

The Russian Revolution

100th Anniversary

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Part One

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 began 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 the 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 Bolshevik 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 touched 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. 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 to 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.)

November 2017

Part Two

Lenin died in 1924, after being unable to direct his State for more than a year. His party was the dictatorial governing power. It had defeated the landlord/Tsarist insurgency in the Civil War, and had beaten off the military intervention by the Western Democracies at the end of the World War. But the social revolution it had actually accomplished was the bourgeois revolution in the countryside.

When the Tsarist State crumbled in February-March 1917, nominal state power fell to the urban middle class. But there was a disintegration of state power rather than an inheritance of it. The middle class became the nominal ruling class

unexpectedly. It did not overthrow the Tsarist State, and it was taken by surprise by its collapse. The event might be called the bourgeois revolution, but in fact the event brought with it neither a functional bourgeois State nor a bourgeois social revolution. Both remained to be accomplished.

And Lenin accomplished the main body of the bourgeois revolution as the means of establishing a socialist state. He undertook to abolish the system of large landed estates and transfer land to the tenant-farmers—whom it is customary to call peasants in this connection, so let's call them peasants.

He accomplished the substance of the bourgeois revolution in rebellion against the middle class Provisional Government.

Something similar had happened in Ireland fourteen years earlier. There was a kind of middle-class Government-in-waiting headed by John Redmond. Its policy was to let things be until a favourable conjuncture at Westminster put it in subordinate command in Ireland. There was peasant discontent with the landlord system. The peasants had ambition to become landowners. A radical bourgeois intelligentsia—I think it is reasonable to give that name to the tendency represented by William O'Brien and Canon Sheehan—devised a scheme for the ending of landlordism, which they put to the British Government, which was then in the hands of the reforming Unionist administration under Balfour. The O'Brien/Balfour collaboration arranged for the abolition of landlord estates by means of state-subsidised peasant purchase.

The Redmondite Establishment opposed the scheme, fearing that the end of the grievance of landlordism would undermine the Home Rule movement. Balfour hoped that it might. O'Brien was certain that it would strengthen the demand for national independence.

That bourgeois revolution in the land was accomplished, against Redmondite middle class resistance, in the Southern part of the country in the course of a few years. One of the organisations active in it was the *Land and Labour Association*—in Marxist terms, a combination of contradictories.

Cork University set its face against this anomalous Irish bourgeois revolution, and in support of Redmond's disregard of it, about forty years ago. The moving spirit in this, as far as I can judge as a complete outsider from academia, was the frightened mind of Professor Dermot Keogh. Keogh was on the editorial staff of the *Fianna Fail*

daily paper, *The Irish Press*, in 1972. He was present at demonstrations at the British Embassy in Dublin, in response to the Bloody Sunday administrative massacre in Derry. The Embassy was burned down. Government Ministers treated this as quite a moderate response to the Derry atrocity, but Keogh was overcome with a vision of Fascism. His remedy seems to have been to devise means of suppressing thought about the North, and the War that was going on in it, by directing the academic mind into a Byzantine maze of sociology.

Cork University has recently published what—at five kilos—must be the heaviest book published since Fox's Protestant martyrology, the *Book Of Martyrs*, in the 1640s. It is not about the Irish bourgeois revolution at all. It is only a poor attempt at a comprehensive account of the War of Independence. The revolution was accomplished a generation earlier. Nationalist Ireland had settled down into an orderly social structure when it voted in 1918 to have independent government.

The British decision to take an account of the Election and to govern by military power in the Dublin region was the result of a combination of factors during the first phase.

During the second phase—the 'Civil War', brought about by the insistence of the democratic British Parliament that the Irish must take an Oath to the Crown in order to become independent of it—there was a small group of unexplained killings in West Cork which the History Department of Cork University supported British Canadian Peter Hart in magnifying into religious genocide. Apart from this concoction there was a mere hint at Communist revolution in a couple of Creameries.

The bourgeois social settlement of 1903, with its Land & Labour component, held fast through all the mayhem that Britain could generate, and through the Free State terror that it left behind it.

About fifteen years after Lenin's October Revolution, a Fascist movement was launched in nationalist Ireland by those Britain had left in command. When they lost the elections of 1932 and 1933 to De Valera's anti-Treaty movement they concluded that things were about to fall apart. The Universities were dominated by those who had made the Treaty settlement with Britain in 1921-2. Although the Treaty had been an incitement to a degree of political disorder, they imagined that it was the basis of all bourgeois social order. And they saw De Valera as the Irish Kerensky. (Kerensky was the last head of the incompetent Russian Provisional Government that Lenin swept aside.)

They saw De Valera as a weak

figurehead behind which the Communist forces were mustering in the form of the IRA. At some opportune moment he would be set aside by these. A book with the title *Could Ireland Become Communist?* was published by a senior Treatyite academic. The answer was that it could. But an effective counter to Communism had been found since 1917: Fascism.

Fascism, a combination of radical socialism and nationalism, had been devised by Mussolini—a revolutionary socialist who became an irredentist Italian nationalist in 1914 and helped Britain to bring Italy into the War. In the immediate post-War period he formalised this combination as a political party and imposed national order on the social elements that were flying apart. And Churchill, as a senior British Cabinet Minister, went to Rome in the late 1920s to do public homage to him as the saviour of European civilisation from Communism—and who knows but that is what he actually was?

So the Treatyite Cumann nan Gaedheal, that was becoming Fine Gael, did the right Treatyite thing in 1933 by becoming Fascist.

But the Ireland that was seen by Treatyite eyes, through the prism of British political understanding, was a delusion. Bourgeois Ireland of the 1903 social revolution had settled down quickly and was essentially undisturbed by British provocations from 1914 to 1922. It was effectively hegemonic, with its Land and Labour element. It had no intention whatever of becoming Communism, but neither was it afraid of Communism. It was a secure property-owning democracy.

I grew up in it, in a family that did not own property, in the intensest period of the Cold War, and I know that there was no hysteria, and much informed understanding, of what had gone on in peasant Russia, despite the best efforts of the Bishops.

There was no fear of Communism in rural Ireland because rural Ireland had settled down within a bourgeois revolution. What Lenin swept aside in 1917 was a middle class Provisional Government which neglected to consolidate itself by enacting the bourgeois revolution that was asking to be made.

As for Dev being the Irish Kerensky— if he had been in Kerensky's place, there would have been no Communist revolution in Russia. He knew what a bourgeois revolution was, and he had the ability to act on what he knew.

*

Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet on the Russian Revolution was written in a German prison, where she was confined for anti-War activities. It seems to have been written during the late Summer of 1918. She was released by what is called "*the German Revolution*", which was much like the Russian Revolution of February. The Kaiser's State collapsed under stress of the War—but in this case a war that had been forced on it. The Kaiser abdicated—and, since Britain and France were pretending that he had broken some international law and were intent on hanging him, he left Germany for Holland. A Government was formed without him, by the Social Democrats, and a Republic was reluctantly declared.

Luxemburg agitated against it as bourgeois and as having supported the War. It was a weak Government, lacking the basic organs of state. A condition of social chaos prevailed, encouraged by the victorious Allies who were changing the Armistice into unconditional surrender, and tightening the Food Blockade now that they could encircle Germany completely by occupying the Baltic.

A degree of order was maintained by groups of demobilised soldiers acting on their own authority. One of these groups put an end to Luxemburg's democratic socialist agitation against the ineffective Social Democratic Government by killing her. The remains of her movement were later absorbed into the Leninist communist Party. Her prison pamphlet on the Russian Revolution (which was quoted last month) was unsuitable for publication by the Communist Party because of its rejection of Lenin's policy and method. It was published by one of her colleagues around 1922, in criticism of the Party leadership, but it had little relevance to the condition of German politics at the time.

About forty years later it was made use of by the United States as Cold War propaganda against Leninism, which had come to dominance in half of the world as a result of Britain's irresponsible and chaotic second war on Germany. An English translation was published shortly before our discussion-meetings at King's Cross and it figured to some extent in these discussions.

Rosa Luxemburg was an advanced European intellectual of "the revolution"— Jewish and therefore of the most brilliant—in the latter days of the Hapsburg Empire. She was a systematic Marxist. So was Lenin, up to a point. Systematic Marxism similar to Luxemburg's could easily be extracted from his writings. He admired

the outstanding practitioner of systematic Marxism, Karl Kautsky, right up until the War, long after Luxemburg had become impatient with Kautsky.

But, although he was saturated with Marxist theory, and could do it as well as anybody, his driving power did not seem to be an ideal vision of "*the revolution*", but a determination to destroy the political system that had executed his brother, who had been a revolutionary of the idealistic, bourgeois-romantic kind.

The Tsarist State was not a piece of incompetent backwardness left behind by history and waiting to die. It was a pioneering force of Western civilisation in Asia. It had its idealism, and its rationalists, and its practicality. Lenin therefore did not approach the task of destroying it as a mere idealist. He outflanked it in realism. He mastered Marxism as a realistic bulwark against idealistic illusions, while at the same time committing it to the realisation of its remotest ideal. He constructed a party dedicated to the realisation of that ideal, and held it to that purpose for a dozen years after the failure of the 1905 Revolution. He warded off temptations to settle for something less with his merciless analytical laying bare of opportunist and liquidationist ideals. He would not let the party make a progressive accommodation with Tsarism. He made it stand in fundamental hostility until an opportunity for fundamentalist action appeared. And, if no such opportunity appeared in his lifetime, then so be it.

Cold calculation, and slow-burning, relentless determination, of that order was beyond Rosa Luxemburg's power to imagine.

Nietzsche—I don't know that Lenin ever mentioned him—described the State as "*the coldest of all cold monsters*". It must have seemed to Luxemburg that in Leninism the coldest of States had met its match.

*

I don't recall that Luxemburg herself said anything, in April 1916, about the Easter Rising. Many of those who were of her general way of thinking either condemned it or dismissed it as being irrelevant to the course of history. Trotsky did so, as did Karl Radek. Her close political colleague, Karl Liebknecht tried, before the Rising, to expose in the German Parliament the fact that the Kaiser was conspiring with Irish rebels, arming them to make war on their King, and was allowing Casement to try to raise an anti-British Brigade from British Prisoners of War.

The passage below from Luxemburg's pamphlet will serve to explain the framework of her understanding and to set the scene for consideration of the post-War era.

Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist theorist of the Second International, adopted a position on the War that was intermediate between the "*Government Socialists*" and the anti-Government/Anti-War Socialists. After the War, when the Armistice as being manipulated into German unconditional surrender, he took a position in the Government formed by the 'Government Socialists', got access to the Foreign Office Archive, and published a collection of documents under the title, *The War Guilt Of William Hohenzollern*, i.e., the abdicated Kaiser.

And bear in mind that James Connolly, once the Socialist International reneged on its commitment to prevent war between the states by launching class war against capitalism, took a clear stand in support of Germany—a fact carefully removed from the historical record by Ruth Dudley Edwards and by all those who write Irish history in the British interest. And his support of Germany was expressed in his newspaper by translations of articles by the German Government Socialists. His opinion, similar to Casement's but arrived at independently, was that Britain had trapped Germany into war for the purpose of destroying it as a commercial rival. And Britain, in its hour of victory in 1919, did nothing at all to falsify that opinion. (Connolly's view will be compared with Luxemburg's and Lenin's in a future article.)

Here is what Luxemburg wrote in the Autumn of 1918:

"The military adventure of German imperialism under the ideological blessing of German Social Democracy did not bring about the revolution in Russia but only served to interrupt it at first, to postpone it for a while.

"Moreover, for every thinking observer, those developments are a decisive refutation of the doctrinaire theory which Kautsky shared with the Government Social-Democrats, according to which Russia, as an economically backward and predominantly agrarian land, was supposed not to be ripe for social revolution and proletarian dictatorship. This *theory* which regards only a *bourgeois* revolution as feasible in Russia, is also the theory of the opportunist wing of the Russian labour movement, the so-called Mensheviks... On this basic conception... both the Russian and German opportunists find themselves in agreement with the German Government Socialists. According to the opinions of

all three, the Russian Revolution should have called a halt at the stage which German imperialism in its conduct of the war had set as its noble task, ...it should have stopped with the overthrow of Czarism...

"Theoretically, this doctrine (recommended as the fruit of 'Marxist thinking' by ...Kautsky) follows from the original 'Marxist' discovery that the socialist revolution is a national and, so to speak, a domestic affair in each modern country taken by itself. Of course, in the blue mists of abstract formulae, a Kautsky knows very well how to trace the world-wide economic connections of capital which make all modern countries a single integrated organism. The problems of the Russian Revolution, moreover—since it is a product of international developments plus the agrarian question—cannot possibly be solved within the limits of bourgeois society.

"*Practically*, the same doctrine represents an attempt to get rid of any responsibility for the course of the Russian Revolution, so far as that responsibility concerns the international, and especially the German, proletariat, and to deny the international connections of this revolution. It is not Russia's unripeness which has been proved by the events of the war and the Russian revolution, but the unripeness of the German proletariat for the fulfilment of its historic tasks...

"The fate of the revolution in Russia depended fully upon international events. That the Bolsheviks have based their policy entirely upon the world proletarian revolution is the clearest proof of their political far-sightedness and firmness of principle and of the bold scope of their policies..." (*The Russian Revolution*, Ann Arbour translation, 1961, Chapter 1).

The world is conceived here as an organic capitalist unity in which "*the revolution*" must be made in the whole in order to be able to succeed in any part. And this view is attributed to the Bolsheviks—not unfairly. But then Luxemburg is bewildered by Lenin's insistence of frittering away the coherence of Imperial Russia by making propaganda in favour of national rights during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, and raising up nations where none existed before; and by his perverse policy of making Bolshevism an instrument of the bourgeois revolution of the peasantry in his revolutionary action against the Government of the urban bourgeoisie for the purpose of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, thereby creating a hundred budding capitalists for every established agricultural capitalist that existed before.

Capitalist-landlord Russia was ripe for Socialism. But Lenin subjected rural

Russia, where the bulk of the population lay, to a process of mass bourgeoisification. Where did that leave 'the revolution'? The more Luxemburg thought about it, the more problematical it appeared to her.

There is much in Lenin's writing that agrees with Luxemburg's view of the world as an integrated capitalist whole. How did he reconcile this with his advocacy of national rights? He didn't. He adopted policies designed to undermine the Tsarist State, and then to sweep aside the ineffective urban middle class. Provisional Government, to which nominal authority had fallen. He did not disable himself as a revolutionary politician by engaging in theoretical exploration in advance of the event about the problems that his means of taking power might cause him after he had taken it.

Ever since I was drawn into this kind of thing by Pat Murphy I have been wondering what political intellectuals meant when they use the word "*historicist*". I have tried to get a definite meaning, but failed. A possible meaning is getting locked into a tight scheme of understanding of history as a closed system and as a consequence being unable to see the world around you. But the those who criticised historicism seemed to be locked into just such a scheme.

Southey (the poet, who was still remembered when I was young) commented that Wesley, the Methodist, sometimes seemed to be on the brink of seeing the world as it was, so to speak, but his understanding always rose up and eclipsed his sight. I could understand that. He knew what must be the case and therefore could not see what was the case.

There is no Irish history of the Irish bourgeois revolution. That is partly because of the damaging 'Civil War' that the British democratic state managed to inflict on nationalist Ireland when compelled to go of it, and partly because of the sponsored cultivation of neo-Redmondism during the past half-century, in response to the War that broke out in the undemocratically-governed British region of Ireland, which British propaganda made the Irish middle class feel guilty about.

(A multi-volume *History Of Ireland* published in the early 1970s had volumes on the 19th and 20th centuries, written by Cork University Professors Joseph Lee and John A. Murphy respectively. The 19th century volume ended before the 1903 social revolution, which Redmond's party tried to prevent, while the 20th century volume began after the revolution

was accomplished, and described the Irish social structure as *conservative*. The social revolution was hidden in the gap between the two.

The social structure brought about by the land revolution was certainly conservative: it *conserved* the arrangements that the revolution had brought about.

There is to my knowledge only one worthwhile account of that Irish social revolution. It was written by its organiser himself, William O'Brien, in his retirement. If it had been kept in print, it would, perhaps, have been sufficient. It was never reprinted, and the few comments on it by academics were dismissive. That incomparable account of how 20th century Irish society was forged became one of the moist difficult books in the world to get. I got a copy, thanks to the pioneering internet searches of Robert Burrage, a Tory who was an active member of BICO in Belfast when he lived there. (However, lack of human resources has prevented us from reproducing it so far.)

The Russian bourgeois revolution enacted by Lenin in October 1917 has been even more scantily treated than the Irish bourgeois revolution. There is little distinct awareness that it actually happened. But it did happen. And its beneficiaries defeated all-comers—aristocratic and democratic—in the Civil War and the Wars of Intervention.

Lenin set aside the incompetent bourgeois Provisional Government by undertaking to enact the peasant-bourgeois revolution. He then established a proletarian dictatorship behind his bourgeois revolution, and it survived because it could not be isolated from the bourgeois revolution which it had brought about in order to be attacked. The way to it lay through the mass of peasant landowners.

Lenin did not skip over the bourgeois revolution, as orthodox Marxists accused him of doing. He enacted the substance of the bourgeois revolution in the Russian economy. And it was this entanglement of the two revolutions that saved the proletarian dictatorship in its most vulnerable phase. There was no clear space around it through which it could be attacked.

Regarding the matter theoretically and in the long-term, Rosa Luxemburg was right. Lenin, with his peasant policy for outflanking the urban middle class, magnified the forces of bourgeois resistance to socialism. And Lenin's

response to Sukhanov's account of the revolution was cavalier in spirit, rather than scientific: When an opportunity presents itself, you seize it and then see what can be done.

One of his favourite quotations was from the staid Weimar bourgeois, Goethe: "*Theory is grey, my friend, but the eternal tree of life is green*". And what Rosa Luxemburg could not have been expected to foresee was that the messy entanglement of the two, mutually exclusive, revolutions—the socialist and the bourgeois—was what would enable the most thorough form of socialist state ever established to survive and become a world force.

December 2017

Part Three

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Luxemburg, a Jew born in what became Poland, repudiated nationalism altogether as reflecting a form of society that was made obsolete by the development of international capitalism.

Lenin did not repudiate nationalism as historically outmoded. He used the Brest Litovsk negotiations with Germany in March 1918 to stir up nationalist feeling in Europe—and he was condemned sharply by Luxemburg for it. He supported nationalist movements against Imperialist states, as he increasingly described Imperialism as Finance Capitalism, which was international in tendency.

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the nation state being considered to be essentially a bourgeois social form. But I do not recall that he ever said much about what socialist movements should do in the burgeoning nation states implied by his propaganda. He theorised no more than he had to, but when he had to he theorised with striking effect. (Theorising as a form of pure reason—he left that to Rosa Luxemburg.)

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In 1920 Lenin tried to break through into chaotic Europe by force. Poland blocked the way. And so the first battle between International Socialism and National Socialism was fought in Poland in 1920. The dispute between Pilsudski and Lenin moved from ideology to war. Pilsudski conducted a long, orderly retreat before the offensive of the Red Army, right up to the gates of Warsaw, and then launched a powerful counter-offensive which drove the Red Army back beyond its starting-point and enlarged the Polish

state. And then he wrote an exuberant book about it: *Year 1920*.

(In 1926 Pilsudski established himself as the authority figure in the Polish State. His regime was described as "*fascist*", and rightly so I think. Insofar as I could find definite meaning in the word '*fascist*', it was a combination of nationalism and socialism.

There was considerable rancour in Weimar Germany, "*democratic Germany*", over the Polish settlement. It was not until Hitler took power that Germany accepted the existence of the Polish State. But Hitler told the Germans that they must forget about the "*Polish Corridor*". He made a Treaty with Poland in 1934 accepting the *status quo*, but with one item left for future negotiation: the Germany city of Danzig, which was close to East Russia. It was not under actual Polish authority, and held an anomalous position similar to that of mediaeval Free Cities. It was notionally under the League of Nations, but the League had no political purchase within it.

When Germany proposed to clear up that anomaly early in 1939, by attaching Danzig to East Prussia, Pilsudski was dead. His successor, Colonel Beck, was swept off his feet by the offer of a military alliance with the British and French Empires against Germany. He refused to negotiate on Danzig, though it is hard to see what Poland would have lost by its transfer to East Prussia. And, by making Poland part of a powerful military alliance against Germany, he revoked the 1934 German/Polish Treaty in fact, and gave Germany reason to act against it. And, when Germany did act, Colonel Beck got no assistance whatever from Britain or France.

Russia took back what it had lost to Pilsudski.

The Polish Guarantee was obviously a provocation of Germany with a view to getting a 'moral' case for another war on it.)

*

In the War of 1920, National Socialism confined International Socialism within a single country. Lenin was defeated by Pilsudski. But, at the same time, it vindicated his position on nationality against Rosa Luxemburg's rejection of it as a spent force.

But the Single Country within which comprehensive socialism, in the form of a dictatorship of the proletariat, was confined was vast in size, rich in material resources, and had been developing strongly as its own cultural world for

about a century.

Lenin, as far as I know, did not reassess the situation after his defeat by Pilsudski. He carried on strengthening the State that he had constructed in Russia, weaving it into the life of Russian society, and devising ways of enabling economic development to go on within the great mass of individual owners of property that he had brought into being.

His socialist state rested on the bourgeois revolution which he had enacted in the main body of Russian society. With his New Economic Policy he enabled the new owners of the land to buy and sell in the market, while using the State to prevent, or delay, the emergence of political awareness from that activity. But he asserted repeatedly that this mass of small-scale commodity transactions would have a tendency to generate capitalism "*daily and hourly*".

He did not repudiate the opinion that Communism could only be achieved through international socialist revolution—meaning socialist revolution in the countries of advanced capitalism in Europe—but neither did he desist from the practice of building it in isolated Russia.

While he was directing affairs, this conflict between theory and practice never became an issue. But, when he was disabled in 1923 and died early in 1924, it became the great issue.

This series of articles began as an account of the development of BICO from discussion meetings held around 1963 between a group of Trotskyists of IRA background, a group of ex-members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Pat Murphy, and myself. It was agreed that we should follow through the course of events in Russia in the light of a factual assessment of the situation at each turning point and see where that led us.

I had never been in any socialist organisation, nor had Pat. I had read *Capital* Volume 1 in Slieve Luacra and the later volumes after I went to London, and from those later volumes I got an idea of the immense resourcefulness and adaptability of capital that was quite different from the idea one got from Volume 1. The only Marxist political literature I had read was Trotsky's *Defence Of Terrorism* (directed against the German Social Democrat, Karl Kautsky).

The critical thing in our discussions was what happened after Lenin, in 1923-4. Trotsky at that point made an issue of *Socialism In One Country*, holding it to be an impossibility. This was entirely in accordance with his theory of *Permanent*

Revolution, published before 1917. That theory said that a bourgeois revolution would be unsustainable in Russia and would give way to socialist revolution—but also that socialist revolution would be unsustainable in Russia unless it was sustained by socialist revolution in Europe.

Lenin could be quoted in support of that view, but he had not acted on that view when there was no European revolution, and when his attempt to break through to Europe was thwarted by Pilsudski. He carried on as if he thought that Socialism in One Country was a practical possibility, and Trotsky did not dissent.

But now Lenin was gone, and those who had been carried along by the magnetic force of his will had to decide for themselves what to do.

Should the revolution be aborted, and a bourgeoisie found, and an orderly transfer of power to it be arranged? I could not find that Trotsky suggested such a thing.

His view implied that an attempt to build socialism in Russia in isolation must lead to its perversion or degeneration under the irresistible influence of the surrounding capitalist world. But what he published a few years later was not an account of the inevitable degeneration suffered by the revolution when it was persisted with after isolation made it impossible—it was *Revolution Betrayed*.

I had many discussions with Liam Daltun, trying to get my head around the idea that the revolution was destined to failure by international circumstances, but that it also failed because it was betrayed by those who assumed the leadership of it. To my mind the idea that it was betrayed implied that it might have succeeded.

Would it have succeeded if Trotsky had become party leader after Lenin instead of Stalin? As I recall, Liam would not express a definite opinion one way or the other. But he could not deny that he thought it would have been better if Trotsky had become leader.

So why didn't he? I looked into that a bit and it struck me that he did not try to take over the leadership. He acted as if he did not want to be Party leader. Lenin towards the end did what he could for him. He was the obvious heir. And Lenin tried to cast a posthumous veto against Stalin. But Trotsky refused to act in any way that would have enabled him to become leader of the party made by Lenin.

Going into this, I discovered his pre-Revolution condemnation of the Leninist Party as a dictatorially-controlled

bureaucratic structure which was designed to act in place of the working class.

Going through Trotsky's later accounts of why he did not become leader in 1924, I found much of his pre-Revolution dislike of Leninism re-surfacing as criticism of Stalinism, but with the addition of distaste for the uncouth company of the workers who were increasingly encountered in Stalin's circles. The party Stalin made was to act in place of the working class and yet it was thick with workers who were not cultured.

Now Liam Daltun was an intellectual. He was very widely read. He took the *Irish Times* (which I had never seen before I met him) and a French newspaper every day, but it was evident, ardent Trotskyist that he was, that he had never gone into the detail of why Trotsky had not taken over from Lenin. What I was finding out was all news to him—as it was to me. He did not close up against it, despite Trotskyist taunts from Géry Lawless, with whom he had a strange love/hate (or contempt) relationship. Eventually Lawless blew the group apart by becoming police informer, and I had to try to figure the thing out on my own.

December 2017

Part 3

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In 1920 Lenin tried to break through into chaotic Europe by force. Poland blocked the way. And so the first battle

between International Socialism and National Socialism was fought in Poland in 1920. The dispute between Pilsudski and Lenin moved from ideology to war. Pilsudski conducted a long, orderly retreat before the offensive of the Red Army, right up to the gates of Warsaw, and then launched a powerful counter-offensive which drove the Red Army back beyond its starting-point and enlarged the Polish state. And then he wrote an exuberant book about it: *Year 1920*.

(In 1926 Pilsudski established himself as the authority figure in the Polish State. His regime was described as "*fascist*", and rightly so I think. Insofar as I could find definite meaning in the word '*fascist*', it was a combination of nationalism and socialism.

There was considerable rancour in Weimar Germany, "*democratic Germany*", over the Polish settlement. It was not until Hitler took power that Germany accepted the existence of the Polish State. But Hitler told the Germans that they must forget about the "*Polish Corridor*". He made a Treaty with Poland in 1934 accepting the *status quo*, but with one item left for future negotiation: the Germany city of Danzig, which was close to East Russia. It was not under actual Polish authority, and held an anomalous position similar to that of mediaeval Free Cities. It was notionally under the League of Nations, but the League had no political purchase within it.

When Germany proposed to clear up that anomaly early in 1939, by attaching Danzig to East Prussia, Pilsudski was dead. His successor, Colonel Beck, was swept off his feet by the offer of a military alliance with the British and French Empires against Germany. He refused to negotiate on Danzig, though it is hard to see what Poland would have lost by its transfer to East Prussia. And, by making Poland part of a powerful military alliance against Germany, he revoked the 1934 German/Polish Treaty in fact, and gave Germany reason to act against it. And, when Germany did act, Colonel Beck got no assistance whatever from Britain or France.

Russia took back what it had lost to Pilsudski.

The Polish Guarantee was obviously a provocation of Germany with a view to getting a 'moral' case for another war on it.)

*

In the War of 1920, National Socialism confined International Socialism within a single country. Lenin was defeated by

Pilsudski. But, at the same time, it vindicated his position on nationality against Rosa Luxemburg's rejection of it as a spent force.

But the Single Country within which comprehensive socialism, in the form of a dictatorship of the proletariat, was confined was vast in size, rich in material resources, and had been developing strongly as its own cultural world for about a century.

Lenin, as far as I know, did not reassess the situation after his defeat by Pilsudski. He carried on strengthening the State that he had constructed in Russia, weaving it into the life of Russian society, and devising ways of enabling economic development to go on within the great mass of individual owners of property that he had brought into being.

His socialist state rested on the bourgeois revolution which he had enacted in the main body of Russian society. With his New Economic Policy he enabled the new owners of the land to buy and sell in the market, while using the State to prevent, or delay, the emergence of political awareness from that activity. But he asserted repeatedly that this mass of small-scale commodity transactions would have a tendency to generate capitalism "*daily and hourly*".

He did not repudiate the opinion that Communism could only be achieved through international socialist revolution—meaning socialist revolution in the countries of advanced capitalism in Europe—but neither did he desist from the practice of building it in isolated Russia.

While he was directing affairs, this conflict between theory and practice never became an issue. But, when he was disabled in 1923 and died early in 1924, it became the great issue.

This series of articles began as an account of the development of BICO from discussion meetings held around 1963 between a group of Trotskyists of IRA background, a group of ex-members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Pat Murphy, and myself. It was agreed that we should follow through the course of events in Russia in the light of a factual assessment of the situation at each turning point and see where that led us.

I had never been in any socialist organisation, nor had Pat. I had read *Capital* Volume 1 in Slieve Luacra and the later volumes after I went to London, and from those later volumes I got an idea of the immense resourcefulness and adaptability of capital that was quite different from the idea one got from

Volume 1. The only Marxist political literature I had read was Trotsky's *Defence Of Terrorism* (directed against the German Social Democrat, Karl Kautsky).

The critical thing in our discussions was what happened after Lenin, in 1923-4. Trotsky at that point made an issue of *Socialism In One Country*, holding it to be an impossibility. This was entirely in accordance with his theory of *Permanent Revolution*, published before 1917. That theory said that a bourgeois revolution would be unsustainable in Russia and would give way to socialist revolution—but also that socialist revolution would be unsustainable in Russia unless it was sustained by socialist revolution in Europe.

Lenin could be quoted in support of that view, but he had not acted on that view when there was no European revolution, and when his attempt to break through to Europe was thwarted by Pilsudski. He carried on as if he thought that Socialism in One Country was a practical possibility, and Trotsky did not dissent.

But now Lenin was gone, and those who had been carried along by the magnetic force of his will had to decide for themselves what to do.

Should the revolution be aborted, and a bourgeoisie found, and an orderly transfer of power to it be arranged? I could not find that Trotsky suggested such a thing.

His view implied that an attempt to build socialism in Russia in isolation must lead to its perversion or degeneration under the irresistible influence of the surrounding capitalist world. But what he published a few years later was not an account of the inevitable degeneration suffered by the revolution when it was persisted with after isolation made it impossible—it was *Revolution Betrayed*.

I had many discussions with Liam Daltun, trying to get my head around the idea that the revolution was destined to failure by international circumstances, but that it also failed because it was betrayed by those who assumed the leadership of it. To my mind the idea that it was betrayed implied that it might have succeeded.

Would it have succeeded if Trotsky had become party leader after Lenin instead of Stalin? As I recall, Liam would not express a definite opinion one way or the other. But he could not deny that he thought it would have been better if Trotsky had become leader.

So why didn't he? I looked into that a bit and it struck me that he did not try to

take over the leadership. He acted as if he did not want to be Party leader. Lenin towards the end did what he could for him. He was the obvious heir. And Lenin tried to cast a posthumous veto against Stalin. But Trotsky refused to act in any way that would have enabled him to become leader of the party made by Lenin.

Going into this, I discovered his pre-Revolution condemnation of the Leninist Party as a dictatorially-controlled bureaucratic structure which was designed to act in place of the working class.

Going through Trotsky's later accounts of why he did not become leader in 1924, I found much of his pre-Revolution dislike of Leninism re-surfacing as criticism of Stalinism, but with the addition of distaste for the uncouth company of the workers who were increasingly encountered in Stalin's circles. The party Stalin made was to act in place of the working class and yet it was thick with workers who were not cultured.

Now Liam Daltun was an intellectual. He was very widely read. He took the *Irish Times* (which I had never seen before I met him) and a French newspaper every day, but it was evident, ardent Trotskyist that he was, that he had never gone into the detail of why Trotsky had not taken over from Lenin. What I was finding out was all news to him—as it was to me. He did not close up against it, despite Trotskyist taunts from Géry Lawless, with whom he had a strange love/hate (or contempt) relationship. Eventually Lawless blew the group apart by becoming police informer, and I had to try to figure the thing out on my own.

February 2018

Part 4

If Trotsky was to succeed Lenin, he would have had to take Lenin's party in hand, operate through its structures, and direct its action in the social and political condition of things brought about by Lenin's Revolution and the isolation of that Revolution from Europe brought about by Pilsudski. He would have had to become a Party man handling the bureaucratic apparatus by which it was moved. The proletarian mass could not be brought to exercise its dictatorship in the conduct of the State by orations.

The mass cannot move in political administration as a mass. Furthermore the proletarian mass of the kind supposed by pre-Leninist Marxism—the proletarian mass of advanced capitalism—did not exist in Russia. The class conscious

proletariat that was to exercise a purposeful government by its dictatorship, one that would oversee the fading away of the state, did not exist. It would have to be created. And, since nobody proposed that the Revolution should be aborted and the creation of an industrial proletariat should be handed over to Capitalism, the only way of getting it was for the State to create it.

This is what Lenin proposed to do. When thought about from a German vantage point, it was a shocking thing to propose. Kautsky, the perfect model of a Marxist, was duly shocked. And Trotsky, for all that he had defended State Terrorism against Kautsky, shared too many of Kautsky's assumptions to be comfortable with it. But the transition from Lenin to Stalin enabled him to misapply to Stalin the shocking thing that the Revolution was committed to.

Lenin had an acute insight into the nature of the proletariat. Long before 1917 he said that Socialism was an "*alien intrusion*" into the life of the working class. If that was so, then Socialism would not come about through the socialist party taking instruction from the working class and acting for it on the instructions it was given.

Karl Kautsky, who probed the way forward for the German Social Democracy, envisaged Socialism being born fairly effortlessly out of Capitalism as it existed in the Bismarckian German State. He published a book before the War about how things might go on the day after the revolution.

James Connolly took a somewhat similar view as Kautsky of the social character of Germany. But he was more definite than Kautsky, possibly because he was looking at the condition of the working class in Germany from the vantage point of the social conditions in Britain. When Britain declared war on Germany, he supported Germany on both anti-Imperialist and Socialist grounds. He published articles on working class arrangements in Germany in *The Workers' Republic* in 1915-16. (I collected some of them in a pamphlet: *Connolly And German Socialism*.) And he supported the German War Socialists—which Kautsky did not.

In August 1914 Connolly published an article in praise of Karl Liebknecht when it was rumoured that Liebknecht had been executed for opposition to the German war effort, but then he never mentioned him again. When the working class did not act internationally to make war impossible, but supported their own states

in the War, Connolly accepted that as being the reality of things, aligned himself within it, and held that the cause of Socialism would be best served by German victory.

He never mentioned Liebknecht again. And he took no heed of the British propaganda which described the German State as a reactionary Autocracy. Liebknecht, however, adopted the British view of the German State, and sought to expose in the German Parliament the assistance being given by the Government to the Irish Republicans.

Then, in November 1918, when the German State fragmented under pressure of four and a quarter years of defensive warfare, the Kaiser, who had been declared outlaw by the *Entente*, abdicated and left the country and a Social Democratic Government was formed and the state was declared to be a Republic, Liebknecht launched his campaign to overthrow the State and carry out a Socialist Revolution.

Under the circumstances, such a campaign could do more than generate disorder. When the Bolsheviks had taken power in Russia a year earlier, it was in the circumstances of a social revolution that was already in progress: the peasants were seizing the land from the landlords. But there was no spontaneous social revolution in progress in Germany. There was no obvious revolution that could just happen. Germany was far too socialist in composition for there to be a socialist revolution against the *status quo*. What was needed was defensive political action in support of the *status quo*. The revolutionary arena was very narrowly political. What was needed was the formation of a conservative national front against the predatory action of the *Entente* Power which was transforming the Armistice into an Unconditional Surrender.

Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg's rebellion prevented that development on the Left at the very start, and therefore, as it was a necessary development, it was brought about by the Right in the course of the next fourteen years.

An easy birth of Socialism out of Capitalism might have happened in Germany, where the Social Democracy constituted an immense region of German society that had been living a life of its own for a generation. It might be said that an accident prevented it. But history is full of accidents.

John Lloyd held a kind of Menshevik view for a while, because it was in the

atmosphere. But Menshevism had in fact broken more radically with the Populist source of things than Bolshevism had. It lived in a systematically idealised enclave of Marxism, comprehensively disengaged from Russian social reality.

One of the more 'moderate' and less Marxist Menshevik leaders, Tseretilli, for whom Dzerzinsky issued an arrest warrant a few weeks after the October Revolution, wrote in exile in the 1930s:

"We can see the germs of the new society forming in the heart of capitalist society. The growing workers' organisations are no longer content merely to struggle against the misdeeds of the resent regime, they are changing the very foundations of this regime, socializing to an ever greater degree production and commerce, creating the new culture, a new social mentality which Marx's profound observation that the revolution is nothing more than the birth of a new society which has grown to maturity in the heart of the old is as vested in the case of the proletarian revolution as in any other..." (Quoted from Tseretelli: *A Democrat In The Russian Revolution* by W.H. Roobol, 1976).

If that was how things were, the Revolution would have happened in Germany.

But Lenin took it, from very early on, that the Socialist Party would, in the complexity of the actual world, have to act as a directing force on the working class, rather than its representative. That was the ground of Trotsky's strong condemnation of him before 1917. And, after 1917, it was no great leap for Lenin to undertake that his Party should become the creator of the working class whose interests it would represent, and would itself determine what those interests were and communicate them to the emerging class.

Trotsky appeared to be entirely unaware in 1923-4 that he had been acting on those shocking assumptions for six years. It only struck him when Lenin died and he was faced with the prospect of taking over the leadership of the Party himself, or doing so jointly with Stalin. But in Stalin the essentials of Leninism stood out too starkly to be tolerable.

Stalin had not been a revolutionary in 1917. Much was made of that fact in 1924, and also in our little group in the early sixties. I saw it as being entirely to Stalin's credit that, when he was the senior Bolshevik in Petrograd in March 1917, he had directed the Party into a parliamentary opposition role. It meant that he had given the matter some realistic thought and was

not moved by a mere revolutionist reflex. And it meant that, when Lenin returned and persuaded him to support his revolutionary scheme, he had a serious sense of what it involved.

Stalin was the working class in the Bolshevik leadership of aristocratic and bourgeois intellectuals. He was part of the class that it was the purpose of the Revolution to make into the ruling class, and he applied himself in a practical way to enabling that to be done.

He had little experience of Europe in terms of time spent there. Others had extensive experience. But his experience was different in kind. What one experiences depends on where one is placed. He was not placed in the intellectual/artistic stratosphere, looking down on the social bulk that would make the European revolution if there was to be a European revolution. And his expectation of a European revolution was considerably less than that of his intellectual colleagues in the Bolshevik leadership. He was assessing possibilities within his own medium of existence while they were hopefully looking down on a mass that existed for them chiefly as an ideal, and yearning for a miraculous escape from the Russian isolation into which they had been led—or had led themselves.

(Stalin, as far as I recall, had been particularly doubtful about the invasion of Poland.)

Russia was where the Revolution actually was, and either Russia could be organised to undertake industrialisation without a capitalist class, and with a working class that was being created in the course of industrialisation and was willingly acting in place of a capitalist class, or it was all empty idealism.

Why not reverse the historical order of economic base and political/cultural superstructure?, Lenin asked. And I don't know that anyone in the Bolshevik leadership told him that that was out of order.

The industrial proletariat was a product of capitalist development—of capitalist class exploitation. Through capitalist exploitation and regimentation a proletariat was created which became conscious of itself as a class. It was a necessary class in capitalist society. As the capitalist form of economy became universal, the proletariat became the major social class. Artisans were proletarianised. Skilled trades ceased to have independent standing. All was proletarianised.

Increasingly the proletariat included all that was necessary for modern social existence and, at a certain point, it would shrug off the capitalist class as a redundant parasitic form.

I don't know that Marx himself ever tried to envisage just how the proletariat would become "*the gravedigger of capitalism*". There was a New Left variety of Marxism knocking around in the 1960s which preached a mystified dialectic that held that the proletariat, because it was nothing, would at some moment be transformed into everything, and that the nothingness should therefore be preserved to keep it ready for the moment of its transfiguration. That struck me as gibberish.

I could only see Capital being shrugged off through diversification of the proletariat such that, while still living on wages, it came to include all the skills that were necessary to the functioning of society. And that was closest to being the case in Germany then (because the "*superstructure*" set by Bismarck prevented the degradation of the proletariat, such as happened in Britain), and was farthest from being the case in Russia, whose economic form was substantially pre-capitalist.

The development on which Russia was set by Lenin was industrialisation by means of a class-conscious proletariat that was being created by the force and culture of the revolutionary State. That State was, in a sense, the product of the advanced Capitalism of Europe, which it was intent on overthrowing, but the class-conscious proletariat in Russia was to spring fully-formed into being from its hands. It was not a class that had formed itself through experience as the exploited class of Capitalism, but was formed from the start as a class that had overthrown Capitalism. And yet its business was to do, in large part, what had been done elsewhere by Capitalism. And the first item of business was "*the primitive accumulation of capital*" to enable a rapid take-off into industrialisation.

The industrialisation of Russia was undertaken while Europe was suffering the economic, political and spiritual disruption of the Great War and was turning to Fascism in order to restore itself, and while Britain was warding off Fascism only by suspending the operation of party-politics by class-collaboration in a different form. Russia therefore loomed large in the consciousness of Europe. And it was either looked to admiringly as showing what Socialism could do, or was

denounced for degrading the idea of Socialism by setting it to do what should have been left to Capitalism to do.

Culture was given priority in Russia. A good thing! But it was not the culture of Bohemian drop-outs. It was not Hampstead culture. It was not the delightful culture of the residue of the ruling class. ("*History shows that the final ambition of the leisure class is to be charming.*"?) It was neither sceptical nor sexually libertine.

Russia had no use for Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. What it had a use for was Mary Barton. Nevertheless it should have had Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, because that was *Culture*. (Did we have James Joyce? *Ulysses* did not come to hand in Slieve Luacra in the mid=fifties, though I was able to find it in a dirty bookshop in London in the late fifties. And, when it was later thrust upon us, we found that we did not want it!)

Soviet authors were "*the engineers of human souls*", according to Stalin. Book culture produces cultured people. (Didn't Milton say much the same thing.) But the culture required for the realisation of Lenin's project in Russia was not the culture required by the wealthy middle class of late Capitalism that had taken power in Britain in the Great War in a Millenarian spirit, traumatised itself, and made a mess of Europe in the Versailles settlement.

Hampstead had no use for *How The Steel Was Tempered*, except as a subject for ridicule. (What did Hampstead know about steel?) On the other hand, the purposeful ruling proletariat that was being shaped in Russia had no use for that delightful aristocratic/bourgeois idyll, *All Passion Spent*. (I don't recall if it was ridiculed by Zhdanov.)

Soviet industrialisation was not the work of Zombies, or terrorised individuals working at the point of a gun. It couldn't have been. It was the work of culturally engineered human souls acting within a cultural milieu that was appropriate to the task. The effectiveness of that Soviet culture as compared with the British culture of the inter-War generation was put to the test when Britain declared war on Germany for a second time, lost it for lack of a will to fight, succeeded in directing Germany eastwards, and was saved as a World Power by the Soviet destruction of German power.

While the survival of Imperial Britain depended on Russia, Britain abased itself before the Soviet culture which it despised.

State direction combined with a herd instinct of survival made Britain a carrier of Soviet culture for a few years (But after survival Britain found it was no longer viable as an independent Power. It found itself dependent both culturally and economically on the United States. Anyone who knows what the English mind, or soul, was in 1950 must know that it is something very different now, and that the difference did not grow out of itself but was engineered by the superior American culture, the culture of Hollywood. It is only for Anglophile circles in Ireland that England retains the Roman constancy boasted of by Gladstone and retains the status of "*an ever fixed star*".

March 2018

Part 5

The group which in the early 1960s attempted to formulate a socialist position that would enable Irish politics and history to be dealt with coherently was made up of members from the Communist Party of Great Britain who disagreed with its stifling of realistic discussion of Irish affairs, and also to some extent with its view of the Soviet Union following Khrushchev's condemnation in 1956 of what had been done in the Stalin period; and discontented Republicans who had played some part in the 1956 invasion of the North, had concluded that Republicanism needed a revolutionary social position, had gone to London in search of one through the Connolly Association which was regularly denounced as communist by Irish Bishops but discovered that it was a dependency of the CPGB and therefore stifled discussion of what they were looking for, had turned to the Trotskyist organisations (of which there were three) which were then beginning to make their presence felt; and Pat Murphy, to whom Liam Dalton turned for assistance in forming an organisation; and myself, who was brought along by Pat. And then Tom Skelly found out about the Group and came along to it.

Tom was the only member who had engaged in actual social revolt. He had led a kind of peasants' revolt in County Longford around the time of the First Coalition Government. It was from Tom that some of us heard of *Praties and Point*: family meals of potatoes, in which the fork would be pointed at a bit of bacon in the rafters. It was still well known in Slieve Luacra, however, where there were still pieces of bacon hanging from the ceiling.

I found it difficult to grasp the possibility of a peasants' revolt in Ireland in my lifetime. I grew up in a property owning democracy in North-West Cork. There was no class of landlords that could be rebelled against. I knew that there had been a landlord aristocracy in my grandmother's time, but it had been abolished before my mother's time, leaving not a trace behind. The region was peasant only in the sense that it was not urban. But there could be no doubt that Tom Skelly was telling the truth. I later discovered that the Home Rule Party had sabotaged the anti-landlord movement in the first decade of the century, and that it was only in County Cork that the concession made to its demands was thoroughly implemented. This was due to the activity of Canon Sheehan, the classic Irish novelist, and D.D. Sheehan, the land reformer, along with William O'Brien. The land movement in North West Cork was a *Land and Labour Movement*. This was D.D. Sheehan's project. Small-scale land ownership was accompanied by a network of publicly-built Labourers' Cottages, each with an acre of land, which covered the countryside.

This is not irrelevant to consideration of Russia in the 1920s. Land & Labour was a kind of realisation of the Narodnik ideal, and Narodism was the source of most things in Russia after the Emancipation of 1861.

My interest in Russia did not begin with Communism or Revolution. It began with the 19th century Russian literature that I came across in the Narodnik democracy in Slieve Luacra.

In the Parish of Boherbue, until I was in my early teens, there was no Public Library. There was no library of any kind. And there was no bookshop. And yet there was no shortage of books. There were books all around the place.

Then a Parish Hall was built voluntary labour—a Parish Hall, but certainly not a church Hall—and I mixed some concrete for it with a shovel. It included snooker rooms, a Badminton Court, and, amongst other things, provision for a library.

Books were not purchased for it. They were brought in by people who had them, and they came from the Townlands (i.e., the countryside) rather than the village. And one day I glanced at a battered copy of Dostoevsky's *White Nights*, and was lured into 19th century Russia. Two other things that struck me particularly then were plays by Tolstoy: *The Power Of Darkness* and *The Fruits Of Enlightenment*. And there was an account

somewhere by Dostoevsky about the pain experienced by emancipated peasants when they were required to sit on juries and pass judgment on fellow human beings in the cause of civilisation.

From the time I looked at *White Nights* English literature had little appeal for me. In the course of time I got a Russian grammar and a number of Russian poems got into my head. I could still repeat one of them, *Vnimaya Oozhacam Voini*, by the Populist Nekrassov. It is certainly sentimental and could not exist in English.

Dostoevsky peasants had to suffer the pain of passing judgment on fellow humans who did things that were human and that anyone might have done. This was necessary because what they were emancipated into in 1861 was Capitalism. They had not anticipated that that was what Emancipation meant. They resisted it. Their ideal was their pre-Emancipation life with a few improvements. And the self-sufficient peasant Commune became the ideal of the Intelligentsia. This was not in conflict with Tsarism. The Tsar, the *Little Father* of all, should be its protector. If the Tsar was to be abolished, the vaguely envisaged alteration was not the bourgeois-democratic State of Capitalism, but the Commune without a State.

There was no bourgeois ideal in progressive Russian literature of the 19th century. There was no George Elliot. The bourgeois life, as observed in the West, was rather held in contempt. Progress looked backwards—as English Socialism did for a while before it was taken in hand by Liberalism.

What the Emancipation Decree of 1861 did was break up the familiar socially organic relationships and establish the framework for capitalist development. The nobles had not been the independent owners of great landed estates until then, and the peasants had not been their individual contractual tenants. All had lived together in a Tsarist cultural web that might be seen as having something in common with the Catholic ideal of the Mystical Body—but Orthodoxy had much more going for it in this regard than Roman Christianity.

There was of course a bourgeois development within Tsarism: St. Petersburg. Tsar Peter the Great had travelled anonymously in the West, observed how Capitalism worked and apprenticed himself to it. (There is a German opera about him: *Tsar Und Zimmermann*, Tsar and Carpenter.) When he returned home to rule Russia, he ordered nobles to go and build a city on the Gulf of Finland and practise living the enlightened

bourgeois life in it. A long time later the Emancipation was decreed and it was expected of the nobility in their new role that they should make an effort, wherever they lived, to live the enlightened life. Tolstoy's play, *The Fruits Of Enlightenment*, is a mockery of it. It shows a group of peasants coming to a Big House to transact a piece of commercial business with their landlord under the new relationship. Some cultural event is going on in the house and they are told to wait in the kitchen until the landlord is free to deal with them. And so, through the gossip of the servants, they begin to see what goes on in the Enlightened life.

What was going on in the vigorous intellectual life of Russia during the two generations following the Emancipation was no cultural preparation for the triumph of Capitalism. It was a search for a way of preventing it. There was Populism (Narodism), Commune anarchism, and Socialist Revolutionaries.

I seem to recall that Marx was tempted by this Russian Populism into thinking that the Capitalism, of which he was so painstakingly working out all the financial devices, might be by-passed, but was shepherded away from that thought by Engels.

Much of Lenin's early writing had to do with refuting Populism by showing that Capitalism was developing in Russia and could not be by-passed. But then, having given primacy to proletarian class development and proletarian revolution, he devised the strategy of overthrowing the Tsarist/capitalist state by a form of proletarian revolutionary action that could enlist the support of the peasantry, and then by means of proletarian state power open up a line of development for the peasantry that was not capitalist, and thus by-pass Capitalism after all.

Another tangent: Regularly in the *Irish [née Cork] Examiner* there appear articles by two members of the former Communist Party of Great Britain: John Lloyd and Geoffrey Roberts. Roberts is a History Professor in Cork University and writes on military affairs, but not on Irish military affairs. He is very much against Irish military affairs. And he did not contribute at all to the wide-ranging discussion published in the *Cork Evening Echo* on the centenary of the Great War. Having come from the British nationalist strand of the CPGB, he was a useful addition to the revisionist re-orientation of Cork University with which Dermot Keogh has been prominently associated. He suggested in commemoration of the

Kilmichael Ambush that the names of the Auxiliaries who were killed there while engaged in the business of enforcing British military rule against the elected Government should be listed along with the IRA Volunteers who supported the elected Government.

John Lloyd, Scottish upper class in background, was briefly a member of BICO. He joined along with Professor Bill Warren of the School of Oriental and African Studies, who came from the Glasgow Gorbals. Bill had come to disagree strongly with the CPGB view of Imperialism and was attracted by the position being developed by the B&ICO. He exerted an influence of moral ascendancy over Lloyd. When Bill died, Lloyd was like a fish out of water in BICO and he soon left. He was for a while Editor of the *New Statesman*. He was also a *Financial Times* journalist, and he greatly approved of Yeltsin's artillery bombardment of the Parliament building. Parliament was trying to make itself the centre of a form of Constitutional government, but it was nationalist in spirit. (What else could Constitutional government be?) Yeltsin's ruling by decree was seen as being more in accordance with the spirit of Progress, at least while there was work of destruction that needed doing.

John Lloyd held a kind of Menshevik view for a while, because it was in the atmosphere. But Menshevism had in fact broken more radically with the Populist source of things than Bolshevism had. It lived in a systematically-idealised enclave of Marxism, comprehensively disengaged from Russian social reality. [NB: This paragraph somehow found its way, out of place, into last month's instalment.]

The Menshevik ideal was of a bourgeois democracy in which Socialism would blossom. During its brief period in Office it showed no aptitude for bringing about that condition of things. And, when it was ousted and the Bolshevik regime consolidated itself, there was no coherent Menshevik opinion on how what it saw as Constitutionalism might be restored—on how Constitutionalism as ideal might be made in Constitutionalism as fact. (Where Constitutionalism is fact it is not idealism that sustains it.)

While Lloyd was in BICO he seemed to believe in something called *Leninist democracy*. It was the CP fashion of the time. I ridiculed it as something of which no trace could be found in actual history. Some years later I heard him on the radio declaring that Lenin was the greatest criminal of the 20th century. And he

issued a statement that he had found out about the Russian Gulags, and was overcome with grief at the thought that he had been associated with them, however tenuously, through his political affiliations, and had broken down and wept.

He had clearly not been influenced at all by his period of BICO membership. He must have been inoculated against it by the fantasy life of the Communist Party.

He was Editor of a couple of issues of a magazine called *Problems of Communism* that we published, and he proposed that 'Communism' be dropped and replaced with 'Marxism'. (Marxism was respectable. Hardly anything else was allowed a voice at that time in vast regions of British academic life.)

There was a debate on the proposal. I suggested that, if there had to be a choice between *Communism* and *Marxism*, it was *Marxism* that should be dropped. After all, *Communism* preceded *Marxism*. Marx joined the Communist Party.

As to the Gulags: Lloyd must have been made immune to knowledge of them in the CPGB, and the immunity must have held good during his time in BICO.

The idea of "*Leninist democracy*" was much in vogue in CPGB and some Trotskyist circles in the 1970s-80s. I ridiculed it. When Solzhenitsyn's *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich* appeared, I treated it as escapist fiction. But, when *The Gulag Archipelago* began to appear, I saw that Dostoevsky had re-surfaced in Russia and history had resumed. But Lloyd was soon denouncing Solzhenitsyn as an obscurantist reactionary.

That put Lloyd back with the classical liberal ideology which was the ground on which Marxism was constructed. But of course he didn't see it. The different pieces of thought—the slogans—don't connect up with him. I only ever had one real discussion with him. It was about the military collapse of France and Britain in May 1940. A Fascist Fifth Column in France had opened the front to the Germans, he said. I had been searching high and low for some trace of this Fifth Column, but it just was not there. And I could not see that anything beyond the actual engagement of the military forces in place—Britain and France having had eight months after their declaration of war to put their forces in place for the prosecution of the war which they had declared—and the conduct of those forces in battle, when Germany eventually responded to the declarations of war on it, sufficiently accounted for the outcome.

But, no, it was the Fifth Column in

France. That was the British story. It was the British story in 1940, told in all media, high and low. It even appeared in an Agatha Christie detective story, in 1940, and in a Tommy Trinder film. And it has been the British Story ever since. That is one of the great strengths of the British national mind: it forms ideas appropriate to its interests, regardless of facts, and treasures them as fixed points of orientation in a world that is otherwise in flux. In Dublin, by contrast, ideas are mere sparkles in the flux, dying in the process of being born. Elizabeth Bowen noted this in her wartime spy reports to Churchill:

"The stereotyped, or completely conditioned, mind seemed to me rarer in Dublin than in London. (There is also a great deal of bigotry, but this seems to be individual, not mass.) Public opinion in Dublin is almost dangerously fluid. It is, at the same time, less homogeneous than in any English city I have known" (*Notes On Eire*, 2008 Auburn edn. p15).

My fixed idea about Russia came from Dostoevsky and Tolstoy—possibly because I got something worthwhile from both of them that was relevant to the life of Slieve Luacra. And particularly the Dostoevsky who would sulk in the cellar, rather than participate in Chernyshevsky's vision of life lived transparently in a crystal palace.

Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* follows on in a certain way from Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* When Lenin's political structure began to crumble—about seventy years after the ousted Mensheviks had thought it *was* crumbling—I wondered if a Dostoevskian spirit could have survived the intense modernising of three generations, so that it could see the whole development from the vantage point of a Populism that had been obliged to submit to Progress for a while. When the first volume of *Gulag* appeared, I saw that that spirit had survived, and was intellectually strong.

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Systematic description of society in terms of classes which perform economic functions in market economy began with Smith and Ricardo and was most precisely set out by Ricardo. Rent on land, Interest on money, Profit on enterprise constituted society. And each function was carried out by a social class which lived by it. English literature of the 19th century is largely about the interplay of the social bearers of these economic functions, with Wages appearing on the margin and making its way to the centre.

It was in England that the market broke free of all organised social constraint and

realised itself as Capitalism, and Capitalism became society. Marx joined the Communist Party and wrote a book about Capitalism to show that it was based on an antagonism that would destroy it. But then he spent the rest of his life working out the economic devices by which it kept itself functional, while keeping an eye open for signs of a rebellious spirit that offered hope of destroying it. He wrote a pamphlet in praise of the Paris Commune, which was only a flash in the pan. (It was an act of rebellion against making a settlement of the War that France had launched on Prussia, with popular approval, and which it had lost. The war accelerated the formation of a German State, which it had been its aim to prevent, and French refusal to make a settlement when it could no longer engage in regular warfare, and the call to the French populace to rise up in military action, led to the German occupation of Paris. That war is usually presented in British history as a Prussian assault on France. Eventually the German Occupation found a French government with which it could end the war that had been declared on it, and it withdrew. The Third Republic was established in France and it put down the Commune with mass slaughter.

The Commune, in rebellion against the State on patriotic grounds, made its own emergency arrangements but I don't know what it had to offer towards the project of constructing a Communist state. I don't recall that Lenin gave it much attention. But he gave considerable attention to the French Revolution, and to how Robespierre might have averted his fall on Thermidor by enacting his own 'Thermidor'.

I suppose the idea of a Communist State is a contradiction in terms. Lenin's book in 1917, *The State And Revolution*, suggested that the withering away of the Communist State would begin almost as soon as it was established. The capitalists had to be subordinated by an act of state, and the intervention by the landlords, supported by Britain and France, had to be dealt with. But then, according to the course of events projected by *State & Revolution*, the withering away of the State would begin.

In fact, what happened at the end of the emergency measures connected with the Civil War, was a crisis in the relationship between the small Communist State and the mass of the peasants who had been made owners of private property by it.

A closely observing Menshevik, Miliukov, in exile in the USA, wrote at

that point (1921) that the Bolshevik deviation from Marxist orthodoxy, (which in the circumstances of the time had become a kind of bourgeois orthodoxy), had run its course, made its contribution to the development of Russia, and was burnt out:

"It was necessary for the cycle of events in Russia to come to a close before its meaning could become patent and a criterion be found by which events could be judged in their unity and completion. I think this is now the case with both the 'White' and the 'Red' movements in Russia. The former ran its course with the loss of the last patch of anti-Bolshevik territory in the Crimea; the latter with the Great Russian famine. General Wrangel's defeat manifested the degeneration of the 'White' movement. The famine of 1921 demonstrated Russia's exhaustion under the Bolshevik rule. Whatever happens in time to come, these two phenomena will mark the turning point in the Russian Revolution" (Paul Miliukov: *Russia: Today & Tomorrow*. New York, 1922).

In Miliukov's view there was a necessary revolutionary process in which things like Bolshevism would come and go, contributing something along the way. The purpose was to construct the population into a political substance which lived its life in connection with the State. For centuries under the Tsar there was no interconnected national society in Russia, just a lot of particular things, with most of the people living in particular arrangements of natural anarchy. And the Bolsheviks had their part to play in bringing all the bits and pieces into cohesive social existence:

"It is important... to discriminate between the passing and the lasting substance of the Russian Revolution... While the destructive aspect of the Revolution is of necessity presented in detail in this book, I wish that the constructive processes of the Revolution should not be overlooked. We are witnessing the birth of the Russian democracy, in the midst of the rains of the past which will never return. One must not be impatient with the great and complicated revolutionary process which in other countries took decades, if not centuries, for its completion" (vii).

"On the face of it the Bolshevik revolution of November 7 seemed to be too much Utopian to be able to succeed... Should it really happen, would it not be equivalent to refutation of Marx's doctrine?...

"We shall see... that the Bolsheviks knew all these arguments perfectly well. But we shall also see that they never intended to introduce communism in Russia. The November revolution was to be a revolution not for Russia's sake, but for the sake of the world revolution.

Russia was the means, not an aim in herself" (p25).

When the Tsarist State collapsed in March 1917 the Bolshevik leaders came back from around the world: Geneva, Paris, London, New York. They were internationalist revolutionaries, knowing little about Russian realities. When they seized power their great ambition—

"was to beat the record of the Paris Commune... However, the reality defeated all forecasts. the 'communist' revolution of November 1917 proved a much greater success than the national revolution of March. The last of the four governments of the national Revolution was overthrown after eight months' duration. The Bolshevik government has now lasted four years" (p25).

The returned Bolsheviks found out enough about Russian realities to be able to continue the "*stream of revolutionary transformation*".

How did the Bolshevik regime last so long?

"...three pillars have supported the Bolshevik structure for such a long time. There are... their highly centralised system of administration, numbering quite an army of officials, controlled by the Communist Party; in the second place their Red Army; and in the third place, their secret police and espionage system, which is effectively in the hands of the Communists. Of the two aims...—preparing for communism and keeping in power—the former was gradually removed to a second place, while the latter evolved into a system of self-defence of the small minority against their own people—a system which has never been surpassed by any tyranny at any time in the world's history" (p70).

Has Miliukov forgotten on page 70 what he said in the Preface? That after four years of Bolshevism he as "*witnessing the birth of Russian democracy*"? I don't think so. Some of the Mensheviks became hard-headed in their understanding of the world after it was too late to be of any use to them.

The national revolution of March was a democratic revolution of the people against the Tsarist autocracy, according to the ideologists. In fact it was neither national nor a revolution. The established State collapsed, taking everybody by surprise. An active nation on which a routine of democratic government might be based had no more existence in 1917 than in 1916. The Provisional Government did not do anything much during its eight months. It waited for the results of the Election it had called During the following

four years Bolshevik actions created a democracy, in the sense of an interconnected populace that was active in the affairs of the State.

The State was not in any sense a delegate of the populace. The populace was active under the direction of the State. But a populace that could act under the direction of the State was an altogether new condition of things in Russia, as Miliukov acknowledged.

Of course the regime did not fall in 1921. There was no Russian Thermidor—except the one that was organised by the regime itself to ensure its own continuation.

It was in this development, in Lenin's hands, that Marxism approached closest to the status of being Political Science.

In general terms politics can never be reduced to the regularity of a science, unless the waywardness inherent in human existence is eradicated. But, in particular circumstances, something like a scientific understanding sometimes seems to exist. It requires a combination of analytical detachment and wilful engagement. These are rarely found together. The English Revolution, Cromwell's pseudo-republic, had no understanding of itself. It was closely observed by Clarendon with a considerable degree of detached understanding as he bided his time in France, with his King in tow, waiting on the opportunity to intervene. But Lenin displayed this power of analytical understanding in the midst of the revolution in which he was thoroughly engaged, and in 1921 he redirected the revolution so as to make it encompass the bourgeois revolution, which had been skipped over, and allowed it sufficient scope under the dictatorship of the proletariat to deliver economic substance while being kept blind politically.

And so the four years, that Miliukov in 1921 took, reasonably enough, to be the whole course of the Bolshevik Revolution, proved to be no more than a preliminary phase.

April 2018

Part Six

A number of readers have pointed out that in last month's article I described Miliukov as a Menshevik when he was in fact a Cadet.

I'm afraid I never took much heed of the different groups that made up the Provisional Government between February and October 1917. The essential

characteristic of that Government is that it did not govern, and it was overthrown by the Bolshevik Party because it had the will to govern.

Back in the sixties, when I did most of my reading about 1917, little heed was taken either by the Trotskyist organisations or the Communist Party of either the Cadets or the SRs (Social Revolutionaries). I knew, in a kind of way, that Kerensky was an SR. The only name I could have associated with the Cadets was Struve. Virtually nothing of his was available in English, and the little I picked up about him was that he began as a Marxist and became a bourgeois. Only the Mensheviks seemed to have any relevance to the political medium in which the ICO was hatched.

Some Trotskyists were uneasily aware of a problematic relationship with Menshevism. They felt that it was obligatory to be Leninist. Everybody was Leninist, including the Master of Balliol College, Oxford. But I could not understand how Tony Cliff of the International Socialists (who was by far the most interesting of the Trotskyists intellectually) was able to maintain a veneer of Leninism over a solid foundation of sound Menshevism.

Cliff's analytical description of Russia in 1917 suggested that what was on the cards was the accomplishment of a bourgeois revolution in substance to fill out the nominal bourgeois revolution that happened with the collapse of the Tsarist State in February. But he never said anything like that while I had any kind of connection with him. He remained a dogmatic Leninist in defiance of the facts which he was establishing. And he held that Stalin betrayed the revolution which at the same time he argued was unachievable.

(Cliff's lieutenant at the time was John Palmer, a journalist on the *Financial Times*. Palmer hovered around the verge of our group for a while. His connection with it was by way of Géry Lawless. Lawless had published a single issue of a commercially-produced (Irish emigre) newspaper, funded, I imagine, by Cliff's 'International Socialism' organisation. Palmer had an article in it entitled *Parabellum Patriot*. It was about Sean Treacy who helped to start the War of Independence, and was Palmer's uncle.)

The very strange thing about the bourgeois revolution in Russia as anticipated by Marxists, but not only by Marxists, was that it was understood that it would be a bourgeois revolution without

the bourgeoisie, and that it was theoretically possible for it to be by-passed in substance. And, insofar as the Cadets figured at all in our discussions, it was as an actual bourgeois party that had somehow got involved in the bourgeois revolution.

I knew nothing about it, nor did Pat Murphy. Nor did we pretend to know. We were there amongst people with very strong opinions, but conflicting opinions, and our business to see if sufficient agreement could be brought about to enable something to be done.

The Cadets, the Constitutional Democrats, the actual bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolution, supposing that is what they were, were off the agenda. And I retained the fixed idea that they were not worth bothering about. But, after I had stopped doing anything concentrated about Russia, I came across bits of Miliukov that were very much worth bothering about—and the last thing I would have assumed him to be was a Cadet.

He remarks somewhere that, while he could agree with the characterisation of the February Revolution as "*bourgeois*", it was not capitalist or landlord. It was bourgeois in the sense that it was conducted by intellectuals.

This may make little sense in Irish terms. There is no intelligentsia in Ireland. There are only careerist academics on the make in the rat-race. Contemporary Ireland may be capitalist but it is hardly bourgeois.

In France there is an intelligentsia. In Germany there used to be an intelligentsia and it shaped the world of art and thought to a very considerable extent. In Russia there was over a long period an autonomous intelligentsia which did remarkable things. And power fell to that intelligentsia in February 1917. Or the power of State collapsed, leaving it to these parties of the intelligentsia to make a new power structure—if they could.

Tsarism fell because the Army lost confidence in the ability of the Tsar to give effective direction to the War into which he had launched it, and it looked to the Duma to take over and do it more effectively. The Duma was a Parliament that had existed since the 1905 Revolution as a powerless adviser of the Tsar.

The Grand Duke, the heir to the throne, thought of continuing the function of monarchy in conjunction with the Duma but was given to understand that this would not be tolerated. He stood aside. The Duma became sovereign with Prince Lyvov as Prime Minister.

Prince Lyvov was an aristocrat of very ancient lineage; a sentimental Tolstoyan who idealised the peasantry; and the organiser of a national (i.e. state-wide) federation of Zemstvos. The Zemstvo was an elected local government body established in the 1860s, after the Emancipation subverted traditional authority. I don't know how the Zemstvos functioned in their various territories, but it was to the national federation of Zemstvos that one would look for the influence of a national civil society in 1917 as the substratum for a bourgeois state. But there doesn't seem to have been any such civil society element asserting itself in the revolutionary situation.

The function of the Federation seems to have been to support the Army at war, first the Japanese War and then the war on Germany, by providing hospital services, canteen facilities, and even supply of ammunition.

Prince Lyvov, though he may have been a sentimentalist at heart, was born to command. His head knew what needed to be done in the anarchy that followed the subversion of Tsarism by the Army in the hope that the Duma would construct a political order that would be more effective in supporting the war. The Dual Power of Duma and Soviets needed to be broken. The Provisional Government needed to govern, and in order to do this it needed to curb the Soviet movement—a development in the 1905 Revolution that resurfaced in February 1917. The Soviets (occupational associations) did not have the purpose of forming themselves into the State, but they were an obstacle to the formation of an effective order of state by the Duma.

It appears that Lyvov saw what needed to be done but that, either it was the kind of thing he was unwilling to undertake, or he saw that it was the kind of thing that it was appropriate for a man of the people—rather than a patriarch—to undertake. Anyhow, he handed the task over to Kerensky, the Socialist Revolutionary. And Kerensky, after a while, enlisted the Mensheviks.

Whether Kerensky understood the task and bungled it, or whether he never comprehended the task but was driven towards it by circumstances but always resisted it even while approaching it, I don't know.

Anyhow, he did not do what was required for the establishment of a political order that would prosecute the War more effectively, the Soviet movement continued to spread, and the Bolsheviks

took power through the Soviets on a policy of ending the War and giving the land to the peasants—who were already taking it. And, when a Constituent Assembly, returned by state-wide elections organised by the Provisional Government, met early in 1918, there was a functional Bolshevik State in the active centres of power.

The Bolshevik State refused to give way. The Provisional Government, after a year of existence, was still so far from being a State that it could not seriously contest the issue. And, if the Bolsheviks had stood down and let things start again with the Constituent Assembly, it is likely that there would have been Civil War anyway.

British Liberalism had surrendered a few months earlier: a victim of a War which it had launched and which had found out its inadequacies. It gave way to a regime not only of Tories but, worse still, *Unionists*! A regime fronted by a Liberal opportunist driven by frantic energy and unlimited ambition: Lloyd George.

But there was continuity in the British State, because there existed, beneath the form of things, the substance of the ruling class that had directed affairs in the medium of a formal monarchy for two centuries. And, if historical comparisons conducive to political sense are to be made, the relevant British comparison with Russia is not 1917 but 1641.

The issue in 1641 was pure Parliamentary government in pursuit of an ideal. It split the reform movement of the time. The purists won. They defeated the Royalists in a Civil War. A period of parliamentary government followed. It failed. The Monarchy was restored without resistance. Then, in the course of a couple of generations, a ruling class of gentry/aristocracy took over, preserved the form of monarchy, and established what is called *the Government of the King in Parliament*, with the Prime Minister exercising the Royal Prerogative.

If England persists in representing itself as the model which the world must follow—and it still does, with disastrous effect—then let us at least know what England is politically, and how it came to be a democracy.

The Bolshevik *coup* is said to have aborted the development of a liberal democratic state in Russia. But was what Bolshevism made impossible ever a realistic possibility? The experience of many other revolutions since then suggests not.

Popular revolutions everywhere have resulted in what England describes as

dictatorships—except that, when they are friendly to Britain, they are not so described. Is it at all probable that this is due to the coincidence that men of an evil disposition happen to gain influence always and use the influence to pervert the normal course of events in order to gain enormous power and wealth for themselves?

It appears that around the midsummer of 1917 in Russia the project of a collective dictatorship was thought about. It was not attempted, probably because it was incompatible with the idealism of the situation, Liberal and Marxist, that was fed by the popular turmoil. But, if it had been attempted and had succeeded and the parties of the Provisional Government had discarded their Constitutional illusions and had combined into a functional oligarchy, would that not have been somewhat similar to what was brought about in England after Parliamentary Government was tried and failed in the 1650s? What was the ruling class that commanded the situation from the Restoration in 1660 to the Reform Act in 1832—and indeed long after the Reform Act—but a collective dictatorship?

Democratic elements were gradually introduced into the oligarchic British State only after it was established so securely as a State that its overthrow by democratic agitations was hardly even a fantasy, and after it had established itself as an exploitative world Empire that drew the produce of the world to England by direct action, and the ideology of Imperialism had taken root in the mass mind of England. It was only around 1890 that the political elite of the British State began to see general democratisation as a practical proposition.

There was nothing in the English mode of democratisation that gives support for the view that Russia would probably have become a liberal democracy in 1918 if Lenin had not dispersed the Constituent Assembly.

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Fedor Dan was an intransigent Menshevik opponent of Bolshevism from long before 1917. He opposed the Bolshevik *coup* in 1917 and maintained an internal opposition to Bolshevism until he was exiled in 1922. Then, before he died in 1947, he wrote a survey of *The Origins of Bolshevism* of which an English translation was published in 1964. In this he describes the Bolshevik development, not as a deviation from a norm that Russia should have complied with, but as being a normal development under the circumstances of capitalism in Russia, much as Miliukov did in the extract

I included last month.

He began by comparing the Russian and American states as political developments spreading over Continents:

"Nevertheless Russian evolution took a course completely different from that of the United States, although Russia, even more than America, constitutes a whole continent with inexhaustible reserves of all kinds of raw materials for industry...

"It is not the place here to linger over the conditions that governed the destiny of America. It is a fact that during the half-century that passed between the abolition of slavery and the 1914-18 World War, American industry went through a process of gigantic development. In many respects American capitalism outdistanced European capitalism. The organiser and leader of American capitalist economy—the rapidly growing bourgeoisie—actually became the ruling class in its own country. A firm, spacious and secure edifice of democracy was created on a firm capitalist foundation.

"During those 50 years the tempestuous evolution of Russia, interrupted by revolutionary explosions, took place quite differently...

"To a high degree its capitalism was imported... Its bourgeoisie never achieved the role of the ruling class—either in the sense of ruling the State or in the sense of influencing the masses of the people politically or intellectually. The 'Great Reforms' were not crowned by a democratic constitution, as had been expected by their ardent sponsors, while the State Duma wrenched forth by the 1905 revolution was very quickly reduced to the role of a mock-parliament, scarcely masking the untouched autocracy.

"But political democracy on a capitalist foundation proved to be equally decrepit and unviable in the 1917 revolution engendered by the First World War. In the course of some seven or eight months it perished—together with Russian capitalism and the Russian bourgeoisie. Only in the framework of Socialism—and a dictatorial Socialism at that—could the task be set, and partially even realised of 'overtaking and passing' the advanced capitalist countries with respect to industry. In contradistinction to America, the 'americanisation' of Russia is being realised not in a capitalist but in a Socialist form. And there can be no doubt that if, as seems indicated, one of the consequences of the anti-Fascist victory proves to be the strengthening of political democracy, then in Russia, in any case, democracy can only be erected on a Socialist and not a capitalist foundation.

"The causes of the unviability of bourgeois democracy in Russia are contained, in the final analysis, in the historically belated entry of Russia on the path of capitalist evolution. This belatedness placed a stamp of singularity

on the whole socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country...

"My work is not a history of the *struggle* for democracy in Russia, but a history of the Russian democratic idea...

"I hope to enable the reader to understand 'Bolshevism' not as an accidental phenomenon that was summoned to life by a quite exceptional concatenation of circumstances and that interrupted the liberation struggle, which had been going on for decades, of the Russian intelligentsia, working-class and people as a whole, but, on the contrary, as a political product of that struggle and an historically inevitable stage on the road to its consummation. For this reason any polemical intention is quite alien to this book" (p2-3).

"The profound peculiarity of Russian democratic thought lies in this, that from its inception it never for a moment idealized capitalism and was not drawn to it... The nascent Russian bourgeoisie not only was in no way a hero for the Russian democracy that was seeing the light simultaneously with it, but, on the contrary, instantly became for it an object of hostility..." (p10).

And so there was the bourgeois revolution of 1917 in which the bourgeoisie were held in contempt as a "reactionary" element. The bourgeois revolution was merely a stepping-stone on the way to Socialism in the view of the democratic parties. But how that step could be taken democratically remained as unclear in practice in 1917 as it had been in theory for a dozen years before 1917:

"The antithesis between Democracy and Socialism, the struggle for whose resolution runs through the history of the Russian revolutionary thought like a red thread, remained unresolved by the 1917 revolution too..." (p408).

The issue was resolved by direct action by the Bolsheviks, and then—

"just as throughout the civil war, so in the years of initial instability and subsequent gradual consolidation when the Soviet regime, shot through by 'crises', the political profile of the regime and forces contending with each other played a minimal role in the peasant's attitude towards them. The peasantry, or individual strata of it (the 'kulaks', the 'medium peasants', the 'paupers') defined its attitude towards them exclusively from the point of view of its own struggle—in the beginning for land, then for its free use of the products of the land. The 'Constituent Assembly Front' organised by the SRs not only condemned itself to defeat in advance, but did a good deal to discredit the very idea of political

democracy in its 'European' form in the eyes of the broad masses of the peasantry. This came about just because, having made this idea their banner, the S.R.s went over to the side of the anti-Bolshevik barricade where there were grouped primarily the leading forces of the so-called 'White' movement, that is, forces in which the peasants rightly saw defenders of the old landed proprietors and the champions of a reversal of the total reapportionment that had just been carried out.

"In Russian conditions circumstances so fell out that the 'kolkhoz' [collective farm] system, which definitively shattered the narrow framework of individual peasant farming, also shattered the limited intellectual and political horizon of the peasantry... For the first time it made tangible... the uninterrupted link between its own economic destiny and the destiny of the state. It was only in the school of the Soviets... that for the first time the peasantry began to learn the 'state' approach to the problems of its own socio-economic way of life too. There, in the Soviets, even after the levelling off of the electoral rights of all citizens proclaimed by the 'Stalin' constitution of 1936, remnants of the privileged classes liquidated by the Soviet revolution were scarcely represented. The monopolists were in fact the 'toilers'—the workers and peasants together with the Soviet bureaucracy and the trade union intelligentsia, who, however, were serving by now not private but state interests. That is why in spite of the 'single candidacy' of Soviet elections and of the 'one-party' regulation of Soviet policy, Soviet 'parliamentarianism' has proved to be far from a 'fiction' but an extremely real factor in the 'democratization' of the Soviet regime" (p468-9).

All of this was democratisation in the sense of the creation of a *demos*—an interconnected national political body. And it is only when such a national body politic exists that the rivalry of political parties for the control of Government in a stable state structure can be carried on.

Iraq in 1990 was in the process of being democratized in this basic sense—of being formed into a national body politic—when the Western Imperialist democracies declared that it was subject to a Tyranny or Despotism or Dictatorship and decided to overthrow the 'regime'. When the 'regime' was overthrown, a wild murderous anarchy set in, and multi-party elections were held in the disrupted body-politic. These elections could do no more than reflect the anarchy to which society had been reduced by invasion. A British Minister, Hillary Benn, commented: "*We gave them their freedom, and it was up to them what they did with it*".

What multi-party Iraq did, in the

condition of being a disrupted body-politic, was make war on itself. What the Russia of the Stalin Constitution did was defeat Nazi Germany after Germany had defeated Poland, France and Britain had withdrawn from the war in Europe after having launched it.

What Dan says about the onset of the World War is entirely free of the fantasy evasions of Trotskyism, and of much more than Trotskyism:

"'Munich' was not merely a political compromise with Hitler. In Munich the governments of Great Britain and France sanctioned his destruction of Czechoslovakia and its *de facto* occupation. After the fusion with Austria, with the closeness to the Nazi Government of Germany not only of the governments of Hungary and Rumania, but also of the 'Colonels' government of Poland, which had taken part in the divisions of Czechoslovakia and had previously refused to give the Red Army the right to pass through Polish territory in case of a war with Fascist Germany, this meant the definitive military-strategic exposure of the Western border of the Soviet Union, the annihilation of the last obstacle to an invasion of its borders by the Hitler armies..." (p430).

And the Soviet/German Pact was a holding operation in response to Munich.

The contrast between Russian conduct in the two World Wars is very great. In 1914 Tsarist Russia was ready for war. It had war aims—very ambitious, expansionist, aims—to which Britain had encouraged it. It was ready to spring, and its sprang. Its mobilisation in July set things in motion. It went on the offensive, advanced, was stopped, and began to break down.

Stalin wrote somewhere in praise of defensive tactics of the kind often employed by Britain. He had no war aims—no reason for going to war. German Intelligence reported that what they encountered was a defensive deployment of a kind that might be adapted for offence. There were Russian reverses in the early stage of the German invasion but the defensive line was never broken. The German advance was held, and it was then that the Russian steamroller went into motion—causing Britain to scramble back on the Continent after years of delay. And there was no rebellion. The newly-created Russian *demos* held firm throughout the War.

Dan makes reference to articles on Bolshevism by Martov that sound interesting, but I could find no trace of

them in English. Martov, who was Dan's brother-in-law, was the oracle of Menshevism. He had combined with Lenin to give Marxist Social Democracy a coherent voice in a magazine called *Iskra*.

The Menshevik/Bolshevik split was a political parting of the ways between Martov and Lenin. Martov wanted to educate the working class to act politically for itself. Lenin could not see the workers, as non-owners of property, cohering as a class politically. His strategy was that working-class action in politics was practically possible only under the hegemony of a scientific socialist party.

Dan suggests that the establishment of socialist economy after the Bolshevik revolution, was assisted by the stratum of Menshevik-educated workers that took part in it. I think that probably was the case. But there is hardly anything of Menshevism available in English translation. Why should there be? Why should the bourgeois world which they failed in 1917 be interested in them? They were committed to a bourgeois-democratic transition to socialism. The bourgeoisie was happy with that as a thing that would never happen. But Menshevism failed—and then its effects were absorbed into the melting pot of the Revolution. Why should bourgeois England bother with them? The wonder is that Dan's book was translated and published.

The translation is, however, introduced with an uneasy Preface by Professor Leonard Shapiro, rejecting the idea that only Bolshevism met the requirements of the condition of Russia in 1917. What if, he says, the others had not done what they did, and had instead done something closer to what the Bolsheviks did?

"The victory of Bolshevism was perhaps only 'inevitable' in the sense that, assuming all the actors in the drama, including the Mensheviks, behaved as they did, it became possible... for Lenin to achieve his object of overthrowing the democratic regime which came into being in February... The Mensheviks *could* after all, have followed the advice of Plekhanov... and have made it more possible for the Provisional Government to establish a stable regime, which *could* have taken Russia out of the war without ensuring collapse. The Provisional Government, in turn, *could* have shown more foresight in realizing the importance of ending the war, establishing its own legitimacy and disarming the Bolsheviks and their private army—and so on and so forth. There is nothing 'inevitable' in history except the fact that human beings behave in a manner which accords with their traditions, habits and preconceived

prejudices..."

Is that not just another way of saying that if the Provisional Government, which was something less than a regime, had acted authoritatively, and made itself a regime by doing what it left for the Bolsheviks to do, there would probably have been no Bolshevik Revolution?

But could the Provisional Government, which owed its existence to the Army, and was committed to the War, have ended the War in defiance of the Army?

Dan, who was present in the situation, took account, with hindsight, of the substantial things in the course of events which provided sufficient reason for the way things went. Shapiro seeks refuge in things that the Provisional Government might have contemplated but did not do.

Long ago, in Belfast Central Library, I came across the *Memoirs* of Baron Wrangel, entitled *From Serfdom To Bolshevism*. I am not certain that he was the famous Whiteguard General. The book gives no information about him, and a biography of the Whiteguard General makes no reference to this book. Anyhow, the following piece, which I copied out, sums up the way the Army saw its Provisional Government:

"The curtain has fallen upon 'the absolutism of the Romanovs'. It was to be followed by a stupid force: 'Eunuchs in power', and that by a closing tragedy, 'King Israel', a drama approved by the Governments of Germany, Britain, Italy and Bulgaria..."

"The Provisional Government consisted of Messrs. Kerensky, Miliukov... but there is no point in mentioning their names. These men, these emasculated wretches, rather, are not as interesting as the Europeans believe them to be. I have seen more than one of their kind in the East; at the first glance you would never suspect them of being the kind of creatures they are. It is only when you can see them at close quarters that you can see that they are entirely lacking in virility and that they are incredibly flabby creatures absolutely destitute of will power; that they are good for nothing and not even competent to look after the ladies of the seraglio... Just as in Russia the 'Soviet of Workmen and Soldiers' settled everything... [Wrangel was in the Crimea.] The wretched creatures were therefore merely ornamental objects who did more harm than good. They were harmful because they brought everything into confusion and chaos and let things take their course.

"But I must say a few words about the Grand Eunuch, Kerensky. For some months he was the favourite clown, the principal actor in the force, the star buffoon who got the publicity. He played

every part: Minister of Justice, tribune, darling child, young premier, grand old man, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the armies..."

"Fortunately the Bolsheviks cleared out the eunuchs shortly afterwards and rid us of that verminous crowd. That was the one good action they did; though it is true that afterwards they extracted heavy payment for that service..." (*From Serfdom To Bolshevism*, English edition 1927).

That was the bourgeois revolution without a bourgeoisie—a bourgeois revolution conducted by the intelligentsia—as seen from the viewpoint of the Army, which is, after all, the basic institution of a state.

The Army brought down the Tsar in the hope of getting a Parliamentary Government that would provide it with the means of fighting the War more effectively. The Parliament was implicated with the Soviet movement right from the start through the person of Kerensky. A Soviet was an association of people in the same occupation which decided how things should be done in that occupation.

One of the first acts of the Parliament was to democratise the Army by recognising the associations of its various layers as being authoritative. But an Army is necessarily hierarchical. The Army of the most democratic democracy must be hierarchical in order to be functional. The Parliament subverted hierarchical subordination in an Army at war, and exhorted the officers to establish effective control by means of tact and wisdom.

The Bolsheviks brushed aside the Provisional Government, ended the Tsarist War to which the bourgeois democracy had dedicated itself, and constructed an Army which took on and defeated all-comers.

May 2018

Part Seven

The message of the Russian Revolution of 1917 is not that Democracy was overthrown by a Communist *coup d'etat*. It is that Democratic Revolution is in one sense a self-contradictory idea. A democracy is a tightly organised form of State. A revolution, in the generally understood sense of the word, has as its essential thing, the destruction of a State. It might be that in a certain pedantic sense it can be taken to mean the replacement of

one form of State by another. When a wheel revolves it does not destroy itself. But a revolution in a state is first of all an act of destruction. And what the destruction of a State gives way to is anarchy. What the destruction of the Tsarist State in Russia in March 1917 produced was anarchy. There then developed within the anarchy in the course of nine months a purposeful political party which in November enacted a *coup d'etat* as the first act in the construction of a State out of the anarchy.

Marxists in these later times are excessively addicted to the word "*revolution*", and they apply the term *state* to something which is not a State. My experience of politics in any active way is confined to Northern Ireland. But it is evident in hindsight that there is no better place than Northern Ireland for getting an insight into the political realities of the modern world.

Back in 1970 in Belfast I knew somebody very well who has now become a top dog historian and public figure—Lord Bew. Lord Bew was then a systematic Marxist-Leninist of the most advanced kind—an Althusserian—while I was, in basic outlook, more of a Kantian than anything else. That meant in practice that I never took leave of common sense in favour of any system. What Kant said, in impenetrable language, is that in the end, after one has flirted with all the scientific pretensions which aspired to straighten out the 'crooked wood of humanity', there is only common sense and the vulgar but practical notion of *sufficient reason*.

Lord Bew shaped himself to the ideological requirements of the Northern Ireland Office without ceasing to write in rigorously transcendental language and we parted company in the early 1970s. He became the semi-official ideologist of the British State in the North. When Marjorie Mowlam was appointed Northern Ireland Secretary, she announced that she was reading Paul Bew in preparation for the job.

Lord Bew wrote that the State was destroyed in 1972, was restored, and was destroyed again in 1974.

Now I was there in 1972. And I was dependent on the State and would have been in a very bad way if it had been destroyed. I would possibly have managed to carry on until it was cobbled together again in January 1974. But, after it was destroyed again in 1974, a quarter of a century with no State followed and my survival would have been miraculous.

As a matter of empirical fact the State

as an actual political structure was undisturbed by the superficial political carry-on of 1972 and 1974, and it became increasingly responsive to the requirements of the population during the generation after 1974.

The existence of the State in the Six Counties was disconnected from the superficial political life of the Northern Ireland system. The politics on which the Six Counties depended was the democratic party-politics of England, Scotland and Wales, from which Northern Ireland was excluded. The State continued, regardless of what was going on in the Northern Ireland side-show. In State terms, Northern Ireland was an arena set aside by Westminster for Irish faction-fighting. The adventures that went on in the faction-fight arena had no effect whatever on the substantial structure of the State as far as the 'ordinary decent citizen' was concerned. The actual State had always been administered, according to British law, by what was called "*the Imperial Civil Service*". There was a continuum of existence of the State as an administrative structure between the Six Counties and what was called "*the mainland*". The layer of Northern Ireland existence in which there was turmoil was a place apart—a place that had been set apart—from the political life of the state for some purpose of State that Westminster and Whitehall never acknowledged.

Lord Bew rejected the view that Northern Ireland was an undemocratically governed region of the UK state. He was invited to address a meeting of the Campaign For Labour Representation in Belfast in the mid-seventies. He did so in the company of Professor Patterson. What they said did not address the undeniable fact that the Six Counties were excluded from the party-political substance of the democracy of the state.

If they had not rejected the CLR description of the situation, it is a virtual certainty that Patterson would not have been made a Professor and Bew would have been made a Lord Professor.

Both of them joined the Official Republican movement, and Lord Bew was a member of the Official IRA, according to an uncontradicted report in the *London Review of Books*. And then they were advisers to the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Lord Trimble, who was browbeaten by Tony Blair into nominal compliance with the Good Friday Agreement, but then set himself to prevent its functioning.

When, if ever, they rejected Marxism-

Leninism I do not know. I would guess that they are Marxist-Leninists still. Where would the British State be without its Marxist-Leninists? Lord Bew explained to me, when he was an overt and rigorous advocate of systematic Marxism-Leninism and was concerned about my tendency towards waywardness, that much might be done within the *Ideological State Apparatus*. And he proved it by becoming a member of the House of Lords.

The Official IRA at the time when he must have joined it was authoritatively Marxist Leninist in the Althusserian mode. Even the exhibitionist gunman, Des O'Hagan, expressed himself in Althusserianism. Its great merit was that this language was so dense and so profound that it was all but impossible to tell what was being said in it. I used to wonder whether those who were doing the saying had themselves any definite ideas in mind, or were speaking "*in diverse tongues*" after the manner of Pentecostal Churches.

Anyhow the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State was thoroughly debased by Marxist-Leninist workers in the Ideological State Apparatus of the Imperial State, and the ultimate debasement was the description of the Northern Ireland facade of the British State as being itself a State, which was destroyed in 1972, rose again, and was destroyed again, with ordinary life continuing without interruption regardless of these revolutionary events.

Nobody in Petrograd in 1917 could have doubted that the State had broken down, even though ordinary life depended very little on the State, as compared with Britain in the 1970s.

The despotic Tsarist State crumbled. There was freedom from the State as a result. There was not democracy. Democracy is not freedom from the State. It is a complex form of state. It is a way of conducting an authoritative state so that the bulk of the population feel implicated in it. The "*Democratic Revolution*" did not bring that into existence in place of Tsarist absolutism. There was no *democratic absolutism* in Russia in 1917. The State broke down and a subordinate Parliament had notional sovereignty conferred on it by the Grand Duke who refused to inherit the throne.

If the Tsarist State had been overthrown by a conspiratorial bourgeois democratic *coup d'etat*, then a new form of State would have begun to assert itself from the start. But what sprang into existence on the collapse of the Tsarist State was democratic ideology and no State. And, in that freedom, various social elements

asserted themselves in ways that obstructed state-formation.

There was no bourgeois-democratic force in being that was capable of taking over from the Tsarist State. That is to say that there was no socially influential bourgeois class in being, that had established hegemony over a substantial section of the populace, and could set about governing in the confidence of winning an election held on a general adult franchise.

The term "*bourgeois democracy*" came to be used as if it expressed a single thing, because in Britain at a certain moment it gave the appearance of being so. It is in fact a combination of the two things. And in Russia in 1917 these two things did not exist in combination. There was the bourgeoisie and there was democracy. The bourgeoisie was a small, politically impotent class, while democracy was an ideal amongst the people. And the relationship of the bourgeoisie with the people was not such that bourgeois rule could present itself as rule by the people—as it did in Britain for a generation or so before 1914.

What flourished in the anarchy that followed the collapse of the Tsarist State was groundless Idealism. From the viewpoint of this Idealism, the Bourgeois State and the Democratic State were seen as contradictory.

This was not a state of mind brought about by Bolshevik propaganda. It was inherent in the understanding of those who, on the Western scheme of things, should have been bourgeois-democrats.

Sukhanov, in Western terms, was a bourgeois intellectual. But he was an intellectual who could only see bourgeois rule as a dictatorship. He was certainly an intellectual. He was also an 'expert' in economics and planning. He had served the Tsarist State as an expert, while at the same time being sought by the Tsarist police as a subversive. He had been an SR [Socialist Revolutionary] in his youth, but for many years he had been non-party. During 1917 he was in contact with everybody, and his long account of events from February to October is, apart from Baron Wrangel's from the other side, the only one I know of published in English translation. He was a friend of Kerensky, but was of the opinion that Kerensky came to stand for bourgeois dictatorship against democracy.

"*Bourgeois democracy*" was self-evidently a contradiction in terms. The bourgeoisie—the capitalists—were a

small, not quite Russian, minority.

Baron Wrangel, who was on the Board of a German company, suggested that there was no working class in Russia, meaning that there was no social class of workers. Hardly any industrial workers were the sons of industrial workers. The great majority were peasant by origin, without a sense of position as a social class of workers.

In England a class of workers had been produced by Capitalism over a long period. The two had developed together. Workers had a sense of position as a social class, with a sense of deference to the bourgeoisie. The *laissez-faire* capitalist party was the Liberal Party, and it exercised a strong hegemonic influence over what might be called progressive workers for a couple of generations. The political separation of working class interest from capitalist interest occurred very slowly.

Arthur Henderson, who made the Labour Party into a class party for the 1918 Election, had served his political apprenticeship in the Liberal Party. And there was also a conservative working class, brought about by the fact that it was the Tories who had introduced the first measures of protection of workers against capitalism in the form of the *Factory Acts*.

But in Russia Capitalism was brought in from outside, and its workers were peasants suddenly confronted with the naked reality of proletarianisation, and not inclined to endure it. And proletarian dictatorship had a kind of immediate meaning which it lacked in Western Europe—and was undoubtedly closer to democracy than bourgeoisie dictatorship would be.

*

When the Tsar abdicated in mid-March, in response to Army mutinies, Kerensky, by his own account urged the Duma—the subordinate Parliament—to reject the Decree dissolving it and to assert itself as the authority in the state. The Duma refused to do this, but neither did it actually dissolve itself.

The abdicating Tsar passed the Crown to the Grand Duke, his brother. The Grand Duke was persuaded not to accept it and he conferred authority on the Duma. This took a couple of days. Kerensky in retrospect attributed what followed to the refusal of the Duma to reject dissolution formally on the first day and thus assert itself as the authority in the state. Although authority was transferred to it by the Grand Duke within days, by that time the Soviet had already met.

The Duma, by not rejecting the Decree

of Dissolution, while continuing to meet, reduced itself to a private body on a par with the Soviet. The Dual Power of Duma and Soviet (both of them concessions to the 1905 Revolution) existed for a moment before the Duma was made sovereign by the Grand Duke, and the Duma could thereafter do nothing about it. And that was why it all went wrong.

If the Duma had formally rejected the Decree of Dissolution, the subsequent course of events would possibly have been different. The 'revolution' would have been given something of the character of a *coup d'etat*. But, in the critical moment, it saw itself as subordinate, and after it was made sovereign it was forever trying to catch up with events.

The Bolsheviks then established State power through the Soviets and abolished the redundant Constituent Assembly when it finally met after the event.

What Kerensky says in effect is that the Duma behaved constitutionally when it should have seized power, and therefore could never establish itself as a commanding authority afterwards.

A DIGRESSION ON THE GERMAN REVOLUTION

The Bolshevik *coup d'etat* was enacted with the support of the German Government under the Kaiser. Lenin undertook to make a separate peace with Germany if he gained power, and he did so after about three months, against strong opposition within the Bolshevik Party. Germany then transported forces to the Western Front, and the German State came within a whisker of surviving by breaking through the Anglo-French lines with the Ludendorff offensive. But the line held, and then the American presence brought Germany to defeat, by reason of fighting power and propaganda rather than of numbers. And the fighting ended in November 1918 with an Armistice which, because of a 'Revolution' in Germany, was treated by Britain and France as an Unconditional Surrender by Germany.

A book was published in England a few years ago with the title *The Peoples War Of 1914-1919*. It did not live up to its title.

A crucial part of the War—the crucial part, as far as the subsequent history of Europe was concerned—was fought *after* the Armistice of November 1918. The Armistice, combined with the German 'Revolution' encouraged by American propaganda, enabled the Allied war-effort to be brought to bear directly against the German populace by means of Occupation and starvation.

Germany in its vigorous economic development following the formation of the national state in 1871, had outrun its domestic food and raw material resources by 1900. The fact was noted in the English ruling class magazines. And the starvation of Germans by Blockade was a British weapon of war in 1914-18. But the Royal Navy was shut out of the Baltic until the Armistice and the German mutinies of November 1918. The Blockade was continued after the Armistice, and was intensified when entry to the Baltic made it possible to stop German trade with Scandinavia. And it continued until the Government of the German 'Revolution', tailored to Allied requirements, agreed to sign a confession of War Guilt on behalf of the German people.

(When, after the next war on Germany, Bomber Harris was frowned upon for his "area bombing" designed to destroy civilian population, he retorted that the Royal Navy had starved half a million Germans to death in the 1914 war without reproof.)

German experience of Allied conduct during the year following the Armistice cannot but have taught the lesson that Darwinism was the morality of Progress.

*

Which was on the cards in Germany in November 1918, a Democratic Revolution or a Socialist Revolution? There were pressures for each, but was either realisable?

To undertake a Democratic Revolution implies that the State is undemocratic. But, in the German State, the power of the purse lay with the Parliament, and the electoral franchise for the Parliament was certainly not less than was the case in Britain. But it was decreed by Britain when it declared war that the German State was an "autocracy".

How was this proved? By the fact that the German Parliament voted War Credits?!

But the British Parliament also voted War Credits. The King Emperor could not have made war if the Parliament had not given him the money. In other regards that is taken to be the crucial thing. Neither could the Kaiser have made war if Parliament had not voted him the money. But that is somehow felt not to be the crucial thing in the German state. The Kaiser, though entirely dependent on Parliament for the means of action, was an autocrat. Therefore Germany had to be normalised by means of a democratic revolution.

A democratic revolution against a democratic State!

From the East, Germany was under pressure to engage in socialist revolution. But Lenin had seen Germany during the War as demonstrating the practical possibility of Socialism by the means it had devised of organising itself for the War. And it was to the virtually existing Socialism of Germany that he looked as the international force that would reinforce a socialist revolution in Russia.

A book about the foundation of the Weimar Republic was published by the Cambridge University Press in 2017, which seems to carry to completion the merger of University College Dublin with Cambridge University that was set in motion by T. Desmond Williams in the mid-20th century. The book was written in UCD and funded by various Irish institutions but without any attempt to see the matter from an Irish viewpoint. There is no mention of the fact that Connolly supported Germany in the War, and that he published descriptions of the German State that conflicted sharply with the British insistence that it was an Autocracy, and, in the matter of socialist development, treated it as being greatly more advanced than Britain.

Connolly supported the German war effort on socialist grounds and on the ground also that a German victory was needed for a better ordering of world affairs. And, in the light of the condition of the German economy now, more than a century later, after two German defeats in war followed by humiliation and plunder, and of the condition of the world under British hegemony in the first instance and later under the hegemony of Britain's wild colonial offspring, is it reasonable to say that he was wrong?

During the War Connolly gave space in his newspaper only to the German War Socialists who said that in defending Germany they were defending their own interests. I assume he knew that there was an anti-War tendency in German Socialism, but he did not publish a word in support of it. He acted as if he knew that Britain, because of its nature, and because of the long-sighted way it had brought the War about, would not agree to a compromise peace as long as the Royal Navy dominated the world. He committed himself to a German victory in the cause of Socialism and of the freedom of the seas.

On the view of Germany which he published, there does not seem to be any

need for a democratic revolution against autocracy or for a fundamentalist working class revolt against capitalism. It was democratic enough to be going on with, and what its further socialist development required was not revolution but careful nursing.

No trace of this view of things is to be found in this Cambridge University book that—

"would not have been possible without a number of major Irish government funding awards. I am extremely grateful to the Irish government for a three-year post-graduate scholarship to the European University Institute in Fiesole/Florence; the Irish Research Council for a two-year post-doctoral fellowship—held at the Centre for War Studies in the School of History at University College Dublin; and to the Irish Research Council for an International Career Development 'Elevate' Fellowship, co-funded by the European Union's Marie Curie Actions programme held jointly at UCD's Centre for War Studies and the Free University of Berlin... In addition to these major awards I benefitted from the EU1's 4th year grant as well as regular doses of EU departmental research funding" etc., etc.

The book begins:

"On the afternoon of 9 November 1918, the sight of red flags flying above central Berlin reminded the journalist Theodor Wolff of the great scenes of the French Revolution. The comparison was not misplaced. The German Revolution of 1918-19 was one of 20th century Europe's formative events. It was both the end of the 1st World War and of the German Empire; as well as the birth of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first fully democratic state. The revolution was part of a wider period of political change that saw the collapse of the continent's multi-ethnic land Empires and their replacement with nation-states..." (*Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* by Mark Jones, UCD/Cambridge University Press, p1).

Well, what the German Empire was was the German nation-state formed two generations earlier, and it was more coherently national than some of the new 'nation-states' into which central Europe was reconstructed by the British and French Empires in 1919. And none of the multi-ethnic Empires had *collapsed*. The Hapsburg Empire was defeated in war and was broken up by the Empires that defeated it. Unlike the British Empire, it had not suffered national rebellion during the war by any of the peoples in it. And the "nation-states" carved out of it were

themselves the scene of national antagonisms during the inter-War period.

What Germany needed in late 1918 and 1919 was a strong movement of national resistance against the Imperialist Super-Powers: Britain and France. What it got was a spurious 'revolution' that left it at the mercy of the Super-Powers.

When the American presence became felt in the war in the Autumn of 1918, and the German Army began to be pressed back, an attempt was made to prepare for resistance to the bitter end. That was called *Endlösung* (final solution), but this was prevented by mutiny, and the mutiny spread and led to the collapse of the State. Jones describes the *Endlösung* project as "fantasy" and refers to the experience of 1944-5 to prove it. Hitler determined when it became clear that Germany would not win the War that there should be no submission in anticipation of defeat. And the nation stood by him to the bitter end. Both the Communists and the Capitalists had to fight their way into Germany until they met. Hitler hoped that they would fall out before they met and that he could repeat Frederick the Great's survival, but his case for resistance to the bitter end was that there should be no ground for the doubt about outcome as there was in 1918. There wasn't.

And how much better they were treated in 1945 than in 1919. There was some cosmetic punishment but the State was up and running again in a few years, with much the same personnel everywhere except right at the top—and there were some who were close to the top.

In November 1918 the Allies were demanding that the abdicated Kaiser should be put on trial for his life for the hitherto unknown offence of *war crime*. They held that he had caused the War.

How had he caused it? By being too emphatic in his support for Austria in its demand on Serbia regarding the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne. *Not* by the march through Belgium. The War had already started in Europe before Britain made that its reason for entering the War—after having refused to deter Germany from marching through Belgium by informing it that it would enter the War against it if it did so.

The German Social Democracy, aside from Karl Liebknecht and a few others, took it that the Russian mobilisation and the Franco-Russian Treaty engagement made war inevitable, and voted finance for it. In November 1918, after the Kaiser had fled from the Allied witchfinders, the Social Democratic Party became the

Government, declared the state a Republic, curried favour with the Allies by revising its views on the Kaiser's State, declared that there had been a Revolution, and was faced with a revolutionary campaign to overthrow it led by Karl Liebknecht, who was supported by the Bolshevik State in Russia.

The first two hundred pages of Jones's book describe the wild rumours that spread amongst the populace in those circumstances of the breakdown of the State, combined with defeat in war—and "*autosuggestion*" of a state of affairs that did not exist. And you wonder what it's all about until you get to page 211:

"From Rumour to Atrocity: the False Rosa Luxemburg

"As the German armies invaded Belgium and France in August 1914, the German armies committed atrocities... because they believed they faced a treacherous enemy of civilian soldiers, known as *franc-tireurs* in addition to their regular military opponents."

So it's all about Horne and Kramer in Trinity College, who for many years have been working up anti-German feeling on the assumption that in 1914 the Germans *auto-suggested* a Belgian resistance that did not exist, and dealt with it. And then they went and did it again in January 1919 by suppressing the non-existent threat to the Social Democratic Government by the Liebknecht/Luxemburg agitation:

"Uncomfortable as it might be for many historians of Germany's first democracy who tend to prefer to stress that Weimar was born out of the elections on 19 January... it is important to note that the Republic was also founded upon the ability to use force to display its power. Hence, we may describe the violent events that took place during the first five months of 1919 as the Republic's 'foundation violence'. There was widespread support for the state's performance of its power... as a shield that protected those who had grown increasingly fearful of the imagined and real threats posed by Spartacism and 'Russian conditions'. In these psychological conditions, performance violence was a welcome reassurance that the new state would not allow individuals and their families to fall victim to Spartacist violence. Hence there was widespread political approval for displays of force that might not otherwise have taken place because they were unnecessary from a technical point of view..." (p246).

A few years ago Fintan O'Toole went to the gates of Trinity Collage and declared a revolution. It was not technically

necessary for the State to bother its head about it and it didn't. But was that knowably the case in Berlin in January 1919?

And are there states without "*foundation violence*" and without an ongoing capacity for defensive violence?

The Weimar Republic was founded on "*excessive violence*" (p326). Yet there is something to be said for it:

"the German Revolution's achievements were impressive. Without it, we cannot be certain that fighting would not have continued on the Western Front beyond November 1918. Indeed, without the revolution there may have been a further attempt to abandon diplomacy in favour of *Endkampf* with unforeseen consequences" (p325)

—instead of the consequences of surrender/diplomacy that we know about: the false confession of War Guilt that bugged Weimar and enabled its gravedigger to deliver the *coup de grace*.

Yet Weimar led to Nazism—that is more or less asserted. It crossed the Rubicon by "*performing violence*" in December/January 1918/19:

"The consequences of this turning point do not automatically lead to National Socialism and the Second World War. However, they do mark an important point on the journey, especially in terms of the way that they introduced forms of violence to the political life of the Weimar Republic that endured... until the establishment of the Third Reich. Between 1930 and 1933... the same patterns of violence that first occurred in the winter of 1918/19 re-emerged as Nazi Brownshirts fought with Communists... Difficult as it may be for some to accept, the political and cultural legitimacy for Nazi violence at the Republic's end had much in common with the language and collective imagery that accompanied state-sponsored violence at the Republic's foundation" (p328).

Social-fascism!

It is at least a novelty to find the Communist International view of the 1930s being reproduced by Cambridge University and UCD—that Social Democracy was a stage on the way to Fascism.

June 2018

Part Eight

France made a declaration of Democracy to the world in the early 1790s. England rejected it.

Within the Whig Party—the party of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688—there was a tendency that supported French principles as being consistent with the principles of the 'Glorious Revolution'. Against this there developed an authoritarian tendency which insisted that continuity of government was the essential thing in political affairs.

The politician of the authoritarian resistance to Democracy was William Pitt the Younger. Its ideologue was Edmund Burke. The authoritarian Whiggery of Pitt and Burke became the Toryism of the early 19th century. And Burke's powerful defence of authority, the *Letters On A Regicide Peace*, set the parameters of English political thought.

Burke denied that the 'Glorious Revolution' was a revolution at all—that was its virtue. Revolutions were not to be wilfully undertaken. The basic human right was a right to be governed.

England maintained regularity of government against a process of great economic and social change all through the 19th century. It was constitutionally undemocratic under a ruling class of aristocrats and gentry, while France fluctuated between democracy and dictatorship—democracy without effective State authority and dictatorship with popular approval—until the bourgeois Third Republic was founded on the slaughter of the Paris Commune in 1871, in the aftermath of the failed invasion of Germany.

England became a nominal democracy in 1918 as a by-product of the military conscription introduced in 1917 for the Imperial War. The populace had allowed itself to be compelled to serve in the war to break Germany and seize its trade and its colonies, and to conquer the Ottoman Empire. There was no conflict in political practice between democracy and Empire, and, therefore, there was no conflict in principle either.

Church and State had been merged in the English Constitution and so there was no possibility of conflict between its practices and its principles.

(It used to be the case, before England almost lost itself in the European Union, that the Westminster Parliament legislated retrospectively to legitimise extraordinary actions undertaken in crises which it had been too busy to legitimise in advance.)

A couple of years after the nominal political democratisation of 1918, the

matter of social revolution was put to the test.

It had been assumed that an enfranchised populace would not for long tolerate the social institutions and economic arrangements made by the superior classes when they monopolised political power. But in 1921, when three powerful Trade Unions made a set of demands on the state which would have upset the system, the Prime Minister said he could do nothing for them but, on the other hand, he had no power that could resist their power if they exercised it. So the situation was that they must either take over the country, or else withdraw and let him govern it as best he could. They went home. The democracy was bourgeois as well as Imperialist.

Democracy came to Russia as a thief in the night. There were revolutionaries in plenty in Russia. Oscar Wilde's Russian play, *Vera*, even placed the son of the Tsar in a revolutionary group, and it was not much of an exaggeration. But the revolutionaries did not make the revolution. It was in that respect the converse of the 'Glorious Revolution'—it was a revolution, and nobody made it. It took the revolutionaries a few days to realise that it had happened.

Sukhanov (who was simultaneously an 'expert' serving the Tsarist State and a subversive being sought by its police) describes that situation:

"*Tuesday, February 21st*, I was sitting in my office in the Turkistan section. Behind a partition two typists were gossiping about food difficulties, rows in shopping queues, unrest among the women, an attempt to smash into some warehouse. 'D'you know', suddenly declared one of these young ladies, 'if you ask me, it's the beginning of the revolution!'

"These girls didn't understand what a revolution was. I believed them for a second. But in those days, sitting over my irrigation systems and aqueducts, over my articles and pamphlets... I kept thinking and brooding about the inevitable revolution that was whirling down on us at full speed...

"In this period of agony of Tsarism, the attention of Russians, or at any rate of Petersburg 'society'... revolved primarily around the State Duma convened on February 14th. By some people—the more conservative Left (socialist) elements—the workers' street demonstrations under the slogans of 'Bread!' and 'Down with the Autocracy!' were linked to this date. Elements further to the Left, including myself, spoke out at various party meetings *against* tying up the workers' movement with the Duma. For bourgeois Duma circles had given

proof enough, not only of their inability to join the proletariat even against Rasputin, but also of their mortal fear even of utilizing the strength of the proletariat in the struggle for a constitutional regime or for 'carrying on the war to total victory'.

"This fear was completely justified. It was possible, of course, to summon up a spirit, but to force it into one's own service—never...

"*Not one party was preparing for the great upheaval*. Everyone was dreaming, ruminating, full of foreboding, feeling his way...

"These philistine girls, whose tongues and typewriters were rattling away behind the partition, didn't know what a revolution was. I believed neither them, nor the inflexible facts, nor my own judgment. Revolution—highly improbable! Revolution!—everyone knew this was only a dream—a dream of generations and of long laborious decades. Without believing the girls, I repeated after them mechanically: 'Yes, the beginning of the revolution'.

"On Wednesday and Thursday—February 22nd and 23rd—the movement in the streets became clearly defined, going beyond the limits of the usual factory meetings. At the same time the feebleness of the authorities was exposed... But these were 'disorders'—there was still no revolution. A favourable outcome was not only not discernible as yet, but not one of the parties was even steering towards it; they merely strove to exploit the movement for agitational purposes.

"On Friday the 24th the movement swept over Petersburg like a great flood... General Khabalov got out a proclamation, which essentially only served to reveal the impotence of the authorities...

"The movement was plainly out of hand... On Friday I began categorically maintaining that we were dealing with a revolution, as an accomplished fact. However, I was waved aside as an optimist...

"Who was to be the successor of the Tsarist autocracy? This was the point on which my attention was focussed that day...

"My starting-point was the complete disintegration of democratic Russia under the autocracy. At the time the democratic movement had control of no strong organizations, whether political, trade-union, or municipal. And in its state of disintegration the proletariat, isolated as it was from other classes, could create only fighting organizations which, while representing a real force in the class struggle, were not a genuine element of State power..." (*The Russian Revolution*, pp3-7).

For these reasons, and because of difficulties connected with the War,

Sukhanov concluded: "*Power must go to the bourgeoisie. But was there any chance that they would take it?*" (p9).

This was also the position of the Bolshevik Party, more or less, until Lenin returned from exile in April, persuaded the Party leaders to adopt a revolutionary policy against the Provisional Government, and to develop the Soviets into organs of State power. (The Soviets were the mass institutions of society. They were not hostile to the Parliamentary Government, and did not see themselves as alternatives to it, but the Parliament did not see how it could fit them into its notion of constitutional government, and it had no roots in society through mass institutions of its own.)

The Bolsheviks attempted to seize power in July, but failed. That put the Provisional Government in the ascendant over them. It failed utterly to consolidate its victory because Kerensky could not establish a workable relationship with General Kornilov, whom he had appointed Army commander. His ideas were perhaps too abstract and Kornilov's were too concrete. Anyhow, he declared that certain measures adopted by Kornilov amounted to treason, and prosecuted him. The Bolsheviks then recovered quickly from the reverse they suffered in the July Days and they slipped into power in October.

It was not the case that they seized the institutions of power of the Democratic State and used them to their own advantage. There was no Democratic state. There was not even an oligarchic bourgeois State. There was, in effect, a Parliamentary body called the Government, which had not inherited institutions of State power from the Tsarist regime in February, and which had not constructed institutions of State power of its own by October.

And the Government had remade itself in May by bringing the bulk of the Menshevik Party over to it. The Mensheviks did not bring an addition of power to the Government. (They saw themselves as educators of the workers, rather than representatives of the workers in politics.) But they added to its confusion.

The Bolsheviks did not, in the literal sense, seize power. What they did essentially was to assert the power which they had built up during the eight months of anarchy as the State power in the situation. And it was then that the anarchy brought about by the February Revolution, that happened entirely of its own accord, resulted in the establishment of a Russian State. And that State saw off all-comers in

the course of the next three years.

Sukhanov claimed that in October the Bolsheviks had no governing policy for the State they had constructed, and had no theory of how what they undertook to do might be done:

"...the Bolsheviks should have had clear ideas and precise plans as to what they should do with the State they had won... I maintain the Bolsheviks had no such plans. And personally, both in speeches and in articles, I directed attention precisely to this aspect of the matter.

"I maintained the Bolsheviks had no other ideas than the immediate handing over of the land for seizure by the peasants, readiness to propose peace at once, the most confused ideas about 'workers' control and the most fantastic notions of methods of extracting bread, with the help of the 'sailor' and the 'working girl'... Lenin had more 'ideas', borrowed whole from the experience of the Paris Commune and Marx's pamphlet on it, and also—from Kropotkin. These of course included the destruction of the system of credit and the seizure of the banks; the thoroughgoing revision of the government apparatus and its replacement by administrators from among the working class (this in peasant, limitless and half-savage Tsarist Russia!); the liability to election of all officials; compulsory parity between specialist's wages and the average worker's. And there were some other fantasies, which all vanished at the first contact with reality.

"Lenin's pamphlet, *State and Revolution*, was very soon to become gospel. But first of all this gospel, as always, served as something to swear by—God forbid that anything should be done in accordance with its visionary words!—and secondly it had not yet been published...

"The Bolsheviks didn't know what they were going to do with their victory and the State they would win. They were acting *against* Marx, *against* common scientific Socialism, *against* common sense, *against* the working class, when by way of insurrection, under the slogan of 'Power to the Soviets, they attempted to hand over to their own Central Committee the totality of state power in Russia. The power of a single isolated proletarian vanguard, though it was based on the confidence of millions of the masses, obliged the new Government and the Bolsheviks themselves to perform tasks they knew to be beyond their strength. This was the core of the problem. The Bolshevik Party was utopian in undertaking to perform these tasks. It made a fateful error when it started an insurrection without thinking about them" (p571).

Sukhanov's book was published in

1922. From the time I came across it in the 1960s I have taken it to be the book of the Russian Revolution, even more than Burke's *Reflections* is the book of the French Revolution. Sukhanov was a participant in what he wrote about. What he said in 1922 he had said in 1917. He was a Left Menshevik in 1917, as close to Bolshevism as it was possible to be within Marxism. And he was one of the very few whose criticism was noticed by Lenin.

It seems that, when he was finishing his book (whose Russian title is *Notes On the Revolution*), he took the State, which had won all its wars, internal and external, as being still an act of insurrection. And so, in a sense, it was. The wars had served as a diversion from the problem of governing in accordance with the objects which the Bolsheviks set themselves.

Much could be done as necessary measures for the defensive War that was in accordance with the full Communist aims of the Bolshevik Party, but those measures could not be continued after military victory as the form of the peacetime economy. In that sense, the problem of implementing the Bolshevik programme began in 1921.

Sukhanov's assertion that in October 1917 the Bolsheviks had no "*clear ideas and precise plans as to what they should do with the State they had won*" is not seriously disputable. It is also indisputable that the actual economic revolution accomplished by the Bolshevik *coup d'etat* was a bourgeois revolution. The new form of property relations it established was private property in land by farmer owners, in place of the landlord system—as was done in Ireland in 1903.

Rosa Luxemburg, the Jewish/German/Polish Marxist, who was closest to Lenin in the German Socialist Democracy, published a pamphlet against Leninism on this ground—that he was set on enacting a socialist revolution in a way that would greatly increase the weight of bourgeois property against the socialisation of property.

Rosa Luxemburg was a revolutionary. She was very much a revolutionary. But she gave priority to the correct method of cooking the salmon over the practical problem of catching it. So she never had the problem of implementing a problematical programme after gaining power with it, because she never gained power—never came close to it. Indeed, it could be said that she did not really want to gain State power because of the many conditions she imposed on the way it must be done.

But she continued to engage in revolutionary agitation in support of an impossible revolution in a Germany that was under conquest and that the conquerors were intent on breaking up. She added to the chaos of defeat—in which the pressing need was for national defence—by means of an agitation that was essentially defeatist. And she did this without ever having attempted to construct a political force that could act as a State in place of the brittle Social Democratic Government that she was agitating against.

She had criticised Lenin for his preoccupation with political power and he had criticised her—in response to her *Junius* pamphlet during the War—for her lack of concern with it. She played with revolution in the highly unstable conditions brought about by defeat and conquest—which are not the same thing but were combined in the Anglo-French treatment of Germany in 1918-19, and she came to grief.

Sukhanov characterised the Bolshevik Revolution as Utopian because it was not conducted on a governing programme ready to be put into effect when they won. He was a revolutionary of long standing. He had brooded on revolution and dreamt of it. He was a Marxist—an orderly scientific socialist. And yet he thought of revolution as a kind of election.

Lenin responded with what seems to have been the last article he published: *Our Revolution Apropos Of N. Sukhanov's Notes*, 16 January 1923. There are two further items in the *Collected Works*, but they are proposals to the Party.

This is the gist of his response:

"It does not occur to any of them to ask: but what about a people that found itself in a revolutionary situation such as that created during the first imperialist war? Might it not, influenced by the hopelessness of its situation, fling itself into a struggle that would offer it at least some chance of securing conditions for the further development of civilisation that were somewhat unusual...

"If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West-European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?...

"You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country

as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism? Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary historical sequence of events are impermissible or impossible?

"Napoleon, I think, wrote, *'Ons'engage et puis... on voit...* First engage in a serious battle and then see what happens;... Our European philistines never even dream that subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than he Russian revolution..." (Vol. 33, pp378-380).

A very great part of the world, perhaps the greater part, was, until Britain's Great War of 1914, living in pre-capitalist forms of society, in a condition that was summed up by Britain's superb Imperialist poet, Rudyard Kipling, as "*the dark Egyptian night*". After 1918 they could no longer live like that. It wasn't allowed. The world was organised into a League of Nations, run by the British and French Empires that had made war on their German rival and destroyed it, and it was parcelled out into concocted nation-states in a capitalist world market—states, often, without prior national development, and without internally-generated capitalist markets, and therefore in practice subordinate to the European Empires.

Ireland was, by comparison with many of these states, a developed nation with a market economy. It asserted itself as a nation-state in the 1918 Election and declared itself independent of Britain in January 1919. The newly-democratised British Government disregarded the Irish Election and Declaration of Independence and governed it by Black and Tan methods. A Trinity historian, Joast Augusteijn, has argued that the Irish Declaration of Independence was not legitimate because it was not recognised by any other states. What other states were there in 1919? The world was being run by Britain and France through the Versailles Conference, and the League which was being established as an adjunct of the Versailles Conference. For the purpose of recognising the democratically-mandated Irish independence, Britain was the world. And it put in the Black and Tans.

The handful of states that ran the League asserted authority over the world—minus the USA and Russia—and, as the first act of its authority, it mandated a Jewish colonisation of Arab Palestine. And the world was impelled into a line of *progress* that served the capitalist Imperialism of the 1918 victors: Britain, France, Italy

and Japan. And in its resistance to Imperialism, it took its inspiration from the side of Bolshevik development that West European Marxism rejected.

As Lenin was writing his response to Sukhanov, the conflict within Bolshevism about the possibility of Socialist development in Russia while capitalism continued in Western Europe, began.

Trotsky had predicted many years before the event that, when Tsarism fell, there would be Socialist revolution because a bourgeois regime could not sustain itself. And so it happened. But he also predicted that Socialist revolution in Russia would be bound up with Socialist revolution in Western Europe, and that Europe would compensate for Russian backwardness. And he held that, if a Socialist revolution in Russia was not supported by European Socialist revolution, it would necessarily fail, because the pressure on it of the International Division of Labour in the capitalist world market would be irresistible.

Lenin died in 1924, his last political intervention having been in March 1923. There was no overthrow of Capitalism in Europe. It had been defended in Italy by Fascism. So what was Russia to do?

Trotsky repeated his position that an attempt at Socialist development in an isolated Russia must fail. If that was the case, would not the thing to do be to find a bourgeoisie from somewhere and try to hand over the instruments of Soviet State Power to it, with its Bolshevik Party undertaking the role of an Opposition?

The bourgeoisie had failed to establish their own State Power in 1917. But now in 1924 there actually was a structure of State. The structure of a proletarian State it is true—but Lenin had said repeatedly that there was no longer an industrial proletariat. It had disappeared as a class in the course of the Civil War.

Trotsky did not propose that the project should be abandoned, but neither did he withdraw his contention that it could not succeed.

Let us concede, almost a century later, that things worked out in the long run, in accordance with Trotsky's prediction. The Soviet system collapsed about 70 years later, under pressures exerted by proxy wars with the world capitalist system, a.k.a. the United States. There was a general world market. Russia was unable to seal itself off from it. And the world market got the better of it in the end.

Capitalism failed to industrialise Russia. It was generally agreed that Russia must be industrialised. Lenin proposed the variation of the European mode, of establishing something of the culture that in orthodox Marxism was seen as being the product of capitalist industrialisation and making it the means of Socialist industrialisation. And that was done. But the doing of it was described by Trotsky as *The Revolution Betrayed*. And this was profoundly inconsistent with his own basic assumption. On that assumption, the alternative to *The Revolution Betrayed* was the Revolution Abandoned As Impossible.

If the industrialisation of Russia was done effectively within an all-pervasive capitalist world-market, even though by a Socialist Government, then it is time the inappropriate idealistic criticism of it was given a rest and a realistic comparison of Soviet and orthodox capitalist industrialisations was undertaken.

July 2018

Part Eight

France made a declaration of Democracy to the world in the early 1790s. England rejected it.

Within the Whig Party—the party of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688—there was a tendency that supported French principles as being consistent with the principles of the 'Glorious Revolution'. Against this there developed an authoritarian tendency which insisted that continuity of government was the essential thing in political affairs.

The politician of the authoritarian resistance to Democracy was William Pitt the Younger. Its ideologue was Edmund Burke. The authoritarian Whiggery of Pitt and Burke became the Toryism of the early 19th century. And Burke's powerful defence of authority, the *Letters On A Regicide Peace*, set the parameters of English political thought.

Burke denied that the 'Glorious Revolution' was a revolution at all—that was its virtue. Revolutions were not to be wilfully undertaken. The basic human right was a right to be governed.

England maintained regularity of government against a process of great economic and social change all through the 19th century. It was constitutionally undemocratic under a ruling class of aristocrats and gentry, while France

fluctuated between democracy and dictatorship—democracy without effective State authority and dictatorship with popular approval—until the bourgeois Third Republic was founded on the slaughter of the Paris Commune in 1871, in the aftermath of the failed invasion of Germany.

England became a nominal democracy in 1918 as a by-product of the military conscription introduced in 1917 for the Imperial War. The populace had allowed itself to be compelled to serve in the war to break Germany and seize its trade and its colonies, and to conquer the Ottoman Empire. There was no conflict in political practice between democracy and Empire, and, therefore, there was no conflict in principle either.

Church and State had been merged in the English Constitution and so there was no possibility of conflict between its practices and its principles.

(It used to be the case, before England almost lost itself in the European Union, that the Westminster Parliament legislated retrospectively to legitimise extraordinary actions undertaken in crises which it had been too busy to legitimise in advance.)

A couple of years after the nominal political democratisation of 1918, the matter of social revolution was put to the test.

It had been assumed that an enfranchised populace would not for long tolerate the social institutions and economic arrangements made by the superior classes when they monopolised political power. But in 1921, when three powerful Trade Unions made a set of demands on the state which would have upset the system, the Prime Minister said he could do nothing for them but, on the other hand, he had no power that could resist their power if they exercised it. So the situation was that they must either take over the country, or else withdraw and let him govern it as best he could. They went home. The democracy was bourgeois as well as Imperialist.

Democracy came to Russia as a thief in the night. There were revolutionaries in plenty in Russia. Oscar Wilde's Russian play, *Vera*, even placed the son of the Tsar in a revolutionary group, and it was not much of an exaggeration. But the revolutionaries did not make the revolution. It was in that respect the converse of the 'Glorious Revolution'—it was a revolution, and nobody made it. It took the revolutionaries a few days to realise that it had happened.

Sukharnov (who was simultaneously an 'expert' serving the Tsarist State and a subversive being sought by its police) describes that situation:

"Tuesday, February 21st, I was sitting in my office in the Turkistan section. Behind a partition two typists were gossiping about food difficulties, rows in shopping queues, unrest among the women, an attempt to smash into some warehouse. 'D'you know', suddenly declared one of these young ladies, 'if you ask me, it's the beginning of the revolution!'

"These girls didn't understand what a revolution was. I believed them for a second. But in those days, sitting over my irrigation systems and aqueducts, over my articles and pamphlets... I kept thinking and brooding about the inevitable revolution that was whirling down on us at full speed...

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"This fear was completely justified. It was possible, of course, to summon up a spirit, but to force it into one's own service—never...

"*Not one party was preparing for the great upheaval.* Everyone was dreaming, ruminating, full of foreboding, feeling his way...

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For these reasons, and because of difficulties connected with the War, Sukharnov concluded: "*Power must go to the bourgeoisie. But was there any chance that they would take it?*" (p9).

This was also the position of the Bolshevik Party, more or less, until Lenin returned from exile in April, persuaded the Party leaders to adopt a revolutionary policy against the Provisional Government, and to develop the Soviets into organs of State power. (The Soviets were the mass institutions of society. They were not hostile to the Parliamentary Government, and did not see themselves as alternatives to it, but the Parliament did not see how it could fit them into its notion of constitutional government, and it had no roots in society through mass institutions of its own.)

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And the Government had remade itself in May by bringing the bulk of the Menshevik Party over to it. The Mensheviks did not bring an addition of power to the Government. (They saw themselves as educators of the workers, rather than representatives of the workers in politics.) But they added to its confusion.

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This is the gist of his response:

"It does not occur to any of them to ask: but what about a people that found itself in a revolutionary situation such as that created during the first imperialist war? Might it not, influenced by the hopelessness of its situation, fling itself into a struggle that would offer it at least some chance of securing conditions for the further development of civilisation that were somewhat unusual...

"If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West-European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?...

"You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism? Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary historical sequence of events are impermissible or impossible?

"Napoleon, I think, wrote, '*On s'engage et puis... on voit...* First engage in a serious battle and then see what happens;... Our European philistines never even dream that subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution...' (Vol. 33, pp378-380).

A very great part of the world, perhaps the greater part, was, until Britain's Great War of 1914, living in pre-capitalist forms of society, in a condition that was summed up by Britain's superb Imperialist poet, Rudyard Kipling, as "*the dark Egyptian night*". After 1918 they could no longer live like that. It wasn't allowed. The world was organised into a League of Nations, run by the British and French Empires that had made war on their German rival and destroyed it, and it was parcelled out into concocted nation-states in a capitalist world market—states, often, without prior national development, and without internally-generated capitalist markets, and therefore in practice

subordinate to the European Empires.

Ireland was, by comparison with many of these states, a developed nation with a market economy. It asserted itself as a nation-state in the 1918 Election and declared itself independent of Britain in January 1919. The newly-democratised British Government disregarded the Irish Election and Declaration of Independence and governed it by Black and Tan methods. A Trinity historian, Joast Augusteijn, has argued that the Irish Declaration of Independence was not legitimate because it was not recognised by any other states. What other states were there in 1919? The world was being run by Britain and France through the Versailles Conference, and the League which was being established as a adjunct of the Versailles Conference. For the purpose of recognising the democratically-mandated Irish independence, Britain was the world. And it put in the Black and Tans.

The handful of states that ran the League asserted authority over the world—minus the USA and Russia—and, as the first act of its authority, it mandated a Jewish colonisation of Arab Palestine. And the world was impelled into a line of *progress* that served the capitalist Imperialism of the 1918 victors: Britain, France, Italy and Japan. And in its resistance to Imperialism, it took its inspiration from the side of Bolshevik development that West European Marxism rejected.

As Lenin was writing his response to Sukhanov, the conflict within Bolshevism about the possibility of Socialist development in Russia while capitalism continued in Western Europe, began.

Trotsky had predicted many years before the event that, when Tsarism fell, there would be Socialist revolution because a bourgeois regime could not sustain itself. And so it happened. But he also predicted that Socialist revolution in Russia would be bound up with Socialist revolution in Western Europe, and that Europe would compensate for Russian backwardness. And he held that, if a Socialist revolution in Russia was not supported by European Socialist revolution, it would necessarily fail, because the pressure on it of the International Division of Labour in the capitalist world market would be irresistible.

Lenin died in 1924, his last political intervention having been in March 1923. There was no overthrow of Capitalism in Europe. It had been defended in Italy by Fascism. So what was Russia to do?

Trotsky repeated his position that an

attempt at Socialist development in an isolated Russia must fail. If that was the case, would not the thing to do be to find a bourgeoisie from somewhere and try to hand over the instruments of Soviet State Power to it, with its Bolshevik Party undertaking the role of an Opposition?

The bourgeoisie had failed to establish their own State Power in 1917. But now in 1924 there actually was a structure of State. The structure of a proletarian State it is true—but Lenin had said repeatedly that there was no longer an industrial proletariat. It had disappeared as a class in the course of the Civil War.

Trotsky did not propose that the project should be abandoned, but neither did he withdraw his contention that it could not succeed.

Let us concede, almost a century later, that things worked out in the long run, in accordance with Trotsky's prediction. The Soviet system collapsed about 70 years later, under pressures exerted by proxy wars with the world capitalist system, a.k.a. the United States. There was a general world market. Russia was unable to seal itself off from it. And the world market got the better of it in the end.

Capitalism failed to industrialise Russia. It was generally agreed that Russia must be industrialised. Lenin proposed the variation of the European mode, of establishing something of the culture that in orthodox Marxism was seen as being the product of capitalist industrialisation and making it the means of Socialist industrialisation. And that was done. But the doing of it was described by Trotsky as *The Revolution Betrayed*. And this was profoundly inconsistent with his own basic assumption. On that assumption, the alternative to *The Revolution Betrayed* was the Revolution Abandoned As Impossible.

If the industrialisation of Russia was done effectively within an all-pervasive capitalist world-market, even though by a Socialist Government, then it is time the inappropriate idealistic criticism of it was given a rest and a realistic comparison of Soviet and orthodox capitalist industrialisations was undertaken.

August 2018

Part Nine

The second revolution in Russia was a consequence of the first. The first revolution, usually called *bourgeois*, failed to establish a viable bourgeois State in place of the Tsarist State. This failure is connected with the fact that the Tsarist State was not overthrown by purposeful political action by those who took its place as a Provisional Government. Tsarism just stopped functioning, apparently because of a mood that came over those on whose activity it depended. And it seems that it was only after it had ceased to function for a few days that the idea got about that there had been a revolution.

England had declared war on "Autocracy" in 1914, but the only Autocracy in Europe was the Tsarist State with which it was in close alliance in the War. The quick victory, which England expected the vast Russian Army to bring about, would have extended Autocracy.

The Kaiser was not an Autocrat. The Tsar was.

An event that preceded the cessation of the Tsarist regime was the murder of Rasputin by a group of nobles. Rasputin, an uncouth, philandering monk, had for a number of years been a major influence within the regime. He had become the adviser of the Tsar's English wife, and the Tsar was hen-pecked.

Rasputin had a sense that war with Germany would be fatal to Russia, but his influence could not be brought to bear on decision-making in July-August 1914 as he was laid up with wounds inflicted by a woman he was seducing. The War was an accomplished fact when he returned.

A group of nobles close to the Tsar decided to remove him from the political scene and they murdered him in December 1916. The regime died quietly a couple of months later. Such things happen in authentic Autocracies.

The Duma, which bore no resemblance in effective Constitutional terms to either the Reichstag or the Westminster Parliament, found itself in possession of nominal state power which it had not attempted to seize.

Kerensky was a major figure in the Provisional Government from the start. He was its connection with the people. He had been active in the Populist movement, and had been a member of a terrorist group. He did not in his *Memoirs* apologise for having been a terrorist. He was impatient with people who did not have an

instinct about right and wrong in the matter. There were situations in which it was obviously the right thing to be a terrorist and there were situations in which it was equally obviously the wrong thing.

Tsarism ceased to be. The event that had been yearned for came about, God knows how. The Autocratic obstacle to the ideal took itself away, and that was sufficient for the ideal to be realised. The ideal and the real became the one thing and social harmony had come to be in the nature of things.

Either that was the mental world in which Kerensky acted in 1917, or he constructed in his retirement a very convincing pretence that it was.

Anyhow, no State was constructed by this excessively idealised bourgeois revolution, and it was brushed aside by a socialist party that was in earnest.

The socialist revolution developed quickly as a Russian State power in which a substantial stratum of the people was actively involved.

A Russian people, in the political sense, was left to the socialist revolution to bring about. The first democratic Russian State, in the sense of a State whose functioning depended on the political activity of the populace, was a socialist State. And, because of the failure of the bourgeois revolution, the socialist State was faced with the task of doing in the economy too what the bourgeoisie had failed to do—industrialisation.

Industrialisation was the work of *laissez-faire* Capitalism in England. It was done by the action of free individuals each seeking a profit and hiring the labour of loose proletarians (whose numbers had been multiplied by Enclosures of common land) to do it. Was it possible that it might be done by the action of a socialist State? And, if it was possible, was it proper that it should be done? Was it not the purpose of a socialist State to abolish the process of capitalist exploitation of proletarian labour-power by which industrialisation was achieved?

If Capitalism failed, could the proletariat as a mass organise itself as a State and, directed by managers drawn from itself, undertake the basic task of establishing an industrial economy that rivalled the capitalist economies of Western Europe?

Lenin set the Bolshevik Party the task of industrialising the Russian economy, without capitalists, by methods which were compatible with the comprehensive development of Socialism in the longer term, and then he died.

The means which he left for doing this were a one-party system of state and a rural economy consisting of millions of recently-established, small-scale, owners of private property, to whom he had conceded the right to engage in market activity under the New Economic Policy. There was no urban economy worth speaking of. It had been broken up by the socialist revolution and used up in the Civil War. And the State form was a dictatorship of the proletariat, that was without a proletariat to run it.

The proletariat, as a functioning economic category had disappeared along with the urban capitalism that produced it: "*The proletariat has disappeared. It has sometimes figured in statistics, but it has not held together economically*" (Lenin, October 1921).

What Lenin meant by "*proletariat*" was the industrial working class, which was not quite what it meant in Roman times. The Roman proletariat, as far as I could gather, was the parasitic populace of the cities that was provided with bread and circuses from the proceeds of the Empire. The industrial working class of modern industrial capitalism was something very different. It was a necessary economic class of industrial capitalism, and therefore it had acknowledged social status in capitalist societies—minimally in Britain, more so in France, and extensively so in Germany. And, to the extent that it had acknowledged social status, and that some gestures were made towards meeting its concerns, its relationship with the capitalist regime that exploited it became conciliatory.

In England, under *laissez-faire* capitalism, there were great riots, and great demonstrations of protest that seemed to be on the brink of causing a revolutionary rupture in society. All of that ended in 1885-6 when Joseph Chamberlain, a Birmingham manufacturing capitalist, split the Liberal Party and went into alliance with the Tories on a social reform programme. He wondered that the working class put up with the way it was being treated under Liberal capitalism, was convinced that it would not put up with it much longer, fought elections under his own "*Unauthorised Programme*" in which the development of the welfare state was projected, formed a joint party with the Tories (the Unionist Party) which dominated politics for ten years around 1900, obliging the Liberals to repudiate *laissez-faire* and become social reformers under cover of a spurious class war against

'feudalism' waged by Lloyd George.

Chamberlain stood for social reform and Empire. It seems probable that *laissez faire* capitalism was one of the elements that made the establishment of the World Empire possible, but then at a later stage it was the Empire that made social reform in Britain possible. And then, in the 1890s, the sentiment of popular Imperialism sponsored by Chamberlain made democratisation seem feasible to ruling class circles.

Then Britain launched the World War, and the industrial working class played its part in it stoically, year after year, when the Germans did not prove to be a walkover.

Lenin formed the International of Communist Parties to overthrow European capitalism and protect the Russian Revolution. The construction of a British Communist Party proved difficult. The proletariat, in the sense of the industrial working class, kept its distance, despite the irritant of post-War depression instead of "*homes fit for heroes*". The proletariat had made its agreement with 'the system' and held to it.

Lenin then advised the British Communists to chase up the proletariat in the other sense—to go out into the highways and by-ways and enlist the drop-outs of various kinds: the lumpen proletariat. (I can't give a reference for this, it is so long since I read it, 50 years ago.)

The proletariat of British capitalism, in the sense of the organised working class, then became, in Leninist terms, the "*labour aristocracy*", which shared the proceeds of imperialist exploitation with the capitalists. Ivor Kenna, of the Finsbury Communist Group in North London, investigated this idea and demonstrated in detail that it was the case.

I was diverted into Northern Ireland politics at that point. I didn't have the British temperament required for British politics anyway. Ivor continued to describe the situation in these basic terms (see the *Finsbury Communist*). It is a good thing that somebody does it. And Brexit, if it happens, may require a return to that kind of understanding.

Kerensky described the Bolshevik Revolution as mob rule. He said that mob rule is irresistible. There's no doubt about it. But it usually spends itself and dissipates. Except that, in Russia it didn't. Therefore . . .

Mobs have played very little part in Irish history. O'Connell arranged to carry Repeal of the Union by assembling a great

mob in Clontarf in 1843. The Duke of Wellington let it be understood that massacre is the appropriate way for dealing with a seditious mob. O'Connell backed down and never recovered. (And Ireland lost more through the Famine/Holocaust in the next few years than it would ever have by administrative massacre.)

The only other mob I know of is the one that burned down the British Embassy in Dublin in 1972, in response to the British administrative massacre in Derry. And it is significant, not because the burning of the Embassy was an outrageously disproportionate response to the massacre, but because of the effect it had on the frightened mind of Dermot Keogh.

Keogh was on the editorial staff of the Fianna Fail paper, the *Irish Press*, at the time. Fianna Fail was the governing party of the day, and was the party that had given democratic stability after 1932 to the administration imposed by Britain on 26 Counties of the island in 1922 by means of a one-sided 'Treaty', to which a majority submitted under threat of an all-out Imperial reconquest by Boer War methods—Concentration Camps plus a dense network of barracks across the country. Fianna Fail was the party that had refused to submit to the Treaty and that ten years later had nursed the electorate back to a spirit of republican independence which supported a unilateral Irish breach of the Treaty.

The Party that had enforced the Treaty with British financial and military support in 1922 formed itself into a Fascist movement in 1933 against Fianna Fail's breach of the Treaty. But this Irish fascism—which declared itself to be fascist—was curbed electorally by Fianna Fail all through the 1930s, and its threats of direct action—a projected *March On Dublin*, for instance—came to nothing in the face of popular support for Fianna Fail's stance in favour of continuing Parliamentary Government. Fascism was then allowed to wither peacefully and reinvent itself within the Parliamentary system which it had failed to overthrow.

Complete formal independence of the 26 Counties as a state was achieved in 1938, when the British occupation of three Ports, which it held under the Treaty, ended—enabling the Irish state to be free of Britain in Britain's next World War. The Irish State had by then adopted a new Constitution which made no mention of the Treaty.

That Constitution, however, asserted *de jure* sovereignty over the 6 Counties in the North which remained within the

British state in the slightly detached form of Northern Ireland. It treated the Partition of the country as illegitimate, and the British Government of the North as illegitimate.

In 1972 the British Army, acting under command, fired randomly into a Civil Rights demonstration in Derry. In the parlance of more recent times, it killed its own people. But, from Fianna Fail's point of view, and from the Constitutional point of view of the Irish State, they were not its own people to kill as it chose. They were citizens of the *de jure* Irish sovereignty who were temporarily deprived of their citizenship by the usurping power of the foreign British state.

Dermot Keogh was in the News Room of the Fianna Fail paper as accounts of the massacre came in. He later went out on the streets to observe the popular response to the event. And then he gave this account of the affair in an interview for the RTE documentary, *The Seven Ages Of The State*:

"I was working in the Irish Press news-room on Bloody Sunday, and I remember vividly on the evening on the Subs desk waiting as the copy came in, and it was three, and then four, and then five, and six, all the way up to the Butcher's Dozen. It was a terrible night because I and others who had no sympathy for the I.R.A., or no sympathy for violence in Northern Ireland, was wondering what was going on in the minds of British administrators. It was like Amritsar all over again. It was like old-fashioned colonialism."

"As I was standing in the Park just opposite the Embassy, somebody said 'Take down the railings!' And I looked in stupefaction. But within minutes the railings were down and people had poured out. And then I saw people in green uniform, Ogligh na hEirean, directing traffic. And that was the moment of realisation that there was a Fascist organisation likely to take over the state, unless there was radical action: that the IRA were intent, not just on destroying Northern Ireland, but also on bringing down the Government in Southern Ireland. And that was a moment of truth for me."

"Working as a journalist in that period I clearly had some indication that this was qualitatively different to anything the IRA had done before. This was an entirely new set of revolutionaries, new technology, and a new ruthlessness."

This is the hysteria of a tender mind, unfit for contemplating the realities of things.

Keogh retreated from news reporting to academia, becoming influential in Cork University in the "radical action" of disembowelling Irish history, making it nice instead of nasty.

Others in the Dublin Establishment at the time looked on the burning of the Embassy as the easy way out of the problem with which the Derry massacre presented them. (Taoiseach Lynch phoned Prime Minister Heath and asked for a guarantee that nothing like it would ever be done again. He was given the brush-off.)

The idea took hold of organising a mass convergence of the nation at Newry the following weekend. Train time-tabling began to be organised. If that had actually happened, the fat would have been in the fire. By directly implicating the Southern populace in the undemocratic affairs of the North, it would possibly have warded off the further development of the War in the North.

But the burning of the Embassy took the heat out of the situation. All that happened in Newry was a token demonstration. The opinion began to be cultivated that the North was really a place apart, not the Fourth Green Field illegitimately held by a foreign state—though the Sovereignty claim to it in the Constitution was kept in place.

The Nationalist body in the North, effectively disowned by the state which still asserted *de jure* sovereignty over the North, fought its own war with the British State, which was never recognised to be a war by any Dublin Government, and it "destroyed Northern Ireland", in the sense of forcing a drastic alteration of its political structure. The disowning of the North in the early 1970s, by the state which continued to assert *de jure* sovereignty over it, clearly did not exert a pacifist influence on its affairs.

The distinct thing that gave Dermot Keogh a vision of Fascism at the burning of the Embassy was that the mob that assembled at it did not act with complete spontaneity. There was a thinking element in it which gave it direction.

Kerensky said that mob rule is irresistible. And there's no doubt about it. But the mob soon wears itself out for want of coherent purpose. His essential case against Bolshevism is that it conferred lasting power on the mob by giving immediate practical purpose to its inchoate yearnings for the Millennium.

The only Continental intellectual of

pre-1914 vintage that I have known is Manuel Sarkisyanz. He advertised in Irish magazines for a translator and publisher of a book he had written in German.

The only reply he got was from Athol Books. The book was translated by Angela Clifford as *Hitler's English Inspirers*. Sarkisyanz was surprised by this as he had illusions about Ireland being boldly revolutionary. But he made the best of his discovery that the Irish State was profoundly bourgeois and had no intelligentsia. I had a number of discussions with him in Heidelberg. He was living out of his time and place, and so I suppose was I. He was Armenian/Iranian by origin, and was saturated with Russian culture as well as German, and he lived in Mexico in Winter because it was governed, sort of, by the Party of Permanent Revolution. (At other times he lectured in Heidelberg University.)

He surveyed the post-1918 world with the mind of a coherent pre-1914 intellectual. And I somehow had acquired a similar mentality through growing up in the backwardness of Slieve Luacra, whose culture was still that of Young Ireland, and not having it eroded by contemporary education.

Sarkisyanz was of the opinion that, beyond the discipline of scientific socialism, Bolshevism was Christian in spirit. And that Fascism was a development of Humanism. And certainly the object of Fascism was very modest and particular compared with that of Bolshevism.

Bolshevism was engaged in the comprehensive remaking of humanity in such a way that, after the intervention of so many disturbing modes of production, it would be restored, on a higher technical level, to the contentment that characterised the primitive Commune.

The purpose of Fascism was merely to restore the viability of the capitalist state where it had been disrupted by the elemental Great War, by curbing the uncompromising class antagonism that fed into its party-politics under the influence of the Russian Revolution.

The War had brought the masses into political action suddenly. The 'masses' were a new phenomenon, a product of Capitalism, which capitalist liberalism had difficulty in coping with after the shock of the Great War. Fascism protected Capitalism by suspending the Parliamentary conflict of parties and restoring national politics by means of a party which established within itself the compromise between socialism and

capitalism where that had not come about through the conflict of parties.

Fascism met with general approval of West European civilisation. The historic voice of Western civilisation during the generation after 1917 was Winston Churchill. It was Churchill's fate to start what is called the Anti-Fascist War by refusing to make a settlement of the War that Chamberlain had declared on Germany in 1939, even though Britain had lost the battle and was incapable of sustaining the War with its own resources.

Churchill continued that War with a view to bringing about a war between Germany and Russia. He then saw it as a regrettable necessity to become an ally of Russia for the moment, though he always regarded it as the basic enemy.

The second British war on Germany was a historical absurdity. The British military strategist and historian puts it like this.

"The last thing Hitler wanted ... was another great war ..."

If he had really contemplated a general war, involving Britain, he would have put every possible effort into building a Navy... But, in fact, he did not build up his Navy to the limited scale visualised in the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935...

How did it come about that he became involved in the major war that he had been so anxious to avoid? The answer is to be found... in the encouragement he had long received from the complaisant attitude of the Western Powers coupled with the about-turn of the spring of 1939. The reversal was so abrupt and unexpected as to make war inevitable" (Basel Liddel Hart, *The Second World War*, Chapter 1, *How The War Was Precipitated*).

In the Fall of 1938 Britain used its influence to enact a major breach of the Versailles Treaty in favour of Hitler by breaking the Czechoslovak state (formed under that Treaty) and awarding Sudetenland to Germany, while Poland and Hungary took other parts of it. Then, in March 1939, Britain and France made a military encirclement of Germany by means of a military alliance with Poland. Germany, having been raised to the status of a hegemonic Regional Power by the Munich Agreement, responded to this hostile military encirclement, erratically established by Britain after five years of close collaboration, by striking at its weakest point. And Britain responded to Hitler's move against Poland, not by making war in alliance with Poles as the terms of the encirclement required, but by leaving the Poles to fight alone and be

defeated, and then by making leisurely arrangements for war on Germany, in the mode of world war.

Germany responded in May 1940 to the British/French declaration of war made on it in September 1939, taking Britain by surprise and causing it to leave the Continent, to which it did not return for four years.

Britain then "*stood alone*" for a year, refusing a settlement but being unwilling or unable to fight—the two things being closely related. And Hitler, quixotically concerned to preserve British Imperial civilisation in the world, and wanting only a settlement of the War that Britain had declared on him, let it have its year of defiant posturing, while he made preparation for war on the Power which both sides agreed was the fundamental enemy of European civilisation: Communist Russia.

Martin Mansergh denies that the Polish Guarantee amounted to a military encirclement of Germany. The South African Government—the Dominion with military experience—advised Whitehall that that is what it would be. And No. 12 of the Oxford War Pamphlets (*Encirclement* by J.L. Brierly, 1939) said that was what it was. Military encirclements are not things to play about with, especially with relation to a state whose growth as a military power one has been encouraging up to that point.

The sense of the Polish Guarantee, of the failure to deliver on it, and of the British attempt to become engaged in war against Russia in Finland—after having declared war on Germany—is that of a grossly bungled attempt to engineer a European War on Russia which the British Labour movement could be wrong-footed into supporting.

As things worked out, German military power—which Britain had helped to build up—was stopped in Russia, and was driven back to Central Europe, and Britain got back on the Continent after four years of absence only because the United States had joined the War, and insisted on it.

The refusal of Britain in June 1940 to make a settlement of the war it had declared on Germany, but had not fought in earnest, led to the German war on Russia—which brought the power of Communist Russia into Central Europe. That was its most noticeable effect at the time. It also led to the mass killing of Jews in the German-controlled hinterland of the invasion of Russia, with the popular approval, or acquiescence, of the local populations.

This was scarcely noticed in the British war media at the time, but about a generation after the war it began to play a major part in the apologetics of the war.

I write this after hearing a Lord Hennessey say on BBC radio that in June 1940 to June 1941 Britain stood alone and thus saved the world.

Well, if the world was saved from what was dominant in Europe in 1940-1, it was not Britain that saved it, but Communist Russia. The USA and Britain, in June 1944, clambered back onto a Europe in which the greater part of German military power was engaged in the Russian Front and was relentlessly being driven back. And the purpose of D-Day was not the salvation of Europe from National Socialism, but the occupation of part of it before it was saved by Communism.

And, no sooner was the National Socialist regime cleared away, than the Power that broke it was treated as hostile in the Western Occupation Zones—and in Germany its adherents were punished.

Fascism was a force of evil that arose outside the bounds of civilisation and became dominant over civilisation and threatened to destroy it. What was the source of its power? Its Evilness of course. The notion of a Pact with the Devil as a source of power survives in the undergrowth of post-Protestant liberalism.

The need to destroy that Evil Power had priority over all differences of opinion within civilisation, and so it was that the Grand alliance of all humanity joined in a League against it.

But the way things were handled in 1945 suggests that the Evil of National Socialism was destroyed by the greater Evil of Communism!

English liberalism, after its treason to itself in August 1914 and again in 1919, has never been able to grasp the events of the world coherently. At critical points it makes do with makeshifts carried over from the Biblicalist theology from which it emerged.

The sources of power after the 19th century are the great masses of population, whose grooves of living were broken up by the totalitarian world war launched by Britain in 1914 and concluded with the draconian punishment of Germany in 1919, after it was compelled under starvation to make a false confession of having caused it.

When the Tsarist State collapsed under the stress of this war, into which Britain had lured it with the offer of Constantinople, the Bolshevik Party took

in hand the disordered masses—the mob, as Kerensky saw it—and gave them structured existence as active participants in a viable State.

The terminology of class was used in the formation of the State but, by Lenin's own account, did not so much describe what existed as establish a purpose which would enable orderly social existence to be constructed out of anarchy. And then it was Stalin who guided the establishment of those structures which generated the power that resisted National Socialism in 1941 after Britain had given it two practice-wars to hone its expertise—Poland in 1939 and France in 1940.

So how was this done?

September 2018

Part Ten

When the Soviet State set about industrialising the Russian economy on socialist lines in the early 1920s, the general understanding of its leading theorists was that Capitalism had become World Capitalism. Capitalism had become essentially Imperialist. It progressed relentlessly around the world, using whatever means it found appropriate, from brute force to the subtleties of elaborate forms of money lending. It was a Destroyer, with a power never before seen in the world, and a Creator which reassembled the ruins of what it destroyed in its own image.

There had been a time when Capitalism was one of a number of modes of production in the world, engaging in trade with other modes of production, and seeming to accept that those other modes of production had legitimate grounds for existing. The political economy of that era argued that international trade was mutually beneficial: that it had to be so, otherwise it would not be engaged in.

That argument rested on the fact of the different modes of production existing in substantially independent states, that were self-sufficient, and that only traded internationally with inessential surpluses.

The beginning of the end of that state of affairs in the world set in with the Wars of the Spanish Succession and the Grand Alliance around 1700. The British war effort was financed with money that did not exist. It was fought on credit. But this credit was not borrowed money that did exist. It was invented money: fictitious

money. It might be described as *future money*, which would acquire reality in the long run by leading to the production of its equivalent in goods.

Jonathan Swift, a pamphleteer of the Tory Party, influenced the elite public opinion of Britain against the Whigs sufficiently to cause the War to be ended in a negotiated peace which left the enemy state intact. His reasoning was that the fighting of the war on credit was commercialising life and eroding all recognised human values. For his achievement in bringing about the negotiated Peace of Utrecht he was exiled to Dublin, where he brooded on human ingratitude for twenty years.

Britain gained a very substantial points victory over France by the Treaty of Utrecht. It became the hegemon of Europe—the balance-of-power arbiter of Europe—freeing itself for world conquest, and for the construction of capitalism into the dominant system in Britain.

The rise of capitalism to complete dominance within a long-established society, freeing itself from all the curbs of custom, religion, law, and all the interests connected with them, and remaking human life in the service of the market, was an extraordinary development. It was achieved in Whig England and nowhere else. It was achieved in the course of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th.

It was achieved by the combination of corruption and the introduction of industrial technique. Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister—that is, the first leader of the commercial party that took over as a ruling class from the monarchy while acting in the name of the monarchy—smoothed the way in Parliament with his guiding principle that: *Every man ha his price*.

The source of the means of corruption was the plunder of India.

Society could not be laid bare to be reconstructed into something new and unheard of by men of principle. And principles abounded in the early 18th century as spin-offs from the Glorious Revolution. The compliance of high-minded men was secured by bribery.

There was a time when what is now called *corruption* was well understood to be the lubricant of *progress*. It is frankly described in a history of the Whig/Liberal Party published around 1830, along with the pious thought that the commercial system was now well-established, had produced the appropriate principles for itself, and could operate without corruption

in future.

The other great source of capitalist breakthrough was the vast industrial Slave Labour Camps in the Caribbean. I got to know about these Camps through consorting with West Indians when I went to London in the late 1950s and through having a wayward interest in the theatre. I found that there was a play called *The West Indian* which had once been famous. I looked it up and found that there wasn't a West Indian in it. The 'West Indian' was a white colonist. West Indians of the late 18th century, like Irishmen, were English colonists. The slave populations on the Caribbean Island had no more presence in English public life than had the *de facto* serfs in Ireland.

A moment came when industrial slavery had served its purpose. There was then a peaceful transition to freedom. The Government bought the slaves from their owners and left them to wither as themselves, while their former owners invested the money got for them in wage-labour capitalism.

The slaves, abandoned as waste matter, became the modern West Indians by living on what nature presented. A hundred years later large numbers of them were brought to England to be wage-labour. The fact there had ever been West Indians of an entirely different kind—colonials with Parliamentary Assemblies—was removed from public memory. The only trace of it remained in the mid-20th century was the convention that the captain of the Cricket Team should be white.

It was through British action in the world that Capitalism became a world system. And it was through colonisation of North America by Puritan refugees from the compromising Restorationist system of 1660, and their hygienic extermination of the peoples they found in North America, that a purely capitalist society was formed—a society with no complicating pre-capitalist survivals.

And it was through construction of that half-Continent into a coherent and purposeful capitalist Super-state that Capitalism became the weightiest and most energetic force in the world.

(The Southern half of the Continent remained broken up into nominally independent pre-capitalist states, but the United States, with the support of the British Empire, asserted effective sovereignty over 'Latin America', where Catholic Europeans had mixed with American natives: the *Monroe Doctrine*.)

Capitalism was economically dominant

in the world in 1919; it was militarily dominant; and it was morally dominant. Capitalism did just as it pleased in the service of extending its power and making itself universally binding. There was nothing that it could do for this purpose that world opinion could find morally repugnant, because the only morality that existed internationally was the morality of Capitalism.

The effective states were the victor states in the War: Britain, France, Japan, Italy and the United States. Britain and France were facing defeat in the War they had launched against Germany when the United States intervened and saved them. They were beholden to the United States morally (so to speak) and were in hock to it financially. Britain had, before this, sapped the independent Imperial will of France, and now its own independent will was sapped by the USA.

The matter was put to the test on the issue of the *Anglo-Japanese Treaty*. The "*Manifest Destiny*" of Puritan America had carried it from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and then it was clear to it that it must cross the Pacific. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty lay in its path. It gave Britain an ultimatum to end it—or else. Britain ended it—and lost its Asian Empire as a consequence twenty years later. The British submission was made at the Washington Naval Conference of 1921.

Italy was never a serious contender for world power. It made war on Austria in 1914, against the opposition of a substantial body of Italian opinion, only because Britain offered it a large tract of Austrian territory as a reward.

The political will of world capitalism became concentrated in the United States as a consequence of the working out of Britain's Great War. It was indisputably the most powerful force in the world. The question was whether it would allow any economic form other than capitalism to exist in the world.

About ten years ago a Middle Eastern political group (Usbit al Tahir) took as its object the restoration of the Muslim Caliphate. The British Home Secretary (Jack Straw) declared that advocacy of the Caliphate was an act of terrorism. It was self-evident to him that a restoration of the Caliphate would be a stain on the life of the world.

And it was self-evident to the United States citizens that Capitalism was a direct expression of human nature, and that where it did not exist human nature was being suppressed.

The United States—the essential

Yankee part—knew nothing but Capitalism. (Well, it had slavery in its Southern region, but that was the "*peculiar institution*" inherited from Britain, and in any case it was not part of an elaborate social structure which Capitalism had to overcome, such as was the case with Feudalism in European countries, but was a mere appendage to Capitalism without any rights against Capitalism.)

Bukharin's statement in the early 1920s that "*modern capitalism is world capitalism*" accorded with the facts of the matter at the time. But Bukharin had anticipated the facts before they arrived, feeling out tendencies of development during the War.

Liberal Britain launched the World War in August 1914 in the expectation of a quick victory being achieved by the vast mass of the Russian Army. Elements of the Liberal Party were worried at the prospect of the Tsarist State being extended westward. But, if things had gone according to British expectations, the meltdown of Europe and the subversion of the British Empire would probably not have occurred, and the world would have remained a complex place in which many different lines of development were possible. It was the War that brought about the simplification: Capitalism as a world system centred on the United States.

(A German writer in 1916 observed that the world had never before seen the phenomenon of a great Empire, constructed over the centuries by brilliant statesmen, being subverted in a couple of years by an upstart rival which it sought to swat away. Of course the British Empire went on to win the War—or at least to be on the winning side—but it also happened that Germany subverted it in the course of being defeated by it.)

The new Russian State, committed to both Industrialisation and Socialism, set out on its task in a world that had become comprehensively capitalist in principle through the construction of the League of Nations. The United States did not become a member of the League, though it was the inspiration behind it. There was an expectation in the Bolshevik leadership that Central Europe would erupt in socialist revolution, but that expectation diminished week by week.

Trotsky predicted that war between the British Empire and the United States was bound to happen in the mid-1920s, and it did seem to be the next item on the international agenda. But the demoralised British Empire was a battered remnant of what it had been in 1914, incapable even

of holding Ireland, and it conceded Washington primacy at the Washington Naval Conference 1921-2.

World capitalism, however, was still only a potential political entity. Washington was not yet ready to take over its direction. It had been precipitated into its world role by British rashness in 1914, and Britain's military and political bungling thereafter, and in 1919 it needed a pause for thought, to fill itself out, and to deal with its immediate issue of Japan.

The policy advocated by Churchill in 1919 was an alliance with Germany to crush Bolshevism. He was ashamed of the totalitarian ideology of Good and Evil adopted during the War. He wanted to shrug it off, and to secure the Empire in the enlarged position which it had gained in the world through the War, by means of practical world politics. He wanted to treat the defeated enemy honourably and unite with him against the fundamental enemy of capitalist civilisation that had taken power in the East.

Under the limited, oligarchic, democracy, in which he had cut his political teeth, that is what would have been done. But democratised Britain of the 1918 reform just wasn't up to it.

Democratised Britain made a mess of Europe in 1919, deflating the pressure that might otherwise have been exerted on Moscow, and providing the opportunity for Soviet/capitalist deals.

In these circumstances the industrialisation of Russia by a socialist regime—Socialism in One Country—was undertaken and achieved. Its achievement was demonstrated in 1941-5 in the most industrialised war ever fought.

The industrialisation of the economy was accomplished without capitalists. The production of modern armament was in the circumstances a priority of production. And these armaments were used in battle by the social force that produced them.

All of this could have been done only through intense activity on the part of the greater part of the populace. A realistic description of what Russia was like in 1922 allows for no other explanation short of Divine intervention.

The populace, in accomplishing this, was not divided into political parties competing for its votes and doing each other down. It was therefore not democratic in the British sense. British democracy is a system in which the employees of private capital vote, every four or five years, for one or other of the

parties which share the business of governing the state, and for the rest of the time earn their wages.

It took close on 300 years, starting with the abolition of the Monarchy in 1649, for this system of representative government to be established. It was established through successive phases of aristocratic Parliaments—capitalist middle class Parliaments—and popularly elected Parliaments.

When the Monarchy fell in Russia in 1917, there was no elite able to take its place and form a State. The matter fell to the populace.

The British populace was enfranchised into the middle class representative system in 1918 and was an influence preventing a functional settlement of Europe in 1919. In 1939 it committed the hulk of the British Empire to war on Germany in defence of the anomalous position of Danzig under the Versailles system. It did so in alliance with Poland, precipitating the German/Polish War and then leaving the Poles to fight it alone.

It declared war on Germany, but went about it in the most leisurely manner, as a World War. When Germany, after nine months responded to the declaration of war on it, and won the first battle, Britain brought the Army home from Dunkirk, greatly relieved that there would not be another war of fixed positions like 1914-18.

The French Government, having lost the war which it had declared jointly with Britain, and being under occupation, made a settlement with Germany and was denounced for it by Britain. Britain, with the Royal Navy dominant over the German, refused to make a settlement. It kept Germany on a war-footing, hoping this would lead to a German/Russian War. It did.

Russia defeated Germany. The will of the undemocratic Russian populace achieved what the British party-political democracy (suspended) did not even attempt. And, as Russia was pushing into Germany and winding up the War, the British Government was searching for ways to make war on it.

British democracy survived incidentally as a result of the outcome of the German/Russian War and, in surviving it, sought for ways of destroying the force that had saved it.

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Industrialisation was generally agreed to be the business of Capitalism. It became the business of the socialist regime in

Russia because of the utter failure of Capitalism to industrialise under the Tsarist system, or to establish a capitalist regime when Tsarism fell.

The socialist regime had to accomplish a capitalist task. Western socialist enthusiasm for the Bolshevik Revolution never came to terms with that basic fact of the situation. It applied its ideals of Socialism, as a take-off from advanced Capitalism, to the work of industrialisation as undertaken by Bolshevism in the actual pre-capitalist conditions existing in Russia. But it did not urge the Bolsheviks to stand down and let private Capitalism take over as the mode of production appropriate to the situation so that the ideals of Socialism should not be sullied.

As I write, Radio Eireann announces that there is to be a Dublin History Festival at which the star turn will be Anne Appelbaum, an anti-Russian American journalist in the right-wing London 'quality' magazines who in recent times has been specialising in Ukrainian/Russian affairs. She has a New Cold War potboiler on the Russian Labour Camps, *Gulag*, which she attributes to a common source with the German Extermination Camps. And she has a book on the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s: *"Red Famine, Stalin's War On The Ukraine"*.

Famines are a common feature of the modern era, particularly with the British Imperial part of it. Some are more popular than others with Western democracy. The Ukrainian Famine of the early 1930s is uncomplicatedly popular because Britain had nothing to do with it. But the Persian Famine of 1917-18, caused by the operations of the British Dunsterville Expedition is unknown to the democratic populace, even though the numbers are greater.

I imagine that there have been local Famines caused by sheer bad luck, but large-scale Famines are associated with economic progress and the *"primitive accumulation"* required for industrial take off, or with associated wars. And those might be treated as costs of production of Capitalism—or of Socialism, where Capitalism is in default.

Famines were not unusual in Ireland under British rule, but the Famine of the late 1840s stands out because of its circumstances, its scale and its purpose. It was an event in the consolidation of Capitalism. The Famines of the 18th century were useless by comparison.

The English aristocracy imposed its dominance over the defeated Irish was exploitative but was not economically

constructive. It luxuriated on its rack-rents, built its network of Great Houses around the country and reconstructed Dublin as a decorative city. It lived grandiosely on the wealth it extracted from the broken Irish populace. The Irish economy under it did not make a vital contribution to the rise of Capitalism, as did the Slave Labour economy of the Caribbean.

In the 1780s the Anglican aristocracy in Ireland over-reached itself. It took advantage of England's difficulty with its Colonies on the American mainland to assert the independence of its little Parliament, while the slave drivers in the Caribbean only sought a slight increase in the power of their Parliamentary institutions.

The Slave Labour Camps were an integral part of the developing capitalist system. The Slave Masters had their feet planted firmly on the ground of Progress. Fifty years later there was a peaceful transition from slavery to wage-labour. The slave-owners exchanged their slaves for money which they could invest in the system of wage capitalism. The slaves were bought by the Government and turned loose on the islands to become the new West Indians. A century later they began to be shipped to England as wage-labour.

The Anglican aristocracy in Ireland lived in parasitic illusion. Political independence was disastrous for them. Within 20 years they provoked rebellion and had to be rescued by the British Army. The Westminster Government then bought the Irish Parliament out of existence. But, for the next forty-five years, Ireland remained clogged with pre-capitalist social bodies, landlord and peasant. Ireland—leaving aside the development in the Ulster Plantation, which always is left aside—was a drag on Progress.

Was the Irish Famine man-made? Was it genocidal? Put it this way: if the Ukrainian Famine was these things, then so was the Irish. Judgment in the matter is necessarily comparative. There are no absolutes. The Irish Famine was an incident in the development of Capitalism. The Ukrainian Famine was an incident in the development of Socialism.

Ireland was part of the British state and the Ukraine part of the Soviet state. There was a mass political movement in Ireland demanding a reorganisation of its relationship with the British state and a weak political movement in the Ukraine for secession from the Soviet state.

Food was exported, under military escort, from starving Ireland to other

regions of the British state, and similarly from Ukraine to the Soviet state. The British Empire had at its disposal vast resources with which it might have fed the Irish populace when the single crop on which it lived failed. There the similarity ends, both with regard to the subject of the Famine and the matter at issue.

The Irish potato eaters, who had a toehold on existence, were not bidding for power against the British State. They were what they were as a consequence of the destructive effect of British rule in Ireland over many generations. They had not chosen to be rack-rented potato-eaters. That was all that, under the British system, it was possible for them to be. And the Soviet State did not have at its disposal the vast resources that the British Empire had.

It was in the Ukraine in the early 1930s that the conflict inherent in Lenin's strategy, pointed out by Rosa Luxemburg, came to a head. Lenin, in order to establish a socialist regime, abolished landlordism and enfranchised the peasantry as owners of private property, knowing that this would be a source of Capitalism. He relied on class divisions arising amongst the peasantry, which could be used to break the power of capitalist elements and facilitate the establishment of co-operative farming that could be combined into a general socialist development.

I grew up amongst a property-owning peasantry that had organised itself into a co-operative system, but not a collective system. Rural Ireland was well-informed about the world—at least Slieve Luacra was. I recall discussions about Soviet farming when Stalin died. That was at the height of the Cold War, when the Bishops were going full blast in denunciation of Communism as Godless Atheism. And I seem to recall that a prayer for the conversion of Russia was added to the Mass—strange to recall now that Russia has been converted, is no longer Communist, but is hated more intensely than it was then.

I recall perfectly reasonable discussions about the merits and drawbacks of the Stalinist organisation of agriculture by property-owning peasants of a social disposition.

There are two main accounts of the cause of the Ukrainian Famine: that it was caused by the refusal of the upper stratum of the peasantry to agree to the establishment of agricultural collectives, which was the policy of the State, and their refusal to sell grain to the State as a

form of resistance—which led the State to confiscate the grain that was needed for the cities; or that it was part of a long-term Russian policy, dating from Tsarist times, to suppress Ukrainian nationality, with collectivisation being used as a spurious issue to generate national conflict.

A 1953 publication, *Tortured But Unconquerable Ukraine*, by J.F. Stewart, treats it as the latter, and describes it as "the greatest massacre of all time", beating the massacre of the Jews by a couple of hundred thousand: "More than Six Million Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death in pursuance of Russian policy".

And it was Russia, not Communism:

"They entered upon the path of provocation, terror and physical annihilation of whole masses of people, a policy which was well known to the Russian Tsars which has been followed during the entire period of Russian domination and which still continues. Not only to oppress but to strike a deadly blow at the Ukrainian nation, and, after it, all the other non-Russian peoples in the USSR, and then to master the whole world, is Russia's centuries-old dream and policy."

It says that entire Ukrainian villages were wiped out in 1933 and Russians brought in to colonise them.

A similar view is expressed in Stephen Oleskiw's *The Agony Of A Nation* (1983) but it is combined with the other view:

"The famine of 1932/3 can perhaps be best viewed as a desperate attempt by the Russians to totally subjugate the Ukrainian nation" (p7).

Then Robert Service is quoted:

"Collectivisation, dekulakisation and the man-made famine are separate matters. It would have been possible to collectivise without dekulakising, to collectivise and dekulakise without the famine... The decision to inflict all three was a political one. The general aim was the destruction of market relations and of the last bourgeois or petty bourgeois classes; the particular aim in the Ukraine was all those, but also the devastation of a hostile area" (p16).

It appeared to Moscow at the time that the opposition of the bourgeoisifying stratum of the Ukrainian peasantry was a serious obstacle to the consolidation of the State. Stalin told Churchill that it was the most dangerous moment in the life of the State. At that moment Churchill was necessarily sympathetic to Soviet reasoning. He had insisted on continuing the war on Germany in 1940, though

lacking the means to fight it, and his prospect of ending up on the winning side depended on the capacity of the Russian State which had mastered the crisis of 1933. And Ukrainian separatism was at that moment reasserting itself in alliance with the Nazi occupation.

Appelbaum says that the voice of the Ukraine on the subject of the Famine was silenced from 1934 until the collapse of the Soviet regime, with one "complicated exception". That was the period of Nazi liberation from Communism, 1941-1944.

The striking thing about Ukrainian nationality is that it never appeared in stable political form until after the Ukraine was forcibly incorporated in the Soviet system in 1945 and then functioned as part of it for almost half a century.

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The British State since August 1914 has made a point of never going to war over a conflict of interest with another state. It never goes to war over anything less than the saving of civilisation.

It made a particular point in August 1914 of having no material interest at stake in its war on Germany. It stood to gain nothing material from victory. But one of the Government papers astutely pointed out—I think it was the *Manchester Guardian*—that going to war purely in the interest of ensuring that Right would prevail in the world would probably lead to other good things too. And it did.

The Empire was greatly expanded—though the will to govern it competently was undermined.

Now, if you go to war to save civilisation, there is nothing you can do that you judge necessary to winning the war that can fall under moral condemnation, because nothing that saves civilisation can be bad, because civilisation is what is good.

In both its World Wars Britain carried out subordinate wars in which it did the very thing that it had declared war on Germany over. But it did so with an easy conscience—indeed, with a positive sense of virtue—because everything was justified by the great disinterested moral principle put on the table at the start.

When you come across the Hush-Hush Army commanded by General Dunsterville, that was sent into action between Bagdad and Baku in 1917, and whose passage through that marvellous wilderness was recorded, with photographs, by Major Donohue in *The Persian Expedition*. You suspect at first that it must be an elaborate hoax. But it was all matter-of-factly true. And there

was some purpose to it, connected with countering some new variant of the Kaiser's plan to conquer the world. So how can it matter that a few million Wogs died of starvation because of it?

How many million? when I first came across this very minor incident in Britain's Great War, twenty or thirty years ago, the figure that was claimed was ten million. I don't know if there is an agreed estimate. Who would there be to agree it? The whole thing is too slight and too alien to be bothered about.

The estimate for the Ukraine seems to have settled around a million and a quarter—less than the Irish Famine in a population five or six times the size of the Irish population in 1845.

And about half the size of the Famine in Bengal during Britain's Holy War against Fascism, when Churchill decided that India must play its part, like it or not, and diverted Indian resources to the war effort.

Famines are commonplace in the history of British action in the world—which is the history of the rise of Capitalism to world dominance. And likewise with conflicts of nationality.

The world was quite old when the capitalist assault on it began, but it had not formed itself into a series of distinct nations which were waiting to be crowned by capitalist states. To a considerable extent, tight national cohesion was formed in conjunction with the formation of political units of the market, and potential nations pulled and pushed at each other in the process of determining the formation of nation-states.

In Ireland a coherent national development began very quickly after the Parliament of the English colony was removed in 1800., but it did not include the population of the Ulster Plantation, which had been developing a public life of its own, in conjunction with Britain, for 200 years. In 1969 I said it should be treated as having a distinct national life of its own, and that an accommodation should be made with it on those terms. I was blacklisted for this, but the facts remain as I stated them.

As between the Ukraine and Russia, they could neither merge nor separate. Russia could not have held the Ukraine if a substantial body of Ukrainians had not regarded themselves as Russian—and if the Ukraine had a capacity for State formation equal to Russia's.

It has been argued that Russia originated in Kiev and that this fact has been concealed by Russian censorship. But it

was in Moscow that the State was formed, and Kiev could never avail of opportunities to form a viable State.

Of the three major peoples in the region—Poles, Russians, Ukrainians—it was the Russian people that proved to be capable of sustaining a State. A Russian historian of the early 19th century argued that the Russians did not constitute a nation at all. But they were a body of people on whom a State could rest, and it was therefore beside the point politically whether, without a State, they would have been a nation.

The Poles could not sustain a State. Joseph Conrad took offence of the description of his father as a Polish revolutionary. His father was a rebel. He rebelled for the independence of Poland as it was, not for revolution.

Attempts at Polish State formation failed because the Polish nobility would not allow a governing Monarchy to be formed, and it was itself incapable of governing as a ruling class, as the English nobility did, because very noble asserted a right of veto.

A Polish State was eventually formed by James Connolly's kindred spirit, Joseph Pilsudski. It lent itself to British manoeuvres after Pilsudski died. It re-emerged as an independent State two generations later, when the Soviet Union was dismantled.

A major ideological object of the Ukrainian State that emerged from the Soviet Union has been to indict Russia of Genocide because of the Famine. The inventor of the word "*genocide*"—as an exotic replacement for "*extermination of a people*"—Raphael Lemkin, badly wanted to indict Russia of Genocide, but in order to get the term adopted by the United Nations he had defined it in a way that meant Russia could not be indicted under it.

The Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yushenko, made use of the term *Holodomor*. This is a Russian/Ukrainian term made of "*golod*" (there is no 'h' in Russian), meaning *hunger*, and *mor* meaning *plague*, and is used to convey the sense of genocide without coming up against Lemkin's UN definition.

There is a report of a Maynooth Conference on the Ukrainian and Irish Famines, *Holodomor And Gorta Mor*, with Vincent Comerford as an editor.

About twenty years ago T.P. O'Mahony proposed in the *Cork Examiner* that nationalist Ireland should make the Famine

the centrepoint of its history and use it as Israel uses the Holocaust. He was slapped down by Professor Keogh of Cork University, who insists that Irish history has to be made strictly subordinate to the policy of a particularly insipid kind, lest it cause more disturbance than was already happening in the North—whose cause lay entirely in the undemocratic mode of government insisted on by Westminster. O'Mahony's proposal was snuffed out, making the writing of history problematical. But, when Ukraine came on the scene, it was emphasising its *Holodomor*—and was not reprimanded.

In *Holodomor And Gorta Mor* there is a rather sneering summary of Irish national history in the Introduction, and Comerford comments that, in the the past, "*the distinction between 'national' and 'nationalist' was frequently overlooked*" (p59). It is at best a tentative distinction.

In the world set in motion when Britain launched it into world war in 1914, nations do not present themselves as inert substances. Ernest Gellner came closer to the truth when he said that nations were a product of nationalism. That is certainly the case with the Ukraine. In Ireland the case can be made that nationalism went astray, and did itself immeasurable damage, by claiming to include within it a well-established and stable body of people who rejected it. But I don't recall that we got any gesture of support from Comerford when we made that case.

Raphael Lemkin reminisced about his youth as the son of a Jewish farmer in Poland:

"I was born in a part of the world historically known as Lithuania, or White Russia, where Poles, Russians (or rather White Russians) and Jews had lived together for many centuries. They disliked each other and even fought, but in spite of this turmoil they shared a deep love for their towns, hills and rivers. It was a feeling of common destiny that prevented them from destroying one another completely. This area was between ethnographic Poland to the west, East Prussia to the north, Ukraine to the south, and Great Russia to the east" (*Totally Unofficial: An Autobiography*. Yale 2013).

More likely it was the absence of a sense of common destiny in the era of Empires, before the era of inescapable nationalism that followed the destruction of the Empires, that enabled them to jostle against each other and let each other be.

Lemkin's last piece of writing was a typescript which lay unpublished for half a century, until it was issued as a

Holodomor Occasional Paper in Ontario in 2014. He was still trying to pin genocide on Russia, despite his own official definition obstructing him. The title asserts *Soviet Genocide In The Ukraine*. The argument is:

"Notably, there have been no attempts at complete annihilations, such as the method of the German attack on the Jews. And yet, as the Soviet programme succeeds completely, if the intelligentsia, the priests and the peasants can be eliminated, the Ukraine will be as dead as if every Ukrainian were killed, for it will have lost that part of it which kept and developed its culture, its beliefs, its common ideas, which has guided it and given it a soul, which, in short, made it a *nation* rather than a *mass of people*."

Does that not describe English rule in Ireland over a century and a half? And, when it appeared to have failed in the mid-1840s with the rise of O'Connellism, was the potato blight not seen as an act of Providence at the eleventh hour to do the job, and ensure that a Celt in Ireland would soon be as rare as a Red Indian in Manhattan?

And Britain, in the 19th century and into the 20th century, boasted honestly about being the greatest exterminator of weak peoples in the cause of Progress. How is it that none of this figures in scholarly discussions of Genocide?

I will return to the issues of primitive accumulation and the formation of nation-states next month.

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