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THE DIALECTICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL CHANGE: A STUDY OF LENIN
AND HEGEL

City University of New York

PH.D. 1983

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THE DIALECTICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

A Study of Lenin and Hegel

by

Kevin Anderson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1983

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE DIALECTICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

A study of Lenin and Hegel

by

Kevin Anderson

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This thesis analyzes the connection between Lenin's major post-1914 theoretical works and their relevance to the sociology of revolution. Methodologically, this is the first full-length study to single out and stress Lenin's extensive studies of Hegel.

His 1914-1915 writings, mainly on Hegel's Science of Logic, are examined in detail. As Lenin studies Hegel, he appropriates, at least in part, new dialectical concepts such as the transformation into opposite, free self-development, and the unity of idealism and materialism. He seems to be revising his earlier views on dialectics and criticizing those of his Marxist contemporaries. He does not, however take all of Hegel's dialectic as his own.

The second part of this study examines the relationship of these unpublished notebooks on Hegel to Lenin's major theoretical works after 1914. The study Imperialism:

The Highest Stage of Capitalism is found to have some decidedly Hegelian influences. This work also stresses the dialectical relationship Lenin draws between imperialism and national liberation movements. While rooted in political developments such as the 1916 Irish uprising, this concept of a new revolutionary subject seems as well to have been influenced by the Hegel studies.

This work also examines the 1917-1918 writings, including but not limited to the book State and Revolution. This work finds there a Promethean vision of a Soviet democracy. This seems to have a connection with the theme of free self-development found in the Hegel notebooks. This dissertation also traces Lenin's abandonment of his own vision of 1917-1918.

This work concludes with an assessment of the whole. No other Marxist revolutionary leader makes such a study of dialectics and none develop a new dialectical concept such as national liberation. In the period after Lenin, no other Marxist student of Hegelian dialectics connects dialectics with a political assessment of new revolutionary subjects.

On the other hand, this dissertation singles out two major limitations in Lenin's dialectic: (1) his failure to make his Hegel studies public or to draw them to a conclusion in the form of a methodological book or article. We

term this his "philosophical ambivalence," a term borrowed from Raya Dunayevskaya. (2) His abandonment of his 1917-1918 vision of a Soviet democracy in favor of a more centralized state. Even when he begins belatedly to criticize that state in 1922-1923, his criticisms are limited and lack the Promethean vision of 1917-1918. In these areas, Lenin fails to carry his new and creative ideas through to their conclusion. Nonetheless, his usually slighted theoretical works constitute an important contribution to the sociology of revolution.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: SOCIOLOGY AND REVOLUTION

Lenin's important work on the dialectical foundations of social theory has tended to be obscured by both Western and Russian writers. I hope to fill this major gap in the sociology of revolution.

A figure such as Lenin should tell us much about the sociology of revolution: few sociologists have ventured into this area. The study of Lenin has up to now been dominated by political scientists and historians. Many theoretical connections of the revolution to the actual social forces which made that revolution -- the sociology of revolution -- have been touched on little if at all. While historians do concede the power of revolutionary ideas in works such as the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels or State and Revolution by Lenin, they tend to stress their immediate agitational effects. So far writers slight the dialectical foundation which made these popular works possible, and without which they cannot be understood fully.

A. The Sociology of Revolution

American sociology has not produced a body of work on revolution as such. What has been done could be divided roughly into two groups: (1) early broadly qualitative

studies done before World War II, and (2) more or less functionalist studies as a mainstream after World War II, with some counter-currents. The functionalist studies tended to place revolution as a sub-category of modernization, and intersected quite closely with work in political science of the same period.

Prominent among the early American sociological studies of revolution are those of Lyford P. Edwards, Pitirim Sorokin and George Sawyer Pettee. Edwards' broadly sympathetic 1927 study of modern European revolutions focuses heavily on the role of ideology in undermining that status quo in a pre-revolutionary period. He also stresses that the slow-developing, rational evolution of revolutionary sentiments in the intelligentsia and the population as a whole are a factor. He argues that if the old elite "...believe firmly in themselves and in the righteousness of their actions they cannot be overthrown."¹ He further argues that revolutions such as the French, the English and the Russian have overall beneficial effects on society, despite their destructiveness, not only materially, but morally: "The workman's backbone is stiffened. He gains self-respect."² This sympathetic though not uncritical study is a product of the Chicago School, with an introduction by Robert E. Park.

The 1938 Pettee study³ continues many themes from Edwards' suggestive early study. He stresses the participation of masses versus theories of revolution as mere circulation of elites. Pettee also cites Lenin in particular when he also stresses the importance of clever and intelligent leadership. He does not confine this to narrowly political ability, but takes up also Lenin's original reading of Marxism.

During roughly the same period as the Edwards and Pettee studies, Sorokin's 1925 study⁴ had an entirely different emphasis. He tended to view revolution as an unmitigated tragedy: the irrational took over the rational in politics at such times, with tremendous destructive force. While this view was substantially modified later in his 1937 work⁵, the quantitative bent puts his work outside the scope of this study.

On the other hand, also in the 1930's and building in part on the work of Edwards and Pettee, historian Crane Brinton produced his masterful overview of revolution, later reworked to take fuller account of the Stalin terror⁶. Its foundation remained grounded in the same type of liberal humanistic approach as seen in sociologists Edwards and Pettee.

By the postwar period, American sociology had moved

toward the general direction of the Sorokin book. This was due primarily to two factors: (1) liberal disillusionment with the promise of revolution outside the West, following the revelations of all of the horrors of Russia under Stalin, and (2) the increased respectability of the functional, policy-oriented study of revolution as part of Cold War competition with Russia.

As the historian Cyril E. Black put it in his 1964 article on "Anticipation of Communist Revolution":

The importance of revolutions as a subject for political analysis derives from two key considerations: revolutions arising from crises of modernization will be a frequent occurrence in the years ahead, and revolutions have become the decisive arena of conflict between the Western and Communist systems of states.⁷

Some more sympathetic qualitative overviews of revolution were produced in this period, such as that of Hannah Arendt.⁸ Yet even here the positive elements of revolutions were seen more in moderate (national) revolutions such as the American than in the more radical (social) French and Russian ones. Another approach was that of the sociologist Neil Smelser, who grouped revolution under irrational phenomena such as "crazes" and "hysteria."⁹

But the dominant approach until recently has been a functionalist thesis, as illustrated above by Cyril E. Black. Revolution was seen as the product of transitory

difficulties in the modernization of societies, all of which were presumed to be heading generally in the same direction. According to this thesis, the ultimate destination was Western-style pluralist democracy. George Fischer¹⁰ has taken issue with this concept of modernization as Talcott Parsons applies it to the USSR.

As the sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt, one of the main theorists of modernization put it: "The emergence or creation of modern polity has been always an outcome of a revolutionary act."¹¹ Such a thesis has been perhaps of some use for an understanding of the anti-colonial revolutions after 1945, and in showing the nationalist dimensions of even a great social revolution like the Russian. Nonetheless, this thesis tends not to distinguish enough between the many national revolutions and the fewer great social revolutions -- the English, French, Russian and Chinese. For all the importance Eisenstadt's statement cited above gives to the phenomenon of revolution it still acts as if once a "modern polity" has been achieved, then social revolution is no longer much of a possibility. Social revolutions, basing themselves on labor and peasant unrest on a vast scale, are given importance only at the beginning of the modernization process. Such a view cannot anticipate the disturbances which, from the 1960's onwards, shook the

Communist and Western societies, in my view already modern.

Barrington Moore's work falls part way between the modernization approach and the one I will be using. He does offer a view that there are many paths to modernization and several different possible outcomes to the process.¹² His later work gives some emphasis to the role of mass movements and mass discontent during periods of revolution and unrest.¹³ Yet for Moore, as with the modernization school, social revolution nevertheless tends to be considered as epiphenomenal in the march toward industrialization and modernization. And he also tends to slight theory and ideology, never taking up major theorists of revolution such as Trotsky, Luxemburg, or Lenin, even as he discusses the German and Russian revolutions of 1917 and 1918.

Several important new sociological studies of social change and revolution by Skocpol¹⁴ and Wallerstein¹⁵ tend to emphasize structural factors as against the "voluntarism" of either revolutionary parties or masses. In some respects they follow from Moore's work. In the case of Wallerstein, this means tracing broad social changes over the last four centuries, relying heavily on neo-Marxian economics to demonstrate the relationship of imperialism to the growth of capitalism in Western Europe. For Skocpol, more within the scope of our study, it means a concentration on the

structural political and economic factors, especially in the area of agrarian relations, underlying the French, Russian and Chinese social revolutions. While certainly taking these new studies into account, I will be emphasizing instead the links between revolutionary theorizing, social movements, and social revolution.

After the turbulent 1960's, another theorist, the political scientist George Armstrong Kelly, also drew conclusions somewhat different from the modernization school. Rather than the product of transitory difficulties in modernization, he argued that revolution can be understood only if political theory could

...restore the hypothesis that domestic violence can, under certain conditions, be regarded as "natural" much in the same way as organized warfare among states.¹⁶

While Kelly reached as far back as Aristotle, he also, like Lenin, studied closely Hegel's theorizing on state and society. But internal violence cannot be equated always with social revolution. This holds true despite some reductionist definitions, like that of Chalmers Johnson,¹⁷ which include any violent political transformation as a revolution.

In sum, many diverse theorists, from Edwards to Feliks Gross,¹⁸ and from Kelly and Eugene Kamenka¹⁹ to Pettee, do emphasize and pay homage to the impact of

revolutionary ideology. And most commentators on revolution attest to the central importance of the Russian revolution of 1917. All the same, there have been to date no close, specialized studies of the dialectical foundation of Lenin's sociology of revolution. Thus, while many historians and political theorists such as Anweiler, Haimson, Meyer, and Rabinowitch,²⁰ have written a great deal on the Russian revolution and on Lenin, they have not probed in depth the dialectical, in effect Hegelian, grounding of Lenin's writings on revolution. For instance, Meyer's 1957 study of Lenin does not include much discussion of the dialectical foundation of Lenin's sociology of revolution in Hegel. He explains that he slights this grounding because its effect "...on policy in the Leninist movement and the Soviet state has been of no more than marginal importance."²¹

My own focus, on the contrary, will be on the theoretical foundations of a sociology of revolution, rather than on the politics of the contemporary Soviet state and the Leninist movements. I will give emphasis precisely to the part of Lenin's theorizing which Meyer found so interesting and influential and yet left aside for future studies of Lenin: the deep grounding of his social theory in Hegelian dialectics. As Meyer put it:

The student who sees in Lenin primarily a man of political action, whose attitude to theory...was brazenly manipulative, will be surprised that the problem which puzzled Lenin more than any other and to which he returned whenever he had a chance was the meaning of "dialectics."²²

In another study of the origins of Bolshevism, Haimson claims a deep Hegelian grounding of Lenin's political activity already for his early years, but his study stops too early in Lenin's life to focus, as I will, on the theoretic crystallization as of 1914.

B. Theoretical Problematic: The Dialectical Lenin

Much work on sociological theory deals with seminal thinkers such as Kant, Rousseau and Hegel as well as Marx. But the extensive theoretical work on Marxism has been confined generally to such academically filtered Marxists as the Frankfurt School or the French structuralists. Thus Lukacs, Adorno, Marcuse or Althusser tend to be considered much more by contemporary sociologists than actual practicing revolutionary theoreticians from within the Marxist and socialist movements.

Among such revolutionaries, two contemporaries of Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg, have justly fared relatively well in how scholars view their contributions to social theory. Two recent studies of Trotsky by Knei-Paz and Howe²³ show the great range of his theoretical interests and, when

added to the "standard" Deutscher three volumes, there can be no complaint that he was not seriously analyzed. More recent studies of the sociology of revolution such as Lowy's²⁴ have confirmed continued interest in Trotsky. One major recent study of Luxemburg by Nettl as well as newer ones by Bronner and Dunayevskaya,²⁵ likewise show the many-sided character of her writings on social theory.

So far the opposite holds true of Lenin himself. Contemporary social theorists tend to slight his theoretic output as a whole, and of the few who did go into Lenin such as Harding,²⁶ hardly any of them paid any attention to his philosophical contribution, especially his turn to Hegel's Science of Logic. But all three of these leaders of European Marxism in their time -- Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Lenin -- shared the same type of wide-ranging intellectual interests. And of these Lenin alone related the Hegelian dialectic to the theory of revolution.

Lenin's reads like a dialectical social theory, but it has little in common with critical sociology as in the Frankfurt School of Max Horkheimer et al. before and after World War II. It is above all, in Lenin's case, a sociology of revolution with a dialectical foundation. His concern is with what shatters more than with what holds together modern societies. The importance of such insights do not

limit themselves to the period of the Russian revolution alone. Hence the significance of a study of the dialectical foundation of Lenin's sociology of revolution.

We attempt to show that all of Lenin's major post-1914 writings, those which form the core of "Leninism," take their form from a social type of dialectics. Most specifically, we trace that Leninist core in large part to Hegel's Science of Logic. We further argue that it is precisely this which accounts for some of the quality -- dialectical -- of Lenin's political writings during the revolution and after, attested to by so many commentators from diverse points of view.

We explore this dialectical foundation of Lenin's theorizing in contrast to the neo-Kantianism which predominated in European social theory before 1914. This neo-Kantian social theory was dominant both in academic sociology (Durkheim, Weber), as Giddens has argued,²⁷ and also in the established Marxism of the leaders of the Second International (Kautsky, Bebel, Plekhanov, Adler).

Lenin's dialectics meant stressing a Hegelian concept such as the transformation into opposite. He used this concept, for example, to outline what he saw as a transformation in the capitalist economy from competition to monopoly in his 1916 study of imperialism. However, by using the

Hegelian concept of contradiction he saw greater competition between nation states and national empires developing from within this new monopoly stage. Thus the apparent equilibrium of monopoly was seen by Lenin to have been shattered by the competition of World War I -- not over economics in the narrow sense, but for an economic-political redivision of the world.

Central to my analysis of Lenin and the dialectic of social change is his "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic."²⁸ This close study of the dialectic proper, which he kept private during his lifetime, is analyzed in detail from a sociological point of view. Despite the sometimes fragmentary nature of these notes, they will be shown to contain a telling analysis of Hegel's theorizing and its relationship to Marx's Capital.

Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" comprises some 150 pages of extensive extracts from and commentaries on Hegel's Logic. Other notes on Hegel, comprising 85 pages, take up several other of Hegel's works, but much more briefly. In Lenin's manuscripts, left unpublished after his death, they comprise ten notebooks, written between September and December, 1914. In the following year, during 1915, his notebooks began to become more occupied with notes on imperialism, during which period he also apparently read

Hegel's Phenomenology, though there is no record of his notes on that.²⁹ In any case, he turned to the economic data only after his Hegel studies had been completed.

These 1914 notes on Hegel's dialectic were published in Russian in 1929 in the Leninski Sbornik (Lenin Miscellany), Volume IX. The noted French Marxist Henri Lefebvre translated them into French in 1935, and wrote for them a substantial introduction.³⁰ Soon thereafter, Raya Dunayevskaya translated the whole work into English. Failing in the 1940's and 1950's to find an American publisher for her translation, Dunayevskaya published Lenin's commentaries on Hegel as an appendix to her first book.³¹ In 1961, Progress Publishers of Moscow issued the full text of Lenin's notebooks on Hegel, including the quotes Lenin recorded from Hegel, as Volume 38 of the English edition of Lenin's Collected Works.³²

Despite this long history of their being in print, and despite the voluminous scholarship on Lenin in all fields, these notes on Hegel have not as yet formed the basis of any study of Lenin's theorizing. Most specifically, this is the gap we propose to fill.

It is no doubt controversial in the West, as in the East, to consider Lenin as a Hegelian Marxist thinker. In the West, both academic specialists and western Marxists

alike tend to view Lenin as anything but a social theorist who explored the intricacies of the Hegelian dialectic as a foundation for his theory of revolution. Official Russian Communist officials and writers make very effort to cover up Lenin's radically Hegelian critique of his own crude earlier theorizing. Even more importantly, this Russian cover-up takes place because Lenin's notes on Hegel are in contrast to the heavy-handed economic determinism not only of the Second International, which Lenin criticized explicitly, but also to all Russian texts on the official social theory, dialectical materialism.

Several other writers have begun some work toward the type of broad theoretical analysis I will be attempting. Moshe Lewin wrote a fine empirical overview of Lenin's last years,³³ which is invaluable as background to our study, as was Louis Menashe's brief but provocative overview of changes in Lenin's political views.³⁴ The late Lucien Goldmann credited Lenin with having been the first (before Lukacs and Gramsci) among the twentieth century Marxist theorists to rediscover the importance of Hegelian dialectics for Marxism.³⁵ And Lukacs and Gramsci, unlike for example the Frankfurt School, draw heavily throughout their careers from Lenin's concept of dialectic. They identify with him to a great extent, despite some differences with him.

More recent writers in France such as Jacques d'Hondt of the French Hegel Institute, or Roger Garaudy, have drawn heavily on Lenin's work around Hegel as well as the full range of Marx's work in their project of making Hegel's theorizing contemporary, and criticizing reductionist neo-Stalinist Marxism.³⁶ The same has been true of the work of the Praxis group in Yugoslavia, especially Mihailo Markovic³⁷ and Rudi Supek, and of writers such as Iring Retscher in Germany.

We have sought to fill a gap in the existing literature on Lenin and on dialectics, whereby Lenin's practice of Hegelian Marxism is too often inexplicably banished both from contemporary discussion of "Leninism" and sociology of revolution, and from contemporary discussions of dialectics, including a recent revival and expansion of Hegel studies.

The two massive recent studies of Lenin's thought -- Cliff's³⁸ and Harding's -- which total over 2,000 pages when taken together, nonetheless devote scarcely a line to Lenin's voluminous and crucial 1914-15 writings on dialectics, mainly on Hegel. Another massive study, that of the Belgian historian Marcel Liebman, devotes merely a few pages as an afterthought on Lenin's concept of dialectic, as an appendix, without connecting Lenin's work on dialectics with his theorizing as a whole.³⁹ It is surely not

because these writers are following Soviet dogma or Western liberal scholarship. All are deeply interested in concepts of Marxism independent of Stalinism. All three ultimately view Marxism mainly as a materialist socio-economic analysis only, and see Lenin having added to that type of Marxism his political and tactical activity. Where Cliff simply repeats old interpretations about the key to "Leninism" being the concept of the vanguard party to lead, Harding tries to raise the discussion instead to a theoretical level, to a discussion of Lenin's social and economic analysis of Russian capitalism and imperialism, while Liebman even includes an appendix on Lenin on Hegelian dialectics.

But theory remains emptied of its philosophical foundation. Thus Bukharin, who nonetheless was seen by Lenin to have never understood dialectics, and "thus" never to have been fully Marxist, is seen by Harding as having largely anticipated Lenin's two key works of the post-1914 period: Imperialism and State and Revolution. While it is certainly true that the themes Lenin and Bukharin discussed, imperialism and the state, were similar, we will argue that Lenin's treatment of those themes was strikingly different, not only from earlier studies, but also from those of his colleague Bukharin. Why else would Lenin write his own study of imperialism so soon after he introduced

Bukharin's study with such praise? In addition, Lenin chose nothing short of his Will to declare that Bukharin did not understand dialectics and therefore could not fully be considered as a total Marxist.

Not only were Lenin's studies, unlike Bukharin's, arguably grounded in Hegelian dialectics, but this had socioeconomic consequences in that Lenin's new stages of capitalism -- imperialism growing out of state monopoly capitalism -- had within them the dialectical opposite of new forms of revolutionary subject: specifically the national liberation movements and the new type of mass organizations represented by the Soviets as a continuation and deepening of the Paris Commune. In fact, we will attempt to show that it was Lenin's very concept of theory that was strikingly different in 1914-23, for State and Revolution, unlike Imperialism, so stressed subjectivity that it hardly included any socioeconomic analysis at all.

On the other hand, major writers who have concerned themselves with Hegelian-Marxist dialectics give us little more discussion of Lenin on Hegel than do the more empiricist historians. We refer instead to writers such as Herbert Marcuse and Georg Lukacs who did see Lenin's writings on Hegel as important, and who did discuss them in their major philosophical works.

Marcuse concludes his important 1941 study of Hegelian dialectics for the English-speaking world, Reason and Revolution, with a discussion of Lenin on the dialectic. He covers not the Notebooks on Philosophy but the trade union debate with Trotsky, and Lenin's public statements then on dialectics. Marcuse writes that "Lenin insisted on dialectical method to such an extent that he considered it the hallmark of revolutionary Marxism."⁴⁰

But despite that statement, Marcuse does not use this to re-evaluate Lenin's thought as a whole in light of his preoccupation with dialectics. Instead, Marcuse concludes his discussion of Lenin by stressing only what many others, ignorant of his study of dialectics, had already emphasized one-sidedly for many years: the primacy of politics over economics in Lenin's concept of Marxism. Nor does Marcuse use Lenin on Hegel as a transition to his own period (1941) from the nineteenth century concepts of dialectic in Hegel and Marx. Instead he shows us the relationship of Hegel to non-Marxist social theory after Marx only, except for the brief discussion of Lenin.

Lukacs did not of course know Lenin's writings on Hegel in detail when he wrote either History and Class Consciousness (1923), or Lenin: A Study of the Unity of His Thought (1924). But he was aware of them by the time he

wrote The Young Hegel (1947). He does devote a few pages of that work to a brief discussion of Lenin on Hegel. Lukacs begins by praising Lenin for throwing "a completely new light on the relations between Hegel's dialectics and dialectical materialism" in the 1914-15 notes on Hegel.⁴¹ But where Marcuse reduced Lenin's contribution to dialectics too quickly to politics, Lukacs is not even that daring, and instead seems to try and connect Lenin to the safe established Marxist ground of "economics" only. Lukacs writes that the reason Lenin on Hegel is so great is because Lenin feels affinity in the Notebooks for the way Hegel's dialectic was grounded in a "comprehensive and accurate analysis of economic problems."⁴² As we will see later, this is hardly what Lenin singled out in his Notebooks on Philosophy, which do not discuss Hegel's views on economics. These, as Lukacs knew very well, were not to be found in Hegel's Science of Logic in any case. It would appear that Lukacs may not have studied Lenin on Hegel as thoroughly as his commentary makes it appear. It is also possible that Lukacs did not dare to give an "unorthodox" interpretation of Lenin at that time. In addition Lukacs writes in The Young Hegel as if the 1908 Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (Lenin CW:14) and the "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" (Lenin CW:38) were written by Lenin from exactly the same

perspective. He does not even pose the question of whether Lenin had undergone a very serious philosophical reorganization after 1914. Lukacs who in 1919 daringly took issue even with Engels, by now declares Stalin as well as Lenin a philosopher of the age of imperialism!

The rest of Lukacs' discussion stresses how Lenin saw Hegel as emphasizing practice united with theory. It is notable that this whole discussion of Lenin on dialectics occurs in the chapter on "Labour and Teleology," which links Hegel to Marx's concept of labor, but which is hardly a crucial chapter in The Young Hegel. Not only that, Lukacs' other references to Lenin on Hegel make sure to "also" mention Materialism and Empirio-Criticism as if that were an equivalent work, or to mention Lenin as part of the dyad "Lenin and Stalin" on philosophy. Thus does Lukacs take back even the small flavor of Lenin on Hegel which he had given us in the chapter "Labour and Teleology."

Lukacs and Marcuse do not include politics or economics in the sense of examinations of contemporary problems linked up with Hegelian dialectics, as did Lenin in his studies of imperialism and the state and revolution. Thus their dialectics tend to remain academic and specialized as philosophy and culture only. When Marcuse did venture into socio-economic problems with his One-Dimensional Man, it was hardly

with the aim of uncovering new revolutionary subjects. Thus it lacked the same aims as Lenin's State and Revolution. We attempt instead to trace the birth, development and ambivalent conclusion of Lenin's new concept of Marxist dialectics, 1914-1923, as a total view uniting politics, economics and Marxist dialectics. In uncovering this, we have found most useful the work of several very original American Marxists who have written on the relationship of Lenin to Hegelian dialectics since the 1940's: Raya Dunayevskaya, Grace Lee (Boggs) and C.L.R. James. We have examined both their published writing and their unpublished texts on this question including their remarkable three-way correspondence during 1949-1951, which itself totals 140 pages.⁴³ As will be seen by our numerous references in the text, we have found most useful the work in this area of Raya Dunayevskaya.⁴⁴

We will begin our study of Lenin and dialectics by showing how Lenin plunged into a detailed study of Hegelian dialectics as World War I began, and how this thinking on dialectics continued to develop, from the hybrid essay "Karl Marx" where he had barely begun to absorb Hegel, to the massive "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic," to the shorter essays and speeches and references to dialectics right up to the Will and the other last writings of 1922-1923. We also will trace Lenin's own apparent philosophical ambivalence

toward his newly developed Hegelian Marxism. This manifested itself in the continued publication of early works such as Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (1908) and in the continued public references not only to Hegelian dialectics, but also to its opposite, the vulgar materialism of Plekhanov. Both Hegel and Plekhanov were in contradictory fashion recommended for study by the youth as if these two writers held convergent rather than contradictory positions. Meanwhile Lenin's private notes did contain critiques of Plekhanov's concept of Marxist philosophy.

But even more crucial is the fact that Lenin did in private develop a comprehensive study of Hegelian dialectics in 1914-1915. Hegelian concepts such as "unity of opposites," "contradiction" and "transformation into opposite" were explored in great detail. In addition, Lenin's break both with his own vulgar materialist past and with that of the whole of established Marxism -- including other revolutionaries as well as reformists -- was made explicit in his notes. Plekhanov was thus attacked not only for "betraying" earlier Marxist principles, as in his support of the Allies during World War I, but also for never having understood Marxist dialectics in the first place, even when his views on politics were "revolutionary." Nor was the critique limited to political opponents such as Plekhanov and Kautsky:

revolutionaries holding in many respects similar views to Lenin's, such as Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Bukharin, were nonetheless dubbed half-dialectical or non-dialectical in the course of the various political disputes on trade unions and the national question.

Nor was Lenin's private and massive study of dialectics in a completely separate compartment from his major published theoretical work on imperialism, national liberation, and the state and revolution. We will argue that all of these writings were "dialectical" in a new way, to a great extent because of Lenin's Hegel studies, 1914-1915. We will show in detail the relationship of the Hegel studies to the concepts of imperialism and the state, and of national liberation and the new forms of social revolution he discovered in the Soviets.

Most of all, we will ask: to what extent did the Hegelian thread developed by Lenin from 1914 enable him to see the self-activity of workers and peasants and national liberation movements in a new way? How much did his sociology of revolution treat the mass of working people as the key to both the possibility and the successful carrying out of a revolution, as well as the construction of a new society? How large did such a view, rather than earlier vanguardist

concepts, loom in the theory and activity of the years 1914 to 1921, the Revolution and the Civil War, as well as what the historian Moshe Lewin has aptly called "Lenin's Last Struggle"?

We will also discuss to what extent Lenin left social theory an ambivalent heritage, despite his later writings on the basis of Hegelian dialectics. On one hand he made the study of Hegel which castigated Plekhanov and other established determinist Marxists as Kantian and therefore not in tune with dialectical methodology, which he left unpublished. On the other hand he urged the Soviet youth in the 1920's to begin by studying Plekhanov. And while State and Revolution appears to show a break with the earlier What Is To Be Done?, both books went through many printings without additional comment by Lenin after the revolution. So did the violently anti-Hegelian and mechanistic early philosophic work, Materialism and Empiro-criticism, while on the other hand he referred publicly to a concept of Marxist theoreticians as "materialist friends of the Hegelian dialectic."

In short, if there is a dialectical, Hegelian Lenin, to what extent was there also an ambivalence toward this aspect in Lenin's post-1914 writing as well? Our overall

aim is not to add a footnote to the already voluminous biographies, histories and political science studies of Lenin and the Russian revolution. Instead, it is to show how theoretical probing on Lenin's part into the foundations of the social order which he sought to overthrow up to a point forms a coherent whole. These theoretical writings were never assembled into a whole during his lifetime or analyzed as such since. When we analyze the whole we have recorded we believe this should bring to light a striking source for social theorists as well as historians. In broad terms, here lies the significance of the whole present thesis.

C. Methods: Textural Analysis for Theoretical Problematic

In a qualitative theoretical study as outlined above the methodology employed will be the close, piece by piece textual analysis of primary sources, of the voluminous writings by Lenin himself. We will look at the full range of writings by Lenin. The emphasis will be on any theoretical statements, whether previously published or not.

Our other prime method we indicated earlier. It consists of pursuing a broad analysis of Lenin's theorizing. Concretely, this means to answer questions posed by his mid-career immersion into a social type of dialectic, and into Hegel's work. To what extent and in what forms, we

will keep asking, does this conceptual metatheoretical turn mark any significant shift in Lenin's theorizing? Does this dialectical turn also mean a turn toward a spontaneous Marxism? Just how do all of these dimensions interact in Lenin before, during and after his Hegelian moment? As will be seen, the results of our investigation have shown some new dimension of Lenin's theorizing, but only further research could demonstrate to what extent Lenin's major post-1914 writings were Hegelian.

Our study involves first and foremost going through much of Lenin's 45 volume Collected Works. While Lenin's known writings are now entirely in English, the discussion of his work, especially at the theoretical level, has to be consulted in French and German.

After bringing out the key concepts for social theory in Hegel's Science of Logic, we will look at Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" with an eye to which categories from Hegel Lenin drew on and which he passed over in these private notebooks. Then, having looked systematically at the notebooks on Hegel, we will attempt to analyze textually the form and structure of some of Lenin's major insights from Hegel. The next step will be to analyze textually the form and the type of logic employed in some

of Lenin's major post-1914 works on social theory.

This close textual analysis will attempt to uncover the nature of Lenin's dialectics after 1914, and to note any methodological differences from the pre-1914, more or less pre-Hegelian writings. At each stage, from that of the examination of Hegel's Science of Logic on, we will also occasionally bring in some key comparisons of Lenin's social theorizing and concept of dialectic with that of Marx, especially in his major work, Capital.

Having thus gone textually through Lenin's major theoretical works in relationship to Marx's and Hegel's main works, I will be prepared to summarize the main lines of Lenin's social theory, his social dialectic of revolution. The analysis will indicate a certain relationship of the Hegelian dialectic to Lenin's theory of revolution. In the conclusion, Lenin's Hegelian-influenced sociology of revolution will be discussed in terms of its relevance to contemporary social change.

Any sociology of social changes needs to examine theories like Lenin's with a fine-tooth comb, to gain whatever insight we can into the phenomenon and dynamics of revolution. This theoretical study of Lenin will fill a major gap in sociological analysis not only of Lenin and his revolution, but of revolution in general.

Footnotes - Chapter One

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21. Meyer, p. 5.
22. Meyer, p. 8.
23. Baruch Knei-Paz, The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky (London: Oxford, 1978); Irving Howe, Leon Trotsky (New York: Viking, 1978).
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26. Neil Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, 2 Vols. (New York: St. Martin's, 1978-81).
27. Anthony Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory (New York: Cambridge, 1971).

28. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 38 (Moscow: Progress, 1961). This edition of Lenin's works contains 45 volumes. Henceforth reference material from Lenin's Collected Works in this dissertation will take the following form: Lenin, CW 38:217, indicating volume and page number in this edition. Such references will from now on be found in parentheses directly in the text.
29. The references to his reading Hegel's Phenomenology are in his Notebooks on Imperialism, CW 39.
30. Henri Lefebvre, "Introduction" to V.I. Lenin, Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel, trans. Henri Lefebvre and Norberto Guterman (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).
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Chapter Two

THE CRISIS OF WORLD MARXISM IN 1914, AND LENIN'S PLUNGE INTO HEGEL

In August 1914 and immediately afterwards, in response to the outbreak of World War I and the breakup of the Second International, Lenin moved quickly in two seemingly contradictory directions: (1) he spent long weeks in the library in Bern, Switzerland, engaged in daily study of Hegel's Science of Logic, writing hundreds of pages of notes on Hegel; and (2) as is much better known, he moved toward a stance of revolutionary defeatism as the policy Marxists should in his view have adopted toward the governments of the various belligerent countries, and called for the establishment of a new international. In so doing, he partially broke with the concept of Marxism as a vulgar materialism which characterized the Second International, including his own earlier views.

While both enemies and supporters of Lenin during the Russian Revolution attest to his great political suppleness and ability to change tactics in quite different directions on very short notice, few if any commentators see this as a theoretical question. They simply ascribe it to good political judgement, as if this is a biographical fact having

nothing or little to do with Lenin's concept of dialectic.

While Marx has not shared Lenin's historical reputation as a brilliant strategist of revolution, he was in a different way, at a theoretical level, saluted by many for the subtlety of his Capital. As he wrote in response to one such critic, who called Hegel a "dead dog" and yet praised Marx's Capital:

Lange is naive enough to say that I "move with rare freedom" in empirical matter. He hasn't the least idea that this "free movement in matter" is nothing but a paraphrase for the method of dealing with matter -- that is the dialectic method.¹

For Lenin, it was also a question of dialectics, specifically Hegelian dialectics, as part of the foundation of his "Marxism" after 1914. For perhaps the most unique and yet least known feature of Lenin's Marxism after 1914 was his notes on Hegel.

A. Lenin Plunges into Hegel

No other major Marxist leader or theorist since Marx and Engels had done the type of serious Hegel studies which Lenin did on Hegel's Science of Logic from September to December 1914. And when from 1919 on, more academic Marxists such as Lukacs and those of the Frankfurt School delved into the same areas, they for the most part tended to keep their dialectical sociology and philosophy very

far removed from practical politics, especially the type of dialectical analysis of politics and economics which Lenin was to carry out in his studies of imperialism, national self-determination, and the state and revolution.

And certainly none of the major Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century who were also leaders of parties -- not Trotsky, Kautsky, Luxemburg or Mao -- none of these leaders of socialist parties and movements, with the sole exception of Gramsci (and even then those writings were locked away in prison or in party archives for many years afterwards), had made that "return" to the Hegelian dialectic which Marx had called the "source of all dialectic." No, whether it was politics, economics, or culture that was given the priority by these various Marxist theorists claiming the heritage of Marx, none except Gramsci made Hegelian dialectics the type of central category that Lenin did in 1914 and afterwards. Nor did any of the younger layer of Bolshevik theoreticians, such as Bukharin or Preobrazhensky.

The fact that Lenin refers only occasionally in direct terms to the Hegelian dialectic in his published writings and public speeches which have been recorded after 1914 does not make those references any less jarring to a world of Marxist debate where "materialist dialectics" had long

before gotten into the well-worn groove of giving emphasis only to the first part of that term, "materialist." But one can see those public references to Hegel here and there in the heat of controversy by Lenin. We will view these later. To offer just one example here, in the middle of the famous 1920-1921 "Trade Union Debate" with Trotsky, Bukharin and Shliapnikov over the role of trade unions in the new Soviet social order, Lenin suddenly declares:

...dialectical logic requires that an object be taken in development, in change, in "self-movement" (as Hegel sometimes puts it). (CW 32:94)

While such remarks are relatively isolated in Lenin's published writings and speeches, they are merely the tip of the iceberg. For the posthumous 1929 publication of his 1914-1915 notes on Hegel show his Hegel studies to have been quite intensive. It will be argued below that the role of Hegelian dialectics was central not only in Lenin's notes on philosophy for private use, but that these notes also had a direct relationship to his major post-1914 writings. The first public appearance of Lenin's new concept of dialectic was, we will argue, in his 1915-1916 writings on imperialism and national self-determination. That dialectic was to a degree influenced by the 1914-1915 Hegel studies.

Lenin began to read Hegel intensively in 1914 at the same time he prepared the article "Karl Marx" for the

Russian Granat Encyclopedia. But the months studying Hegel were intended for far more than the encyclopedia piece, for they continued long after it was completed. Once his Hegel studies were further along, however, he wanted to change the section on dialectics. He wrote to Granat on January 4, 1915 that as a result of working more on Hegel "these last six weeks" he wanted to add "some corrections to the section on dialectics." (CW 36:317) We argue below that these Hegel notes represent nothing less than the beginnings of a reworking by Lenin of his overall concept of Marxism. This in turn became the foundation for his critique of the Second International and his revolutionary theorizing after 1914.

When Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks including the 1914 Hegel notes have been published by Moscow editors at all, there has been an apparent effort to minimize the importance of Hegel for Lenin. We find the Hegel notes mixed in the same volume with a few scattered philosophical notes from 1909 and even earlier on topics other than Hegel. Despite the inclusion of this seemingly extraneous material, the Preface to the Philosophic Notebooks (CW 38) informs us that Lenin kept the 1914-1915 material, which was almost exclusively devoted to Hegel, in a series of separate notebooks. The editors write: "This material comprises the contents of

ten notebooks, eight of which, relating to 1914-1915, were entitled by Lenin Notebooks on Philosophy." (CW 38:13)

It would appear that Lenin kept these Notebooks on Philosophy devoted mainly to Hegel, as a separate item for personal reference. Despite this and the fact that in any case even the scattered contents of the Moscow edition contains more on Hegel than on any other philosopher by far, the notes on Hegel get merely a half page in the eight page official Preface.

Nonetheless Lenin, to the extent that he studied philosophy and made notes on it in the years preceding the 1917 revolution, notes which he himself grouped as eight notebooks under the label Notebooks on Philosophy, devoted his entire philosophical research to a study of an "idealist" philosopher, Hegel. The French Communist philosopher Louis Althusser has written on this question in a way which does not seek to minimize Lenin's interest in Hegel, but to reach the conclusion that Lenin nonetheless learned nothing from Hegel. Althusser writes that despite hundreds of pages of notes and months of study in 1914-1915 "...basically Lenin did not need to read Hegel in order to understand him, because he had already understood Hegel, having closely read and understood Marx."² But this point of view, tinged sometimes with an almost violent anti-Hegelianism, does not

shed much light on why Lenin did turn to an intensive study of Hegel in 1914.

On the other hand, the Hegelian Marxist and first English translator of Lenin's Notebooks on Philosophy, Raya Dunayevskaya, has written:

He began reading Hegel's Science of Logic. It formed the philosophic foundation for the great divide in Marxism. His Philosophic Notebooks show how completely he reorganized his conception of the relationship between the materialistic or economic forces, and the human, subjective forces, the relationship between science and human activity.³

Our own view, the reader will see, follows that of Dunayevskaya. Hence we differ fundamentally from Althusser.

Let us now turn directly to Lenin's Notebooks on Philosophy. We turn especially to the most important set of notes, on Hegel's Science of Logic. Throughout Lenin's notes, we explore this question of Lenin's attitude toward Hegel, and to see in detail what his notes disclose about his attitude toward dialectics in 1914-1915.

On the very first page of his notes (Lenin CW 38:87) he begins to explore Hegel's famous Preface which begins by arguing ironically against a narrow concept of logic as taught to schoolchildren as a mere "technique for thinking." Hegel also separates himself from the scientistic trends in modern sociological theory by denying that philosophy (by which he meant not philosophy as defined today in academia,

but all of the human arts and sciences such as history, economics, politics, sociology and anthropology as well as what we call today philosophy) can "...borrow its method from a subordinate science, like mathematics." Lenin takes all of this down in his notes and writes in his own words "a shrewd statement about logic."

Yet it is also arguable that Lenin at this point still accepts the simplistic view of the Marxism of the Second International (and later of Stalinism) that Hegel was an "idealist" and Marx a "materialist." On the next page (Lenin CW 38:88) he talks of the need to "turn around" the propositions of the "idealist" Hegel to have "life" and not "logic" be the causal element or foundation of changes and developments in human philosophy. He skips over an implicit reference by Hegel to the French Revolution, or at the very least to changes in life as foundations for changes in logic, when Hegel writes that "...logic shows no traces so far of the new spirit which has arisen in the sciences no less than in the world of actuality."⁴ Had he noted this sentence, it may have occurred to Lenin, as it did later on in his reading of Hegel, that Hegel's "idealism" is not something unconnected to history or to politics, or even to great revolutions such as the French Revolution. Lenin's notes also skip over Hegel's references to his first major work, The

Phenomenology of Spirit, as forming the foundation of his Science of Logic.

It would appear that Lenin was still very wary of any "phenomenology" or even more so, the Hegelian concept of "spirit." Perhaps he himself did choose to read the Science of Logic rather than the Phenomenology as a way of finding a "technique" or "methodology" for his Marxist theory in the narrow sense which Hegel had ridiculed when he decried efforts to limit logic to a mere "technique of thinking." But as has happened to many before and after Lenin who read Hegel with limited aims, Hegel appears to have gradually captivated Lenin. We will show just that as we follow Lenin further in his Notebooks on Philosophy.

In looking at Hegel's Preface to the second edition of the Science of Logic, written over a decade after the completion of the work, Lenin concentrates in his notes on Hegel's critiques of traditional (Kantian and pre-Kantian) logic as a "...a meagre shred or a disordered heap of dead bones." (Hegel, p. 31, Lenin CW 38:89) Lenin writes next to this critique by Hegel of formalistic and narrow concepts of logic: "...what is necessary is not leblose Knochen (dead bones) but living life."

But he continues to skip over, probably as too idealistic or perhaps even considering them "mystical,"

statements such as the following, crucial to this Preface:

"Nowadays we cannot be too often reminded that it is thinking which distinguishes man from the beasts." (Hegel, SL:31)

Even more important is Hegel's brief statement of what logic is for him:

If nature, as such, as the physical world, is contrasted with the spiritual sphere, then logic must certainly be said to be the supernatural element which permeates every relationship of man to nature, his sensation, intuition, desire, need, instinct... (Hegel, SL:32)

Lenin leaves the first statement out completely in his notes. In the case of the second one, he records only the phrase about logic being something "supernatural" (Lenin, CW 38:90), without noting the connections Hegel makes to the material, natural, physical world.

But a bit later he does take down without comment Hegel's statement that the development of philosophy presupposes a certain stage of material development and a leisure class. For example, he notes Hegel's view that "...the need to occupy oneself with pure thought presupposes that the human spirit must already have traveled a long road." (Hegel, SL:34, Lenin, CW 38:89) Further along, Lenin notes, Hegel remarks that philosophy first develops in a situation where:

In the silent regions of thought which has come to itself and communes only with itself, the interests which move the lives of races and individuals are

hushed. (Hegel, SL:90)

Lenin summarizes and then quotes part of this statement, but he refrains from what might have been expected of a "materialist" Marxist critic of Hegel: he does not condemn Hegel for "isolating" philosophy from history, perhaps since as we have seen, Hegel had earlier made those connections. Rather, Lenin notes prominently in the margin of his notes that Hegel considers that "interests 'move the lives of people'," and further on, Lenin writes in the margin: "the relation of thought to interests and impulses." He seems surprised to find statements in Hegel connecting ideas to concrete historical periods and even to interests of historical groups.

A bit later, Lenin summarizes Hegel's critique of Kant at this point for himself thusly:

In my opinion, the essence of the argument is: (1) In Kant, cognition demarcates (divides) nature and man; actually it unites them; (2) In Kant, "the empty abstraction" of the thing-in-itself instead of living Gang, Bewegung (progress, movement) deeper and deeper, of our knowledge about things. (Lenin, CW 38:94)

He appears to be breaking with the concept of Hegel as an idealist removed from the world of actuality. Instead, he is dividing German idealism into, to adopt classical Leninist language, "two trends." One was exemplified by Kant, the other by Hegel.

Lenin gives a positive summary of Hegel's view of what logic is a bit further on:

Logic is the science not of external forms of thought, but of the laws of development "of all material, natural and spiritual things," i.e., of the development of the entire concrete content of the world and of its cognition, i.e., the sum-total, the conclusion of the History of knowledge of the world. (Lenin, CW 38:93)

By now, Lenin seems to have begun to embrace Hegel by the time he has completed his notes on these two Prefaces to the Science of Logic. But, as we have seen, he retains a great deal of reservation in his view of Hegel, and either criticizes and turns around, or seems to overlook, some of the most theoretical or idealistic generalizations that Hegel makes.

But it is also demonstrable that no other leader of the Second International since Engels had delved so directly and sympathetically into Hegel. Kautsky had not done so. Nor had Luxemburg, Trotsky, Hilferding, Bebel or Plekhanov.

When he turns to Hegel's overall "introduction" to the Science of Logic, Lenin appears to agree with Hegel's view of logic as something broader than a "science of thinking" which provides "the bare form of cognition." However, he overlooks what he probably still regards as Hegel's mysticism. For example he overlooks Hegel's following attack on empiricism. In this particular case Lenin himself (and

especially his earlier reductionist concept of the relationship theory should have to reality as seen in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism) must have felt under attack here by the idealist Hegel:

Truth is the agreement of thought with the object, and in order to bring about this agreement -- for it does not exist on its own account -- thinking is supposed to adapt and accommodate itself to the object. (Hegel, SL:44)

Hegel goes on to praise "ancient metaphysics" over contemporary "common sense" empiricism; ancient philosophers "believed that thinking (and its essential determinations) is not anything, but rather its essential nature." (Hegel, SL:45)

Lenin, himself obviously still quite a bit empiricist, skips over these critiques of "common sense" modern philosophy. He only begins his detailed notes where Hegel turns to a critique of other German idealist philosophers, such as Kant and especially Fichte. Here he records an entire paragraph from Hegel in his notes. (Lenin, CW 38:95, Hegel, SL:47) He also records Hegel's important reference at this point to his Phenomenology of Spirit, and snippets of his critiques of Kant and Spinoza.

But he continues to skip over very important historical references such as the following, which, provided one is not afraid of idealism, certainly is compatible with

Marx's dialectic in its references to historical development:

Kant moreover considers logic...having attained so early a completion before the other sciences...Now if logic has not undergone any change since Aristotle ...then surely the conclusion which should be drawn is that it is all the more in need of a total reconstruction; for spirit, after its labors over two thousand years, must have attained to a higher consciousness about its thinking and about its own, pure, essential nature. (Hegel, SL:51)

Such material, we would argue, has as great importance as Hegel's earlier implicit references to the French Revolution and a "new spirit which has arisen in learning and in life," which Lenin also leaves out of his notes. Yet Lenin more than leaves this later material out of his notes. In this case Lenin makes some derisive comments in a very brief summary of this part of Hegel as "clericalism, God, the realm of truth, etc." (Lenin, CW 38:96) Lenin still seems to be shying away from any references to the Hegelian concept of "spirit."

While Lenin remains skeptical of Hegel's views of the "world spirit" and so forth, he is attracted (no doubt on the basis of his own experiences as a revolutionary, especially in 1905) to the Hegelian concept of spontaneous self-development as opposed to rigid stages either in concepts or in history. Lenin takes down Hegel's statement that "method is the consciousness of the form taken by the inner

spontaneous movement of its content." (Lenin, CW 38:90, Hegel, SL:53) He also notes for future reference that Hegel's material which follows this "gives a good explanation of dialectics." It is here that Hegel again makes a direct reference to his Phenomenology of Spirit. Lenin is quick to appreciate Hegel's statement that "the negative is just as much positive." (Hegel SL:54, Lenin CW 38:97) He takes this down and then notes that

...negation is something definite, has a definite content, the inner contradictions lead to the replacement of the old content by a new, higher one. In the old logic there is no transition.

So, despite its "idealistic" character, Lenin is impressed by the concept of "transition" in Hegel's concept of negation.

Lest the reader think that this is a mere repeating of the Second International's catechism, learned and then vulgarized from Engels, that dialectic is fluid and not static, Lenin gives his own preliminary summary at this point. There it is clear that he is moving beyond the views of the Second International. He writes:

And Hegel puts forward two basic requirements:

- 1) "The necessity of connection" and
- 2) "the immanent emergence of distinctions."

Very important! This is what it means, in my opinion:

1. Necessary connection, the objective connection of all the aspects, forces, tendencies, etc. of the given sphere of phenomena;

2. The "immanent emergence of distinctions" -- the inner objective logic of evolution and of the struggle of the differences, polarity. (Lenin, CW 38:97)

Rather than any mere fluidity here the concentration is on development through contradiction: the simultaneous unity and contradiction present in life but not captured by the limited logical forms of social theory, as in for example, disputes over "conflict" versus "consensus" models in sociological theory.

Now Lenin moves toward a summary of some statements Hegel makes on Kant. Lenin notes that Kant, according to Hegel despite flaws, "rated dialectic higher" than others who regarded it "as an external negative activity which does not pertain to the subject matter itself," and instead saw dialectic as "a necessary function of reason." (Hegel, SL:56) What Kant had done was to show two things: (1) the "objectivity of the illusion," i.e. that appearance, even when "false" has an objectivity of its own, and (2) the "necessity of the contradiction," as inherent in human "thought determinations." (Hegel, SL:56)

It is at this point that Lenin deepens his break with the narrow materialism of the orthodox Marxism of the Second International. Now we see him apparently plunge directly into Hegel's idealism. He draws a box around the

following points in his commentary on Hegel, and puts part of it in large block letters:

Is not the thought here that semblance also is objective, for it contains one of the aspects of the objective world? Not only Wesen (essence) but Schein (appearance or shine), too, is objective. There is a difference between the subjective and the objective, BUT IT, TOO, HAS ITS LIMITS. (Lenin, CW 38:98)

Not only does "appearance" and not merely "essence" have an objective reality, but there is not so firm a distinction as Lenin had previously thought between objective and subjective. This distinction "has its limits," he declares. Previous to this time, followers of Marx had held since Engels that the key to a Marxist analysis was getting beyond "appearance" to the underlying "essence" of phenomena, i.e. with economic relations as the "essence" of capitalism and human subjectivity as the level of "appearance" only. This is the type of thinking that Lenin is breaking with. Instead he follows Hegel's view that Schein (shine or appearance)⁵ is after all the appearance of reality, and thus important in and of itself. Appearance and essence certainly are contradictory qualities at times, but they have an interrelationship even when they are contradictory.

When Hegel argues that

...it is only after profounder acquaintance with the other sciences that logic ceases to be for subjective spirit a merely abstract universal and reveals itself as the universal which embraces within itself the

wealth of the particular... (Hegel, SL:58)

Lenin takes down this statement on the need for logic to develop through a whole series of encounters with "other science" -- so it will not remain the "dead bones" of school logic. Lenin also writes in the margin at this point "cf. Capital," the first of his many references to Marx's Capital in these Notebooks on Philosophy. (Lenin, CW 38:99, Hegel, SL:58) Lenin also writes "a good comparison (materialist)" next to the example Hegel gives to clarify his point, which he also records.

We have seen Lenin beginning to study Hegel. Already in his notes on the introduction to the Science of Logic he has begun to break with the simplistic categories of idealism versus materialism which had been the philosophical foundation of the Marxism of the Second International, including his own, before 1914. Before continuing with our discussion of the notes on Hegel, let us briefly relate to our own topic what other writers on Lenin tend to put first: Lenin's political writings in this turbulent period, especially his concept of "revolutionary defeatism" as the attitude he advocated that revolutionary socialists take toward the First World War.

B. Lenin on the War and Revolutionary Defeatism, 1914-1915

During the period from August through December 1914, Lenin's writings consist mainly of the following materials: "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic (150 pages), essay on "Karl Marx" for the Granat Encyclopedia (50 Pages), and political writings on the war (40 pages). (see Lenin, CW 21 and 38.) This is a rather surprising balance of theoretical versus practical writings for a Marxist who is often regarded as primarily an organization man rather than a theorist. It is why we have broken with the traditional way of presenting Lenin's response to the war. We have put the theoretical and philosophical questions first in our discussion, and the political questions second. However, we will now relate them briefly to his first political writings after August 1914.

From practically the very first day of the war, Lenin began to elaborate his concept of "revolutionary defeatism." On August 24 he wrote in an unpublished article:

From the viewpoint of the working class and the toiling masses of all the peoples of Russia, the defeat of the Tsarist monarchy and its army, which oppress Poland, the Ukraine, and many other peoples so as to increase Great-Russian oppression of the other nationalities, and consolidate the reactionary and barbarous government of the Tsar's monarchy, would be the lesser evil by far. (Lenin, CW 21:18)

Another article in the same period stated, extending the

argument outside Russia:

The Russian Social-Democrats were right in saying that to them the defeat of tsarism was the lesser evil...in each country the socialists (who are not opportunists) ought to see their main enemy in their "own" ("homemade") chauvinism. (Lenin, CW 21:22-23)

Here we see Lenin for the first time beginning to see himself as a leader not only of Russian Marxism, but also of world Marxism. He is actually claiming that the Russian Bolsheviks had lessons to give, not only to other East Europeans such as the Mensheviks or Rosa Luxemburg, but also to the major grouping in world Marxism at that time: the German social democracy.

By November 1, 1914, the Bolshevik exile newspaper published an article on "The Position and Tasks of the Socialist International" written by Lenin. This was the first public bid for a leading position in world Marxism. It included for the first time the actual concept of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war," which was to distinguish Lenin's Marxism during the period 1914-1917, and to separate him even from other revolutionary opponents of that war. In that November article Lenin wrote:

The bourgeoisie is duping the masses by disguising imperialist rapine with the old ideology of a "national war." This deceit is being shown up by the proletariat, which has brought forward its slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war. (Lenin, CW 21:39)

As is well-known, this position was so intransigent, so "Left," that many other revolutionary opponents of the war did not go along with it, including some of his own Bolsheviks such as Kamenev.

But the theoretical and political arguments around these questions did not come to be fully developed by Lenin until 1915, after he had completed his Hegel studies. The first detailed elaboration of his anti-war views was in the unpublished twenty page article "Under a False Flag," written in February 1915. There he began to develop his concept of a labor aristocracy which was crucial to his later theory of imperialism:

The enjoyment of crumbs of advantage from the colonies, from privileges, by an insignificant minority of the working class in Britain, for instance, is an established fact, recognized and pointed out by Marx and Engels. Formerly confined to Britain alone, this phenomenon became common to all the great capitalist countries of Europe, as their colonial possessions expanded, and in general as the imperialist period of capitalism grew and developed... (Lenin, CW 21: 152)

His manuscript includes explicitly Hegelian language drawn from his "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic," as in the phrase below, "break in gradualness":

[This development of imperialism led to] an entire opportunist trend based on a definite stratus within present-day democracy, and linked with the bourgeoisie of its own national "shade" by numerous ties of common economic, social and political interests -- a trend directly, openly, consciously and systematically

hostile to any idea of a "break in gradualness." (Lenin, CW 21:153)

This was all part of Lenin's argument not only against pro-war elements in international socialism, or those he regarded as little better, such as Kautsky. Even more important, he now offers also a critique of concepts such as "peace without annexations" advocated by other revolutionary anti-war leaders such as Trotsky and Luxemburg.

Underlying this attitude of extreme revolutionary intransigence was not only Lenin's personality and his revolutionary past, we are now ready to argue, but also his Hegel studies. For in those studies he explored concepts of "leaps" and "breaks in gradualness," and also that of "self-development." As we return in the next chapters to our detailed examination of Lenin's Hegel studies in 1914-1915, it should be kept in mind that these 1914 studies of dialectics influenced all of his better-known articles on the war and on "revolutionary defeatism." We shall explore to what extent Lenin's changed view of Hegel and of the dialectical sociology of social change also shaped his subsequent and major theoretical studies of imperialism, national liberation, and the state and revolution, written mainly in 1916 and 1917. The present chapter brought out just how this theoretical break started.

But first we must underline the central place of politics in Lenin's life and work. Such a political animal as Lenin hardly engaged in Hegel studies as totally separate from his political life. Nor could a philosophical issue alone have been a determinant of his theoretical-political direction. Thus the chief Russian Marxist philosopher of the time, Plekhanov, had through his pro-Allies stance during World War I probably enhanced Lenin's desire to work out his own concept of Marxist dialectics in 1914-1915. It is not a question of Hegel studies causing Lenin's concept of revolutionary defeatism, but of exploring for the first time the possibility that these Hegel studies were somehow related to Lenin's political career as a revolutionary.

Footnotes - Chapter Two

1. Marx to Kugelman, June 27, 1870, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Progress, 1970), p. 225.
2. Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971), p. 112.
3. Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, p. 168.
4. G.W.F. Hegel, Science of Logic, trans. A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities, 1969), p. 26. Hereafter references to this work by Hegel will take the form of parenthesis in the text, as follows: (Hegel, SL:26). If a reference is also given to Lenin, CW 38 in the same parenthesis, this is because Lenin took down that passage in his notes from the Science of Logic. Quotations from Hegel are given directly from this standard English edition of the Science of Logic and then cross-referenced to the version in Lenin's notes in CW 38, in the Notebooks on Philosophy.
5. The German language has this built-in double meaning where appearance thereby seems more directly connected to physical reality than in English: thus in German, appearance (Schein) is also what "shines forth" from an object. So unorthodox is this plunge into Hegel's idealism in Lenin's thought, and so dramatic a change from his earlier views, that the standard English edition of these Notebooks on Philosophy as edited and printed in Moscow, seems to minimize that plunge. It does that by failing to translate for the English reader the key work Schein (shine or appearance) and instead leaves it in German. Wesen (essence) is translated as are five other German words Lenin uses on this page (CW 38:98), but curiously, not Schein. This appears to be a rather clumsy attempt to cover up what Lenin is getting at by obscuring it for English readers.

Chapter Three

LENIN ON VULGAR MATERIALISM AND ON HEGEL'S BEING, ESSENCE AND APPEARANCE

Lenin has spent a full thirteen pages with his notes and comments on the first forty pages of Hegel's Science of Logic, comprising the two Prefaces and the Introduction. He has only sixty-one pages of notes and commentary on the first two books of the Science of Logic, the "Doctrine of Being" and the "Doctrine of Essence," even though these two books, published separately by Hegel in 1812 as the first volumes of his Science of Logic, comprise no less than 504 pages of the entire 800 page work. Hegel's last part, the "Doctrine of the Notion [Concept]," gets proportionately seventy-one pages of notes and commentary by Lenin, even though this last part comprises only half the number of pages (269) of the first two books of the logic. In other words, the section on the Notion or Concept takes up almost half of Lenin's notes on the Science of Logic, even though it is less than a third of the text in Hegel's work.

Since our purpose is to discuss Lenin's view of Hegel, we will divide this material roughly the way Lenin did in our discussion. Hence we give an analysis of his treatment of Being and Essence in this chapter, while reserving our

entire fourth chapter for a discussion of Lenin's notes on the Notion or Concept.

A. Lenin on the Doctrine of Being

In this part of Hegel's work the first phrase Lenin takes down and notes as very important is the following

...there is nothing, nothing in heaven or in nature or mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation... (Hegel, SL:68, Lenin, CW 38:103)

A practicing revolutionary like Lenin may have especially loved Hegel's refusal to counterpose "immediacy" to "mediation" or philosophical reflection. Hegel in fact finds "the opposition between them (immediacy and mediation) to be a nullity." (Hegel, SL:68) It is this "active" side to Hegel's idealism which the young Marx had praised in his theses on Feuerbach:

The main shortcoming of all materialism up to now (including that of Feuerbach) is that the object, the sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of intuition; not, however, as sensuous human activity, praxis; not subjectively. Hence, the active side was developed abstractly in opposition to materialism by idealism...¹

However, despite being drawn to it, Lenin at the same time continues explicitly to reject Hegel's idealism with great suspicion. Thus he writes on the end of this section on "With What Must Science Begin?," with which Hegel begins this section on the "Doctrine of Being":

Nonsense about the absolute. I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels) -- that is to say, I cast aside for the most part God, the Absolute, the Pure Idea, etc. (Lenin, CW 38:104)

Later Lenin will discover to his surprise that "the whole chapter on the 'Absolute Idea'" has "the least idealism and the most materialism." (Lenin CW 38:234) That did not happen for another few weeks. We will continue with Lenin as he hews his own path through Hegel.

Now he traces Hegel's first triad of "Being-Nothing-Becoming" rather noncommittally, only to pounce excitedly on Hegel's claim that: "What is first in the Science had of necessity to show itself historically as the first." (Hegel, SL:88). Lenin writes next to this passage: "It sounds very materialistic!" (Lenin, CW 38:106)

At this point Lenin begins to focus very specifically on what will be central for him in Hegel, the concept of the transformation into opposite. He writes in his notes:

Dialectics is teaching which shows how Opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical, -- under what conditions they are identical, becoming transformed into one another, -- why the human mind should grasp these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living conditional, mobile, becoming transformed into one another. En lisant Hegel [in reading Hegel]. (Lenin, CW 38:109)

This concept of the transformation into opposite was a category Lenin was soon to put to frequent use in his

analyses of the collapse of the Second International and World War I, and in most of his other theoretical writings. We will see that again and again later on, when we examine his published writings after 1914 in light of his Notebooks on Philosophy.

From a contemporary standpoint, we must also note in passing what Lenin does not take out from Hegel, which might have appeared to be relevant. He skips over almost completely Hegel's critique of "non-rational" philosophies such as intuitionism which had also counterposed themselves to Kantian "bourgeois rationalism." Perhaps the incredible hold which concepts of evolutionary progress and Kantianism had over not only sociologists but Marxist theorists at least until the cataclysm of World War I which rent European civilization made this the point of concentration for Lenin in his reading of Hegel.²

But still more important, for it was central not only to twentieth century Marxism, but to Marx's own writings, is the way in which Lenin skips over Hegel's first discussion of what, alongside transformation into opposite, is the core of all of Hegelian dialectics. This is the concept of "negation of the negation." This is the concept that Marx suddenly reintroduces into the penultimate chapter of Capital, Volume I, on "The Historical Tendency of

Capitalist Accumulation." This rather than the often mis-applied concept of "thesis-antithesis-synthesis"

(which was never Hegel's) gives an early "definition" of a sort of dialectics by Hegel, at this early point in the Science of Logic, when Hegel writes, in his section on

"Something":

Something is the first negation of negation, as simple self-relation in the form of being...But in all this, care must be taken to distinguish between the first negation as negation in general, and the second negation, the negation of the negation: the latter is concrete, absolute negativity, just as the former on the contrary is only abstract negativity, something is the negation of the negation in the form of being... (Hegel, SL:115-116)

We will not examine in detail Hegel's dialectic of being-nothing-something here. However, we need to lay stress on just how Hegel introduces the centrally important concepts of negation of negation, first and second negation, and absolute negativity. Lenin seems not to grasp this passage very well and he writes "the exposition is somewhat fragmentary and highly obscure." (Lenin, CW 38:108)

The contemporary Marxist reader of Hegel knows something Lenin did not: Marx's 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic." There the young Marx had singled out "absolute negativity" and "negation of the negation" as key concepts. Not aware of that subsequently published work, and perhaps viewing the reference to "negation of the negation" in

Capital as merely a literary flourish, Lenin falls far short here of Marx's level of discussion in the 1844 Manuscripts. Instead of analyzing this first appearance of these key concepts of negation in Hegel, Lenin retreats into a quote from Engels on "abstract and abstruse Hegelianism." (Lenin, CW 38:108)

Consequently, Lenin continues to single out, like Engels, merely the "fluid" character of dialectics as against other "static" concepts"

Shrewd and clever! Hegel analyses concepts that usually appear to be dead and shows that there is movement in them. Finite? That means moving to an end! Something? -- means not that which is Other. Being in general? -- means such indeterminateness that Being = not-Being. All-sided, universal flexibility of concepts, a flexibility reaching to the identity of opposites, -- that is the essence of the matter. This flexibility, applied subjectively = eclecticism and sophistry. Flexibility, applied objectively, i.e., reflecting the all-sidedness of the material process and its unity, is dialectics, is the correct reflection of the eternal development of the world. (Lenin, CW 38:110)

This type of statement hardly goes beyond Engels in its grasp of Hegel. Then he proceeds to virtually skip over Hegel's important section on transition.

But Lenin soon shows the extent to which he is breaking new ground. For he concludes that "ideal" and "real" are no more absolute opposites than were "immediacy" and "mediation":

The thought of the ideal passing into the real is profound! very important for history. But also in the personal life of man it is clear that this contains much truth. Against vulgar materialism. NB. The difference of the ideal from the material is also not unconditional, not überschwenglich [inordinate].

...Obviously, Hegel takes his self-development of concepts, of categories, in connection with the entire history of philosophy. This gives still a new aspect to the whole Logic. (Lenin, CW 38:114)

Most important above is Lenin's recovery of Marx's term "vulgar materialism"³ as a critique of one-sided, non-dialectical and contemplative forms of materialism.

The above passage from Lenin's notes just quoted also includes discussion of Hegel's concept of "the ideal passing into the real" as "profound." Lenin abstains from criticizing this notion on the basis of "materialism." He concentrates instead on the Hegelian concept of self-development of the idea, which he sees as paralleling human history, especially revolutions.

Lenin goes extremely lightly over the next 200 pages. Those pages deal with quantitative aspects in sections two and three of the "Doctrine of Being." He only devotes ten pages of his notes to this vast section. At one point he laments:

Further the transition of quantity into quality in the abstract-theoretical exposition is so obscure that nothing can be understood. Return to it! (Lenin, CW 38:117)

But suddenly his tone changes at the end of these 200 pages, long and arid, insofar as Lenin is concerned. As Hegel concludes the part on the "Doctrine of Being," Lenin suddenly finds something which illuminates a key problem for him as a Marxist: Hegel's assertion, as Lenin puts it, "that gradualness explains nothing without leaps." (Lenin, CW 38:234) Here is part of the passage on "leaps" from Hegel which Lenin copies down excitedly, writing next to it in the margin of his notebook: "Leaps! Breaks in gradualness! Leaps! Leaps!" Hegel himself has written:

It is said, nature non facit saltum [nature makes no leaps]: and ordinary thinking when it has to grasp a coming-to-be or a ceasing-to-be, fancies it has done so by representing it as a gradual emergence or disappearance...Water, in cooling, does not gradually harden as if it thickened like porridge, gradually solidifying until it reached the consistency of ice; it suddenly solidifies, all at once. (Hegel, SL:370, Lenin, CW 38:123-124)

Before moving to the "Doctrine of Essence," it is necessary to look at what we have covered so far. First, let us examine once again Lenin's singling out of "both immediacy and mediation." There we stressed that term "immediacy" as something new in philosophy for Lenin. Now that we are discussing "leaps," it behooves us to read that phrase again, this time emphasizing not so much the "immediacy" as the "mediation" (philosophical reflection) which is connected to it by Hegel. It is this two-fold movement

of "immediacy and mediation" which is so crucial to Hegel's dialectic and which appeared to be attractive to Lenin.

Secondly, we have seen Lenin begin to discuss in this section an important category for him in Hegel's Science of Logic, the transformation into opposite. Thirdly, we have seen him apparently fail to grasp, or at least skip over, Hegel's introduction of the key concepts of "negation of the negation," i.e. "absolute negativity." Fourthly, Lenin continues to be attracted to categories like fluid versus static, but while thus still to a great extent following Engels in this regard.

At the same time we have seen Lenin coming closer to Hegelian dialectics. This is the new Lenin. Thus, at the same time, he begins to embrace Hegel's critique of "vulgar materialism," introducing that latter term into twentieth century Marxism for the first time. This concept was very common in Marx's early writings, but these were of course unknown to Lenin. In sum, Lenin has been emphasizing three major points so far: (1) "immediacy" and "leaps in gradualness" as not separated from "mediation" or philosophical reflection, (2) transformation into opposite, and (3) a critique of vulgar materialism. Let us keep all of this in mind as we now turn to the discussion of "Essence," which many Marxists, including Engels, had

viewed as the core of Hegel's Science of Logic for Marxism.

B. Lenin on the Doctrine of Essence

This section covers 35 pages in Lenin's Notebooks and 180 pages in Hegel's Science of Logic. Lenin begins his notes by returning to the problem of show or appearance (Schein) we touched upon earlier when Lenin discussed Hegel's introduction. Here in the actual section on show, Lenin compares Hegel's concept of essence to: "the movement of a river -- the foam above and the deep currents below." He continues: "But even the foam is an expression of essence." (Lenin, CW 38:130) A bit later on, Lenin adds to this:

The more petty philosophers dispute whether essence or that which is immediately given should be taken as basis (Kant, Hume, all the Machists). Instead of or, Hegel puts and, explaining the concrete content of the "and." (Lenin, CW 38:134)

While Lenin does not state it explicitly here, it would appear that he is concerned not so much with Kant and other philosophers as with "orthodox Marxism," which had said that politics was "superstructure" and economics "base" and therefore the foundation of a Marxist analysis. This type of economistic vulgarization had been prominent in European Marxism at least since the last years of Engels. Perhaps, if our inference is valid, Lenin is beginning

to place all of "orthodox" Marxism of the era of the Second International in the same general category as Kant and the neo-Kantian revival which was taking place in the early years of this century. Granting our inference the question becomes one of "idealism" versus "materialism" as the sharp dividing line between Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy that an entire generation of Marxists (Lenin included) made it to be. That the inference just made does stand up, Lenin seems to bear out. For in his notes he soon makes Hegel's "law of contradiction" and his concept of "self-movement" or, more generally, his "dialectic" not only the key to Hegel but to Marxism for Lenin.

First, he writes down five full paragraphs from Hegel's brief section on the "Law of Contradiction." The extract includes the following material:

But it is one of the fundamental prejudices of logic as hitherto understood and of ordinary thinking, that contradiction is not so characteristically essential and immanent a determination as identity; but in fact, if it were a question of grading the two determinations and they had to be kept separate, then contradiction would have to be taken as the profounder determination and more characteristic of essence. For as against contradiction, identity is merely the determination of the simple immediate, of dead being; but contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity.

...Further, it is not to be taken merely as an abnormality which only occurs here and there, but is rather the negative as determined in the sphere of

essence, the principle of all self-movement, which consists solely in an exhibition of it. (Hegel, SL: 439-440, Lenin, CW 38:138-141)

Here we are a long way not only from "static" materialism, but also from any notion of dialectic as merely "fluid" versus "static." The key has become "self-movement" and not merely "movement." And self-movement arises from within the subject matter. Thus it is not a steady "flow" or the product of external force, but of the inner contradictions of the subject matter that constitutes the heart of social change. Very importantly, we should note, for social theory this would make the "internal contradictions" of a society the key to understanding its change or "self-movement."

Lenin becomes very enthusiastic over having discovered this in Hegel:

Movement and "self-movement"... "the principle of all self-movement"... who would believe that this is the core of "Hegelianism," of abstract and abstrusen (ponderous, absurd?) Hegelianism?? This core had to be discovered, understood, hinüberretten (rescued), laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did.

The idea of universal movement and change (1813, Logic) was captured before its application to life and society. (Lenin, CW 38:141)

At the end of these remarks he does refer to Engels as well as Marx and to "universal movement and change" and not "self-movement" through contradiction. Nonetheless,

the first part of the passage above suggests that Lenin is reaching beyond Engels and notions of mere fluidity as the core of the dialectic.

Now Lenin shows still more how far he has come. We see that from the way he sums up what he has taken from Hegel's concept of contradiction:

(1) Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the transition from the one to the other, this however is the most important.

(2) Intelligence and understanding.

Intelligence grasps contradiction, enunciates it, brings things into relation with one another, allows the "concept to show through the contradiction," but does not express the concept of things and their relations.

(3) Thinking reason (understanding) sharpens the blunt difference of variety, the mere manifold of imagination, into essential difference, into opposition. Only when raised to the peak of contradiction, do the manifold entities become active (regsam) and lively in relation to one another, -- they receive acquire that negativity which is the inherent pulsation of the self-movement and vitality. (Lenin, CW 38:143)

What is new here is the relationship Lenin is seeing between what would intuitively appear to be total opposites: on one hand, spontaneous self-movement, and on the other, "thinking reason (understanding)." Only through this thinking reason" does "self-movement and vitality" develop fully. We are a long, long way from the early Lenin's critique of spontaneity and the famous vanguardism of his What Is To Be Done? of 1902. Here the link between theory and

practice is a direct one in each human being and each human activity, "thinking reason" and "self-movement and vitality."

There is no mention of any "mediation" by any third groups -- such as a political vanguard party -- between the two. Translating into Marxist language, what we have here is a concept of revolution where "self-movement" (of labor, peasantry, etc.) links up with "thinking reason" (Marxist theory). The party to lead is missing completely. Revolution without mentioning the vanguard party but with much emphasis on philosophy. That is arguably the type of change that Lenin's Marxism is undergoing in these Note-books on Philosophy. At least that is how this author reads this and other like themes in Lenin's theorizing.

Lenin also goes into Hegel's concept of the identity of opposites, alongside his concept of contradiction. After referring in the margin to Marx's Capital, Lenin writes:

...but the basic idea is one of genius: that of the universal, all-sided, vital connection of everything with everything and the reflection of this connection -- materialistisch auf den Kopf gestellter Hegel [Hegel materialistically turned on his head] -- in human concepts, which must likewise be hewn, treated, flexible, mobile, relative, mutually connected, united in opposites, in order to embrace the world. Continuation of the work of Hegel and Marx must consist in the dialectical elaboration of the history of human thought, science, and technique. (Lenin, CW 38:146-147)

This type of inter-connectedness of concepts will be important in a moment, when Lenin gets to Hegel on causality. But first we should make clear that Lenin has by no means been converted to Hegel. A few lines further down he not only reminds himself that he is not accepting "God and the Absolute" (Lenin, CW 38:147) but concludes a few pages later:

This is one of 1,000 similar passages in Hegel. One must first of all extract the materialist dialectics from it. Nine-tenths of it, however, is chaff, rubbish. (Lenin, CW 38:154)

Lenin makes considerable notes on Hegel's discussion of form and content and the concept of "ground." He is intrigued with the following statement, of which he copies down the first sentence:

When all the conditions of a fact are present, it enters into Existence. The fact is, before it exists; it is, first as essence or as an unconditioned; secondly, it has determinate being or is determinate, and this in the twofold manner above considered, on the one hand, in its conditions, and on the other, in its ground. (Hegel, SL:477, Lenin, CW 38:147)

Lenin then writes: "Very good! What has the absolute idea and idealism to do with it?" What Lenin admires here is the way Hegel sees empirical facts as conditioned by history and emergent in a self-movement of various social forces and groups. Facts are not lifeless and motionless, but rather go through a process of becoming, existence,

and then non-existence. It is the whole process and not the fact at an isolated point in time which is the key to a broader understanding.

Now Lenin begins the section on "Appearance" by once again noting that, as Hegel writes, "essence must appear." (Lenin, CW 38:147, Hegel, SL:479) This part of Hegel (and of Lenin's notes) is extremely controversial in Russia, as noted earlier, because such self-defined and actual "workers' states," even when admitting to flaws, quickly add that all this, however, is at the level of "appearance"; their "essence" remains "proletarian" due to the "material base" created by nationalized property.

Hegel, as here quoted approvingly by Lenin in the reference to appearance as linked up with essence, indicates that any such a procedure is not dialectics, but rather sophistry, since "essence must appear." In other words, all that appears constitutes part and parcel of essence. Lenin then goes through and takes down passages from Hegel's well-known discussion of the whole being greater and truer than the sum of its parts.

Under the topic of "Actuality," the last part of the "Doctrine of Essence," the key question for Lenin is Hegel's discussion of necessity and causality. No question has been more important in Marxism in the twentieth century than

that of causality. Great debates have revolved around whether imperialism or capitalism, for example, are primarily causes or effects. Many view Marx and Weber as having devoted their lifework to unravelling the cause of the rise of capitalism. Lenin's reading Hegel in this section shows him to be in agreement with Hegel's dismissal of the problem of causality as a relatively subordinate one in philosophy and sociology.

Hegel sees cause and effect not so much as separate categories, but rather part of an interconnected relationship of events and factors. Later, he will show us that what moves history, in his view, is not causality but the "free self-movement" of the subject. But at this point all Hegel does is tear apart earlier philosophical concepts of causality. Lenin applauds him at every stage in this "negation" of previous philosophers. He writes, after quoting Hegel to the effect that "effect contains nothing whatever that cause does not contain": (Lenin, CW 38:159, Hegel, SL:559)

Cause and effect, ergo, are merely moments of universal reciprocal dependence, of (universal) connection, of the reciprocal concatenation of events, merely links in the chain of the development of matter...

The all-sidedness and all-embracing character of the interconnection of the world, which is only one-sidedly, fragmentarily and incompletely expressed by causality. (Lenin, CW 38:159)

Lenin not only shares Hegel's concept of reciprocity between cause and effect, but uses it to criticize "neo-empiricism." After noting in the margin that "necessity does not disappear, when it becomes freedom," he writes

When one reads Hegel on causality, it appears strange at first glance that he dwells so relatively lightly on this theme, beloved of the Kantians. Why? Because, for him causality is only one of the determinations of universal connection, which he had already covered earlier, in his entire exposition, much more deeply and all-sidedly; always and from the very outset emphasizing this connection, the reciprocal transitions, etc., etc. It would be very instructive to compare the "birth-pangs" of neo-empiricism (respective "physical idealism") with the solution or rather with the dialectical method of Hegel. (Lenin, CW 38:162)

Lenin thus fully approves of the short shrift Hegel makes of causality as an isolated, narrow topic. His approval comes just as we reach the final part of the Science of Logic, on the "Doctrine of the Notion" or "Subjective Logic." There we get Lenin's full discussion on "self-movement." As against the section of "Being," where he took extensive notes only in the first part, Lenin has taken notes fairly evenly throughout the book on essence, since its chapters all seem to have a relationship to social and political questions. Here we see how Lenin moves step by step toward Hegel -- and toward a full break with his own past vulgar Marxism.

Footnotes - Chapter Two

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works in One Volume (New York: International, 1968), p. 28.
2. The importance of non-rational philosophy later in the twentieth century has led some Marxist philosophers to utilize and to develop these concepts from Hegel, which Lenin passed over. See Lukacs' use of it to analyze fascism in The Young Hegel and later works, and Dunayevskaya's quite different use of Hegel's critique of intuitionism for part of her analysis of Maoism in Philosophy and Revolution.
3. This theme had been as missing in the Second International as it is today in official texts on Marxism-Leninism emanating from Russia, but it was a key term in Marx's critique of philosophy. Even though this theme was given more emphasis by the young Marx, at least explicitly, Lenin recovers the term via Hegel and the Marx to which he had access (not including the 1844 Manuscripts). That shows, for this writer at least, that Lenin's striking recovery of the critique of vulgar materialism suggests that it becomes central for Marxism once Hegel is read as a key to Marx, as Lenin was doing in these notebooks.

Chapter Four

THE CORE OF LENIN'S HEGELIANISM: FREE SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION INTO OPPOSITE

We have up to now seen Lenin cover many key concepts: appearance versus essence, law of contradiction and law of identity or interconnectedness, and the problem of causality. These are all questions that have a direct bearing on Marxism and on sociology. And yet there is also a certain incompleteness. Where Hegel makes "self-movement" rather than causality the key to social relationships and social change, the question of from whence comes this self-movement and what is its dialectic likewise needs grasping. It is exactly this "unfinished" state which is key until Lenin actually gets to Hegel on the Notion, and there we will see Lenin developing this more. Putting it another way, Hegel has just taken us through many of the traditional questions which have preoccupied Marxists and other social theorists, and tore into pieces not only the answers others made to these questions, but often the questions themselves. But despite Hegel's brilliant critique, his "negation" of others' concepts, we still await his "negation of the negation" or its synonym, "the positive in the negative." Up to now we are left with an incomplete view

of where Hegel's dialectic will lead. It is there, at the end of Hegel's argument, that Lenin is most surprised to find that Absolute Idea is not so much a godly Absolute as a this-worldly totality -- a sum total of all like the one he has himself begun developing for the twentieth century.

The next part on the "Notion" (or concept), which Hegel terms the "subjective logic," and "the realm of subjectivity or freedom" (Hegel, SL:571) is the heart and soul of Hegel's dialectic. It is not, we shall see, that the subject matter of "the Notion" (or concept) is new to philosophy. Rather it is a unique approach to this subject matter, putting "freedom" and "self-movement" at its center, that distinguishes Hegel.

As this chapter demonstrates, that affects Lenin very much.

For Hegel, the notion or concept in philosophy is directly connected to and flows out of his concept of freedom. As Herbert Marcuse noted:

They never denote mere concepts (as in formal logic), but forms or modes of being comprehended by thought. Hegel does not presuppose a mystical identity of thought and reality, but he holds that the right thought represents reality because the latter, in its development, has reached the stage at which it exists in conformity with the truth. His "pan-logism" comes close to being its opposite: one could say that he takes the principles and forms of thought from the principles and forms of reality, so that the logical laws reproduce those governing the movement of

reality.¹

Thus, to take a well-known example, Hegel's notion of the master-slave relation in his Phenomenology is one not of the institution of slavery as such, but rather of the slave's striving toward freedom. That is why Hegel terms his discussion of the notion or concept "subjective logic."

A. Lenin on the Notion

This section of the Notebooks on Philosophy consists of over sixty printed pages of notes and excerpts for 269 pages of Hegel's text. It is here that Lenin has taken his most intensive notes. On that ground alone, it could be argued that this section is the core of Lenin's response to Hegel. More important than the length of Lenin's notes, however, is their depth, their range of concepts and the greater and greater extent to which Lenin begins to speak with his own voice. He starts giving us long summaries of what the dialectic now means to him as a result of his having read closely Hegel's Science of Logic. This is but one manifestation of how sharp was the break with his own philosophical past. For he, like all other Marxists, had heretofore referred to this book, the Science of Logic, as Hegel's most idealistic.

However, it is Hegel's particular way of treating subject matter, putting not only fluidity but free self-development at its center which appears to impress Lenin so much.

Thus, he resonates strongly when Hegel writes: "With the Notion, therefore, we have entered the realm of freedom."

(Hegel, SL:582)

Still more than before in his note-taking, Lenin becomes absorbed in Hegel's critique of Kant. He takes down a whole series of paragraphs, including the following key statement by Hegel:

It will always stand out as a marvel how the Kantian philosophy which recognized the relations of thought to sensuous reality, beyond which it did not advance, as only a relative relation of mere Appearance, and perfectly well recognized and enunciated a higher unity of both in the Idea in general and, for example, in the Idea of an intuitive understanding, and yet stopped short at this relation and the assertion that the Notion is and remains utterly separate from reality -- thus asserting as truth what it declared to be finite cognition, and denouncing as an unjustified extravagance and a figment of thought what it recognized as truth and of which it established the specific notion. (Hegel, SL:592, Lenin, CW 38:173)

This passage cited above is the culmination of over ten pages where, as Lenin sums up for himself,

Hegel refutes Kant, precisely, epistemologically... exposing Kant's duality and inconsistency, his, so to speak, vacillation between empiricism (materialism) and idealism, Hegel himself arguing wholly and exclusively from the stand point of a more consistent idealism. (Lenin, CW 38:169-170)

Here is one of the most striking instances of Lenin's apparent embrace of Hegel's dialectical idealism in these notes. It is out of keeping with the type of Marxist materialism of the time, including even the "militant materialism" advocated by Lenin in 1922, as we will see a bit later. Such passages as this one illustrate the depth of Lenin's plunge into Hegel in 1914-1915, something he was never to systematize in private, let alone in public.

What is at issue here is Kant's insistence on separating his concept of empirical reality from overall humanistic values, the separation which social science has upheld ever since as the split between fact and value. Lenin sums all of this up for himself, as follows:

Essentially, Hegel is completely right as opposed to Kant. Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract -- provided it is correct (NB) (and Kant, like all philosophers, speaks of correct thought -- does not get away from abstraction of matter, of a law of nature, the abstraction of value, etc., in short all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely. From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice, -- such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth. Kant disparages knowledge in order to make way for faith; Hegel exalts knowledge, asserting that knowledge is knowledge of God. The materialist exalts the knowledge of matter, of nature, consigning God, and the philosophical rabble that defends God, to the rubbish heap. (Lenin, CW 38:171)

Like Hegel, Lenin is concerned with the concept, or the

notion (Begriff), drawn out of activity of human beings in the living, human, social world. He approvingly quotes Hegel on the transition from the concrete to the abstract:

Abstract thinking, therefore, is not to be regarded as a mere setting aside of the sensuous material, the reality of which is not thereby impaired.
(Hegel, SL:588, Lenin, CW 38:170-171)

Lenin concludes that "Kant belittles the significance of thought." (Lenin, CW 38:172) Then he draws a line of comparison from Hegel to Marx's Capital:

Here, too, Hegel is essentially right: value is a category which dispenses with the material of sensuousness, but it is truer than the law of supply and demand. (Lenin, CW 38:172)

Lenin's reference here is to the concept of value in Marx's Capital. From now on the marginal comments criticizing Hegel become less and less frequent. Lenin begins increasingly to use Hegel explicitly to reorganize his own concept of Marxism.

It has appeared from the very beginning that Lenin was concerned with actuality, with politics, with revolution, and that as he read Hegel he must have kept telling himself: turn it around, stand this "idealist," Hegel, "on his feet." He apparently was arming himself against "idealism." Even before reaching the notion in the Science of Logic, he had stressed the necessity of connections, of totality. He saw nothing short of the "objectivity" for

Marxism of the world Hegel was describing with his abstractions. We have seen how, upon reading Hegel's concepts of abstract and concrete universal, Lenin referred to Marx's Capital. (Lenin, CW 38:99) A bit later, he wrote that what was important for Hegel was the concept that "what is first in science has had to show itself first, too, historically." (Lenin, CW 38:106) By the time he reached the last part of the Science of Logic on the Doctrine of the Notion, he had already wound his way through the Hegelian concepts of appearance, of essence and actuality, of totality, and most important of all, the Hegelian concept of "freedom" as equal to "subjectivity."

In fact, where we cited above Lenin applauding Hegel's critique of Kant, we did not mention what Lenin wrote in the margin at that point: "The 'eve' of the transformation of objective idealism into materialism." (Lenin, CW 38:169) This is the very point in the Science of Logic where Hegel is beginning more fully to elaborate his central concept of the "negation of the negation." Hegel writes:

Essence is the first negation of being, which has thereby become illusory being; the Notion is the second negation or the negation of this negation, and is therefore being once more, but being that has been restored as the infinite mediation and negativity of being within itself. (Hegel, SL:596)

It might appear at first glance that Lenin is skipping over this crucial discussion of negation of negation, since he does not record it in his notes. True, after briefly summarizing that statement above, and also Hegel's rendition of his key syllogism of "universal, particular and individual," Lenin writes that Hegel's "further development of Universal, the Particular (Besonderes) and the Individual (Einzelnes) is in the highest degree abstract and 'abstruse'" and calls "these parts of the work...the best means of getting a headache."
(Lenin, CW 38:176)

However, first appearances seem misleading. Here, at least, that is Raya Dunayevskaya's conclusion on this particular section of Lenin's Notebooks on Philosophy. She has written:

It is under the section of "Syllogisms," where Hegel destroys the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, that Lenin burst forth with the aphorisms that reveal how decisive was his break with his own philosophic past.²

According to Dunayevskaya, in a word, we are at an important turning point in the Notebooks on Philosophy. Lenin's aphorisms will be dealt with shortly.

In line with her view, let us look more closely at what Lenin does say about Hegel's treatment of the syllogism. The following brief paragraph in the Notebooks on

Philosophy shows Lenin summing up what is important for him in an entire one hundred page section of the Science of Logic:

Obviously, here too the chief thing for Hegel is to trace the transitions, from a certain point of view, under certain conditions, the universal is the individual, the individual is the universal. Not only (1) connection, and inseparable connection, of all concepts and judgements, but (2) transitions from one into the other, and not only transitions, but also (3) identity of opposites -- that is the chief thing for Hegel. But this merely "glimmers" through the fog of extremely abstruse exposition. This history of thought from the standpoint of the development and application of the general concepts and categories of the Logic -- that's what is needed! (Lenin, CW 38:177)

This is the type of Hegelian logical syllogism that appears to be forming a new foundation for Lenin's own concept of Marxism, as discussed by Dunayevskaya.

He seems to love Hegel's humorous dismissal of the syllogisms of "school logic." Lenin writes:

Quoting, on p. 125, the "famous" syllogism -- "all men are mortal, Gaius is a man, therefore he is mortal" -- Hegel shrewdly adds: "Boredom immediately descends when such a syllogism is heard approaching." (Lenin, CW 38:177)

He gives his own broad summaries and reworkings of Marxist dialectics, stimulated by his reading of Hegel but not derived directly from him. Thus what Lenin is doing in his summary above of the Hegelian syllogism appears to be nothing short of breaking with empiricist logic.

Rather than the static "fact" of whether Gaius "is" or "is not" a man, what is crucial for Lenin is the transition, the connection of the different propositions in a new logical totality which is in a process of self-development. Not only the connection, but the "self-development" of ideas, of notions, is what brings Hegel's logical syllogism above alive for Lenin.

Just how remarkably Hegel affected Lenin here might be traced by a closer look at this long statement from Lenin:

To deny the objectivity of notions, the objectivity of the universal in the individual and in the particular, is impossible. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions. Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another, already includes in an undeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism, -- so the simplest generalization, the first and simplest formation of notions (judgements, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's ever deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance and role of Hegel's Logic. This NB. (Lenin, CW 38:178-179)

In this statement, in our view, we get the first Marxist stress of the twentieth century on the "Hegelianism" of the famous chapter one of Capital. Its structure began with the seemingly simple form of the commodity and yet ended with the fetishism of the commodity. Here the dialectic rather than economics begins to emerge for

Lenin as the center of Capital and all of Marxism. It is important not to miss this newness in Lenin: making notes on Hegel he states nothing less than that chapter one of Capital's "simple form of value...already includes in an undeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism"³

Now Lenin begins what he calls "Two aphorisms." He directs them against the established Marxist philosophy that he had been brought up on, and against Plekhanov especially:

1. Plekhanov criticises Kantianism (and agnosticism in general) more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectical-materialistic standpoint, insofar as he merely rejects their views from the threshold, but does not correct them (as Hegel corrected Kant), deepening, generalizing and extending them, showing the connection and transitions of each and every concept.

2. Marxists criticised (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Buchner) than of Hegel. (Lenin, CW 38:179)

Not only Lenin is apparently criticizing all twentieth century Marxism from a Hegelian standpoint. More than that, these "Marxists...at the beginning of the twentieth century" would seem to include Lenin himself. Here is a question for Lenin not only of "betrayal" by Kautsky and Plekhanov of their earlier "orthodox Marxist" principles in order to support their respective govern-

ments, albeit critically, in World War I. He applies his critique of their concept of dialectic, and thus of their whole concept of Marxism, even to the past, when both he and they were orthodox Marxists, that means in the heyday of the united Second International from 1900 to 1914.

No, for Lenin it is now a question of differing world views, of differing concepts of all of Marxism. Apparently Lenin now considers himself a Hegelian-Marxist, and as such opposed to the leading philosophers of the Second International, be they revolutionary or reformist. This is apparently what he means in the last quote. There he counter-poses a "dialectical-materialistic standpoint," which he implies he is embracing, to their mainly "vulgar-materialistic standpoint."

Furthermore, this is a specifically Hegelian dialectic that is involved. For Lenin implies strongly in point two above that "bourgeois" philosophy should have been criticized by Marxists not in the manner of the materialism of Feuerbach or Buchner, but in an Hegelian manner. This calls for special emphasis in view of Lenin's reputation as the leading "orthodox Marxist" of the twentieth century. This type of statement, given the myths which have been created to make of Lenin a schematic, vulgar materialist theorist both by Soviet scholars and

by anti-Leninists in the West, is nothing short of startling.

Lenin amplifies the above statements in his next "aphorism," perhaps the most quoted one of all from the Notebooks on Philosophy. It reads:

Aphorism: It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!! (Lenin, CW 38;180)

This is the most dramatically explicit statement by Lenin anywhere on the centrality of the Hegelian dialectic to Marxism. Indeed, it is one that everyone now quotes to prove Lenin's "extremism," his exaggeration to the point of absurdity or him not really meaning it. Even if the statement is extreme, it would appear that the main point here for Lenin is his break with his own philosophic past, especially his Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (1908). As in the two previous aphorisms, Lenin would seem to include himself amongst the Marxists who, by not "having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic" created a situation where "half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx."

Now Lenin's notes begin to have pages with a vertical line drawn down the middle. On the left side of the

page he quotes from Hegel and on the right side he "translates" into "materialist dialectics," by using Hegel to put down thought of his own. This is not so much apparently in order to "correct" Hegel, as to use him in Lenin's reconstruction of his own concept of Marxist dialectics.⁴

Lenin supports this view when he writes at this point in the Notebooks, in another "aphorism":

Hegel actually proved that logical forms and laws are not an empty shell, but the reflection of the objective world. More correctly, he did not prove, but made a brilliant guess. (Lenin, CW 38:180)

Lenin amplifies this statement a few pages later:

Historical materialism as one of the applications and developments of the ideas of genius -- seeds existing in embryo in Hegel. (Lenin, CW 38:190)

What appears to attract Lenin to Hegel's dialectic is not only the "objective" and "historical" grounding that he is surprised to find in Hegel, but also the "subjective" side of Hegel. Lenin finds attractive the way in which Hegel puts human beings and their activity at the center of his philosophical/social world view. Hegel's logical syllogisms have the human subject at their center.

This notion of radical subjectivity was missing not only from the philosophies before him that Hegel had criticized. Radical subjectivity was missing equally from

the deterministic, materialistic, economics-centered and heavy-handed Marxism of the "leading lights" of the Second International, such as Kautsky and Plekhanov. It seems fair to assume that Lenin had this in mind when he notes:

When Hegel endeavors -- sometimes even huffs and puffs -- to bring man's purposive activity under the categories of logic, saying that his activity is the "syllogism" (Schluss,) that the subject (man) plays the role of a "member" in the logical "figure" of the "syllogism," and so on, -- THEN THAT IS NOT MERELY STRETCHING A POINT, A MERE GAME. THIS HAS A VERY PROFOUND, PURELY MATERIALISTIC CONTENT. It has to be inverted: the practical activity of man had to lead his consciousness to the repetition of the various logical figures thousands of millions of times in order that these figures could obtain the significance of axioms. This nota bene. (Lenin, CW 38:190)

The key statement above is where Lenin sees that for Hegel, the subject, or the human being, plays the role of a key figure in the logical syllogism in his whole philosophical system. Such is Lenin's view of Hegel at this point.

Lenin continues to be astounded by the degree to which Hegel's concept of logic is not in an ivory tower, but directly connected with daily human activity:

Remarkable: Hegel comes to the "Idea" as the coincidence of the Notion and the object, as truth, through the practical, purposive activity of man. A very close approach to the view that man by his practice proves the objective correctness of his ideas, concepts, knowledge, science. (Lenin, CW 38:191)

We can almost feel Lenin's increasing excitement as he writes all of this down, opening himself to embrace Hegelian dialectics nearly in full.

Now we find Lenin singling out passages he would earlier have dismissed as "idealism," as when Hegel writes:

...we must also reject even more vigorously that estimate of the Idea according to which it is not anything actual, and true thoughts are said to be only ideas. (Hegel, SL:755-756)

This is surely one of the classic statements of Hegelian idealism. Yet Lenin simply paraphrases and concurs with this statement in his Notebooks: "It is equally incorrect to regard the Idea as something 'unreal' -- as people say 'it is merely an idea'." (Lenin, CW 38:193)

Lenin begins to take up Hegel's concept of cognition. He sees it as a process, as an interrelationship between the objective world and human cognition:

Cognition is the eternal, endless approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not "lifelessly," not "abstractly," not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution. (Lenin, CW 38:195)

No longer is it a question of idealism versus materialism. Now the stress falls on a Hegelian concept of self-movement of human cognition in relationship to

the material world. This concept is separate both from contemplative idealism and contemplative materialism. It is the self-movement of cognition of human thought or awareness, which appears to attract Lenin, as revolutionary protagonist.

Lenin also is in the process of discovering that the same Hegel does not stop with saying "idealistically" that ideas have an objective force in the world and should not be dismissed as "only ideas." This same Hegel sees ideas as connected with the material, human world, and not as often imagined, residing in an ivory tower. Lenin writes the following on the Hegelian concept of totality:

The totality of all sides of the phenomenon, of reality and their (reciprocal) relations -- that is what truth is composed of. The relations (= transitions = contradictions of notions = the main content of logic, by which these concepts (and their relations, transitions, contradictions) are shown are reflections of the objective world. The dialectics of things produces the dialectics of ideas, and not vice versa. (Lenin, CW 38:196)

Here Lenin seems once again to be anticipating by almost a decade what is commonly attributed to Lukacs: making the Hegelian concept of totality central to Marxism.

And, far from appearing to worry any longer over whether Hegel is too idealistic, Lenin writes the following comment in the margin next to the above-cited statement:

Hegel brilliantly divined the dialectics of things (phenomena, the world, nature) in the dialectics of concepts. (Lenin, CW 38:196)

But in case the reader is still not convinced, Lenin proceeds to express himself "still more popularly:

This aphorism should be expressed more popularly, without the word dialectics: approximately as follows: In the alternation, reciprocal dependence of all notions, in the identity of their opposites, in the transitions of one notion into another, in the eternal change, movement of notions, Hegel brilliantly divined PRECISELY THIS RELATION OF THINGS, OF NATURE. (Lenin, CW 38:196)

Here we have Lenin summing up Hegel's dialectic as the dialectic of a concrete totality, a living, breathing, human totality, in a process of self-movement and self-development.

Lenin then writes out a little definition of dialectics, writing in the left margin the question, " what constitutes dialectics?" In the right margin, he writes: "Every notion occurs in a certain relation, in a certain connection with all the others." The text of his brief definition reads as follows:

mutual dependence of notions
" " all "
without exception
transitions of notions from
one into another
" all " without
exception.
the relativity of opposition between notions...
the identity of opposites between notions. (Lenin,
CW 38:197)

Here he has zeroed in on what is central for him. He puts at the center not Hegel's concept of "negation of the negation," but rather (1) the unity of opposites, and (2) the law of contradiction.

However, it should be noted that not every swipe against Hegel has disappeared. Even at this stage of embracing Hegel, Lenin once in a while cannot swallow a statement like the following:

Since spirit is not only infinitely richer than nature, but also, its essence is constituted by the absolute unity of opposites in the Notion, it exhibits in its phenomenal aspect and relation to externality contradiction in its extreme form.
(Hegel, SL:776)

Lenin jots this down in his notes and then puts in the margin: "mysticism!" (Lenin, CW 38:204) It was apparently the phrase about "spirit...infinitely richer than nature" that drew Lenin's objection.

But he seems, at the same time, convinced by Hegel that the gulf between ideas and sensible world is not so great for Hegelian idealism. That idealism, Lenin now sees, is in its own way quite materialist. As Lenin sums this up at some length:

Logical concepts are subjective so long as they remain "abstract," in their abstract form, but at the same time they express also the Things-in-themselves. Nature is both concrete and abstract, both phenomenon and essence, both moment and relation. Human concepts are subjective

in their abstractness, separateness, but objective as a whole, in the process, in the sum-total, in the tendency, in the source. (Lenin, CW 38:208)

Here Lenin has captured for himself (and for us) the Hegelian concept of the "concrete totality." For Lenin (in reading Hegel), that means human concepts are ...objective as a whole...in the sum-total." Thus, taken as a whole, over time, ideas shape history and society. But that is not all. We have deliberately cut Lenin's phrase in two, to view separately the Hegelian concept of self-development.

The other part of Lenin's statement above puts stress on this. There he writes that logical concepts are objective not only when taken as a whole, but "in the process...in the tendency, in the source." Breaking this down a bit further, we now have ideas possessing "objectivity" when they are not only a "whole," but a "process," i.e. self-developing rather than static. Objectivity is connected to development: when we look at their "source," i.e. their relationship to a self-development, out of a process which began in the past, and finally, when we look at ideas as a "tendency," i.e. where their self-development is tending toward in the future. It is the process of self-development of ideas, a process which appears to fascinate Lenin as he reads Hegel here. He

is especially interested in the concept of a "sum-total" of ideas, which for Hegel have a certain direction. He presumably connects this to Marxian concepts of the proletariat as embodying the heritage of German philosophy.⁵ Lenin's next major statement is one of his most far-reaching. Lenin writes: "Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it." (Lenin, CW 38:212) This statement has caused considerable discussion among contemporary Russian ideologues, who are hard-pressed to integrate such "idealism" into their conception of Lenin. It is without doubt one of the most daring statements in the entire Notebooks on Philosophy. The main counter-argument advanced in Russia tends to be that Lenin here was merely summing up Hegel, rather than giving his own views.⁶

But as we have seen already and will see still more in the course of examining the Notebooks as a whole, this proposition becomes increasingly difficult to defend the more one traces Lenin's progress through the whole length of the Science of Logic. It is a relatively easy matter to take isolated quotes out of context and argue that these were only notes summarizing Hegel. When the whole is read objectively, however, it becomes clear that, right from the beginning, Lenin is writing comments

both in agreement with, and in refutation of, various points from Hegel.

One could of course argue that by the end Lenin stopped arguing with Hegel because he had already said it all before. If the latter were true, we would expect more material simply recording important points from Hegel at the end of the Notebooks, as Lenin grew tired of writing out his objections time after time. In fact, as we have seen, it is only in the third and last section, on the Notion, where Lenin begins long discourses and summaries of both Hegel's views and his own views.

As to the immediate passage under discussion, that on consciousness not merely reflecting the world but also creating it, we should note also its placement on the page. Lenin has begin to use the same format that he employed a bit earlier: he puts quotes from Hegel on one side of the page, to the left, and then on the right side of the page writes in his own words what it means for "materialist dialectics." Here he does not put the actual phrase "materialist dialectics" at the top of the right hand column where he is speaking in his own words. Yet it is the same format as earlier when he did explicitly use the phrse "materialist dialectics." (Lenin, CW 38:212) Hence the official Russian counter-argument carries all

the less weight.

We are now in the middle of the last section of Hegel's chapter on the "The Idea of Cognition." Lenin spends six pages of his own notes on this six page section of Hegel. He keeps to the procedure of placing Hegel's quotes on the left side of the page and his own commentary on the right side. In general, he seems surprised and pleased to learn that for Hegel, as he is reading him,

Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality. (Lenin, CW 38:213)

He takes down the following passage from Hegel in full:

In the theoretical Idea the subjective Notion, as the universal that lacks any determination of its own, stands opposed to the objective world from which it takes to itself a determinate content and filling. But in the practical Idea it is as actual that it confronts the actual; but the certainty of itself which the subject possesses in being determined in and for itself is a certainty of its own actuality and of the non-actuality of the world... (Hegel, SL:818, Lenin, CW 38:212-213)

This is an extremely idealistic statement, especially in the last part on the "non-actuality of the world." We might well have expected Lenin once again to write "mysticism!" in the margin.

Instead, we get a very close summary of Hegel's

statements followed by an explicit reference by Lenin to revolutionary practice. In the passage below note that Lenin is "catching" Hegel himself suddenly having used the word, subject, instead of Notion. Yet Notion was his distinctive category in all other places and not subject. Lenin writes:

In the practical idea (in the sphere of practice) this notion as the actual (acting?) stands opposed to the actual.

The self-certainty which the subject (here suddenly instead of "Notion") has in its being in and for itself, as a determinate subject, is a certainty of its own actuality and of the non-actuality of the world.

i.e. that the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity. (Lenin, CW 38:213)

This appears to be a definite and explicit return by Lenin to the concept of dialectic as a unity of idealism and materialism, where "the idea" shapes history and life as much as the "material base." If any are tempted to say at this point that Lenin is merely summarizing the "idealist" Hegel, rather than giving also his own views when he does so, let them come to grips with the following passage from Lenin's commentary, which precedes the entire discussion of consciousness:

Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge: see the Theses on Feuerbach. (Lenin, CW 38:212)

For it is these "Theses on Feuerbach" where Marx, seventy years earlier, had chastised contemplative non-revolutionary materialism, and held that the "active side" of human social reality had been developed better by idealism.

Lenin concludes this whole section as follows:

"What is necessary is the union of cognition and practice."

(Lenin, CW 38:216) And he argues that this "union" with "practice" is not something Lenin has brought to Hegel, but was present there in Hegel. This is something Lenin finds quite surprising, as in Hegel's discussion of the "syllogism of action":

In the syllogism of action one premise is the immediate relation of the good end to actuality, which it seizes on and in the second premise directs it as an external means against external actuality. (Hegel, SL:821)

After taking down the above statement from Hegel, Lenin makes the following quite detailed commentary on the text:

The "syllogism of action"...For Hegel action, practice, is a logical "syllogism," a figure of logic. And that is true! Not, of course, in the sense that the figure of logic has its other being in the practice of men (= absolute idealism), but vice versa: man's practice, repeating itself a thousand million times, becomes consolidated in man's consciousness by figures of logic. Precisely (and only) on account of this thousand-million-fold repetition, these figures have the stability of a prejudice, an axiomatic character. First premise: The good end (subjective end) versus

actuality ("external actuality").
Second premise: The external means (instrument),
(objective).

Third premise or conclusion: The coincidence of
subjective and objective, the
test of subjective ideas, the
criterion of objective truth.

(Lenin, CW 38:217)

Lenin had tended to view Hegel as a contemplative philosopher far removed from the world of revolutionary struggles which Lenin saw as his world. Now it is this connection of his concepts to human actions and consciousness which continues to surprise and impress Lenin.

But we must also draw an important distinction here. The reader may think that seeing Hegel as philosopher of "action" has simply meant a confirmation to Lenin of his earlier views on revolution in a surprising place, the philosophy of Hegel. Yet we must ask what it was that in midlife drew Lenin to Hegel in the first place. Surely it must have been not a quest for "action" -- that he could have found in countless explicitly revolutionary writers, not to mention himself -- but rather a search in Hegel for a deeper theoretical foundation. Lenin's surprise is in finding in Hegel not only some of that deeper theoretical foundation that he had sought, but also the deeply revolutionary and critical content which was at the core of Hegel's dialectic.

It is Hegel's concept of the unity of theory and practice, or the theoretical and the practical idea, that strikes Lenin. Still more, that concept forces him to reorganize his own concept of Marxism. In the very next passage which Lenin takes down from Hegel, the latter shows that his concept of "action" is not something separated from "mediation," or philosophical reflection:

Now just as in the end relation in general, the realized end is also again merely a means, which conversely the means is also the realized end, so similarly in the syllogism of the good, the second premiss is immediately already present implicitly in the first; but this immediacy is not sufficient, and the second premiss is already postulated for the first -- the realization of the good in the face of another actuality confronting it is the mediation which is essentially necessary for the immediate relation and the accomplished actualization of the good...Now if it is supposed that the end of the good is after all not realized through this signifies a relapse of the Notion to the standpoint of an actuality determined as worthless and yet presupposed as real. (Hegel, SL:822, Lenin, CW 38:217)

Here Lenin appears to touch on the relationship of theory to practice from the opposite end, from the end of theory. For Hegel, above, to achieve a "good" end, "immediacy is not sufficient" and "it is the mediation which is essentially necessary." Surely it was this need for an overall theoretic framework, and not a seeking after a "philosophy of action" per se, that must have drawn Lenin to Hegel in 1914. But to his surprise, he

found that the philosopher of mediation and of abstracted human thought was, in his own way, also a philosopher of action.

Now Lenin is at the edge of the concept which concludes the Science of Logic, Hegel's "Absolute Idea." If the realization that Hegel was not entirely in an ivory tower had by now become routine to Lenin, he still expected a final flight into "heaven" at the last stage, the absolute. To his great surprise, Lenin takes down Hegel's preliminary "definition" of the "Absolute Idea":

...cognition is restored and united with the practical Idea...but whereas in questing cognition this actuality appeared merely as an objective world without the subjectivity of the Notion, here it appears as an objective world whose inner ground and actual subsistence is the Notion. This is the absolute Idea. (Hegel, SL:823, Lenin, CW 38:219)

To see the Marxist concept of the unity of theory and practice already present in Hegel's concept of the unity of "cognition" and the "practical Idea" was surprising enough. But to see this as what Hegel defined his penultimate concept, his "absolute Idea" to be, gave certainly a very, very different view of Hegel than Lenin had been expecting. As he wrote a few pages later:

It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the "absolute Idea" scarcely says a word about God...it contains almost nothing that is specifically idealism... (Lenin, CW 38:234)

This must be seen in the perspective of the numerous Hegel scholars who have dismissed the "absolute Idea" as an Hegelian flight of fancy, or a return to theology. Take for example, Herbert Marcuse, who tells us the following about the "Absolute Idea":

Consequently, Hegel's chapter on the Absolute Idea gives us a final comprehensive demonstration of dialectical method...The absolute idea is the subject in its final form, thought. The absolute idea now has to be interpreted as objective being. Hegel's Logic thus ends where it began, with the category of being...At this point, Hegel's Logic resumes the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy, a tradition that it had abandoned in so many of its aspects...In line with this tradition, Hegel too links his Logic with theology.⁷

For his part, George Lukacs similarly ties Hegel's "Absolute Idea" to religious notions:

For what forms the conclusion of the system is the repeated self-attainment of the Idea, this time not only as Idea, but simultaneously as its own reality. It is evident that the basic structure of this edifice is strongly reminiscent of the theological system in which God as creator realizes the previously worked-out Idea.⁸

And what is contradictory about that is the fact that Lukacs in his otherwise quite profound study of Hegel's Phenomenology, in his The Young Hegel, ends not where Hegel ended but goes instead into religion. Lukacs finds religion easy to criticize. Yet he does not return either to absolute knowing or "the Golgotha of the Absolute Spirit" with which Hegel ended. We cite these views of two

eminent Hegelian-Marxist philosophers not in order to take us away from what Lenin is doing with Hegel, but to show its unusual character.

B. Lenin on Hegel's Absolute Idea: The Culmination of the Logic

The chapter on the Absolute Idea is but twenty pages long and forms the conclusion of the Science of Logic, after over 800 pages of preceding material. Despite his earlier admonition to himself that he is avoiding "God and the Absolute," Lenin writes a full twenty pages of notes and commentary on this final chapter of Hegel's book. Had he covered the rest of Hegel so intensively, the Notebooks on Philosophy would have stretched out to over 800 pages rather than the 150 pages he did write on the Science of Logic.

Lenin begins by taking down the first few lines of this chapter, as follows:

The absolute Idea has shown itself to be the identity of the theoretical and the practical Idea. Each of these by itself is still one-sided... (Hegel, SL:824, Lenin, CW 38:219)

As stated above, it is this type of unity of theory and practice that attracts Lenin, and which he sees as uniting Hegel with Marx.

He makes very, very few critical remarks against

Hegel any longer. It is not as though he is noting, grasping and accepting every part of Hegel, even at this point. For example, he fails to note passages which seem to have an important bearing on Marxist dialectics such as the following one:

The absolute Idea...contains within itself the highest degree of opposition. The Notion is not merely soul, but free subjective Notion that is for itself and therefore possesses personality... (Hegel, SL:824)

Lenin's avoidance of this passage is surely not because of the first line, since, as we have seen, he was well aware of and agreed with the concept in Hegel that everything contains an opposite within itself. No, what may have been involved is a difference between two historical periods: Lenin's and ours. As we shall discuss at greater length later, these statements about "personal and free" or "free subjective Notion" have greater meaning for our historical period, which has lived through totalitarianism, than Lenin's. Lenin's generation of Marxists predated Stalinism. That Marxism meant extension of already existing bourgeois freedoms to the mass of the people. Lenin's generation ruled out any type of authoritarian rule from above, except perhaps in the "emergency" of the actual revolutionary seizure of power or in the

midst of a civil war. Even in such an emergency they assumed a multiplicity of political parties and tendencies which would argue among themselves. Here, once more, Raya Dunayevskaya is right when she argued in 1953:

[Lenin] didn't have Stalinism to overcome...transitions, revolutions seemed sufficient to bring the new society. Now everyone looks at the one-party totalitarian state: that is what must be overcome by a totally new revolt in which everyone experiences "absolute liberation"...⁹

At this point, we must remember, Lenin had not even seen the 1916 Easter rebellion in Ireland, the first open "crack" in the silence imposed on the revolutionary movement since World War I. Easter 1916 was the first mass revolt of that war, and the precursor not only of the Russian Revolution, but of the anti-colonial revolutions. Still less was Lenin preoccupied with a central problem for Marxist dialectics in our age: what happens after the revolution?

A few pages later, Lenin stops to go over in great detail Hegel's exposition of dialectics as a whole. He takes down, for example, the following passage:

The absolute method, on the contrary, does not behave like external reflection but takes the determinate element from its own subject matter, since it is itself that subject matter's immanent principle and soul. (Hegel, SL:830, Lenin, CW 38:220)

Here it would appear that Lenin is concerned with the con-

cept of dialectic as seeing development and change from within the subject matter -- immanent development -- rather than out of external reflection.

Apparently the following passage is very important to him, for he takes it down first in German and then in Russian. It reads:

This is no less synthetic than analytic moment of the judgement, by which the universal of the beginning of its own accord determines itself as the other of itself, is to be named the dialectical moment. (Hegel, SL:831, Lenin, CW 38:220-221)

Lenin writes next to this passage in the margin: "One of the definitions of dialectics."

Suddenly, before taking down Hegel's comments which follow immediately on the development of dialectics from the Greeks through Kant, Lenin suddenly begins his own lengthy definition of dialectics. He entitles it "Elements of dialectics,"

First he gives a three-point version, which attempts to clarify the above-cited passage from Hegel:

A determination which is not a clear one!!

1) The determination of the concept out of itself (the thing itself must be considered in its relations and in its development);

2) the contradictory nature of the thing itself (the other of itself), the contradictory forces and tendencies in each phenomenon;

3) the union of analysis and synthesis. Such, apparently are the elements of dialectics. (Lenin, CW38:221)

But he is still not satisfied. Therefore he begins a sixteen-point exposition entitled "Elements of dialectics."

We will begin by quoting it in its entirety:

We can, if you please, present these elements of dialectic in a more detailed way, thus:

1) The objectivity of the analysis (not examples, not digression, but the thing in itself).

2) The whole totality of the manifold relations of this thing to the others.

3) The development of this thing (respective appearance), its own movement, its own life.

4) The internally contradictory tendencies (and sides) of this thing.

5) The thing (the appearance, etc.) as sum and unity of opposites.

6) The struggle respective the unfolding of these opposites, the contradictions of the impulses, etc.

7) The unity of analysis and synthesis -- disintegration of the particular parts of the totality, the summation of these parts together.

8) The relations of each thing (appearance, etc.) is not only manifold but general, universal. Each thing (appearance, process, etc.) is connected with every other.

9) Not only unity of opposites but transitions of every determination, quality, characteristic, side, feature into every other (into its opposite).

10) Infinite process of unfolding of new sides, relations, etc.

11) Infinite process of the deepening of man's cognition of things, appearances, processes, etc., from appearance to essence, and from the less profound to the more profound essence.

12) From co-existence to causality and from one form of connection and of mutual dependence to another, deeper and more universal.

13) The repetition at a higher stage of certain features, characteristics, etc., of the lower, and

14) The apparent return to the old (the negation of the negation).

15) the struggle of the content with the form and

the reverse. The shedding of the form, the transformation of the content.

16) The transition of quantity into quality and vice versa. ((15 and 16 are examples of 9))

Briefly the dialectic can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. Thereby is the kernel of the dialectic grasped, but that demands explanation and development.¹⁰

Here we have arrived at the core of Lenin's concept of the dialectic. This case, we should note, is not applied to political questions of revolution, imperialism, the state, national liberation and so forth, as we will discuss a bit later on. On the contrary, we see Lenin here treat the dialectic as "pure dialectic," as the ground or starting point for a discussion of political and sociological questions. Let us stop and discuss these sixteen points in detail.

Points one through five discuss the Hegelian concept of a "concrete totality," at various levels. Totality has a quantitative aspect, as it must for Hegel and Lenin be all-embracing and show "the relations of this thing to the others" (point two). It is not, however, static or motionless, like a photograph, but fluid. Moreover, totality is not merely fluid, but self-developing. For the fluidity comes from within the subject matter, and not external forces, a subject matter with "its own movement, its own life" (point three).

This many-faceted, self-developing totality is not a unanimity, however, but rather a sum of different entities and impulses, a "unity of opposites" (point five). It includes "internally contradictory tendencies (and sides)" (point four). While for Hegel this has very broad philosophical scope, embracing not only social theory, but psychology, religion, and so forth, for Lenin it will be the relevance of all of this to revolutionary social theory that is the concern. Clearly one obvious application of all of this to society would be to see society simultaneously as a totality embracing various functions and interests, and also as a division into contending groups, classes and individuals.

In sum, such a Hegelian model would embrace aspects of what contemporary social theory argues over quite often: consensus or functionalist models, on the one hand, and conflict perspectives on the other. The Hegelian concept of totality here discussed by Lenin offers a broader perspective that integrates these prevailing models. We state this as an example of the sociological relevance of Hegelian dialectics as summarized by Lenin.

Now let us return directly to Lenin's sixteen points on the dialectic. Having shown that the "concrete totality" is really a "unity of opposites," Lenin proceeds to discuss

the Hegelian concept of "contradiction," beginning with the "struggle...of these opposites" (point six). Even so, at the point of contradiction, there are still unities and relationships binding the struggling "opposites" together: "Each thing...is connected with every other" (point eight). This is looking at the unity of opposites from the other end, from the standpoint of the concept of contradiction.

Thirdly, Lenin discusses the Hegelian concept of transition. The struggle of opposites is not circular within a closed universe, like the change of seasons or the simplistic "ying and yang," but a development through contradiction. It is a struggle of opposites where one side wins out over another and creates a transition to a newer and more developed form. This new form in turn commences to have its own contradictions, but these are not a return to the past, but opposition at a different and higher level. Thus we get to "transitions" (point nine), which are an "infinite process of unfolding of new sides, relations, etc." (point ten). These include "the struggle of the content with the form and the reverse" (point fifteen), and the "transition of quantity into quality and vice versa (point sixteen).

Fourthly, it is not a process which occurs independently of the living, human subject, of human history and society. Even more importantly, the process of self-development is not unconscious or instinctual for humans, but directly connected to human theoretical knowledge: "Infinite process of the deepening of man's cognition of things..." (point eleven). However, no teleology is implied here, this "progress" in human cognition is by no means a straight line. While it moves from "co-existence to causality and from one form of connection and of mutual dependence to another, deeper and more universal" (point twelve), there will still be the "repetition at a higher stage of certain features, characteristics, etc., of the lower" (point thirteen).

What is more, there is the "apparent return to the old" (point fourteen). This is what Lenin labels "negation of the negation." It is the "negation of the negation." Hegel also sometimes termed this the "positive in the negative." For Lenin as well as Hegel, this negation of the negation propels forward the movement of history, society, and ideas. Lenin's sixteen-point "elements of Dialectics" remains an unsurpassed brief presentation of Hegelian dialectics as the dialectics of revolution. In the context of the present work, this summary stands out

as neither oversimplified nor vulgarized.

Having finished his sixteen points, Lenin proceeds to resume quoting at length the entire passage from Hegel where he had left off before beginning the sixteen points. As discussed above, in the rest of the passage Hegel traces the history of dialectics from the Greeks to Kant. Lenin is especially interested in Hegel's refutation of the accusation that "dialectics" is "the trick of an illusive show," (Hegel, SL:832, Lenin, CW 38:224) and of the charge that "dialectic has only a negative result." (Hegel, SC:832, Lenin, CW 38:225)

Lenin quotes the entire passage from Hegel on the latter, and writes in the margin: "this is very important for understanding dialectics," Hegel writes:

...but the other is essentially not the empty negative, the nothing, that is taken to be the usual result of dialectic; rather is it the other of the first, the negative of the immediate; it is therefore determined as the mediated -- contains in general the determination of the first within itself. Consequently the first is essentially preserved and retained even in the other. To hold fast to the positive in its negative, in the content of the presupposition, in the result, this is the most important feature in rational cognition; at the same time only the simplest reflection is needed to convince one of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement and so far as examples of the proofs of this are concerned, the whole of logic consists of such. (Hegel, SL:834, Lenin, CW 38:226)

Hegel is outlining in detail here the process of

negation of the negation in his logic, through the stage of the "positive in the negative." This is not meant by Hegel in any way to limit the power of the negation, which could take various forms in human history and consciousness.

Lenin terms the above passage "very important."

Then he writes:

Dialectics consists in general in the negation of the first proposition, in its replacement by a second (in the transition of the first into the second, in the demonstration of the connection of the first with the second, etc.). The second can be made the predicate of the first. (Lenin, CW 38:226)

But so important is this passage from Hegel that Lenin writes yet another summary for himself. And he draws a box around it to give it greater emphasis. It reads:

Not a bare negation, not a random negation, not a sceptical negation, vacillation, doubt, which is characteristic and existent in the dialectic -- which, undoubtedly contains in itself the element of negation and as the most important element at that -- no, but a negation as a moment of connection, as a moment of development, retaining the positive, i.e., without any vacillation, without any eclecticism.¹¹

Here Lenin traces for himself the way in which Hegel outlines the process by which his concept of negation moves through a process of "negation of the negation." Far from having skipped over this key passage on the negation of the negation, Lenin has recorded it in full, summarized it

in his own words, and stated in the margin "very important for understanding dialectics."

Now Lenin goes on to copy out a whole lengthy critique of formalistic theorizing, ending with the following passage from Hegel:

But formal thinking makes identity its law, and allows the contradictory content before it to sink into the sphere of ordinary conception, into space and time, in which the contradictories are held asunder in juxtaposition and temporal succession and so come before consciousness without reciprocal content. (Hegel, SL: 825, Lenin, CW 38:227-228)

At this point he does take issue with Hegel, the only time he does so in the entire concluding chapter on the Absolute Idea. And he does so rather feebly, accusing Hegel of having "allowed the ass's ears idealism to show themselves -- by referring (to) time and space...(as) something lower compared with thought." (Lenin, CW 38:228)

Then he goes on to take down in its entirety one more of Hegel's important statements on negation of the negation:

Now the negativity just considered constitutes the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of the negative relation to self, the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the sublation of the opposition between Notion and reality, and the unity that is truth. The second negative, the negative of the negative, at which we have arrived, is this sublation of the

contradiction, but just as little as the contradiction is it an act of external reflection, but rather the innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being, exists. (Hegel, SL:835-836, Lenin, CW 38:229)

Lenin seems to have by now fully subscribed to and taken as his own, Hegel's concept of negation or the negation. He writes for himself the following summary of the above passage:

Important here is: 1) the characterization of dialectics: self-movement, the source of activity, the movement of life and spirit; the coincidence of the concepts of the subject (man) with reality; 2) objectivism to the highest degree ("the most objective moment"). (Lenin, CW 38:229)

That is not all there is to be found in the above passage from Hegel. Has Lenin grasped fully the concluding phrases on the "innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being exists"? Lenin's summary concentrates only on activity, self-movement and objectivity. The words "person" and "free being" are apparently abstract to him. Here, too, different historic periods show which abstract categories get concretized. Raya Dunayevskaya, in her three-way correspondence with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee (Boggs) wrote, as if addressing Lenin:

You see, Vladimir Ilyich, you didn't have Stalinism to overcome...transitions, revolutions, seemed sufficient to bring the new society.¹²

For the next two pages, Hegel gives a detailed exposition of his own original concept of the syllogism in logic. This concept embraces aspects of universal, particular, and individual and involves a four-part movement from one term to another. Lenin surprisingly takes down very little of this very important section and then complains that some of it "is not clear to me." (Lenin, CW 38:229) This is not because he has stopped quoting from Hegel, for he continues to quote extensively from the last six pages of the Science of Logic.

He singles out, for example, the following passage, and gives it special emphasis:

The richest is therefore the most concrete and most subjective, and that which withdraws itself into the simplest depth is the mightiest and most all-embracing. (Hegel, SL:841, Lenin, CW 38:232)

Yet, as we have seen him do before, he skips over the sentence immediately following in Hegel's text, a sentence which stresses human personality and human freedom. It reads:

The highest, most concentrated point is the pure personality which, solely through the absolute dialectic which is its nature, no less embraces and holds everything within itself, because it makes itself the supremely free -- the simplicity which is the first immediacy and universality. (Hegel, SL:841)

It is certainly arguable that if Lenin had had access to Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, he would not so easily have shied

away from such expressions of Hegel.

Then Lenin quotes with emphasis Hegel's concept of "the science" of logic as "a circle of circles." (Hegel SL:842, Lenin, CW 38:233) He ends his quotes from the Science of Logic with the following, on the relationship of ideas to nature:

The idea, namely, in positing itself as absolute unity of the pure Notion and its reality and thus contracting itself into the immediacy of being, is the totality in this form -- nature. (Hegel, SL:843, Lenin, CW 38:234)

Then he writes that this has a close relation to materialism:

This sentence on the last page of the Logic is highly noteworthy. The transition of the logical idea to nature. It brings one within a hand's grasp of materialism. Engels was right when he said that Hegel's system was materialism turned upside down. This is not the last sentence of the Logic, but what comes after it to the end of the page is unimportant. (Lenin, CW 38:234)

Lenin's overview of the whole chapter on the Absolute Idea follows immediately thereafter in the Note-books on Philosophy:

It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the "Absolute Idea" scarcely says a word about God (hardly ever has a "divine" "notion" slipped out accidentally) and apart from that -- this NB -- it contains almost nothing that is specifically idealism, but has for its main subject the dialectical method. The sum-total, the last word and essence of Hegel's logic is the dialectical method -- this is extremely noteworthy. And one

thing more: in this most idealistic of Hegel's works there is the least idealism and the most materialism. "Contradictory," but a fact! (Lenin, CW 38:234)

Such is Lenin's estimation of this crucial chapter in Hegel's work. As pointed out above, Lenin appears to take this chapter extremely seriously as a foundation for a Marxist dialectic. This contrasts sharply, as we have seen, with the views of several major Marxist commentators on some aspects of this subject: Lukacs and Marcuse. Paradoxically, Lenin, who is not usually thought of as an Hegelian Marxist, seems in fact to have put less distance between himself and Hegel at this point than the "Hegelians," Lukacs and Marcuse. He seems less concerned than they with the issue of theology, but rather bent on discovering the Hegelian dialectic as a dialectic of revolution. True, Lenin may not grasp syllogism and the concept of "negation of negation" as well as these philosophers who have devoted much of their lives rather than a few short years to unravelling the relationship between Hegel and Marx. Yet it is Lenin who places Hegel's concluding chapter at the center of his whole concept of dialectic.

Let us conclude by looking for a moment at what Lenin does not discuss from the concluding sentences of this chapter on the Absolute Idea. Here the evidence for the

argument that Lenin is deliberately dismissing part of Hegel is very strong. After quoting the first sentence of the last paragraph of the Science of Logic, he wrote, as cited above, "what comes after it to the end of the page is unimportant." Yet it is certainly arguable that these last passages are central for an understanding of what Hegel is saying in the Science of Logic, especially with their stress on putting the concept of "freedom" squarely at the center of Hegel's concept of logic and of dialectic. Let us quote the essential parts from Hegel's conclusion which Lenin had decided were "unimportant":

But this determination has not issued from a process of becoming, nor is it a transition, as when above, the subjective Notion in its totality becomes objectivity and the subjective end becomes life. On the contrary, the pure Idea in which the determinateness or reality of the Notion is itself raised into Notion, is an absolute liberation for which there is no longer any immediate determination that is not equally posited and itself Notion; in this freedom, therefore, no transition takes place...the Idea freely releases itself in its absolute self-assurance and inner poise. By reason of this freedom, the form of its determinateness is also utterly free... the Notion ascends as a free Existence that has withdrawn into itself from externality, that completes its self-liberation in the science of spirit, and that finds the supreme Notion of itself in the science of logic as the self-comprehending pure Notion. (Hegel, SL:843-844)

As we discussed earlier at various points, Lenin is probably avoiding this passage because of its seeming mystical idealism at the end, where the notion "completes

its self-liberation in the science of spirit." He misses also, however its references to the concept of freedom: "this freedom" where "no transition takes place," or the phrase about the "Idea" which "freely releases itself in its absolute self-assurance and inner poise," and so forth. This type of concept sti'll seems outside Lenin's world view, due to the already mentioned difference between his historical period and our own.

Raya Dunayevskaya noted this very lapse by Lenin at the end of his study of the Science of Logic. She did so in her preliminary analysis of Lenin on Hegel, in an already mentioned 1953 letter to another American Marxist philosopher, Grace Lee (Boggs). Dunayevskaya begins her letter by quoting one of the passages cited earlier where Hegel discusses "a person, a subject, a free being." Then she singles out the problem of totalitarianism and the crucial importance of the concept of freedom for today's Marxist dialectic in light of the phenomenon of totalitarianism. She follows this by quoting from the above-cited last passages from the Science of Logic, and from Lenin's dismissal of them as "unimportant." Dunayevskaya writes in free form, as if addressing a letter to Lenin. Here we quote her beyond what we cited before:

You see, Vladimir Ilyich, you didn't have Stalinism

to overcome, when transitions, revolutions seemed sufficient to bring the new society. Now everyone looks at the totalitarian one-party state: that is what must be overcome by a totally new revolt in which everyone experiences "absolute liberation" ...the assertion of freedom, "personal and free," and full liberation, takes precedence over economics, politics, philosophy, or rather refuses to be rent asunder into three and wants to be one, the knowledge that you can be free...¹³

This chapter gave a detailed overview of what Lenin wrote on the Science of Logic and more generally on the core of Hegel's dialectic.

We can now put briefly some of the main concepts Lenin is drawing from Hegel: free self-development through contradiction, leaps versus evolutionary gradualism, the unity of opposites, the unity of idealism and materialism, and historical transcendence. It is also important at this time as we finish with the "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" to point out several areas where Lenin apparently stops short of embracing Hegelian dialectics fully, even by the end of his study of the Science of Logic.

We have already pointed out some places where Lenin skips over references to freedom. But the major difference between Lenin's reading of Hegel and that of non-Marxist Hegel scholars is on the question of Hegel's concept of "aufheben," the simultaneous overcoming and preservation of contradictions in a dialectical transition. As the noted

Hegel scholar J.N. Findlay writes:

One may, in fact, say, with some exaggeration, that for Hegel the overcoming of contradictions and irrationality consists really in their permanent acceptance, since they are seen to be essential to, and therefore part of, the rational outcome.¹⁴

This type of contemplative stance or "permanent acceptance" of contradictions was of course totally foreign to the revolutionary Marxist V.I. Lenin. He is concerned mainly with overcoming rather than preserving contradictions, in his Marxist aspiration of creating a classless society. In this sense, Lenin is reading Hegel in a one-sided manner. Or at the very least he is taking his material from that part of Hegel's concept of Aufheben which is most in keeping with Marx and with revolutionary views in general.

We must also note differences between what Lenin included in his sixteen point "elements of dialectics" and the full sweep of his Abstract. For example, Lenin's "elements" do not include the type of extreme rejection of vulgar materialism implied in his earlier statements: "Man's consciousness not only reflects the world, but creates it." (CW 38:212) The fact that Lenin includes no such statement in his "elements of dialectics" would appear to indicate, at the very least, an ambivalence toward such an apparently idealistic statement.

Having illustrated these points of divergence between Hegel and Lenin on dialectics, we can now return to our main argument: the surprising, unexplored and major points of affinity of views between the Russian revolutionary and materialist Lenin, and the German idealist philosopher Hegel, who was no revolutionary.

Footnotes - Chapter Four

1. Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 25.
2. Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, p. 169.
3. While Lenin's statement is by no means quite as explicit as Lukacs' remark, a decade later (which he later withdrew after his recantation when attacked by Zinoviev and Stalin. This continued long after Stalin's death as well. See Lukacs' 1967 Preface to the republication of his History and Class Consciousness) that in Capital, Volume I, "the chapter dealing with the fetish character of the commodity contains within itself the whole of historical materialism" (p. 170). Still, it would appear that Lenin anticipated by several years Lukacs' rediscovery of the integral relationship of Hegel to Marx's "revolutionary dialectic." Just as important, Lenin concretized his concept of dialectic as the dialectics of revolution: the national question, the concept of revolutionary defeatism, and the analysis of the state and revolution. We will discuss Lenin's concept of dialectic in relationship to that and to other twentieth century theorists such as Lukacs a bit later.
4. Raya Dunayevskaya argues in her 1957 "Lenin on Hegel's Science of Logic: Notes on a Series of Lectures": "Lenin, far from stressing that he must read Hegel 'materialistically', now emphasizes that 'the germs of historical materialism' are in Hegel." See The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. VI, Section III(3), p. 3902.
5. We are not so far from the conception of the young Marx who wrote in 1843 in his "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: "As philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its spiritual weapons in philosophy...The only practically possible liberation of Germany is liberation that proceeds from the standpoint of the theory which proclaims man to be the highest being for man...The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat." Quoted from Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 3 (New

York: International, 1975-1982), p. 187. This essay by Marx was, unlike the 1844 Manuscripts, published in his lifetime and therefore known to the Second International. But it carried little weight at the time. A twist which emphasized Marx's youth, on the one hand, and the stress that "spiritual" meant socialist, on the other, both led to its becoming obscured. The essay suffered, too, because the rest of Marx's early philosophical writings had remained unpublished. Here Lenin alone stands out once more. Now he alone did recapture this link to Marx's concept of the self-development of revolutionary ideas.

Lenin went on, as the reader shall see, to use this concept in his theoretical writings in the next few years, especially on Imperialism and on State and Revolution. Where for Marx's lifetime, philosophy as a "weapon" of the proletariat may have remained "abstract," Lenin was able to write on this subject at a changed historical juncture, 1914-1917. Then at least one country, Russia, had a proletariat which did become Marxist. Russia did so at least in the sense that it followed a party expounding the Marxist philosophy of human liberation, as concretized by Lenin. Marx had "anticipated" such a "tendency" in the modern working class by some seventy years. Lenin lived to see its "actuality." This great change from Marx to Lenin is put in doubt only in part (as we shall discuss in the concluding chapters of this thesis) by the fact that by the end of his life, Lenin also came to see its problematic and somewhat ambivalent outcome in the "bureaucratic deformation" in the new Soviet state.

6. B.M. Kedrov, "On the Distinctive Characteristics of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks," Soviet Studies in Philosophy, Summer 1970.
7. Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, pp. 165-167.
8. George Lukacs, The Ontology of Social Being: Hegel's False and His Genuine Ontology, trans. David Fernbach (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 56.
9. Dunayevskaya to Grace Lee (Boggs), May 12, 1953, The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. III, Section IIE, pp. 1797-1812.

10. This time we are using Raya Dunayevskaya's somewhat clearer translation in the 1958 edition of her Marxism and Freedom, pp. 349-351. See also Lenin, CW 38:221-223 for another version.
11. Once again we are using the 1958 translation in Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, p. 351. See also Lenin, CW 38:226.
12. Dunayevskaya to Grace Lee (Boggs), May 12, 1953..
13. Ibid.
14. J.N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-Examination (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 64.

Chapter Five

LENIN'S REFERENCES TO DIALECTICS, 1914-1923

In the present chapter we follow the process of Lenin's encounter with Hegel as a whole, from 1914 to his deathbed in 1924. It will be seen that Lenin's work around dialectics was hardly limited only to the notes on the Science of Logic. Here we will confine ourselves to Lenin's discussions of "pure" dialectics. By this we mean just two things: (1) basic conceptual statements on Marxist dialectics or (2) explicit references to Hegel or dialectics in his post-1914 work. We will examine both notes on Hegel which continued after 1914 and reference to and discussion of dialectics in writings and speeches after 1914. A brief section will look at Lenin's major pre-1914 discussion of Marxist dialectics, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, to back up our claim of a break in Lenin's thought after his Hegel studies and the political shake-ups of late 1914.

The reader will see below that Lenin apparently began looking into Hegelian dialectics as part of his work around the Granat Encyclopedia article, "Karl Marx," written late in 1914. This essay was no sooner completed, however, than Lenin was asking for it back from the

publisher in order further to develop the section on dialectics. In this essay, we will show, side by side, the old, pre-1914, pre-Hegel Lenin, and the new Lenin which began to emerge in the Fall of 1914. In subsequent chapters, we will take up the impact of Lenin's new concept of dialectic on two undisputed central concepts of Lenin's last years: imperialism and national liberation, and the problem of the state and revolution.

A. The Essay "Karl Marx"

Lenin's work on Marxist dialectics during the year 1914 was not limited to his private notebooks on Hegel. It also included several months of work on his essay "Karl Marx" for the Russian Granat Encyclopedia. This essay had been commissioned by the Encyclopedia, who were to pay the financially hard-pressed Lenin for his article. Yet the article was hardly an off-the-cuff one written only for money. Instead, Lenin appeared to be attempting to use Granat as a platform to expound his own newly developing view of Marxism. There he puts dialectics at the center. As Krupskaya remarks in her memoirs:

...Ilyich at the same time began an article on "Karl Marx" for Granat's Encyclopaedic Dictionary as soon as we arrived in Berne. This article, dealing with the teaching of Marx, opens with an outline of his philosophy under two headings: "Philosophic Materialism" and "Dialectics," followed by an exposition of

Marx's economic theory, in which he describes Marx's approach to the question of socialism and the tactics of the class struggle of the proletariat. Marx's teaching was not usually presented in this way.¹

One should not underestimate the newness of this type of approach in 1914, after the Second International had for over a generation made economics the foundation of and the key to Marxism. As Raya Dunayevskaya has argued:

Scores of "popularizations" of Marxian economics had been written. Lenin's Essay is the first, since the death of Marx and Engels, to show the primacy of a philosophical approach.²

Not only did Lenin constantly refer to dialectics in his article "Karl Marx." He also made some extensive comments on what he saw dialectics to be. While he begins with Engels' concept of dialectic as "process" versus "static" concepts, he develops this further than Engels did. He sees dialectics as

...far more comprehensive and richer than the current idea of evolution is. A development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis ("the negation of the negation"), a development, so to speak, that proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line; a development by leaps and catastrophes, and revolutions; "breaks in continuity"; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses toward development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society; the interdependence and the closest and indissoluble connection between all aspects of any phenomenon...these are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of development that is richer than the conventional one. (CW 21:54-55)

This was hardly in keeping with the orthodox Marxism current in 1914, especially in its reference to Hegel's concept of negation of the negation. Having looked already in detail at the notes on Hegel's Science of Logic, which he was writing at the same time, it is easy to see the connection between those Hegel notes and this essay on Marxism. The connection including very prominently and for the first time in the Second International, dialectics.

While not quite as new for Lenin, who had for years followed the peasantry as a revolutionary subject, it was nonetheless quite startling to read the following statement about Marx's attitude toward the peasantry:

The spirit in which Marx wanted this work to be conducted is to be seen in his appraisal of the situation in Germany in 1856, the darkest period of reaction; "The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War"...While the democratic (bourgeois) revolution in Germany was uncompleted, Marx focussed every attention, in the tactics of the socialist proletariat, on developing energy of the peasantry. He held that Lassalle's attitude was "Objectively...a betrayal of the whole workers' movement in Prussia"...because Lassalle was tolerant of the Junkers and Prussian nationalism. "In a predominantly agricultural country," Engels wrote in 1865, in exchanging views with Marx on their forthcoming joint declaration in the press, "...it is dastardly to make an exclusive attack on the bourgeoisie in the name of the industrial proletariat but never to devote a word to the patriarchal exploitation of the rural proletariat under the lash of the great feudal aristocracy..." (CW 21:77-78)

This was written by Lenin in 1914 for a Russian

audience including other revolutionary Marxists who nonetheless, in his view, underestimated the peasantry as a revolutionary subject. And while the above passage was deemed too dangerous for the published version inside Tsarist Russia, Lenin in his 1918 Preface to the new pamphlet edition gave once again the quote from Marx in 1856, since by that time the deleted portion had been lost. Later the full section was found among Lenin's papers and published in subsequent editions

Lenin was fully aware of just which points in his presentation were controversial within Marxism. In the letter which accompanied the manuscript of the essay to Russia, he argued that the editors should take care to leave in quotes from Marx to substantiate "especially the most controversial questions of Marxism, which include philosophy and the agrarian problem first and foremost." (Lenin to Granat Publishing House, November 17, 1914, CW 35:173)

Only six weeks later, having continued his Hegel studies, Lenin was already dissatisfied with part of the essay. He wrote to Granat:

I shall be very grateful if you send me a proof, or drop me a postcard about when it could be expected. By the way, is there still time for some corrections to the section on dialectics? Perhaps you will be so kind as to let me know when it is being sent for setting, and what the deadline is for corrections. It is a question I have been working on these last

six weeks, and I think I could add something if there is still time. (Lenin to Granat Publishers, January 4, 1915, CW 36:317)

Here Lenin shows that these changes in his views had occurred in the "six weeks" preceding January 4, 1915. Since the notes on Hegel's Science of Logic end with the date December 17, 1914, the "six weeks" referred to above put the time period squarely within the time when Lenin was apparently developing what in the last chapter we called the core of his Hegelianism in his study of Hegel's "Doctrine of the Notion."

Taking a second look at that brief section on "Dialectics" in "Karl Marx," we discover that it relies heavily on Engels' Anti-Dühring and does not break completely with the concept of evolutionism. It instead calls evolution in Hegelian dialectics "more comprehensive and far richer than the current idea of evolution is." (CW 21:54). In fact, a section on "Philosophical Materialism" directly precedes that on "Dialectics." Here Lenin, following Plekhanov still, appears to place Marx's views closer to those of Feuerbach than to Hegel:

Beginning with the years 1844-45, when his views took shape, Marx was a materialist, and especially a follower of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose weak points he subsequently saw only in his materialism being insufficiently consistent and comprehensive. To Marx Feuerbach's historic and "epoch-making" significance lay in his having resolutely broken with

Hegel's idealism and in his proclamation of materialism... (CW 21:50)

To be sure, Engels' Ludwig Feuerbach included Marx's own critique, the 1845 "Theses on Feuerbach" which called his materialism contemplative and said that the "active" side had been better developed by idealism. Yet now Lenin merely repeated what he had said in 1908 and what was part of the Marxist "orthodoxy" of the time: Marx differed with Feuerbach "on in [seeing] his materialism begin insufficiently consistent and comprehensive."

In any case, the letters to Granat showed, in the words of Dunayevskaya, "that Lenin himself pinpointed the precise place where the new philosophic frontiers opened themselves up for him."³ By January 1915 it seemed clear to Lenin that even what Krupskaya had called the unusual procedure of giving great emphasis to "dialectics" in the Marx essay was inadequate and that the future demanded an even more central role for Hegelian dialectics in his Marxism.

This is all the more remarkable when we remember that: (1) even those Marxists who did take up the peasantry in this period -- like the Bolsheviks -- hardly delved into Hegelian dialectics, as we will see a bit later when we look back on Lenin's own Materialism and Empirio-Criticism

(1908). (2) The essays of the young Marx on Hegel and humanism were not known to Lenin or other Marxists of the time, essays such as the 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right or the 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic."

But the section on economics which was after all the main section of the essay on Marx was hardly connected to the small and very new section on dialectics, any more than was the section on materialism quoted above. In relation to the main discussion of economics the section on dialectics amounted to little more than a bow toward dialectics preceding it, which was then ignored as he went on to write as mechanistically on economic theory as if he had not studied Hegelian dialectics. Thus even by January 1915, he was talking of revising the section on dialectics further, but hardly yet of revising his concept of Marxism as a whole. This would emerge, we will argue in the process of confronting the political issues of 1915 to 1917, partially as a result of the Hegel studies of 1914-1915. Only as he completed his study of Hegel's Science of Logic in mid-December 1914, plus spent much of 1915 on dialectics as well, did he begin to carry themes from his Hegel studies into a reexamination of his basic concepts of Marxism centered around politics and economics. This was hardly the case in the essay on Karl Marx.

Later he would take up a reexamination of the acknowledged central theme of contemporary Marxism: the concept of imperialism. But although the topic was the same as that worked out by others, the approach, as the reader shall see, was dialectical in a new way. It was new both in its form of presentation and in its tying together the concept of imperialism with its dialectical opposite, national liberation. But it was a difficult and long process for Lenin to reach such a discussion of dialectics as the dialectics of revolution. He did not know the explicitly Hegelian writings of the young Marx, or the Grundrisse, which the Second International had kept locked away in its vaults, and which were not published until after the Russians began to bring out more comprehensive editions of Marx's works. We are not, however, arguing that the mere availability of texts would solve a theoretical problem. Before turning to the dialectics of revolution, we will continue our examination of Lenin on what he termed "the dialectic proper."

Not only did Lenin try to publish more on dialectics for the Granat Encyclopedia. He also continued his studies on Hegel through 1915. These additional notes on Hegel, completed after the already-discussed "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" total seventy pages. They were followed

by notes on books about Hegel, plus apparently notes still lost or lying in Moscow unpublished on Hegel's Phenomenology. Also added was the 1915 draft for an essay "On the Question of Dialectics." This five page densely packed and nearly finished essay of five printed pages showed how much deeper than in the "Karl Marx" essay that Lenin had by then delved into Hegel "as Hegel." More than that, Lenin related this work around Hegel to Marxists. He had by now, as the reader saw in the previous chapter, included himself among those who had not understood all of Capital because they had not studied the whole of Hegel's Science of Logic. Specifying that it was especially the first chapter of Capital that was at issue. Now he also criticized Engels on Hegel in "On the Question of Dialectics." We will discuss it in detail, after first looking briefly at Lenin's notes on Hegel and Hegel scholars written in 1915.

B. Lenin's 1915 Hegel Studies: The Contrast to the Essay "Karl Marx"

The most copious notes Lenin left behind, besides those on the Science of Logic were the nearly sixty pages he wrote the next year on Hegel's massive three volume History of Philosophy. These notes of 1915 are not only shorter; they tend more toward straight summary than

Lenin's summarizing plus reworking of his own, Marxist dialectics, which had characterized especially the last section of the notes on the Science of Logic. Nonetheless, these notes also contain some very important observations on Hegelian dialectics; they extend even further what he had written in the Science of Logic.

Lenin makes for example the following notes on the question of idealism versus materialism:

Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism. Dialectical idealism instead of intelligent; metaphysical, undeveloped, dead, crude, rigid instead of stupid.
(CW 38:276)

This is one of his most forceful statements anywhere against "vulgar materialism," and seemingly, his own philosophical past. It echoes what the young Marx wrote in his "Theses on Feuerbach," which was known to Lenin. There, as we have seen, Marx stated that:

The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism -- that of Feuerbach included -- is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism...Hence he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary," of "practical-critical," activity.⁴

But that is not all. Lenin goes on to make explicit to himself: it is Hegelian dialectics as against the

Plekhanov-type philosophical materialism which he is seeing as the dividing line.

No longer is it a question of accepting Plekhanov's philosophy (as in 1908) while opposing his political conclusions. Here Lenin attacks Plekhanov explicitly and forcefully on his failure to grapple with Hegelian dialectics in a serious way. This attack, we should note, Lenin himself never made public:

To be elaborated:

Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectics) probably about 1,000 pages (Beltov plus against Bogdanov plus against the Kantians plus fundamental questions, etc., etc.). Among them, about the large Logic, in connection with it, its thought (i.e. dialectics proper, as philosophical science) nil! (CW 38:277)

These statements show the extent to which Lenin was breaking with the foundation of his early philosophic concepts, the concepts of both mainstream Bolshevism and Menshevism: Plekhanovite philosophical materialism. For some unknown reason, Lenin's notes stop short in their summary and commentary on Hegel's History of Philosophy, skipping everything after Greek philosophers. It is not known whether he stopped reading or the notes have been lost. In fact, most of these notes cover only Hegel on the early Greek philosophers preceding Plato and Aristotle.

On the other hand, Hegel's shorter Philosophy of

History does not even get that much, a mere eight pages

of notes concluding with the following statement:

If Marx did not leave behind him a "Logic" (with a capital letter), he did leave the logic of Capital, and this ought to be utilized to the full in this question. In Capital, Marx applied to a single science logic, dialectics and the theory of knowledge of materialism (three words are not needed: it is one and the same thing) which has taken everything valuable in Hegel and developed it further.

Comodity -- money -- capital

production of absolute Mehrwehrt (surplus value)
production of relative Mehrwehrt
(CW 33:319)

Brief as these notes on the Philosophy of History are, the above statement makes the link between Hegel and Marx's Capital unusually explicit. It is thus very significant. That is really the end of Lenin's rough notes on Hegel, as far as actual material which would seem to bear directly on his own reconstruction of Marxist dialectics. Then he goes on to write summaries of a few philosophical works by Lassalle, Aristotle, and Leibnitz, but these are short and do not appear to lead him anywhere. Nor does he seem to develop much from his study of several contemporary academic studies on Hegel. But there remains one key contribution in the 1914-1915 period on Hegelian dialectics: the five page manuscript "On the Question of Dialectics," apparently written in 1915. That is where we now turn.

C. "On the Question of Dialectics"

Where the essay "Karl Marx" was written before Lenin completed his studies of Hegel's Science of Logic, this manuscript he drafted definitely after the completion of those studies. Probably he drafted the piece, as well, after all of his additional Hegel notes discussed above. This five page manuscript also relates more directly to Lenin's own time, whereas the section on dialectics in "Karl Marx" is presented more as part of the origin of Marxism only. Here Lenin connected his Hegel studies not only to Hegelian dialectics, but has begun to connect them very directly and explicitly to his own concept of dialectics.

There is little question that these are Lenin's own thoughts rather than mere "jottings" on Hegel.⁵ Let us examine it in detail. Lenin begins by referring to Hegel's theory of contradiction. Despite several passing references also to Lassalle, Heraclitus, and Aristotle in this first paragraph, the main thrust of the paragraph is Hegelian:

The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its transitory parts...is the essence...of dialectics. That is precisely how Hegel, too, puts the matter.
(CW38:359)

Not only does Lenin begin this essay with Hegelian dialectics. He moves almost immediately to a sharp critique

of Plekhanov:

This aspect of dialectics (e.g., in Plekhanov) usually receives inadequate attention: the identity of opposites is taken as the sum-total of examples ("for example, a seed," "for example, primitive communism"). (CW 38:359)

Here he is criticizing Plekhanov's subsuming of the category of contradiction under that of totality -- as if dialectics was a mere summing up of the various parts of a whole. To Lenin, as he made clear in the notes on the Science of Logic, contradiction meant instead both the unity of, and the struggle between, opposites. Nor does Lenin spare even Engels, criticizing him implicitly for the same vulgarization of dialectics as Plekhanov. He says: "The same is true of Engels. But it is 'in the interests of popularization'...and not as a law of cognition (and as a law of the objective world)." (CW 38:359) While Engels is let off the hook because of his good intentions ("popularization"), it is equally clear that Lenin sees a need to go more deeply into the Hegelian contradiction than was found in Engels' presentation of the matter.

Lenin goes on to present his own view of the "spontaneous development" of human history and ideas. He sees "two basic...conceptions of development (evolution):... development as decrease and increase, as repetition, and development as a unity of opposites." (CW 38:360) He is of

course interested only in "self-movement" and not what he perceives in Hegel as an "external" source (God). That is only the "first conception." In the "second conception the chief attention is directed precisely to knowledge of the source of 'self'-movement." Only the latter in Hegel, and not the God-centered concept, according to Lenin "alone furnishes the key to the 'leaps', to the 'break in continuity', to the 'transformation into the opposite', to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new." (CW 38:360) There can be little doubt that it is the Hegelian dialectic which Lenin is here summarizing in this essay, especially in light of the themes covered by his larger notes on the Science of Logic.

But that is not all. Lenin now moves to show the link directly from Hegelian dialectics to chapter one of Marx's Capital, "Commodities":

In his Capital, Marx first analyzes the simplest, most ordinary and fundamental, most common and everyday relation of bourgeois (commodity) society, a relation encountered billions of times, viz. the exchange of commodities. In this very simple phenomenon (in this "cell" of bourgeois society) analysis reveals all the contradictions or the germs of all the contradictions of modern society. (CW 38:360-361)

Lenin goes on to trace the relationship of individual to universal in Hegel and concludes with another sharp attack on Plekhanov and on all established Marxism.

He gives the following overview of dialectics:

Dialectics is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the "aspect" of the matter (it is not an "aspect," but the essence of the matter) to which Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists, paid no attention. (CW 38:362)

Never has Lenin claimed more explicitly a unity between Marx and Hegel on the one hand, and a differentiation of them from "Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists," on the other.

He concludes the essay with a sharp attack on "crude, simple" vulgar materialism. In the process he makes clear his own critical appropriation of "philosophical idealism":

Philosophical idealism is only nonsense from the standpoint of crude, simple, metaphysical materialism. From the standpoint of dialectical materialism, on the other hand, philosophical idealism is a one-sided, exaggerated, uberschwengliches (exaggerated) (Dietzgen) development...Idealism is clerical obscurantism. True, but philosophical idealism is...a road to clerical obscurantism through one of the shades of the infinitely complex knowledge (dialectical) of man.

Here is how he gives his own concept of human knowledge. He speaks of a spiral of spirals rather than a straight line:

Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral. Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent, complete, straight line, which then (if one does not see the wood for the trees) leads into the quagmire,

into clerical obscurantism...And clerical obscurantism (= philosophical idealism)...is a sterile flower undoubtedly, but a sterile flower that grows on the living tree of living, fertile, genuine, powerful, omnipotent, objective, absolute human knowledge. (CW 38:363)

We have come to the end of Lenin's 1914-1915 writings on Hegelian dialectics. They have covered over three hundred pages and taken him an entire year to write.

They bring out almost a tug of war in Lenin's mind. On the one hand there is his earlier scientistic Marxist materialism, drawn from Plekhanov, and sharpened in his bitter 1908 debates with the "Machist" Bogdanov. On the other hand is Lenin's new concept of Hegelian dialectics as revolutionary. Now he treats them as the source of all dialectics, and as a critique of the contemplative vulgar materialism of established Marxism.

D. An Excursion into Lenin's Earlier Writings on Philosophy

In the period before 1914 Lenin shared the prevailing hostility toward Hegelian dialectics. That hostility marked both the revolutionary and the reformist wings of the Second International. In his first major published work, What the "Friends of the People" Are, and How They Fight the Social Democrats (1894), Lenin hit out sharply against Hegelian dialectics as well as liberalism and populism. He quotes the following statement by his main Populist

opponent. Mikhailovsky, at the time of this statement (1877), Lenin writes "was able to appraise...more correctly...the materialist conception of history." The early statement by Mikhailovsky which Lenin praised reads:

If we remove from Capital, the heavy, unnecessary lid of Hegelian dialectics then, apart from the other merits of this essay, we shall observe in it splendidly elaborated material for an answer to the general question of the relation of the forms to the material conditions of their existence, and the excellent formulation of this question for a definite sphere. (CW 1:180)

Lenin was in fact defending Marx from Mikhailovsky's later charge that Marx's method was determined by Hegelian dialectics, and therefore false and distorted. Lenin's argument quotes Mikhailovsky above to prove that the latter was once closer to Lenin's position: Marxist but like Plekhanov, extremely hostile to Hegelian dialectics and viewing their importance in Marx's main works as minimal.⁶

The posthumously famous 1908 book-length philosophical work Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was hardly then or later, "the theoretical preparation for the Bolshevik Party" as the Moscow preface claims. (CW 14:11) If this were the case for Lenin, then it is surprising that his 1921 brief chronology for Bukharin, "Notes on the History of the R.C.P.," does not even list the year 1908, and the years 1909-1910 are simply titled "liquidationism."

(CW 36:553) No, this was no fundamental work of Bolshevism but rather the product of an at the time obscure polemic inside Bolshevism during the years of despair and defeat which followed the 1905-1907 Revolution. When the book was republished in 1920, Lenin did write that its subject matter was "the philosophy of Marxism, dialectical materialism." But he made it clear that this was not so much "in general" or for the world Marxist movement, but rather mainly in reference to a critique of Bogdanov's concept of "proletarian culture" then gaining a following among Soviet youth and intellectuals. (CW 14:21) In fact, the book was published in the West in translations only in 1927, just a few years before the Notebooks on Philosophy covering Hegel appeared in French and German. Given that fact, the tenacity with which both Leninists and anti-Leninists hold to this early book as the main or even the sole expression of "Lenin on philosophy" is indeed striking. The fact tells a great deal about them and little about Lenin. And it tells nothing at all about the crucial philosophic break which, as we are arguing here, to a great extent determined the actual theory and politics of nothing less than the 1917 revolution. Russian editions unfortunately confused the matter even further, as mentioned earlier, by publishing the 1915 essay "On Dialectics" as an "addenda" to

Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, and wrongly attributing it to the years 1912-1914.

David Joravsky has already done the painstaking work necessary to cut Materialism and Empirio-Criticism down to size and put it in its proper context. The book does not spell out anywhere the Stalinist type of concept of "party-ness in philosophy," Joravsky shows. More than that, but for the five years before the break-up in 1908, Lenin's Bolsheviks had several prominent "Machists" (the opponents in the 1908 book) working relatively harmoniously within the leadership, as did the Mensheviks to a lesser extent.⁷

And while Lenin's attack on Machism in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was both dogmatic and a vulgarization of Marxism, and certainly narrowly materialist, little was original about the philosophic positions Lenin espoused there. They were the standard Plekhanovite "dialectical materialism." In fact, far from Lenin being previously "intolerant" of "unorthodox" philosophical ideas among intellectuals in his Bolshevik faction, the reverse was true. Joravsky shows at great length that it was Lenin's Bolsheviks which for years tolerated Bogdanov the Machist in the leadership, and the final break-up in 1908 was only partially because of "philosophy." In fact, Joravsky proves how, unlike the Mensheviks, who had paid attention

to philosophic questions in a manner not substantially different from Plekhanov, the Bolsheviks had maintained for years a deliberate policy of "neutrality" on philosophical issues, which by common agreement were not discussed in their publications.

Even where "philosophy" became an issue for Lenin in his dispute with Bogdanov, it was apparently more because Plekhanov and P.B. Akselrod (he had give himself the nickname "the Orthodox") attacked the Bolsheviks for combining "un-Marxist" Leninist "ultra-revolutionism" with a non-Marxist philosophical foundation, Machism. When Mensheviks added that Lenin's indifference to, and even ignorance of, philosophy, simply left the field to Bogdanov and Machism within Bolshevism, Lenin had no recourse but to write his own "philosophical" work separating himself from Machism. Perhaps the final straw was when, in 1908, the most prestigious journal in the world Marxist movement, and which never published Lenin, Neue Zeit, published Bogdanov's article "Ernst Mach and Revolution." As Joravsky points out:

In a little preface the translator informed the German audience that the Russians had unfortunately made a political issue of Mach: the Bolsheviks had made his philosophy the basis of their faction, while the Mensheviks defended the materialism of Spinoza and Holbach.⁸

Perhaps even this would have been allowed to pass by Lenin had Bogdanov and he not at this very time gotten into a major political quarrel over whether to abstain from the Tsar's limited parliamentary elections. Bogdanov wanted to keep the concept of abstention as a tendency within Bolshevism, while Lenin wanted to break with abstentionism very firmly. Possibly he did so in order to reunite with the "party-Mensheviks" of the "orthodox Center" of Menshevism, as exemplified by Plekhanov.⁹

Lenin claimed that it was not philosophical differences but the introduction of religious issues in the concept of "god-building" that had created a fundamental theoretical difference between the Machists and the other Bolsheviks. Thus the publication of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, far from a specifically "Leninist" original work on philosophy, was intended instead as a reaffirmation of orthodoxy on the question of dialectical materialism. And even at the Bolshevik faction meeting where Bogdanov's position on abstaining from elections being kept as one tendency within Bolshevism was defeated, and Bogdanov walked out to form his own group, the loyal Leninist Skrypnik's motion that "empirio-criticism" also be condemned in the political report of the meeting, was defeated.

So, far from anything original, Lenin's Materialism

and Empirio-Criticism was a standard Marxist philosophical book in the era of the Second International. Such works of "dialectical materialism" which, following Engels, Akselrod, and Plekhanov, placed virtually all of the emphasis on the word "materialism" and, (for fear of becoming "idealist") hardly any went into the preceding word, "dialectical." The only thing specifically Leninist about the arguments in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism is Lenin's uniquely polemical style, a far cry from the more measured and academic prose then common in Marxist theoretical disputes. But once the style is separated out there is nothing particularly original in this book.

Lenin spends fully 361 pages arguing such concepts as the material existence of the objective world independent of human consciousness. Not content to convict his opponents of idealism or solipsism, he felt the necessity to show their reactionary character by attributing a necessary link to mysticism or the conservative religious views of the British philosopher Berkeley, by the use of parallel quotations. Seldom if ever is Marx cited as a source -- but Lenin has plenty of quotes on materialism from Feuerbach, Plekhanov, Engels and Dietzgen. This certainly is what Lenin meant when he wrote in 1914 in the Notebooks on Philosophy, as cited earlier:

Marxists criticized (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Büchner) than of Hegel. (CW 38:179)

In this 1908 work, which Lenin surely means to include in his private 1914 criticism, the often repeated conclusion, is that "the Machists are afraid to admit the truth. They are fighting materialism, but pretend that it is only Plekhanov they are fighting. A cowardly and unprincipled method." (CW 14:86-87) However, those looking for explicit attacks on Hegel in this work will find it disappointing. Lenin follows Engels in his general praise of Hegel as a founder of dialectical materialism, or at least a worthy precursor. (CW 14:127, 137, 226-227) No, aside from solipsism and mysticism and Machism, the other enemy is not Hegel, but Kant. (CW 14:127, 168, 232) Lenin even calls "Hegelian dialectics...that pearl" which Lenin's opponents "could not pick out from the dungheap of absolute idealism." (CW 14:243) Thus Kantian and not Hegelian idealism is the explicit enemy. Of course, there are plenty of other references to the limits of Hegel, such as to the "Absolute Idea...a theological invention of the idealist Hegel." (CW 14:227) It is in relationship to his past, in this context, that the reader can see better Lenin's surprise, in 1914, that the chapter on the "Absolute Idea" in

the Science of Logic contained "the least idealism and the most materialism." (CW 38:234)

There is even a glimmer of what he will discover later in those Notebooks on Philosophy:

Marx and Engels laid the emphasis in their works rather on dialectical materialism than on dialectical materialism, and insisted on historical materialism rather than on historical materialism. (CW 14:329)

But this statement in his 1908 work, aimed against his opponents for stressing the one question, materialism (which they opposed in philosophy), could be applied equally to the book from which it is quoted. "Materialism" rather than dialectic or history is in fact where Lenin also places the emphasis, in keeping with the standard Marxist "orthodoxy" of the time.

The following passage, free of polemical material, states the core of Lenin's position on Marxist philosophy in 1908:

Marx...was able through Feuerbach to take directly the materialist road against idealism. Thirty years later, in the afterword to the second edition of the first volume of Capital, Marx just as clearly and definitely contrasted his materialism to Hegel's idealism, i.e., the most consistent and most developed idealism; he contemptuously brushed Comtean "positivism" aside and dubbed as wretched epigoni the contemporary philosophers who imagined they had destroyed Hegel when in reality they had reverted to a repetition of the pre-Hegelian errors of Kant and Hume...because they were incapable of understanding Hegel's dialectics and treated him with scorn. And finally, take the various philosophical utterances

by Marx in Capital and other works, and you will find an invariable basic motif: insistence upon materialism and contemptuous derision of all obscurity, of all confusion and deviations toward idealism. All Marx's philosophical utterances revolve within these two fundamental opposites, and from the standpoint of professorial philosophy, their defect lies in this "narrowness" and "one-sidedness." In reality, this refusal to recognize the hybrid projects for reconciling materialism and idealism constitutes a great merit of Marx, who moved forward along a sharply-defined philosophical road. (CW 14:337-338)

Here we see all the basic elements common to orthodoxy at that time: there is a bow to Feuerbach as well as Hegel, and a dismissal of Comtean positivism, Kant and Hume. Then, despite the bow to Hegel, one finds the basic motif of Capital to be "insistence on materialism." The last sentence best shows the break in Lenin's thought after studying Hegel in 1914. In 1908 Lenin adamantly rejects any concept "for reconciling materialism and idealism" in the name of Marx. By 1915, he was able to write, as we saw above: "Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism." (CW 38:276)

The rest of Materialism and Empiro-Criticism is not relevant to our focus on Lenin's dialectical sociology. That book simply displays, in our view, the totality of his philosophic break with his own past. For the views of Mach and Avenarius -- not to speak of the Russian "Empirio-critics" Bogdanov, Bazarov and Volskii (Valentinov) -- are

long since forgotten in twentieth century discussions of Marxist dialectics. While the youthful and revolutionary Bogdanov chafed under the mechanical materialism of the Second International, his own philosophical work has not subsequently evoked discussion or even translation into foreign languages. Surely this is not because it is merely unorthodox vis-à-vis the Second International, or Lenin.

It must rather be because even Lenin's opponents recognize the superficial nature of this Russian "empirio-criticism" fused with Marxism. Only one major independent theorist has even bothered to go back over the whole debate, and there the purpose was to lay bare Lenin's "middle class materialism." Unfortunately the author of the critique, Anton Pannekoek, was hardly himself beyond the narrowly materialist world view of Marxist orthodoxy at the turn of the century. But perhaps because Pannekoek's work is an independent Marxist critique of Lenin on philosophy, it has generated some discussion.¹⁰

"With Stalin already ascendant," as Mattick notes in his appendix to Pannekoek's book, Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was published in the West in 1927:

There was not so much open hostility as indifference and, even more awkward, just among those whose applause would have been most cherished, a kind of polite embarrassment.¹¹

This is true as far as it goes. Mattick is right in the sense that even so anti-Hegelian a Marxist as Althusser steers pretty much clear of this 1908 work in his book Lenin and Philosophy.

But the larger truth is that the 1908 work hardly represents anything originally Leninist on philosophy. As Althusser himself seems to recognize implicitly, the core of Lenin on philosophy is the 1914-1915 writings. It is there that we now return, albeit with our very different vantage point than that of the anti-Hegelian Althusser. Thus Lenin's 1908 work was just that, a conventional polemic written in the middle of a dispute within Russian Marxism. Unlike Imperialism and State and Revolution and other works, he did not ask for it to be translated during his lifetime. When Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was republished in Russian in 1920, it was apparently with the same specific purpose as in 1908: to criticize Bogdanov once more.

Since Bogdanov, Mach and Avenarius and so forth enjoyed no substantial following in Europe in the late 1920's. Why did Stalin and Bukharin publish the book abroad in 1927? No doubt because, unlike Lenin's 1914-1915 writings on Hegel, the 1908 work showed the type of materialism which Bukharin and Stalin, then in power, shared. And

the type of coarse polemic found there was deemed useful for a bureaucracy now armed with state power and control over an entire Communist International and facing the problem of restlessness in the ranks, including among intellectual members and sympathizers. This book was mechanistic enough in its conclusions, and moreover, dogmatic enough in its tone, to suit the new power-holders. Never mind that Lenin had never made it the philosophical foundation of Bolshevism even when it was written, in 1908.

Emergent Stalinism would vulgarize this mechanistic 1908 work even further. Moreover, it tore out of context the concept of "partyness in philosophy," which Lenin in 1908 meant in only a general sense of philosophers becoming Marxists and revolutionaries and not one particular party.¹² In this way, that book came to serve as a battering ram to stifle any and all philosophical debates which did not begin at the top.

As distorted in Stalin's time, Lenin's "dogmatism" of 1908 seems totally incompatible with the main direction of Lenin's thought, 1914-1923. In addition, even when the 1908 work is taken in its proper context, as Joravsky does, it is still a very far cry from the full-blooded Hegelian Marxism arguably emerging in Lenin after 1914. To the

extent that Lenin practiced dialectics before 1914, it was more at a political or economic level than a philosophical one; as a revolutionary activist and theorist with a very sensitive nose to new stages or types of revolt, mass movement and forms of revolutionary organization. Here his writings around the 1905 revolution are dialectical in the sense of seeing the mass movement as a self-developing one rather than trying to impose "party Bolshevism" on it. So too were the writings of Trotsky and Luxemburg. But at the same time, in 1908, all of the great revolutionary theorists -- Luxemburg and Trotsky as well as Lenin -- bowed in philosophy to the type of vulgar materialism found in Engels, Dietzgen and Plekhanov. Only one of them, Lenin, went on to make a year-long study of Hegelian dialectics, at the start of World War I.

E. Lenin and Dialectics, 1914-1923: A Brief Overview

During the period from August 1914 to April 1917, Lenin did a great many things. He broke with the Second International and tried to found a new international. In that period he also advocated revolutionary defeatism, wrote his book Imperialism, and began to prepare notes for State and Revolution. In that same crucial period Lenin wrote 3,008 pages of articles, private notebooks, and

letters as published in his Collected Works (Vols. 21-23, 35-39, 41). This is an average of three or four pages per day. The published works alone total 1,408 pages for this period, the main one of which is of course Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (120 pages), for which he wrote no less than 768 pages of Notebooks on Imperialism in 1915-1916 (CW 39). There are, however, two other apparently massive sets of notes. One set is for the even more important State and Revolution, only very brief excerpts of which have been published. The other major set of notebooks is on Hegel's works, written during 1914-1915, and totaling 245 pages, plus a few more pages reviewing works of Hegel scholars, bringing the total to 245 pages on Hegel.

When, however, we turn to August-December 1914, when Lenin was doing his most intensive Hegel studies, we find only 114 pages of works and notes on other topics, plus 158 pages of notes on Hegel. The following breaks it down (including his published letters) for the period between World War I's outbreak and Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917.

<u>Type</u>	Number of Pages	
	<u>Aug. 1914- Apr. 1917</u>	<u>Aug.-Dec. 1914 only</u>
Published and unpublished works, besides notebooks	1,407	114
Notes on Hegel	245	158
Notes on other philosophers	70	--
Notebooks on imperialism	768	--
Letters	<u>518</u>	<u>67</u>
Total Pages	3,008	339

We find that Lenin's notes on Hegel actually overshadow everything else in terms of numbers of pages written, during the first months after the outbreak of war in 1914. In August-December 1914 he wrote more pages on Hegel than either private letters (mostly to fellow Bolsheviks) or articles for publication. Even when we look at the sheer bulk of the Notebooks on Imperialism, which are three times the length of the notes on Hegel, the importance of Hegel for Lenin is possibly underlined rather than diminished. For the Notebooks on Imperialism are generally short extracts from hundreds of books and articles -- the longest entry is but 20 pages. Nor is there any extended discussion in the Notebooks on Imperialism of any one particular writer. In fact, except perhaps for the constant references to Kautsky in virtually all the published

writings in this period, there is no writer who, judging by the Collected Works and the number of pages, preoccupied Lenin during the period August 1914 to April 1917 so much as Hegel. Even Marx was apparently not studied as closely as Hegel.

Despite this great preoccupation with Hegel, Lenin never published a work on Hegelian dialectics during this period or afterwards. Yet he did publish several major works on Marxism, especially Imperialism and State and Revolution. Therein lies the paradox which we need to unravel now. We will try to do so at two levels. The first, which follows immediately, is a question of examining some of Lenin's brief published references to Hegel and to dialectics after 1914. The second involves an examination of the structure, method, and context of his two main theoretical works after 1914, Imperialism and State and Revolution. In the next two chapters we look at what, if any, was their relationship to the 1914-1915 Notebooks on Hegel.

We have earlier discussed the important 1914 essay "Karl Marx" with its section on dialectics which Lenin wanted to expand still further after completing his study of Hegel's Science of Logic. By 1915 Lenin published several long pamphlets on the attitude revolutionary socialists

needed to take towards the war, developing his concept of revolutionary defeatism. In one of them, the 50 page article "The Collapse of the Second International," written in May and June 1915, he several times referred explicitly to Hegelian dialectics.

Here is how he did so against Plekhanov, who now supported the Allies and the Russian government in the war:

Plekhanov has set a new record in the noble sport of substituting sophistry for dialectics. The sophist grabs at one or many "arguments"; it was Hegel who long ago very properly observed that "arguments" can be found to prove anything in the world. Dialectics calls for a many-sided investigation into a given social phenomenon in its development, and for the external and the seeming to be reduced to the fundamental motive forces, to the development of the productive forces and the class struggle...He does not make the slightest attempt to study the economic and diplomatic history of at least the past three decades, which history proves conclusively that the conquest of colonies, the looting of foreign countries, the ousting and ruining of the more successful rivals have been the backbone of the politics of both groups of the new belligerent powers.

With reference to wars the main thesis of dialectics, which has been so shamelessly distorted by Plekhanov to please the bourgeoisie, is that "war is simply the continuation of politics by other (i.e. violent) means." Such is the formula of Clausewitz, one of the greatest writers on the history of war, whose thinking was stimulated by Hegel. (CW 21:218-219)

Earlier in this essay, he referred to the Hegelian concept of totality. He wrote of the "totality" of the "objective changes" needed for a revolutionary situation. (CW 21:214) This type of explicit and uncritical reference

to Hegelian dialectics, in polemic with another Marxist, was unprecedented not only for Lenin, but for the whole tradition of Marxism out of which Bolshevism emerged after the turn of the century.

In the same essay he again used the concept of dialectic in his critique of Kautsky:

...Kautsky is exploiting the hope for a new peaceful era of capitalism so as to justify the adhesion of the opportunists and the official Social Democratic parties to the bourgeoisie, and their rejection of the revolutionary, i.e. proletarian, tactics in the present stormy era, this despite the solemn declarations of the Basle resolution!...Dialectic has turned into the meanest and basest sophistry! In the present war the national element is represented only by Serbia's war against Austria...It is only in Serbia and among the Serbs that we can find a national-liberation movement of long standing, embracing millions, "the masses of the people," a movement of which the present war, of Serbia against Austria, is a "continuation"...Marxist dialectics, as the last word in the scientific-evolutionary method, excludes any isolated examination of an object...The national element in the Serbo-Austrian war is not, and cannot be, of serious significance in the general European war... (CW 21:225, 235)

He returned to this question of dialectics again briefly in his 1918 critique of Kautsky, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky." (CW 28:233, 324)

So we begin to see a pattern here, which will repeat itself. The pattern recurs when Lenin faces a well-known Marxist theorist who he wants to criticize. This will pertain not only to "betrayers" like Kautsky and Plekhanov

but also to "revolutionaries" like Bukharin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg. Then Lenin will criticize not only their political or economic analysis, but also will bring in his new concept of Marxist dialectics. He will publicly fault his opponents on grounds of being non-dialectical or halfway dialectical.

Another example of this occurs in his 1916 review of Rosa Luxemburg's anti-war Junius Pamphlet. He writes that: "On the whole, the Junius pamphlet is a splendid Marxist work." But Lenin shifts when he comes to one of his key disagreements, on Luxemburg's attitude toward the national question. There she thought nationalism inevitably reactionary in an era of imperialism, where he had a concept of revolutionary nationalism as national liberation. He writes:

The fallacy of this argument is obvious. That all dividing lines, both in nature and society are conventional and dynamic, and that every phenomenon might, under certain conditions, be transformed into its opposite, is, of course, a basic proposition of Marxist dialectics. A national war might be transformed into an imperialist war and vice-versa...Only a sophist can disregard the difference between an imperialist and a national war on the grounds that one might develop into the other. Not infrequently have dialectics served -- and the history of Greek philosophy is an example -- as a bridge to sophistry. (CW 22:309)

He continues this theme in his conclusion:

In saying that the class struggle is the best means

of defence against invasion, Junius applies Marxist dialectics only halfway, taking one step on the right road and immediately deviating from it. Marxist dialectics call for a concrete analysis of each specific historical situation. (CW 22:316)

While Lenin was apparently unaware at this time that "Junius" was Rosa Luxemburg, his explicit reference to dialectics is no doubt caused in part by his assumption, from the seriousness and scope of the Junius Pamphlet, that he was dealing with a major German Marxist theorist.

Again in 1916, this time in a public debate with his colleague Karl Radek, who held a Luxemburgist position on the national question and who had just dismissed the Easter 1916 Irish uprising as a "putsch," Lenin writes in the conclusion of his argument:

The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene. (CW 22:357)

This critique was really directed not only against Radek, but against the far more theoretically gifted young Bukharin, who had adopted a similar position on the national question. Lenin wrote a fifty page essay against this position within Bolshevism, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism" (not published until 1924, after Lenin's death). This may help the reader to understand

the critical assessment of Bukharin that appeared in 1922-1923 in Lenin's Will:

Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theorist of the Party; he may also be legitimately considered the favorite of the whole Party; but his theoretical views can only with the greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxian, for there is something scholastic in him. (He has never learned, and I think never fully understood, the dialectic.)¹³

Dunayevskaya notes that another Hegelian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, had also criticized Bukharin in remarkably similar language:

Antonio Gramsci, who did not know Lenin's Will, wrote a most profound critique of Bukharin's Historical Materialism, calling attention to the total lack of any "treatment whatever of the dialectic." His "Critical Notes on an Attempt at a Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin" also criticized the paper "Theory and Practice from the Standpoint of Dialectical Materialism" that Bukharin delivered at the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology held in London in 1931. Gramsci held that the dialectic was "degraded from being a doctrine of politics into being subspecies of formal logic and elementary scholasticism."¹⁴

Surely something serious was at stake for Lenin if the "biggest" theoretician of the party, Bukharin, "never fully understood the dialectic." That, we note, as that was the only point on which Bukharin was specifically criticized in the same Will where Lenin talked of removing Stalin from his position as General Secretary because of his rudeness. Others were also criticized for an overly administrative or bureaucratic attitude (not only Stalin,

but also Trotsky and Pyatakov), and for having opposed the October Revolution (Zinoviev and Kamenev).

But it is extremely noteworthy that the only specifically theoretical issue referred to in the entire Will is dialectics. The national question, the state and revolution, economics -- not one of these other issues are referred to. Only dialectics is. That surely indicates the supreme importance for Lenin of his whole concept of dialectics, at this key point when he was summing up his ideas for his Bolshevik colleagues and evaluating those colleagues as well.

Another important set of references to Hegelian dialectics occurs in Lenin's critique of Trotsky (as well as Bukharin, Shliapnikov and Kollontai) in the 1920-1921 Trade Union Debate of 1920-1921. Even Moscow authorities have now recognized that this question of dialectics comes up here. Thus they include the discussion of dialectics during the trade union controversy in a just-published 110 page booklet of Lenin's writings entitled On the Question of Dialectics.¹⁵

Turning to the 1920 critique, in the trade union debate, mainly of Trotsky, we find that the 38 page pamphlet "Once Again on the Trade Unions" (CW 32:70-108), has an 18 page section on dialectics just before the

conclusion. Part of it is entitled "Dialectics and Eclecticism. 'School' and 'Apparatus'." Bukharin had attempted to create a "buffer group" between Lenin's faction and that of Trotsky. At that time when the latter favored continuing the tight military discipline of War Communism over the working class and the trade unions even though the civil war had finally ended.

Lenin begins this section by praising Bukharin for his "theoretical ability and keen interest in getting at the theoretical roots of every question." But then he ridicules Bukharin's superficial statement that "neither the political nor the economic factor can be ignored." (CW 32:90) Lenin adds:

The gist of his theoretical mistake in this case is substitution of eclecticism for the dialectical interplay of politics and economics (which we find in Marxism). His theoretical attitude is: "on the one hand, and on the other," "the one and the other." That is eclecticism. Dialectics requires an all-round consideration of relationships in their concrete development but not a patchwork of bits and pieces. (CW 32:91)

Lenin does not leave it at dialectics in general. He also brings in Hegel directly, giving the following definition of dialectical logic:

Dialectical logic demands that we should go further. Firstly, if we are to have a true knowledge of an object we must look at and examine all its facets, its connections and "mediacies." That is something we cannot ever hope to achieve completely, but

the rule of comprehensiveness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity. Secondly, dialectical logic requires that an object should be taken in development, in change, in "self-movement" (as Hegel sometimes puts it). This is not immediately obvious in respect of such an object as a tumbler, but it, too, is in flux, and this holds especially true for its purpose, use and connection with the surrounding world. Thirdly, a full "definition" of an object must include the whole of human experience, both as a criterion of truth and a practical indicator of its connection with human wants. Fourthly, dialectical logic holds that "truth is always concrete"...
(CW 32:94)

Especially noteworthy here is the explicit mention of Hegelian dialectics. It should not be forgotten, however, that the brunt of Lenin's argument in this essay was about "combatting bureaucratic distortions of the Soviet apparatus, safeguarding the working people's material and spiritual interests in a way and means inaccessible to this apparatus, etc." (CW 32:100) This central theme was an argument directed against Trotsky. But it certainly stands out that, in a major theoretical dispute on the nature of the new Soviet state, Lenin once again brings in Hegelian dialectics.

The reader should note though, that the way which Lenin does so also raises the question of his ambivalence toward his new philosophical ideas on Hegelian dialectics. For just as Lenin agreed to republish the 1908 work Materialism and Empirio-Criticism after the revolution

unchanged, in this above-cited discussion of dialectical logic, he suddenly reverts to bringing in Plekhanov. Was this done deliberately to soften his argument for his Bolshevik audience? Few of them, if any, had also become involved in Hegelian dialectics. Mainly they held Plekhanovite-type views of Marxism as materialism. Or was Lenin himself ambivalent in his own mind about his new work around dialectics?

We do know that just after Lenin cited the concept familiar to Russian revolutionaries (that in dialectics "truth is always concrete"), he brings in the popularizer of that statement in Russia, Plekhanov, as follows:

Fourthly, dialectical logic holds that "truth is always concrete, never abstract," as the late Plekhanov liked to say after Hegel. (Let me add in parenthesis for the benefit of young Party members that you cannot hope to become a real intelligent Communist without making a study -- and I mean study -- of all of Plekhanov's philosophical writings, because nothing better has been written on Marxism anywhere in the world. (CW 32-94)

An attached footnote reads:

By the way, it would be a good thing, first, if the current edition of Plekhanov's works contained a special volume or volumes of all his philosophical articles, with detailed indexes, etc. to be included in a series of standard textbooks on communism; secondly, I think the workers' state must demand that professors of philosophy should have a knowledge of Plekhanov's exposition of Marxist philosophy and ability to impart it to their students. (CW 32:94)

Several issues are important here. Firstly, the statement "truth is concrete" had been one aspect of dialectics which virtually all Russian Marxists both accepted and referred to widely. Secondly, the reference to Plekhanov on Marxist philosophy comes after the distinctly non-Plekhanovite Hegelian Marxist views expressed just a sentence earlier. Was Lenin then covering his flanks by raising Plekhanov after first raising Hegel, so as not to appear too controversial? Or did he really mean his full statement? In the latter case the ambivalence would be still in Lenin's mind, while in the former it would have been a matter of keeping certain new positions private until he could better put them out. And as we know, he never finished an essay or book on dialectics, which may have been one of the main purposes of the study of Hegel. In any case, the whole passage, as well as Lenin's other contradictory statements raises the question of Lenin's ambivalence with respect to his newly discovered Hegelian dialectics. As Dunayevskaya puts it:

[this] bears out the truth of the subordinate position of philosophy in established Marxism. It also points to the fact that Lenin himself was not ready to openly reveal his break with his old mechanistic position in Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and thus blunted creative new points of departure for future generations.¹⁶

In an earlier study, Dunayevskaya stressed another side of

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this problem:

The reason for the "privacy" of his Philosophic Notebooks...has nothing to do with an alleged lack of courage. The tragedy lies elsewhere, deep in the recesses of time, revolution and counter-revolution. too short were the years between 1914 and 1917, between 1917 and 1923. Too daring was the November Revolution in Russia, and too many the aborted and missed revolutions elsewhere. Too overwhelming were the concrete problems of this great historic even, objective and subjective, including what Lenin called cultural backwardness. The pull, therefore, was for "stagefying." When to study what? First one read Plekhanov, then Materialism and Empirio-Criticism...The duality in Lenin's philosophic heritage is unmistakable. But how can that excuse the failure to grapple with the Philosophic Notebooks...¹⁷

Whether it was more a matter of his own reluctance to add yet another controversy for his Bolsheviks to grapple with, or whether he was too occupied with concrete political questions such as the national question, the bureaucratization of the new Soviet state, not to speak of civil war, economic reconstruction, and the attempt to extend the Russian revolution internationally to Europe and Asia, Lenin did for one reason or another fail to finish or publish his study of dialectics. He also left a trail of somewhat ambivalent statements behind on dialectics. While the main thrust of his statements on dialectics was toward Hegelian Marxism, as seen in the trade union debate, he was also capable of referring in glowing terms to his pre-1914 philosophical positions in Plekhanov and Materialism and

Empirio-Criticism.

We will view this problem of ambivalence in yet another example of Lenin speaking directly on dialectics. Then, after studying two of his main theoretical works -- that around imperialism and the national question, and that around the state and revolution -- as concrete examples of Lenin's theorizing after studying Hegel in 1914, we will return once again to a consideration of the whole problem of Lenin's ambivalence. For now we will proceed to finish our overview of his explicit statements on dialectics after 1914.

Most striking of all was Lenin's 1922 article for the new Russian journal Under the Banner of Marxism. While not directly criticizing his fellow Bolshevik leaders, he concluded his essay in part with a call for study of Hegelian dialectics. He eases his readers into the subject of Hegel: he declares that although the materialism of natural science was surely to be welcomed in the struggle against "clerical obscurantism," on the other hand

it must be realized that no natural science and no materialism can hold its own in the struggles against the onslaught of bourgeois ideas and the restoration of the bourgeois world outlook unless it stands on a solid philosophical ground. (CW 33:233)

Therefore one must be a "consistent," "modern," and "Marxist" materialist, "a dialectical materialist," Lenin

continues. Then came his "bombshell" on Hegelian dialectics, linked directly to a "new revolutionary subject" outside the working class. The bombshell had to do with the anti-colonial revolt in Asia:

In order to attain this aim, the contributors to Pod Znamenem Marksizma must arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, i.e., the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his Capital and in his historical and political works, and applied so successfully that now every day of the awakening to life and struggle of the new classes in the East (Japan, India, and China) -- i.e. the hundreds of millions of human beings who form the greater part of the world population and whose historical passivity and historical torpor have hitherto conditioned the stagnation and decay of many advanced European countries -- every day of the awakening to life of new peoples and new classes serves as a fresh confirmation of Marxism. (CW 33:234)

Sensing no doubt that his readers would be skeptical not only on ideological grounds, but also because of the difficulty of understanding Hegel, Lenin adds:

Of course, this study, this interpretation, this propaganda of Hegelian dialectics is extremely difficult, and the first experiments in this direction will undoubtedly be accompanied by errors. But only he who never does anything never makes mistakes. Taking as our basis Marx's method of applying materialistically conceived Hegelian dialectics, we can and should elaborate this dialectics from all aspects, print in the journal excerpts from Hegel's principal works, interpret them materialistically and comment on them with the help of examples of dialectics in the sphere of economic and political relations, which recent history, especially modern imperialist war and revolution, provides in unusual abundance. In my opinion, the editors and contributors of Pod Znamenem Marksizma should be a kind of "Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian

Dialectics"...Unless it sets itself such a task and systematically fulfills it, materialism cannot be militant materialism. (CW 33:233-234)

His essay concludes with an "example" of how "dialectics" are needed to sort out sociological statistics.

Pitirim Sorokin had attacked the prevalence of divorce in Soviet Russia and said that

modern legal marriage is a form which conceals what is in effect extra-marital sexual intercourse, enabling lovers of "strawberries" to satisfy their appetites in a "legal" way.

Calling Sorokin an example of "graduated flunkies of feudalism" (CW 33-235), Lenin talked of "de facto" but not "de jure" divorces inside the old society far greater than the "shocking" figure of 92 divorces per 10,000 marriages of which Sorokin had complained.

Lenin claimed that a study of dialectics would help new Russian scholars to see through the type of statistics used by Sorokin. But this essay's most striking feature is its open call for intensive study not of dialectics in general, but specifically of Hegelian dialectics. Along with the Will and the essay to be considered next, it forms the core of Lenin's last writings on dialectics. His references to dialectics had become more common, as in 1914-1917, once the civil war was over and the nature of the new Soviet society began to be debated among the Bolsheviks.

Also among Lenin's last major references to dialectics is in one of the very last writings from his pen, even after Will of December 1922-January 1923. This was written, like the Will, while Lenin was immobilized by his stroke, but was able on certain days to do a little dictating. The article in question is a brief appraisal of Sukhanov's famous Notes on the Revolution, written on January 17, 1923. First Lenin takes up what he calls the "German model" of the Second International, the orthodox Marxism of his own youth and the early Bolsheviks as well as the Germans. He criticizes it as follows:

They call themselves Marxists, but their conception of Marxism is impossibly pedantic. They have completely failed to understand what is decisive in Marxism, namely, its revolutionary dialectics. They have even absolutely failed to understand Marx's plain statements that in times of revolution the utmost flexibility is demanded, and have even failed to notice, for instance, the statements Marx made in letters -- I think it was in 1856 -- expressing the hope of combining a peasant war in Germany, which might create a revolutionary situation, with the working-class movement -- they avoid even this plain statement and walk round and about it like a cat around a bowl of hot porridge...up to now they have seen capitalism and bourgeois democracy in Western Europe follow a definite path of development, and cannot conceive that this path can be taken as a model only mutatis mutandis, only with certain amendments...For instance, it does not even occur to them that because Russia stands on the border-line between the civilized countries and the countries which this war has for the first time definitely brought into the orbit of civilization -- all the Oriental, non-European countries -- she could and was, indeed, bound to reveal certain distinguishing features...

(CW 33:476-477)

Here he connects dialectics to flexible tactics and creative "application" of Marxism in a revolutionary situation. He makes this specific for two issues the West European social democracy had ignored or played down: the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and that of the oriental and non-European world. Here we have an explicit link between dialectics and the core of Leninism: on the peasantry and on the concept of imperialism and the national question, especially in the East.

In concluding his critique of Sukhanov, Lenin hammers home even further the point about the orient versus Western European models:

You say that civilization is necessary for the building of socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilization in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism?...Our Sukhanovs, not to mention Social-Democrats still farther to the right, never even dream that revolutions cannot be made otherwise. Our European philistines never even dream that the 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. (CW 33:480)

Here Lenin has done much more than repeat earlier statements on dialectics and on the national and anti-colonial revolutions: he has shown explicitly their intimate

connection in his mind in one of his very last writings. In this way, then, Lenin keeps up until his last days a stress on what he gained from his own Hegel studies. The reader will see the same emphasis as we turn to Lenin's main works after 1914. In each case, and despite recurrent signs of ambivalence, he refers to Hegel or to the specifically Hegelian kind of dialectic. That holds for political writings no less than for his later philosophical notes.

But not everything was Hegelian or dialectical in the post-1914 Lenin. The 1920 reissue of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism by Lenin shows the extent to which he waffled, at least publicly, in his concept of dialectics. And even in the 1920 trade union debate, as we have seen, his references to Hegel were balanced by ones to the anti-Hegelian Plekhanov. Finally, even the most explicit public references to Hegel, in the 1922 article for Under the Banner of Marxism, which Korsch used as point of departure for Marxism and Philosophy,¹⁸ contained much ambivalence on the question of idealism versus materialism. For despite Lenin's call there "for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics," as we saw, Lenin's conclusion called not for the unity of idealism and materialism, but rather only for "militant materialism." Such a phrase was hardly new, and could easily be seen as totally in continuity with the

early work, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Indeed it was so interpreted after Lenin's death. Among the first to feel its bite were the philosophically and Hegel oriented German Marxists, Korsch and Lukacs, at the hands of Zinoviev at the 1924 Comintern Congress.

Footnotes - Chapter Five

1. N.K. Krupskaya, Memories of Lenin, trans. Bernard Isaacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), pp. 295-296.
2. Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom (1982), p. 168.
3. Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, p. 101.
4. Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, p. 28.
5. While it was first published in Russian in 1925, shortly after Lenin's death, as a separate article, the first English edition prejudged its relationship to Lenin's early writings by publishing it in 1927 as an "addenda" to the first English translation of the 1908 work, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. According to Dunayevskaya (Philosophy and Revolution, pp. 313-314), the fragment on dialectics was then wrongly attributed to the years 1912-1914.

Here we will approach the 1915 draft neither as an "addenda" to 1908, nor as, alternatively, Moscow does now. The present Moscow edition places it rather technically, thus avoiding direct reference to Hegel. There the editors only link the piece to "a notebook between the Conspectus of Lassalle's book on Heraclitus and the Conspectus of Aristotle's Metaphysics." (Lenin, CW 38:579, ftn. 136). Rather, we treat it as the culmination of an entire year of work on Hegelian dialectics by Lenin, 1914-1915.

6. Lenin seemed unaware not only of Marx's roots in Hegel, but also of Marx's critiques of Mikhailovsky even when the latter was writing in 1877. In fact, when Mikhailovsky charged that Marx intended Capital to apply to Russia, that led Marx not to defend such a conception, but to write just the opposite: that perhaps Russia could have a different path to socialism, via the village commune, rather than by uprooting pre-capitalist communal forms and passing first through the stage of primitive accumulation. For Marx's reply to Mikhailovsky, which foreshadowed his famous letter to Vera Zasulich, see Maximilien Rubel, ed., Karl Marx, Oeuvres: Economie, II (Paris:

Gallimard, 1968), pp. 1553, 1555. See also Rubel's edition of Marx's French edition of Capital, Vol. I (1875) where, in response to critics like Mikhailovsky, Marx added to his section on accumulation the little phrase that primitive accumulation applied as a pattern "for Western Europe." (Karl Marx, Oeuvres: Economie, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 1170.) None of this work of Marx was discussed by Lenin or other Russian Marxists very much. Little of it was even known, Plekhanov and Zasulich having failed to publish most of it.

7. See David Joravsky, "Lenin and the Partyness of Philosophy," Chapter 2, Soviet Marxism and Natural Science (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1961), pp. 24-43. For another somewhat similar discussion, see Loren R. Graham, Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union (New York: Knopf, 1970), especially pp. 42-47.
8. Joravsky, p. 32.
9. Ibid., p. 111.
10. See Anton Pannekoek, Lenin as Philosopher, with notes by Paul Mattick and introduction by Karl Korsch (London: Merlin, 1975).
11. Ibid., p. 111
12. For a discussion of this, see Joravsky, pp. 24-26.
13. This is the version quoted by Trotsky in his The Suppressed Testament of Lenin as cited by Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, pp. 118-119. See also the somewhat softened Moscow translation, Lenin CW 36:595.
14. Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, p. 318.
15. Lenin, On the Question of Dialectics (Moscow: Progress, 1980). The other articles included here are, from the 1914-1915 Notebooks on Philosophy, nothing except the 1915 essay fragment "On the Question of Dialectics"; the section on dialectics from the 1914 essay "Karl Marx"; plus the fifty page 1915 essay "The Collapse of the Second International" which, as discussed earlier, does a few times delve into

dialectics in its critique of Plekhanov and Kautsky. The last entry is a 1923 critique of Sukhanov, to be discussed later on. But the startling omissions are of course of anything from the 1914-1915 notes on Hegel. Nor is a reference even made to the fact that "On the Question of Dialectics," the essay from which the title for this little volume is taken, is included in Moscow editions in the same volume which includes the notes on Hegel, the Philosophic Notebooks (Lenin, CW 38).

16. Dunayevskaya, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, p. 176.
17. Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, p. 117.
18. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy, trans. Fred Halliday (New York: Monthly Review, 1970).

Chapter Six

THE DIALECTICS OF IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

We have now arrived at a subject which is almost universally considered part of the essence of what is now termed "Leninism": imperialism. In fact, a recent study by Neil Harding argues that Lenin's 1916 book, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism is nothing less than "the theoretical basis" of Lenin's post-1914 Marxism.¹ Whether or not that is the case, we are dubious in the sense that such a formulation seems to leave out "dialectics," which is, we will argue, precisely what decided Lenin to write his own version on a subject he originally seemed satisfied to leave to Bukharin.²

In a word, this was the period where Lenin demonstrated politically and economically how different his concept of Marxism had become after his 1914-1915 encounter with Hegelian dialectics. Secondly, such a formulation by Harding seems to leave out as well what we will come to later in the State and Revolution (1917), as if the "Promethean" character of that work written in the midst of revolution was any less theoretical because there is little socio-economic analysis present.

Nonetheless, it is certainly true that Lenin's

writings on imperialism and national self-determination, which do contain much economics and sociology, indeed mark a major part of his work after 1914-1915. For in the period 1914-1917 alone, Lenin wrote the world-renowned 120 page study, Imperialism, also filled up no less than 768 pages of what are now termed Notebooks on Imperialism. (CW 39) He also wrote several hundred pages of material on national self-determination and the war, some of it after 1917. In taking this material as a whole, we are following Lenin's own suggestion in the 1917 Preface to the Russian edition of Imperialism. There he noted that his attempt to publish the book under Tsarist censorship forced him to leave out much material:

This pamphlet was written with an eye to the tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution...on these matters I had to speak in a "slavish" tongue, and I must refer the reader who is interested in the subject to the articles I wrote abroad in 1914-1917, a new edition of which is soon to appear." (CW 22:187)

Among these voluminous writings during 1914-1917, we will consider only some of the more important ones, such as:

"Socialism and War," 1915 (45 pages)

"Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," 1916 (15 pages)

"The Junius Pamphlet," 1916 (15 pages)

"The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up,"
1916 (41 pages)

"A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism,"
1916 (48 pages)

"Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," 1916
(15 pages)

Even from a glance at the above list, including only major pamphlets and essays, it is clear that the debates on politics and especially the self-determination of nations, consumed as many or more pages than the slim volume Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, which was to be published under the censorship in Russia. In addition, there are the 768 page Notebooks on Imperialism, which most definitively show which subjects other than imperialism were on Lenin's mind as he labored on Imperialism and his other published works in 1916. Much of it is on Marx's and Engels' writings on splits within the European labor movement and on national liberation, as well as Lenin's own researches on the latter question. In a word, Lenin was not limiting his view to economics, no matter how theoretical was his economic analysis in the book intended for legal publication in Tsarist Russia, Imperialism. In addition to the Notebooks and the 1916 articles and speeches, related are also several important articles, speeches and letters written after 1917.

A. Economics and Dialectics in the Analysis of Imperialism

Judging by the nearly 800 pages of notes from original sources going mainly into the writing of Imperialism in 1916, it would seem that Lenin had more in mind than the slim volume which was actually published. And in any case, it was hardly true that, as one recent biographer, Tony Cliff, has argued, "Lenin did not claim to have worked out a complete theory of imperialism in his book," but that his concern was rather "with the practical lessons the workers' movement had to draw from the changes in modern capitalism."³ Cliff continues:

(1) in terms of the actual description of modern capitalism, Lenin is not original at all, and borrows practically everything from Bukharin, and (2) the difference between the two books [Lenin's and Bukharin's] is radical -- a difference between a theoretical treatise on imperialism, and a political pamphlet on the same subject.⁴

Thus Cliff, unlike Harding, but for very different reasons than we, agrees that there are some major differences between Lenin and Bukharin on imperialism. But for Cliff these of course have nothing to do with dialectics. Rather he sees "popularization" in Lenin's study of imperialism, versus Bukharin's, to Cliff, more academic study of the same topic. Harding on the other hand does view Lenin's Imperialism as a serious theoretical work in its own right, but at the same time agrees fundamentally with Cliff and

many, many others that Lenin "borrowed" most of Imperialism from earlier Marxist studies such as Hilferding's and Bukharin's. Harding writes:

It is not too extravagant to maintain that Hilferding's analysis, together with Bukharin's refinements to it, constituted the economic bedrock of Lenin's own theory of imperialism.⁵

If Lenin were merely following earlier work and popularizing it (Cliff) or slightly revising (Harding), why then would he have written nearly 800 pages of Notebooks on Imperialism in large part in its preparation, mainly from original sources, and spent a full year preparing this study?

But the argument does not hinge alone on the amount of work Lenin put into his slim book Imperialism, but equally or even more importantly on the methodological differences of his study with earlier ones. We will suggest that many of these innovations which his study developed centered on dialectics.

Dunayevskaya has argued that there is in fact a profound difference between Lenin's study and even that of his fellow Bolshevik Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy:

Because Lenin had also introduced Bukharin's work, and took no issue with it, the impression created when the two disagreed sharply on the question of national self-determination during the same period, was that the point at issue was "only political." In truth, the methodology of the two works shows

they are poles apart. Thus, as opposed to Bukharin's concept of capitalist growth in a straight line, or via a quantitative ratio, Lenin's own work holds on tightly to the dialectical principle, "transformation into opposite." The key point in tracing the subject's self-development instead of an "objective" mathematical growth is that the former not only makes it possible to see transformation into opposite of both competitive capitalism into monopoly and part of labor into an aristocracy, but also makes you conscious that this is but the "first negative," to use an expression of Hegel's. The development through this compels finding the "second negative," or as Marx expressed it, going "lower and deeper" into the masses to find the new revolutionary forces. Thus, Lenin held that, just when capitalism had reached this high stage or "organization," monopoly (which extended itself into imperialism), is the time to see new, national revolutionary forces that would act as "bacilli" for proletarian revolutions as well.⁶

My point is that, whether one agrees or disagrees with Raya Dunayevskaya's conclusion, there is evidence that the two -- Lenin and Bukharin -- did not share the same viewpoint. While it is well-known that Lenin sharply disagreed with Bukharin on political questions such as the self-determination of nations, too great an affinity is often assumed than exists between Lenin and Bukharin even on the "economics" of imperialism. True that Lenin did not explicitly critique Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy in his introduction to it, and no critical notes on it by Lenin have been found, yet he did at least once criticize that work.

This was in a major 1919 speech on the question of

the self-determination of nations. Here the implicit reference to Bukharin's concept of imperialism is fairly obvious:

Comrade Bukharin's concreteness is a bookish description of finance capitalism. In reality we have heterogenous phenomena to deal with. In every agricultural gubernia there is free competition side by side with monopoly industry. Nowhere in the world has monopoly capitalism existed in a whole series of branches without free competition, nor will it exist ...To maintain that there is such a thing as integral imperialism without the old capitalism is merely making the wish father to the thought. And if we had an altered capitalism, our task would have been a hundred thousand times easier. It would have resulted in a system in which everything would be subordinated to finance capital alone. (CW 29:168)

While hardly a comprehensive economic critique of Bukharin on imperialism and finance capitalism, the above section from Lenin's speech does show that Lenin did have important differences with Bukharin's economic theories. This critique of Bukharin's economics is followed immediately by a critique of Bukharin on national self-determination. Let us note for later that the above-cited 1919 critique of Bukharin bears great similarity to Lenin's critique of Kautsky's concept of "ultra-imperialism." But for now we must concentrate on Lenin's Imperialism, 1916.

Both Kautsky the reformist and Bukharin the Left Bolshevik agreed on one important methodological point: the possibility of an age of imperialism where imperialism

took over the world, and via central planning, created a type of economic unity which had an equilibrium or a stability, and which was ripe to takeover in toto by socialism. Lenin rejected this concept because he viewed it as non-dialectical: that is, it one-sidedly ignored the contradictions within imperialism, whether between imperialist states vying with each other for world domination, or between imperialism and new (national revolutions) and old (proletariat and peasantry) revolutionary subjects.

It is even possible that some of the barbs aimed at Kautsky's "ultra-imperialism" were also aimed at Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy, although of course not explicitly. For Lenin was having enough disagreement already with his young Bolshevik colleague on the question of national self-determination, which was a far more immediate political question during the war and after. Note the following critique of Kautsky's concept of "ultra-imperialism" in Lenin's December 1915 introduction to Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy:

But this development proceeds in such circumstances, at such a pace, through such contradictions, conflicts and upheavals -- not only economic but political, national etc. -- that inevitably imperialism will burst and capitalism will be transformed into its opposite long before one world trust materializes, before the "ultra-imperialist" world-wide amalgamation of national finance capital takes place.
(CW 22:107)

Could that not also be a veiled critique of Bukharin's own book?

It is time to examine Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Lenin's own study, in some detail. What relationship is there to the question not only of economics, but also of "dialectics"? First, it must be said that, unlike say the 1914 essay "Karl Marx," this book does not have a section on dialectics or even one on philosophy. Nor does it ever refer explicitly to "dialectics." Therefore the question of its relationship to Lenin's studies of Hegelian dialectics lies not in specific reference to that word but in an examination of the form of Lenin's study.

Lenin begins with a detailed discussion of the extent of monopoly in the contemporary world economy not only in Germany, but also in all industrialized countries. He notes that this change occurred around the year 1900, during the heyday of imperialism. To Lenin this is not a smooth or evolutionary transition, but a sometimes violent transformation. He writes that "competition becomes transformed into monopoly" (CW 22:205) and stresses the forceful even violent character of this transformation:

Monopoly hews a path for itself everywhere without scruple as to the means, from paying a modest sum

to buy off competitors, to the American device of employing dynamite against them. (CW 22:208)

Far from a new "equilibrium" being produced under monopoly capitalism, for Lenin violent competition between monopolies, whole industries and national states increases rather than decreases at the same time that production becomes centralized into fewer and fewer hands:

Domination, and the violence that is associated with it, such are the relationships that are typical of the "latest phase of capitalist development"; this is what inevitably had to result, and has resulted, from the formation of all-powerful economic monopolies. (CW 22:207)

The key to everything for Lenin is transition, the development of monopoly and imperialism not from "outside" earlier capitalism, but from within, from the dialectical process Hegel called "transformation into opposite." As Lenin puts it:

In other words, the old capitalism, the capitalism of free competition with its indispensable regulator, the Stock Exchange, is passing away. A new capitalism has come to take its place, bearing obvious features of something transient, a mixture of free competition and monopoly. (CW 22:219)

Here the key point is not only concentration within a given industry such as steel, but the predominance also of "finance" over "industrial" capital:

It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production...Imperialism,

or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reaches vast proportions. The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of financially "powerful" states stand out among all the rest. (CW 22:238-239)

But it is exactly here that the connection of "monopoly" to "imperialism" is drawn, phenomena often kept in separate compartments by other theorists.

Lenin instead appears to adopt aspects of the Hegelian-Marxist perspective of a "concrete totality" in viewing monopoly-imperialism as a specific "new stage of capitalism," and writes of its need to export capital more than goods:

Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of goods. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of capital...England became a capitalist country before any other... claimed to be the "workshop of the world," the supplier of manufactured goods to all countries, which in exchange were to keep her provided with raw materials. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this monopoly was already undermined...On the threshold of the twentieth century we see the formation of a new type of monopoly: firstly, monopolist associations of capitalists in all capitalist-istically developed countries: secondly, the monopolist position of a few very rich countries, in which the accumulation of capital has reached gigantic proportions. An enormous "surplus of capital" has arisen in the advanced countries...As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilized not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country,

for this would mean decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. (CW 22:240-241)

That is his picture of the new interrelationship between developed countries and economically backward ones at the stage of monopoly capital: export of capital comes to dominate over export of goods. But this hardly produces a new equilibrium or stable world system, in Lenin's view.

Once again the concept of contradiction is employed when Lenin criticizes, again and again, Kautsky's concept of "ultra-imperialism," a relatively stable and conflict-free imperialist-monopolist division of the world, which the latter envisioned as a relatively possible outcome of imperialism. Lenin writes:

Certain bourgeois writers (now joined by Karl Kautsky, who has completely abandoned the Marxist position he had held, for example, in 1909) have expressed the opinion that international cartels, being one of the most striking expressions of the internationalization of capital, give the hope of peace among nations under capitalism. Theoretically, this opinion is absolutely absurd, while in practice it is sophistry and a dishonest defence of the worst opportunism...The capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method in order to obtain profits... To substitute the question of the form of the struggle and agreements (today peaceful, tomorrow warlike, the next day warlike again) for the question of the substance of the struggle and agreements between capitalist associations is to sink to the role of a sophist. (CW 22:252-253)

Far from peace between nation states being more likely under imperialism and monopoly, Lenin argues that the reverse is true, because the expanding empires, having virtually absorbed all the non-industrialized world, now have nowhere to turn but upon each other:

...the characteristic feature of the period under review is the final partitioning of the globe -- final, not in the sense that repartition is impossible; on the contrary, repartitions are possible and inevitable -- but in the sense that the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has completed the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet. For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future only redivision is possible... (CW 22:254)

Lenin returns again and again to this concept of increased conflict and war between imperialisms for repartition of the globe. Evidently World War I is the climax of such a conflict in Lenin's view.

Now we have arrived at the central and most important section of the book, entitled "Imperialism, as a Special Stage of Capitalism." Here we see Lenin appearing to employ both Hegelian categories -- concrete totality and transformation into opposite -- as he sums up:

Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of

transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres...monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our eyes, creating large-scale industry and forcing out small industry. (CW 22:265)

In the above brief passage is a crucial one in Lenin's study of imperialism. It contains elements of a uniquely "Leninist" view. We can see the influence of Lenin's 1914-1915 study of Hegelian dialectics, and especially the category which he singled out from that: transformation into opposite. Here we not only have Lenin preceding this passage with the concept of "totality" where he had talked of his desire "to sum up, to draw together all the threads," but it appears to be a Hegelian concrete totality rather than evolutionary summation in a straight line because the "sum" does not "add up" in any ordinary sense.

Instead, the later development is in contradiction with the earlier one. This brings us to the concept of "transformation into opposite" as the origin of the present stage of monopoly and imperialism. Here "monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition" and yet he argues that "we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our eyes."

During 1917, Lenin added some comments on imperialism

and monopoly capitalism, beginning to see yet another trend, "state capitalism," born out of the conflagration of World War I. While he referred to this point several times, including in the Preface to State and Revolution, one of the more detailed statements was in a brief article from January 1917:

History does not stand still even in times of counter-revolution. History has been advancing even during the imperialist slaughter of 1914-1916, which is a continuation of the imperialist policies of preceding decades. World capitalism, which in the sixties and seventies of the last century was an advanced and progressive force of free competition, and which at the beginning of the twentieth century grew into monopoly capitalism, i.e., imperialism, took a big step forward during the war, not only towards greater concentration of finance capital, but also towards transformation into state capitalism." (CW 23:267)

This type of material cannot be disregarded, and once it is considered an integral part of Lenin's overall work on the question of imperialism, and we realize that for Lenin, economic, political, philosophical and sociological questions are not compartmentalized, then we will not be surprised to see a statement such as that above on state capitalism cropping up as early as 1917.⁷

And that is not all. Although Lenin told us in his uncensored Preface that he could not go into trends in the socialist and labor movements, he does begin to hint at it (CW 22:269) as he moves into yet another critique of

Kautsky's "ultra-imperialism."

Not only is the new stage of imperialist capitalism prone to instability due to wars between empires for re-division of the world, but it is also prone to internal decay and stagnation as "unproductive" coupon-clipping takes the place of industrial expansion. More than that, the stagnation and decay also affect the labor movement as well, in Lenin's view. Here he quotes both Marx and Engels on the "bourgeoisification" of the British working class in the era of the heyday of British imperialism.

But Lenin now generalizes this notion and extends it also to Germany, where the labor movement was led by socialists and even avowed Marxists:

Imperialist ideology also penetrates the working class. No Chinese Wall separates it from the other classes. The leaders of the present-day, so-called, "Social-Democratic" Party of Germany are justly called "social-imperialists," that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds; but as early as 1902, Hobson noted the existence of "Fabian imperialists" who belonged to the opportunist Fabian society. (CW 22:285-286)

In this light he views Kautsky's concept of "ultra-imperialism" as a retrogression from the alarm with which even the liberal pacifist Hobson had in 1902 viewed the growth of imperialism. (CW 22:294-295)

He also touches very very briefly on the question of national self-determination, after quoting Hilferding on

the subject:

This movement for national independence threatens European capital in its most valuable and most promising fields of exploitation, and European capital can maintain its domination only by continually increasing its military forces.

After thus quoting Hilferding, Lenin writes:

To this must be added that it is not only in newly opened-up countries, but also in the old, that imperialism is leading to annexation, to increased national oppression, and consequently, to increasing resistance. (CW 22:297)

When he next gives examples of the above, he carefully avoids mentioning Russia, something he refers to in the 1917 Preface as an example of self-censorship to permit publication of the book inside Russia. (CW 22:188, 298)

If we now turn to the massive unpublished Notebooks on Imperialism, we of course see no such self-censorship. We also see a few more explicit references to, and studies of, dialectics. Thus near the beginning of the Notebooks, Hegel's Phenomenology is listed as a book read by Lenin (CW 39:31) -- but if he made notes on that book they are either lost or lying somewhere unpublished. The Notebooks also show that Lenin kept up some Hegel studies even as he began to study imperialism in detail. (CW 39:174)

And while revolutionary literature such as the work of Rosa Luxemburg is not referred to in the book Imperialism, the Notebooks show that Lenin devoted more space to

his summary of her Junius Pamphlet (7 pages) than to any other book. In a few other cases, such as the summaries of the book by Hobson, the summaries are even longer, but it is indicated that these summaries were made by Krupskaya and not Lenin. In general the Notebooks on Imperialism contain far briefer entries than those on Hegel, where the Science of Logic got hundreds of pages of notes. It is possible that this is because Lenin is here much or even more interested in recording factual material than in grappling with key concepts.

Or is he already taking for granted that, since he has grappled with that, he is ready to practice dialectics, and thus need not repeat to himself the "source"? If it is true that Lenin based himself heavily on Bukharin or Hilferding in Imperialism, little evidence is found for that view in the Notebooks on Imperialism. Bukharin is not discussed there, while Hilferding gets merely five pages. The longer note on Hobson (35 pages) was the one done by Krupskaya.

There is also quite a bit of material on the national question -- ranging from extracts from Marx and Engels on that subject to discussions of racism and national oppression in the twentieth century, including discussions of Blacks in the U.S. In fact, the last several hundred pages

of the Notebooks on Imperialism are really not on the economics of imperialism but on the political questions which Lenin largely had to leave out of his book Imperialism. In addition to taking up national oppression and racism, they also contain lengthy discussions of racism and chauvinism inside the socialist movement itself. Much of this material is extracts from Engels and Marx. Again, this material was for broader uses than the "legal" study of imperialist economics to be published under the censorship.

In his uncensored article, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," published in 1916 in an exile Bolshevik journal, Lenin recapitulates in a briefer format the main theses of the book Imperialism. Here he also "takes the gloves off" in his critique of reform socialism and his vision of new revolutionary opposition inside the imperialist countries:

Now a "bourgeois labor party is inevitable and typical in all imperialist countries...For the trusts, the financial oligarchy, high prices, etc., while enabling the bribery of a handful in the top layers, are increasingly oppressing, crushing, ruining and torturing the mass of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat. On the one hand there is the tendency of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists to convert a handful of very rich and privileged nations into "eternal" parasites on the body of the rest of mankind, to "rest on the laurels" of the exploitation of Negroes, Indians, etc., keeping them in subjection with the aid of the excellent weapons of extermination provided by modern militarism. On

the other hand, there is the tendency of the masses who are more oppressed than before and who bear the whole brunt of imperialist war to cast off this yoke and to overthrow the bourgeoisie. (CW 23:116)

But it is not merely new revolutionary opposition in general due to impoverishment and war.

For Lenin, it also means the emergence of one of the dialectical "opposites" of imperialism: the revolutionary "lower and deeper" layers of the industrial proletariat and the unemployed. For if part of the proletariat also "transforms into its opposite," into a labor aristocracy, this new proletariat under imperialism has hardly reached stability and passivity as with the British proletariat in the late nineteenth century. For the proletariat becomes differentiated into both an aristocracy and a more revolutionary lower and deeper layer. Here is how Lenin develops his argument on this point, out of his study of Marx and Engels on the British trade unions:

One of the most common sophistries of Kautskyism is its reference to the "masses." We do not want, they say, to break away from the masses and mass organizations!...Marx and Engels...did not forget, firstly, that the trade union organizations directly embraced a minority of the proletariat. In England then, as in Germany now, not more than one-fifth of the proletariat was organized. No one can seriously think it possible to organize the majority of the proletariat under capitalism. Secondly -- and this is the main point -- it is not so much a question of the size of an organization, as of the real, objective significance of its policy; does its policy

represent the masses, does it serve them, i.e. does it aim at their liberation from capitalism or does it represent the interests of the minority, the minority's reconciliation with capitalism?...Engels draws a distinction between the "bourgeois labor party" of the old trade unions -- the privileged minority -- and the "lowest mass," the real majority, and appeals to the latter, who are not infected by "bourgeois respectability." This is the essence of Marxist tactics!...And it is therefore our duty, if we wish to remain socialists to go down lower and deeper to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and the whole purpose of the struggle against opportunism. (CW 23:119-120)

This is Lenin's vision of a split within the labor movement, a "new stage" paralleling the transformation of competition into monopoly and the creation of a labor aristocracy: the development of the lower and deeper layers of proletarian revolt. Clearly Lenin is now always searching for opposites so that the stage of production -- monopoly capitalism -- is tied to the kind of revolt that is the dialectical force for overthrow.

The clearest and most forceful actual speech by Marx on which Lenin based this concept of "lower and deeper" is not well known, especially in its relationship to the Paris Commune. Still more strikingly, that key speech does not appear in the Moscow editions of Marx's Collected Works.

Hence we quote it below:

The trade unions, he said, are an aristocratic minority. Poor working people could not belong to them: the great mass of workers who, because of economic development, are daily driven from the

villages into the cities, long remain outside the trade unions, and the poorest among them never belong. The same is true of the workers born in London's East End, where only one out of ten belongs to the trade unions. The farmers, the day laborers, never belong to the trade unions.

The trade unions by themselves are impotent -- they will remain a minority. They do not have the mass of proletarians behind them, whereas the International influences these people directly; the International does not need the organization of the trade unions in order to win over the workers.⁸

Marx made this blistering critique of the British unions after they broke with the First International because of its fervent support of the Paris Commune in 1871, just after the break. This type of argument, in Lenin's article "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," could only be hinted at in Imperialism, the legally published book.

And while Imperialism is certainly a very important work in Lenin's post-1914 writing, its importance is sometimes over-rated because Marxism is too often reduced to "economics," and divorced from politics and dialectics. At least on the surface, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, does appear to be a "purely" economic work. This is apparently what leads a writer such as Harding to make it the center of his book, Lenin's Political Thought. To Lenin himself, it was not quite so important. In fact, as late as 1920, long after what Lenin considered his own

truly original contribution to Marxist theory, State and Revolution, was published in several foreign language editions, Lenin was still wondering whether "my booklet on imperialism ought to be published in German (and in other languages)." (Lenin to Zinoviev, July 1920, CW 44:397) It was of course translated and has since become a Marxist classic.

It is curious that Lenin never entered the debate on imperialism raging in European Marxism from 1900 to 1914 and involving the major theorists of the Second International such as Kautsky and Hilferding as well as Luxemburg. It would appear that he accepted the general lines of the "orthodox Marxist center" as represented in the Second International by Kautsky and Hilferding. Something obviously changed, for as we have seen, in 1915-1916 Lenin decided to spend a year or more on the topic of imperialism as judged by his notebooks and published writings. And as we have seen, Lenin's book and his even more detailed and comprehensive Notebooks on Imperialism were hardly a mere "popularization" for "the workers" of the theoretical analysis of Bukharin, Hilferding, and Kautsky.

On the contrary, it appears more likely that Lenin sought in 1914-1917 to become not only a leading political figure in world Marxism, but also a leading theorist not

just for Russia but for the world movement. His earlier works -- from The Development of Capitalism in Russia to the studies of revolutionary organization such as What Is To Be Done?, to the studies of the 1905-1907 revolution, and those on the national question -- concentrated only on Russian thought and developments. Conversely the works after 1914 center on world problems of Marxism; dialectics, the nature of imperialism, national self-determination from China to Ireland, the Paris Commune and the state and revolution.

Seen in this light we note that Imperialism spends most of its time not on economically backward Russia, which is hardly mentioned, but on the central developed capitalist countries: Germany, Britain, France, the United States. Clearly more than Tsarist censorship kept Lenin from focusing the book on Russia: Russian capitalism had not fully reached the world stage of monopoly and imperialism. The path of Lenin's theoretical writings in 1914-1917, from Hegel to imperialism and the self-determination of nations, and the state and revolution -- was a very new one. Not only was it a sharp break with his own past in its concentration on Russia alone. It was equally a break with the mainstream of European orthodox Marxism.

In order to "break" with the latter, it appears that

Lenin felt he had to deal with some of the fundamental questions the latter had been dealing with since 1900, chief among which was the extended debate over imperialism. He did exactly that in his own way in the book Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism. That accomplished, he immediately moved on to other questions, such as continued writings on the question of national self-determination, and most importantly of all to him, his book The State and Revolution.

Unfortunately Soviet and Western scholars alike tend too often to separate Imperialism's theorizing, not only from Lenin's notebooks on Hegel but even from his other writings on the war and especially the self-determination of nations. This is despite the fact that, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Lenin called attention to these very writings in the 1917 Preface to Imperialism, and said they should be read alongside Imperialism. That is what we now intend to do.

We are not arguing that Lenin's Imperialism was definitely a Hegelian Marxist work. In order to do so, a systematic comparison of Lenin's study of imperialism with those of Hilferding, Luxemburg, and Bukharin, who had not studied Hegel rigorously, would be necessary, as well as more analysis of Lenin's Imperialism itself in relation to

Hegel's Science of Logic. What we have attempted to show is that, at a minimum, there was something of a Hegelian influence in Lenin's study of imperialism. We also argued that there were major differences between Lenin's theory and that of the others on imperialism. We concluded that those differences are to some extent rooted in Lenin's 1914-1915 Hegel studies. This in no way means that political and economic questions were determined by philosophical ones. To make such an argument would be a mirror image of vulgar materialism.

B. The Self-Determination of Nations and the Dialectics of Revolution, 1914-1917

Even more crucial to Lenin's concept of the dialectics of revolution in the era of imperialism than the transformation of capitalism into monopoly, and of part of the proletariat into "aristocracy of labor," was the concept of self-determination of nations. Where, earlier, it had been a "principle" for a Bolshevik leader in an old empire ruling over Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, and Central and East Asian peoples, after 1914 it became a question of the dialectics of world revolution for Lenin. For movements for national self-determination: or in today's language, national liberation, were to Lenin nothing less than the

"dialectical opposite" of the new capitalist stage marked by monopoly and imperialism. For if it were true that, in Lenin's view, part of the Western proletariat had been "bribed" by the "crumbs" from imperialism, especially in Britain, and capitalism thus emerged all the stronger after 1900, at least temporarily, it was equally true that the new stage contained its own "opposite": both the revolt from the "lower and deeper" layer of the working class inside the imperialist countries and the still newer revolutionary subject, the national liberation movements.

If the Hegelian concepts of the unity and the transformation of opposites were central to Lenin in his working out of the economics of imperialism and of the aristocracy of labor, so too was the Hegelian concept of "contradiction" and the "struggle of opposites."⁹

What emerged in Lenin's writing was nothing short of a new revolutionary subject alongside the proletariat and the peasantry -- the anti-colonial revolutions. For Lenin the best example at hand was the Easter 1916 rebellion in Ireland, but it was not limited to Ireland. He viewed it as a world stage.

Contrast the way in which Rosa Luxemburg reached for a new revolutionary subject from her jail cell as she penned the famous Junius Pamphlet against World War I, and

yet ended up simply repeating the proletariat as revolutionary subject:

There is but one conclusion that the proletariat can draw from the historic necessity of imperialism. To capitulate before imperialism will mean to live forever in its shadow, off the crumbs that fall from the tables of its victories. Historic development moves in contradictions, and for every necessity puts its opposite into the world as well. The capitalist state of society is doubtless a historic necessity, but so also is the revolt of the working class against it...The world rule of imperialism is a historic necessity, but likewise its overthrow by the proletarian international. Side by side the two historic necessities exist in constant conflict with each other.¹⁰

To be sure, Luxemburg brings in the dialectical concept of "contradictions" and sees the proletariat as the dialectical "opposite" of capitalism. And she states that history moves in contradictions "and for every necessity puts its opposite into the world as well," for the new stage of imperialism growing out of capitalism.

She had, as early as 1905 arrived at a similar position to Lenin on trade unions as merely an "aristocracy" of labor, while seeing the deepest revolutionary impulses in the poorest, most unskilled rnak and file workers.¹¹ Yet, she wrote only of one source of new revolt, deeper layers of proletarian resistance inside the imperialist countries, while her revolutionary internationalist position led her to reject in advance anti-colonial revolts as mere

bourgeois nationalism.

Lenin's discussion of the Junius Pamphlet took the form both of extensive notes in the Notebooks on Imperialism, and an important article reviewing it for a Bolshevik journal in 1916. There is no other major Marxist writer who receives this type of praise from Lenin on a theoretical issue during this period:

On the whole, the Junius pamphlet is a splendid Marxist work, and its defects are, in all probability, to a certain extent accidental. (CW 22:306)

He begins his critique by faulting Luxemburg for what he views as a somewhat half-hearted critique of the social democratic center in Germany, as represented by people like Kautsky. What he objected to was her failure to break completely with the SPD.

But ten of Lenin's fifteen pages reviewing Junius are not devoted to that, but rather to the question of national self-determination. He quotes Junius as follows:

National wars are no longer possible in the epoch (era) of imperialism. National interests serve only as an instrument of deception, in order to place the working masses at the service of their mortal enemy, imperialism. (CW 22:308)

Then he gives his own answer. Partly to be sure, the answer continues his earlier arguments within Russian Marxism around the national question. But for the most part we get an entirely new way of seeing this problem. It is a

unique point of view in the Marxism of the time in its interweaving of "dialectics" with politics. Lenin writes:

Junius is perfectly right in emphasizing the decisive influence of the "imperialist atmosphere" of the present war...The only mistake, however, would be to exaggerate this truth, to depart from the Marxist requirement of concreteness, to apply the appraisal of this war to all wars possible under imperialism...The fallacy of this argument is obvious. That all dividing lines, both in nature and society, are conventional and dynamic, and that every phenomenon might, under certain conditions, be transformed into its opposite, is of course, a basic proposition of Marxist dialectics. A national war can be transformed into an imperialist war and vice versa...Only a sophist can disregard the difference between an imperialist and a national war on the grounds that one might develop into the other...Transformation of the present imperialist war of 1914-1916 into a national war is highly improbable...National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but inevitable. About 1,000 million people, or over half of the world's population, live in the colonies and semi-colonies (China, Turkey, Persia). The national liberation movements there are either already very strong, or are growing and maturing...The continuation of national liberation politics in the colonies will inevitably take the form of national wars against imperialism. (CW 22:308-310)

Therefore Lenin reaches his conclusion that "Junius applies Marxist dialectics only half way," (CW 22:316) as we noted earlier. But now we have seen the interweaving of the concept of national liberation with that of dialectics. It will continue until Lenin's death.

Let us now examine in detail what Lenin made of the question of self-determination of nations during the years

1915-1917, and then after the Russian Revolution as well. First let us take a look again at the 1915-1916 Notebooks on Imperialism, which turn out to be very much on national liberation as well as the economics of imperialism.

Throughout these Notebooks, Lenin is again and again compiling statistics, historical data, and other material on colonized peoples and their revolts. His massive chart summarizing recent world history includes the categories "Revolutionary movements (non-proletarian)" and "national movements and national question." (CW 39:688-706) He also summarizes and quotes at great length from Marx and Engels on divisions inside the industrial working class, as noted earlier, but also diverse material on the peasantry, and on non-European nations such as India, Persia, Algeria, Egypt, China, and the Phillippines, as well as Ireland, and the Japanese and Blacks in America. He expresses shock that the American Socialist Party had separate locals for Blacks and whites in the South. Clearly these massive Notebooks on Imperialism were as much on the self-determination of nations as on what was actually included in the book, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.

The notebooks also show Lenin's method of working during the period 1915-1916. He makes long summaries of books and articles on monopoly capital and various topics

he wrote on. But there is little sense here of grappling with totally new fundamental methodological questions in the way he did in the 1914-1915 notes on Hegel. These Notebooks on Imperialism do not stay long with any one author (not even Marx and Engels), and seem to confirm that Lenin's greatest intellectual dialogue during the years 1914-1917 with a single thinker was with Hegel.

But it was not merely notebook material on this highly controversial area of the self-determination of nations. It was for Lenin, even more than "dialectics" as such, the central political question he debated not only with reformist Marxists, but even with revolutionaries with whom he was in agreement on many other questions -- people who had also opposed World War I as Luxemburg did, and people who worked very closely with him and were Bolsheviks such as Bukharin, Pyatakov, and Radek. Even more than his famous "revolutionary defeatism" also born of a dialectical concept of "transformation into opposite" (as in the slogan, "transform the imperialist war into a civil war"), Lenin's position on the dialectics of national liberation set him apart from all of his contemporary leaders in the Marxist movement.

To support this major claim let us begin with the famous statement Lenin published in November 1914 on the

war:

The conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan, one that follows the experience of the Commune, and outlined in the Basle resolution (1912)... (CW 21:34)

He soon came to oppose

...the propaganda of peace unaccompanied by a call for revolutionary mass action (which) can only sow illusions and demoralize the proletariat, for it makes the proletariat believe that the bourgeoisie is humane, and turns it into a plaything in the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries. (CW 21:163)

But Lenin's first major theoretical statement on the war came the next year. It was the forty page pamphlet "Socialism and War," written in German and co-authored with Zinoviev for the September 1915 Zimmerwald Conference of antiwar socialists. Already we see some of the main lines of argument to be found later in the book Imperialism on monopoly, on how "six powers have enslaved 523 million people in the colonies," (CW 21:303) and on how the anti-colonial struggle must become integral to the revolutionary movement in the developed countries. Here is how he begins to sum up his new position on national liberation:

Socialists cannot achieve their great aim without fighting against all oppression of nations. They must, therefore, unequivocally demand that the Social-Democratic parties of the oppressor countries (especially the so-called "Great" Powers) should recognize and champion the oppressed nation's right to self-determination, in the specifically political sense of the term, i.e., the right to political

secession. The socialist of a ruling or a colonial nation who does not stand for that right is a chauvinist...

Imperialism is the epoch of the constantly increasing oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of "Great" Powers; it is therefore impossible to fight for the socialist international revolution against imperialism unless the right of nations to self-determination is recognized...A proletariat that tolerates the slightest coercion of other nations by its "own" nation cannot be a socialist proletariat. (CW 21:316-317)

Even here, though, it has not yet become a central question for Lenin. The great bulk of this pamphlet is devoted to the other question, that of revolutionary defeatism, and the national question gets only a small amount of space. And when he does discuss the national question above, he does not appear to see the immediate emergence of anti-colonial revolts as a concrete possibility, thus leaving his views on self-determination more at the level of socialist principles distinguishing "revolutionaries" from "chauvinists." It is still not explicitly a question of finding a new revolutionary subject there in the age of imperialism. But, after a year of "revolutionary defeatism" in his published writings and of massive Hegel studies in private, Lenin has begun to reexamine the questions of imperialism and national liberation in a new way.

By the year 1916, the bulk of his published and non-published articles are on the question of national self-

determination. The first major one is the article "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, Theses," published in April 1916. In that famous work, he opposes giving up

...one of the points of the democratic program, for example the point on the self-determination of nations, on the grounds of it being "impracticable" or "illusory" under imperialism. (CW 22:144)

Here in the 1916 Theses he for the first time connects together the possibility of social revolution with his support for national self-determination, by arguing in a very new way:

The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis such as the Dreyfus Case or the Zabern incident, or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc. (CW 22:145, emphasis added)

He expands this further, connecting self-determination with his concept of revolution:

The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general, stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favor of the equality of nations in general...The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by "their own" nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words... (CW 22:147-148)

He is thus calling for action and not only words in support of anti-colonial revolts.

He also makes clear in his conclusion that he is not merely repeating old slogans, even Bolshevik ones. Old positions "should be supplemented," he writes, because of "the particular urgency of this demand under imperialism." (CW 22:155) Nor is he confining his debate over self-determination to Russian and East European questions, as he did before 1914: this article was published not in Russian but in German, in April 1916, and it discusses the the question of self-determination at the level of the world revolutionary movement and world imperialism. As with the other major pamphlet also published in German, "Socialism and War," Lenin is here attempting to become a world leader of Marxism, not merely a Russian leader. He debates not only with Russian political tendencies, but even more with the broadest group of "Western Marxist" theorists: from Kautsky to Otto Bauer, to Herman Gorter and Rosa Luxemburg. These theses are still newer and more original than the economic arguments in the book Imperialism.

Lenin wrote the 1916 Theses on national self-determination without a current "concrete example" of a national revolution in the era of modern imperialism. But just as these theses came off the press, the epochal Easter Rebellion broke out in Dublin. This revolt, little noticed at

the time, in reality signalled a whole new stage in anti-colonial revolts, it can be argued. It was in reality part of the chain of events leading to the independence movement not only in Ireland, but the anti-colonial revolts which swept Africa and Asia from the 1920's until today, and which are still being fought out in Southern Africa.

Ireland was of course taken up a few months later by the lengthier forty page article Lenin published in Russian, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up." He begins by summarizing the views of his opponents: "We are told in reply that 'the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society'," which Lenin calls "an attempt to evade political questions." (CW 22:321) He argues further that

...in transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression,

but argues that this becomes a reality only with full national freedom "including complete freedom to secede."
(CW 22:325)

Although he terms his Polish and Dutch opponents "among the best revolutionary and internationalist elements in international Social-Democracy," he calls their position opposing the self-determination of nations "imperialist economism." (CW 22:348) He notes that Radek, Gorter, and

Luxemburg are generally closer to his positions than reformists who in his view only verbally support self-determination, including on this list Kautsky, Martov, and even by this late date, also Trotsky.

One of the newest sections is the one entitled "The Irish Rebellion of 1916." Where Radek had dismissed the Easter Rebellion as a "putsch" with "not much social backing" in his rather arrogant article entitled "Their Song Is Over," Lenin had this analysis of Ireland:

The term "putsch," in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (Vorwärts, March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls such a rebellion a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon. (CW 22:354)

In his view of "social revolution as a living phenomenon," he included not only the revolt of the industrial proletariat, but also "revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe," as well as peasant revolt against landowners. "To imagine that social revolution is

conceivable without" these new elements outside the industrial working class "is to repudiate social revolution," he concluded.

Nor was it only a political question. It was also methodological, again a question of that word which kept cropping up in Lenin's writings after 1914, "dialectics." For here is the very point where Lenin sums up briefly what is original and new in his concept of national revolution in the era of imperialism:

The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene. (CW 22:357)

While it is true that Lenin ultimately subordinates his concept of national revolution to that of proletarian revolt, it is equally true that he seems to view the national revolutions as an independent revolutionary subject (if not alongside the proletariat, then certainly "one of the bacilli") which helps to bring on the social revolution. For Lenin this comes close to a new revolutionary subject emerging at a time when imperialism has created a new stage of capitalism, making it appear impregnable to some Marxists and even "buying off," in Lenin's view, a section of the proletariat.

His conclusion on Ireland is not really on Ireland alone, but nothing short of an anticipation of the Russian Revolution the following year:

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc. prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905. (CW 22:358)

And for those who believe that the "vanguard party" is the key to "Leninism," it is curious to note that in the above discussion of revolution there is indeed a "vanguard," but it is the Irish masses and "the socialist proletarians." There has been little or no mention of the subject of the vanguard party to lead since 1914, not even in private correspondence.

What his private correspondence at this time was filled with was bitter reproaches against those who opposed his new views on self-determination. (See Lenin to Armand, November 30, 1916, CW 35:248-255). There does not seem to

be a single correspondent, Armand and Zinoviev included, not to speak of Radek or Bukharin, who agreed with Lenin's new formulations on self-determination completely. Here is what he wrote to Shliapnikov about Radek in 1916:

You may not know that Radek pushed us out of the Vorbote editorial board. It was initially agreed that there would be a joint editorial board composed of two groups: (1) the Dutch (maybe plus Trotsky) and (2) us (i.e. Radek, Gigory [Zinoviev] and me). This condition gave us equal rights on the editorial board.

Radek intrigued for months, and got the "missus" (Roland-Holst) to cancel the plan. We were demoted to the position of contributors. It's a fact!...Now on the question of assessing the Irish insurrection (a most important question, is it not: Not abstract "theory"!) both Radek and Kulisher (the cadet in Rech) are in full agreement, stupidly calling it a "putsch." (CW 36:394-395)

In fact, Radek appeared to "win" the battle initially as far as non-Russian exile journals were concerned. Nothing else appeared by Lenin (except for a brief speech) in German, and his articles in late 1916 lay either completely unpublished, or were published only in Russian.

But there is an important body of work, totalling 63 pages, and left unpublished during Lenin's lifetime, where he deepened still further his critiques of other Left revolutionaries who disagreed with his position on the question of national self-determination. These writings against what Lenin termed "imperialist economism" were not published in 1916 by anyone. Nor were they published even

after the revolution despite a speech in 1917 where Lenin complained that they had not yet been published. (CW 24: 299) Of course all that changed after Lenin's death, as Stalin moved to finish off his last major opponent, Bukharin. Then these articles were "discovered" and published by Stalin in 1929 since they criticized Bukharin quite sharply.

In fact, Lenin begins this material by lamenting that by late 1916 Bukharin, initially isolated within Bolshevism on his position against national self-determination, had gained an international following uniting Bukharin, Pyatakov and Bosh among the Bolsheviks, and including Polish and Dutch revolutionary internationalists as well. In short, despite the Irish revolution, Lenin's opponents and their concepts seemed to be growing among the exile revolutionaries who had broken with the Second International.

The "economism" present in this new position against self-determination in the midst of World War I, lies for Lenin in the "same old fundamental mistake of the same old Economism: inability to pose political questions." (CW 23:18). The Bukharin group had written in 1915, in their rival "Theses on the Right of Self-Determination":

The imperialist epoch is an epoch of the absorption of small states by the large state units and of a constant reshuffling of the political map of the world toward a more uniform type of state; in the process of this absorption many nations are incorporated into the state system of the victorious nations...It is therefore impossible to struggle against the enslavement of nations otherwise than by struggling against imperialism, ergo -- by struggling against imperialism, ergo, by struggling against finance capital, ergo against capitalism in general. Any deviation from that road, any advancement of "partial" tasks, of the "liberation of nations," within the realm of capitalist civilization, means the diverting of proletarian forces from the actual solution of the problem, and their fusion with the forces of the corresponding national bourgeois groups. The slogan of "self-determination of nations" is first of all utopian (it cannot be realized within the limits of capitalism) and harmful as a slogan which disseminates illusions. In this respect it does not differ at all from the slogans of the courts of arbitration, of disarmament, etc., which presuppose the possibility of so-called "peaceful capitalism."¹²

It is not that they did not regard colonial revolts as well-intentioned, but they saw them as "illusory" in an era where imperialism would "inevitably" triumph over such revolts, which were seen as vestiges of pre-capitalist formations on their way out. In this sense, capitalist imperialism was perhaps even "progressive" in that it cleared the way for a world socialist system including the colonies, drawn by capitalism out of their "feudal" torpor. It was not that they opposed these revolts completely, but stated definitely that with anti-colonial revolts, "it is not a question of socialism."¹³ There is no mention of a

new revolutionary subject even by 1916, but like Luxemburg's Junius Pamphlet, this group saw imperialism and the war "abolishing thereby the national-state seclusion of the working class and revolutionizing the consciousness of the proletariat in an unprecedented manner."¹⁴ In such a political-economic framework, nationalism could only be reactionary and the task of socialists was simply to promote internationalism.

Calling their failure to see the new revolutionary subject, national liberation, a product of their "depression" brought about by the war, Lenin instead saw imperialism generating "democratic aspirations" among the masses, including national liberation:

Capitalism in general, and imperialism in particular, turn democracy into an illusion -- though at the same time capitalism engenders democratic aspirations in the masses, creates democratic institutions, aggravates the antagonism between imperialism's denial of democracy and the mass striving for democracy...Imperialist war may be said to be a triple negation of democracy (a. every war replaces "rights" by violence; b. imperialism as such is the negation of democracy; c. imperialist war fully equates the republic with the monarchy), but the awakening and growth of socialist revolt against imperialism are indissolubly linked with the growth of democratic resistance and unrest.
(CW 23:24-25)

He continues this argument in another one of these late 1916 articles against "imperialist economism":

The political superstructure of this new economy, of

monopoly capitalism (imperialism is monopoly capitalism) is the change from democracy to political reaction. Democracy corresponds to free competition. Political reaction corresponds to monopoly...Being a "negation" of democracy in general, imperialism is also a "negation" of democracy in the national question (i.e. national self-determination): it seeks to violate democracy. The achievement of democracy is, in the same sense, and to the same degree, harder under imperialism (compared with pre-monopoly capitalism), as the achievement of a republic, a militia, popular election of officials, etc. There can be no talk of democracy being "economically" unachievable. (CW 23:43)

Lenin also brings in very sharply the concept of the aristocracy or labor again. This time it is in direct relationship to imperialist domination of the colonies:

...to a certain degree the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of their own bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations. (CW 23:56)

By now he seems to have moved beyond his May 1916 position of national revolution as one of the "bacilli" of proletarian revolution. Now he almost conceives of national liberation as an equally important revolutionary subject in the world movement:

While the proletariat of the advanced countries is overthrowing the bourgeoisie and repelling its attempts at counter-revolution, the undeveloped and oppressed nations do not just wait, do not cease to exist, do not disappear. If they take advantage even of such a bourgeois imperialist crisis as the war of 1915-1916 -- a minor crisis compared with social revolution -- to rise in revolt (the colonies, Ireland), there can be no doubt that they will all the more readily take advantage of the great crisis of civil war in the advanced countries to rise in revolt.

The social revolution can come only in the form of an epoch in which are combined civil war by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries and a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements, including the national liberation movement, in the undeveloped, backward and oppressed nations.

Why? Because capitalism develops unevenly, and objective reality gives us highly developed capitalist nations side by side with a number of economically slightly developed or totally undeveloped nations. (CW 23:60)

Here Lenin reaches the furthest in his concept of a new revolutionary subject in the national revolutions. He also brings in the following statistics on the colonized world:

The colonial and semi-colonial nations, we said, account for 1,000 million people, and P. Kievsky [Pyatakov, Bukharin's colleague] has not taken the trouble to refute that concrete statement. Of these 1,000 million, more than 700 million (China, India, Persia, Egypt) live in countries where there are workers. But even with regard to colonial countries where there are no workers, only slave-owners and slaves, etc., the demand for "self-determination," far from being absurd, is obligatory for every Marxist. (CW 23:64)

Finally, he opposes a type of socialism which would be the exact same thing for different cultures, implicitly accusing the Bukharin-Pyatakov-Bosch group of wanting to impose a uniform culture and politics of "monotonous grey" on all of humanity:

All nations will arrive at socialism -- this is inevitable, but all will do so in not exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat,

to the varying rate of socialist transformations in the different aspects of social life. There is nothing more primitive from the viewpoint of theory, or more ridiculous from that of practice, than to paint, "in the name of historical materialism," this aspect of the future in monotonous grey. (CW 23:69-70)

That is the culmination of Lenin's writings on national self-determination during the war, 1914-1917, and before the Russian revolution.

We have found that the question of the self-determination of nations was perhaps the chief source of political controversy between Lenin and other internationalist Marxists, including Bolsheviks, during 1915 and especially 1916. We have also argued that, for Lenin, national liberation was, in Hegelian language, the "dialectical opposite" of the new stage of imperialism reached by capitalism as it was transformed into monopoly. While Lenin had for many years had a position on the so-called national question within Russian and East European Marxism, it was hardly at the center of his Marxism.

In 1915 and 1916 that question of the self-determination of nations on a world scale in the era of imperialism did become central for Lenin. He wrote more pages on that than on any other question except Hegel during the years 1914-1917.

It is a curious picture. We see a public, political

Lenin involved in endless disputes over the question of national self-determination with his comrades, including great theorists and allies such as Bukharin and Luxemburg. The same Lenin who was the only important Marxist leader to study Hegel during this period also saw a new revolutionary subject, national revolution, as the "opposite" brought onto the historic stage by the new stage of imperialism and monopoly. The Irish revolution of 1916 was anticipated by his new concept, and it in turn deepened the concept for Lenin. He called his opponents Bukharin and Luxemburg "half-dialectical" for failing to see this "dialectical opposite" to imperialism in the way he did. Were not his writings on self-determination of nations related to his earlier studies of Hegelian dialectics? The evidence presented so far seems to argue that they were. To explore this question further let us examine briefly his earlier and later positions, before 1914 and again after 1917.

C. Lenin on the National Question Before and After

A good example of Lenin's writings on the national question before his 1914-1915 Hegel studies and the new situation created by World War I, is seen in the comprehensive sixty page article "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination." It was published on the eve of World War I in

the spring of 1914 in a Russian journal. (CW 20:395-454)

Almost the entire article is filled with a debate with Rosa Luxemburg on the relationship of the national question to Russia and Eastern Europe. Not only that. Several lengthy sections also take up Marx and Engels on Poland and Ireland, in a section entitled "The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg":

The "practical" Rosa Luxemburg evidently does not know what Karl Marx's attitude to the question of Irish independence was. It is worth while dwelling upon this, so as to show how a concrete demand for national independence was analyzed from a genuinely Marxist, not opportunist, standpoint. (CW 20:435)

He goes on to quote Marx's 1867 article on Ireland, as follows:

For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendance. I always expressed this point of view in the New York Tribune (an American paper to which Marx contributed for a long time). Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland...The English reaction in England had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland. (Marx's italics)

Marx's policy on the Irish question should now be quite clear to our readers.

Marx, the "utopian," was so "unpractical" that he stood for the separation of Ireland, which half a century later has not yet been achieved. (CW 20:439)

Let us explore the above text in relation to the post-1914 writings on this subject.

The new material discussed earlier in this chapter

under imperialism and the national liberation movements, 1914-1917, is entirely missing: (1) There is not discussion of imperialism as a world stage and national self-determination as its "dialectical opposite," but instead a move from Marx and Second International statements back to Russia, where Lenin "supports" national self-determination for all these people ruled over by the Great Russians. In other words, despite the above references to more general cases such as Ireland, Lenin is still here writing as a Russian Marxist only. That is why there is no discussion of modern imperialism, which was hardly present in backward Russia in the way Britain, Germany, France and the U.S.A. were involved in the new stage of monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

(2) There is no discussion of dialectics. Nor is the method of presentation or the form of the article "dialectical," but the whole tone is instead rather legalistic. Except for Poland and Ireland in the nineteenth century, no actual revolts are discussed, and there is no concept of national self-determination as a revolutionary subject. So the question of national self-determination remains more a "principle" than a road to seeing and grasping a new revolutionary subject in the era of imperialism, or even inside Russia itself.

(3) In keeping with the concentration on Russian questions only, there is no discussion of the colonized world outside Poland and Ireland. India, China, Persia, and so forth, which became so crucial to Lenin in 1916, are nowhere to be found in this essay. His conclusion states that "we must formulate political issues from the all-Russia, not the 'Cracow' point of view." (CW 20:451) The latter is a barb against Luxemburg and Jogiches, but also shows Lenin's limited field of concentration. Current Irish, African, Middle Eastern or East Asian revolts are not discussed.

(4) Finally and most important, there is no concept, as in the 1916 essay, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," of national revolts being possible in the forefront of the general proletarian revolution, as in Lenin's statement that they could be "one of the bacilli" (CW 22:357) helping to bring the proletarian revolution onto the scene. No, in this 1914 essay, the argument is confined to a legalistic argument about what Russian socialists "should" do to combat chauvinism which is viewed as one of the main props holding the tottering Russian empire together.

While it is true that this last position became sharpened fully for Lenin only after the 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland, it is equally true that he anticipated that

revolt in his earlier "Theses" on self-determination, published on the eve of that Irish revolt. To argue that all of this is "only political" and had nothing to do with dialectics is to miss the chronology by which Lenin arrived at his new positions: after the war and collapse of the Second International he appeared to reformulate his Marxism, first on dialectics (Hegel studies and other writings), then on economics (mainly the book Imperialism), and on the national question (politics) plus the state and revolution (politics).

If one overlooks this chronological process, one misses what was new in Lenin's method after 1914 -- and which was opposed as such by many of his colleagues, both on the self-determination of nations and, as we shall see, on the state and revolution and the need for a second Soviet revolution in Russia in 1917.¹⁵

D. Continuation of the Debates Over National Self-Determination After the Revolution

Lenin's discussion of national liberation did not stop after his return to Russia in 1917, but continued to his dying breath: it in fact was probably the principle cause of his break with Stalin on his deathbed as they argued over the national question in Georgia, in late 1922.

Far from an isolated occurrence, that fight, which Moshe Lewin has developed in detail in his book Lenin's Last Struggle, grew out of Lenin's main post-1914 writings. While it is true that he did not complete any major study of national self-determination after 1916, it is equally true that he constantly discussed and wrote about this question -- despite more immediately pressing problems such as civil war, famine, the construction of the Communist International, and the political-economic policy of the new Soviet state. There are literally dozens of letters, articles and speeches devoted entirely or in part to the question of national self-determination, discussing its ramifications either inside Russia or in the broad area of its place in the dialectics of world revolution. While quite a few of these statements occur at the beginning of the revolution, several important ones occur in Lenin's last writings as well.

In April 1917, as Lenin's "April Theses" were being debated, the All-Russia Conference of the Bolshevik Party also witnessed a sharp debate between Lenin and Pyatakov on the National question. Here is where Lenin complained: "We have not succeeded in publishing the article in which I called this view 'imperialist Economism'." (CW 24:299) Here is what Lenin said there about the question of

secession of nationalities from the Russian empire:

If Finland, Poland or Ukraine secede from Russia there is nothing bad in that. What is wrong with it? Anyone who says that is a chauvinist. One must be mad to continue Tsar Nicholas's policy. Didn't Norway secede from Sweden? Alexander I and Napoleon once bartered nations, the Tsars once traded Poland. Are we to continue this policy of the Tsars? This is repudiation of the tactics of internationalism, this is chauvinism at its worst. What is wrong with Finland seceding?...Any Russian socialist who does not recognize Finland's and Ukraine's right to freedom will degenerate into a chauvinist. And no sophisms or references to his "method" will ever help him to justify himself. (CW 24:300-301)

Lenin got his resolution on the national question passed, but that did not end the issue by any means. It is also important to note that this was in the midst of 1917, when the young Pyatakov and Bukharin did unlike many others, largely support Lenin's April Theses; still Lenin did not hesitate to disagree sharply with them on the national question.

Although Lenin referred to this question having been debated with Rosa Luxemburg "since 1903," his 1917 view was a definite development from and deepening of his earlier view, rather than a mere "reiteration" of earlier views. This is seen especially well in his June 1917 "Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Programme." The earlier Bolshevik program had given the following position on language rights:

8) The right of the population to receive instruction in their native tongue in schools to be established for the purpose at the expense of the state and local organs of self-government; the right of every citizen to use his native language at meetings; the native language to be used on a level with the official language in all local public and state institutions. (CW 24:472)

Lenin proposed deleting the above phrase "on a level with the official language," and instead putting at the end of the statement the phrase, "the obligatory official language to be abolished."

But the snarpest debate with the Bukarin-Pyatakov position on the national question occurred after the revolution, in March 1919, as a new draft of a Communist Party program was debated. Here almost the entirety of Lenin's 32 page speech on the party program is taken up with imperialism and the national question. As noted earlier, Lenin at this time critiqued Bukharin's concept of "integral imperialism" very sharply, but the real fireworks came on the national question:

"I want to recognize only the right of the working classes to self-determination," says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognize something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. That is ridiculous...When Comrade Bukharin said, "We can recognize this right in some cases," I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Bashkirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I heard that the Hottentots have laid claim to an

autonomous republic, but we have Bashkirs, Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single one of the people living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire. (CW 29:171-172)

This was not just a principle to Lenin, but a question of how to extend the revolution to Poland, and even to Germany:

Our programme must not speak of the self-determination of the working people, because that would be wrong. It must speak of what actually exists...Every nation must obtain the right to self-determination, and that will make the self-determination of the working people easier...there is not the slightest doubt that we must recognize the self-determination of the Polish nation now...And there the workers are being intimidated by statements to the effect that the Muscovites, the Great Russians, who have always oppressed the Poles, want to carry their Great Russian chauvinism into Poland in the guise of communism. Communism cannot be imposed by force. (CW 29:174-175)

But it was also a question of recognizing the right of nations to self-determination in order to win the civil war and preserve the Soviet regime inside Russia itself.

An even sharper exchange took place with Pyatakov:

Many over-enthusiastic comrades here went as far as to talk about subordinating all the national parties to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Comrade Pyatakov almost went as far as to say the same. (Pyatakov, from his place: "Do you think that would be a bad thing?") Since he now says that it would not be a bad thing, I must reply that if there were anything like this in the programme, there would be no need to criticize it: the authors of such a proposal would have dug their own graves. (CW 29:187)

But the sharpest statement was yet to come:

We concluded a treaty with the short-lived Red

Finnish Government and agreed to certain territorial concessions, to which I heard quite a number of utterly chauvinistic objections, such as: "There are excellent fisheries there, and you have surrendered them." These are the kind of objections which induce me to say, "Scratch some Communists and you will find Great-Russian chauvinists." (CW 29:194, emphasis added)

That statement at the end of the above extract would well serve as the epitaph of the other Bolsheviks. They, as we will see, never accepted fully Lenin's position on national self-determination, and lived to see Stalin use national chauvinism as one of his paths to power. But at this time what concerned Lenin was how to extend the revolution internationally. In that same year, 1919, after the defeat of the January Spartacist uprising in Germany and the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Lenin wrote: "if not through Berlin, then through Peking."¹⁶

By 1920, the debate shifted to the Communist International, where Lenin presented his famous "Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions." In response to them, Preobrazhensky had written on spreading socialism to the economically backward lands "...if it proved impossible to reach economic agreement with the leading national groups, the latter will be compelled to join a union of European republics." (CW 31:555) This was the type of argument Lenin was to polemicize with to his dying day.

The list of topics which begins Lenin's "theses" and on which he asks for "opinions, amendments, addenda and concrete remarks" include not only geographically separate nations such as Ireland or the Ukraine, but also "nations" such as "Negroes in America." (CW 31:144) And while Lenin spent most of his energy fighting the Bukharin-type position which said self-determination was unnecessary under socialism, and in the age of centralized monopoly and imperialism, still Lenin was never found falling into the uncritical type or virtually pan-Islamic slogans as advocated by Zinoviev at the 1920 Baku Congress of Peoples of the East. There Zinoviev had stated to that gathering from chiefly Islamic lands:

The time has now come when you can set about organizing a true peoples' holy war against the robbers and oppressors. The Communist International turns to the peoples of the East and says to them: "Brothers, we summon you to a holy war in the first place against British imperialism!"¹⁷

On the other hand, Zinoviev ignored the statements by the women delegates from Muslim countries critical of their position in those lands.¹⁸ In contrast to Zinoviev's view, Lenin's 1920 Theses on national liberation included "the struggle against Pan-Islamism." (CW 31:144) But Lenin's main emphasis was "that all Communist Parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the

dependent and underprivileged nations (for example Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies." (CW 31:148) He added that this must not only be in "word" but also in "deed."

But the most original formulations from Lenin came not so much in the theses as in the debate around them at the Communist International. First, Lenin argued that Soviets had relevance for even pre-capitalist lands without a proletariat:

The idea of Soviet organization is a simple one, and is applicable, not only to proletarian, but also to peasant feudal and semi-feudal relations...the Communist International's theses should point out that peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a weapon which can be employed, not only in capitalist countries but also in countries with pre-capitalist relations... (CW 31:243)

Even more original was the concept of "skipping" capitalism in underdeveloped lands:

The question was posed as follows: are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation...We replied in the negative...the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage. (CW 31:244)¹⁹

Such were some of the changes in Lenin's world view after 1914. But that was not all.

Right until his dying day, Lenin's private correspondence and speeches after the revolution are filled with references to the national question. Sometimes it was something so "simple" as asking if Bashkir Red Army men could fight in their own region (Lenin to Trotsky, June 6, 1919, CW 44:249), or complaining that a new map of the USSR did not show autonomous regions separately, or in enough detail (Lenin to Zinoviev, April 21, 1921, CW 45:133).

The following 1921 enchange over Turkestan is an example of the latter, as excerpted from Lenin's August 7, 1921 memo to Tomsy:

- 4) Moslem poor peasants' committees indispensable, and
- 5) the Moslem poor should be treated with care and prudence, with a number of concessions.

It is possible and necessary to combine and consolidate the line of wisdom and prudence, maintaining the interests of our "world policy" throughout the East. (CW 45:246)

But another letter a month later shows Lenin's deep suspicions of Great Russian chauvinism on the part of Tomsy, this one written to Joffe:

In addition, as a personal request, to enable me to sort things out in this matter, I ask you to devote special attention (in your report or in a special annex to your report) to the question of protection of native interests against "Russian" (Great-Russian or colonialist) exaggerations...Who are the natives themselves (Safarov's supporters)? Names: Record: Prestige? (Facts, facts...)

Will they be able to stand up for themselves: Is that sure? Even against such a subtle and firm and stubborn man as Tomsy?

I personally very much suspect "Tomsky's line" (perhaps it would be more correct to say Peter's line? or Pravdin's line? etc.) of engaging in Great Russian chauvinism, or, to put it more correctly, in deviating in that direction.

It is terribly important for all our Weltpolitik to win the confidence of the natives; to win it over again and again; to prove that we are not imperialists, that we shall not tolerate any deviation in that direction.

This is a world-wide question, and that is no exaggeration.

Then you must be especially strict.

It will have an effect on India and the East; it is no joke it calls for exceptional caution. (CW 45: 297-298, Lenin to Joffe)

Here the diplomat Joffe is assumed to be aware of the international implications "on India and the East" of the Soviet policy on the self-determination of nationalities within the USSR. This debate over Turkestan policy continued until at least the end of 1921. (See Lenin to Safarov, December 22 and 24, 1921, CW 45:417-418.)

Another "diplomatic" aspect was seen in Lenin's marginal notes on a letter from the Soviet diplomat Chicherin in March 1922 on international matters. Chicherin had written:

The novelty of our international scheme must be that the Negro and other colonial peoples participate on an equal footing with the European peoples in conferences and commissions and have the right to prevent interference in their internal affairs. Another novelty is the obligatory participation of working class organizations.

Lenin underlined this passage and wrote in the margin,

"true!". (CW 45:509)

E. The "Last Struggle with Stalin's Great-Russian Chauvinism

Most of this correspondence did not see the light of day until after Stalin's death, since Stalin replaced Bukharin and Pyatakov as Lenin's major opponent on the national question in the last years, 1922-1923, as Lenin lay dying. And by now it was no longer only a question of theory, but of deeds. In 1922 a dispute flared up between Stalin and Ordjonikidze on the one hand, and local Georgian Communist leaders seeking autonomy. As proof of the fact that Bukharin's type of disagreement with Lenin on national self-determination was that of a genuine internationalist, himself personally free of chauvinism, it was in fact Bukharin whom the Georgian dissidents trusted to bring their message to Lenin outside of official channels (CW 45:582). Lenin's initial reaction was noncommittal, if not hostile, but by late 1922 he became concerned that the national rights of the Georgians were being violated.²⁰ By December 1922, just after Lenin dictated his famous Will, he also dictated the following material on "The Question of Nationalities or Autonomization," which is worth quoting extensively:

It is said that a united apparatus was needed...Did

it not come from that same Russian apparatus which, as I pointed out in one of the preceding sections of my diary, we took over from Tsarism and slightly annointed with Soviet oil?...It is quite natural that in such circumstances the "freedom to secede from the union" by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist...A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation..."offended" nationals are not sensitive to anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest...political responsibility for all this truly Great-Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky... (CW 36:605-610)

In his conclusion, Lenin did not leave it at a Russian problem. He again brought in the question of extending the Russian revolution eastward:

...the harm that can result to our state from a lack of unification between the national apparatuses and the Russian apparatus is infinitely less than that which will be done not only to us, but to the whole International, and to the hundreds of millions of the peoples of Asia, which is destined to follow us on to the stage of history in the near future. It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities... (CW 36:610-611)

These statements on his deathbed show the continuity and deepening of Lenin's concern with the problem of national liberation, now not only a key to extending the revolution outside Russia, but in the ebb tide of the

revolutionary wave of 1917-1921, and in the midst of the bureaucratization of the new Soviet regime, now national chauvinism became a possible road by which the Russian revolution would itself in turn "transform into its opposite."

As noted earlier, Lenin at this very time (January 1923), also wrote his critique of Sukhanov's Notes on the Revolution. He called Sukhanov non-dialectical and too Europe-centered, while Lenin talked of coming revolutions in the East. (CW 33:480) He reiterated some of these themes in his last published article, "Better Fewer, But Better" (March 1923). There he wrote of "the next military conflict between the counter-revolutionary imperialist West and the revolutionary and nationalist East." (CW 33:500)

And the very last recorded word from Lenin's lips, just before a final stroke deprived him of all speech until his death in January 1924, were again on Georgia. Letters to Stalin and Trotsky on March 5, 1923 threatened a break with Stalin (CW 45:607-608), while the very last, most poignant letter is that of Lenin to the Georgians:

Dear Comrades:

I am following your case with all my heart. I am indignant over Ordjonikidze's rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech. (CW 45:608)

It had been a very long road indeed from the Hegel studies or 1914, to the 1916 writings on imperialism, to this last battle over Great Russian chauvinism and these last writings looking eastward rather than to Germany for the world revolution. It is not that Lenin considered the Western proletariat unimportant -- dozens of articles and speeches show that he did not. But we have tried in this chapter to stress what was new in Lenin's concept or dialectic of revolution and counter-revolution after 1914. That new stand he carried through to his dying breath.

None of his fellow Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, in whom Lenin confided his attitude toward Georgia and asked him to be his representative, embraced this problem as Lenin did. Trotsky chose to debate Stalin on general economic policy rather than (to him) the obviously less central question of national self-determination.

Not until the 1950's and the rise of a whole new Third World would the themes raised by Lenin on this subject be taken up again and developed further, by writers such as Frantz Fanon. It is that which makes these writings of Lenin especially relevant for our period. We are not arguing that Lenin was fully aware of the new Third World revolutions which were to emerge especially after World

War II. While he did not recognize Asian anti-colonial revolt as a totally independent factor from the Western proletariat, and he certainly devoted little attention to Africa, he anticipated nonetheless the new stage of the Third World far more than any other Marxist theorist of his time. While he may have thought Germany more important than Asia as long as that country seethed with revolution, and apparently thought little about Africa or Latin America, he did, in the midst of World War I and the Irish revolution conceive of a new world revolutionary subject: anti-colonial revolution. While he may not have seen it as clearly as we can today -- from South Africa to El Salvador to Vietnam -- he did see it beginning in Ireland and drew important conclusions from it, bringing it into a central position in his overall concept of the dialectics of revolution.

Soon after his Hegel studies, in sum, Lenin comes to treat national liberation as a decisive dialectical opposite of imperialism. In taking this stand, he stands alone among the Marxist theorists of his time.

Footnotes - Chapter Six

1. See Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 2, especially chapter 3, "The Theoretical Basis -- the Economic and Social Analysis of Imperialism," pp. 41-70.
2. See his introduction to Bukharin's Imperialism and the World Economy, which Lenin penned apparently in December 1915 (CW 22:103-107).
3. Tony Cliff, Lenin, Vol. 2, p. 60.
4. Ibid., p. 61.
5. Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 2, p. 53.
6. Dunayevskaya, State-Capitalism and Marxist-Humanism, or Philosophy and Revolution (Detroit: News & Letters, 1967), pp. 15-16.
7. In fact, the extreme expression of state-capitalism and transformation into opposite holds not just for Lenin's own period, but also for later ones. Thus in Stalin's period the major economist Eugene Varga was called to task by Stalin after the Second World War for arguing that private capitalism in the West had also learned economic planning. One economist, Maria Natanovna Smit, held out against this simplistic critique of Western capitalism which entailed emphasizing only its supposed planlessness, and cited Lenin on that very point. She wrote that Lenin's category of state monopoly held even truer for World War II, referring to the above-cited passage from early 1917. For a discussion of this in relationship to postwar Soviet economic theory and the general economic scene, see Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, pp. 244-247.
8. Saul K. Padover, ed., Karl Marx Library, Vol. 3: Karl Marx on the First International (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 141.
9. As Dunayevskaya sees the relationship of the Hegel studies to the new view of national liberation: "when

it was a question of analyzing imperialism -- not just in economic terms but related to its opposite, the national revolts, Lenin changed his former positions, reorganizing his own attitude to the relationship of idealism to materialism." (Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, p. 63).

10. Rosa Luxemburg, Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), pp. 324-325.
11. See Rosa Luxemburg, "The Mass Strike," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, pp. 153-219.
12. Olga Hess Gankin and H.H. Fisher, ed., The Bolsheviks and the World War (Stanford University Press, The Hoover Institute, 1940), p. 219.
13. Ibid., p. 221.
14. Ibid., p. 222.
15. Tony Cliff arguably falls into the error of not seeing the new in Lenin's 1916 position on the question of national self-determination when he writes that Lenin in 1916 merely "reiterated" his position on the national question as expressed in the spring of 1914 and discussed above. See Cliff, Lenin, Vol. 2, p. 54.

Of if one comes from a Luxemburgist and "Left Communist" background, plus one is seeking to ingratiate oneself with the new leaders in power such as Zinoviev and Stalin in 1924, then one writes a book on Lenin which discusses at length Lenin's concept of imperialism, world war and civil war during 1914-1916, but never delves into the "divisive" question of the "self-determination of nations," thus leaving the statement that Lenin's thought was "dialectical" hanging in mid-air. See Georg Lukacs, Lenin: A study of the Unity of His Thought, pp. 39-59.

16. Quoted by Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, p. 126.
17. Congress of the Peoples of the East: Baku, September 1920, Stenographic Report, trans. Brian Pearce

(London: New Park, 1977), p. 36.

18. Ibid., p. 148.
19. Raya Dunayevskaya has underscored the special importance of this new formulation as a change from Lenin's earlier positions: "It cannot be stressed too much that these precedent-shaking statements came from a man who had spent decades fighting the Narodniki (Populists) of his own country, people who had maintained that Russia could skip the capitalist stage of development...only something very fundamental and objective could have wrought such a complete change in Lenin's concepts. Three worldshaking events brought about this transformation. First, the 1917 Russian Revolution had established a workers' state that could come to the aid of a land even more backward technologically than Russia. Second, the colonial revolutions themselves illuminated the revolutionary role not only of the peasantry but also of national struggles in the imperialist epoch. Third, there was the new dimension of color in the Orient, in Africa, and within the United States. As a totality these events concretized the Subject." (Philosophy and Revolution, p. 138).
20. For a full account see Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle.

Chapter Seven

THE DIALECTICS OF STATE AND REVOLUTION

The book State and Revolution was unquestionably the one which Lenin considered his most important theoretical achievement. So determined was he to present that as ground for an actual coming revolution he saw on the horizon not only in Russia but also in Europe, that he asked Kamenev:

Entre nous: if they do me in, I ask you to publish my notebook: "Marxism and the State" (it got left behind in Stockholm)...I think it could be published after a week's work. I believe it to be important, because not only Plekhanov, but also Kautsky have bungled things... (CW 36:454)

That was July 1917, and Lenin was on the run during the anti-Bolshevik hysteria gripping Russia at that time. He saw to finishing that work himself now that he was alive and had the manuscript sent from Stockholm, and finally saw the pre-revolutionary situation maturing. Despite the fact that it was not published until after the November Revolution, Sukhanov tells us in his memoirs that it was passed around in Russia and not just to Bolsheviks. In 1918 it was the first of his theoretical works that he wanted translated into Western European languages. (CW 44:160) He wanted it to be read, like his 1914-1917 works, by other

revolutionaries in other countries.

State and Revolution is thus not just "Russian," and is not just for the "eve" of the revolution, but Lenin's ground for revolutionary strategy after power, that is to say, for the future. It is nothing short of the summing up of his concept of revolution on the eve of the revolution.

The timing of the work also shows Lenin's preoccupation with theoretical issues at this time. As Harding argues:

Perhaps the most puzzling and inexplicable period of Lenin's life, from the standpoint of those exponents of the "basic position" who would have us believe that he was pre-eminently an instinctive practical politician, are his activities during the turbulent months following the downfall of the autocracy in February 1917... Instead of devoting his time to political wheeler-dealing to achieve immediate tactical advantage to his party in Russia, he concentrated his energies on an almost academic, exhaustive study of Marx and Engels on the question of the state with a view to outlining the longterm strategic objectives of the global socialist revolution.¹

Unfortunately, Harding limits himself to theory and leaves out philosophy, specifically not only the Notebooks on Hegel, but also the 1915 "On Dialectics." So we end up with strategy rather than as we will see, a new vision of revolution. This vision involves not only a question of strategic differences with other Marxists, but of differences over the form of the new society, of the actual goals

of the revolution as well. But Harding's view is an advance over the commonly-held one of Lenin as party man **first** last and always.

Yet Harding himself had unfortunately not examined the Notebooks on Philosophy at all in his two volume massive study of Lenin's thought. Because of that, to this writer that is a serious omission. Because of it, Harding's correct emphasis on theory sounds hardly different from empiricism and thus leads him to center the whole question of theory on the study of Imperialism which Lenin had called "a popular outline." Not that it does not contain theory, but its philosophic categories, like "transformation into opposite," arguably to a degree drawn from Hegel, are proved statistically: hence the theory looks like, but we have argued, fundamentally is not like, that of Bukharin.

Had it been so, the sharp polemics, especially on the national question, would not have followed. Here the key to the difference lies in Lenin's Will: in 1923 Lenin made explicit his critique of Bukharin not understanding "the dialectic." On the other hand, to Harding, the only difference is that as "leader of a political party," and "not merely a theorist," Lenin was obliged "to be more concrete"² in his State and Revolution than Bukharin. But

Lenin's concreteness does not mean a focus on socio-economic data about the modern "state-monopoly capitalism."

Instead, State and Revolution focuses on mass initiatives and creativity as described by Marx in his writings on the Paris Commune.

Raya Dunayevskaya contends that a far different methodology is present in State and Revolution.

Basing himself on Marx's concept that "centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy and judicature -- are organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labor," Lenin now saw that the need of his time was to destroy bureaucratism. There is no other way to wither away The State...That now became the key to his theory and his practice. It was a new organization of thought in the true Hegelian-Marxian manner...Lenin put his theoretical emphasis on the concept of all, "to a man" to run their own lives, "No police, no army, no officialdom. Every worker, every peasant, every toiler, every one who is exploited, the whole population to a man." That was Lenin's vision and that is what he aimed at in practice. The masses, to Lenin, were not a "means" to reach an "end," socialism. Their self-activity is socialism.³

I agree with that reading. With the stress on vision above and beyond political economy in mind, let us now turn to that book, State and Revolution, subtitled "The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution."

A. State and Revolution: The Book

The bulk of the book is concerned with close textual analysis of two of Marx's works, the Civil War in France and the Critique of the Gotha Program, both written after the Paris Commune, plus supplementary material from Engels. At the center of all of this is the greatest revolution preceding Russia's of 1905: the Paris Commune of 1871. Throughout Lenin focuses on one problem: Marx's view that the old capitalist state must be "smashed" and not "taken over" by the socialist revolution. Lenin paraphrases Marx in 1852: "all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed." (CW 25:411) Nor is Lenin completely "forgetting" his earlier studies of Hegel, as he calls Marx's view of the product not only of "a rich knowledge of history," but also of "a profound philosophical conception of the world." (CW 25:412, emphasis added). But there are no explicit references to Hegelian dialectics in State and Revolution. However, we call attention to the fact that it was written after the 1914-1915 Hegel studies, and Lenin does at this point refer to Marx as a philosopher. Referring to Marx as a philosopher was unusual in Lenin's period.

Such a view as that Lenin had apparently arrived at by 1917, emphasized politics and philosophy as well as

economics. Hence the age of imperialism with its monopoly capitalism and the even greater centralized planning which went into what Lenin's preface termed "the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism," (CW 25:387) meant a strengthened state machine ruling over the workers. In State and Revolution he continues:

Imperialism -- the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism -- has clearly shown an extraordinary strengthening of the "state machine" and an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest, republican countries. (CW 25:415)

Lenin was not interested in taking over such a state machine. Far from this signifying the possibility of socialism taking over for its own use the centralized state, Lenin quoted and emphasized Marx's then little-known 1872 footnote to the Communist Manifesto, based on the Paris Commune:

In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the programme of the Communist Manifesto "has in some details become out of date," and they go on to say: "...One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (CW 25:419)

Nor was it a question of accepting the Second International-

al's conception of what socialism would look like, even after the "seizure of power."

Lenin was talking about a far more decentralized political system based on direct mass self-rule by peasants and workers, which was itself a transition to the actual "withering away of the state" completely:

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary "workmen's wages," these simple and "self-evident" democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism. (CW 25:426)

Lenin was of course talking about the abolition of parliamentarianism in favor of rule by the new institutions spontaneously created by the Russian peasants and workers in 1905 and 1917: the Soviets.

He keeps talking of "smashing" the state bureaucracy, the state machine, totally:

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy -- this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat. (CW 25:430)

And he seems to include himself as well as Kautsky and the other leaders in his critique of the Second International for ignoring Marx's concept of "smashing" the state. They

had labeled the latter "anarchism":

"Breaking state power," which was a "parasitic excrescence"; its "amputation," Its "smashing"; "state power, now become superfluous" -- these are the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analysing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to engage in excavation, as it were, in order to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the mass of the people. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolutions arrived. (CW 25:436)

It seems that the "next great proletarian revolutions" referred to are 1905 and 1917 in Russia, and that therefore Russian Marxist leaders, including Lenin, are part of his critique.⁴

Lenin documents in great detail the failure of Bebel, Kautsky and Liebknecht to incorporate specific and major critiques from the Left of the German Social Democracy, made several times by Marx and by Engels, such as Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program (1875) or Engels' on the Erfurt Program (1891). The unchanged Erfurt Program, Lenin notes, again probably including his own Russian Marxism, "became the model for the whole Second International," and that "Engels thereby criticized the opportunism of the whole Second International." (CW 35:448) So we seem to have Lenin criticizing not only his own earlier view that

economically backward Russia could only have a bourgeois revolution, and not a socialist one. Also and more importantly, we see him criticize the heart of West European revolutionary as well as reformist Marxism: failing to talk about the state, and specifically, Marx on the Paris Commune.

This was a very important theoretical issue. It was a question of putting new forms of organization for human liberation created in the midst of revolution -- whether in the Paris Commune or the Russian Soviets of 1905 and 1917 -- at the center of the Marxist dialectic. In The Civil War in France, this had been central for Marx, rather than the dry deterministic economic analyses which had predominated in the Second International, including its revolutionary wing. Even Lenin, who had always stressed the importance of the "political," and who had been in the Left wing of the Second International, now began to talk about something more than "tactics" for social democracy. He went far beyond, for example, his 1905 pamphlet "Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution" where he criticized what he saw as the timid tactics of the Mensheviks.

Instead of tactics, he began to debate goals, and not goals in the ordinary empiricist meaning of that word, but

goals as nothing short of a vision of what a classless society might look like, based on experiences of actual mass revolutions. Since 1914, by a process of Hegel studies, then discussion of imperialism and the national question, and now the state and revolution, he had gradually arrived at new views of fundamental questions. By 1917 he came to believe that not only did he not share the tactics of those he termed "opportunists," but he did not share their goals either. Rather than reform versus revolution, or which groups, like the peasantry, were in fact revolutionary, the debate now centered, for Lenin at least, on a new concept of mass self-activity, on a new vision of what both revolution and a new society looked like. The concept would "smash" the old Tsarist (or West European for that matter) state machine and replace it with direct rule by the masses of proletariat, peasantry, and poor, plus revolutionary intellectuals.

It was apparently this new vision not so much of tactics but of the content of the revolution which distinguished Lenin's theoretical work in this period. It also happened to have been a tremendously attractive vision of the future to thousands of Russians, if not millions who heard it indirectly, in the 1917 revolution. The book State and Revolution was of course its most rigorous theoretical

statement. Lenin makes the following claim about the new society he envisions:

Naturally the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine," without a special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed people (such as Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).
CW 25:468)

He goes on to criticize the "revolutionary" mainstream of social democratic literature during the Second International, focusing on Plekhanov, Kautsky, and Bebel. He does so on the question of how they answered anarchism. These leaders of the Second International, Lenin argues, believed in taking over rather than in smashing the state machine.

Instead, Lenin proposes the following type of revolutionary government, in transition to a non-state:

In socialist society, the "sort of parliament" consisting of workers' deputies will, of course, "establish the working regulations and supervise the management" (Kautsky) of the "apparatus," but this apparatus will not be "bureaucratic." The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become "bureaucrats" for a time, and

that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a "bureaucrat." (CW 25:486)

He also admits that where in "opposing Kautsky, Pannekoek came out as one of the 'Left Radical' trend which included Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek and others," that the latter group "represented Marxism" in their debates with Kautsky and Bebel around 1910-1912. (CW 25:488-489) This is again an implicit self-critique of himself and Bolshevism, who had not taken sides in this major dispute, perhaps the major dispute in world Marxism just prior to 1914. Lenin had instead kept relations with Kautsky at a time when Luxemburg had already broken with him.

On the other hand, these other Left socialists had limited themselves to pointing out Kautsky's opportunism and to calling for social revolution rather than reform. Or, in the case of Luxemburg, she wrote in 1913 an economic study of the Accumulation of Capital to give her analysis of the economic roots of imperialism and hence of "opportunism." Lenin went in a different direction. While certainly writing on those questions, as in his book Imperialism, he first plunged into a study of Hegel, and in 1915-1916 found a new subject in the national liberation movements. More than that, now he began to expound a vision in 1917 of a Paris Commune-type state unimagined even by

the "left radical" wing of the Second International:

Under socialism much of "primitive" democracy will inevitably be revived, since, for the first time in the history of civilized society, the mass of the population will rise to taking an independent part, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of the state. Under socialism all will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one governing.

Let us learn revolutionary boldness from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the outline of really urgent and immediately possible measures, and then, following this road, we shall achieve the complete destruction of bureaucracy. The possibility of this destruction is guaranteed by the fact that socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the people to a new life, will create such conditions for the majority of the population as will enable everybody, without exception, to perform "state functions," and this will lead to the complete withering away of every form of state in general. (CW 25:494)

This view was not only stated in the book, State and Revolution. It was also elaborated beforehand in the one hundred pages of material comprising Lenin's notebooks Marxism on the State.⁵ It is to these notebooks which we now turn.

B. Lenin's Notes for State and Revolution

These notebooks on Marxism on the State are far briefer than those on imperialism and the national question and those on Hegel which we have discussed earlier. They are much closer to the final text of State and Revolution. However, there are some formulations which were not included in the published State and Revolution, and which are

important for our discussion.

One of the most important of these materials occurs on the very first page. There Lenin cites Marx and Engels' 1872 and 1882 Prefaces to the Communist Manifesto, written for the German and Russian editions. While the 1872 Preface on the Paris Commune and the need to totally uproot the state is included as the central theme of State and Revolution, their discussion of the Russian peasant commune in 1882 is not. Perhaps Lenin intended to do so in the uncompleted sections of State and Revolution on the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, which are not completed in the notebooks either. In any case, he does include a brief but important reference here.

Marx and Engels had written the following on Russia in their less-known 1882 Preface to the Communist Manifesto:

The first Russian edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, translated by Bakunin, was published early in the sixties by the printing office of the Kolokol. Then the West could see in it (the Russian edition of the manifesto) only a literary curiosity. Such a view would be impossible today.

...It was the time when Russia constituted the last great reserve of all European reaction, when the United States absorbed the surplus proletarian forces of Europe through immigration...

And now Russia? During the Revolution of 1848-1849 not only the European princes, but the European bourgeois as well, found their only salvation from the proletariat, just beginning to awaken, in Russian intervention. The Tsar was proclaimed the chief of

European reaction. Today he is a prisoner of war of the revolution, in Gatchina [the Tzar's palace], and Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe.

The Communist Manifesto had as its object the proclamation of the inevitably impending dissolution of modern bourgeois property. But in Russia we find, face to face with the rapidly developing capitalist swindle and bourgeois landed property, just beginning to develop, more than half the land owned in common by the peasants. Now the question is: can the Russian obschina [peasant village commune], though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership? Or on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?

The only answer to that possible today is this: If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development.⁶

Here is what Lenin writes in his notebooks on Marxism on the State, when he comes across not this full preface, which was not included in Russian or German editions at that time, but an extract of it quoted by Engels in a German 1890

Preface:

...1890 with an excerpt from the preface to the Russian translation, on the Russian obschina, London, ed. I. 1882, at present "Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe, p. 20..."⁷

Next to the passage stating "Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe," Lenin writes in the margin, "Exactly!".

This type of conclusion may sound obvious to today's

Marx scholars who are better aware of Marx's last writings on the Russian peasant commune, including the now famous drafts of a letter and actual letter sent to Vera Zasulich in 1881. Such was not the case in Lenin's time, when Plekhanov, Zasulich and others had obscured these writings by Marx in favor of a "Marxism" which said that industrialization must precede socialism. In fact, Lenin himself had also subscribed generally to such a view. And while Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution had talked of passing directly to socialism, it was hardly argued on the basis of the Russian peasantry, which Trotsky regarded as politically backward.⁸

Mechanistic Marxists, beginning with Kautsky in 1918⁹ had reproached Lenin and the Bolsheviks for daring to speak about and try to establish socialism in a peasant-dominated and largely agricultural country, rather than merely a democratic revolution which would prepare the way for capitalism and then socialism. On the other hand, while the 1882 preface on the Russian peasant commune appears possibly to have influenced the formulation of State and Revolution, Lenin did not make these writings by Marx and Engels central to his debates with Kautsky and the Mensheviks, although as we have seen, he did many times discuss the concrete possibilities of peasant Soviets even in countries

with less capitalist industrialization than Russia. In part, no doubt, it was because he did not know the full extent of Marx's writings on the subject, and had gotten even the 1892 Russian preface not directly, but from Engels' quoting it in 1890. It also may have involved, as with his reluctance to divulge publicly the extent of his Hegel studies, a certain ambivalence toward such a new theoretical point of departure as Marx's last writings on Russia, which would have necessitated a reformulation of some of his own positions in the debates with the Narodniki in the 1890's.

There are other points which seem to bear on the relationship of the Russian peasantry to revolution which were not included in State and Revolution. He quotes and paraphrases Marx's The Civil War in France:

It [the Paris Commune] was right in telling the peasants that its victory was their only salvation;... 3 months of free communication of "Communal Paris" with the provinces would have led to a "general rising of the peasants."¹⁰

But that is not all.

There are also discussions of changes in the European labor movement after 1871, which state more clearly than ever before Lenin's concept of the "transformation into opposite" both of capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism and imperialism, and of the labor and socialist movements

into a "bureaucracy." He writes:

Changes after 1871? They are all such, or their general nature or their sum is such, that bureaucracy has everywhere soared (both in parliamentarianism, within it, -- in local self-government, in the joint-stock companies, in the trust and so on). That is the first thing. And second: the workers' "socialist" parties have, by 3/4, "grown into" a similar bureaucracy. The split between the social patriots and the internationalists, between the reformists and the revolutionaries has, consequently, a still more profound significance: the reformists and the social-patriots "perfect" the bureaucratic state machine...while the revolutionaries must "smash" it, this "bureaucratic-military state machine," smash it, replacing it by the "Commune," a new "semi-state."¹¹

All of this material was not developed for inclusion in the published State and Revolution. It also shows more fully the connection between Lenin's study of imperialism and State and Revolution.

Finally, Lenin in these notes clarifies some of his differences with Bukharin on Marxism and the state. The Moscow edition of Lenin's Marxism on the State includes as an appendix the text of, and Lenin's marginal notes on, Bukharin's important article "The Imperialist Robber State State."¹² Bukharin's brilliant article discusses what he terms "the modern leviathan," the imperialist state:

In this way there is formed a single all-embracing organization, a modern imperialist robber state as an all-powerful organization of the ruling bourgeoisie, with innumerable functions and gigantic power, both spiritual (various methods of fooling people) religion, the press, the school, etc.) and material

(the police, army). This power penetrates into all pores of finance-capitalist society and puts its peculiar specific stamp upon our time. And we see here the dialectics of history: the state, which was at first the only organization of the ruling class, is turned into an organization that exists side by side with others in order to turn back into a single organization which has absorbed into itself all others. Such is the modern monster, the modern leviathan of statehood.¹³

But where Bukharin sees a process where, just as early capitalism brought about labor revolts "so will imperialism destroy the slave mentality of the workers,"¹⁴ Lenin's concept of dialectic is quite different.

Lenin's concept, while no doubt benefiting immensely from a critical reading of the brilliant young Bolshevik, Bukharin, includes, as we have seen, new forms of resistance in the national liberation movements to the new imperialist state, as well as discussion of the Paris Commune on "smashing" that state inside the imperialist countries. Bukharin's analysis, on the other hand, concentrates almost exclusively on the structure of the new imperialist "leviathan state." He writes that:

For Social-Democracy which is, or at least should be, the educator of the masses, it is now more than ever necessary to emphasize its hostility in principle to the state.

This is at a time when: "The present war has shown how deeply the roots of state organization have sunk into the minds of the workers."¹⁵

Lenin's marginal notes include many question marks and phrases like "wrong, incomplete." Where Bukharin tends to see undifferentiated wholes -- the new state, the proletariat crushed, imperialism dominant -- Lenin's dialectic focuses on the contradictions in each sphere. Thus the new state for Lenin engenders a new type of revolt: the proletariat becomes differentiated into a labor bureaucracy and an aristocracy of labor on the one hand, and the rank and file workers on the other; and modern imperialism calls forth new forms of national revolution, from Ireland to India. Where Bukharin becomes most specific on the new structures of power and domination, Lenin becomes most specific on the new forms of revolt and new forms of organization which revolutionary upheavals had developed in 1871 and 1905 and were developing in 1917.

The new vision was developed further. It was sketched out in several important pamphlets, as well as innumerable speeches and articles from the day Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917. We now turn to a discussion of some of the most important of these. They are in a sense the unfinished part of State and Revolution, whose manuscript breaks off just as Lenin is about to discuss 1905 and 1917. Lenin's concluding postscript of November 30, 1917 reads: "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the

"experience of the revolution" than to write about it."

(CW 25:497)

C. Lenin's New Vision of Revolution: From Speeches and Pamphlets, 1917-1918

While the theoretical ground for these writings in terms of the relationship to Marx and to Engels, and their critique of established Marxism, was contained in State and Revolution, the vision of a totally new society with totally new human relations touched on there was greatly expanded upon in the major speeches and pamphlets of 1917-1918. Taken together with State and Revolution, they give us many indications of what Lenin would no doubt have written, had he been able to "finish" State and Revolution with chapters on the 1905 and the March 1917 revolutions.

It is a curious irony of history that in January 1917, on the eve of the March revolution, Lenin presents to us his detailed and current views on his concept of revolution in his "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution" given to the Swiss social-democratic youth group. It is interesting there to observe that as late as January 1917, the Soviets of 1905, which were to spring up again larger and stronger in 1917, and to be at the center of Lenin's concept of revolution, get a mere half-page brief mention in a 22 page speech. (CW 23:248) This is a discontinuity rather

than a continuity with State and Revolution, which seems to indicate that its main themes were developed only after the outbreak of revolution in Russia in March 1917.

On the other hand, he did in the January lecture connect the 1905 revolution in Russia very explicitly with Asian revolutions -- in Turkey, Persia and China -- as well as with Western European unrest. This is a continuity with his new work around imperialism and national liberation discussed in an earlier chapter. But it is indeed remarkable to note that this moving and detailed lecture, with its graphic and heroic portraits of the Russian strikes and insurrections of 1905, talks hardly at all about the new forms of organization thrown up spontaneously by the revolution: the worker and peasant Soviets.

Lenin's next major statement on revolution was the "Letters from Afar," totalling forty-five pages, written between the March revolution and his departure for Russia. By the third letter, Lenin had begun forcefully to express the type of ideas found in State and Revolution. That this indicated a change in Lenin's thinking is shown by the Petrograd Bolsheviks not seeing fit to publish the letter in Pravda. They in fact were taking an opposite position from Lenin's, seeking a position in the Provisional Government. The crucial passage from the third letter

reads:

Organization is the slogan of the moment. But to confine oneself to that is to say nothing, for, on the one hand, organization is always needed; hence, mere reference to the necessity of "organizing the masses" explains absolutely nothing. On the other hand, he who confines himself solely to this becomes an abettor of the liberals, for the very thing the liberals want in order to strengthen their rule is that the workers should not go beyond their ordinary "legal"...organizations, i.e., that they should only join their party, their trade union, their co-operative society, etc.

Guided by their class instinct, the workers have realized that in revolutionary times they need not only ordinary, but an entirely different organization. They have rightly taken the path indicated by the experience of our 1905 Revolution and of the 1871 Paris Commune; they have set up a Soviet of Workers' Deputies: they have begun to develop, expand and strengthen it by drawing in solders' deputies from rural wage-workers and then (in one form or another) from the entire peasant poor...

It might be asked: What should be the function of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies? They "must be regarded as organs of insurrection, of revolutionary rule," we wrote in No. 47 of the Geneva Sotsial-Demokrat, of October 13, 1915...

The proletariat...must "smash!" to use Marx's expression, this "ready-made" state machine and substitute a new one for it by merging the police force, the army and the bureaucracy with the entire armed people...the proletariat must organize and arm all the poor, exploited sections of the population in order that they themselves should take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that they themselves should constitute these organs of state power. (CW 23:323-326)

This is the earliest public, although unpublished, statement by Lenin on his new vision of socialism, at the very time he was writing State and Revolution. Despite the reference to the 1915 article calling Soviets "organs of

insurrection, of revolutionary rule," there is a big difference between a 1915 passing reference and Lenin's 1917 vision of the Soviets as the key to the Russian revolution. His fellow Bolsheviks in Moscow understood the "newness" of this letter very well. This is why they did not choose to publish it.

It is even possible that Lenin did not begin his study of Marx on the Paris Commune for State and Revolution until the March revolution and the re-emergence of the Soviets. Krupskaya does not tell us when Lenin began once again to study Marx on the Commune, but she does offer some valuable observations:

On March 18, the anniversary of the Paris Commune, Ilyich went to Chaux-de-Fonds, a large Swiss labour center. He went there gladly...The thought of the Paris Commune, of utilizing its experience in the newly launched Russian revolutionary movement, and of avoiding its errors, occupied Ilyich's mind a good deal those days, and so his lecture went off very well and he was pleased with it himself. His address impressed our comrades tremendously, but the Swiss thought it impracticable...¹⁶

There were in fact only ten days between the outbreak of revolution and this lecture on the Paris Commune by Lenin.

Many, like Lukacs, stress Lenin's "practical" side as in the breaking off of the manuscript of State and Revolution on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution as proof that "in the reciprocal relation of theory and practice

Lenin always opted for the priority of practice."¹⁷
Conversely Krupskaya seems to be showing us something quite different: a man who in 1914 studied Hegel during the greatest political crisis of his life, and who now, on the eve of his greatest political activity, plunges into a study not just of current events, or even of the last Russian revolution, 1905; but rather a study of Marx on the last revolution he witnessed and analyzed half a century earlier, the Paris Commune of 1871.

Thus the uniqueness of Lenin seems to be not his preference for the practical side of things, but rather the surprising extent to which this "man of action" -- unlike the other leaders of 1917 regardless of political line -- managed to continue his serious theoretical work in the midst of the revolution. For it seems clear that State and Revolution was hardly conceived, let alone written, by the time of that January 1917 lecture on 1905 -- and yet it was completed by the summer of 1917. What other Russian political leader produced a theoretical work, not to speak of such a serious one, in those turbulent days, March through August 1917? None did.

There lies the theoretical uniqueness of Lenin, and there lies a possible link between his 1914-1915 Hegel studies and his 1917 studies on Marx in the 1870's: this

particular Marxist seems to opt for a deep investigation of theory at every crucial turning point, and not theory as merely politics and economics, but also as grounded in philosophy, as seen in the Hegel studies.

While Harding unfortunately does not apparently see the whole, especially not Hegelian dialectics, he does contrast Lenin's theoretical seriousness with that of his opponents:

...Lenin had elaborated a far more consistent theoretical justification for his new political strategies than the Mensheviks had for their old ones...he had elaborated a new Marxist analysis which justified an advance towards socialism. It was not Lenin who ignored the Menshevik and S.R. argument about the intractable reality of Russia's level of economic development; on the contrary, he constantly tried to convince them of the new realities of international finance capital. It was, rather, the Mensheviks who signally failed to take issue, at the theoretical level, with Lenin's whole analysis of imperialism and the imperialist war. None of the prominent theorists of Menshevism even attempted to keep pace with, or offer substantial criticism of, the theoretical premisses which Bukharin and Lenin elaborated in the period 1914 to 1917.¹⁸

Had he been able to add the little phrase, "Hegelian dialectics" to "strategy" and "economics," Harding would also have been able to separate that arguably different pair of theorists, Lenin and Bukharin, in addition to seeing the difference he argued existed between Lenin and the Mensheviks and S.R.'s.

For Lenin, the next step after the "Letters from Afar" was of course the famous "April Theses." There he extended his theoretical work around Marx on the Paris Commune, as exemplified by point five of the theses:

5) Not a parliamentary republic -- to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step -- but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.

Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy.

The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker. (CW 24:23)

As Lenin above articulated a program very similar to that Marx had seen in the Paris Commune of 1871, it meant splits and controversies not only with Mensheviks, but also with "old Bolshevism."

Here is how Lenin himself underlined the break with his own Bolshevik past:

...we hear a clamour or protest from people who readily call themselves "old Bolsheviks." Didn't we always maintain, they say, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is completed only by the "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry?"

My answer is: The Bolshevik slogans and ideas on the whole have been confirmed by history; but concretely things have worked out differently; they are more original, more peculiar, more variegated than anyone could have expected.

The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has already become a reality...

A new and different task now faces us: to effect

a split within this dictatorship between the proletarian elements (the anti-defencist, internationalist, "Communist" elements, who stand for a transition to the commune) and the small-proprietor or petty-bourgeois elements...(who are opposed to moving towards the commune and are in favour of "supporting" the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois government). (CW 24:44-45)

In the same article Kamenev was criticized for using an "old-Bolshevik formula" (CW 24:50). As is well-known, Lenin had to fight every inch of the way to get his new concepts adopted by his own Bolsheviks. Even once they were accepted "in general," all kinds of disagreements continued to break out in the Fall of 1917 over whether the second insurrection was premature.

On the eve of the November Revolution, he wrote bitterly, having once again seen his call for immediate plans for an insurrection pigeon-holed:

I am compelled to tender my resignation from the Central Committee, which I hereby do, reserving for myself freedom to campaign among the rank and file of the Party and at the Party Congress (CW 26:84)

But of greater interest to us is the theoretical elaboration of Lenin's new concepts which had been developed first in the as yet unpublished State and Revolution.

Some of this came in the fifty page pamphlet, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?," published on November 1, 1917. First he sketched out some central ideas from State and Revolution:

But Marx, basing himself on the experience of the Paris Commune, taught that the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machine and substitute a new one for it. (I deal with this in greater detail in a pamphlet which is now finished and will soon appear under the title The State and Revolution. A Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution). This new type of state machinery was created by the Paris Commune, and the Russian Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies are a "state apparatus" of the same type...

The proletariat cannot "lay hold of" the "state apparatus" and "set it in motion." But it can smash everything that is oppressive, routine, incorrigibly bourgeois in the old state apparatus and substitute its own, new apparatus. The Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies are exactly that apparatus. (CW 26:102)

But the November 1 pamphlet was not limited to repeating theoretical schema from State and Revolution.

It also involved some very detailed description of the shape of a new society, self-administered by the workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals, as in the following well-known description of how to solve the housing crisis:

The proletarian state has to forcibly move a very poor family into a rich man's flat. Let us suppose that our squad of workers' militia is fifteen strong; two sailors, two soldiers, two class-conscious workers (of who, let us suppose, only one is a member of our Party, or a sympathizer), one intellectual, and eight from the poor working people, of whom at least five must be women, domestic servants, unskilled labourers, and so forth. The squad arrives at the rich man's flat, inspects it and finds that it consists of five rooms occupied by two men and two women -- "You must squeeze up a bit into two rooms this winter, citizens, and prepare two rooms for two

families now living in cellars. Until the time, with the aid of engineers (you are an engineer, aren't you?), we have built good dwellings for everybody, you will have to squeeze up a little. Your telephone will serve ten families. This will save a hundred hours of work wasted on shipping, and so forth. Now in your family there are two unemployed persons who can perform light work: a citizeness fifty-five years of age and a citizen fourteen years of age. They will be on duty for three hours a day supervising the proper distribution of provisions for ten families and keeping the necessary account of this. The student-citizen in our squad will now write out this state order in two copies and you will be kind enough to give us a signed declaration that you will faithfully carry it out."

...we demand an immediate break with the prejudiced view that only the rich, or officials chosen from rich families, are capable of administering the state, of performing the ordinary, everyday work of administration. (CW 26:112-113)

He argued that mass creativity could compensate for lack of specific training in administration of the state and the economy, and that the new type of Soviet revolution would tap that creativity in a very deep way.

Again and again Lenin hammers away at this point in different ways:

Only then shall we see what untapped forces of resistance to the capitalists are latent among the people; only then will what Engels called "latent socialism" manifest itself. Only then, for every ten thousand overt and concealed enemies of working-class rule, manifesting themselves actively or by passive resistance, there will arise a million new fighters who had been politically dormant, writhing in the torments of poverty and despair, having ceased to believe that they were human, that they had the right to live, that they too could be served by the entire might of the modern centralized state,

that contingents of the proletarian militia could, with the fullest confidence, also call upon them to take a direct, immediate, daily part in state administration. (CW 26:126)

Lenin concluded on this note, drawn obviously from the young Marx: "Ideas become a power when they grip the people." (CW 26:130) That was not rhetoric, but an actual description of the way in which Lenin's vision of direct rule by the masses linked up with the ongoing spontaneous upheavals of Russian workers and peasants in 1917-1918.

This type of statement and concept hardly stopped with the November Revolution. A few days after the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin stated in a speech:

Creative activity at the grass roots is the basic factor of the new public life. Let the workers set up workers' control at their factories. Let them supply the villages with manufactures in exchange for grain. Account must be taken of every single article, every pound of grain, because what socialism implies above all is keeping account of everything. Socialism cannot be decreed from above. Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach; living, creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves. (CW 26:288-289)

This concept continued to guide Lenin's political thought well into 1918 and 1919.

One of the most striking portraits of the new society he envisioned in 1917-1918 is contained in the December 1917 article "How to Organize Competition?." It was certainly a different thing he had in mind than what is usually

conceived by the word competition. He writes:

Competition must be arranged between practical organizers from among the workers and peasants. Every attempt to establish stereotyped forms and to impose uniformity from above, as intellectuals are so inclined to do, must be combated. Stereotyped forms and uniformity imposed from above have nothing in common with democratic and socialist centralism ...The Paris Commune gave a great example of how to combine initiative, independence, freedom of action and vigour from below with voluntary centralism free from stereotyped forms. Our Soviets are following the same road. (CW 26:413)

He called for competition also between peasants and workers on one hand, and revolutionary intellectuals on the other:

...the workers and peasants must be brought to see clearly the difference between the necessary advice of an educated man and the necessary control by the "common" worker and peasant of the slovenliness that is so usual among the "educated"...The workers and peasants are still "timid"; they must get rid of this timidity, and they certainly will get rid of it. We cannot dispense with the advice, the instruction of educated people, of intellectuals and specialists...Advice and instruction, however, is one thing, and the organisation of practical accounting and control is another. (CW 26:412)

We have certainly come a long way indeed from the Lenin of the 1902 work What is to be Done?. Paraphrasing and extending Kautsky, he then argued that the working class on its own could only reach the level of "trade union consciousness." He continued to develop these new concepts in his first major article written after the Bolshevik Revolution, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government."

C. Lenin's Ambivalence and Critique of Bureaucracy, 1919-23

But from early 1918 on, other problems occupied Lenin: the famine, the Civil War, and above all the tortuous arguments over the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Peace. The hoped-for revolution in Germany seemed to come in the Winter of 1918-1919, but it was snuffed out with the crushing of the January 1919 Spartacist rising and the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Throughout this period, 1918-1921, Lenin rushed from one crisis to another, with invasion, civil war and famine being the main ones that faced the new state month after month. Each time one set of invaders or internal enemies had been defeated, another sprung up almost immediately. Finally, late in 1920, Russia saw "peace." But it was a peace following over three years of world war and still another three years of even more destructive civil war. The entire country lay in ruins and starvation. In the Spring of 1921 the Kronstadt sailors rose up against the regime, demanding greater democracy and food rations. So snaky was the new state that key Bolshevik leaders left the Party Congress to lead the suppression of that revolt.

During the long years of civil war, much of the 1917-1918 discussion of direct rule by the masses had been dropped by Lenin because of the centralized authority and

use of "bourgeois specialists" which he deemed necessary to deal with war, famine, and counter-revolution. By April 1920, Lenin saw it this way: "Dictatorial powers and one-man management are not contradictory to socialist democracy." (CW 30:503) Here is how he sketched the objective conditions faced by the workers in the last year of civil war:

We see today that the working class has suffered most from hunger. In 1918 and 1919 the country's industrial workers received only seven poods of bread each, whereas the peasants of the grain-producing gubernias each had seventeen poods...The proletariat has been hungry for two years but this hunger has shown that the worker is capable of sacrificing not only his craft interests, but even his life. The proletariat was able to stand famine for two years because it had the moral support of all the labouring folk, and it bore these sacrifices for the sake of the victory of the workers' and peasants' government. (CW 30:513)

Despite those years of "war communism" and despite all of the language of "one-man management" during that period, Lenin was the first among the major Bolshevik leaders to suggest an abrupt move away from this policy once the civil war had ended, in 1921. As he admitted at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921: "We do have a bureaucratic ulcer; it has been diagnosed and must be treated in earnest." (CW 32:190) While he did not agree with the proposals put forth by the Workers' Opposition to turn the state over to the trade unions, neither did

he agree with Trotsky's and Bukharin's ultra-centralist and authoritarian counter-proposals, which involved continuing war-time restraints as a path toward socialism. This is what Lenin meant when he accused Trotsky and Bukharin of being non-dialectical on the question of the trade unions. Later in his Will he criticized Trotsky for an "administrative mentality" despite his organizational talents, and also wrote that Bukharin, despite his theoretical gifts, could hardly be considered fully Marxist, since he did not understand "the dialectic."

Here is Lenin's 1921 call for "extending democracy," issued in response to Trotsky and Bukharin:

What does follow is that we shall be extending democracy in the workers' organizations, without turning it into a fetish; that we shall redouble our attention to the struggle against bureaucratic practices; and that we shall take special care to rectify any unwarranted and harmful excesses of bureaucracy, no matter who points them out. (CW 32: 103)

He began also to return in limited form to some of the themes of 1917-1918, as in his call for drawing "non-Party people from the masses" into "economic work." (CW 32:362) But this was hardly a full return to the "Promethean" vision of 1917-1918 of drawing the entire population into the direct administration of the economy.

And while the Shlyapnikov-Kollontai position, set

forth as the Workers Opposition, has tended to be viewed by historians as more democratic than Lenin's position, in fact both Shlyapnikov-Kollontai and Trotsky-Bukharin, as far apart as their positions were on the trade union question, were arguably united on one point: underestimation of the importance of the peasant majority. What concerned Lenin in 1921 was not only keeping the support of the tiny and decimated proletariat, but also and perhaps even more important in terms of the regime's immediate survival: what was the attitude of the peasantry toward it?

For while peasants had been "given" and had taken for themselves the land as a result of the November Revolution, the forced requisitions of grain during the war communism had very often deprived peasants of their harvests with little or no compensation. Lenin was soon to advocate and push through an unprecedented series of economic concessions to the peasantry which amounted to nothing less than a total dismantling of war communism.

In the famous 1920-1921 trade union debate, Lenin criticized both advocates of bureaucratic party supremacy (Trotsky-Bukharin) and of trade union supremacy (Shlyapnikov-Kollontai) in the new Soviet state. And as we have seen, he did so with some direct references to Hegelian dialectics. In Lenin's conception, trade unions were to

remain independent of the state, and to retain non-statist functions and aims from pre-revolutionary days. Of course they were supposed to function as "schools of communism," but they could also be vehicles of protest against abuses by the new state, supposedly already governing in the interests of the working class.

This protection against abuses was directed not only at "vestiges" of capitalism, but at new bureaucratic features born out of the revolution itself. Under the New Economic Policy which restored some market features to the economy, this concept tended, however, to become submerged by the fact that the new trade unions were to protect workers also against newly-permitted small-scale private capitalism in industry and agriculture. But the more significant and often overlooked point is that trade-union autonomy also meant the possibility of workers protecting themselves against "their own" Soviet state. And there were certainly plenty of strikes by those trade unions in 1921 and 1922.

In addition, Lenin's last statements on the general political situation in Russia, 1921-1923, are filled with references to incipient and dangerous "bureaucracy" inside the new Soviet state. This is true of his last major article "Better Fewer, But Better" (1923). There he wrote

from his sickbed: "Let it be said in parenthesis that we have bureaucrats in our Party offices as well as in Soviet offices." (CW 33:494) He ended this article with, as discussed earlier, an overall political assessment of the international scene centering on national revolutions which he perceived to be on the horizon in Asia.

But he was very concerned that the Soviet regime could fall from its own internal contradictions in the near future, long before such international developments could end its isolation. He wrote following his statements on revolution in the East:

We must reduce our state apparatus to the utmost degree of economy. We must banish from it all traces of extravagance, of which so much has been left over from Tsarist Russia, from its bureaucratic capitalist state machine. (CW 33:501)

Even though he ended his recommendations with a call for gradual industrialization, that should not obscure the even more important political critique cited above. For if the revolution could not somehow limit bureaucracy, an alienated peasantry could help overthrow the new regime long before either an Asian revolution or industrialization came to its rescue.

But missing in this late Lenin on bureaucracy is a well-developed concept of a "dialectical opposite" to the problem he was analyzing. His theory of imperialism, as we

have seen, not only sketched the rise of new forms of capital, but also saw a new revolutionary subject arising within and alongside the transformation of capitalism into imperialism and monopoly: national liberation movements of oppressed nations and the heightened revolutionary consciousness of "lower and deeper" layers of the proletariat inside the imperialist country itself. And his theory of the state and revolution had a critique of the modern centralized bureaucratic capitalism only in brief, and certainly not "proved" in socio-economic terms as in pamphlet Imperialism. In fact, the bulk of that work was taken up with Marx versus the Second International on the state machine and on the Paris Commune, as well as on the new subject: direct rule by the masses, whether in the form of the Paris Commune or of the Russian Soviets. In Lenin's 1921-1923 critique there is little of a new mass revolutionary subject in his theory, either as actuality or as potential.

His critique of Soviet bureaucracy does call for admitting a few thousand "non-party masses" to the Communist Party. It is adamant on the national question, as we have seen earlier, and does refer cryptically to lack of "dialectics" in Bukharin, and to "administrative" and bureaucratic tendencies not only in Stalin but also in

Trotsky. The famous "Will" of late 1922 calls both Stalin and Trotsky bureaucratic, but hardly proposes removing them from overall leadership, although it is urged that Stalin be removed as General Secretary. Let us quote that brief Will nearly in full.

Our Party relies on two classes and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes...But I hope that this is too remote a future and too improbable an event to talk about... I intend to deal here with a few ideas concerning personal qualities.

I think that from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the C.C. as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the number of C.C. members to 50 or 100.

Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary-General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the C.C. on the question of the Peoples' Commissariat for Communications has already proved, is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present C.C., but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work.

...I shall just recall that the October episode with Zinoviev and Kamenev was, of course, no accident, but neither can the blame for it be laid upon them personally, any more than non-Bolshevism can upon Trotsky.

Speaking of the young C.C. members, I wish to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most outstanding figures (among the youngest ones), and the following must be borne in mind about them: Bukharin is not only a most

valuable and major theorist of the Party; he is also rightly considered the favorite of the whole Party, but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics, and, I think, never fully understood it.)¹⁹

December 25. As for Pyatakov, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows too much zeal for administering and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter...

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us **Communists, become intolerable in a Secretary General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead...** This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance. (CW 36:594-596)

The bulk of the discussion around this Will has focused on the statement about removing Stalin, but the critiques Lenin makes of other key leaders are also quite serious, despite the diplomatic tone. Lenin in this whole series of letters lists only two concrete steps to be taken in his judgment: removal of Stalin and admission of new rank and file people to the Central Committee and new workers to the Communist Party.

All of the major leaders are faulted for one reason or another and yet no fundamental change in the leadership is proposed except for removing Stalin. The Will is

directed to the next party congress, where it was to be read. It is not directed either to the rank and file of the Communist Party or to the public at large, but to the very leadership it was criticizing. It did not even get to be read at the Party Congress, for the entire Central Committee (including Trotsky) voted to suppress its contents.

But Lenin himself was ambivalent in the way he wrote his Will. His ambivalence prevails not for lack of deep anguish over the problems besetting the new Soviet state, but because he hardly could say he had a "solution." All he could say is that "if" the Trotsky-Stalin dispute signified a class difference, then nothing would help. And indeed nothing did. No greater tragedy not only could but did befall that workers' state as it proceeded after that: not only because of Stalin's counter-revolutionary leadership, but objectively it became the state-capitalist land we know it now to be. In a word, it did what Lenin warned against: "reverting to capitalism." It would appear that Lenin saw the dangerous bureaucratization forming not at the top layers of the Communist Party, but rather more at the middle layers, even at the time he was calling for Stalin's removal. He could not face the situation squarely.

For all of his critiques of bureaucracy in 1921 and 1922, as late as March 26, 1922, he had written to Molotov:

If we do not close our eyes to reality we must admit that at the present time the proletarian policy of the Party is not determined by the character of its membership, but by the enormous undivided prestige enjoyed by the small group which might be called the Old Guard of the Party. A slight conflict within this group will be enough, if not to destroy this prestige, at all events to weaken the group to such a degree as to rob it of its power to determine policy. (CW 33:257)

This was followed by suggestions to Molotov on making it more difficult to join the Communist Party. Evidently Lenin was still expecting counter-revolution to come from outside rather than inside the Russian Communist Party. It would appear that his Will and his last formulations on the new Soviet state were torn between the above type of concept of an "Old Guard" substituting for the exhausted worker and peasant masses, and a growing critique of bureaucracy and authoritarian practices at the top, from within this very Old Guard, especially Stalin. The latter's particular penchant for authoritarianism was brought home to Lenin by the incident over Georgian self-determination in 1922. Thus, while the Will did call for adding new members to the Central Committee and the Party itself, it did not call for decentralizing the Party apparatus. Still worse, it hardly contained any calls for direct rule by

the Soviets of workers and peasants as in 1917-1918.

This is not intended to minimize the major decentralizing changes Lenin did propose between the end of the Civil War and his death: (1) a form of trade union autonomy to allow workers to challenge bureaucratic abuses in the new state and also to have protection against the newly permitted marketplace of the NEP; (2) the establishment and strengthening of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which was to investigate the Communist Party itself for abuses of its authority; (3) the dismantling of war communism, especially in the countryside, allowing a measure of free trade in agriculture in order to appease the peasantry; (4) the most important, his last struggle against Stalin and others with their Great Russian chauvinism inside the upper reaches of the New Soviet state, not only around the Georgian issue, but on national self-determination in general.²⁰ Did Leon Trotsky fully understand the national question in the same terms which Lenin did? The fact that he did not fight Stalin in 1924 on the question in the manner Lenin mapped out shows that it was not only a question of not being as daring as Lenin would have been because when he later did turn against Stalin, it was both too late and not on Lenin's ground of national self-determination. As for Bukharin, by the late 1920's he

had actually become the theorist who helped Stalin to defeat Trotsky, Pyatakov, Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Perhaps a quote once again from Hegel's Science of Logic will indirectly illuminate the problem Lenin faced in 1922-1923 with his critique of the new Soviet state:

It will always stand out as a marvel how the Kantian philosophy recognized the relations of thought to sensuous reality, beyond which it did not advance, as only a relative relation of mere Appearance, and perfectly well recognized and enunciated a higher unity of both in the Idea in general and, for example, in the Idea of an intuitive understanding, and yet stopped short at this relative relation and the assertion that the Notion is and remains utterly separate from reality -- thus asserting as truth what it declared to be finite cognition, and denouncing as an unjustified extravagance and a figment of thought what it recognized as truth and of which it established the specific notion. (Hegel, SL:592, our emphasis)

To adopt the language for a moment of his teacher in 1914-1915, Hegel, Lenin appears in 1922-1923 to have "stopped short" in his political thinking, rather than following it through to its conclusion. He could not bring himself to apply, for example, his ~~Hegel~~-derived concept of "transformation into opposite" to his own Bolshevik Party now in power, even though he had been able to use that concept to discuss the transformation of capitalism into monopoly and imperialism, and of the Second International into a reformist organization, and many other important themes. But when it came to his own Bolsheviks in 1922-1923 in a

decidedly non-revolutionary situation, he "stopped short" and did not carry his incipient critique to its conclusion.

This is rooted in one area, fundamental to pre-1914 Bolshevism, that he had never fully and explicitly criticized and certainly never repudiated in any systematic way before or after 1914, despite frequent modifications: his 1902 concept of the vanguard party to lead the revolution as articulated in What Is To Be Done?. Despite many modifications after 1902, both from the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, that concept remained and was at the root of Lenin's 1922 talk of a Bolshevik "Old Guard" as the key to maintaining the revolution, as in the letter to Molotov cited above.

Whether or not such a party was needed for underground revolutionaries in Tsarist Russia, although that too is of course open to question, and whether or not the centralization of "War Communism" and its dictatorial features were necessary to save the revolution from its enemies in 1918-1920, Rosa Luxemburg's perceptive critique still holds. She wrote it from her jail cell and never published it during her lifetime, but it has since become a widely-read document. There she wrote:

But socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not

come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators...

Doubtless the Bolsheviks would have proceeded in this very way were it not that they suffered under the frightful compulsion of the world war, the German occupation and all the abnormal difficulties connected therewith, things which were inevitably bound to distort any socialist policy, however imbued it might be with the best intentions and the finest principles...

The danger begins only when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model or socialist tactics.²¹

We agree with Luxemburg's analysis.

Footnotes - Chapter Seven

1. Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 2, p. 83.
2. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
3. Dunayevskaya, Marxism and Freedom, pp. 191-192.
4. Marx on the Paris Commune was hardly the center of discussion, and barely mentioned, at the 1907 all-Russia Social Democratic conference where all major figures, from Lenin to Trotsky, and from Plekhanov to Martov to Luxemburg debated the questions surrounding the 1905 revolution for two weeks around the concept of what Marx had written on the 1848 revolutions. (For a discussion of that 1907 congress, see Dunayevskaya, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution.)
5. Lenin, Marxism on the State: Preparatory Material for the Book, The State and Revolution (Moscow: Progress, 1972). This important work is for some unexplained reason not included in Lenin's 45 volume English-language Collected Works, but was instead published separately for the first time in 1972 in English, apparently in connection with the Lenin centennial. Virtually all of it was published in Russian in 1930.
6. Marx and Engels, Birth of the Communist Manifesto, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International, 1971) pp. 130-132. This important preface, although it also takes up the United States, is unfortunately not usually included in the standard English editions of the Communist Manifesto.
7. Lenin, Marxism on the State, p. 7.
8. For a discussion of Marx's late writings on Russia and their fate see the symposium "Marx, Marxism and the Agrarian Question" which consists of "Marx and the Peasant Commune" by Teodor Shanin and "Marx and Revolutionary Russia" by Haruki Wada, History Workshop, 12 (Autumn 1981). Surprisingly, these otherwise excellent articles do not take up Lenin's own direct connection with the late Marx on Russia, as evidenced

here by his own notebook on Marxism on the State

9. See Karl Kautsky, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964).
10. Lenin, Marxism on the State, p. 48.
11. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
12. Originally published in German in Jugend-Internationale, December 1, 1916, this article by Bukharin is included in English along with Lenin's critical marginal notes in Marxism on the State, pp. 102-107.
13. Quoted in Lenin, Marxism on the State, p. 106.
14. Ibid., p. 107.
15. Ibid.
16. Krupskaya, Memories of Lenin, p. 337.
17. Lukacs, "1967 Postscript," Lenin: A Study of the Unity of His Thought, p. 100.
18. Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 2, p. 150.
19. Trotsky's edition of the Will, The Suppressed Testament of Lenin, contains a less muddled translation of this passage on Bukharin: "Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theoretician of the party, but also may legitimately be considered the favorite of the whole party; but his theoretical views can only with the very greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxian, for there is something scholastic in him. (He has never learned, and I think never fully understood, the dialectic.)" Cited in Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution, pp. 118-119.
20. Moshe Lewin's excellent treatment of this period in his Lenin's Last Struggle, shows great sensitivity to the question of national self-determination in Lenin's political thought but does not connect this to what we have made central: the rootedness of Lenin's concept of national self-determination in Hegelian dialectics. Also, even the conservative historian Richard Pipes, in his early work on the national

question in the Soviet Union, did write on Lenin's grappling with the question of Great Russian chauvinism toward Georgia: "...as this evidence accumulated in the winter of 1922-23, Lenin went through a reappraisal of Soviet nationality policy which bore all of the marks of a true intellectual crisis. It is likely that had he not suffered a nearly fatal stroke in March 1923 the final structure of the Soviet Union would have been quite different from that which Stalin ultimately gave it." Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923, revised edition (Cambridge: Harvard, 1964), p. 276.

21. Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism? (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), pp. 77-79.

Chapter Eight

LENIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIALECTICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL CHANGE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

We have argued and documented in this work that Hegelian dialectics permeated Lenin's theorizing after 1914 -- and that this dialectics constituted nothing less than part of the foundation of his whole theory of revolution during the crucial years 1914-1923. We traced this theme at length through Lenin's Notebooks on Philosophy as well as his major political writings after 1914. In the concluding chapter we weigh this little known contribution to the dialectical sociology of social change. We do so in terms of both achievements and limitations. In the end we ask: how did these achievements and limitations of Lenin's theorizing link up with each other?

What we have uncovered is a somewhat different Lenin from that seen in the usual view of a party man and political strategist with little time or commitment to theory. Instead we have displayed a man who studied Hegel as his main activity at the height of the collapse of the Second International in 1914, and who continued his serious theoretical studies of imperialism, the state, national liberation, and revolution right through the revolution itself.

We have shown not only the seriousness of Lenin's Hegel studies, but also how the dialectical concepts he found there in 1914-1915 seemed to influence all of his major theoretical writings afterwards. The reader should note that we are not claiming anything like a full "epistemological break" in Lenin's theorizing after 1914. Nor are we arguing that it was only via Hegel studies that Lenin substantially reorganized and developed his concept of Marxism after 1914. His break with his old concepts of Marxism and of revolutionary organization was never total: at several points we have shown Lenin's ambivalence toward both his Hegelian Marxist theoretical foundation and to the new vision of direct Soviet democracy expounded in 1917-1918.

Except for the work of Raya Dunayevskaya, other scholars writing on Lenin's thought have tended to ignore or to deny the importance of these crucial vantage points with which to view Lenin. As a result, an important key to understanding one of the most influential, intriguing and controversial figures of twentieth century radical thought has been lost. We have frequently indicated our indebtedness to Dunayevskaya's pioneering work in this area. Reviewing Dunayevskaya's Philosophy and Revolution, one well-known writer familiar with Lenin and dialectics,

Henri Chambre, suggested the need for further work on the subject:

In returning to Hegel when he read the Science of Logic in 1914-15, Lenin seemed to overturn the ideas which he had expounded a decade earlier in Materialism and Empiriocriticism. Dunayevskaya is doubtless right to challenge the "reductionism" of B.M. Kedrov, member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless a more detailed study of Lenin would be required in order to conclude that these new ideas of his, which he recorded only elliptically, governed his work in 1917-23...¹

We have sought in this thesis to move toward exactly the type of "more detailed study" of Lenin's theorizing that Chambre had called for a decade ago.

And we conclude that there is a significant relationship between the 1914-1915 Hegel studies and the other theoretical writings, 1914-1924. However, we have found mainly indications of this influence in his later writings, rather than a totally Hegelian foundation in these writings. Further research would be necessary to explore the relationship of the Hegel studies to Lenin's theories of imperialism, the state and revolution, and national liberation. We have uncovered indications of such a relationship, but have not carried out the type of detailed textual analysis which would be needed either to demonstrate or disprove a Hegelian underpinning to Lenin's major post-1914 writings to do that. To repeat the words of Henri Chambre just quoted,

"a more detailed study of Lenin would be required..."

A. Lenin's Achievement

We began our study by reviewing the literature to show the importance of our theme. While others had frequently pointed to it, none had yet developed it in sufficient detail. In our first chapter we also showed the relationship of our study not only to other Lenin studies, but to the overall problematic of the sociology of revolution. We showed a need for studies of revolutionary thought to complement the recent studies of social and economic structures undergoing revolutionary change.

In our second chapter we saw Lenin beginning his Hegel studies right after he arrived as an exile in Switzerland, in September 1914. Lenin began to read Hegel with quite a bit of suspicion of the latter's idealism, as against his own materialist philosophical outlook based on the Marxism of the Second International. But as the reader saw, Lenin was soon surprised to see the connections Hegel makes between human history and the development of ideas. Lenin is also, as we have stressed, impressed with the concept of living, breathing human life as the foundation of Hegel's logic, rather than formalist conceptions of logic as a mere technique for thinking. Hegel's logic, for Lenin,

included the content of human thought as well as its form.

He soon begins to question the materialism of the Marxism of the Second International when he writes in his notes that appearance and essence are not so separate as some had maintained: that appearance is after all the appearance of essence. All in all, we showed Lenin beginning to reject the Kantian logic, which underlay the Marxism of the Second International, in favor of a Hegelian logic. He was especially interested in Hegel's critique of Kant and in Hegel's further development of Kant's concept of contradiction.

In this chapter two on Lenin's plunge into Hegel, we also looked very briefly at Lenin's famous writings at the time (1914-1915) on war and on revolutionary defeatism. We showed that Lenin's theoretical and philosophical output was far greater than his political writings in this period. They included not only the 1914 "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic," but also the fifty page encyclopedia article, "Karl Marx." We also showed that the first major article on the war, "Under a False Flag," and that only twenty pages, was written in February 1915, some time after most of the key Hegel studies had been completed. Thus, we were able to find Hegelian language about a "break in gradualness" in that first main article on the war. The

concept of revolutionary defeatism was articulated virtually simultaneously with Lenin's plunge into his Hegel studies.

Our third chapter examined Lenin's notes on the first two parts of Hegel's Science of Logic: being and essence. In the section on being, Lenin took note of several Hegelian concepts: transformation into opposite, breaks in gradualness or leaps, and immediacy and mediation. He was beginning to see in Hegel a logic which put fluidity and change at the center of social reality. It was not only a question of fluid versus static concepts and forms, but also of actual leaps or breaks in gradualness, which Lenin seemed to take as his own from Hegel. Hegel, in Lenin's view, saw this type of occurrence as more normal than a gradual evolutionary flow. Lenin of course found it compatible with his own revolutionary views.

But that was not all. In the section on being, Lenin also became increasingly interested in a critique of what he himself termed vulgar materialism. Raising this issue meant a still greater break with the stress in the Marxism of his time on philosophical materialism and against all forms of idealism. Lenin was breaking not only with Plekhanov and the other philosophers of the Second International, but also with his own philosophical past: the 1908 work

Materialism and Empirio-Criticism had stressed only materialism as the key to Marxist philosophy.

In his reading of Hegel's section on essence, Lenin began to move beyond categories such as leaps or breaks in gradualness and fluid versus static. Now he began to delve into other Hegelian concepts such as self-movement, self-development, and contradiction. The source of fluidity and change was now seen not as external to the subject matter undergoing change, but rather as arising from within it, from its internal contradictions. These internal contradictions led to a transition to a new form, whether in society or in thought. Internal contradictions were at the root of the self-movement of the subject. The concept of self-movement was new and seemed to stress the possibility, at a political level, of spontaneously self-developing revolutionary forms. What is more, that spontaneity for Hegel was not, in Lenin's reading, separate from theorizing. Thinking reason was explicitly linked to self-movement.

In addition, Lenin examined and seemed to internalize Hegel's critique of causality. Replacing a concept of root cause was the interconnectness of the whole world. Cause and effect were seen not so much as opposites as part of a totality. Underlying all of this was the key concept of transformation into opposite. Thereby the

internal contradictions within (for example) a society could lead a social form literally to change into its opposite. Later on, Lenin used this concept as a theoretical underpinning for varied socio-political analyses. That range includes his writing on the rise of monopoly capitalism from out of competitive forms, and his polemics on the transformation of the once-revolutionary Second International into a reformist and "opportunist" organization.

These sections of Hegel's Science of Logic, on being and essence, comprised almost two-thirds of Hegel's text. Yet Lenin wrote less than half of his massive "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" on them. The bulk of Lenin's notes are on the last third of Hegel's text, on the notion or concept. These crucial notes were considered separately, in chapter four.

There we examined what we termed the heart and soul of Lenin's Hegelianism. This was his sixty pages of notes and commentary on the section on the notion (or concept) in Hegel's Science of Logic, in which he substantially worked out his own concept of dialectic. This section of Lenin's notes on Hegel is quite different from his earlier ones discussed in chapters two and three. As Lenin reaches the final section of the Science of Logic, his notes take

on a strikingly different form. Not only has he virtually ceased criticizing Hegel. Still more important, he has now begun to make much lengthier statements in his own words. These statements do not merely sum up a particular passage or section: they seem rather to give an overview of Hegelian dialectics as he sees it at this key point in 1914.

Here the reader saw Lenin deepen his critique of vulgar materialism to the point where he criticized all or most of Marxism since Marx. Specifically, he criticized post-Marx Marxism around the turn of the century for criticizing Kant more in the manner of Feuerbach than of Hegel. He also wrote in this section that in order to understand Marx's Capital, one needed to know Hegel's Science of Logic thoroughly. In addition, he stated that human consciousness not only reflects the world, but shapes and creates it. All of this added up to a sharp break with the stress on materialism which characterized the Marxism of the Second International. This critique, as we showed, almost certainly included a self-critique by Lenin of his own earlier views on this subject. No contemporary Marxist political leader or theoretician had gone so far toward seeing Marxist dialectics instead as a unity of idealism and materialism.

As we showed, this interest in idealism and the

force of ideas was not a voluntaristic world view whereby ideas or a party could leap over a given historical set of conditions by sheer force of will. Far from it. Rather, Lenin saw change and forward movement, which included ideas, coming not from without, but from the innermost contradictions in the subject matter, i.e. in a society. Lenin's sixteen-point "elements of dialectics," as well as numerous other notes from this section of Hegel's Science of Logic, show the centrality of this concept of contradiction to Lenin's Hegelianism. At the core of Lenin's Hegelianism, its heart and soul, one finds a set of key concepts. Several of them posited that the unity as well as struggle of opposites underlies all human social relations. An apparently stable social institution or society is therefore an uneasy balance of contending forces.

For example, when conflict breaks out and a struggle ensues between (in Lenin's Marxist dialectics) labor and capital, it is because the supposed unity of society was, after all, only the unity of opposites, capital and labor. When labor builds up its strength to fight capital in the form of trade union organizations, only soon to find contradictions within the new labor organizations, the Hegelian concept of transformation into opposite offers a philosophical foundation for a social analysis: the new

labor unions themselves had in turn become unity of opposites embracing, on one hand, rank and file workers, and on the other, bureaucratic union officials removed from the ranks. The once-militant union officials had grown into bureaucrats, transformed into their opposite.

These concepts of the unity of opposites, of the struggle of opposites (or contradiction), and of the transformation into opposite, were a key set of concepts used frequently by Lenin as an underpinning for his writings after 1914. Other concepts at the core of Lenin's Hegelianism revolved around the Hegelian notion of free and spontaneous self-development. Here Lenin's reading of Hegel focused on the issue of inner contradictions welling up within a society to the point where they exploded into new revolutionary forms. In the Science of Logic Hegel of course dealt explicitly only with the self-development of concepts or notions.

But Lenin was interested in live revolutionary subjects: workers, peasants, national liberation movements. Here it is extremely important to note that Lenin saw free self-development as spontaneous to be sure, but not as divorced from theoretical knowledge. Self-development and transition were, he emphasized repeatedly, linked to theoretical knowledge. This too derived directly from

Hegel's concept of the absolute idea as the unity of theoretical and practical knowledge. Chapter four thus included discussion of all of the major concepts which underlay Lenin's Hegelianism.

On the other hand, we showed that major differences remained between Lenin's dialectic and that of Hegel. We illustrated this by showing Lenin's lack of interest in the "preservation" aspect of Hegel's concept of Aufheben. Furthermore, Lenin's own "elements of dialectics" stopped short of the full break with vulgar materialism implied by some of the statements in his notes, especially the one on consciousness not merely reflecting but "creating" the world.

Chapter five traced in great detail Lenin's other explicit references to Hegelian dialectics and to dialectics generally, from 1914 on. We demonstrated just how Lenin continued both his Hegel studies and his constant references to dialectics and to Hegel until his death. In this chapter we discussed the famous essay "Karl Marx." This piece included a section on dialectics. Yet Lenin wanted to change that section further once he had finished reading the Science of Logic. This was something he never did, however. The section of dialectics was separate from the other sections, where Lenin largely repeated pre-1914

themes. Later, we showed, Lenin's Hegelianism may have helped him to reorganize both his economic and his political concepts as well. We also examined Lenin's further notes on Hegel, written in 1915. Here Lenin's critique of Plekhanov's "vulgar materialism" became even more forcefully explicit, and more important links were drawn between Hegelian logic and Marx's Capital. The brief essay fragment "On the Question of Dialectics," also written in 1915, was shown to have deepened the critique of vulgar materialism still further. That fragment included very explicit critiques not only of Plekhanov, but also of Engels' concept of dialectics in Anti-Duhring.

At this time we also briefly examined Lenin's 1908 work on Marxist philosophy, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, and contrasted it to the 1914-1915 writings. Materialism and Empirio-Criticism was seen to have been wholly within the Second International's stress on materialism as the main philosophical foundation of Marxism. Then we moved into a detailed discussion of the many explicit references to Hegel and to dialectics after 1914-1915. Some of these occurred in the midst of political writings while others were letters, speeches and articles directly on the topic of dialectics. We documented Lenin's frequent references to dialectics in his critiques of major rival

Marxist theorists such as Kautsky, Bukharin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and Plekhanov. These references continued from the wartime debates of 1914-1914, to the controversy over the trade unions in 1920, to the famous last will and testament written in 1922-1923.

We also outlined here for the first time what we have termed Lenin's "ambivalence." Despite the many references to dialectics after 1914, there are also references to the need to study Plekhanov's mechanical materialism. Also, as we showed, Lenin allowed Materialism and Empirio-Criticism to be reprinted with a new and uncritical preface after the revolution, while at the same time never publishing a serious and lengthy work on his new concept of dialectics. Nonetheless, the references to Hegel after 1914 were substantial, and showed a strikingly different type of dialectical methodology after 1914.

But these references to dialectics, many of them to Hegel directly, are hardly by themselves enough to indicate that Lenin's post-1914 Marxism was Hegelian in any fundamental way. In order to explore that issue, we examined two sets of universally acknowledged major writings by Lenin after 1914: those on imperialism and national liberation, and those on the state and revolution.

In chapter six we indicated a possible Hegelian

underpinning of the book Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, written in 1916. There, it could be seen, Lenin appeared to use concepts from Hegel such as transformation into opposite and contradiction to discuss the transition which had made modern imperialism possible. He used Hegelian language when he discussed the "transformation into opposite" of competitive capitalism into monopoly. He also used it to discuss the role of the reform socialists and the large trade unions which he saw more and more as stabilizers rather than opponents of the new type of capitalism. We also argued that the great amount of research and time that Lenin put into his study of imperialism meant that he intended more there than popularizing what Bukharin or Hilferding had already worked out in their own studies of the same topic.

We showed Lenin examining the central Marxist question of the time, that of imperialism, which had already been debated extensively in German Marxism. By entering this debate, Lenin was seeking to make his mark as a world theoretical leader in the Marxist movement, instead of merely a Marxist leader in Russia. Not only did he gather his own data on economics and politics from original sources and fill 800 pages of notes. The form of his presentation in his published work also appeared new. Influential to his

study, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, was the Hegelian category of transformation into opposite. He posited just such a transformation, from competition into monopoly and imperialism instead of a slow gradual incremental growth.

We also argued that Lenin's concept of imperialism was dialectical in yet another way, in its inclusion of national liberation movements as the dialectical opposite of the new stage of capitalism imperialism. Where Luxemburg and Bukharin saw only new types of worker revolt inside the imperialist countries as the opposite of imperialism, Lenin saw imperialism itself outside the mother country as a unity of opposites. As imperialism penetrates far-off regions it initially strengthens capitalism, to be sure. But in Lenin's view it also brings forth new contradictions -- increased national oppression and increased resistance by small and non-European nations to foreign domination. Lenin only hinted at this concept of national liberation tied up with imperialism in the book Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, because of the strictures involved in attempting to get such a work published legally in Tsarist Russia in 1916.

It was his other writings in 1916, both published and unpublished, which showed, when taken together with

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Lenin's dialectical concept of imperialism and national liberation. Lenin's massive Notebooks on Imperialism combine both topics, while his 1916 articles published in exile journals on national liberation constitute a major study in themselves. There are also constant references to yet another "opposite" of imperialism: the lower and deeper layers of the working class and the unemployed of the imperialist countries.

But most crucial of all in Lenin's dialectical view of imperialism was his deepened concept of the self-determination of nations. Direct references to dialectics are found in these debates, such as the one with Luxemburg in his critique of her Junius Pamphlet. There Luxemburg had held that national wars were impossible in the era of imperialism.

We did not argue that Hegel studies alone determined Lenin's attitude. His analysis of imperialism was also the product both of Lenin's earlier views on national self-determination and of his observation of the new type of national revolution which first broke out in Dublin in 1916 in the Easter uprising. But the Hegel studies along with current political developments, we argued, may have helped Lenin to deepen and to universalize this concept of

national self-determination beyond what it had been before 1914. Earlier, it had been more an abstract principle held by Russian Marxists who wanted to make clear their opposition to Great Russian domination of the whole Tsarist empire. Lenin raised this question to a central one for world Marxism in the era of imperialism:

Beyond a mere principle which socialists "should" support, national liberation for Lenin became nothing less than one of the possible paths to the full social revolution in the imperialist epoch. Dublin could indeed be the "bacillus" for a European working class revolution, he argued. This new view involved sharp polemics on Lenin's part with fellow revolutionary opponents of the Second International such as Luxemburg, Bukharin, Pyatakov and Radek during the years 1916 and 1917. The latter were close to Lenin on many major political questions and yet disagreed with Lenin's new vantage points on national liberation. They clung to the concept of the class struggle as the unique determinant of revolutionary possibilities. They rejected all nationalism as utopian and ultimately reactionary, including that of the Irish rebels. Lenin came to take the opposite stand, we argued informed by his Hegelianism.

We also showed Lenin's continuing debates on this

issue after 1917. He felt the need to do battle on the question of national liberation again and again. This meant also revising the old Bolshevik Party program to include a deeper commitment to national self-determination inside the territory bounded by the old Russian Empire, up to and including the right of secession. These arguments not only revolved around the day to day affairs of the new Soviet state, but were also given generalized importance in the speeches Lenin made to the Communist International.

Finally, this chapter traced the last struggle Lenin engaged in with Stalin and Orjonikidze over national self-determination in Georgia. By now it was not a question of a theoretical dispute with a co-leader like Bukharin or Pyatakov, who were hardly Great Russian chauvinists at a personal level, but with actual chauvinist practices toward national minorities by Stalin and his associates. In fact, Bukharin, as we saw, had been the intermediary trusted by the Georgian dissidents to deliver their first protest note to Lenin. In Lenin's last writings on this question, he argued that protecting the national rights of the Georgians and the other non-Russian minorities was necessary not only to preserve the character of the new Soviet state, but also to serve as a bridge between

the Russian revolution and its potential allies in Asia. The latter were awakening in the 1920's into a whole series of national movements and uprisings.

Chapter seven explored the dialectics of the state and revolution in Lenin's key writings on this topic in 1917-1918 and afterwards. As in his plunge into Hegel in 1914, Lenin showed once again his deep involvement in theoretical questions in the way in which he plunged into a study of Marx on the Paris Commune at the very time the March 1917 revolution broke out in Russia and toppled the Tsar. We examined in great detail Lenin's new vision of smashing bureaucratic state power and replacing it with direct rule by the masses in a soviet republic.

We argued that the very lack of social and economic data on the state presented there, far from showing that the book State and Revolution was not a serious theoretical work, instead showed Lenin engaged in a new type of theorizing. This new type of dialectics, rooted in Marx to be sure, focused not so much on economics or on the structures of power, as on the live revolutionary forces who could uproot the old society and create a new one. It was Bukharin's pioneering study of the state which preceded that of Lenin, which nonetheless clung to the concept of socio-economic analysis only.

While Lenin certainly read Bukharin's work with interest, we showed where his analysis departed from Bukharin's. We also showed how Lenin regarded State and Revolution as his crowning achievement as a Marxist theorist, asking that it be published in case he did not survive the anti-Bolshevik repression of the summer of 1917. The entire work demonstrably was rooted not only in Marx on the Paris Commune. It was also the first major work he wanted translated into French and German after the revolution. As we noted, it was not so much aimed at Russian Marxism, but rather at attempting to break new ground for all of European Marxism. We also noted indications that it too was grounded in the Hegelian notion of a free self-developing subject.

That concept of self-developing subject was present not only in State and Revolution, but also, we argued, in the notebooks Marxism on the State which preceded it, as well as Lenin's other major writings in 1917-1918. In those writings he was able to sketch out his thinking on what was left unfinished in State and Revolution. As the manuscript of that work broke off, Lenin had been about to consider the 1905 and 1917 revolutions in Russia. His other writings in 1917-1918 did take up the creative initiatives of the Russian masses in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions.

We showed how, as with his new writings on the national question, his 1917-1918 Promethean vision of a Soviet republic got Lenin into many disagreements, not only with Mensheviks, but also with most of his Bolshevik co-leaders: during this period, he often used the term "old Bolshevik" disparagingly. But his new stress on the creative initiative of the masses was to a great extent abandoned by Lenin himself after 1918 in favor of greater centralization and greater reliance on what he called the "Old Guard" of veteran Bolshevik Party members. While many of these centralizing practices were begun as temporary during the civil war period, and some were abandoned soon afterwards, Lenin never returned fully to his 1917-1918 Promethean vision of a type of soviet democracy.

Before we examine this question, which we have termed Lenin's ambivalence, we must underline Lenin's great achievement as an original Marxist theorist, in the crucial years from 1914 to 1923. He not only made a detailed study of Hegelian dialectics, but he also continued this theme until his death. What is more, there are indicators that he used the Hegelian concepts of transformation into opposite and free self-development in his later political and economic theorizing, including studies of imperialism, national liberation, the state and revolution.

This is the first work to call attention to the originality of Lenin's theorizing in terms of its rootedness in Hegel. Until now, no work documented, as we did here, just how far he had traveled both from the Marxism of the Second International and that of old, pre-1914 Bolshevism.

B. Lenin's Ambivalence, Limitations and Stopping Short

Despite his achievements in dialectics and in new concepts of revolutionary theory, Lenin never explicitly developed a new concept of theory to link together all of his new vantage points. He never published his notes on Hegel, and never completed even the brief essay on dialectics drafted in 1915. This was not merely a question of the press of events. As we showed, he spent endless effort and time on the question of national self-determination, right up to his dying day.

But there was not such determination in developing the theoretical underpinnings which made such political concretizations of dialectics possible. Nor was there any fundamental reckoning with the concept of the vanguard party to lead. As much as this concept seemed to disappear in the enthusiasm of 1917-1918, it returned to haunt Lenin and his Bolsheviks afterwards. However modified by Lenin after What Is To Be Done? (1902), this elitist, bureaucratic

concept of revolutionary organization remained within Leninism, and within Lenin himself. It helped in the end to lay the ground for the one-party totalitarian state created under Stalin. Further research is needed on Lenin's concept of party in light of what we have uncovered on the changes in Lenin's political thought after 1914.

It is Lenin's own failure to carry his new ideas through to their conclusion which makes a study of Lenin take on the dimensions of a tragedy. Right within Leninism itself lived contradictory elements -- party and Soviet democracy, Plekhanov and Hegel -- which clashed and contended with each other after 1918. The tragedy is that he stopped short from following the most original side of his theoretical concepts through to their conclusion. The result was that even the sharpest critiques of his co-leaders such as Stalin, in the Will, sounded almost quantitative only: Stalin had accumulated "too much" power and did not "always" know how to use it with sufficient caution. And because Lenin's concept of dialectic was never spelled out in the form of a book or an essay on Hegelian-Marxian dialectics, the statement in the Will that Bukharin did not understand the dialectic sounded like hieroglyphics.

The main limitation of Lenin's theorizing, in our view, is that Lenin seemed at crucial junctures to be

ambivalent about his changing concepts after 1914. Our emphasis on limitations as well as achievements grew out of Lenin's ambivalence around two issues: Hegelian dialectics and his Promethean vision of a Soviet republic in 1917-1918. As we brought out in chapter four, he avoided some of Hegel's references to freedom at the very end of the Science of Logic. This gap, we argued, was in part due to not having seen modern totalitarianism. Thus Lenin had not, and could not have, fully appreciated the importance of the concept of freedom which can be found in various discussions of Marxist dialectics from the 1930's on. Marx himself, and Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, on the other hand, had before the 1930's concerned themselves more with this problem of freedom. Rosa Luxemburg in particular posed the question of revolutionary democracy after the revolution, in her famous prison essay on the Russian Revolution, left unpublished during her lifetime.

But our interpretation of ambivalence in Lenin's thought did not rest there. It centered instead on Lenin's to some extent publicly appearing to take back what he had written about so extensively privately in his Notebooks on Philosophy: his Hegelianism and his critique of Plekhanov's type of "vulgar materialism." As the reader could see in chapter five, Lenin's 1920 pamphlet on the trade union

dispute had a section on dialectics where he criticized both Bukharin and Trotsky as non-dialectical. Here, as we say, he brought in Hegel directly and at some length in a polemic with fellow Bolshevik leaders, using especially the category of "self-movement" and stating that this concept was drawn from Hegel.

However, at the very same time, he brought in as well the anti-Hegelian philosophical views of Plekhanov and called for the study of all of Plekhanov's work by the Russian youth. In the sentence just before the reference to Plekhanov, Lenin had expressed distinctly Hegelian views which differed sharply from those of Plekhanov.

That is not all. During the same period, he authorized and wrote a rather neutral preface to a new edition of his 1908 work Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, it turned out, while not completing anything from his Hegel studies for publication either as a major essay on Hegel or a book. On the other hand, in a remarkable 1922 article written for the new journal Under the Banner of Marxism, he made an explicit and forceful call for the study of Hegel's works by Marxists, and made no mention of Plekhanov.

To some extent, to be sure, circumstances played a big role. We argued that the press of events prevented Lenin from making public in a systematic way his Hegelianism

as seen in his Hegel notes, and which we showed to underlie his other major theoretical writings as well. But, as we argued in chapter five, lack of time was hardly a sufficient reason. Another possible reason was his reluctance to confess his Hegelianism to his fellow Bolsheviks, especially given their virtually unanimous hostility to Hegelian dialectics, a hostility they shared with all other tendencies in the Marxism of the time. In any case, Lenin left behind an ambivalent legacy in terms of his published statement on dialectics after 1914.

That very mixed legacy is why the shock was so great when his notes on Hegel were published for the first time in 1929. It is from that date also that the cover-up of Lenin's passionate interest in Hegel began, as Russian editors sought to hide the Hegelian notebooks under the general heading of Philosophical Notebooks (CW 38). Under this heading one finds both vulgar materialist early notes and the 1914-1915 notes on Hegel which Lenin kept separately and himself had entitled Notebooks on Philosophy. That cover-up was made easier by the fact that Lenin himself had been ambivalent in his published statements on dialectics. All of this helped to conceal for decades the importance of Hegel to Lenin as a Marxist theoretician as well as revolutionary.

But it was not merely a question of a cover-up by Lenin's heirs. Lenin himself appeared in the Notebooks on Philosophy to reject the Engels-Plekhanov type of scientistic Marxist materialism. He wrote, as we have seen, that "consciousness not only reflects the world, but creates it." (CW 38:212). Yet when he came to sum up his own private reflections on dialectics in his sixteen-point "elements of dialectics" at the end of the "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic," this crucial point was missing.

Instead, those sixteen points focused only on the theory of contradiction, transformation into opposite, and free self-development. The question broached by the statement on consciousness was left unanswered, unexplored: Lenin did not appear to take seriously the possibility of a new relationship between idealism and materialism based on his reading of Hegelian dialectics. When pressed, he seemed to opt for a scientistic-materialist view, albeit more fluid and concerned with self-development than the evolutionary or even contemplative materialism of Plekhanov or Engels.

It would appear that Lenin's failure to complete a work on dialectics during his lifetime was in part a product of ambivalence and uncertainty within himself as

to what his views actually were on the subject. And as we have seen, his public views on dialectics were even more ambivalent than his private writings. It would appear that Lenin was unable to challenge at least directly and systematically the Second International's overall concept of Marxist philosophy, the scientific-economist view. The latter was shared not only by Plekhanov and Kautsky, but also by political allies of Lenin and revolutionaries such as Bukharin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.²

Lenin the revolutionary leader and activist did, as we have seen devote considerable effort and time, and with some theoretically important results, to philosophical problems, specifically Hegelian dialectics. No other contemporary revolutionary or reformist Marxist leader did so -- not Luxemburg, not Trotsky, not Kautsky, not Plekhanov, not Bukharin. Lenin also appeared to take his conclusions from his study of Hegel seriously, as we have seen, to the point where it influenced though not determined his post-1914 political and theoretical writings. Yet, the ultimately fragmentary nature of Lenin's post-1914 writings shows that he was in some sense mainly a political activist. Whether it was modesty on philosophical issues generally, or feared embarrassment at expressing unorthodox philosophical views to his fellow Bolsheviks, or mainly the

pressure of time and concern with immediate events, the present study did not seek to explore.

But we do know that Lenin never completed his 1914-1915 projected article or book on Marxist philosophy. Instead he went on to examine problems of imperialism, the national question, and the state and revolution. While we have shown Lenin to have been, more than is commonly attributed to him, interested in philosophical questions and particularly in Hegelian dialectics, we have also indicated his failure to think his philosophical ideas through to a theoretical or philosophical as opposed to a merely political conclusion. That problem in his work is the other side of the coin of its great merit of bringing philosophical issues into immediate political ones.

In that sense, the 1920 republication of the 1908 vulgar materialist, scientistic and extremely dogmatic work, Materialism and Empiro-Criticism, was in fact one side of the post-1914 Lenin. It is that side which may have, in addition to political issues and preoccupations in the turbulent 1914-1924 period, held back Lenin's work around dialectics from reaching a conclusion. Since his work on philosophic problems in 1914-1915 and afterwards is inconclusive and fragmentary, we have stressed those sides of it most in keeping with contemporary theoretical concerns:

the critique of vulgar materialism and the stress on self-developing historical subjects. That is the part of Lenin which has yet to be uncovered, let alone analyzed. Unfortunately it is, however, a somewhat ambivalent and inconclusive legacy on dialectics.

This type of ambivalence and his failure to follow ideas through to their conclusion is all the more remarkable given Lenin's reputation as a leader who did not shy away from new or unpopular notions. But as we will see in a moment, the other major area we have singled out under Lenin's limitations as a social theorist is precisely on that as well: His failure, after the revolution, to hold to his Promethean vision of 1917-1918, and even more important, his failure to think through to its logical conclusion his 1922-1923 critique of the new Soviet state and society.

The second major area of Lenin's ambivalence which we examined was in relation to his views on the state and revolution. Here, unlike his writings on the question of national liberation, Lenin appeared after 1918 to take back much of his earlier Promethean vision of a new society based on a highly democratic soviet republic.

In part he no doubt viewed this turn toward greater centralization and dictatorship as an unpleasant necessity

in a civil war. But once the civil war had ended, Lenin moved quickly toward his New Economic Policy, as we showed. In addition, he launched a multi-faceted struggle against bureaucracy. beginning in 1920 and lasting until his death. But at the same time there was no return to the Promethean vision of 1917-1918. This was true both in the trade union dispute of 1920 and in the 1922-1923 last will and testament. At no time did Lenin seem to face completely the possibility that bureaucracy was originating not in the middle ranks of the Communist Party with its "careerists," but in the top ranks, including the Bolshevik leaders.

In other words, he stopped short, as we demonstrated, of using his concept of transformation into opposite as a critique of his fellow Bolshevik leaders. True, he called for greater democracy and the removal of some of the leaders such as Stalin. But he talked as much about the need for firm unity at the top. And in 1922 he wrote to Molotov that the "Old Guard" of the Communist Party was the key to maintaining the regime's "proletarian policy."

This problematic, however, originated earlier, in 1918 and 1919. During the long, bloody and arduous civil war period, the Bolsheviks consolidated their rule through giving land to the peasants and power to the urban workers, and by ending the war and the imperialist entanglements

which had originally gotten Russia into the war. They fought waves of foreign invasions from Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States. In so doing they forged a mighty army and state machine which crushed all of their opponents. Once the war ended, this state machine remained in place, poised against new attacks.

To the astonishment of the Bolsheviks, the first attack in 1921 came not from abroad, but from the Kronstadt sailors. They were crushed. It is true that Lenin almost immediately, and over the objections of his co-leaders, argued for and won a New Economic Policy giving greater freedom to workers and especially to peasants. It is true that the new Bolshevik regime probably still enjoyed massive peasant and worker support. But it is equally true that Lenin in 1920-1921 was hardly ready to decentralize, let alone dismantle, the Bolshevik-created centralized state machine developed during the civil war. Not only that. Even when, in 1922-1923, he moved into what Moshe Lewin terms his "last struggle" against Stalin and the emergent bureaucracy, he hardly drew his arguments to a conclusion.

Even in his dramatic critiques of the new Soviet state in his Will and his last battles over the national question, he hardly returned to his more original views of 1917-1918, as exemplified by State and Revolution. At no

time did he now talk of going "directly" to the sailors, workers or peasants with his ideas if the "Old Bolsheviks" did not agree with them, or were too cautious and conservative to implement them, as he had in 1917. He by 1919 talks not in revolutionary Promethean terms, but on topics such as the need to bring modern technological methods from the United States and Germany into the Russian factories. These ideas even included Taylorism, and that despite Lenin's own earlier critique of Taylorism as a new stage of capitalist exploitation of the industrial worker.

Even more important, he began to view his own Bolshevik co-leaders increasingly uncritically, as a "thin line" separating Russia from counter-revolution, chaos and restoration of capitalism. Where in 1917, only Trotsky and Bukharin and a handful of others supported his radical views, by 1918-1919 his command of the Bolshevik Party was unchallenged.

While Lenin certainly deserves more recognition than he usually gets for foreseeing and combatting bureaucratic and authoritarian trends in 1922-1923, his acquiescence to those trends during 1918-1921 should not be overlooked either. A different type of view on this matter was that of Rosa Luxemburg, who, while supporting the November Revolution in Russia, nonetheless wrote from her jail cell on the

need for greater democracy after the revolution. The fact that the other major Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, were even further from such a view than Lenin does not mean that Lenin should be viewed uncritically.

Yes, Lenin is very democratic, critical and incisive in 1922-1923 if he is compared with those surrounding him. If however, Lenin's views at this time are compared with his own 1917-1918 Promethean writings, or those of Rosa Luxemburg in 1918-1919, we find that they are much more limited. At a political level, as well as a philosophic one, Lenin thus failed to think through to their conclusion the new ideas he developed during the years 1914-1917, except for the writings we have singled out: those on imperialism and the national question, and those on the state and revolution. On many other questions, from Taylorism to economic planning to much of his assessment of Western "Left wing communism," Lenin's views are not new or original.

It is not a question of being able to predict the horrors of Stalinism. No one is likely to have foreseen such a new and tyrannical development out of the 1917 revolution. But a major political intellect such as Lenin can be criticized for where he stops short of a full development of his own most original ideas. These were his ideas on

the state and revolution, and on dialectics, which were never carried through to a conclusion.

On the other hand, he was untiring in his efforts to reform and to shake up the new Soviet state apparatus, to make it more responsive and democratic. This meant everything from removing certain leaders such as Stalin, to restoring freedom of trade in the countryside, to renewing the battle for national autonomy, to attempting to strengthen the trade unions as a check not only on the private capitalists, but also on the party and state bureaucracy.

Most important and dramatic of all of these efforts was his last struggle with Stalin while on his deathbed. The key issue, as we saw, was national self-determination for Georgia. That struggle revealed not only where Stalin was heading, and, as we saw, Lenin's ambivalent critique of his fellow Bolsheviks. It also revealed that none -- including such gifted leaders and theorists as Bukharin and Trotsky -- saw even remotely as well as Lenin did where Stalin was heading. As we saw, Bukharin, became Stalin's co-leader and theorist in the battle with Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, while Trotsky, who did oppose Stalin, did not do so on the terms Lenin had asked him to do: the national question in Georgia. Instead, Trotsky fought Stalin over

the less controversial issue of economic planning.

At the root of Lenin's ambivalence on the question of the new Soviet state was his attitude toward the 1902 concept of the vanguard party to lead as spelled out in the posthumously famous work, What Is To be Done?.

While the 1905 and 1917 revolutions had caused him greatly to modify that concept, and while in 1917-1918 at the height of the revolution, it might have appeared that he had abandoned it, in fact he never did. It lay in the background, waiting to be picked up again after 1918. Just as he never made explicit his debt to Hegelian dialectics, so he never concretized explicitly how far State and Revolution and other 1917-1918 writings had taken him from the concept of a vanguard party to lead. Vanguardism and appreciation for the spontaneously self-developing revolutionary subject coexisted in his theorizing, seemingly without mutual contact. That was another major source of Lenin's ambivalence, one which needs further research. The key to everything was Lenin's stopping short of anything like a total and public theoretical break with the concept not only of politics but of Marxist dialectics in the Second International and pre-1914 Bolshevism. Lenin's new and innovative concepts of dialectic and of revolution involved original but unsynthesized and unfinished work in

philosophy, economics and social theory. His furthest advances from all other Marxist leaders of his time -- on national liberation and novel forms of grassroots democracy grounded in Hegelian dialectics -- constituted nothing less than a new concept of Marxism. But because of its unfinished nature and Lenin's own ambivalence toward some of the newest aspects of his dialectics of revolution, it remained a contradictory and unclear legacy. This led to the originality of his dialectic being very often covered over, or obscured -- and hence missed altogether.

We have sought in this dissertation to begin to lift the veil, not only on Lenin's Hegel studies, but also on his whole revolutionary vision which was influenced by the Hegelian concept of self-development of the subject and the transformation into opposite. This contribution to the dialectical sociology of revolution has been missed by almost all writers on Lenin as well as the sociology of revolution. The achievement of Lenin in this area offers fruitful insights for the sociology of social change and revolution.

Footnotes - Chapter Eight

1. Henri Chambre, review of Dunayevskaya's Philosophy and Revolution, Slavic Review (December 1974).
2. Explicit and public calls for a totally new concept of Marxist philosophy did not emerge within world Marxism until the 1920's with a younger generation of writers, Lukacs, Gramsci and Korsch, followed a bit later by Marcuse and the Frankfurt School. On the other hand, these new writers, unlike Lenin, tended to divorce their philosophical conclusions from their political ones.

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