
THE OLD ORDER

Up until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russia had taken a separate developmental path from Western Europe, which may account for the different political outcomes in the twentieth century. In Russia, social classes were able to wield much less autonomous power in relation to the state, and the state took on a much more extensive role in furthering industrialization. Certain cultural patterns, such as collectivism (an emphasis on group over individual values) and a continuing close link between the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist state, also differentiated Russia from Western Europe. Finally, the political leadership had suffered repeated setbacks in the international sphere, partly because Russia's domestic structures were too weak to support a successful foreign policy. Foreign policy debacles in turn sparked domestic unrest; for example, Russia's involvement in World War I became the final catalyst for the fall of the tsarist regime.

The State and Social Classes

In prerevolutionary Russia, all social classes had developed a dependence on the strong tsarist state. In the sixteenth century, tsar Ivan the Terrible began the process that finally subordinated the nobility to the state. By the reign of Peter I (1682-1725), every nobleman was required to perform lifetime service in the military corps or state bureaucracy in exchange for the right to exploit land and labor. Thus, the landed class also became an administrative class. Not until 1762, during the reign of Peter III, were the nobles formally freed from compulsory state service. However, the Russian nobility still did not become a strong political force and was dependent on the state for control of the labor force—the serfs, who were in servitude to their masters. (The holdings of the nobility were scattered, and many nobles lived in virtual poverty.) Serfdom, which had developed gradually over the previous centuries, was fully developed by the middle of the seventeenth century. In most regions, the nobility did not develop an entrepreneurial spirit to improve and commercialize agriculture but was able to live off the labor of the dependent peasant class.

In 1861, Tsar Alexander II emancipated the serfs, but this action was a mixed blessing. The peasant became a legal person, free from the landlord's authority. But the freed peasants were obligated to pay redemption fees to the state for forty-nine years to gain ownership of the land (the state had compensated the previous landowners). They also remained bound to the land and to the mir (peasant commune), which still engaged in periodic repartition of land among families in the community. The mir also had legal ownership of the land and was collectively responsible for the redemption payments, as well as for providing military recruits for the government. Only wealthy peasants could buy their freedom. Not until 1907, with the Stolypin reforms, were redemption payments abolished and measures taken to replace the peasant commune by private cultivation. Peter Stolypin, president of the tsar's Council of Ministers, hoped that a more truly independent and prosperous peasant class would soon take on the attributes of a conservative petite bourgeoisie in the countryside. As beneficiaries of the tsarist reforms, this class was to provide a stable foundation of political support for the regime and help to improve agricultural
productivity. World War I interrupted this process in 1914, and the regime was so severely shaken by the international crisis that revolutionary forces were able to topple it in 1917, before Stolypin's blueprint had a chance to prove itself.

Might Russia have followed a path similar to that of Western Europe had the war not intervened? This is a question we will never be able to answer definitively, but there was no substantial bourgeoisie or other social base to provide a political foundation for constitutional government and liberalism, as had developed in most Western European countries. Once the tsarist government fell in February 1917, the peasants contributed to the revolution by seizing the land remaining in large estates.

Meanwhile, in the late nineteenth century, industrialization was taking off in Russia. From the beginning, the key impetus came not from an indigenous bourgeois class but from the state itself and from heavy injections of foreign (especially French, English, German, and Belgian) capital in the form of joint stock companies and foreign debt incurred by the tsarist government. For example, about 75 percent of the output of coal and pig iron depended on French capital. In 1900, over 70 percent of capital invested in industrial joint stock companies in mining, metallurgy, engineering, and machinery was of foreign origin. Percentages were lower in other sectors of the economy but still above 25 percent in lumber, chemicals, leather processing, and cements, ceramics, and glass.

The large role of state and foreign capital in the Russian industrialization effort had significant social consequences. Although many workers were employed in small private workshops, factories on the whole were larger than in Western Europe or North America. In 1914, over 40 percent of the workers were employed in factories with one thousand workers or more (as compared to just over 30 percent in 1901). Many of these factories were run by absentee owners who did not develop personal relationships with their workers. A small but restless working class was developing in the cities. Meanwhile, in the countryside, traditional patterns still survived. Russia seemed to suffer the injustices of two worlds: (1) the constraints on, and dependence of, the peasantry, and (2) the inhumane and impersonal oppression of the large capitalist factories. Many members of the small working class retained their link to the countryside. They were worker-peasants, often making their way back to the village on weekends or holidays to help with the harvest, supplementing family income with their factory earnings.

The tsarist state did not legalize trade unions until 1906, and then their activities were carefully circumscribed. By 1914, they were largely ineffectual, but the absence of strong trade unions did not imply a passive working class. At the end of the nineteenth century, there was increasing evidence of worker discontent in the form of numerous illegal strikes, especially in the large urban centers. In 1905, worker discontent produced a major state crisis, with widespread strikes in the cities and uprisings in rural areas. The tsar responded by establishing a constitutional monarchy, with an elected legislative branch. However, the powers of the Duma, the elected assembly, were gradually restricted in the following years. Through increasing repression, the tsarist state was able to maintain its dominance over Russian society.
Russian Political Culture

Just as patterns of economic development set Russia off from Western Europe, so also was the country’s political culture less conducive to liberal democratic development. Autocracy, collectivism, and a close link between religious and political authority characterized the Russian cultural heritage. These prerevolutionary values were to find continued expression under the new Soviet regime as well.

Russia was converted to Orthodox Christianity in 987. The Russian Orthodox Church took on an increasingly independent status after Constantinople (Byzantium), the center of Orthodoxy, fell to the Turks in 1453. The tsarist state was intimately connected with the Russian Orthodox Church, which provided a kind of official religion or ideology for tsarism. As early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the notion spread in influential circles that Russia was the Third Rome, meaning that only in Russia was true Christianity still embodied in the church's doctrine and rituals. Viewed from this perspective, Russia was the rightful world center of Christianity, for heretical doctrines had corrupted the churches of Rome and Byzantium (the First and Second Romes).

In the 1660s, a schism shook the Russian Orthodox Church, as its head, Patriarch Nikon, sought to reform church rituals and statutes. The Old Believers, who had followers among both peasants and rich merchant families, rejected the reforms as embodiments of the anti-Christ, thus alienating the official Orthodox Church from broad segments of the Christian population. Nonetheless, the tradition of an official state religion was firmly entrenched in Russian history and may bear some resemblance to the Soviet state's later monopoly on correct political doctrine.

Russian political culture also was firmly linked to autocracy, which legitimized the strong dependence of social classes on the state and the right of the state to intervene in a broad range of social affairs. The tsar's secret police waged a repressive campaign against the secret societies that demonstrated fledgling opposition to the regime in the nineteenth century, and strict censorship was imposed. At the same time, a series of popular uprisings, which had been a feature of Russian history since the seventeenth century, reflected the alienation of the peasantry from the prevailing patterns of authority.

Russian patriotism, embodied in the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, also was important. By the nineteenth century, tsarist control extended into Central Asia (bordering on what is now Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan) and to the Pacific coast in the north and east, and it also included part of present-day Poland and the Baltic states. The empire included a mosaic of diverse ethnic groups: Russians were the dominant population group, and a significant proportion was Slavic (for example, Polish, Ukrainian, or Belorussian). The official commitment to nationalism implied both Russian dominance and justification of expansionism in the national interest.

Another important element of traditional Russian culture was collectivism, reflected most clearly in the mir, which regulated the most important aspects of the peasant's everyday life. Mir
in Russian means both "world" and "peace," exemplifying the association in the peasant's mind between the security of the immediate social environment and the whole world. The state supported the formation of the peasant commune in the eighteenth century in part because the mir facilitated collection of taxes from the peasantry. The mir periodically redistributed strips of land within the commune, reflecting changes in family circumstances. This practice served as an obstacle to the improvement of agriculture, for the peasant family felt little inclination to make sacrifices for land with which it would soon part. The commune reinforced preindustrial values and survived until Stalin's industrialization campaign in 1929.

International Pressures

Standing relatively unprotected between Europe and Asia, Russia had been subject to repeated intrusions and challenges for centuries. The Mongol invasion of 1237 led to about 250 years of subjugation. From the late 1400s, the principality of Moscow had engaged in expansion by conquest. Land hunger and a desire for geopolitical security, as well as for access to seaports and trade routes, were important motives. By the seventeenth century, the Russian empire extended east to the Pacific coast in Siberia. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1854-1856) helped to convince tsarist officials that Russia's inferior military position could be rectified only if Russia were strengthened economically. Serfdom was holding back Russia's development, for it bound the peasants to a backward form of agrarian subsistence and allowed the nobility to maintain its old lethargic lifestyle. The state's desire to remain an international power compelled the regime to consider emancipation of the serfs, even if the nobility opposed the reform.

Despite the industrial takeoff in the late nineteenth century, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and 1905 strained the system, as did the failed revolution of 1905. Russia also entered World War I ill prepared, which caused widespread food shortages and rising prices in both the countryside and the city. Further, the Russian army suffered repeated setbacks at the hands of the Germans, triggering disillusionment among the soldiers. Soldiers of peasant background rubbed shoulders with more politicized urban recruits. In this way, some of the peasants came into contact with the revolutionary ideas circulating among factory workers.

War was clearly a catalyst for revolution (as in later communist revolutions, such as in China and Yugoslavia). World War I bared the weak spots in the tsarist economic and political structures, and the incompetence of the regime in handling the war left a power vacuum into which revolutionary forces could enter. The bourgeois and liberal forces, which had dominated the evolution of Western European polities, proved too weak and inflexible to fill the gap in Russia. To understand why a Marxist party came out on top, we need to examine the revolutionary movement as it had developed in the nineteenth century.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
The Russian revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century had roots among certain elements of the nobility. After their emancipation from state service in 1762, the gentry had the leisure to travel frequently to Europe, where they came into contact with the ideas of German idealism and the French Enlightenment. Sons and daughters of the gentry were educated in Russian universities and were exposed to new ideas through intellectual circles and journals. Some began to question their own place in society, giving rise to the classic "superfluous man" portrayed so frequently in Russian literature of the time. The superfluous man found no purpose or place for himself in society and often drifted into lethargy and stagnation. Other offspring of the nobility worked with the zemstvo (an organ of local government), which, among other things, engaged in various social-welfare activities. Finally, some responded by commitment to revolutionary ideologies and organizations, seeking to alter the backward and oppressive Russian institutions. In time, these individuals came to form the basis of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, which was linked more by attitudes than by social background, although most members had studied for at least some period of time at a university. Sons and daughters of peasants, artisans, clergy, and civil servants also joined the ranks, and by the mid-1800s the intelligentsia, which was to form the core of the revolutionary movement in Russia, was made up of raznochintsy (individuals of diverse social class rank), united by their disillusionment with the injustices of the existing order.

**From Populism to Marxism**

Initially, the revolutionaries were not Marxists. In fact, Marx's and Engels's writings did not receive much attention (from revolutionaries or the tsarist censors) until the last decades of the nineteenth century. The earliest uprising of the gentry, the Decembrists' movement of 1825, was based in the military corps and involved demands for a constitutional monarchy. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century and up to 1917, the "liberal" intelligentsia, including elements of the small bourgeois class and gentry, continued to voice such demands. This element, however, was too weak to set the tone for the revolutionary movement.

Most revolutionaries of the 1840s to 1880s populists. Populism was a diverse movement, united by faith in the peasantry and in the mir as a unique and indigenous basis for building socialism in Russia. Some elements in the populist movement felt that only conspiratorial action, assassination, and terrorism could topple the tsarist order before the communes were destroyed by the incipient capitalism that was gradually beginning to disrupt traditional relations in the countryside. Drastic action by a revolutionary elite might be required. Members of these revolutionary circles often exhibited a fanatical and total commitment to the cause, disavowing all other values. Contrary to their expectations, however, even the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 elicited neither a peasant rebellion nor a collapse of the old order. Rather, many peasants had a romantic attachment to the tsar as their protector. The new tsar, Alexander III, simply responded to the attack with increased repression.

Other populists took a different approach: they wanted to educate the peasants to realize the necessity of revolution. To do this, hundreds of students went to the villages to bring their
revolutionary message directly to the peasantry during the "To the People" movement of the 1870s. The peasants were suspicious of these strangers, however, and the young intelligentsia became disillusioned with possibilities for a peasant-based revolution. Nonetheless, populist ideas received continued expression in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, which was founded in 1900. Even Lenin's older brother participated in a (failed) plot to assassinate the tsar and was sentenced to death. The young Lenin disavowed these methods and embraced Marxism.

As the intrusion of capital and Western values seemed increasingly inevitable, many revolutionaries turned to Marxism. The first Marxist organization, the Emancipation of Labor Group, was formed in 1883. Unlike the populists, the Marxists placed their hope for revolution in the urban proletariat. They had little faith in terrorism and assassination; rather, they sought to lead a full-scale revolution in the socioeconomic foundation of society. They saw removal of individual leaders as a superficial measure. As the assassination of Alexander II had demonstrated, the ruling class would simply install new leaders to replace those who had been eliminated. The Marxists wanted to turn ownership and control of the factories over to the workers as a whole. The working class, however, was a small minority in tsarist Russia. Thus, a role for the revolutionary intelligentsia in the movement would be ensured, for they would best understand the demands of revolutionary change.

Marxism may have been attractive to parts of the intelligentsia for other reasons as well. Marxism recognizes the inevitability and desirability of social change and industrialization; this ensures the necessity of science and education, endeavors appreciated by the intelligentsia. In embracing Marxism, some Russian intellectuals also expressed their ambivalence toward Western culture. In many ways, the intelligentsia saw the West as more progressive and advanced than Russian society, with its backward and oppressive institutions. But in other ways, they felt repulsed by the inhumane factory conditions that Western capitalism had spawned. They had a certain hope for Russia's potential, for a socialist revolution might allow Russia to become an example for Western Europe. If a workers' revolution were to occur in Russia, however, some alterations would have to be made in the interpretation of Marxism.

Leninism

Marxism did not seem to be directly and immediately applicable to Russia. The working class was small, and capitalism was only beginning to push out feudal relations in the countryside. Yet some parts of the intelligentsia were attracted to the theory. Some workers, introduced to Marxism by political activists, also found the radical tenor of the party appealing. The Marxist party, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) formed in 1898, was soon riddled with conflict over the correct application of Marxism in Russia. Despite repeated efforts at reunification, the two major factions in the party, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, emerged with independent newspapers and largely separate organizations by 1917. The most influential Marxist revolutionary by 1917 was Vladimir Ilich Lenin (born Ulianov), the leader of the Bolshevik organization, which was finally to take power. Lenin reinterpreted key elements of Marxist theory so that they better fit Russian reality.

How and why should a workers' revolution occur in a country with such a small proletariat?
Normally, according to Marxist theory, a bourgeois democratic revolution should precede a socialist workers' revolution. But because the indigenous Russian bourgeoisie was so weak, Lenin believed that the working class, with the help of the peasantry, would have to take on a greater role in toppling the tsarist government and in struggling for "bourgeois" rights. Once a bourgeois democratic revolution had occurred, the working class must realize that its interests were no longer congruent with those of the capitalist class, which would want to take as much profit from the workers' hands as possible. At this point, the working class must step forward and push the revolution to its next stage: dismantling private capitalist ownership patterns and replacing them with collective working-class control.

Russian Marxists disagreed about the actual timing of these two phases of the revolution. Some, like Leon Trotsky, felt that the two revolutions, the bourgeois democratic and the proletariat socialist, could and should be telescoped into one, producing a situation of permanent revolution to extend beyond Russia to other countries. The Mensheviks generally took a more gradualist approach, believing that there must be two distinct phases. Lenin seemed to stand somewhere in the middle, impatient with and distrustful of the bourgeoisie but also skeptical of Trotsky's outline for the revolution.

When 1917 came and the tsarist regime was toppled, Lenin saw that mass discontent made an almost immediate grasp for power feasible. He seemed to adopt, in practice, Trotsky's notion of telescoping the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions into virtually one phase, separated in time by only a few months. For Lenin, the revolutionary coalition initially had to include the peasantry, for they suffered from both the remnants of feudalism in the countryside and the incipient effects of capitalist intrusion into peasant markets.

Lenin also argued that international conditions facilitated a workers' revolution in a backward country like Russia. Following the ideas of theorists such as Rosa Luxemburg, John A. Hobson, and Rudolf Hilferding, Lenin developed his famous theory of imperialism. He believed that the more advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe had been forced to invest capital in the more backward capitalist countries (such as Russia) and in overseas colonies to ensure continuing profit levels. These profits, extracted from imperialist ventures, could be used by the owners in the more advanced capitalist systems to buy off their own working classes through improved working conditions and wages. The Western European working classes, therefore, had lost some of their revolutionary fervor, and the social democratic parties that represented them had become increasingly reformist, abandoning social revolution for simple amelioration of conditions.

Meanwhile, backward capitalist countries such as Russia suffered the effects of imperialism. Factories were large and conditions oppressive. Because the indigenous Russian bourgeoisie was weak, it had not been able to push forward basic democratic reforms such as genuine constitutionalism and freedom of political expression and organization. The bourgeoisie also had not been able to consolidate its power as effectively as its counterparts in Western Europe. Therefore, the apparatus of legitimation—that is, the mechanisms to bring the population to accept the existing order of things—had not been fully developed. Despite some legal reforms, there was little real amelioration in working conditions.
Lenin concluded that Russia was the weakest link in the capitalist chain: the oppression was particularly severe, but control by the capitalist class was less firmly embedded in society. The bourgeoisie had to rely on the tsar's crude instruments of political repression to inhibit the organization of the working class. Revolution could come more easily in Russia than in Western Europe, and once it did, according to Lenin, it would stimulate the German working class to follow the Russian example. Russia would experience the first revolution, but it would spark further revolutions in Western Europe. Subsequently, the newly established proletarian governments in Western Europe could offer material assistance to their Russian comrades, who still would have to cope with the backward, largely agrarian economy.

**The Revolutionary Party**

On a more practical level, revolution required a revolutionary party. In 1902, Lenin laid the groundwork for Bolshevik Party organization in his famous work *What Is to Be Done?* In it he supported the idea that "the history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness." Without appropriate ideological leadership, the proletariat would not see the systemic source of its repression -- namely, the whole ownership and control system of capitalism. Rather, workers might focus on the particular factory owner or seek simple material improvements in working conditions, such as shorter hours, better pay, or improved safety conditions.

Western European experience seemed to confirm Lenin's conviction that the working class needed a conscious vanguard to lead it to a proper revolutionary understanding. This vanguard would necessarily include many members of the intelligentsia, for they had the capability and opportunity to perceive the broader sources of exploitation more clearly, than the worker, who, however revolutionary his or her sentiment might be, had only a limited view of the situation as a whole. Lenin's vanguard notion suggested that all party members must possess a superior political awareness. Thus, the party would not be an open, broad based organization (as would the trade unions) but would be limited to those who had made an active commitment to the cause and who understood revolutionary dynamics. This pattern was to continue after the revolution and into Soviet rule. Substance, not procedure, was emphasized, and it became more important to hold the correct view to resolve disputes through established democratic procedures. There was some disagreement between the two major factions in the party, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, over how strict party membership requirements should be, but essentially both groups concurred in endorsing a vanguard concept.

Did introduction of the vanguard party concept represent a rejection of democratic principles? It certainly involved an abrogation of simple majority rule. The Canadian political theorist C. B. Macpherson explains the dilemma facing revolutionaries who wish to transform society democratically:

"What makes a period revolutionary is a more or less widespread belief that the existing system of power, the existing system of power relations between people, is somehow thwarting their humanity. . . . If you believe . . . that the very structure of society, the dominant power relations
in it, have made people less than fully human, have warped them into inability to realize or even to see their full human potentiality, what are you to do? How can the debasing society be changed by those who have themselves been debased by it? . . . The debased people are, by definition, incapable of reforming themselves en masse."

Lenin's solution was, of course, that the vanguard party would lead the people to realize their own true interests—interests they might not recognize themselves. How different this is from the liberal view, which defines people's interests as the people themselves see them. Macpherson poses the question "Can a vanguard state properly be called a democratic state?" His answer underscores the ambiguity of the term democracy:

“If democracy is taken in its narrow sense as meaning simply a system of choosing and authorizing governments, then a vanguard state cannot be called democratic. A vanguard state for the people, but it is not government by the people, or even by the choice of the people."

But in a broader sense, Macpherson points out,

“Democracy has very generally been taken to mean something more than a system of government. Democracy in this broader sense has always contained an ideal of human equality, . . . such an equality as could only be fully realized in a society where no class was able to dominate or live at the expense of others.”

In this sense, then, a vanguard party could be considered a legitimate instrument for achieving an otherwise unrealizable goal of democracy.

Repressive political conditions in Russia certainly required a tightly knit organization that generally had to work underground. As Lenin himself suggested in What Is to Be Done?:

“Broad democracy in party organization, amidst the gloom of autocracy and the domination of the gendarmes, is nothing more than a useless and harmful toy. . . . It is a harmful toy, because any attempt to practice the ‘broad principles of democracy’ will simply facilitate the work of the police in making big raids; it will perpetuate the prevailing primitiveness, divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and imperative task of training themselves to become professional revolutionists to that of drawing up detailed ‘paper’ rules for election systems.”

To prevent tsarist agents from infiltrating the party and thus exposing party activists to arrest or exile, strict controls had to be maintained over intraparty organization. These repressive conditions were a major impetus for the development of the party's internal political procedure, the principle of democratic centralism. Reflecting this principle, party cells at the base level did not have contact with one another but were linked through a hierarchical structure. If one cell was compromised, its members would not be able to betray their colleagues in other cells. Fundamental to democratic centralism, which guided the party's internal political structure, was freedom of discussion until a decision was taken; after that strict discipline and unity were required in carrying out the action. Discussion initially was to take place in all party cells, and
the views of lower bodies were to be transmitted through elected delegates to higher organs in the party hierarchy. Finally, the Central Committee or Party Congress made the decision, which was to be strictly adhered to by all party members.

Elections were held within the same hierarchical structure. Elected delegates from party cells (which might be formed in factories, soldiers' contingents, or universities) represented the cell at the next highest party organ in the hierarchy. This organ (perhaps a district or city committee) likewise elected delegates to the next highest organ in the hierarchy, until finally the composition of the highest elective body, the Central Committee, was determined. Delegates were accountable to their constituencies, but once the Central Committee determined a certain path, the minority had to submit to the majority. In this way, the party could act effectively in a highly precarious political environment.

Nonetheless, arrests repeatedly decimated party organizations. As Lenin stated in January 1903, "We do not know whether people are alive or not; we are compelled, simply compelled, to consider them almost nonexistent." Lenin himself had been arrested in 1895 and exiled to Siberia for three years in 1897. At the time of the collapse of the tsarist government in February 1917, he was carrying out his revolutionary activities from a base in Switzerland and returned to Russia only two months later. Under these conditions, it is perhaps understandable that the party took such extraordinary measures to protect the anonymity of the revolutionary cells.

In his famous piece State and Revolution, written in 1917 before the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin presented his understanding of the relationship between democracy and socialism:

In capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false; a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the minority --the exploiters. Communism alone is capable of giving really complete democracy, and the more complete it is the more quickly will it become unnecessary and wither away of itself.

Lenin cites the example of the Paris Commune (a popular revolutionary regime that ruled Paris for two months in 1871) to elucidate some of the characteristics of democratic proletarian rule: all privileges for officials will be abolished; representatives of the working people will be subject to immediate recall by the people; remuneration of all state officials will be at the level of workers' wages. Finally, once class enemies had been brought under control, Lenin foresaw the withering away of the state. The special apparatus of control and repression would be unnecessary; human freedom complete. The division between mental and manual labor would be overcome, and the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" would prevail.

Clearly, Lenin's vision for communist society was "for the people" and contained an ideal of human equality, as Macpherson suggests, even if it does not correspond to the Western concept
of liberal democracy or to a narrower definition of rule "by the people." But could Lenin's vision become reality, or would it be undermined by the very means he proposed to realize it?

THE REVOLUTION AND ITS DILEMMAS

There were actually two revolutions in 1917: the first toppled the tsarist regime, and the second put the Bolsheviks in power. In February, the tsarist regime was overthrown, and the provisional government, which eventually involved a coalition of bourgeois and socialist forces (the Bolsheviks did not participate), took control. Dual power emerged: alongside the provisional government, workers' and soldiers' soviets (councils) represented the working elements of the population more directly. Initially, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were more heavily represented in the soviets than were the Bolsheviks, but by October the Bolsheviks had a majority in many of the most important soviets.

The provisional government hesitated in addressing the major issues that had moved the masses to rebellion. Despite widespread disillusionment with the faltering war effort, the government was not prepared to withdraw (doing so would have meant surrender to Germany), nor was the government willing to address the land issue at once. Rather, the leaders of the provisional government planned to wait until late in 1917, when the problem could be thoroughly investigated and elections to the Constituent Assembly could be held, before making any major policy decision regarding redistribution of land. The elected Constituent Assembly, they felt, would be a more appropriate body to address this controversial question.

Meanwhile, soldiers were deserting and returning to their villages. Peasants were beginning to seize control of large landed estates. When Lenin arrived by train in Petrograd (previously St. Petersburg, subsequently Leningrad, and now St. Petersburg again) in April 1917, he recognized the revolutionary potential of the situation. After several months of increasing mass radicalization, he persuaded his Bolshevik colleagues (with the exception of Grigorii Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev) that the time was ripe to seize power. The Bolshevik slogan "Land, Bread, Peace" addressed the major issues troubling the population. On October 25, 1917 (November 7 by the new Western calendar adopted by the revolutionary regime in February 1918), the revolutionary forces took over the winter palace in Petrograd, overthrowing the provisional government and replacing it with a government of soviets headed by the Bolsheviks. Although power was secured quickly in the capital and in Moscow, from three to four years of civil war ensued before the Bolsheviks were able to subdue major areas of the countryside.

The Bolsheviks gave immediate recognition to the peasants' demands for land. In November 1917, they went ahead with the elections to the Constituent Assembly but, to their disappointment, won only 136 seats as compared to 237 for the Socialist Revolutionaries, who were better known—and respected in the rural areas even though they balked at immediate resolution of the land question. The Bolsheviks responded in quick order by disbanding the Constituent Assembly after a one-day meeting in January 1918. They believed that the peasants were ill informed about the actual land policies of the two parties and therefore were not able to make a choice in their own true interests.
The reasons for the Bolsheviks' initial success are clear. The provisional government inadequately filled the vacuum left by the tsar. The Bolsheviks, especially Lenin, saw the people ripe for revolt and were prepared to act quickly, basing themselves in the workers' and soldiers' soviets. The Bolsheviks' program ("Land, Bread, Peace") expressed the sentiments of the population better than that of the provisional government or any of the other socialist parties. These factors probably did more together to ensure the Bolshevik victory than did the organizational structure of the party.

**Problems of Rulership**

After the October 1917 revolution, a new government was formed under the leadership of the Bolshevik organization, renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1918 and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1952. (Hereafter we capitalize Party when referring to the CPSU to emphasize its monopoly position in Soviet society until the late 1980s and to distinguish it from other political parties that emerged in the Soviet Union and later, Russia.) On December 30, 1922, four constituent republics (the Russian, Transcaucasian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian Republics) formally joined to constitute the Soviet Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), henceforth referred to as the Soviet Union. Following 1922, additional constituent republics were added to the Union.

Once in power, the Bolsheviks were quick to learn that it is easier to criticize than to rule. They soon felt compelled to take extraordinary measures to ensure the survival of the regime. The first challenge was an extended civil war for control of the countryside and outlying regions. The civil war (1918-1921) had negative repercussions for the new Soviet state. Many of the most loyal and committed activists, especially from the working class, were killed, thus weakening even further the Party's base in the population. The Cheka, the internal security arm of the regime, was strengthened to control harmful political tendencies, and the power of the elected soviets was greatly restricted in an effort to retain central control over the war effort.

The Party faced other difficulties once it achieved power. Making good on its promise of peace meant virtual surrender to the Germans. After heated debate within the Party leadership, the Soviet regime finally accepted the unfavorable terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. As a result, Germany took among other things, large sections of Ukraine, the Baltic states, and Belorussia. The defeat of Germany by Russia's former allies (the United States, Britain, and France) reversed some of these concessions. However, these countries were hardly pleased with internal developments in Russia. The revolution not only meant expropriation of foreign holdings and Russia's withdrawal from the war effort; it also represented the first successful challenge to the capitalist order. As a result, the former allies sent material aid and troops to oppose the new Bolshevik government in the civil war period.

Notwithstanding some humanitarian (famine) aid provided in 1921 and 1922, the Soviet Union received little Western assistance or investment. The most severe blow was the failure of the German workers' revolution in Western Europe to aid it. In contrast to Lenin's earlier expectation,
the new leaders had to find ways to address Russia's economic backwardness without outside support. Furthermore, they found no previous models of socialist construction. Marx and Engels themselves had little to say about the process of building a socialist society. The Bolshevik leaders were forced to undertake their vast, bold experiment with no real historical or theoretical precedents.

**Controlling the Opposition**

It is hard to overstate how precarious was the situation facing the fledgling Soviet government in the early 1920s. Its survival was by no means assured. The Party had only a narrow base in the population, and the tenuosity of its power made the Bolshevik leaders increasingly intolerant of dissent. They first dismantled the Constituent Assembly, as noted previously. Gradually, restrictions were placed on other socialist parties, until by 1921, they were effectively banned. Then came limits on intra-Party democracy.

At the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, a conflict over the demands of the so-called Workers' Opposition led to acceptance of the antifactionalism rule. The Workers' Opposition, under the leadership of the prominent Bolshevik figures Aleksandra Kollantai and Aleksandr Shliapnikov, demanded more autonomy for trade unions and a greater role for the unions in representing workers' interests in industrial management. Furthermore, the Workers' Opposition wanted Party members to be bound by the decisions of higher trade-union organs, rather than vice versa, which was the prevailing pattern. After extensive debate in 1920 and 1921, the Party's Central Committee firmly condemned the ideas of the Workers' Opposition as a deviation from Marxism. Under Lenin's guidance, the trade unions were instructed to emphasize their educational role in bringing the workers to support Party initiatives in the economic administration, although they were given no independent role in economic administration, although they were to safeguard certain workers' rights in the factory.

More significant than the defeat of the opposition plank was the imposition of the antifactionalism rule. It forbade groups from meeting to develop platforms in advance of Party meetings, on the grounds that this could lead to the growth of divisive factions, solidify lines of conflict in the Party, and interfere with Party discipline. Theoretically, however, individual Party members could still raise problems or make proposals at the Party meeting itself, in line with the precepts of democratic centralism. The Central Committee was authorized to penalize members for factionalism, and penalties included, expulsion from the Central Committee itself on a two-thirds vote of all members and alternates.

Adoption of the antifactionalism rule by the Tenth Party Congress followed soon after the Kronstadt Rebellion of March 1921 an unsuccessful uprising of sailors at a naval base near Petrograd. The sailors demanded democratization of the soviets and criticized their domination by the Bolsheviks. The Party leadership no doubt felt particularly vulnerable at this time. Despite the fact that the antifactionalism rule was initially viewed as a temporary measure to address a crisis situation, after Lenin's death it was applied even more rigidly, to control any form of opposition within the Party. Aspiring leaders stigmatized their opponents for engaging in
factionalism, but in doing so, they gradually undermined a basic premise of democratic centralism itself: that minority viewpoints should be permitted up to the point where a decision was taken.

In the mid- to late 1920s, while consolidating his support in the Party bureaucracy, Josef Stalin (born Dzhugashvili) was able to defeat his opponents by charging them with factional activity. By 192%, dissension within the Party was almost eliminated. Major figures who might have offered an alternative view, including Leon Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Grigori Zinoviev, and Lev Kamenev, had all been expelled from the highest Party organs. Trotsky had been forced into exile. None of them had felt confident enough of Soviet power to appeal for mass support when they came under attack. Apparently each believed that the survival of Party rule was of greater importance than the preeminence of his individual viewpoint. In 1924, Trotsky himself expressed this view. "My party-right or wrong . . . I know one cannot be right against the party . . . for history has not created other ways for the realization of what is right."

**The Peasant Problem and Industrialization**

The peasantry posed both economic and political problems for the Bolsheviks, and Lenin himself emphasized the importance of the Party's alliance with the peasantry. Indeed, in 1917 recognition of the peasants' desire for control of the land represented a political compromise for the Bolsheviks, whose long-term goal was a socialized economy. Once the civil war was under way, economic demands led the Bolsheviks to introduce the policy of War Communism, which sought to ensure the supply of materials necessary for the war effort. In the industrial sphere, this involved direct state control of the larger productive facilities. In the agricultural sector, the peasants were allowed to maintain control over the land, but grain was forcibly requisitioned to supply the army and cities. By 1921, the leadership recognized the potential political costs of the War Communism policy, which effectively negated many of the benefits the peasants had gained from the revolution. The leadership feared that the peasants' resentment of the forced requisitioning of grain would continue to grow and ultimately undermine the very goals the regime was trying to pursue.

The New Economic Policy, (NEP), initiated at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 brought concessions for the peasant. The new policy created greater incentives for them by abolishing forced requisitioning and replacing it with a tax in kind. Once the tax was paid, peasants could dispose of their surplus as they saw fit -- by raising food for their own consumption or by selling it in the free market or to state agencies. In other sectors of the economy, private enterprise and trade also were revived. The state, however, retained control of large-scale industry.

The NEP posed new dilemmas for the Bolsheviks. First, it strengthened private property and a market economy, which contradicted the Bolsheviks' long-term goal of socialization of the economy. Second, the NEP made it more difficult to achieve rapid industrialization, which the Bolsheviks saw as necessary. The growth of industry would strengthen the Soviet state in dealing with external challenges. It also would be an important step in the construction of socialism by
developing a large working class, which would be the political base of socialist society. But industrialization required capital. Where was this capital to come from? The small industrial sector could hardly generate enough capital for its own rapid expansion. This left the agricultural sector. If adequate grain could be produced for export, the industrialization drive could be funded. Further, if the regime were able to extract foodstuffs from the countryside at low prices, the cost of maintaining the industrial work force would be reduced. The NEP, however, limited the state's ability to extract capital from the rural sector.

The NEP was, then, a political compromise. The peasantry was allowed a greater measure of independence in production as long as taxes were paid. The government would then buy additional grain at established prices. At the same time, a relatively free market was allowed to reign in the countryside, giving rise to the ignominious NEP men, whom the Bolsheviks viewed as speculators seeking a profit. By the mid-1920s, the economy had been restored to its prewar level of production, and doubts were surfacing in the Party over whether the NEP should be altered. Some elements were impatient with the slow pace of industrialization; others were concerned that the present course might allow the growth of a new rural capitalist class as the kulaks (rich peasants) were allowed to accumulate wealth. A major debate developed in the Party over economic policy.

In the mid-1920's, the strongest supporter of the NEP was Nikolai Bukharin, who seemed at the time to be expressing the views of Stalin as well. Bukharin argued that the peasants would lose the incentive to make their farms more productive if further restrictions were imposed. He concluded, "We must say to the whole peasantry, to all its strata: enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your economy." Bukharin believed that if the peasants were allowed to flourish, they would come to accept the new socialist order, and the existing agrarian policy could serve as an adequate framework for industrialization.

Another group of Bolsheviks, including first Trotsky and then Zinoviev and Kamenev, accepted the basic framework of the NEP but felt that too many concessions had been made to the peasantry. Rapid industrialization was of paramount importance, requiring some alterations in present policy. Expressing the sentiment of this so-called Left opposition in the Party, Trotsky's ally, Evgenii Preobrazhensky, put forth his theory of primitive socialist accumulation. In short, it was necessary to pursue policies that could more effectively extract from the nonsocialized agricultural sector a surplus, which could then be used to finance industrialization. To achieve this, prices for agricultural commodities should be lowered and taxes on the peasantry increased. Trotsky believed that poor peasants, however, should be helped and given incentives to join rural cooperatives. In this way, the socialist sector would be strengthened as the poor peasants benefited from government assistance. These measures also would inhibit the growth of an exploitive capitalist class in the countryside. Meanwhile, rich peasants should be taxed more heavily. In any case, unless industry was developed more quickly, the peasantry would lose its incentive to work, since there would be few goods for the peasants to purchase with their income.

By late 1924, Trotsky was being sharply criticized by other Party leaders. He was vilified for lack of faith in the peasantry, for his earlier concept of permanent revolution, and for his failure
to believe in the possibilities of building socialism in one country. These were mere pretexts to undermine Trotsky's standing in the Party. Although Kamenev and Zinoviev were to voice criticisms of the NEP similar to Trotsky's, their strong dislike for him led them to demand his expulsion from the Party. At that time, Stalin opposed this extreme measure. Instead, Trotsky was removed as head of the army and condemned by the Central Committee in January 1925.

Before long, Zinoviev found his base of power in the Party threatened by Stalin's growing ambitions. In 1926, he, Kamenev, and Trotsky finally joined other dissident elements to form a united opposition to Stalin's growing power, but it was too late. In August 1927, Stalin's support was strong enough to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. By November 14, they were expelled from the Party, and in January 1928, Trotsky was exiled from the Soviet Union. In 1940, he was assassinated in Mexico by Stalinist agents.

Bukharin cooperated with Stalin in removing the so-called Left opposition (Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev) and in so doing helped legitimize methods that later would lead to his own removal from the leadership. In 1928, the country faced a major grain procurement crisis -- the peasants refused to sell their grain to the government. This seemed to trigger Stalin's reversal in position. He began to emphasize the need for a change that would speed industrialization and more effectively mobilize the agricultural surplus to that end. In late 1929, a policy of rapid collectivization of agriculture was instituted. Although the process was allegedly voluntary, the peasants were actually forced to give up their land, tools, and livestock and join government-established collectives or state farms. In November 1929, Bukharin, the most prominent figure in the so-called Right opposition, was expelled from the Politburo, by then the top policymaking body in the Party.

By 1929, virtually all internal opposition within the Party had been eliminated, and Stalin's power was secure. Stalin's rivals apparently did not realize that Lenin's emphasis on Party discipline could be twisted to suppress all debate in the Party. Furthermore, Stalin's rivals had been reluctant to appeal to the broad masses of the people for support, fearing that this action might mobilize popular sentiment against Party rule itself. Although members of the Left opposition had held some demonstrations in factories in 1926, they later admitted that in so doing they had violated Party discipline. It seems that most Bolshevik leaders accepted Trotsky's conviction of "my party-right or wrong."

Leadership Succession and Bureaucratization

The struggles over economic policy were closely linked to the struggle for the top leadership position. Lenin's premature death in 1924 (at the age of fifty-four) resulted in competition at the top, which reinforced the difficulties facing the regime in consolidating its rule.

In 1919, the Party had formed several executive bodies, which were to administer Party policy between Central Committee meetings. One of these was the Politburo, which gradually emerged as the leading policymaking organ of the Party. Likewise in 1919, the Party Secretariat had been formed to fulfill largely secretarial functions—that is, keeping records and doing paperwork for the
Party. A third body, the Orgburo, was formed to handle organizational matters (it was abolished in 1952). In 1922, Stalin, who was the only member of the Politburo to sit on the Orgburo, was chosen as head of the Secretariat. Over time, the Secretariat took on much greater importance than was originally anticipated. It was a key factor in Stalin's personal consolidation of power and eventually came to head the Party's extensive administrative bureaucracy.

The Secretariat was staffed with full-time, paid Party workers, who along with other full-time, paid Party workers came to be known as the *apparatchiki*. They were often in a better position to command influence than the elected delegates to Party committees, who might hold jobs elsewhere. The *apparatchiki* had greater access to information and more time to devote to Party work. At each level in the Party organization (in larger cells or primary Party organizations, or at the city, district, and regional levels), Party secretaries were elected to perform functions similar to those of the Secretariat at the central level. These individuals became the most powerful Party figures at the local and regional levels.

As head of the Secretariat, Stalin was able to wield increasing influence over appointments at lower levels of the Party. Because democratic centralist tenets mandated strict Party discipline in supporting decisions made by the Central Committee, it was necessary to maintain some central overview of policies being pursued by subordinate party committees. If Party leaders at lower levels in the hierarchy were deviating from established central policy, measures had to be taken to reexert Party discipline by transferring local officials to other work or replacing them. Despite formal election procedures, the Party center (primarily through the Secretariat) began to direct the selection of candidates for Party office, and during the 1920s, election procedures became more and more formalistic.

A pattern developed that western analysts subsequently dubbed a "circular flow of power": the central Party Secretariat was able to influence election of local Party officials and delegates from lower Party organs, ultimately playing a large role in determining the composition of the Central Committee itself; the Central Committee, whose members were beholden to the Secretariat for their positions, in turn lent support to the Secretariat and its head (Stalin); and the Secretariat in turn continued to strengthen its control over selection of officials at lower Party levels. It was a self-perpetuating system, a type of massive political machine that ensured the head of the Secretariat support throughout the Party structure. As early as 1923, over 50 percent of the delegates to the Party Congress were *apparatchiki*. By 1924, at the Thirteenth Party Congress, this figure had risen to 65.3 percent.

Critics within the Party claimed that the apparatus of the Secretariat was gaining control over the election process. At the same time, debate within the Party over economic policy provided a pretext for Stalin's hard line against any remaining political challengers. By 1929, the Central Committee was packed with individuals who were beneficiaries of Stalin's goodwill, The lack of emphasis on procedural guarantees for democratic decision making (such as an independent judiciary, rights for an organized opposition, separation of powers, or limits on the tenure of top leaders) was taking its toll.
The Transition to Stalinism

The year 1929 was a turning point in Soviet history. The initial goals of the revolution were in danger: the worker-peasant alliance was weak, the soviets were powerless, intra-Party debate was greatly restricted, and a bureaucratic apparatus was growing in the Party. In 1929, Stalin introduced radical changes that further undermined socialist democracy and popular control. He embarked on a Third Revolution (the first two being the February and October revolutions of 1917), allegedly to remove class enemies but, in practice, directed in an arbitrary manner even against loyal Bolsheviks.

Although Stalin justified the policies of the 1930s as necessary to advance socialism, their effect was to further compromise many of the initial revolutionary goals, such as social equality, power to the soviets, creative fulfillment the individual, and the withering away of the state. Instead, Stalin set the course for rapid industrialization and the aggrandizement of his own personal power. The industrialization campaign may have seemed necessary to, provide the economic foundation for socialism, but the methods used to achieve economic advances were in some ways counterproductive and also made realization of the other goals more difficult.