synod in Karlovci, Serbia, in 1922. They claimed to be acting under the authority of Tikhon and were fervent in their condemnations of the Soviet government. Tikhon had been made Patriarch through a system of drawing lots (in accordance with apostolic practice given in Acts 1.26) between three candidates chosen by elections. In the elections the candidate who had received most votes had been Antony. Looked at through Bolshevik eyes the Karlovci Synod could be seen as an indication of what the Church could do if left to its own devices.

A Bolshevik Church?

There was however within the Church a body of opinion sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. This was the so-called 'Living' or 'renovationist' church and it included some of the group of 32 St Petersburg clergy who had originally called for the summoning of the Council. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution they had formed a 'Union for Church Renovation'. Their initial memorandum sent to their Metropolitan had demanded 'the separation of Church and State, a democratic-conciliar form of administration for the Church, the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, services in spoken Russian instead of Slavonic,⁴⁰ the reintroduction of married bishops ... They argued that the monastic episcopate was not only contrary to the canons⁴¹ but went against the very heart of the monastic vocation - which was contemplation, silence and obedience. Bishops, in contrast, had to administer, preach, instruct and command. Likewise the Union was against the restoration of the patriarchate on the grounds that it would weaken the conciliar principle and the concept of Christ as the real Head of the Church. A little later they declared that it was the duty of the Church to protect the workers from exploitation by the capitalists ... In this respect, the group was close to Professor (later priest) Sergius Bulgakov, who planned to found a League of Christian Politics, and to Nicholas Berdyaev.' (Pospelovsky, p.47).

Bulgakov and Berdyaev were both well known as former Marxists converted to Christianity and both had contributed to the influential collection of essays, *Vekhi*, strongly critical of the Russian intelligentsia, in particular its ambition to speak for the peasantry while simultaneously ridiculing the

⁴⁰ Slavonic was the language widely spoken in the Slav world in the ninth century at the time of the missions of SS Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius. Constantine (he assumed the name Cyril shortly before his death) had translated the Greek service books into Slavonic devising a new alphabet for the purpose. It is generally thought that Cyril's alphabet was actually Glagolitic and that the 'Cyrillic' alphabet was developed later by disciples of his brother Methodius. Slavonic stands in much the same relation to modern Slav languages as Old or Middle English to modern English (ie it is more remote than Elizabethan English).

⁴¹ The 'canons' were various decrees issued by councils of the Church recognised as authoritative, especially the seven 'ecumenical' councils from the first Council of Nicaea (325 AD) to the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD.

³⁹ First published in *Novaya Zhizn*, No. 28, December 3, 1905 Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. 10, pp. 83-87. Accessible at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm>

religion that was so central to the life of the peasantry. They were both expelled in 1922 and flourished in exile in Paris. Neither, in the event, had any sympathy for the Renovators once they emerged, with some support from the Bolsheviks, as a distinct anti-patriarchal tendency. Berdyaev comments on the psychological change that he observed following the revolution:

'A new type of man seems to have emerged. There was none of the tolerance and kindness in him so characteristic of the pre-revolutionary type of Russian; none of the longing for what is not; none of the anarchism which respects no rules; no doubts, no subjective reactions, no melancholy, no introspection. All this gave place to a buoyant and somewhat aggressive optimism and a readiness to conform to anybody and do anything. The faces showed eyes firmly fixed on external realities; sympathy and mercy for others, especially for those holding heretical views, became an unknown quality. 'Pushing', self-confidence and thirst for recognition by others dominated human relationships among these people. With the disappearance of the old Russian lie-abed many other and more positive qualities disappeared; but there was greater readiness than hitherto to face trouble and the attendant risk.'⁴²

Discussing Lenin, he says:

'Lenin did not believe in man. He recognised in him no sort of inward principle; he did not believe in spirit and the freedom of the spirit, but he had boundless faith in the social regimentation of man. He believed that a compulsory social organisation could create any sort of new man you like, for instance, a completely social man who would no longer need the use of force ...

'Lenin particularly hated any attempt to combine Christianity with socialism. A reforming spirit in the Church was a more harmful thing in his opinion than the Black Hundred.⁴³ A progressive and regenerated Christianity was worse than the old corrupt Christianity. "A Roman Catholic priest who seduces a girl" writes Lenin "is much less dangerous than a 'priest without cassock', a priest without the crudities of religion, an intelligent and democratic priest who preaches the making of some little god or other, for you can expose the first priest, condemn him and get rid of him, but you cannot get rid of the second so easily, and to expose him is a thousand times more difficult." This category of 'priest without cassock' plays no small part in anti-religious propaganda and it is a category that is very inclusive indeed. 'Priests without cassock' seems to include everyone who is not a materialist, everyone who acknowledges a spiritual principle in life, albeit in the very smallest degree, and all philosophers who are guilty of any spiritualist or idealist leanings. Even Einstein was recognised as a 'priest in disguise' because he

acknowledged the existence of a cosmic feeling which might be called 'religious.' Lenin hated the very word 'religion' and was sharply opposed to regarding socialism as a religion, as Lunacharsky wished to do at one time. Lunacharsky was also a sort of 'priest without cassock' because he preached 'god-construction' which in fact was a form of atheism and even militant atheism ...'⁴⁴

In 1919, a conversation took place between Zinoviev and a married priest, Alexander Vvedensky, during which 'Zinoviev told Vvedensky that his group⁴⁵ would be the appropriate one for an eventual concordat between the state and the Church.' (Pospelovsky p.52) Relations with the Church were in the hands of a senior GPU officer, Evgeny Tuchkov. 'Tuchkov' according to an academic account, 'who was in his early thirties, had had virtually no formal education: he had risen up through the party organisation from the industrial town of Ivanovo-Voznesensk ... The archives recently opened have revealed that Tuchkov's nickname in the force was 'Igumen' [the Russian equivalent of the 'abbot' of a monastery - PB], that at this period he was living with his deeply religious mother in the branch-house on Pervaya Meshchanskaya street of the Diveyevo convent (the community founded by St Serafim of Sarov), where a few sisters remained. Thanks to Tuchkov's presence the house remained open longer than other monastic branch houses in the capital.'⁴⁶ Vvedensky worked closely with Tuchkov.

Lunacharsky And Lenin

In 1921, Anatoly Lunacharsky, appointed by Lenin as 'Commissar of Enlightenment' (ie in charge of education and culture) wrote to Lenin about the possibility of creating a Bolshevik tendency within the Church:

'A significant part of the clergy, undoubtedly sensing the stability of the Soviet regime, wants to be reconciled with it. Of course, this renovated Orthodoxy with a Christian socialist lining is not at all desired and finally ... will be eliminated and disappear. But, as an active opposition to the reactionary patriarch and his supporters ... it can play its role because it is based mainly on the peasant masses [how wrong he proved to be! - PB], the backward merchant class, and the more backward part of the proletariat. For these groups, such a temporary centre of clerical unity is a great shift to the left of the one they still find in the reactionary Orthodox church ... We cannot, of course, support the activity of Soviet Orthodoxy. It might, however, be most advantageous to render aid secretly and to create in the religious arena several transitional stages [on the

⁴² Nicolas Berdyaev: *Dream and Reality - An essay in autobiography*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1950, pp.227-8

⁴³ The Black Hundred was the name given by their opponents to the various counter-revolutionary, pro-Tsar and pro-Church groups, often militantly anti-semitic, that developed early in the twentieth century. The term comes from the monks (monks were dressed in black, hence the term 'black clergy' for the monastic clergy as opposed to the 'white' married clergy) who opposed the Polish and Swedish invasions in the early seventeenth century.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Berdyaev: *The origin of Russian Communism*, London, Geoffrey Bles, 1955 (first published 1937)

⁴⁵ Vvedensky presided over a group called the Union of Communities of Ancient Apostolic Churches. The Renovator movement was a coming together of this group with the 'Living Church' presided over by the Archpriest Vladimir Krasnitsky (previously a chaplain to the 'Black Hundred' Union of Russian People) and the Union for Church Renovation, under the man Pospelovsky regards as the most distinguished member of the movement, Bishop Antonin (Granovsky).

⁴⁶ Ann Shukman: 'Metropolitan Sergi Stragorodsky: The case of the representative individual', *Religion, State and Society*, Vol 34, No 1, March 2006, p.56

way to atheism] for the peasant masses.⁴⁷

I suspect that the tone of this letter was calculated to win the favour of Lenin and that Lunacharsky - and perhaps also Tuchkov - may have had more sympathy for 'renovated Orthodoxy' than they were willing to admit, at least to Lenin. Although there could be no doubt of his contempt for the bureaucratic church of the Tsarist 'Holy Synod', Lunacharsky is mainly known for his insistence that Communism was a religion, a successor to the great religions of the past - perhaps standing in a relation to Christianity similar to that claimed by Islam in relation to Christianity or by Christianity in relation to Judaism. Almost the very day he was appointed as Commissar, concurrently with the Bolshevik seizure of power, he resigned following what turned out to be a false news report that in the storming of the Kremlin the cathedral church of St Basil had been destroyed (apparently much of the interiors of the Kremlin churches were indeed badly damaged by vandalism). Lunacharsky was a product of what Berdyaev has called the 'silver age' - the period between the end of the nineteenth century and 1914 when there was an intense interest among intellectuals in aesthetic and religious questions. Vvedensky was also (like Berdyaev himself - Lunacharsky had worked out many of his most basic ideas in dialogue with Berdyaev) a product of the Silver Age. As a young man he frequented what was almost the temple of the movement, the salon of Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Zinaida Gippius who, among much else, organised 'religious and philosophical' encounters between intellectuals and churchmen, presided over by Ivan Stragorodsky, then rector of the St Petersburg Theological Academy, later to become Metropolitan Sergii (Stragorodsky), second patriarch after Tikhon if one accepts the validity of his election.

Pasternak's novel *Dr Zhivago* is an account of the fate of a typical product of the Silver Age living through the age of Soviet power.

Pospelovsky quotes a 'secret internal order' from Lenin, dated 22nd February 1922 in which he argues that the famine then raging throughout the RSFSR was a unique opportunity 'to gain a full and crushing victory over our enemy' by seizing the wealth of the Church:

'It is precisely now when there is cannibalism in the famine stricken areas that we can (and therefore must) carry out the confiscation of valuables with fanatical and merciless energy and not hesitate to suppress any form of resistance ... it is precisely now that we must wage a merciless battle against the reactionary clergy and suppress its resistance with such cruelty that it will remember it for several decades ... The more members of the reactionary bourgeoisie we manage to shoot the better. It is precisely now that we must give such a lesson to these characters that they would not dare to think of any resistance for at least the next few decades ...' (pp.94-5).

⁴⁷ Quoted in Edward Roslof: 'The heresy of "Bolshevik" Christianity: Orthodox rejection of religious reform during NEP', *Slavic Review*, Vol 55, No3 (Autumn), p.616.

Beginnings Of The Renovationist Church

The document was never formally published in the Soviet Union and first appeared in the emigré press in 1970 so its authenticity may well be doubted but it does fit quite well with the actual course of events. In 1921, following an appeal to the world by Maxim Gorky in July, Tikhon had helped to organise an All-Russian Famine Relief Committee seeking international aid, particularly through religious figures such as the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury. In September the Committee was arrested and replaced by a government body. On 19th February 1922 Tikhon called on church associations to donate church valuables, excepting utensils used for the sacraments, to support the famine relief effort. This was initially reported in the Soviet press but on 23rd February the government issued an order that church valuables, including materials used for the sacraments were to be forcibly confiscated. This inevitably led to violent confrontations throughout the country. In Petrograd, in March, the Renovationists, including Vvedensky and Krasnitsky, published a letter attacking the church majority as counter-revolutionary and insisting on the immediate and total surrender of all church valuables. But their Metropolitan Venyamin came to an agreement with the authorities (presumably Zinoviev) by which church valuables were subject to confiscation, but the believers could make collections to offer money equal to the value of the sacramental objects. In May, Tikhon was placed under house arrest for resisting the confiscation of the church valuables and in these circumstances Vvedensky, Krasnitsky and Bishop Antonin (Granovsky) took over the administration of the church, calling a conference in August when they declared Antonin as Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia.

Venyamin in Petrograd refused to recognise this and temporarily excommunicated Vvedensky, who turned up several days later with the former chairman of the Petrograd Cheka and threatened Venyamin that if he did not revoke the excommunication he would be put on trial for opposing the confiscation of church valuables, which could result in a death sentence. Venyamin refused to give in to this pressure, was arrested, put on trial and shot together with three of his clergy. Vvedensky did not appear at the trial because he was hospitalised after a rock had been hurled at him by one of Venyamin's supporters (the main Renovationist witness was Krasnitsky whose past association with the anti-semitic Union of Russian People was pointed out by Venyamin's Jewish defense counsel).

Pospelovsky claims (p.99) that in the course of the confiscation of church valuables: '2,691 married priests, 1,962 monks, 3,447 nuns and an unknown number of laymen loyal to the patriarch were physically liquidated in the course of 1921-1923.' However he gives as his source (or rather gives as the probable source of his own source, Peter

Struve, major theorist both of the Russian Social Democratic Party at its origins and of the 'bourgeois' Constitutional Democratic Party, now an *émigré*) the 'Renovationist bishop Nikolai Solovei'. This is a very dubious source. Solovei had been sent abroad by the Renovationists to try to influence *émigré* opinion in their favour but instead had attempted to join the anti-Bolshevik emigration by denouncing the Bolsheviks. When he failed to win their trust however he returned to the Soviet Union, helping the anti-patriarchal campaign by claiming that his anti-Bolshevik activities had been ordered by Tikhon.

The Renovationists held councils, which they claimed were continuing the work of the 1917-18 Council, in 1923, 1924 and 1925. In the 1923 council, held in April-May, they sang 'Many Years' ('God grant you many years', a traditional expression of affection and respect, often sung to church goers on their name days) to the Soviet government, abolished the patriarchate, replacing it with a form of collegiate government, reformed the traditional Orthodox practise with regard to marriage and the clergy, and adopted the Gregorian calendar. Initially it would have looked as if they could succeed. They secured control of most of the churches in the major cities, their reforms were popular among the clergy, and the 'Tikhonites', deprived of their own printing facilities and with Tikhon himself under house arrest, had no means of countering their influence other than word of mouth. Furthermore, and very interestingly, they had the support of the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁴⁸

Relations With Constantinople

It happens that their Moscow council of April-May 1923 coincided with the equally suspect 'pan-Orthodox congress' held in Constantinople in May-June 1923 under the direction of the patriarch Meletius Metaxakis, which threw the Greek church into disarray by replacing the Julian calendar with what was effectively the Gregorian calendar with a slight variation that enabled them to call it the 'Reformed Julian calendar'. This was part of a drive towards closer relations with non-Orthodox churches, in particular the Church of England (which was present as an observer at the Congress) at a time when the prospect of recovering Constantinople was being dangled before the eyes of the Greeks by the British, who were still occupying the city (the occupation - and the hopes of the Greeks and of this very political patriarch - came to an end in October).⁴⁹

The reason why I have been hesitant about calling the establishment of the patriarchate a 'restoration' is that the seventeenth century

patriarchate had the blessing of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Although, as already noted, Constantinople was under Ottoman control and the Russian church was de facto self-governing, this could still be regarded as a de jure condition of the establishment of a patriarchate. But in all I have read on the Moscow Council of 1917-18 I have seen no suggestion that the approval of Constantinople was either sought or given. It might have been difficult given that Russia and Turkey were at war, and also that the final decision was made very rapidly, apparently in response to the Bolshevik takeover. Nonetheless there are those who believe on the basis of the canons that were agreed while the Roman Empire was still in existence, centred on Constantinople, that the Patriarch of Constantinople has sovereignty over the Orthodox world, and it is difficult to see how a patriarchate could be created without the consent of another patriarch. On this reading, of course the Russian Church, was uncanonical during the whole period of Peter's Holy Synod (it would, in fact, be difficult to argue otherwise. Its architects, Peter and Feofan, seem to have had no consideration in mind other than their own idea of what would be best). On this reading a canon lawyer could argue that the Renovationist councils, which did have the support of Constantinople, were more valid than the first, if I'm right in thinking that it didn't.

A Softening Of Soviet Policy?

Tikhon was released in July 1923, partly in response to international pressure but Pospelovsky suggests that the government was worried that the Renovationists might actually succeed in their effort to reform, and therefore possibly strengthen, the Church, and had decided to sow a little dissension. The politburo agreed to his release 'if he "repented" for crimes against Soviet power and the people, if he publicly declared his "loyalty" to Soviet authority, if he admitted the justness of his prosecution, if he renounced any tie to monarchist and white-guard counterrevolutionary organisations, if he repudiated the new Karlovitskii church council, if he rejected the machinations of foreign clergy and if he "expressed his agreement with certain reforms in the religious sphere (e.g. the new calendar).'⁵⁰ The proposal to release him on these terms was made by E.M.Yaroslavsky, editor of the main anti-religious paper, *Bezbozhnik* ('The Godless') and soon (1925) to become the head of the newly formed League of the Godless, about which more later.

Tikhon's release certainly had the effect of weakening the Renovationists, as many clergy, including some Bishops, who had assumed they were the only functioning church authority, and may even have believed their claim that they had Tikhon's blessing, now abandoned them. But it seems to me that there was in this period a tension

⁴⁸ I may be exaggerating here, but although the Pan-Orthodox Congress passed a resolution supporting the imprisoned Tikhon, Constantinople and Alexandria were represented at the second Renovationist council held in 1924. There could be no doubting the 'renovationist' spirit of Meletius Metaxakis.

⁴⁹ See Bishop Photius of Triaditsa: *The 70th Anniversary of the Pan Orthodox Congress* at http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/photii_1.aspx

⁵⁰ Gregory Freeze: 'Counter-Reformation in Russian Orthodoxy: Popular response to religious innovation, 1922-25', *Slavic Review*, Vol 54, No 2 (Summer, 1995), p.322.

in the Soviet policy between the continued desire to wean the people away from the church, and the apparent promise of the Renovators that the church could be made an instrument of Soviet policy (as it eventually was after the war). First of all, I don't think it was an accident that this occurred at the time that Lenin, through the state of his health, was losing control of the reins of power. While Lenin had been on form the policy towards the church had been much more uncompromisingly aggressive, including in 1919 a policy of confiscating, exposing to medical examination and public ridicule, the bodies of the saints, believed by church doctrine to be incorrupt. We have already seen the policy of confiscation of church valuables pursued during the famine period. In 1922 and 1923 the Komsomol organised anti-religious carnivals including disruption of Christmas services and assaults on believers. But the party's anti-religious commission, possibly reflecting the growing influence of Yaroslavsky, decided that this method was counterproductive and put a stop to it.

According to Jennifer Wynot's study of monasticism in the Soviet Union, *Keeping the Faith*⁵¹, 'the results of a secret 1923 census underlined the necessity of making religious policy a priority. The census indicated that 3,126,541 people were involved in religious organisations compared with 1,737,053 in 1910. These figures showed that religion had increased during the first five years of the Bolshevik regime ... At the twelfth Party Congress, in 1923, the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin favoured a more conciliatory policy towards religion. They condemned the arbitrary closing of churches and called for propaganda focussing on a materialistic interpretation of social life, addressing mainly the rural areas. Such a reversal of policy paralleled the political decline of Trotsky, who favoured a more aggressive approach ...'

Trotsky On Religion

I'm not sure what is meant by 'involved in religious organisations', presumably some sort of active commitment - the figures for simple churchgoing would have been much higher. I think she might be wrong about Trotsky who continued to sit on the main commission concerned with religious affairs, together with Tuchkov, throughout this period (Pospielovsky, p.107). According to Geoffrey Freeze, even in March 1922, 'amidst the crisis over the confiscation of Church valuables, Trotskii recommended giving permission for journals by the liberal, loyal clergy.'⁵² Which is not to say that Trotsky, any more than Tuchkov or Yaroslavsky, had any sympathy for the church, but simply that he was broadly sympathetic to a more 'cultural', less violent approach. In 1923 he published an essay in *Pravda* - *Vodka, the church and the*

cinema - arguing that the people's commitment to the church was a superficial affair that could be broken by establishing rival attractions:

'As for church-going, the people do not go because they are religious; the church is brilliantly lighted, crowded with men and women in their best clothes, the singing is good - a range of social-aesthetic attractions not provided by the factory, the family, or the workaday street. There is no faith or practically none. At any rate, there is no respect for the clergy or belief in the magic force of ritual. But there is no active will to break it all. The elements of distraction, pleasure, and amusement play a large part in church rites. By theatrical methods the church works on the sight, the sense of smell (through incense), and through them on the imagination. Man's desire for the theatrical, a desire to see and hear the unusual, the striking, a desire for a break in the ordinary monotony of life, is great and ineradicable; it persists from early childhood to advanced old age. In order to liberate the common masses from ritual and the ecclesiasticism acquired by habit, anti-religious propaganda alone is not enough. Of course, it is necessary; but its direct practical influence is limited to a small minority of the more courageous in spirit. The bulk of the people are not affected by anti-religious propaganda; but that is not because their spiritual relation to religion is so profound. On the contrary, there is no spiritual relation at all; there is only a formless, inert, mechanical relation, which has not passed through the consciousness; a relation like that of the street sight-seer, who on occasion does not object to joining in a procession or a pompous ceremony, or listening to singing, or waving his arms.

'Meaningless ritual, which lies on the consciousness like an inert burden, cannot be destroyed by criticism alone; it can be supplanted by new forms of life, new amusements, new and more cultured theatres. Here again, thoughts go naturally to the most powerful - because it is the most democratic - instrument of the theatre: the cinema. Having no need of a clergy in brocade, etc., the cinema unfolds on the white screen spectacular images of greater grip than are provided by the richest church, grown wise in the experience of a thousand years, or by mosque or synagogue. In church only one drama is performed, and always one and the same, year in, year out; while in the cinema next door you will be shown the Easters of heathen, Jew, and Christian, in their historic sequence, with their similarity of ritual. The cinema amuses, educates, strikes the imagination by images, and liberates you from the need of crossing the church door. The cinema is a great competitor not only of the tavern but also of the church. Here is an instrument which we must secure at all costs!'⁵³

Renovatorist And 'Tikhonite' Motives

Jennifer Wynot's reference to a census of 1910 may refer to an enquiry conducted by none other than Alexander Vvedensky, not yet a priest, but much preoccupied with the spread of atheism among the intelligentsia. This was a concern he continued into the 1920s. His central conviction seems to have been that the Church as a

⁵¹ Jennifer Jean Wynot: *Keeping the Faith - Russian Orthodox monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939*, Texas A&M University Press, 2004. I have this in a Kindle edition that doesn't give page references.

⁵² Freeze: *Counter-reformation*, p.335, fn. 124

⁵³ Accessible at

https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/women/life/23_07_12.htm

reactionary institution lacked intellectual credibility. His contempt for the mainstream Church cannot have been any relieved when, after studying for the priesthood prior to the war, he was refused ordination on the grounds of his Jewish ancestry.⁵⁴ Despite his support for the Soviet government ('Soviet power is alone, in the entire world, in all the time of man's existence, in actively fighting for the ideals of good'⁵⁵) he encouraged his clergy to engage in lively polemics in defence of the existence of God.

Anatoly Levitin-Krasnov, one of Pospelovsky's most important sources ('a "walking memoir" of Russian Church history') said that 'if he were asked what was his version of "an ideal church community, I would always recall Petrograd of the 1920s." Sermons were delivered not only on Sundays, as before the Revolution, but on weekdays as well. In many churches one or two days a week would be set aside for serious theological lectures, discussions and debates between the clerics and the laity after brief services, for which benches and chairs would be set up in the churches. Practically every church had at least one such popular priest-preacher or priest-teacher around whom believers flocked, until these priests disappeared in the prisons by the late 1920s or early 1930s.' (Pospelovsky, p.170). Pospelovsky doesn't say it⁵⁶ but according to the Wikipedia entry on the 'Living Church', 'Anatoly Levitin (1915-1991) was a former Renovationist deacon and a friend of Vvedensky.' The reference to 'brief services' with 'benches and chairs' suggests Renovationist rather than mainstream Orthodox practise. It makes an interesting contrast with another nostalgic account of Orthodox practise under persecution, services conducted by Archpriest Sergius Goloschapov (1882-1937, when, together with many others, he was shot in the Butovo firing range) in the Holy Trinity Church in Nikitniki, Moscow:

'The electric light did not strike your eyes as the temple was lit only by candles and icon-lamps, which were put out at a certain moment of the service and then lit again, in accordance with the Church rule ... On major feasts we celebrated 'All-night Vigils.' This meant that we began our worship at ten in the evening and finished at five or six in the morning. Although the mediocrity of our external worship on great festivals was absolutely evident, we did not see it. The warmth of joint prayer transformed everything, our poverty manifested itself in the form of wealth, and our souls were filled with radiant joy.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴ According to the Wikipedia account which gives as its main source Edward Roslof: *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, & Revolution, 1905-1946*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2002.

⁵⁵ Speech "On the relationship of the Church to the Socialist Revolution, Soviet Power and Patriarch Tikhon" given at the Renovationist council of 1923, quoted in Freeze: *Counter-Reformation*, p.311.

⁵⁶ Though he does say, p.81, that Levitin was an admirer of Granovsky.

⁵⁷ "Our nation still lives according to the values of the regicides" - A talk with Fr. Job (Gumerov) on the new martyrs of the Russian Church, accessible at <http://orthochristian.com/105541.html>

In some ways the Renovationist-Tikhonite (or patriarchal) division could be compared to the Catholic-Anglican division in sixteenth century England, with the obvious difference that Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, unlike the Soviet government, could claim to be (more or less) faithful members of the church they supported; and the Roman Catholic Church had an allegiance to a human authority beyond the borders of the state (all churches worthy of the name would profess a loyalty to a divine authority beyond the borders of the state). Nonetheless in the Renovationists the Bolsheviks had a church which professed a wholehearted support for the state. Tikhon had been tamed to the extent that he ordered his supporters not to oppose the state, and he had formally disowned the emigré Karlovci synod. But the 1917-18 Moscow Council had declared (in some contradiction to its principle of the separation of church and state) that the head of the government of Russia had to be Orthodox. That was a condition of the legitimacy of government. The 'Tikhonites', unlike the Renovationists, were still not willing to incorporate prayers for the atheist government or any other formal recognition of its legitimacy into their church practice. They were accepting the government *de facto* but not *de jure* so theirs was a loyalty that could not be considered reliable in case of crisis. Thus there was a mass imprisonment of clergy who refused to recognise or co-operate with the Renovationists. The willingness of the Renovationists to co-operate with this policy - their willingness to denounce their opponents as counter-revolutionaries - did much to discredit them in the eyes of the mainstream Orthodox faithful.

The Solovki Memorandum

In May 1927, a 'memorandum' was issued, presumably smuggled out, by a group of Bishops imprisoned in what had been the Solovets Monastery near the border with Finland. The Solovets monastery had been a stronghold of the Old Believers in the seventeenth century. After a siege lasting eight years from 1668 to 1676 it was sacked and its defenders, laymen and monks were massacred.⁵⁸ Solzhenitsyn gives its seizure by the Bolsheviks as the beginning of the formation of the 'Gulag' network of labour camps.

Most of the Bishops and clerics in prison, the memorandum claimed, were there because of their refusal to recognise the Renovationists. It argued that the Church could co-exist with the Soviet state on the basis of a strict separation of powers under which (quoting Pospelovsky's summary): 'the Church will not interfere in the socio-economic activities and reform of the state and in the fulfilment by the citizens of their civic duties, while the state will cease to interfere in the spiritual activities of the Church and to hinder the spiritual life of its citizens.' Since Tikhon had declared the obligation of civic loyalty in 1923 'not a single cleric

⁵⁸ Pospelovsky: *Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, p.77

has been sentenced for anti-Soviet activities by a Soviet court. All those in prison are there by administrative action' (pp.145-6).

But the memorandum nonetheless laid out the utter incompatibility of the Church's teaching with what it calls 'communism' as expressed in the philosophy of the atheist state:

'The Church recognises the spiritual principles of existence; communism rejects them. The Church believes in the living God, the creator of the world, the leader of its life and destinies; Communism denies His existence, believes in the spontaneity of the world's existence and in the absence of rational, ultimate causes of its history. The Church assumes that the purpose of human life is the heavenly fatherland, even if she lives in conditions of the highest development of material culture and general wellbeing; communism refuses to recognise any other purpose of mankind's existence but material welfare. The ideological differences between the Church and the state descend from the apex of philosophical observations to the practical ... sphere of ethics, justice and law: communism considers them to be a conditional result of class struggle and assess the phenomena of the moral sphere exclusively in terms of utility. The Church preaches love and mercy; communism *camaraderie* and merciless struggle. The Church instills in believers humility, which elevates the person; communism debases man by pride. The Church preserves chastity of the body and sacredness of reproduction; communism sees nothing else in marital relations but satisfaction of the instincts. The Church sees in religion a life-bearing force which ... serves as the source for all greatness in man's creativity, as the basis for man's earthly happiness, sanity and welfare; communism sees religion as opium, drugging the people and relaxing their energies, as the source of their suffering and poverty. The Church wants to see religion flourish; communism wants its death. Such a deep contradiction in the very basis of their *weltanschauungen* precludes any intrinsic approximation between the Church and state, as there cannot be any between affirmation and negation ... because the very soul of the Church, the condition of her existence and the sense of her being, is that which is categorically denied by communism.' (pp.144-145. Lacunae as in Pospelovsky).

Failure Of The Renovation

By 1927, it was clear that the Renovationist experiment was not succeeding. The main problem seems to have been not their legitimacy, nor even necessarily their enthusiasm for the Soviet government, but their attempts to change liturgical practice, and most especially the calendar change. Given the collapse of the old order and the fact that the Church was deprived of all means of printed communication with outlying parishes people in county areas could hardly be expected to know who was legitimate and who wasn't. The Russian peasant didn't have a reputation for undue personal respect for the priests but he - and more especially she - did know what the priest was supposed to do and when he was supposed to do it. To quote Edward Roslof (obviously oversimplifying a little):

'Salvation in this tradition comes not from grace dispensed

by the true church, as in Catholicism, or from belief evoked by preaching the Word of God, as in Protestantism. Rather, Orthodox believers are saved by the proper and corporate completion of liturgical acts in which God Himself is present. Renovationist clergy performed the salvific acts but behaved in ways that showed they did not believe in the immanence of those rites. They changed the words, the actions and even the time - the calendar - that undergird the laity's understanding of sacred immanence. By creating such cognitive dissonance during the most sacred ceremony in Russian religious culture, Renovationists drove away Orthodox believers *en masse*.⁵⁹

This, I think, is what Trotsky failed to understand. He thought that because popular religious practise had or appeared to have very little intellectual content it was just a habit people had got into, a superficial repetition of meaningless but aesthetically pleasing acts. But the repetition of these acts was in itself a large part of what made life worthwhile for millions of people, precisely the means by which a contact was established and maintained with a reality that transcended everyday life, a contact that was experienced in the flesh and did not have to be developed in the form of an intellectual theory. The Renovationists, in their desire to raise the intellectual standard of the church and their hostility to 'mere ritualism' made the same mistake.

Tuchkov seems to have recognised this at quite an early stage. He secured the resignation of the most enthusiastic liturgical reformer, the 'Metropolitan of Moscow and of all-Russia', Antonin Granovsky, replacing him with the much more liturgically conservative Metropolitan Evdokim (Meschersky), and persuading Vvedenskii to temper his reforming zeal. He also approached the Archbishop of Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), Grigory (Yakovetsky) to form a new schism, wholly Orthodox in its practise but also wholly under the control of the GPU.

The very reforms imposed by the Bolsheviks at the beginning of their reign - imprisonment and execution of large numbers of priests, recognition of local religious associations (parishes) as the only legal entity, the right given to women to participate as full voting members in the affairs of the religious associations, deprivation of a printing press - strengthened the conservative laity against the priesthood who might have been more inclined to reform. Above all, the priests were totally dependent on the financial support of the laity. If the laity didn't like the priests trying to educate them by delivering the service in Russian instead of Slavonic they simply refused to pay, and they were not going to be punished for that by the anticlerical Bolsheviks. According to Edward Roslof:

'Lay willingness to boycott renovationist churches, even in places where there was no Tikhonite alternative, led to many synodal clergy becoming impoverished or unemployed or both. At the close of the 1925

⁵⁹ Heresy of Bolshevik Christianity pp.623-4

renovationist national church council, Metropolitan A.I.Vvedensky expressed sympathy for bishops who had a real meal only one day in three and for priests living on a mere ten rubles a month. On another occasion he praised Deacon Ivanov who had been driven out of his parish by the Tikhonites and been left with only a shirt and one potato. A woman took pity on the deacon and gave him a second shirt but he still had to walk around in the dead of winter in his sandals. Despite his poverty, the metropolitan continued, Ivanov refused the Tikhonite offer of "a shirt, boots and a hunk of bread" if he joined them, for he was "armed with the truth of our renovationism." Vvedensii's comments, even with their melodrama, are substantiated by petitions for financial assistance submitted to the Moscow diocesan administration ...⁶⁰

We might note that Bolshevik policy in this respect (radical decentralisation of the Church) was the opposite of the policy adopted by the Muslim conquerors of Constantinople who believed that it was by centralising power in the hands of the Patriarch that they could most easily keep the church under control.

The Declaration Of 1927

Tikhon died in 1925. He had made an arrangement by which, if he was incapacitated, by death or for any other reason, and it proved impossible to hold the council necessary to electing a new patriarch, his authority would pass, in a given order of preference, to one of three named individuals. In the event the 'locum tenens' was Peter (Polyansky), Metropolitan of Krutitsky. Peter, however, was very soon imprisoned (on charges brought against him by Nikolai Solovei claiming that in his American anti-Soviet adventure he had been acting under Peter's instructions). He would continue in prison and unable to fulfil his assigned responsibilities until 1937, when he was shot. He had, however, made his own arrangements and his candidates included the Metropolitan of Nizhni Novgorod, Sergei (Stragorodsky). Sergei was imprisoned in 1926 but released in July 1927, when he issued a 'declaration' which finally acknowledged the legitimacy of the Soviet government:

"We must show, not by words but rather by deeds, that not only those who are indifferent to Orthodoxy, not only those who have betrayed it, but even its most zealous adherents can be faithful citizens of the Soviet Union and loyal to Soviet authority ... We want to be Orthodox and at the same time recognise the Soviet Union as our civil mother land, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes and whose failures are our failures."⁶¹

In October 1927 he provoked widespread disagreement among his own Bishops by mandating prayer for the civilian authorities during divine service and prohibiting prayer for bishops in exile (I assume that 'bishops in exile' means bishops exiled within the Soviet Union by the

government rather than the Bishops who considered themselves to be in exile outside Russia in the Karlovci Synod, who had already been repudiated by Tikhon). And in 1930 he created further outrage by denying that the Church was suffering persecution at a moment when, in the early stages of the forced industrialisation of the 1930s, the Church was moving into a period of persecution at a level that had previously been unthinkable.

The opposition to Sergii was divided between the 'non-commemorators', who simply refused to mention his name in the liturgy as one of the valid rulers of the church, and the emergence, under the leadership of the very popular Joseph (Petrovykh) - briefly, before one of his various arrests, appointed by Sergii Metropolitan of Leningrad - of a group who, while still proclaiming themselves loyal to the patriarchal church (represented by the imprisoned Metropolitan Peter) refused communion with Sergii and his supporters. Both the non-commemorators and the Josephites complied with Soviet law, registering with regional inspectors for cult affairs and electing local councils to negotiate the use of churches etc. Since 1925, however, and Tikhon's declaration of loyalty to the state, there had also been a 'catacomb church', refusing all compromise with the Soviet authorities and operating clandestinely.

Joseph was sent into exile in Kazakhstan in 1929 and shot in 1937.

The 'Great Turn' In Soviet Policy

Sergii's declaration marks the last attempt on the part of the Soviet government to bring into existence a reliably loyalist and totally quiescent church (at least until 1943). A major shift in government policy away from what we might perhaps call subversion of the church towards outright repression occurred in 1928-9. It could be seen in disputes that took place in the congress of the League of the Godless that took place in June 1929 between the League's head, Emil'yan Yaroslavsky and a more interventionist policy advocated by representatives of the Moscow branch of the League and of the Komsomol. The tension already existed as early as 1923. Yaroslavsky, a member of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party and chairman of the body in charge of internal discipline, the Central Control Commission, had founded the paper *The Godless* in December 1922 but he had a rival, founded in 1923, in the form of *The Godless at the Workbench*, published by the Moscow Communist Party, edited by Mariia Kostelovskaia, and supported by the Komsomol. The League of the Godless was formed, under Yaroslavsky's direction, through a merger of the groups that supported the two papers but a tension between them continued. Yaroslavsky was accused of wanting to substitute a Marxist religious frame of mind for the Orthodox religious frame of mind and of being sympathetic to the reforming currents in

⁶⁰ Roslof: Heresy, p.631

⁶¹ Mikhail Shkarovskii: 'The Russian Orthodox Church versus the State: the Josephite Movement, 1827-1940', *Slavic Review*, Vol 54, No.2 (Summer 1995), p.370.

Orthodoxy, believing that they were steps on the road towards a fully fledged atheism:

'In *Pravda* in January 1925 Kostelovskaia criticised the League's propaganda, in particular the mixing of religious and revolutionary terminology. She pointed out that the earliest anti-religious activists were those who at one time had been close to religion, such as former clergy, those with seminary educations and former "God-builders" and "God-seekers." Due to their influence, "Godlessness (*bezbozhie*) ... [was] built in the manner of a religion, only a religion of a particular type ... communist religion." Kostelovskaia argued that it was necessary to transfer control of anti-religious propaganda from these narrow specialists to working-class agitators. In his response in *Pravda*, Yaroslavsky did not refute the specific charge that those who had been close to religion were responsible for creating a counter-religion of communism. And he justified the promotion of a substitute culture as absolutely necessary given the cultural level of the masses. He also maintained that anti-religious propagandists should study religion in order to understand it better. The issue arose again a year later in April 1926 during the Central Committee's conference on anti-religious propaganda when the Komsomol activist and Kostelovskaia supporter, M. Galaktionov, charged that *Bezbozhnik* coddled former priests. After days of rancorous debate the conference passed resolutions rejecting Kostelovskaia's views, including attacks on specialists, and urging the training of activists with some knowledge of religion, especially sects.'⁶²

Kostelovskaia's reference to 'former "God-builders" and "God-seekers"' is a direct attack on Lunacharsky, still in position as Commissar responsible for education and culture.

These accusations came to the fore again (and again in the person of Galaktionov) in 1929, when the League changed its name to the League of the Militant Godless. 1929 also saw Lunacharsky losing his position as Commissar for Enlightenment. Daniel Peris maintains that the 'culturalist' group round Yaroslavsky won the debate:

'The main resolution on anti-religious work opened with fire and brimstone: religious organisations were calculating counter-revolutionary groups actively seeking through devious machinations to depose Bolshevism. With only minimal contradiction, the resolution then hailed the progress against religion in the Soviet period. These matters now aside, the rest of the resolution addressed specific issues such as combating religious holidays, propaganda work among women and youth, better training of activists, further development of propaganda forms such as art, film, lectures and museums - all points on the culturalist agenda ...'

But he continues:

'The culturalists may have won the battle at this congress, but ironically they lost the larger war. Changes in the legal status of religion in 1929 and the forced closure of churches and exiling of priests during collectivisation and dekulakisation struck a tremendous blow against popular

religious expression. More broadly, the turmoil of the cultural revolution, in which the Komsomol played a leading role in undermining institutions and organisations it saw as bureaucratic and/or bourgeois, and the eventual full crystallisation of Stalinism during the 1930s, meant that administrative measures and compulsion would ultimately play a key role in Soviet efforts to engineer a socialist society'⁶³

The Aftermath

I don't think it is possible for me at this point to enter into any sort of adequate account of this next, most dramatic, phase in the story. The point of what has been written so far is that, starting from a position in which the new state and the Church confronted each other as enemies, an attempt was made to effect some sort of reconciliation, meaning a church, or churches that would accept fully the legitimacy of the government, that would not embody and promote an alternative and, in the eyes of both sides, irreconcilable view of the world. The Renovationists, who were the best prospect for a convincing, willing, acceptance of the new society, failed largely because of a modernising programme that resembles nothing so much as the modernising programme that spread through all the Christian churches in the twentieth century, even, with the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church. The reconciliation of the mainstream Orthodox church was a product of coercion and therefore unconvincing, with the most impressive elements of the church continuing in opposition. It is in these circumstances that, with the onset of radical transformation of the society under the first five year plan, the decision was made to drop all attempts at reconciliation, or encouraging a gradual withering away of religious belief, and to launch an all out assault.

Through the 1930s all the different religious groupings, including the most apparently 'loyal', were persecuted relentlessly. 'Continuous production weeks' with arbitrarily distributed rest days were introduced from 1929, doing away with Sundays as a day of rest. This was formalised in 1931 into a system of six day weeks. New laws on religious associations specified that clergy could only operate in their areas of residence, so that areas without any clergy could not be supplied. The local soviets could reject individual members of church councils meaning they could abolish them, or infiltrate then at will. In the first Five Year Plan (1928-33), priests, Bishops and parishes were classified as 'profit making enterprises' meaning they were subject to unrealistic tax demands. In addition the clergy were deprived of the means of earning income through civilian jobs and evicted from state and nationalised housing, meaning that they had to pay the very high rents demanded by the remaining private landlords.

The eradication of religion was announced as

⁶² Daniel Peris: 'Priests in red cassocks: Former priests in the League of the Militant Godless', *Slavic Review*, Vol 54, No 2 (Summer 1995), p.353.

⁶³ Daniel Peris: 'The 1929 Congress of the Godless', *Soviet Studies*, Vol.43 No.4 (1991), pp.724-5

one of the aims of the second five year plan. begun in 1932. By that year, after an intense membership drive, the League of the Militant Godless claimed some five million members, though by 1938, this had dropped to two million of whom only 13% paid their dues. Somewhat disappointingly at the end of this second plan a census in 1937 which included a question on religion found that some 80 or 90 million people (45-50% of the population) put themselves down as 'believers'. But by 1941, official Soviet literature claimed that there were only 4,225 churches still open in the USSR, 3,000 of which were in the territories annexed in 1939 and 1940. In 1930 (admittedly the year when he claimed there was no persecution of the church) Sergii had claimed to have 30,000 churches under his jurisdiction.

According to Pospelovsky (pp.163-4) 'It took the 1930s, with their wholesale persecution and destruction of all churches, to force the believers to accept any functioning church remaining in a given district, be it Sergiite, Josifite, Renovationist or any other. This situation made possible the Sergiite 1943 concordat with the Soviet government and the acceptance by the believers and the surviving clergy of a church totally loyal and submissive to the state.'

The '1943 concordat' came about because Stalin realised that traditional Russian patriotism - inseparable from an identification with the Church - had to be mobilised in the struggle against the German invasion. This was the more obvious because of the recent - pre-German invasion - seizure of territory in the Baltics in which the churches were still free; and because one of the few intelligent aspects of German policy in the occupied territories was to open the churches that had been (in many cases only recently) closed by the Bolsheviks. Also Sergii had, almost immediately, and before Stalin's own 'Brothers and sisters' appeal to Russian patriotism, called on Orthodox believers to rally to the defence of the country. In 1943, therefore, the patriarchate was - notionally at least - restored, with Sergii elected as patriarch.

It was very notional, falling far short of the requirements set by the 1917-18 Council. Sergii was chosen by some nineteen bishops who were still at large, or who had been rapidly released from imprisonment for the occasion. The patriarchate had been in suspension since the death of Tikhon. As we have seen, his 'locum tenens', Peter, had been imprisoned and *incommunicado* since 1926 until he was shot in 1937. From that point onwards

it could be said that Sergii's authority had lapsed and passed to the other candidates named by Tikhon, Metropolitans Agafangel and Kirill, both of whom, apart from being very old, had gone into opposition to Sergii. A large part of the Orthodox community still refused to recognise Sergii's status as patriarch, but he died soon after and, in the circumstances following the war, when Stalin was still favourably disposed to the Church, a much more convincingly representative council was held which elected Sergii's closest associate, Alexei (Simansky), Metropolitan of Leningrad (he had stayed in Leningrad, celebrating the liturgy, throughout the length of the siege).

That marks the real beginning of the Russian Orthodox Church as we know it, continuous to the present day, a church which in the post war Soviet era, behaved towards the Soviet government, even in the period of Khrushchev's renewed oppression, in much the same way that the pre-Revolution church had behaved towards the Tsarist government; but which has now - somewhat ironically in the light of the story that has just been told - emerged as the most powerful Christian church in the world, after the papacy.

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Issue 32, 4th Quarter 2017. January 2018
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