

THE INFLUENCES OF CHERNYSHEVSKY, TKACHEV, AND  
NECHAEV ON THE  
POLITICAL THOUGHT OF V.I. LENIN

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### ABSTRACT

The collapse of the Soviet Union has challenged Marxist political theory. Many people saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as a defeat of Marxism. Most scholars of Political Theory realize that Lenin did not follow Marxist writings. However, most still consider Lenin as predominately a Marxist. This thesis will examine the source of Lenin's ideas on Class, the Party, and the Revolution, and will trace these differences with Marx to Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and Nechaev. It will illustrate the extent of the influence of Lenin's Russian, non-Marxist, predecessors.

Lenin did indeed study and adopt aspects of Marxism, but he differed with him in some important areas, particularly Class, the Party, and the Revolution. Marx, writing in Western Europe, sought human emancipation, while Lenin, in backward, autocratic Russia, sought political emancipation from the Tsarist autocracy. This resulted in differences between the thought and writings of Lenin and Marx.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Chapter One-Introduction.....	2
Chapter Two-Lenin vs. Marx.....	12
Class and Class Consciousness	
The Role of the Party	
The Revolution	
Chapter Three-Lenin's Marxism.....	42
A Background of Lenin's Marxist, and	
Revolutionary Heritage	
Chapter Four-Chernyshevsky and Lenin.....	71
Chernyshevsky and the Russian Revolutionary	
Movement	
Chernyshevsky and Lenin on Class	
Chernyshevsky and Lenin on the Party	
Chernyshevsky and Lenin on the Revolution	
Chapter Five-Tkachev and Lenin.....	96
Tkachev and Lenin on Class	
Tkachev and Lenin on the Party	
Tkachev and Lenin on the Revolution	
Chapter Six-Nechaev and Lenin.....	123
The early Life of Nechaev	
Nechaev and Bakunin, Return From Exile,	
and Murder	
Nechaev's Writings- The Epitome of a	
Revolutionary and Lenin.	
Conclusions.....	152
Appendix I- <u>A Program of Revolutionary Action</u> .....	163
Appendix II- <u>The Revolutionary Catechism</u> .....	167
Appendix III- Appendix of Names.....	172
Bibliography.....	176

To me the fundamental difference between Marx and Lenin is visible on almost every page they wrote. It is not a contradiction, but a difference of mental attitude. And it is not a complete difference, because Marx had in him the practical scientist, and Lenin never consciously got rid of the metaphysician . . . Marx states that such a thing will happen in such a way. Lenin states that such is the only way to make it happen. (Max Eastman as quoted in Page, Lenin, 36.)



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, led the Bolsheviks to victory in the Russian revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks, who later changed their name to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), ruled the Soviet Union since 1917 and only recently has their powerful grasp on the people of the fifteen Union Republics been removed. The Soviet Union has ceased to exist. Many people may argue that it is the defeat of "Marxism" or "Communism". However, what was in place in the Soviet Union cannot be called Marxism, or at least orthodox Marxism. It should be referred to as the collapse of Leninism, or as it is often called Marxist-Leninism.

Lenin created the illusion that he was a follower of orthodox Marxism and vehemently attacked any attempts to revise Marxism, such as Bernstein's Evolutionary Socialism. The truth is, however, that Lenin himself revised Marxist thought and adapted it to fit the conditions which existed in Russia during his time. Marx believed that the proletariat was the class which would bring about the socialist revolution. He illustrated in some of his works that capitalism had inherent contradictions. Capitalism itself would create its own enemies in the form of the

proletariat, who would develop consciousness on their own. Thus the revolution would be made by a class conscious of their historical mission. Lenin, on the other hand, substituted the party for the class. Lenin did not believe that the proletariat would develop anything more than trade-union consciousness without the help of an outside source. For Lenin, that outside source would be a party of professional revolutionaries; a vanguard of the proletariat to spur on the consciousness of the workers and to make the revolution happen. The differences between Marx and Lenin will be discussed in chapter two. Marx believed that the revolution would happen. Lenin chose to make it happen.

Lenin's thought was quite different from Marx's. The alterations which he made to Marxism created what became known as Bolshevism, or Leninism. Many scholars note that Lenin was not an orthodox Marxist, but few explain the roots of his alterations. Lenin was no doubt a "Marxist" but he was just as strongly a Russian thinker. Lenin can be placed at the end of a long list of nineteenth century Russian thinkers. He attempted to "mold" Marxism to his moment of history. Lenin was concerned first and foremost with the emancipation of **Russian** society from Tsarist autocracy. His intellectual heritage is one of great interest and will be examined in chapter two. This will enable one to see how Lenin developed his "Marxism" from a Russian revolutionary tradition and how he merged the two to form Bolshevism. He

followed a rich tradition of Russian revolutionary writers including, N.G. Chernyshevsky, P.N. Tkachev, and S.G. Nechaev. Indeed, the key elements of Leninism, as taken from his writings and the actions of the Bolshevik (and Communist) Party until Lenin's death, can be traced backward to these very three writers.

Perhaps one of the most important books that Lenin read was What is to Be Done? by N.G. Chernyshevsky. Unlike some accounts by Soviet historians, Lenin was not always a Marxist. In fact, he first turned to revolutionary writings only after his brother Alexander was executed for plotting to assassinate the Tsar. The revolutionary ideals which he first came in contact with were not Marxist but populist. Lenin read Chernyshevsky before he read Marx and learned the dialectic from him, rather than from Marx or Hegel. Chernyshevsky was one of the most important revolutionary writers of the 1860's and 1870's. Some of his ideas included finding specific solutions to specific problems, and stating that the liberals could not be trusted and thus revolution must come from below. Lenin had a high regard for Chernyshevsky, even after he had become a "Marxist", and defended What is to be Done? against criticisms. He stated,

I declare that it is inadmissible to call What is to Be Done? primitive and untalented. Under its influence hundreds of people became revolutionaries. . . . It also captivated me. It ploughed me over again completely. . . . It is a work which gives

one a charge for a whole life. Untalented works cannot have such influence.<sup>1</sup>

Chernyshevsky had faith in the ability of the "new men", as he calls them in his major work, to build a new society. Chernyshevsky was one of the first radical writers which Lenin read. The only other writer to have such an effect on Lenin was Marx. Chapter four will cover the similarities between Lenin's ideas and actions and Chernyshevsky's writings.

Chernyshevsky affected a great deal of the intelligentsia of the late 1800's, including two others who affected Lenin greatly, P.N. Tkachev and S. Nechaev. Tkachev was important for Lenin as he built upon the ideas which were put forward by Chernyshevsky. Tkachev was the first to advance the view that a small revolutionary minority should, and must, seize state power and use it to bring about the socialist revolution. His socialist society was based on populist ideals not Marxist. He believed in the possibility of bypassing capitalism. He believed that in this way Russia could "skip a stage", that of capitalism. Lenin also held Tkachev's writings in very high esteem as Bonch-Bruyevich, the librarian for most of the exiles, said,

Not only did V.I. himself read these works of Tkachev, he also recommended that all of us familiarize ourselves with the valuable writings of this original thinker. More than once, he asked

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<sup>1</sup> as quoted in Rolf Theen, Lenin: Genesis and Development of a Revolutionary. (New York: Lippincott, 1973), 59.

newly-arrived comrades if they wished to study the illegal literature. "Begin" V.I. would advise, "by reading and familiarizing yourself with Tkachev's *Nabat*. . . . This is basic and will give you tremendous knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

Tkachev built on some of the ideas put forward by Chernyshevsky as well as putting forth his own. The fifth chapter of the thesis will deal with Tkachev's influence on Lenin.

Sergei Nechaev contributed a very important fragment to Lenin's thought. He outlined the necessity for a professional revolutionary party. Nechaev called for a revolutionary who must be completely dedicated to the task, to the point of willing to die for it. The revolutionary group must be elite and must obey an iron discipline. Much of the organization of the Bolshevik Party can be traced to Nechaev's ideas. Lenin read Nechaev and took his Revolutionary Catechism and remoulded it in Marxist terms into the organization of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin admired Nechaev because he had no emotion in the destruction of a society, as Lenin did not in the destruction of Imperial Russia.<sup>3</sup> The effect which Nechaev had on Lenin's ideas and actions will be discussed in chapter six.

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<sup>2</sup> as quoted in Albert L. Weeks, The First Bolshevik: A Political Biography of Peter Tkachev. (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 29.

The concern of this thesis is to illustrate how much Lenin's so-called "Marxist" thought can be attributed to his Russian heritage, particularly these three writers. These three have been chosen due to the importance of their non-Marxist influences upon Lenin. They form a chain of thinkers, tied to each other, of which Lenin is the last in line. The second chapter deals with the differences between Marx's writings and Lenin's writings and actions. The third chapter deals with how Lenin developed his peculiar mix of ideas and how he learned and "developed" his Marxism. The next three chapters trace back some of Lenin's differences with Marx to Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and Nechaev. Lastly, and briefly, the conclusion will summarize the arguments made throughout this thesis.

Before proceeding into the heart of the Thesis, a critical review of Literature must first be presented. There were some limits which I had in writing this Thesis. I have a working knowledge of German but I do not speak or read Russian. Therefore, I had to rely heavily upon translated materials, but I do not see that as much of a problem. There are many translations of Marx and Lenin, and only once did I need to use a German edition to clarify the English. For Marx, the primary work consulted was the Communist Manifesto, which explains a great part of his views on class, party, and the revolution. As well as this, the German Ideology and the Contribution to the Critique of

Hegel's Philosophy of Right-Introduction, are important sources. For Lenin's ideas on these questions one need primarily to look at What is to Be Done? However, some other works were also consulted, such as The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back and Two Tactics of Social Democracy. The State and Revolution was not used as a major source as many theorists and historians consider it as unrepresentative of Lenin's thought. Lenin penned The State and Revolution at a time when the chances of a successful revolution appeared bleak. Most of the ideas in it were not followed once the Bolsheviks seized power.

The sources used for chapter three were mostly secondary sources. This chapter was included to present a view of Lenin's Marxist influences. The material in this chapter could have come from any number of books but I chose to cite mainly from Haimson, The Russian Marxists, Gleason, Young Russia, and Offord, The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880's.

The sources used for the comparisons in the fourth chapter centred on the two versions of What is To Be Done?; Chernyshevsky's original and Lenin's famous pamphlet of 1902-1903 and Chernyshevsky's Selected Essays. As well as this, many secondary sources have been consulted, of which the most valuable ones have been Woehrlin's Chernyshevsky and Valentinov's Encounters with Lenin. Valentinov's book

provides good first person accounts between Lenin and other revolutionaries. These sources should provide good information to illustrate that Lenin did not only read Chernyshevsky, but that he incorporated many of his ideas into his own thought.

The primary works used in the fifth chapter have been Venturi's Roots of Revolution, Weeks', The First Bolshevik, and Hardy's, The Critic as a Jacobin. Numerous other secondary sources were also consulted to verify certain points. There is very little of Tkachev's writings translated into English, however, these books, as well as others, have numerous tracts of Tkachev's translated.

The sources used for the sixth chapter, on Nechaev and Lenin, are similar to the fifth chapter. Very few of Nechaev's writings exist in Russian or in English. Most of them were destroyed while he was held captive in the Peter and Paul Fortress. However, some of his writings that do exist are translated in part or in whole in other texts. Two of them have been reproduced in Appendix I: A Program of Revolutionary Action, and Appendix II: The Revolutionary Catechism. Other invaluable sources include Pomper, Sergei Nechaev, and Gleason, Young Russia.

A few words must also be given on transliteration. There are different ways to transliterate a word from Russian to English, e.g.) Nechaev or Nechayev, Chernyshevskii or Chernyshevsky. I have used the most



common English form of the given word or the form used in a particular citation, e.g.) Zasulich instead of Zazulich.

Once I have used a given form, I have stayed with that particular spelling of that word or name.

Lenin's prescription for party organization was virtually identical with that of Tkachev, and in his concept of the "professional revolutionary" we can recognize many attributes of Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov and the fanatic, totally dedicated "doomed man" described in Nechaev's sinister Catechism. Indeed, during the years ahead, Lenin himself, like no other man before him, was to become-in the words of Karl Radek-the personification of the will to revolution (Theen, Lenin, 96).

A proper bourgeois revolution cannot be carried out without a Jacobin purge-to say nothing of a socialist revolution. It requires a dictatorship, and the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a Jacobin mentality in the people who set it up. Everything is interconnected here. The dictatorship of the proletariat is an absolutely meaningless expression without Jacobin coercion. (Lenin in talking to Valentinov in Page, Lenin, 71.)

## CHAPTER TWO: LENIN AS OPPOSED TO MARX

Was Lenin a Marxist? This question has come under examination numerous times, including before Lenin and the Bolsheviks had seized power. There are varying schools of interpretation. Some, especially the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, still hold that Lenin was an orthodox Marxist. More prevalent, is the conception that Lenin altered Marx and fused it with his own experiences in Russia. What the debates often centre around is whether Lenin's alterations to Marx were minor, so as to adapt it to Russia, or whether they fundamentally altered Marx. Rolf Theen calls Lenin's thought a fusion of Western Marxism, Russian revolutionary thought and Lenin's distinct psychology.<sup>4</sup> Maximilien Rubel believes that,

Lenin's theoretical "innovation" in regard to Marx's theory can be considered a reversal of historical materialism that is generally identified by the whole Marxist school with Marx's main contribution to social science.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Theen, Lenin, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Maximilien Rubel, "The Relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism" in Revolutionary Russia. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 319.

Despite which side one takes, the theories of Marx and Lenin, although sharing some things in common, differ considerably in important areas. There is little doubt that Lenin believed in much of what Marx wrote. However, he did make fundamental alterations to Marx's writings, which this thesis will argue is a result of the influence of his Russian heritage. An examination of three areas of Marx's theory and Lenin's writings will illustrate some of the differences, and similarities, in their thought. The first area to be examined will be Class and class consciousness, the second will be the role and composition of the Party, and the third will be the nature of the revolution.

#### **Marx and Lenin and Class and Class Consciousness**

The role of the proletariat and class consciousness is fundamental to Marx's theory. Lenin agrees with Marx on the importance of the proletariat and the importance of class consciousness but disagrees with him on how it will develop. First, let us take a look at some of Marx's ideas on class and class consciousness. For Marx "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"<sup>6</sup> He places the role of class as a dominant factor in the relations of men. The capitalist era of the bourgeoisie, known as capitalism, sees the state controlled

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 35.

by the bourgeoisie. As Marx writes, "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie"<sup>7</sup> Capitalism destroys much of the old world, much of what was noble and good. It reduces the "family relation to a mere money relation" and converted most occupations "into its paid wage-labourers"<sup>8</sup> Capitalism is forced to constantly revolutionize production so as to survive. Everything that was old is destroyed and everything that is new, soon becomes outdated. "All that is solid melts into air".<sup>9</sup> However, the nature of capital then, is such that competition creates moments of overproduction. Therefore, Capital suffers periodic crises, each one worse than the previous. The conquest of new markets and the further exploitation of old ones allows capital to evade these crises but in doing so make the next one worse and "diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented."<sup>10</sup>

On top of this, the bourgeoisie and capitalism bring their own enemies upon themselves. Capital, due to its nature, requires the existence of a working class, the proletariat. As Marx states,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons--the modern working class--the proletarians.<sup>11</sup>

Capital cannot do anything to prevent the existence and growth of the proletariat. Private property is the basis of capital and to preserve its existence, its opposite, the propertyless proletariat is kept in existence.<sup>12</sup> The proletariat is the only class which has a hope of emancipating mankind because it is a "class in civil society which is not a class of civil society". The proletariat "claims no traditional status but only a human status". The proletariat must emancipate all of society to emancipate itself.<sup>13</sup> This answers the question of why class is important and why the proletariat is an historical class, but the question still remains: How will they develop consciousness of their historical mission?

The proletariat is a class,

which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages . . . a class which comprises the majority of the members of society and in which there develops a consciousness of the need

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, "Alienation and Social Classes" in Robert C. Tucker, The Marx-Engels Reader-- Second Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right-Introduction." in T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, editors, Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. (Markham: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1986), 190.

for a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

Marx believed that the proletariat would inevitably develop class consciousness due to the nature of capital.

Consciousness is directly related to material activity. It is simply conscious existence. When the proletariat begin to see the situation which they are in, they will realize that they must change it. The material conditions in which the proletariat live mold their consciousness. As capitalism expands and develops, so to does the consciousness of the proletariat. Marx's conception of consciousness is that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."<sup>15</sup>

The nature of capitalism is such that there is an ever increasing tendency for the concentration of capital. This in turn brings more proletariat together, and its strength grows. The increase in the use of machinery makes the proletariat's lives even more precarious. This creates conflicts. Capital will attempt to increase the amount of surplus value that the proletariat create either by lengthening the working day, or by intensifying the labour process. The proletariat will resist such changes, bringing them into ever-increasing conflict with the owners of the means of production. The workers will begin to form unions

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<sup>14</sup> Karl Marx, "The German Ideology" in Bottomore and Rubel Selected Writings, 79.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

to defend themselves against the owners of the means of production. Marx states that the workers are seldom victorious, but that the real success of their battles is the increased organization of the workers. The organization of the proletariat turns the workers first into a class, and then into a political party. The struggle against the owners of the means of production is a class struggle but it is also a political struggle.<sup>16</sup> Capital will attempt to lower its costs by using cheap labour. As the proletariat is deskilled and technology fragments skilled work into unskilled work, labour power becomes easier to replace and therefore, cheaper. As capital develops there is a trend towards the increasing pauperization of the proletariat. More and more join the army of surplus labour. To free itself from the bonds of capitalism, the proletariat must change society, and they, therefore, take on a political role. The working-class movement and the working-class party become considered as one in the same. Thus, economic battles become political battles, as was the case for the eight-hour day:

And in this way, out of separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a movement of the class. . . . Though these movements presuppose a certain

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<sup>16</sup> Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 43-45.



degree of previous organization, they are in turn equally a means of developing this organization.<sup>17</sup>

To summarize, for Marx the proletariat would develop a revolutionary class consciousness simply due to working conditions and every day life under capitalism.<sup>18</sup> The proletariat will become conscious of their historical role because of their material conditions, ie) their poverty. The nature of capital is such that the proletariat are the only truly revolutionary class, as they are outside of civil society. To emancipate themselves, they must emancipate all of society. Capitalism contains the seeds for its own downfall, the proletariat, and they will use these crises to help capitalism collapse and transform society. Marx had the following to say about what he did for class:

And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production, 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the

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<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, "Letter to Bolte", as quoted in John A. Debrizzi, "Marx and Lenin: Class, Party and Democracy" in Studies in Soviet Thought. (24(2), August 1982), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Debrizzi, Marx and Lenin, 100. Some theorists argue that Marx's conceptions were only applicable for Laissez faire capitalism.

transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.<sup>19</sup>

Lenin, like Marx, believed that the proletariat was a revolutionary class. Lenin sees the Russian proletariat as an example from which the world can learn. He sees them as "the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat."<sup>20</sup> For Lenin, only the proletariat, because of its unique class position (as Marx outlined), could be the "vanguard fighter for political liberty and for democratic institutions."<sup>21</sup> Lenin saw the proletariat's role as helping to bring about political emancipation, which he saw as necessary in Tsarist Russia. He was not as concerned with "human" emancipation or the "emancipation of all others", which is what Marx was primarily concerned with and saw as the role of the proletariat. Lenin followed Marx's writings quite closely in dealing with the role of the proletariat as the only revolutionary class. However, Lenin stressed the Russian proletariat over other proletariat. This will be discussed in later chapters concerning Lenin and Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and Nechaev. Lenin was dealing in his particular moment of history. He

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Marx, "Letter to Joseph Weydemeyer, March 5th, 1852" as quoted in Tucker, The Marx-Engels Reader, 220.

<sup>20</sup> V.I. Lenin, What is to Be Done? in Robert C. Tucker, editor, The Lenin Anthology. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), 22.

<sup>21</sup> V.I. Lenin, The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 9-10.

also stretched the meaning of Marx's writings by referring to a segment of the peasantry, those who were exploited by other peasants, as the "rural proletariat".<sup>22</sup> Lenin, attempting to apply Marxism to underdeveloped Russia, had to somehow deal with the majority of the population which was not proletariat, but peasants. Thus, he coined the term "rural proletariat" to get around this problem. Lenin did concur with Marx on the point of capital tending to concentrate itself, which in turn also concentrates the workers. Lenin says the following about capitalism creating a mass of proletariat:

In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation [sic]. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the "lower depths" of utter destitution, savagery and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class."<sup>23</sup>

Where Lenin goes off on a tangent from Marx is his stress on the organization of the working class. Lenin believed that the working class would only develop the beginnings of consciousness on their own and needed help from outside. Lenin also pointed out that the workers in Russia were

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>23</sup> V.I. Lenin, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 119.

organized in very large enterprises and thus easier to organize.

Lenin believed that the struggle with the owners of the means of production would teach the workers that the owners are antagonistic to the goals and demands of the working class. This would help to teach the workers that they would have to fight for any real improvement in their position. This is the acquisition of a very basic level of consciousness, but no more.<sup>24</sup> Lenin, in an article entitled, "On Strikes" states,

What a great moral influence strikes have, how they affect workers who see that their comrades have ceased to be slaves. . . . Every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital . . . it is strikes that have gradually taught the working-class of all countries to struggle against the governments for workers' rights and for the rights of the people as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

In this passage, Lenin recognizes that strikes work toward the consciousness of the proletariat. However, he does not believe that the proletariat can alone develop consciousness of their historical mission. He does not believe that the workers can themselves bring down capitalism in one of its crises. Lenin wrote in What is to Be Done? that the workers in Russia could not develop any real class consciousness.

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<sup>24</sup> John Ehrenberg, "Communists and Proletarians: Lenin on Consciousness and Spontaneity" in Studies in Soviet Thought. (25(4), May 1983), 289.

<sup>25</sup> V.I. Lenin, "On Strikes", as quoted in Debrizzi, Marx and Lenin, 104-105.

They were conscious of the antagonisms of their employers but not of society. He believed that the workers could not escape concerning themselves solely with economic matters. Perhaps one of Lenin's most famous phrases is the following:

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

Lenin continues in the same work by stating,

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected-unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other.<sup>27</sup>

Lenin believed, as Marx did, that the working class, the proletariat, was the class which would lead the socialist revolution. It could attain its, and therefore mankind's, emancipation only through revolutionary means. However, Marx believed that capitalism would cause the proletariat to develop political consciousness, while Lenin believed that they needed an outside source to help them:

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers.<sup>28</sup>

For Lenin this outside source was the Communist Party.

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<sup>26</sup> Lenin, What is to Be Done, in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 50.

### **Marx and Lenin and the Role of the Party**

Some of the greatest differences between Marx and Lenin deal with the role and composition of the party. Marx saw the party as part of the class (the proletariat). Lenin, however, did not agree. He believed that the party must be composed of professional revolutionaries and must bring political consciousness and organization to the working-class movement. This is most evident in Nechaev and will be further elaborated on in Chapter Six.

For Marx, the Communists were simply the most advanced segments of the working-class. The Communists have the advantage of knowing that history will proceed in their favour.<sup>29</sup> Armed with Marx's theory, they know that capitalism will collapse due to its internal contradictions. For Marx, "the Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties".<sup>30</sup> The "party" for Marx is virtually the same as "the class". The Communists are simply the most advanced of the proletariat and thus are "the theorists of the proletariat".<sup>31</sup> Marx was against any idea of others leading the working class to revolution. The workers, for Marx, will develop consciousness of their historical destiny on their own accord. Marx stated that,

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<sup>29</sup> Marx, Communist Manifesto, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>31</sup> Marx, "The Poverty of Philosophy" as quoted in Bottomore and Rubel, Selected Writings, 80.

We cannot ally ourselves, therefore, with people who openly declare that the workers are too uneducated to free themselves and must first be liberated from above by philanthropic big bourgeois and petty bourgeois.<sup>32</sup>

Marx was also against anyone who founded a socialist "sect". He recognized that sects, and thus their leaders, were inescapable, but he did not believe that they should lead the working class. He stated that leaders of sects,

are an unavoidable evil: with time they are shaken off. . . . All the socialist founders of sects belong to a period in which the working class themselves were neither sufficiently trained and organised by the march of capitalist society itself to enter as historical agents upon the world's stage, nor were the material conditions of their emancipation sufficiently matured.<sup>33</sup>

Lenin could fit the description of an undesirable for Marx in the above two quotes as he advocated both professional revolutionaries and he himself could be considered a leader of a sect. This will be covered more closely after an examination of Marx's views on the role of the "party".

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<sup>32</sup> Karl Marx, "Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, et al." in The First International and After. edited by David Fernbach, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), 375.

<sup>33</sup> Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France" as quoted in Debrizzi, "Marx and Lenin", 102.

As stated earlier, Marx considered the party<sup>34</sup> as simply part of the class. The party was not synonymous with the class but was a part of it. For Marx, the party is part of the proletariat **not** an outside force. The Communists, "do not set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement."<sup>35</sup> Their aims are not any different than those of the proletariat themselves and other proletarian parties. That is, their immediate aims are, "the formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat."<sup>36</sup> The Communists have the advantage of "clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."<sup>37</sup> The "party", in other words, simply helps the proletariat in its historical mission. The proletariat will naturally and inevitably overthrow capitalism. The "party" helps the proletariat become spontaneous. As Marx wrote,

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<sup>34</sup> Marx was somewhat unclear of what he meant by "party". By examining the German text it appears that he seems to have favoured the notion of movement over party, **Bewegung** over **partei**. This illustrates that the proletariat were themselves the "movement" and were not to be led by a party in the traditional meaning of the word. See Karl Marx, Manifest Der Kommunistischen Partei. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1969), 61-63.

<sup>35</sup> Marx, Communist Manifesto, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 49.



an international bond of the working classes can ever ensure their definitive triumph. This want has given birth to the International Working Men's Association. That Association has not been hatched by a sect or a theory. It is the spontaneous growth of the proletarian movement; which itself is the offspring of the natural and irrepressible tendencies of modern society.<sup>38</sup>

The only role which Marx gives the party in assisting the proletariat is to help them develop until they are able to fend for themselves. This occurs only when the proletariat is not very advanced in its organization. If the proletariat's "party" (which are themselves proletariat), do not help their brothers, then the proletariat as a whole could "remain a mere plaything in their[bourgeoisie] hands."<sup>39</sup> In other words, Marx believed that the Communists could help the rest of the proletariat with tactics. Lenin held quite different views on the composition of the party and its members and the role of the party.

Marx believed that the primary force in the revolution would be the class; the proletariat. For Marx, writing in Germany, political emancipation had been attained. What was sought was human emancipation. However, Lenin substituted "the party" for "class". Lenin believed that what was more important to the revolution was that the

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<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, "Report to the Brussels Congress" in The First International and After, 99.

<sup>39</sup> Marx, "Letters to Americans", as quoted in Debrizzi, "Marx and Lenin", 101.

"party" or Communists were professional revolutionaries. Lenin did not distinguish between political and human emancipation. Lenin was primarily concerned with **political** emancipation. Max Eastman gives a fine explanation of how Lenin altered Marx in this respect:

Lenin founded his Bolshevik organization upon a recognition of the indispensable historic function of a group of people who were not defined according to the economic class to which they belonged, but were defined according to their purposive activity and their state of mind.<sup>40</sup>

Marx saw such a class but for him these were bourgeois intellectuals, not leaders of a party to create revolutionaries. Lenin's ideas of whom the party should be composed of is well developed in What is to Be Done?. Lenin attacks tactics and policies which he calls amateurish. He states that the amateur organization of the Russian Marxists of the late nineteenth century can no longer be followed. The secret police network, according to Lenin, was too large and effective for the circles and organizations which they had. He compares these Marxists' tactics to warfare by "peasants armed with clubs against modern troops."<sup>41</sup> Lenin points out that a primary task of the "party" is to "establish an organisation of revolutionaries capable of

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<sup>40</sup> Max Eastman, "Engineer of Revolution" in Stanley W. Page, editor, Lenin: Dedicated Marxist or Revolutionary Pragmatist. (St Louis: Forum Press, 1977), 32.

<sup>41</sup> Lenin, What is to Be Done, in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 62.

lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle."<sup>42</sup> For examples of such revolutionaries Lenin cites not Marxists, but old populists including Khalturin and Zheliabov.<sup>43</sup> These revolutionaries are no longer to be amateurs, but professional revolutionaries, dedicated to making the socialist revolution. Where for Marx the old society will destroy itself and the proletariat will create and build the new one, for Lenin the prime task of the revolution is not building a new society but destroying the old one. This can be seen by the type of revolutionary that Lenin wants. As Lenin puts it,

the struggle against the political police requires special qualities; it requires professional revolutionaries. . . . the organisation of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession . . . all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, must be effaced.<sup>44</sup>

Lenin, as can be seen from the above quote, is concerned with the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy. He is aiming for the political emancipation of Russian society. What is important, as Eastman pointed out, is that Lenin no longer agrees with Marx on who the Communists are. For Lenin, the Communists must be professional revolutionaries.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 64. See Appendix III for further information on Khalturin and Zheliabov.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 66-68.

They do not have to be workers. Marx believed that the proletariat themselves would make the revolution while Lenin has the Vanguard leading the proletariat (and peasantry) to revolution. Lenin makes five assertions about the composition of the Communists and it is worth quoting in full:

I mean professional revolutionaries, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men. I assert: (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organisation, and the more solid this organisation must be . . . ; (3) that such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state, the more we confine the membership of such an organisation to the people who are professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organisation; and (5) the greater will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.<sup>45</sup>

Lenin, then, not only wants professional revolutionaries, but wants a strong organisation. The fifth point states that it will be possible for more revolutionaries to come from the working class. However, as the previous quote showed, Lenin wanted professional revolutionaries, regardless of whether they were workers. The desire for continuity is another way for Lenin to call for a centralist

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

party. Unlike Marx, Lenin also states that other classes can join the movement.

For Marx, Communists were proletarians, but for Lenin Communists were revolutionaries. As Lenin states in Two Tactics of Social Democracy; "the only force capable of gaining a "decisive victory over tsarism" is the people, i.e., the proletariat **and the peasantry**."<sup>46</sup> Again, one can see that Lenin's prime enemy is the Tsarist autocracy, not the bourgeoisie. He is striving for the political emancipation of the common Russian people, workers and peasants. Lenin's differences with Marx carry over to his conception of the role of the party (as has been briefly eluded to.)

Lenin believed that the proletariat on their own could achieve nothing more than trade-union consciousness. Therefore, he gave the party the role of the Vanguard Party of the proletariat. The party was to lead the proletariat "from without". The party was to be a small, centralized party composed of professional revolutionaries. For Lenin, "without a revolutionary party there can be no revolutionary movement".<sup>47</sup> However, he did not necessarily consider this against Marxism. As Lenin wrote:

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<sup>46</sup> Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy, in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 130.

<sup>47</sup> Lenin, as quoted in Jeff Lustig, "On Organization: The Question of the Leninist Party", in Politics and Society. (7(1), 1977), 27.

We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the sciences which socialists must develop . . . we think that an independent elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists; for this theory provides only general guiding principles.<sup>48</sup>

Lenin's major alteration to Marx in this area cannot be treated lightly as Lenin's above quote would have it. Lenin substituted the party, composed of professional revolutionaries, for the class, the proletariat, as the decisive factor in a socialist revolution.

Lenin distrusted the masses' spontaneity. He outlined a major task of the party as the combatting of spontaneity. If the workers are left to their own, they will follow trade-union ideology, which can be equated with bourgeois ideology as it deals with economic, not political matters.<sup>49</sup> The workers will be distracted by their immediate needs for material improvement and self-defense. Lenin believed that, "the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine "class struggle" until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries."<sup>50</sup> Some of the other tasks of the party that Lenin outlined included not dismissing terror as a

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<sup>48</sup> Lenin, from Collected Works, as quoted in Debrizzi, "Marx and Lenin", 108.

<sup>49</sup> Lenin, "What is to Be Done", in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 28-29.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 85.

weapon, and the spreading of propaganda and agitation through placing "our own people everywhere".<sup>51</sup>

A major concern for Lenin was party organization. For Lenin, the party must not be too extensive and it must be as secret as possible. This goes hand in hand with the composition of the party being professional revolutionaries. As well as these, the party, as previously mentioned, must be centralized to its leadership.<sup>52</sup>

Rosa Luxemburg, the German socialist, entered into some debates with Lenin about his theories dealing with the role of the party. She rejected Lenin's notion of centralism as a bastardization of Marx, and criticized the anti-democratic policies of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>53</sup> She had the following to say about Lenin's ideas of centralism:

the two principles on which Lenin's centralism rests are precisely these: 1) The blind subordination in the smallest detail, of all party organs, to the party center, which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all. 2) The rigorous separation of the organized nucleus of revolutionaries from its social-revolutionary surrounding. . . . The ultracentralism asked by Lenin is full of the sterile spirit of the overseer. It is no a positive and creative spirit. . . . Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 48-55.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>53</sup> Bender, The Betrayal of Marx, 279.

<sup>54</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, Leninism and Marxism, as quoted in Bender, The Betrayal of Marx, 200-204.

Luxemburg, a long time critic of revisionism, was one of the few socialists who were not tarnished by supporting the First World War. She also criticized Lenin's conception of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. She claimed that the dictatorship that the Bolsheviks created was, "only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians; that is, dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rules of the Jacobins."<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Lenin did not agree with Marx on the nature and the role of the party. Marx did not call for professional revolutionaries, advocate terror, or invent the one-party state. These, for Lenin, were all derived from his Russian revolutionary past. As Peter Wiles states, "Lenin was quintessentially Russian".<sup>56</sup>

#### MARX AND LENIN AND THE REVOLUTION

Lenin, as shown above, made some fundamental alterations to Marx with respect to the rise of consciousness in the proletariat, the role of the party, and the composition of the party. These changes play a central role in the differences between Marx and Lenin with respect to the timing of the revolution and the nature of the

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<sup>55</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, "The Russian Revolution", as quoted in Rubel, "The Relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism", 319.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Wiles, "Leninism and Weltinnenpolitik" in Survey. (22(3-4), Summer-Autumn 1976), 160.



revolution. Marx believed the revolution would come about because of capitalism's collapse, but Lenin's interpretation was that the revolution would cause the bourgeoisie's defeat and the proletariat could use the state for a transition to socialism. In other words, for Marx there was a need to pass through the stage of capitalism, while Lenin believed that the party could control and harness capital. Marx, thus, predicted that the revolution would occur in an industrially advanced country such as England or Germany, not in backward Russia.

According to N. Berdyaev<sup>57</sup>, a contemporary of Lenin's, Russia at the time of the revolution was not suited at all for a revolutionary theory such as Marxism. Russia was primarily an agricultural country. The majority of the population were peasants, not proletariat. In fact, proportionately there were an insignificant number of proletariat. As well as this Russia had an out-of-date commercial life. However, Marxism was used in Russia, with its adaptations, by Lenin,<sup>58</sup>.

For Marx, capitalism was a stage which was necessary in the progression of history. Marx was a determinist who

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<sup>57</sup> Berdyaev is not the only one who has pointed out that Russia was not ready for Marxism. However, Berdyaev was a contemporary of Lenin's and later as an exile was an opponent of the State which the Bolsheviks created.

<sup>58</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, The Russian Idea. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 249. The main emphasis of this book is the predominance of Russian messianism in Russian writings and in the ideas of its leaders.

believed that capitalism, the rule by the bourgeoisie, followed feudalism and in turn would be followed by socialism. The progression may not be so simple but it would happen nonetheless. Capitalism, as previously mentioned, is forced to concentrate, and thus forced to concentrate its workers, the proletariat. The proletariat develop political consciousness through everyday economic life. Capitalism, due to its own internal contradictions, suffers periodic crises. The struggle of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie begins as a national struggle. This struggle is,

more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat. . . . The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the revolution is something which is inevitable. The revolution will come about during a crisis of capitalism. What is important to note is that for Marx, the proletariat are created by the bourgeoisie in capital. Capital, controlled by the bourgeoisie, is a necessary stage.

During the actual revolution, the proletariat are to be the main force. They will be the ones who control the

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<sup>59</sup> Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 48.

revolution. To emancipate themselves, they must emancipate all other classes from capitalism. Recalling what Marx's conception of the party was; the communists are simply the most advanced sections of the proletariat. As Marx wrote:

To convert social production into one large and harmonious system of free and cooperative labour, general social changes are wanted, changes of the general conditions of society, never to be realized save by the transfer of the organized forces of society, viz., the state power, from capitalists and landlords to the producers themselves.<sup>60</sup>

In a revolution the proletariat, not a "Vanguard" are the ones who should have the power. Substituting a party for the landlords does not free labour. The political element of a revolution is only needed for the "overthrow and dissolution". As soon as the organizing begins, and socialism's, "own purpose and spirit come to the fore, socialism sheds this political covering."<sup>61</sup> Lenin's conception of the revolution is quite different from this. Whereas Marx was concerned with a **social** revolution, Lenin sought to lead a **socialist** revolution.

Marx wrote that "philosophy is the head of this emancipation and the proletariat is its heart"<sup>62</sup> Once consciousness in the proletariat is attained, the revolution

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<sup>60</sup> Marx, "Instructions for delegates to the Geneva Congress". in The First International and After, 90.

<sup>61</sup> Marx as quoted in Bottomore and Rubel, Selected Writings, 243.

<sup>62</sup> Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", as quoted in Marx-Engels Reader, 65.

can come about. As the proletariat, as a class, realized the injustices of society, they will have the knowledge to change it through revolution. Lenin twisted Marx's meaning of this and himself wrote that revolutionary consciousness **must** be brought to the workers from "without", by a Vanguard Party.<sup>63</sup> Lenin did not accept the two-stage theory of revolution, i.e., that a bourgeois revolution had to precede a social revolution. He believed that Russia was almost ready in 1917 for the type of revolution that Marx outlined in the Communist Manifesto. He believed that Russia could "skip" capitalism by seizing the state and using it.<sup>64</sup> As previously mentioned this was not possible as Russia did not fit the conditions for a Marxian social revolution. Berdyaev recalls that Lenin insisted that the revolution would have a distinctly Russian character. He wrote, "He [Lenin] always said that the Russian revolution would not be as the doctrinaires of Marxism pictured it."<sup>65</sup>

During the revolution Lenin and the Bolsheviks did many things which betrayed the principles of Marxism. For example, because of the backwardness of Russia, Lenin used the peasantry as a revolutionary force, coining the term, "rural-proletariat". Lenin called for the seizing of power

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<sup>63</sup> Theen, Lenin, 81.

<sup>64</sup> Theen, Lenin, 85.

<sup>65</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 116.

first, and determining what to do later. He is credited with the following statements:

Seizure of power is the point of the uprising. Its political task will be clarified after the seizure.

such a guarantee [of the Bolsheviks having a majority] history has never proffered, and is absolutely in no position to proffer in any revolution.

To wait for the constituent assembly, which will obviously not be for us, is senseless.<sup>66</sup>

It is obvious from these quotes that Lenin did not emphasize in his writings that the proletariat was not the majority in Russia at that point in time. For Marx this was not the time for revolution, but Lenin, with his Jacobin professional revolutionaries, decided to make it the time for revolution. He wanted to seize the state and use it for his conception of "the dictatorship of the proletariat". This concept will be developed more in Chapter Five, on the similarities between Tkachev and Lenin. Unlike Marx, Lenin wanted to use state power, not destroy it immediately. He wrote that,

the proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization of force . . . [and] violence, in order to suppress the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the great mass of the population-the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the semi-proletarians-in the establishment of a socialist economy.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> all three quotes by Lenin, "Toward the Seizure of Power", in Michael Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin: P.N. Tkachev", in The Review of Politics. (6(3), July 1944), 348.

<sup>67</sup> Lenin as quoted in Theen, Lenin, 116.

Indeed, the revolution saw the workers, the proletariat who were supposed to be in control, lose that control to their "vanguard". The soviets became battle-grounds for party conflicts. The decisions which were made in the soviets were seldom made by the workers, but by the party caucuses.<sup>68</sup> Later in the revolution, the Bolsheviks began to nationalize industries. This nationalization saw the workers lose control over their workplace, the opposite of what was supposed to happen in a social revolution. This created hostility from workers' opposition groups and trade-unions. The proletariat were against the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>69</sup>

Maxim Gorky, the famed Russian writer, became appalled by the excesses of the Bolshevik regime and believed that the good sense of the working class would prevail over Lenin and his Bolsheviks:

but I believe that the good sense of the working class and its awareness of its historical tasks will soon open the eyes of the proletariat to the utter impossibility of realizing Lenin's promises, to all the depth of his madness, and to his Nechaev and Bakunin brand of anarchism.<sup>70</sup>

He believed, as Marx wrote in quote which was cited earlier, that the working class will throw off its leaders of

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<sup>68</sup> Jim Wohlforth, "Transition to the Transition", in New Left Review. No 130, 73.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>70</sup> Maxim Gorky in Novaya Zhizn, No 177, Nov 7th(20), 1917, as taken from Page, Lenin, 79.

"sects". Gorky was horrified by the way Lenin manipulated the working class. He wrote:

Vladimir Lenin is introducing a socialist order in Russia by Nechaev's method-full steam ahead through the swamp.

The working class is for Lenin, what ore is for a metalworker. Is it possible under all present conditions to mold a socialist state from this ore?<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Lenin's idea of revolution and how it should progress is quite different from Marx's. Lenin's Russian heritage played a large role in his alterations to Marx as can be evidenced in the quotes by Gorky. At times Lenin followed Marx's writings that capitalist society would lead inevitably towards the social revolution while at the same time he often asserted that the proletarian revolution would have to be lead by intellectuals, the Vanguard, if it was to ever take place.<sup>72</sup> He would not wait for the social revolution, but would make a socialist revolution. John Ehrenberg sums it up well by saying that, "If the Marxist in Lenin led him to believe in the rational capacity of the common man, the Russian revolutionary in him was deeply suspicious, contemptuous and fearful of the people."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Gorky, in *Ibid*, No 177, Nov 10th (23) 1917, in Page, Lenin, 80.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas T. Hammond, "Leninist Authoritarianism Before the Revolution", in Simmons, Continuity and Change, 144.

<sup>73</sup> John Ehrenberg, "Lenin and the Politics of Organization" in Science and Society. (43(1), Spring 1979), 71.

Lenin did not share the same ideas as Marx on consciousness, the party, and the revolution. He altered Marx's writings to suit the conditions in Russia. Lenin applied Marxism to his particular moment in history; to his particular situation in Russia. Lenin was a voluntarist. He wanted to speed history up. He did believe in the historical role of the proletariat but he did not want to pass through capitalism (as a bourgeois stage). Lenin sought a revolution to destroy the old order. He was unclear on and less urgent about the building of a new society. In short he was politically motivated where Marx was humanely and socially motivated. Lenin believed that the proletariat needed to be guided, and thought that they should be guided by a "Vanguard Party" of professional revolutionaries. Lenin wanted to seize state power and use it. He was very much a Jacobin who believed in Marx but was greatly influenced by the Russian Revolutionary tradition.



### CHAPTER THREE: LENIN'S MARXIST INFLUENCES

The heart of this thesis will be covered in the following four chapters, tracing Lenin's ideas back to Russian Revolutionaries. Before that can be done, an examination of Lenin's Marxism must be undertaken. The first chapter of this Thesis concluded that Lenin made some fundamental, as opposed to minor, alterations to Marxist theory. However, when dealing with Lenin, the founder of the World's first "Marxist Country", one cannot ignore the Marxist influences that acted upon him. This chapter will briefly cover a number of important points which must be made before proceeding to the core of this thesis. Three questions must be answered to give a good background to Lenin's Marxist influences: Why did Marxism, as a political theory, develop in Russia?, What was unique about Russian Marxism and who were its proponents?, and lastly, How did Lenin become a Marxist? Some of the reasons why Lenin incorporated so much Russian thought into his "Marxism" will be brought out when these questions are answered.

Backward in almost every respect, Russia in the 1880's was not the place that Marx or Engels had in mind

when talking about the advent of a social revolution. However, the 1880's saw the genesis of the spread of Marxism in Russia, which would eventually lead to the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. Most of those concerned would have scoffed at the suggestion of the rise of Social Democracy in Russia. Whereas Social Democracy required a large proportion of the population to be workers and the establishment of capitalism, Russia was mostly composed of peasants and was predominately an agrarian society. Why then did Social Democracy develop in Russia? The failure of the populists and the merits of Marxism itself, which virtually guaranteed success as history progressed, were the primary reasons why Social Democracy arose in Russia.

The populists were the section of the intelligentsia which advocated a social transformation of Russian society. The key class of society for the populists was the peasant class. Populism arose out of debates between Slavophiles and Westerners. The Slavophiles were those who believed Russia was unique and thus would develop differently than other countries. The Westerners, as their name denotes, believed that Russia should follow the path of the West. The populists inherited the Slavophiles' messianism. They believed that Russia would lead the World to socialism by taking its own path, i.e., avoiding capitalism and basing socialism on the commune and the artel. Almost no "thinking person" in the mid-to-late 1800's escaped the influence of

populist thought.<sup>74</sup> The populists evolved through the 1800's and by the end of the 1860's two main schools of populist thought had evolved: The followers of Lavrov, who stressed that the main purpose of the intelligentsia was to educate the people, and the followers of Bakunin, who wanted to appeal to the peasants' feelings and emotions and prepare them for revolution.

In 1873-74, a large number of populists, following Lavrov's advice, "went to the people" to enlighten them and give them confidence. These populists were mostly young and idealistic. They descended on towns, villages, and the countryside and tried to educate the people to the populists' ideals while living amongst them. However, the peasants, for their part, thought these young people were quite insane and turned most of them over to the police. It is very important to note that the only areas where the populists had any success were in the towns and villages among the workers. The failure of these pilgrimages turned the populists away from Lavrov's teachings and towards Bakunin's.<sup>75</sup> This was the first defeat in the decline of populism and was a step forward for Marxism as many of the intelligentsia began to reexamine their views in light of

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<sup>74</sup> Abbott Gleason, Young Russia: The Genesis of Russian Radicalism in the 1860's. (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 75-76.

<sup>75</sup> Leopold H. Haimson, The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 12-14.

populism's failures. Some populists, as a result of an idealized notion of the peasantry, had begun to realize that the peasants were not as "noble" as they had believed and certainly not as revolutionary.

In 1876 Zemlya i Volya, Land and Freedom, was formed to attempt to consolidate all of the various populist organizations into one party. With the failure of the pilgrimages, the populists, especially the radical ones, began to call for more terrorist acts. The belief was that if the Tsar was assassinated, the regime would crumble. The "terrorists" were very much under the influence of the ideas of Peter Nikitich Tkachev. Tkachev preached violence and the need for an elite, not the peasants themselves, to create a revolution.<sup>76</sup> Lenin, as illustrated in Chapter Two and later in Chapter Four, followed closely in Tkachev's footsteps. Within the party there was dissension on using terrorism. In 1879, at the party's Voronezh Congress, Andrei Zheliabov defended terrorism as a struggle to force the Tsar to grant constitutional rights. This in turn would allow mass agitation. Only Georgii V. Plekhanov spoke out against him. Plekhanov claimed terrorism was rash and impetuous and would drain the revolutionary movement of its drive.<sup>77</sup> Pavel Axelrod eventually sided with Plekhanov, as did some others. The party split into two factions,

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<sup>76</sup> Tkachev will be discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>77</sup> Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 15-17.

*Narodnaya Volya*, or the Peoples' Will, which advocated the use of terrorism, and *Chernyi Peredel*, or the Black Partition, led by Plekhanov. It is interesting to note here that while the leaders of Black Partition eventually became the leading Marxists, it was the Peoples' Will's form of organization that the Bolsheviks later used.

The Peoples' Will carried out a number of "public" executions but their real goal was the assassination of the Tsar. On March 1st, 1881, they succeeded in killing the Tsar. However, this act led to their downfall. Firstly, the peasants did not revolt as they had believed. In fact, the peasants saw the Tsar as their "little father" and grieved his death. As well as this, no constitution was granted. Alexander II had been about to enact some reforms but after his death these were shelved indefinitely. The Peoples' Will also lost most of its leadership as a result of a crackdown by the police after the assassination. This event signalled the long decline of the populist movement.<sup>78</sup> The Black Partition did not fare much better. They formed their groups' headquarters in exile in Geneva. Eventually the remnants of it formed the Marxist Emancipation of Labour Group in 1883. The failure of populism left the door wide open for the proponents of a new theory to step in. However, the first step in the rise of

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<sup>78</sup> Derek Offord, The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880's. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp 37-41.

Marxism in Russia was the conversion of its two leading members, Plekhanov and Axelrod.

Plekhanov was the son of a Hussar captain. He first gained respect and notoriety when he gave a speech at Kazan Square on December sixth, 1876. After his involvement in that demonstration he was forced to flee to Germany for a year. On his return he became the editor of *Land and Freedom's* journal. He laid a lot of emphasis in his articles on the revolutionary potential of the Russian industrial working class, while still adhering to "peasantism".<sup>79</sup> After the split of Zemlya i Volya, he edited Chernyi Peredel with Axelrod. Plekhanov was already swaying towards Marxism while he was still a populist leader. The following speech illustrates Plekhanov's realization of the importance of the growing size of the industrial masses:

Russian industry is not standing still. . . . Need is tearing the peasantry from the land and pushing it to the factory, to the plant . . . in this connection the center of gravity of economic questions is shifting in the direction of industrial centers. The distribution of our forces must conform to this organic process. Fortified in the factory and in the countryside, we will take a position in accord not only with the contemporary situation but also with the entire course of the economic development of Russia.<sup>80</sup>

Plekhanov became converted to Marxism through scientific and statistical study. His "peasantism" arguments on the

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<sup>79</sup> Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 36-39.

<sup>80</sup> as quoted in *Ibid.*, 42-43.

village commune treated the commune as free of internal contradictions and thus it could act as the objective starting block for the social revolution. However, after reading Orlov's Obshchina Ownership in the District of Moscow, his arguments were no longer statistically valid. After this, Plekhanov immersed himself in the works of Marx.<sup>81</sup>

Axelrod was not converted to Marxism in the same way as Plekhanov but what he did share with him was the development of Marxist ideas while he was still a populist leader. In 1874, Paul Axelrod fled to Germany and was warned by the emigre populists, not to pay any attention to the German working class movement. However, Axelrod did not heed their advice and was impressed by the way the German working class met in thousands to defy authority in an autocratic regime.<sup>82</sup> After Plekhanov had been forced to flee to Switzerland, Axelrod drew up a program for a "Great Russian Society of Land And Freedom" and took it to the exile community for approval. The exiles rejected it, calling it reformist. The Program outlined the importance of the industrial working class in the bringing about of a socialist revolution. They said of it, "This is not Populism but Social Democracy".<sup>83</sup> This first hand view of

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>83</sup> as quoted in Ibid., 40-41.

how the working class could be successful in becoming a political identity is what led Axelrod to accept Marxism.

As the populists' hopes began to seem more unattainable, a few new groups looked to the west and its socialist writings, and not solely to Marx. Once populists were prepared to concede that populism had failed in both its forms, propaganda and terrorism, then Marx and his writings could be viewed in Russia in a new light. It could be viewed as a doctrine from which not only Europe, but Russia could draw some conclusions.<sup>84</sup> A number of secret societies and student circles were formed to discuss these new theories and to actively criticize the government. The works of Marx which were most widely read at this time were Capital and The Communist Manifesto.

The first to seriously examine the possibility of applying Marxism, a Western Social Democratic Theory, to Russian conditions were the populist emigres. It was easy for many of them to convert to Marxism as it advocated revolution from below. For many of them it was populism, with the exception of substituting the proletariat for the peasantry.<sup>85</sup> This allowed many of them to accept the failure of the pilgrimages and the failure of the peasantry to revolt. They were able to see this failure as a result of the peasantry not being a revolutionary class. The

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<sup>84</sup> Offord, The Russian Revolutionary Movement, 119.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 117.



minimal success that there was occurred in the towns among the urban workers. Marxism was originally written of approvingly by such populists as Tkachev, Lavrov, and Mikhailovsky, but they never considered it applicable to Russia. However, by the 1880's, Marxism offered some appealing aspects. It offered a deterministic view of history which lessened the capacity and the responsibility of the individual to effect social change. Also, Marxism seemed to offer, unlike Populism, the triumph of socialism due to the progression of history. Lastly, the proletariat was more responsive than the peasantry, which Marx and Engels covered by writing that the peasantry was reactionary, not revolutionary. They coined the phrase, "the idiocy of rural life."<sup>86</sup>

Russian society was changing. As capitalism made more inroads into Russian economic life, the political life also changed. Populism suffered a decline in adherence while Marxism began to rise. Marx saw ideas as weapons which simply needed a material force to wield them. The peasants had failed to offer a material force to transform populist ideas into social transformation. The Russian revolutionaries had to turn to another downtrodden class in society, the proletariat, and with that switch in Emphasis, Marxism strengthened its foothold.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 119-120.

What is important to cover briefly is what Marx and Engels wrote about Russia during the late 1870's and 1880's. Both of them doubted whether Russia could have a social revolution on its own or whether Russia had to follow the path of the West.<sup>87</sup> Engels was inclined to follow the argument that Russia had to follow the same path as everyone else and would have to suffer capitalism to achieve socialism. Marx himself was less sure. He acknowledged that Russia was very distinct and believed that it was possible for Russia to avoid the capitalist stage, but only if there were simultaneous revolutions in the West.<sup>88</sup> This line of thought comes out in his reply to Vera Zasulich, a populist-Marxist emigre, that was written on March 8th, 1881. Marx states,

The analysis given in Capital assigns no reasons for or against the vitality of the rural community, but the special research into this subject which I conducted, the materials for which I obtained from original sources, has convinced me that this community is the mainspring of Russia's social regeneration, but in order that it might function as such one would first have to eliminate the deleterious influences which assail it from every quarter and then to ensure the conditions normal for spontaneous development.<sup>89</sup>

However, the late 1800's saw the increase of industrialization in Russia and the subsequent growth of the

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<sup>87</sup> For examples of this see Marx's letters to Vera Zasulich and Engels' polemic with Tkachev.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 123-125

<sup>89</sup> as quoted in Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader, 675.

proletariat. Capitalism began to grow in Russia which dispelled the idea that there was a possibility of Russia "skipping" capitalism due to the influence and protection provided by the commune.

The first Marxist organization was formed by the formerly populist emigres. Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich were the key members of *Osvobozhdenie Truda*, or the Emancipation of Labour Group. Plekhanov, once he had immersed himself in the works of Marx, turned on his former colleagues, the populists. He applied his new found knowledge of statistics to counter some of the populists' statements. The populists claimed that there were only 800 000 industrial workers in Russia at the last census out of 100 million people. Plekhanov doubted these figures' reliability. He claimed that these figures were arrived at by using poor counting techniques. As well as this, cottage industries were not included and although they may not have been united by capital, they were enslaved by it. Lastly, Plekhanov claimed that the bourgeoisie often hid the true number of workers for tax purposes. These ideas and others, including the deficiency of communal land-holding were best explained in Plekhanov's two major works which were entitled Socialism and the Political Struggle (1883) and Our Differences (1885). Plekhanov stated that the future of Russia was capitalism, but that capitalism would inevitably lead to socialism. He saw that the job of the

intelligentsia was to guide the proletariat as a revolutionary force and establish a class consciousness among them.<sup>90</sup>

Despite these early attacks by Plekhanov, the Emancipation of Labour Group did not fare very well until the 1890's. By then it had become certain that the People's Will had failed to reach their objectives.<sup>91</sup> The Emancipation of Labour Group had to compete with groups inside of Russia for adherents. Many groups studied non-Marxist socialists and populists. Only around 1890 did Marxism begin to spread throughout the educated population sympathetic to the ideas of reform and revolution, the intelligentsia. Plekhanov's conversion to Social Democracy brought him ironically closer to his old enemies, the People's Will. Having read Marx, Plekhanov was able to see the use for terror and violence, but in a different way than the populists. Terrorism could be used for revolutionary purposes but not merely as political terror to assassinate particular individuals. Plekhanov had a dualism to his nature, something which Lenin would pick up on. He had a balance between accepting the Marxist view of history as determinist and the notion that revolution can be prepared for actively. He stated that, "Only organized revolutionary forces seriously influenced the course of events." But

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<sup>90</sup> Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 21-22.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 43.

while Plekhanov would say that we only need "swim with the current of history", Lenin would say that we must "swim against it".<sup>92</sup> This blurring of ideological lines was prevalent in all the organizations of this time. Many may have claimed to be Marxist while still holding on to populist or other socialist ideas. For at this time most Russian revolutionaries did not fully understand Marx's works. Often they used pieces of Marx's theories to justify their own views. One could even call them "jigsaw socialists" for their piecing together of various ideas. It is thus easy to see how Lenin's thought strayed so far from Marx's. What is important to note here is a key difference between Plekhanov and Axelrod. Axelrod emphasized the notions of free development and free maturation of proletarian consciousness. Plekhanov, on the other hand, emphasized the factors that would make the proletariat a revolutionary force.<sup>93</sup> Lenin picked up such ideas directly from Plekhanov and stressed the political nature of the revolution. They are Marxist ideas but they are only a selected part of the whole picture. These early Marxists created the atmosphere and groundwork to make Marxism acceptable to the next generation of Russian revolutionaries. What is important for the purposes of this thesis is not how the party developed, but that the party

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 44-46.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 45.

developed from groundwork laid by these early Marxists and that it was from these early Marxists, including student circles, that Lenin learned Marxism.

Lenin's thought was by no means set from the beginning. Many Soviet scholars would have us believe that Lenin was a Marxist when he was a teenager. This simply is not true. Lenin's thought evolved to form what became known as Bolshevism. Richard Pipes has put forth the idea that Lenin's intellectual evolution progressed through four phases. They are as follows: 1) 1887-1892; Lenin in his early years sympathized with the terrorist organization, The Peoples' Will. 2) 1892-1893; Lenin lost faith in the peasantry (as a revolutionary class) and turned toward the proletariat as a revolutionary force, but he still clung to terrorist ideals and was mostly concerned with the seizure of power. 3) 1895-1899; Lenin became a full-fledged Social Democrat of the Western type. He believed in socialism as a broad-based movement. He realized the need for an alliance with the bourgeoisie and he recognized that socialism presupposes democracy. Much of what Lenin believed in this period, he learned from the exiles. 4) 1899-; By this time Lenin had lost faith in the ability of the working class to rise spontaneously and the bourgeoisie to do anything. He fused his Jacobin ideas, from the Peoples' Will, with

Russian Marxism to form Bolshevism.<sup>94</sup> This conception of the development of Lenin's thought effectively conveys the point. Some will argue over the dates of this chronology, but what it does show is that Lenin was first a populist. He then, like Plekhanov and Axelrod, had doubts about the peasantry while still a populist. Again, like Plekhanov and Axelrod, he soon gave up his populism for Marxism. However, Plekhanov and Axelrod went no further than this. The activities, or inactivities, of the workers, and the fight against the Economists and Revisionists, which will be discussed later in the chapter, disillusioned Lenin. From this disillusionment arose Bolshevism.

Lenin first read Marx in the fall of 1888 while in Kazan, but he did not seriously become interested in Marx until around 1892. The previous year had seen a famine occur in the regions around where Lenin lived. The famine started a debate between remaining populists and the upcoming Marxists, led by Peter Struve. The populists claimed that capitalism had no future in Russia. The famine led to the impoverishment of the peasantry and the destruction of cottage industries. They claimed that this was proof of capitalism undermining its own market and, therefore, capitalism had no future in Russia. The

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<sup>94</sup> Richard Pipes, "The Origins of Bolshevism: The Intellectual Evolution of Young Lenin" in Richard Pipes, editor, Revolutionary Russia. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 26-27.

Marxists, led by Struve saw the results of the famine as results of capitalism conquering the countryside.<sup>95</sup> Lenin was studying when these debates started, but by November, 1891, after he had passed the bar examinations, he applied himself to it. Lenin, at this time, came up with his own conclusions. In his earliest writings, around 1893, Lenin declared that, "Capitalism already at the present time is the basic background of Russian economic life."<sup>96</sup> This conclusion was reached by Lenin using agricultural, not industrial data. Lenin was influenced by the works of V.E. Postnikov<sup>97</sup>, who had demonstrated that the village was splitting into bourgeoisie and proletariat, on the basis of the exploitation of hired labour.

The conclusion that Russia was already capitalist had three important ramifications. If Russia was indeed capitalist, then the peasantry could no longer be relied upon as revolutionaries. As well as this, Russia, if it was indeed capitalist, had no need for political liberties. Lastly, as a capitalistic country, Russia was ready for the type of social revolution envisaged by Marx in the Communist Manifesto.<sup>98</sup> Lenin wrote in 1894, that "The Russian

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<sup>95</sup> Pipes, "The Origins of Bolshevism", 37. For more on Struve see Appendix III.

<sup>96</sup> as quoted in Pipes, "The Origins of Bolshevism", 38.

<sup>97</sup> see Appendix III.

<sup>98</sup> Pipes, "The Origins of Bolshevism", 38-39.



economic order is a bourgeois system from which there is only one way out . . . namely the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie."<sup>99</sup> At this early stage, Lenin still held on to the "populist" beliefs on terrorism. His writings stress the revolutionary aspects of socialism. At this early stage Lenin basically substituted the proletariat for the peasantry into his populist ideals. However, he would soon take a more mainstream view. By 1895, Lenin had become a Western-style Social Democrat. By this time Lenin had realized that Russia was not capitalist yet. A major factor in his "conversion" was a trip abroad to see the German Working Class Movement and to meet the exile Emancipation of Labour Group. Lenin gave a favourable impression to the exiles. The one point which they disliked about him was his outright hostility to the liberals and they helped him to accept the notion that they had to work together to bring socialism about in the end. Lenin had not fully liked Struve's ideas but now he was determined to work with Struve and others towards the formation of a Russian Social Democratic Party.<sup>100</sup> However, events in the mid 1890's were to change Lenin's opinions on the role of spontaneity among the workers and on alignment with the liberals.

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<sup>99</sup> as quoted in Ibid., 39.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

The Legal Marxists were those who stressed the historical determinism of Marxism over the revolutionary aspects of Marxism, so as to legally print Marxist tracts in Russia. They gave little, if any attention to the revolutionary aspects of Marxism. They were led by Struve and even Plekhanov used this tactic. However, Lenin was opposed to this tactic, as he favoured the stressing of the revolutionary aspects.<sup>101</sup> Watering down Marxism to publish it legally was a way of publically publishing it, but it also weakened the content by not stressing the revolutionary aspects and often even leaving them out. From 1893-1895 there were a series of strikes throughout Russia. These strikes forewarned that the proletariat might not wait for history to progress, as the socialists would. These strikes illustrated that the proletariat indeed had a revolutionary potential but that if left on their own, it would be misdirected. For the Legal Marxists, these strikes showed that their theory no longer portrayed reality.<sup>102</sup> The strikes were revolutionary in that they called for economic and political change. The workers indeed had a revolutionary potential which they were not afraid to use.

In 1893 a Marxist circle was formed by Yuri Martov and his associates. Once they had studied the works of Marx, Plekhanov and Axelrod, they renamed their circle, the

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<sup>101</sup> Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 54-55.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

Petersburg Group of Emancipation of Labour.<sup>103</sup> Martov was subsequently arrested, and due to the confessions of a member of his circle, was exiled in Siberia until 1895. On his return to Petersburg in 1895, Martov, with others in the city including Lenin, formed the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of Labour. This Union would help the Social Democrats to cope with the workers' outbursts of energy.<sup>104</sup> The Social Democrats were in agreement on the need for agitation in the factories, but they also disagreed on various points. Lenin, one of the *stariki* or "old men" (though most were 25-30), believed that the workers' spontaneity would never, on its own grow into political consciousness.<sup>105</sup> What was needed was an organized, active Social Democratic leadership. He was also convinced that what was needed was a national Social Democratic organization to better fend off the secret police. Lenin's fears were substantiated when almost all of the major figures in the Petersburg Group, including Lenin and Martov, were arrested in December of 1895 and January of 1896.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Haimson, 71-73. Martov was the editor (Kremer the author) of a pamphlet entitled "On Agitation, which was later used by the Economists to defend their position.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>105</sup> Lenin believed that the workers would be too concerned with the *magenfrage* or the "stomach question". That is that the workers will be too concerned by daily material needs. They will desire bread and butter over social change.

<sup>106</sup> Haimson, 75-76.

However, while Lenin and Martov were in exile in Siberia, Social Democracy did not stand still.

Lenin, by this time, had begun to accept the orthodox Social Democratic position. He was willing to work with the liberals to bring about political reform and thus eventually socialism. However, over the next eight years Lenin would develop his theory of Bolshevism, best explained by his 1903 work, What is to Be Done?. The primary catalysts in this change were the fights against Economism and Revisionism. Economism was a movement which believed that the workers desires should determine what the Social Democrats were fighting for. If the workers wanted economic improvements, as they did, this should be the goals of the Social Democrats. Political change should only be sought when the workers had become politically conscious. The Economists in short were apolitical. The arrest of the leaders of the Petersburg organization allowed the leadership to pass to the youthful advocates of Economism. The advocates of "spontaneity" were in control.<sup>107</sup>

With the Economists on the rise, the remaining *politiki* (advocates of the political struggle) agreed, though some reluctantly, with Lenin on the need to form a nation-wide organization. After a great deal of procedural and theoretical deliberation, the various delegates decided upon convoked an all-Russian Congress and on March 1st, 1898

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

they announced the formation of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). This victory against the Economists would prove to be short-lived. Soon after its birth, the central organizations of the party were completely destroyed by the tsarist police and the entire membership of its Central Committee arrested. This meant that almost all of the intelligentsia who advocated a political struggle were in exile, in Siberia or abroad, and the Economists had filled their places.<sup>108</sup> The Economists were on the ascendancy everywhere. They succeeded in getting Struve's Manifesto, for the RSDLP, rejected by the Petersburg Union, and even gained control of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad, further isolating Plekhanov and Axelrod. The Economists' argument was based on the tactics and organization of Social Democracy as a reflection of the working-class movement's natural growth.<sup>109</sup> However, a greater threat was to come from the Revisionist Movement, coming from Germany, which struck at the heart of Marxist Orthodoxy.

In the late 1890's German Social Democracy had come under attack from within. Eduard Bernstein, a leading Marxist theorist, had attacked some of the basic tenets of Marxist Orthodoxy. His argument was based on the fact that Socialism is immanent, and therefore can be achieved through

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<sup>108</sup>, Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 81-83.

evolutionary, as opposed to revolutionary, means. The argument could be summarized, as similar to what the Economists had been advocating, that "the movement was everything, the final goal-nothing at all."<sup>110</sup> The Revisionists did have a final goal but believed that it could be achieved without revolution. This spurned a Revisionist movement in Russia. What was especially dangerous about revisionism, was that it did not originate among the *praktiki*, but among enlightened intellectuals including, Peter Struve, Tugan-Baranovskii, Bulgakov, and Berdyaev. They acted as "constructive critics" of Marxism and made claims such as the fact that if socialism was immanent, there was no need to assign the leadership of progressive forces exclusively to the proletariat.<sup>111</sup> Struve, and many of the Revisionists would later join the ranks of the emerging liberal movement. What unexpectedly, and unwantedly, occurred was that the Economists used parts of Revisionism to justify their own position. In 1899, the most extreme Economist position was circulated in anti-orthodox circles, becoming known as "The Credo". The Credo was compiled by E.D. Kuskova, one of the new Economist leaders of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. Its two major conclusions were that the Russian Marxists

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 84. For more on Bernstein see Appendix III

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 84-85. Also see Appendix III, Appendix of Names.

should encourage the economic struggle and that they must end their political exclusivism. Kuskova and her supporters wanted the loosening of restrictive bonds and the organization of the party. Axelrod attacked the Economist position, arguing that if the Social Democrats did ally themselves with the liberals, there were two possibilities. The liberals could turn out to be weak, in which case absolutism would continue, or the liberals could dominate the movement, exploiting it for the "possessing classes".<sup>112</sup> However, neither Axelrod nor Plekhanov offered an effective attack, and response, to the Credo. This was left to Vladimir Ulyanov, a rather young *starik*, whose revolutionary name was Lenin.

Lenin's attack on the Credo was the strongest reaction to it. Plekhanov and Axelrod were too wrapped up looking to the future and were caught unaware by the turn of events. A copy of the Credo was smuggled into Siberia where Lenin and other Marxists were serving their administrative exiles. Lenin was furious once he read the Credo and immediately wrote a criticism of it which was endorsed by the other exiles. His reply became known as "The Protest of the Seventeen". It struck at the core of the Revisionist argument. The Revisionists argued that Marxist practice in Western Europe was only a reflection of existing practice. That Marxism "went with the flow". Lenin argued the

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 86-88.

opposite, that Marxism had not followed the path of least resistance, that Marxism appeared when apolitical socialism was dominant (e.g; Owen, Fourier). For Lenin, as Plekhanov and Axelrod had been stressing, Social Democracy had two tasks, the overthrow of absolutism, and the abolition of capitalism. Of these two, the most immediate and important task was the overthrow of the autocracy.<sup>113</sup> The autocracy needed to be overthrown to achieve political emancipation. For Lenin, to leave the workers to spontaneity was dangerous. Lenin, at this stage, had already started to merge his Russian ideas with Marxism and soon would create Iskra, which would lead to the formation of the Bolsheviks.

The year 1900 was significant for Lenin. By this time he had returned to his old ideas and no longer believed in cooperating with the liberals. He saw the liberals as a threat as they would either dominate the movement or fail to help overthrow the autocracy. His negotiations with Struve, during the founding of the RSDLP, had made him realize that the liberals were really a reactionary class.<sup>114</sup> The roots of Lenin's distrust of the liberals can be found in the writings of Chernyshevsky, as will be pointed out in Chapter Four. While still in exile, Lenin had formulated a plan which would bring social democracy out of its crisis. He wanted to create a nation-wide newspaper (Iskra) which would

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>114</sup> Theen, Lenin, 97.



help to consolidate and organize the Russian Social Democratic movement.<sup>115</sup> Lenin collaborated with Martov and Potresov in the creation of Iskra. Iskra was to provide Lenin with a forum for expressing his views, now dominated by the themes of the need for leadership and organization.<sup>116</sup> This was made apparent in the first issue of Iskra, where Lenin, using that pseudonym for the first time, wrote the following:

The task of Social Democracy is to instill Social Democratic ideas and political consciousness into the mass of the proletariat and to organize a revolutionary party unbreakably tied to the spontaneous labour movement. . . . Not a single class in history has reached power without thrusting forward its political leaders, without advancing leading representatives capable of directing and organizing the movement. We must train people who will dedicate to the revolution not a free evening but the whole of their lives; we must prepare an organization so strong that we can enforce a firm division of labour in the various aspects of our work.<sup>117</sup>

This article, from the first issue of Iskra, contains some key ideas of Lenin. This article is representative of Bolshevism. It is concerned with power and the seizing of it, not with emancipation or development. Lenin, in this first issue of Iskra, had already started to develop his ideas on organization and revolution that he would gather

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<sup>115</sup> Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 117.

<sup>116</sup> Theen, Lenin, 98. Also see Appendix of Names for more on Potresov and Martov.

<sup>117</sup> Lenin, as quoted in Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 119. Dec, 1900.

into his work, What is To Be Done?. Iskra and a majority of its adherents were to provide Lenin with the support to openly break with "un-Marxist" groups and form the Bolshevik Party.

Lenin's ideas and knowledge of Marxism were shaped from his own personal experiences. He learned his Marxism from former populists such as Plekhanov and Axelrod. His path to Marxism was, therefore, already fundamentally different from his mentors. Lenin's earlier influences haunted him throughout his life, and by 1900 he could no longer hold to allying himself with the liberals. Lenin's What is To Be Done? presented his ideas on the application of Marxism to Russia. Lenin's background was not Marxist but revolutionary. The following three chapters will deal with the non-Marxist influences on Lenin. What this chapter has illustrated is that even Lenin's Marxist influences were not completely Marxist. His background was such that he could easily have confused Marxist and non-Marxist or part-Marxist revolutionaries.

Lenin had to face the onslaught of Economism, which rested on faith in spontaneity. For Lenin this was the greatest heresy, leaving the working class to develop on their own. However, the greatest threat came from Revisionism, which was non-revolutionary in nature. In attempting to ward off Economism, Revisionism, the liberals, and the State, Lenin developed his theory of Bolshevism.

Lenin truly believed in some Marxist principles, but as chapter one illustrated, he differed from Marx in many respects. To face these challenges, Lenin returned to his old populist heritage and incorporated their ideas on the class, party, and the revolution into his theory, Bolshevism.

Belinsky's 'enlightened individuals', Chernyshevsky's and Dubroliubov's "pure people" or "new men", Mikhailovksy's "true intelligentsia", Lavrov's "critically thinking individuals", Shelgunov's "men of thought", Tkachev's "enlightened minority", Lenin's "tribunes of the people" and Polonsky's "intelligentsia" are basically different variations on the same theme. This theme centered around the search for a group of people hostile to the existing social order, united exclusively by ideological bonds, and ready to lead and serve the masses (proletariat or *narod*) in the total reconstruction of Russian society." (as quoted in Vladimir C.Nahirny, The Russian Intelligentsia. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983), 16.)

Chernyshevsky's harsh, flat, dull, humourless, grating sentences, his preoccupation with concrete detail, his self-discipline, his dedication to the material and moral good of his fellow-men, the grey, self-effacing personality, the tireless, passionate, devoted, minute industry, the hatred of style or of any concessions to the graces, the unquestionable sincerity, utter self-forgetfulness, brutal directness, indifference to the claims of private life, innocence, self-sacrifice, created the image that later became the prototype of the Russian revolutionary hero and martyr. More than any other publicist he was responsible for drawing the final line between "us" and "them". His personality and outlook set their seal upon two generations of Russian revolutionaries; not least upon Lenin, who admired him devotedly. (Isiah Berlin, Russian Thinkers. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company Ltd., 1978), 214.)

#### Chapter Four: Chernyshevsky and Lenin

Few scholars would dispute the influence of Russian thinkers upon Lenin. However, this influence upon Lenin cannot easily be shown. Rolf Theen believes, as do others, that there were two sources to Lenin's thought: Russian and Marxist. However, unlike most scholars, he believes that Russian revolutionary thinkers exerted a greater influence upon Lenin than Marxist writings.<sup>118</sup> There is little doubt among most scholars that Lenin held Chernyshevsky in high esteem. What this chapter will attempt to illustrate is that Lenin did not only read Chernyshevsky, but that he was greatly influenced by his ideas and that many of Chernyshevsky's ideas directly and indirectly can be found in Lenin's own writings.

This chapter will first give a brief summation of Chernyshevsky's thought. It will then illustrate the importance of Chernyshevsky to the Russian revolutionary movement. Chernyshevsky, himself a disciple of Belinsky, the great Russian critic, influenced an entire generation of Russian revolutionaries. Chernyshevsky was the "leader" of

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<sup>118</sup> Theen, Lenin, 72-73.

the "new men" of Russian society. The ideas which Chernyshevsky and his associates, such as Dubroliubov, put forward found their way into most of the populist, and later, the Bolshevik programs. The idea that one should train experts to teach "the ignorant brothers . . . stimulate them to resist authority, to revolt and destroy the old order" was a view held by many Russian thinkers such as Chernyshevsky in the 1860's, Tkachev and Nechaev in the 1880's, and the revolutionaries who followed these thinkers, including Lenin.<sup>119</sup>

The second section of this chapter will deal with the influence of Chernyshevsky upon Lenin. As the second chapter of this thesis concluded, Lenin and Marx held different views on the Party, Class, and the Revolution. Chernyshevsky did not write in these terms, but his ideas on the people and class, on the role of the revolutionaries, and on the coming of the revolution, contain ideas which Lenin drew from. Some of the differences in Lenin's thought can be traced back to Chernyshevsky's writings and ideas. Lenin had read Chernyshevsky before he read Marx. He thus, learned aspects common to both, especially historical materialism, from Chernyshevsky, rather than from Marx. The final section of this chapter will be the conclusion, where

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<sup>119</sup> Isiah Berlin, Russian Thinkers. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company Ltd., 1978), 214.

the influence of Chernyshevsky upon Lenin will be summed up.

#### **CHERNYSHEVSKY A BRIEF INTRODUCTION**

Chernyshevsky was, with little doubt, the most important revolutionary thinker in Russia in the mid-1800's. He represented a change in thought from the mainstream revolutionary thinkers. The intelligentsia, led by Chernyshevsky, pushed the call for reform to a call for revolution. He led the intelligentsia into a new form of thinking and paved the way for the rise of the populists. Chernyshevsky represented a break with Herzen. Herzen was of an upper-class background, of Russian nobility, and lived in exile. He also tended towards liberalism or was too moderate for many revolutionaries. Chernyshevsky, on the other hand, was of low-middle class background, like many revolutionaries after him, a former seminary student, and had different aims and goals than Herzen and his followers.

The key components of Chernyshevsky's thought were his utilitarianism, his love of the Russian people, his concern for social change, and his call for revolution. His first major work was his thesis "The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality". This work concluded that the role of art was not to portray scenes, but to portray reality. In showing the misery of life for the people, art would serve as a criticism of society. Chernyshevsky in this respect



was a forerunner of Socialist Realism. He believed that applying a utilitarian and political approach to art would benefit the masses. Chernyshevsky's "art" not only criticized the existing society but showed how things should be. He was able to turn more of his attention to social and political writings once Dubroliubov joined the staff of The Contemporary as a literary critic.<sup>120</sup>

The object of Chernyshevsky's writings and activities was the transformation of sporadic Russian peasant revolts into an organized revolution to change society. Chernyshevsky believed that a radical redistribution of land would allow for socialism to develop. However, he was a populist utopian in his belief in the linking of socialism with the peasant commune.<sup>121</sup>

Chernyshevsky was the first Russian thinker to apply all problems, not in the abstract, but to their relation to the revolutionary cause. Chernyshevsky realized that reform would not do much to alleviate the socio-economic conditions of the bulk of the Russian population. He understood that emancipation could only be attained through revolutionary

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<sup>120</sup> Leatherbarrow and Offord, A Documentary History of Russian Thought, 194-195.

<sup>121</sup> N. G. Chernyshevsky, Selected Philosophical Essays. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 11-12.

means. Reform from above would not cure Russian society of its ills. Revolution was needed!<sup>122</sup>

In What is To Be Done?, Chernyshevsky illustrates that some progress can be made through cooperatives and *artels*, but that what is needed for any real change is revolution, to be made by trained revolutionaries such as Rakhmetov. Only in this way will social justice ever be brought to Russian society.<sup>123</sup>

#### CHERNYSHEVSKY AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Chernyshevsky was a man of set convictions and the will to find means to help them along. He hated slavery, injustice, and irrationality, all of which were prevalent in the Tsarist regime. Chernyshevsky, with the other "new men", had seen the liberals' betrayal of the revolutionaries in 1849 after the European revolutions of 1848. The emancipation of the serfs was something which the revolutionaries wanted. However, when the serfs were emancipated in 1861, the cruelty of the emancipation was soon obvious. The serfs were emancipated but, did not get any "free" land. Rather, they had to pay the state back for compensating the landlords for the loss of the serfs. The

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>123</sup> These themes will be discussed in more detail later in the Chapter.

serfs also tended to get the very worst land that the landlord could give up. The emancipation was a cruel trick.<sup>124</sup> They were free, but were not! This hardened a great deal of the revolutionaries of the time.

The aftermath of the revolutions of 1848 and the manner in which the serfs were emancipated instilled a distrust of the state, and, therefore, a distrust of reforms from above. This would later manifest itself in Lenin, as a distrust and even hatred of the liberals. Only for a short period of time was Lenin able to work with the Russian liberals as was pointed out in Chapter Three.

Chernyshevsky, having shared many common sources with Marx, in particular Hegel and Feuerbach, believed that the essence of history was a struggle between the classes. The state, for Chernyshevsky, as well as Marx, was simply a tool of the dominant class and could never, willingly or not, offer reforms which would change its nature. Chernyshevsky believed that the state would never be able to end its own domination of society.<sup>125</sup> For one who is familiar with Marx's conception of the state this sounds quite familiar. Lenin, by reading Chernyshevsky, was able to prepare himself for reading Marx. Lenin's distrust of reforms from above was instilled in him through reading Chernyshevsky, and through his own life experiences. Marx himself learned

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<sup>124</sup> Berlin, Russian Thinkers, 225.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 226.

Russian for the primary purpose of being able to study Chernyshevsky in the original Russian.<sup>126</sup>

Chernyshevsky has often been referred to as a revolutionary democrat. However, to use the word democrat with Chernyshevsky is not an easy thing to do. Chernyshevsky believed that the "people" were what was important. However, just as he could not see the state reforming the system from above, he could not see the masses as a force of change. For him, the masses were

indifferent to all those ideas, whether of reaction, constitutionalism, or political revolution. . . . These ignorant, almost dumb, almost comatose masses do not play any part in most of the political affairs of Western Europe.<sup>127</sup>

Chernyshevsky believed that a small group of people dedicated to the social revolution could help to arouse the people. This group of "new men" would lead Russian society towards the path of revolution. Chernyshevsky evolved a simple form of historical materialism. However, unlike Marx, he believed that Russia, by employing Western techniques and educating the masses, could leap over the capitalist stage of development. Like other "populists" he believed that the *mir* and *artel* could be used as a basis for socialism. But Chernyshevsky, unlike Lenin, believed that

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<sup>126</sup> Avraham Yarmolinsky, Road To Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism. (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 100.

<sup>127</sup> Chernyshevsky as quoted in Ulam, In The Name of The People, 63-63

the social revolution must come before political reforms.<sup>128</sup>

Many of the young men of the time, particularly students, found Chernyshevsky inspiring. They admired him for his attempts to work out specific solutions to specific problems in terms of concrete statistical data, for his constant appeal to facts, and for his patient efforts to indicate that there were attainable, practical goals which should be pursued instead of a more desirable, yet unattainable state of affairs.<sup>129</sup> Chernyshevsky was different than most of the revolutionaries which preceded him and not only in terms of ideas. Chernyshevsky endured a great deal of suffering which was not only heroic, but which bordered on masochism. He was not only defiant, but full of resignation as well. When he had served ten years of his Siberian exile he was told that he could ask for a pardon. He replied,

Thank, you. But, look, for what can I plead pardon. . . . It appears to me that I was exiled only because my head is differently constructed from that of the head of the Chief of the Police, and how can I ask pardon for that?<sup>130</sup>

Chernyshevsky would not change his views, even for pragmatic reasons. For Chernyshevsky, dedication to the revolution was of utmost importance. Chernyshevsky, and

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<sup>128</sup> Berlin, Russian Thinkers, 227.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 225

<sup>130</sup> as quoted in Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 55

many Russian revolutionaries who followed him, believed that the acceptance of a particular theory or philosophy was not simply a matter of intellectual choice, but one of a "passionate act of faith".<sup>131</sup> Faith in the certainty of the revolution. His "followers", particularly Tkachev and Nechaev, would expand on this notion of the dedicated revolutionary.

Chernyshevsky affected most of the revolutionaries in Russia in the mid-to-late 1800's. If one had not read him, chances are that a friend or an ideological opponent had. Lenin, was thus also indirectly exposed to Chernyshevsky. Other Russian revolutionaries who would have an effect on Lenin, were familiar with, and accepted some of the ideas of Chernyshevsky. These include Lenin's Marxist mentors, Plekhanov and Axelrod, and Lenin's Russian connection, Tkachev, and Nechaev.

Lenin, while at University in Kazan, joined a revolutionary circle headed by Lazar Bogoraz. This circle wanted to revive Narodnaya Volya. However, Lenin and the others were arrested and Lenin was exiled to his mother's estates in Kokushkino.<sup>132</sup> While in exile during the winter of 1887-88, Lenin poured through his father's library. There he found old issues of The Contemporary, Chernyshevsky's journal, including the issue with What is To

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>132</sup> Then, Lenin, 56-57.

Be Done? in it.<sup>133</sup> Lenin had earlier read What is To Be Done?, but did not fully understand it, probably due to his young age and its complex language used to get around censorship. In 1904 Lenin said of the book to Valentinov, a fellow revolutionary in Lenin's group,

I declare that it is impermissible to call What is To Be Done crude and untalented. Hundreds of people became revolutionaries under its influence. Could this have happened if Chernyshevsky had been untalented and crude? My brother, for example, was captivated by him, and so was I. He completely transformed my outlook. . . . This novel provides inspiration for a lifetime: untalented books don't have such an influence.<sup>134</sup>

Following this statement, Gusev, another revolutionary, asked of Lenin if, "it was no accident that in 1902 you called your pamphlet What is To Be Done?." Lenin's reply was, "Is this so difficult to guess?".<sup>135</sup> Lenin himself admitted the following to Valentinov,

Chernyshevsky was my favourite author . . . Chernyshevsky introduced me to philosophical materialism. It was again Chernyshevsky who first gave me an indication of Hegel's role in the development of philosophical thought, and I got the concept of dialectical method from him; this made it much easier for me to master the dialectic of Marx later on. . . . It is said that there are musicians with perfect pitch: one could say that there are also people with perfect revolutionary flair. Marx and Chernyshevsky were such men.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>134</sup> as quoted in Valentinov, Encounters With Lenin, 63-64.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 64. also see Appendix III for more on Gusev.

<sup>136</sup> Lenin as quoted in Ibid., pp 66-67.

This statement illustrates that Chernyshevsky was not simply a novelist for Lenin. After he had written his pamphlet and entitled it What is To Be Done?, Lenin still held on to the ideas that he learned from Chernyshevsky. Lenin, like Chernyshevsky, soon came to judge all things by their relevance to the revolution. As Rolf Theen states, "If we can rely on the testimony of Krupskaya, it was to the works of Chernyshevsky that Lenin turned in his free moments."<sup>137</sup> Lenin, did not only read Chernyshevsky but was influenced by his ideas. This can be illustrated by examining Lenin's and Chernyshevsky's views on the Revolution, Class, and the Party(revolutionaries).

#### **CHERNYSHEVSKY AND LENIN ON CLASS, PARTY, AND THE REVOLUTION<sup>138</sup>**

Chernyshevsky did not hold the same views as Lenin did, but Lenin incorporated a great deal of Chernyshevsky's ideas into his own writings. Chernyshevsky's writings must be examined closely as many of them were heavily censored. He often wrote in the Aesopian method, saying one thing which related to another. For example, Chernyshevsky would often talk about the problems of the Austrian Empire, but in

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<sup>137</sup> Theen, Lenin, 60.

<sup>138</sup> For Lenin's views on these topics in better detail see chapter two.



truth was talking about the problems of the Russian Empire. This was particularly true with respect to his writings on politics and revolution, as these were very sensitive areas for the authorities.<sup>139</sup>

Chernyshevsky lived in a different time than did Lenin. The concern of the intelligentsia was only just beginning to switch from reform to revolution. This could be considered the time of the genesis of Russian radical revolutionism. His views on Class were, thus, somewhat different in emphasis. However, though not particularly concerned with the working class, the proletariat, Chernyshevsky held many of the views that Lenin, would absorb. Chernyshevsky emphasized the importance of class in almost all of his writings on philosophy and science. He outlined the connection between various idealist trends of a particular time with the mood of the bourgeoisie. After the revolutions in Europe in 1848 the bourgeoisie were terrified about revolution. This could be seen in the reactions of the bourgeoisie. Chernyshevsky wrote that, "grief over their impending fate creates confusion in their minds". For Chernyshevsky only a "toiler",

thanks to his robust nature and to his stern experience of life . . . understands the essence of things much better, more correctly, and more deeply than people of the more fortunate classes.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii, 229.

<sup>140</sup> Chernyshevsky, Selected Essays, 22.

Chernyshevsky believed that only the lower classes could emancipate society. For Chernyshevsky it was the toilers, the peasants, and labourers, rather than only the proletariat, who were the only truly "historical class", as with Lenin, as illustrated above in Chapter Two. The other classes, particularly the bourgeoisie, or liberals, were too concerned with their own interests: "an individual class that sacrifices the [good of the] whole nation to its own interest comes to a bad end itself."<sup>141</sup> For Chernyshevsky, and Lenin, the lower classes, the workers and the "rural proletariat", as Lenin refers to the majority of peasants, were the important people in Russian society.

Chernyshevsky, like Marx, placed economic activity and socioeconomic status as the primary factors of life. According to Chernyshevsky, all differences between races and nations of the same race are historical. Conditions of life matter more. Classes are based on economic activity.<sup>142</sup> Chernyshevsky placed classes as the most important division in society. He wrote,

a nation also has class and occupational divisions. . . . These specifically class or occupational features are so important that, except for language and patriotism, each class or occupational division in a given West-European nation differs far more in mental and moral respects from the other divisions in that nation than it does from its corresponding division among the other West-European nations. As

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<sup>141</sup> Chernyshevsky from the "Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", as taken from Selected Essays, 125.

<sup>142</sup> Chernyshevsky, Selected Essays, 27.

regards mode of life and conceptions, the peasant class throughout the whole of Western-Europe appears to constitute a single entity.<sup>143</sup>

Lenin could have obtained this conception of class from either Chernyshevsky or Marx as they both had similar views. However, where Marx dealt with the proletariat, Chernyshevsky deals primarily with the peasantry.

Russia was not a very developed country in the 1860's and the bulk of the population were peasants. The emphasis in Chernyshevsky's writings deal not so much with the working class as with the working classes, that is the peasants **and** labourers. As previously mentioned, Chernyshevsky did not trust in reform from above. For him, that only benefitted the few, either the nobility or the bourgeoisie.<sup>144</sup> The masses would get nothing unless they would take it. The masses would have to take up arms against their oppressors; **"only the axe can save us, and nothing but the axe!"**<sup>145</sup> Lenin would have to deal with this segment of the population, something which he could not learn from Marx. He more closely followed Chernyshevsky as he deals with the "rural proletariat". Lenin could not

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<sup>143</sup> Chernyshevsky, "On Scientific Conception of World History" in Selected Works, 250-251.

<sup>144</sup> William F. Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii: The Man and The Journalist. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 201.

<sup>145</sup> as quoted in Valentinov, Encounters with Lenin., 72.

follow Marx's conception of class. He needed to account for the majority of the Russian population, the peasantry.

Chernyshevsky, independently of Marx, also discussed the injustice of the market system. In What is To Be Done?, Vera Pavlovna has a vision of a glorious utopia in her fourth dream. Chernyshevsky's message was that private ownership and the system of competition produces luxury only for a very few. The bulk of the masses remained in misery.<sup>146</sup> It was not very odd, then, that people of different classes had different goals: "It has long been noted that different people in the same society regard as good, things that are quite different, and even opposites".<sup>147</sup> For the same reasons, Chernyshevsky believed that the classes could never work together. He attacked the American economist Carey, who advocated the harmony of class interests. Chernyshevsky pointed out that classes are not equal and that one will gain predominance over the others. He wrote,

The fundamental unity [of the classes] breaks up in numerous directions, of which the one that is most favoured by historical circumstances gains predominance and pushes the others into the background.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii, 218.

<sup>147</sup> Chernyshevsky, "Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" as taken from Selected Essays, 124.

<sup>148</sup> Chernyshevsky, as quoted in Selected Essays, 35-36.

Chernyshevsky, and Lenin in following him, had a distrust of the liberals and reform from above. But as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Chernyshevsky also believed that the lower classes could not by themselves do anything about their situation. The lower classes were concerned with economic, rather than political, matters. Chernyshevsky stated that,

There is no European country in which the vast majority of the people is not absolutely indifferent to the rights which are the object of desire and concern only to the liberals.<sup>149</sup>

Chernyshevsky believed that a few enlightened individuals could lead society towards socialism. These "new men" would be totally dedicated to the cause of the social revolution. In this respect, Lenin followed Chernyshevsky quite closely.

#### CHERNYSHEVSKY AND LENIN ON REVOLUTIONARIES (THE PARTY)

As mentioned, Chernyshevsky wrote at a different, and less-developed time, than did Lenin. Chernyshevsky wrote in the late 1850's and early 1860's. This was not a period of time in Russian history which saw the rise of political parties, but rather it was a time for definitions of points of view. Several decades were to pass before there was to be any formation of organized political activity.<sup>150</sup> Chernyshevsky, thus, did not write so much

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<sup>149</sup> Chernyshevsky in 1859 as taken from Berlin, Russian Thinkers, 3.

<sup>150</sup> Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii, 228.

about "the party" to bring about the revolution, but more about the people who were to bring it about; the so called "new men". In 1859, Chernyshevsky, in his "Politics" section of The Contemporary, defined reactionaries and reformers. He defined reactionaries as those who fought for their own material interests. Any change, economic or political, that would affect their well-being would be opposed. Reformers were those who wanted change not for their own benefit, but for the people's benefit. He further subdivided reformers into moderates, which he often referred to as liberals, and revolutionaries. Moderates wanted to sway the opinion of reactionaries, and thus the government, to their own progressive views. Revolutionaries were those who realized that rhetoric and justice would not change the reactionaries, and hence, the system. Therefore, the revolutionaries became uncompromisingly hostile to the regime. Chernyshevsky even went so far as to identify his own position as that of a revolutionary. He discredited the moderates and sarcastically referred to himself as a reactionary.<sup>151</sup> Chernyshevsky considered himself a revolutionary and could exert a considerable influence upon the many students which followed him. Many of these students would in turn become revolutionaries, particularly in Narodnaya Volya.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 273-274

Chernyshevsky's best outlined representation of a revolutionary must be considered, Rakhmetov in What is To Be Done?. In this novel he alludes to the "new men" in Russian society and how they will be necessary for the revolution. He says to the reader,

you have only just begun to appear among us; already there's a fair number of you and its growing all the time. If you were my entire audience, there'd be no need for me to write.<sup>153</sup>

Chernyshevsky here is alluding to the need to spread the word of revolution to others. His book is aimed at the enlightened "new men" in Russian society. However, Chernyshevsky did not believe that just anyone could be a revolutionary. Only a small percentage of the "new men" would be revolutionaries, because for Chernyshevsky, the revolutionary must be totally dedicated to the cause, that is revolution.

Rakhmetov, was just such a character. Chernyshevsky introduces the character of Rakhmetov into What is To Be Done? in order to provide his perception of what a revolutionary should be. Rakhmetov is totally dedicated to the cause, giving up all vices, except cigars. He becomes celibate so as not to be distracted from his goals, and once slept on a bed of nails to harden himself. He learned gymnastics to increase his physical strength, which became legendary. In short, he dedicated his entire life to

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<sup>153</sup> Chernyshevsky from What is To Be Done?, 48-49.

training for the revolution.<sup>154</sup> As Chernyshevsky states to the reader:

Nowadays there are only a few people like Rakhmetov. Up to the present time I've met only eight examples of this breed. . . . They had nothing in common except for one trait, but this trait united them into a single breed and distinguished them from all others.<sup>155</sup>

Chernyshevsky does not mention what this trait is, but it is not hard to determine that it is their dedication to the revolution. As Vera Pavlovna states,

The Rakhmetovs are a different breed. They identify with the common cause to such an extent that it becomes their own necessity, filling their lives. It even comes to replace their personal life.<sup>156</sup>

What Chernyshevsky is calling for is professional revolutionaries. Lenin's views on revolutionaries can be traced back to these very ideas:

the struggle against the political police requires special qualities; it requires professional revolutionaries . . . the organisation of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession . . . all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, not to speak distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, must be effaced.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> For more on Rakhmetov see Chernyshevsky, What is To Be Done?, 271-293, and 310-311.

<sup>155</sup> Chernyshevsky, What is To Be Done?, 274.

<sup>156</sup> Chernyshevsky, What is To Be Done?, 343.

<sup>157</sup> Lenin, What is To Be Done?, in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 66-68. also see note 41 in chapter two.



Thus it becomes clear that Lenin, who held Chernyshevsky in such high esteem, incorporated some of his ideas, as illustrated in Chapter Two, on revolutionaries.

## CHERNYSHEVSKY AND LENIN ON THE REVOLUTION

Chernyshevsky believed that the revolution was only a matter of time. For him the existing economic relations, the unequal distribution of wealth and power, were unjust and, as mentioned above, could only be solved by revolution. The people could only be emancipated, and thus achieve victory, through revolutionary struggle.<sup>158</sup> Chernyshevsky had a distrust for reforms from above, and he believed that liberals could be dangerous. He said the following about the reform attempts of M.M Speranskii:

All such people are ridiculous with their alluring dreams, but they may be harmful when they delude themselves in serious matters. In their enthusiastic bustle on a false path, they seem to achieve some success, and with this lead many astray, who follow the same path which leads to nothing but illusions. From this point of view, the activity of Speranskii may be called harmful.<sup>159</sup>

Chernyshevsky realized that the conflict between classes would lead to a revolutionary situation. He defined

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<sup>158</sup> Chernyshevsky, Selected Works, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Chernyshevsky as quoted in Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii, 245-246.

radicalism, not as attachment to any particular political form, but as a belief in revolution as the only means of correcting the problems in society.<sup>160</sup>

Chernyshevsky is considered by some to be a democrat. This question has already been addressed and dismissed. However, he did not want to show that democratic political forms were unimportant, but that alone, they were inadequate. In a conversation with S.G. Stakhevich, Chernyshevsky said the following:

You say, gentlemen, that political freedom cannot feed a hungry man. That is perfectly true. But really, can air, for example feed a man? Naturally not. Yet without food man can live for several days, without air he cannot last even ten minutes. Just as air is necessary for the life of an individual man, so political liberty is necessary for the just life of a human society.<sup>161</sup>

For Marx, the revolution was an historical event. On the other hand, Lenin believed that revolution should be **made**, and he was primarily concerned with Russia. Lenin's "voluntarism" can also be traced to Chernyshevsky. Chernyshevsky actively calls for the revolution. He believes in its inevitability, as does Lenin, but also calls for immediate action. When we first encounter Vera Pavlovna in What is To Be Done? she is singing a song with the following words:

We are poor but we are working people; we have strong hands. We are uneducated, but not stupid,

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 232

<sup>161</sup> Chernyshevsky as quoted in Ibid., 231.

and we long for light. We shall study-knowledge will set us free. We shall work-labour will enrich us. This will come to pass. If we live a little longer, we shall live to see it.<sup>162</sup>

This song obviously infers that the revolution will come and enrich the lot of the poor. At the end of Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream, Chernyshevsky, in Aesopian form, calls for the "new men" in society to work towards revolution.<sup>163</sup>

Chernyshevsky also made a stronger call to revolution when on March 1st, 1860, under the signature of "a Russian", he wrote in Herzen's Kolokol:

Our situation is intolerable . . . only the axe can save us, and nothing but the axe! Change your tune and let your Kolokol [bell] not call to prayer, but let it sound the alarm! Summon Russia to take up the axe.<sup>164</sup>

Chernyshevsky's ideas can directly be found in Lenin's writings. But perhaps the most important point about Chernyshevsky and revolution, is the fact that he popularized the thought of revolution, paving the way for Tkachev, Nechaev, and Lenin.

## CONCLUSION

Lenin held many of the same views as Chernyshevsky. Both of them distrusted reform from above, and had a hatred for the liberals. Lenin, following Chernyshevsky's teachings, came to judge everything by its relevance to the

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<sup>162</sup> Chernyshevsky, What Is To Be Done?, 42.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 378-379.

<sup>164</sup> as quoted in Valentinov, Encounters With Lenin, 72.

cause of revolution. Few scholars dispute that Lenin read Chernyshevsky before he had read Marx, and by his own words, it was from Chernyshevsky that he first learned the dialectic. This made it easier for him to master Marx. Chernyshevsky states the following passage, illustrating his primitive form of historical materialism:

Literacy and education are increasing gradually among the people, . . . because of this the people are coming to understand their own human worth, to distinguish favourable things and institutions from those unfavourable to them, and to think about their needs. How can this even be doubted? And if this indubitable historical law brings some inconvenience to our routine, then, however one tries to avoid it, the course of history will not be stayed.<sup>165</sup>

However, Alexander Kucherov brings out in his study of Chernyshevsky that Chernyshevsky never resolved his internal conflict between the "historical process" and the "free choice of rational men". Chernyshevsky believed in the determinism of history, but at the same time, believed that individual revolutionaries could make a difference. He vacillated on this point, particularly with respect to the problem of changing the economic system of society.<sup>166</sup> Lenin also suffered from a conflict between Marxian determinism and his own desire to make the revolution.

Chernyshevsky tried to educate the young generation in Russia, the so-called "new men" as to their task in

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<sup>165</sup> Chernyshevsky as taken from Woehrlin, Chernyshevskii, 224.

<sup>166</sup> as taken from Ibid., 225.

society. He taught them that the revolution would change the structure of society to help the downtrodden masses. He did not outline the form the revolution would take, but made clear that it would be **made** by a small group of revolutionaries; men such as Rakhmetov. Lenin, perhaps did the greatest honour to Chernyshevsky by naming his own pamphlet of 1902, What is To Be Done?. Chernyshevsky's novel has the "new men" for the collective hero. Lenin substitutes "the party" for the "new men".<sup>167</sup> However, Chernyshevsky also affected Lenin through his "followers", men such as Tkachev and Nechaev. These populist revolutionaries, built on Chernyshevsky, particularly his conception of the "new men", or party, and the nature of the revolutionaries. Valentinov best sums it up when he states that,

It is thus impossible, unless one gives credence to a wanton misconception to believe that Lenin was shaped only by Marx and Marxism. By the time he came to Marxism, Lenin, under Chernyshevsky's influence, was already forearmed with certain revolutionary ideas which provided the distinctive features of his specifically "Leninist" political make-up.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Theen, Lenin, 107.

<sup>168</sup> Valentinov, Encounters With Lenin, 65.

It was at this time [1873] that Tkachev asserted the views which Lenin was to expand later . . . Lenin's debt to Tkachev is indicated in the program of the latter's journal, Nabat . . . , which began to appear in Geneva at the end of 1875 . . . Lenin's debt to Tkachev is a substantial one. If Lenin was hesitant in acknowledging the debt, as he was also in the case of Nechayev, this can be explained in terms of anxiety to make the Bolsheviks appear to be the party of the masses-as contrasted with Nechayev's and Tkachev's concept of the minority conspiratorial party. Lenin was not opposed to conspiracy-he recognized it as a necessary element in combatting an autocracy-but he felt impelled to mask it as the "Vanguard" of the future. (John S. Reshetar, Concise History of the CPSU, in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 73)

## CHAPTER FIVE: TKACHEV AND LENIN

The last chapter concluded that Lenin was indeed influenced by Chernyshevsky. Another source of Lenin's thought can be found by examining the works of P.N. Tkachev. Tkachev was a Russian revolutionary who came to the forefront of the revolutionary movement in the late 1860's and 1870's. Like many other young Russians he was greatly influenced by the works of Chernyshevsky. However, unlike Chernyshevsky, he eventually fled Russia. Therefore, his views on revolution were much clearer due to the lack of censorship. Tkachev wrote on the nature of the revolution and the need for a small enlightened minority, a party, to **make** the revolution. To this respect he contributed a great deal to Lenin's world outlook. Tkachev was also one of the first Russian revolutionaries to be influenced by Marx.<sup>169</sup> However, Tkachev, unlike many of his contemporaries, was opposed to anarchy and "populism". Following in Chernyshevsky's path Tkachev distrusted the masses, for he was a Jacobin and believed in seizing, and using, state power.

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<sup>169</sup> Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, 146.

The influence that Tkachev had upon Lenin can be gauged by firstly examining Tkachev's own views and his role in the revolutionary movement. Following that a comparison between Lenin's views on the Party, Class, and the Revolution, as outlined in Chapter Two, and Tkachev's view on the same subject will gauge the commonalities between them. Lastly, the conclusion will summarize the similarities that they have and attempt to illustrate that they are more than just coincidence.

#### TKACHEV: AN INTRODUCTION

Tkachev was a bright young student in St. Petersburg in the 1860's. However, like many of his contemporaries he soon turned towards radicalism. Chernyshevsky and his journal, The Contemporary, gave Tkachev his first inspiration. He entered St Petersburg University in 1861 where he got his first contact with the realities of politics. By October of that same year he was in prison in Kronstadt fortress for his participation in the student demonstrations in the fall of 1861.<sup>170</sup> When Tkachev was released from prison his formal education had come to an end as he, like many others, were expelled. He had been allowed to take his final examination for admission into law

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<sup>170</sup> Franco Venturi, Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), 390.



school and had passed. However, his illegal agitational activity did not allow him the time to attend school full-time. This combined with the government's policy of intolerance towards student agitation, the revolutionary spirit of the times, and Tkachev's own fiery and restless temperament led Tkachev to abandon his studies in order to pursue the career of a full-time revolutionary writer.<sup>171</sup>

Tkachev originally wrote in legal journals and was not overly concerned with theories of revolution, but more with matters of jurisprudence. The idea which most attracted Tkachev was the importance of economics. He came to link social change with changes in the underlying economic structure. He soon realized that there was a need for political and economic restructuring. Tkachev invariably developed such ideas, which led him to the revolutionary path, through the influence of Chernyshevsky.<sup>172</sup>

Chernyshevsky greatly affected the outlook of Tkachev, as well as numerous other revolutionaries of the 1860's and 1870's. Weeks outlines in his book, The First Bolshevik, the substance of Chernyshevsky's heritage to the revolutionaries: 1) suggestions of economic determinism, 2) The utopian-socialist outlook of What is To Be Done?, 3) The

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<sup>171</sup> Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 42-43.

<sup>172</sup> Deborah Hardy, Petr Tkachev, The Critic as a Jacobin, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 41.

fear (in Chernyshevsky's younger days) of the destructive potential of the masses if left unleashed in a spontaneous revolution, 4) Russia as a special case, and 5) The typically Russian dedication to the cause.<sup>173</sup> Much of this can be seen in Tkachev's own writings.

Tkachev believed that economic forces were extremely important. He followed a loose form of economic materialism but he was more interested in the "great practical importance of economic materialism than in dealing with theoretical changes to it." He noted that economic materialism was able,

to concentrate the energy and activities of those sincerely devoted to the social cause on really essential points: the vital interests of the people. It was a spur that inspired them the support of the most indispensable forces. . . . It was a spur that inspired direct practical action.<sup>174</sup>

Tkachev was concerned with the economic and social well-being of the people. The above quote illustrates Tkachev's desire to bring about the revolution. Unlike many of his populist contemporaries Tkachev believed in direct political action. He did not believe that one should simply follow the "general laws". He believed that general laws could be applied to nature but not so much to society. In 1865 he wrote:

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<sup>173</sup> Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 22-23.

<sup>174</sup> Tkachev , as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 398.

One can take up an objective, indifferent attitude towards the phenomena of nature. But with the phenomena of social life, one must take up a critical attitude. The phenomena of nature can be reduced to general rules and more or less certain laws; but the phenomena of contemporary life, social phenomena, cannot and must not be reduced to laws; doing this implies justifying a number of absurdities which are transformed into principles thanks to habit and indifference.<sup>175</sup>

Tkachev understood that there was little chance for reform in the Tsarist system. He also understood, unlike many of his contemporaries, of the impossibility for any real reform in the capitalist system of production. He wrote:

The entire problem of economic reform can be solved by a government decree granting credit to the workers. We have not the slightest doubt that such a decree, if it were really carried out, would lead to the desired result. We do not doubt that the state has all the means it needs of compelling agreement with its own laws if only it want to, and that it is in a position-if it so desires-to open up the purses of the capitalists to the workmen. But will it so desire? That is the entire problem, and there can be no doubt about the answer. . . . Only in one case can the State act for the benefit of the workman, and that is when the workers themselves become the dominating class in the political sphere; when the state of Western Europe, the State of the bourgeoisie, becomes the State of the workers.<sup>176</sup>

In these notes Tkachev's view of the state becomes clear. Tkachev was opposed to the anarchists in that he did not want to abolish the state, but rather, wanted to use the

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<sup>175</sup> Tkachev as quoted in Ibid., 392.

<sup>176</sup> Tkachev in the notes on the text of his translation of Ernst Becher, The Problem of the Workers in its Contemporary Significance and the Means to Solve It., as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 401.

state for the benefit of the people. He did believe in a future socialist society, but in order to bring that about, one needed to use the state, not smash it. Tkachev's view on propaganda was that it would only work to educate the masses once the "revolutionary party had seized political power."<sup>177</sup>

He also held an opposing view to the anarchists on the matter of the role of the masses. Here, Tkachev again drew on the influence he received from Chernyshevskiy.

Tkachev wrote that:

the average representative of the people is a dispassionate person; this is particularly true of the Russian people. Slave-like impulses have been encouraged in the Russians by centuries' old slavery. Secretiveness, untrustworthiness, servility . . . have all served to atrophy the energy of the Russian people. They are phlegmatic by nature. It is impossible to place any hope in their enthusiasm. Their stoical passivity is like the encrusted shell of a snail.<sup>178</sup>

Tkachev did not believe that the masses could do anything on their own. He came to the conclusion that the revolution must be made immediately. Otherwise the revolution could be delayed under the auspices of the bourgeoisie. For Tkachev, the revolution must be **made** by a small minority of dedicated revolutionaries. In an article published in 1868, entitled "Men of the Future and Heroes of the Bourgeoisie", Tkachev

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<sup>177</sup> Tkachev, in Vladimir C. Nahirny, The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983), 132.

<sup>178</sup> Tkachev from "Our Illusions" in his journal, Nabat, as taken from Weeks, The First Bolshevik, xii.

outlined his conception of the "realist", the ideal man, the revolutionary. They were to be inspired by one single ideal, making the revolution:

Their distinctive badge lies in the fact that all their activity, their whole way of life is dominated by one ambition, one passionate idea: to make the majority of men happy and to invite as many as possible to the banquet of life. The bringing about of this idea becomes the only purpose of their activity, because this idea is completely fused into their conception of personal happiness. Everything is subordinated to this idea, everything sacrificed-if one can even use the word sacrifice.<sup>179</sup>

For Tkachev, these ideal people would not be united in a loose form. He outlined the need for a strong organization for the minority. He was not democratic. He believed that,

this minority, because of its higher mental and moral development, always has and ought to have intellectual and political power over the majority. . . . We acknowledge anarchy . . . but only as the desirable ideal of the far distant future.<sup>180</sup>

This gives a brief overview of Tkachev's thought. He has often been referred to as a Jacobin<sup>181</sup>, and this can hardly be disputed. He was a socialist who believed that the only way to bring about change was for a minority to seize the state and use it to bring about revolution.

#### TKACHEV'S REVOLUTIONARY PAST

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<sup>179</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 408.

<sup>180</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Ulam, In the Name of the People, 243.

<sup>181</sup> See Hardy, The Critic as a Jacobin.

Tkachev, through the 1860's, became more radical as he clashed more and more with the Tsarist regime. In 1866 he was caught in the crackdown by the secret police after Karakazov's<sup>182</sup> attempt on the Tsar's life. However, Karakazov had acted alone and Tkachev was soon released for lack of any real evidence. During this period Tkachev kept in touch with the Academy of Smorgon, part of the University of St. Petersburg and one of the few centers of revolutionary activity which remained active during the "white terror".<sup>183</sup> There was more student unrest in 1869. During these student disorders, Tkachev issued a small manifesto entitled, "To Society"<sup>184</sup>, which was an attempt to make the student demands more widely known. He was giving a political stance to the student disorders.

During this same year, before the disorders actually occurred, Tkachev had met a brilliant young activist by the name of Sergei Nechaev. Nechaev was a true revolutionary, giving everything to the cause. He and Tkachev shared similar Jacobin views. Tkachev wrote about them, Nechaev lived them.<sup>185</sup> Together the two of them tried to found a

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<sup>182</sup> see Appendix III for more on Karakazov

<sup>183</sup> Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 390-391

<sup>184</sup> The authorship of "To Society" has sometimes been contested but most scholars believe that it was Tkachev alone who wrote it though Nechaev may have had some input.

<sup>185</sup> for more on Nechaev, see the following chapter.

conspiratorial movement based on these disturbances.<sup>186</sup> Adam Ulam believes that Tkachev can be considered a mentor of Nechaev, for by 1868, Tkachev already had a rich revolutionary past.<sup>187</sup> Their association did not last too long as Nechaev soon fled the country while Tkachev was arrested again on March 26th, 1869. He had to wait in prison until the 15th of July 1871 before being tried in the trial of Nechaev's followers. Nechaev had concocted a myth about him leading a very large revolutionary group in Russia. In reality this group was very small but no one knew that as the cells consisted of only five people and only Nechaev went between them. In short, Nechaev and a few of his followers murdered another, Ivanov, who wanted to leave the group. For Nechaev, Ivanov's independence showed a lack of dedication to the revolution and, therefore, he had to die. The murder of Ivanov would also bind the small group together. A unity in crime. In the subsequent investigations Nechaev's groups were uncovered and Tkachev was implicated for revolutionary activity. On the 13th of August, 1871 Tkachev was sentenced to 8 months in prison "for having repudiated the principle of property with the aim of destroying it or weakening its foundations."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 391.

<sup>187</sup> Ulam, In the Name of A People, 177.

<sup>188</sup> quote from Tkachev's sentence as taken from Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 400.

This was for his translation, or more correctly for his notes in the translation, of Becher's work. He was also sentenced to one year and four months in prison and exile to the district of *Velikiye Luki* for his involvement with Nechaev. From there he fled abroad in December of 1873.<sup>189</sup>

Tkachev seemed to be a successor for the leadership of the Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1870's. However, Tkachev made it clear that he had little use for democracy and no use for "the people". He believed that only a minority of revolutionaries could change society towards the path of socialism.<sup>190</sup> Tkachev would better elaborate his views once free of the Russian Censor. His views were made clearest in the journal he edited in Geneva, entitled, Nabat or The Tocsin. What this translates to is the Alarm Bell. For Tkachev, the revolution had to be made now. He believed that cooperatives and associations, such as women's cooperatives, would only help a select few. What was needed was active attacks against the structure of society. Here Tkachev echoed, though much more strongly, the theme of Chernyshevsky's What is To Be Done?. Tkachev's Nabat stated the following:

To organize for the purpose of disorganization and annihilation of the existing regime as the most immediate and most essential goal: this should be at

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 391

<sup>190</sup> Ulam, In the Name of A People, 243.



present the only program of action of all revolutionaries.<sup>191</sup>

Tkachev clearly called for methods which were not democratic and not explicitly Marxist. However, Tkachev was the first to write favourably of Marx in the Russian press and later entered into a polemic with Engels.

While Tkachev was in prison awaiting trial he began to read Marx. His earliest references to Marx come in 1870, as Tkachev read *Das Kapital* in the original German before it was translated into Russian in 1872. Tkachev used Marx in his critical evaluation of capital as a an evil social and economic system.<sup>192</sup> Tkachev concluded from his readings of Marx that capitalism was not a step towards progress but a regressive step. Where Tkachev broke with Marx was that he was firmly a statist. He did not want to destroy the state, but use it.<sup>193</sup> In this way, Russia would be able to "skip" capitalism and proceeds toward socialism. He did not believe that one could skip a stage in the progression of history, but that one could pursue a different course to the outcome, that is, socialism. In other words, to get to point c from point a one normally will travel through point b. However, for Tkachev c could not be achieved by skipping

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<sup>191</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Ulam, In the Name of a People., 251.

<sup>192</sup> Hardy, The Critic as a Jacobin, 157-158

<sup>193</sup> Hardy, The Critic as a Jacobin, 161.

b but it could be reached by an altogether different path, point d. He wrote that,

Any given economic principle develops by the laws of its logic and to change these rules is just as impossible as it is to change the laws of human thought, the laws of our psychological and physiological functions. In the area of logical reasoning it is impossible to skip from the first premise to the last without the middle—exactly as in the sphere of the development of a given economic principle, it is impossible to jump from the lower stage directly to the higher without [passing through] all intervening ones. . . . It is a totally different thing if [one], setting aside the old principle, will strive to exchange it for a new. This striving can very easily be crowned with success, and in his action there will certainly be nothing utopian.<sup>194</sup>

Tkachev and Engels entered into a polemic in 1875 in which Tkachev stated the peculiarity of Russia's situation. Tkachev wrote that Marxism could not be applied to Russia.<sup>195</sup> Engels considered Tkachev ideas crude and primitive. He accused Tkachev of ignorance of the problems of the International. Tkachev in turn said that Engels did not understand the situation in Russia. He wrote that,

If we have no urban proletariat, neither do we have a bourgeoisie. Between the oppressed people and the State which crushes it with its despotism, there is no middle class; our workers are faced only with a struggle against political power.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Hardy, The Critic as a Jacobin, 91.

<sup>195</sup> Berdyaev, The Russian Idea, 118.

<sup>196</sup> Tkachev as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 415-416.

Tkachev developed his views throughout 1874 and 1875 until he could find a journal for his views. In 1875, together with some Polish emigres, he founded Nabat.

Tkachev used Nabat as an organ for disseminating his ideas to the Russian Revolutionaries. He knew the circulation was small but that was not a problem as it was not meant for the "people", but only for the dedicated revolutionaries. In the journal he called for revolutionaries to delay no further and make the revolution. Here is an extract:

The time has come to sound the tocsin! Look! The fire of "economic progress" has already touched the foundations of the life of our people. Under its influence the old forms of our communal way of life are already crumbling, the very "principle of the obshchina", a principle which is supposed to be a cornerstone of the future social structure we all dream of, is being destroyed. . . . Each day brings us new enemies and creates new social factors which are inimical to us. . . . You see, the state, despairing of controlling us, is calling bourgeois society, the intelligentsia, to its aid.<sup>197</sup>

Tkachev stressed the urgency of the revolution. He was afraid that if nothing was done, then the state would become a bourgeois state. This could postpone the revolution for a long time. For him the time to strike was immediately as the Tsarist regime was "weak". Tkachev wrote the following in Nabat:

Today our enemies are weak and divided. Only the government with its officials and soldiers stands

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<sup>197</sup> Tkachev, as taken from W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord, translators and editors, A Documentary History of Russian Thought. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 288-289.

against us. But these officials and soldiers are no more than soulless automata, senseless, blind and often unconscious instruments in the hands of a few autocrats. . . . Consequently, the only strong and dangerous enemy we face today is this insignificant handful of autocrats. . . . The revolutionary does not prepare revolution; he "makes" it. So make it! Make it soon! All vacillation, all procrastination is criminal!<sup>198</sup>

Tkachev constantly reiterated his urgency about the making of the revolution. However, many other revolutionaries also called for an immediate revolution, including the anarchists and populists. Tkachev, as a Jacobin, stood apart from them in his calling for the seizure, and use, of the state:

in modern societies in general, and in Russia in particular, material strength is concentrated in the hands of the state power, consequently a true revolution-the actual metamorphosis of moral strength into material strength-can be effected only if one condition obtains: if revolutionaries seize state power into their own hands; in other words the immediate, direct aim of the revolution must be nothing other than the capture of governmental power and the transformation of the given conservative state into a revolutionary one.<sup>199</sup>

Almost all of the material which Tkachev wrote for *Nabat* was delivered in this very critical manner.

Tkachev wrote in the *Nabat* for a couple of years but soon lost interest in the *Tocsin*, partly due to his isolation from the rest of the Russian emigre community.<sup>200</sup> In 1882 he was committed to an asylum where he died in

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 289-290.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 291.

<sup>200</sup> Hardy, *The Critic as a Jacobin*, 296.

1886.<sup>201</sup> However, Tkachev's life greatly affected many revolutionaries, among them Lenin. N. Berdyaev, a contemporary of Lenin's who became a Russian "liberal", believes that Tkachev **must** be regarded as a predecessor of Lenin. He points out that Tkachev was hostile to anarchy(democracy), his view of revolution was an act of violence by a minority upon the majority, he was opposed to propaganda before the revolution, and wanted to avoid allowing the state to become a bourgeois constitutional state.<sup>202</sup> All of this can be said of Lenin, who was very familiar with the works of Tkachev.

Other contemporaries of Lenin hold similar views. Valentinov, who was associated with Lenin in Geneva, recalls Lenin telling him that "Tkachev was a great revolutionary for his time, a real Jacobin."<sup>203</sup> Pavel Axelrod, a founder of Russian Marxism, and later an opponent of Lenin's, wrote after the revolution that, "doesn't Tkachev's "revolutionary minority" remind one of the Bolsheviks' "carriers of revolutionary consciousness" opposed to the masses as the

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 300-301.

<sup>202</sup> Berdyaev, The Russian Idea, 118. Berdyaev was once a Marxist himself, but took the path of Struve and others by stressing the importance of ideas such as spontaneity and allying with other classes, particularly, the liberals in Russian society. He himself eventually became a supporter of Russian liberalism.

<sup>203</sup> Lenin in Valentinov, Encounters with Lenin, 203.

carriers of spontaneity".<sup>204</sup> Lenin himself also gave credit to Tkachev's revolutionary ideas. He wrote that "the attempt to seize power after the ground for the attempt had been prepared by the teaching of Tkachev and carried out by means of the "terrifying" terror which really did terrify, was majestic."<sup>205</sup>

Lenin did read Tkachev and he recommended it to others. How much Lenin was influenced by Tkachev is hard to say. Lenin's ideas are from a number of sources. However, a good way of gauging it is to examine the similarities in their writings. A close examination of Tkachev on the issues of the Class, the Party, and the Revolution, should illustrate the debt that Lenin owes to Tkachev.

#### TKACHEV ON CLASS, THE PARTY, AND THE REVOLUTION

Tkachev, influenced by Chernyshevsky, did not trust the revolution to the masses. Lenin's views on class can be found in greater detail in Chapter Two, but in summary, he believed that the masses could never develop revolutionary consciousness on their own. Lenin did not get such an interpretation from Marx, but predominately from Chernyshevsky and Tkachev. A key concept in Tkachev's

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<sup>204</sup> Axelrod as quoted in Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 36

<sup>205</sup> From Lenin, Selected Works, as taken from James H. Billington, Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 196.

thought is the relationship between the masses and the revolutionaries. Tkachev did not believe that the masses were capable of changing their situation and thus had a profound distrust of the masses. He characterized the masses as having:

psychological poverty . . . monotonous character . . . moral immaturity . . . a man of the masses is above all else an egotist. The course of his egotism may be found not only in his intellect, in his stupidity or immaturity, but in his material poverty. . . . Although he may feel a common interest and solidarity with his brothers, nevertheless he refuses to stick up for his comrades. Knowing that this might threaten him with a loss of work or his piece of bread. . . . The result is that the general interest will always be lost sight of, while each behaves strictly according to his own interests, each scrapes only for himself, and each loses out in the end.<sup>206</sup>

Tkachev was not democratic. He had no use for the masses as a revolutionary force on their own.

However, Tkachev did not despise the masses, only what they were capable of. Like many other revolutionaries he believed that he knew what was right for the masses. He also believed that the social classes which existed were not natural. He wrote that,

history confronts us with the fact of the unequal distribution of wealth and so on. These are facts which pertain only to a certain type of social organization. Outside the given system there is no basis for their existence; they are mere products of

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<sup>206</sup> Tkachev, echoing the ideas of Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, in "Destroyed Illusions" as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 75.

a given social system, not products of universal relations of man qua universal human being.<sup>207</sup>

Tkachev believed that the classes of society were artificial. However, unlike Marx, he did not believe that the masses, the working classes, could do anything on their own to alleviate the problem. Tkachev distrusted spontaneity. He infused this distrust of the spontaneity of the masses into Lenin. Lenin, as developed in Chapter Two, did not believe the revolution should be left to the spontaneity of the masses.

Lenin agrees closely with Marx on the issues of the importance of the proletariat as a revolutionary class and the importance of consciousness, but disagrees on how consciousness will develop.<sup>208</sup> Lenin, influenced by Chernyshevsky and Tkachev, did not believe that the masses could develop anything other than "trade-union consciousness". Lenin postulated that class consciousness would have to be brought to the workers. He wrote that,

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 81.

<sup>208</sup> see chapter Two for further analysis.

<sup>209</sup> Lenin, What is to Be Done, in Tucker, The Lenin Anthology, 50. Also see note 25 in Chapter two.



Lenin conceived that this outside source would be the Communist Party. Tkachev held views which were much the same.

#### TKACHEV ON THE PARTY AND THE REVOLUTIONARY

Tkachev's views on the role and composition of the revolutionary party are quite clearly explained in his writings. Tkachev postulated that the revolutionary party's main goal would be to seize state power and use it to further the social revolution. Tkachev believed that only a minority of dedicated revolutionaries could accomplish this task. He wrote that:

The success of revolution depends on the formation and organized unity of the scattered revolutionary elements into a living body which is able to act according to a single, common plan and be subordinated to a single, common leadership-an organization based on centralization of power and decentralization of function.<sup>210</sup>

For Tkachev, the party was not to be democratic and loose, but centralized and tightly organized. These same ideas come out in Lenin, who pointed out that the primary task of the party is to "establish an organisation of revolutionaries capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Tkachev, in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 86.

<sup>211</sup> Lenin, What it To Be Done?, 63. Also see note 39 in Chapter Two.

The organization which they create, the party, must have an iron discipline:

If organization is necessary for any large or strong party, it is without any question even more necessary for a weak or small party, for a party which is only at the beginning of its formation. Such is the position of our social revolutionary party. For it, the problem of unity and organization is a matter of life and death.<sup>212</sup>

Tkachev also realized that there must be a relatively small number of revolutionaries, and that they must be **professional revolutionaries**. He was a Jacobin and believed that the minority could, and should, lead the majority before, and during the revolution. Tkachev believed that the minority,

will impart a considered and rational form to the struggle, leading it towards predetermined goals, directing this coarse material element [the masses] towards ideal principles. In a real revolution the people act like a tempestuous natural force, destroying and ruining everything in its path, always acting without calculation, without consciousness.

Tkachev continues along the same line of thought by writing that,

A revolutionary minority is no longer willing to wait but must take upon itself the forcing of consciousness upon the people.<sup>213</sup>

Tkachev released his own "revolutionary catechism" before the more famous one released by Nechaev. In it he

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<sup>212</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 86-87.

<sup>213</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 77.

outlines the duties, role, and attitude of the professional revolutionary. Here are some excerpts:

He is no revolutionary if he pities anything in this society. . . . It is even worse for him if he has any kindred, intimate, or amorous relationships. . . . So much joy and grief are in their memories, so many hopes and plans, so many other thoughts and considerations that to renounce the ideal in the slightest would mean suicide-this ideal, which is so closely bound into their whole internal being.<sup>214</sup>

Lenin also called for professional revolutionaries, regardless of whether they were proletariat or not.<sup>215</sup>

However, Lenin did not call for such an explicit break with family and society.

Tkachev had many ideas which Lenin incorporated into his thought. For example, Tkachev also stressed that the party must have a dual nature, "On the one hand, it must prepare the seizure of power at the top, on the other the popular uprising at the bottom".<sup>216</sup> For Tkachev, the party, composed of professional revolutionaries, had to seize power and make the revolution. For Tkachev, there should be no delay:

Therefore, on the banner of the revolutionary party, a party of action rather than a party of reasoning, may be inscribed only the following words: Struggle against the government, struggle against the

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<sup>214</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>215</sup> see chapter two for more on Lenin's views.

<sup>216</sup> Tkachev, from Nabat, as quoted in Leatherbarrow and Offord, A Documentary History of Russian Thought, 293.

existing order of things, struggle to the last drop of blood -to the last breath.<sup>217</sup>

### TKACHEV ON THE REVOLUTION

Tkachev, as previously mentioned, urged the immediate making of the revolution. He pointed out that capitalism was on the rise in Russia and encroaching on the village commune. The village commune was beginning to crumble and it would be harder to make revolution under a bourgeois democracy. He believed that,

this is why we insist that a revolution in Russia is really indispensable, and indispensable right at the present time. We will not stand for any pause for any temporization. It is now or very far in the future, maybe never! Now conditions are for us; in ten, twenty, years they will be against us.<sup>218</sup>

Tkachev was very much a voluntarist. He did not believe that the revolution would simply happen but that it would have to be made, and as soon as possible. He believed that the revolutionaries did not need to prepare for the revolution as,

The preparation of a revolution is not the work of revolutionaries. That is the work of exploiters, capitalists, landowners, priests, police, officials, conservatives, liberals, progressives, and the like. Revolutionaries do not prepare, they make a revolution.

In this way Tkachev, believed that Russia could bypass the capitalist stage of development, or "skip" a stage. He

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<sup>217</sup> Tkachev as quoted in Haimson, The Russian Marxists, 17.

<sup>218</sup> Tkachev, taken from Ibid., 16.

answered Chernyshevsky's question, and just as easily could have been answering Lenin, when he wrote:

As to the question, "What is To Be Done?" let us not preoccupy ourselves with that any longer. That has been settled long ago. Make the revolution. How? However you may, however you are able to . . . no attention should be given those questions which have no direct connection with practical revolutionary action or which are concerned mainly with the future-questions only to further divisions and disunity within the circles of our revolutionary youth. I have in mind here those questions concerning the construction of a social order in the future and the practical measures for bringing it about once the revolution has completed its destructive mission. For now, the present must occupy our attention.<sup>219</sup>

This lengthy quote illustrates Tkachev's ideas on what the party should do toward the revolution. For him, it must make the revolution. Theoretical matters about the future system should wait until after the revolution. For a student of Lenin, this should sound familiar. Lenin argued that what was important was to create a unified Social-Democratic Party. Differences could be ironed out later. Unfortunately for many Russian socialists, they believed just such an idea.

The revolution for Tkachev was not an historical event so much as it was an act of a minority party of revolutionaries. Tkachev did not see the party acting alone, but using the masses as their tools:

The relationship of the revolutionary minority to the people and the participation of the latter in

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<sup>219</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 88-89.

revolution may be described in the following terms. The revolutionary minority, freeing the people from the oppressive terror and fear of the contemporary rulers, opens the way for the people to apply their destructive revolutionary force. Relying on this force, the revolutionary minority ably directs this violence for the destruction of the immediate enemies of the revolution . . .

Tkachev also stressed the importance that any seizure of power **must** be accompanied by popular unrest. He continues by writing that,

an attack at the center of power and seizure of power in revolutionary hands without at the same time a popular uprising could lead to positive, lasting results only under the most favourable of conditions.<sup>220</sup>

Democracy and universal suffrage meant nothing to Tkachev. He believed that only a revolution could change the existing conditions of the lower classes; "economic slaves must remain political slaves". Tkachev wrote that,

universal tabulation of votes, which is attained by the workers as a majority in the state, proves always to be mere fiction a fantastic right and from this right flow benefits to those whose interests have nothing to do with those of the workers. Only force can give meaning to right.<sup>221</sup>

Thus, Tkachev believed that the revolution was being prepared for by economics, but that it must be made by the part of dedicated revolutionaries.

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<sup>220</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 77-78.

<sup>221</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Ibid., 91-92.

## CONCLUSION

Tkachev clearly held the ideas which Lenin would later use in his own writings. Tkachev made it clear that for him, the state must not be destroyed but used until every enemy has been destroyed. As Berlin puts it, "in this doctrine he was followed by Lenin more faithfully than mere adherence to the ambivalent Marxist formula about the dictatorship of the proletariat seemed to require."<sup>222</sup> Rolf Theen refers to Tkachev as the most important theoretician of Russian Jacobinism. He points out that both Lenin and Tkachev had an urgency in their writings. The revolution must be made now. As well as that, Theen agrees that Lenin's idea for the organization of the party was virtually the same as Tkachev's. According to Theen, Lenin was the uncontested heir to Tkachev.<sup>223</sup>

Lenin, as well as Tkachev, had to work in a different situation than where Marxism developed. The bourgeoisie was not the primary threat or foe in Russia. For them, the primary foe was the Tsarist autocracy. The revolutionary movement in Russia was much more constrained than elsewhere. The center of this revolutionary movement was not the free labour movement, as it was in Germany, but

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<sup>222</sup> Berlin, Russian Thinkers, 216-217

<sup>223</sup> Theen, Lenin, 109-110.

the intelligentsia.<sup>224</sup> Under similar circumstances, Lenin could not help but use some of the ideas of Tkachev. However, it is not simply that the same ideas can be found in their writings, but also that Lenin almost unqualifiedly endorsed Tkachev's writings.<sup>225</sup>

There can be little doubt that Lenin incorporated a great deal of Tkachev's thought into his own. He did not believe all of Tkachev's ideas but used those, especially concerning the use of the state and the revolutionary, to bring about his form of "Marxism" to Russia. As the next chapter will illustrate, he also was influenced by Nechaev, a "disciple" of Tkachev. In a debate among Soviet scholars, particularly N.N. Baturin and S.I. Mitskevich, soon after the revolution, Mitskevich wrote the following in defence of the Russian Jacobins:

Let Comrade Baturin not tell me that they (the Russian Jacobins) were not genuine proletarian socialists. I know that, but I also know that it is necessary to think dialectically and not to limit oneself to saying yes, yes and no, no. The Russian Jacobins were the forerunners of Russian revolutionary Marxism, but they were not yet revolutionary Marxists.<sup>226</sup>

Tkachev and Lenin held different views on what socialism would be. However, their tactics were virtually

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<sup>224</sup> Pipes, "Russian Marxism and Its Populist Background", 317.

<sup>225</sup> Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 74.

<sup>226</sup> Mitskevich, as quoted in Weeks, The First Bolshevik, 179.



the same. Lenin "bolshevized" Tkachev's ideas. Max Nomad, the brilliant historian, called Tkachev's idea of a revolutionary dictatorship as "bolshevism with the Marxist verbiage omitted."<sup>227</sup> Though he may not have been "The First Bolshevik" as Weeks refers to him, he definitely contributed to the development of Lenin's thought.

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<sup>227</sup> Max Nomad, Apostles of Revolution, ( Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1939), 216.

## CHAPTER SIX: NECHAEV AND LENIN

The Russian reformers developed from the Decembrists onwards. The early 1860's was the first real break between the radicals, or revolutionaries, and the moderates. However, the late 1860's and 1870's were to see splits within the radical camp itself; splits which were to foreshadow the future breakup of the RSDLP. The base of the dispute centered around the role of the revolutionary and the tactics which the revolutionary movement should pursue. Most favoured propaganda and/or agitation, however, a few, of whom the most notable were Tkachev and Nechaev, swayed towards Jacobinism and revolution. That is where most wanted to work with the peasants and workers to educate them about the revolution or inform them of the ills of Russian society, which most already knew of. Those who followed Tkachev and Nechaev wanted to make the revolution and destroy the autocracy. Primary in their thought was not construction of a new order, but **destruction** of the old order. Nechaev carried on with Tkachev's ideas but took them to new extremes. Whereas Tkachev was primarily a

theorist, Nechaev was an activist and was "possessed" with the will to personally change the Russian situation.

Nechaev's main contribution to Lenin's thought can be found by examining Nechaev's revolutionary career and in "The Revolutionary Catechism", which is concerned with defining the duties and role of the "professional revolutionary". Nechaev built upon the concept of the revolutionary, using ideas which originated in Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov and Tkachev's own writings. An examination of Nechaev's life, which was lived as a "professional revolutionary", and an examination of Nechaev's views on revolutionaries will illustrate the debt which Lenin owes to Nechaev. Little is left of Nechaev's writings, as much of it was destroyed by either the Tsarist Government or his "comrades". This chapter will not be able to prove Lenin's debt to Nechaev, which is impossible, but it will illustrate the similarities in Nechaev and Lenin. Lenin did not outwardly discuss Nechaev in his writings, but his contemporaries did record some of what Lenin said of Nechaev. By doing this it should become obvious that Lenin was indeed influenced in his thought by the revolutionary whom Dostoevsky called, "The possessed".

#### **THE EARLY NECHAEV**

Sergei Genadeivich Nechaev was born on September 20th, 1847 in the town of Ivanovo, about 350 km northeast of

Moscow.<sup>228</sup> The only account of his childhood comes from his sister, F.A. Postnikova. His sister recalled his childhood to a Soviet historian in 1922 when she was seventy-six years old. Therefore, much of what she recalled was biased towards Nechaev, who had become a family legend. However, some things are known to be true. Sergei and his two sisters were brought up by their grandparents until his father remarried (his mother had died). His father was a sign-painter and his step-mother was a dressmaker. Nechaev grew up in the environment of Ivanovo, which was becoming "The Russian Manchester". His sister recalls that Sergei had an intense hatred of their material life. Nechaev was put to work when he was nine or ten as a messenger boy in a factory. This job did not last long as Nechaev lost a letter he was delivering. According to his sister, this event shaped his character, building his resolve to educate himself.<sup>229</sup> Whether this is true or not is hard to tell, but Nechaev did proceed to educate himself in order to escape from the drudgery of Ivanovo.

The first solid material that there is on Nechaev places him in Ivanovo in 1863. Nechaev was a sixteen year old sign painter, following the footsteps of his grandfather and father. In his spare time, of which he seemed to have a

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<sup>228</sup> Philip Pomper, Sergei Nechaev. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 4.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 239-240.

lot, Nechaev worked at educating himself in the gymnasium curriculum. A number of letters exist between Nechaev and another young man from Ivanovo, Nefedov, who had escaped the drudgery of Ivanovo for Moscow. These two young men were both influenced by V.A. Dementev, a moderate radical writer. Dementev had introduced Nechaev and Nefedov to cultural activities and radical ideas.<sup>230</sup> The departure of Dementev and Nefedov for Moscow must have been a considerable blow to Nechaev. Nechaev's letters to Nefedov contained pleas for more books to help him with his studies. In these letters Nechaev expressed a burning desire to escape the drudgery of Ivanovo. He wrote the following to Nefedov in 1864:

I'm studying assiduously, and there's no other way: the bumpy road I travel knocks me about unbelievably. Reality very indelicately grabs at me with its clumsy paws and forces me to make enormous leaps. Ah! The sooner I can climb out of this place the better. Anyway, this acquaintance with reality is useful, because it doesn't permit me to sink into apathy and contemplate the world's charms; constant analysis of my surroundings gives me a true understanding of my own strength.<sup>231</sup>

In the above passage, Nechaev's impatient character can be seen. This feeling of a need to escape the situation as quickly as possible can be seen in his later writings on revolutionaries and revolution and in his own life's activities.

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<sup>230</sup> Gleason, Young Russia, 341-342.

<sup>231</sup> Nechaev to Nefedov, as quoted in Pomper, Sergei Nechaev, 14-15.

In August of 1865, Nechaev moved to Moscow. However, instead of trying to get into a gymnasium, he decided to take the examinations for the post of elementary-school teacher. He did not pass the exam and soon, in April of 1866, he moved to St Petersburg. He arrived in St Petersburg soon after Karakozov's attempt on the Tsar's life. Karakozov's actions made a strong impression on Nechaev. He wrote that,

The foundations of our sacred cause were laid by Karakozov on the morning of the 4th of April, 1866. . . . His action must be regarded as a prologue. Let us act, my friends, in such a way that the play will soon begin.<sup>232</sup>

Between 1866 and 1868, Nechaev would be transformed from an uncultured youth from the provinces into the epitome of the professional revolutionary.

Once he had moved to St Petersburg, Nechaev once again took the examinations for the post of elementary school teacher, and this time he passed. Not a lot is known of Nechaev's life in the capital. Having passed his exams, Nechaev got a post teaching bible in the Sergievskii parochial school. We know that this was only a temporary job as in a letter to Nefedov on October 23, 1864, before he himself had become a teacher, he wrote,

I recently visited Aleksander's father's school; the course of study is not bad, but it's a pity that most of the time is wasted on the teaching and study

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<sup>232</sup> Nechaev, as quoted in Venturi, The Roots of Revolution, 361.

of the Bible; it appears to be their major subject.<sup>233</sup>

However, Nechaev's followers could find useful applications for the bible. The police found a note in Kapatsinskii's papers from Ametistov, a disciple of Nechaev's, which told Kapatsinskii to transmit the "allegory" in two passages of Luke. The two passages, verses nine and seventeen, are as follows:

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.<sup>234</sup>

These two passages illustrate Nechaev's preoccupation with the destruction of the "evil" autocracy. This same theme can be found in much of Lenin's writings.

As mentioned earlier, when he first moved to Petersburg, he convinced his old friend from Ivanovo, Aleksei Kapatsinskii, to come and room with him in the capital. Kapatsinskii was later arrested in 1869 and at that time gave a deposition to the police about Nechaev. This character sketch was given before Nechaev had hatched his plot to kill Ivanov and is one of the best sources on Nechaev for the years around 1867-68. Here are some excerpts:

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<sup>233</sup> Nechaev, as quoted in Pomper, Nechaev, 26.

<sup>234</sup> As taken from Ibid., 26.

The first impression Nechaev makes is unpleasant yet actually seductive. . . . In debate he will try to trick and humiliate his opponent—he is a talented dialectician and knows how to touch the most sensitive areas of a young conscience: truth, honesty, courage, etc. He won't tolerate people who are his equals, and with those stronger than he, maintains a strict silence and tries to cast a shadow of suspicion over them. He is extremely firm in his convictions, but out of self-esteem, to which he is prepared to sacrifice everybody. Thus, the main traits of his character are despotism and self-esteem. All his declamations are full of passion, but very bilious. He stimulates interest in himself, and the more impressionable and naive simply worship him, the latter a necessary condition of any friendship with him.<sup>235</sup>

Nechaev, already at this early stage in his life, was living as he professed a professional revolutionary should. He was consumed with a passion for changing the situation in Russian and believed that he was the one to do it. He demanded iron discipline, "worship" as Kapatsinskii put it, of his followers, something which Lenin would later pick up on.

One influence on Nechaev is known for certain and that is the influence of P.N. Tkachev. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tkachev had been a radical pamphleteer and activist for six years before he met Nechaev sometime in late 1866 or early 1867. By 1868, they had become close collaborators. The influence of Tkachev can be seen in the first political pronouncements of Nechaev.<sup>236</sup> Tkachev and Nechaev shared similar views on the role of the masses,

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<sup>235</sup> As taken from Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>236</sup> Gleason, Young Russia, 343-344.



Nechaev easily accepting Tkachev's "jacobinism". Both of them belonged to an informal circle which discussed the works of Buonarrotti, Babeuf, and other "Jacobin" ideas.<sup>237</sup> In the fall of 1868-69, they were to have a chance to spread and use their theories as another wave of student demonstrations broke out.

Shortly after the fall semester began, a new radical emigre journal, People's Cause, started to circulate amongst the students. The primary writer in this journal was Bakunin. Bakunin called for total revolution and aroused the radical sympathies amongst the students. This was Nechaev's first reading of Bakunin and it probably helped him to develop his idea that all revolutionaries should withdraw from academics, literature and study and concern oneself only with matters of revolution.<sup>238</sup>

The issue which sparked off the student demonstrations was the banning of student corporations; that is student mutual societies. However, this time around, the student demonstrators themselves were at odds with each other. There was a growing split between the moderates, who wanted the student corporations legalized, and the radicals, led in part by Nechaev and Tkachev, who wanted to use confrontation tactics for revolutionary purposes. Tkachev and Nechaev, with several others, did attempt to set up a

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 344-345.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 345-346.

revolutionary organization, and to that effect, they wanted the collapse of the movement to legalize the student corporations. They believed that this would radicalized more students. This is an underlying theme in much of Nechaev's writings; compromising the reformers to radicalize them further. Tkachev, Nechaev, and their associates believed that there would be a peasant revolution on Feb 19th, 1870. This was the ninth anniversary of the emancipation edict, and the peasants had to decide whether to leave the land, or stay with an obligation to pay the state back for freeing them. This never materialized. However, they drafted a program during the student demonstrations entitled, Program of Revolutionary Action, which outlined their rough timetable.<sup>239</sup> This program will be discussed in more detail when dealing with Nechaev's ideas.

The student demonstrations ended unexpectedly when a confrontation between a student and a professor led to the expulsion of the student. This in turn led to petitions, the disruption of classes, more expulsions and some arrests. It was actually the moderates who took the lead, but some radicals, Tkachev in particular, were arrested. However, Nechaev, true to his form, concocted a dramatic exit. A note was delivered by mail to Vera Zasulich (who was to

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<sup>239</sup> Gleason, Young Russia, 347-349. For more on the Program of Revolutionary Action see second half of this chapter and Appendix (1).

become famous as a member of the Peoples' Will). The note was dropped by a hand from a carriage, some stories said it was a police coach, and delivered to Zasulich. The note said the following,

I am being taken to a fortress, I don't know which. Let the comrades know about it. I hope to see them again; let them keep on working for the cause.<sup>240</sup>

This was all an elaborate plan of Nechaev's to build up his image. No one had escaped from the Peter and Paul Fortress, but people believed that he had. When he arrived in Geneva to meet with Bakunin and the emigre leaders, he had **built** a reputation as a revolutionary. Nechaev realized that the revolutionary cause needed a leader whom they could worship; that is a leader who has performed legendary feats. Nechaev would meet, and also trick, the emigre leaders and then return to Russia with the backing of their names. This he hoped would bring more strength to "**the cause**". The methods that Nechaev used, in particular his discipline and organizational methods, were taken and moulded to Marxist thought by Lenin.

#### **NECHAEV AND BAKUNIN, RETURN, AND MURDER.**

What follows is a brief examination of Nechaev's dealings with the emigres, the formation of his organizational cells, and his downfall. Many of the

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<sup>240</sup> Nechaev in Max Nomad, Apostles of Revolution, 219-220.

tactics used by Nechaev would later be copied by Lenin, although with a much more focused goal. This will be discussed in the next section.

It is difficult to place exactly when and how Nechaev met Bakunin. However, it was probably in the second week of April, 1869, in Geneva. Bakunin, who had been out of touch with the affairs of Russia, was obviously captivated by this dominating revolutionary. He wrote to James Guillaume, that:

At present I am engrossed in Russian affairs. Our youth, theoretically and in practice the most revolutionary in the world, is in great ferment. . . . I have here with me now one of those young fanatics who know no doubts, who fear nothing, who realize that many of them will perish at the hands of the government but who nevertheless have decided that they will not relent until the people rise. They are magnificent, these young fanatics. Believers without God and heroes without phrases!<sup>241</sup>

For Bakunin, Nechaev was an exciting breath of fresh air. He was captivated by Nechaev, who for him, embodied a student of revolution to spread the gospel of revolution. However, quite the opposite would soon happen, Nechaev influencing Bakunin.

In the summer of 1869, Nechaev, Bakunin, and Ogarev<sup>242</sup> collaborated on many articles and proclamations. It is difficult, with many of them, to determine who wrote

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<sup>241</sup> Bakunin, talking about Nechaev. As quoted in Gleason, Young Russia, 354.

<sup>242</sup> see Appendix III for more on Bakunin and Ogarev.

what, but Nechaev definitely wrote three of them: "To the students of the University, Academy, and Technological Institute", "Principles of Revolution", and the first issue of *Narodnaia Rasprava*, the "Peoples' Vengeance".<sup>243</sup>

Nechaev sent these proclamations, including those written by Bakunin and Ogarev, to Russia via the mail. He originally did not try to disguise them too much and many of them were intercepted by the authorities. This caused many people to be detained by the police and questioned. In St. Petersburg alone, at one postal station, 560 proclamations were detained and 387 people were arrested or involved. Some argue that Nechaev was simply careless. However, his character and other actions seem to say otherwise. Max Nomad suggests that this was not due to any lack of intelligence on Nechaev's part, but was rather a concerted attempt to get people into trouble, thus, radicalizing them and pushing them more towards the path of fanaticism.<sup>244</sup>

The most important document that they produced at this time was "The Catechism of a Revolutionary".<sup>245</sup> The catechism outlined the duties and role that a revolutionary should play. The rules set out in the catechism are opposed

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<sup>243</sup> Pomper, Nechaev, 83-84.

<sup>244</sup> Nomad, Apostles of Revolution, 223-224.

<sup>245</sup> "The Catechism of a Revolutionary" is reprinted in full in Appendix II.

to even the most conventional morality. For example, the catechism states that the revolutionary must be,

stern with himself, he must be stern with others as well. All tender, effeminizing feelings of kinship, friendship, love, gratitude, and even of honour itself must be suppressed in him by a total cold passion for the revolutionary cause. For him there exists only one comfort, one consolation, reward, and satisfaction-the success of the revolution. Day and night he must have one thought, one goal, he must always be ready to perish himself and to destroy with his own hands everything that hinders its realization.<sup>246</sup>

This passage illustrates the dedication to the revolution that Nechaev demanded and Lenin would later demand. This component of the catechism will be discussed in the next section.

The catechism is also interesting in that there is debate about who actually wrote it. Some say that it was Nechaev, while others believe it was Bakunin, and indeed one copy did exist in his handwriting. However, Philip Pomper makes the strongest argument in the case for joint authorship. He argues that Bakunin was responsible for stylistic changes, as well as input into the content, particularly of the first section, while Nechaev infused his fanaticism and martyrdom into it.<sup>247</sup> The result, for Pomper, is that the catechism, however it was

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<sup>246</sup> as taken from Pomper, Nechaev, 91.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 90.

compiled, represents Nechaev's ideas; "the final impact of the "Catechism" is Nechaevist".<sup>248</sup>

Herzen, who until this time had kept clear of Nechaev, was forced to aid his cause. Herzen and Ogarev had come into the possession of 20 000 francs of the Bakhmetev Fund, in 1858. This was left to them by a Pavel Bakhmetev, a young Russian nobleman, and they were to use it for revolutionary propaganda. However, Herzen had used shrewd investments and they were able to use just the interest. Therefore, in 1869, the original sum was still intact and as Ogarev had a right to the fund, Herzen was in no position to deny him half of it. In late July of 1869, Ogarev received roughly 8 000 francs, of which most of it he passed on to Nechaev.<sup>249</sup>

Nechaev, armed with this money, the Catechism, and a handful of other proclamations returned to Russia and made his way to Moscow. In Moscow, Nechaev went about setting up cells of his organization. He was relatively unknown in Moscow except by Uspensky and Cherkezov, and most knew him as Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. Nechaev had fabricated the existence of "The Committee". The Committee was the supreme body of Nechaev's organization, but in reality was simply

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<sup>248</sup> Philip Pomper, "Bakunin, Nechaev, and the "Catechism of a Revolutionary": The case for Joint Authorship.", in Canadian-American Slavic Studies. 10:4 (Winter 1976), 546.

<sup>249</sup> Pomper, Nechaev, 96.

Nechaev himself. Whenever something had to be done which was not completely within the norms of Nechaev's pawns, Nechaev would simply issue an order from The Committee. Most of Nechaev's activity was in Moscow, so he placed the Committee in St Petersburg.

The first cell which Nechaev created was the result of his acquaintance with Uspensky, who had good connections and was known to Nechaev. The first circle, The Petrovsky Academy circle, had as its primary members Nikolai Dolgov, Ivan Ivanov, Aleksei Kuznetsov, and Fedor Ripman. This circle, or cell, was the founding circle of The Society of the People's Revenge.<sup>250</sup> Later they were joined by Ivan Pryzhov, who technically belonged to the lesser nobility, but did not fit in anywhere in society.<sup>251</sup> His father was one of the few cases of a person rising from a serf to nobility in a single generation. Pryzhov, through his research into taverns in Russia, knew the seedier side of Moscow, and Nechaev immediately saw some potential in this.<sup>252</sup> Each of the members of this first circle in turn created their own circles of around five members. In this way, the members of the circles would only know of their circle(s). This would help to protect against any

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 99-103.

<sup>251</sup> For more on Uspensky, Cherkezov, Dolgov, Ivanov, Kuznetsov, Ripman and Pryzhov, see Appendix III

<sup>252</sup> Gleason, Young Russia, 363-366.



infiltration by spies. However, this also allowed Nechaev to keep everyone in the dark.<sup>253</sup> Anytime his authority was questioned he would simply state that it was not he, but the Committee which gave the order. To ensure discipline the Committee was always watching them. In this way Nechaev was able to gain almost complete control of the members of his organization. However, soon he would be challenged and he would reply with murder!

Ivanov was growing increasingly independent and probably was doubting the existence of the Committee. He got into a disagreement with Nechaev over the posting of a proclamation at the Petrovsky Agricultural Academy. German Lopatin, who wanted to expose Nechaev for what he was, later investigated what actually happened. He believed that Ivanov's unwillingness to donate more money to the cause, that is, to Nechaev, was also a factor. What came of all this is that Nechaev, together with Uspensky, Kuznetsov, Pryzhov, and Nikolaev, a friend of Nechaev's from Ivanovo who had joined their group, planned the murder of Ivanov, who in their eyes was no longer dedicated to the People's Vengeance, and must, therefore, be liquidated. Nechaev

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<sup>253</sup> Nechaev developed his ideas on his organization on his own. However, he was probably influence by Ishutin's group within "Organization", entitled "Hell". Hell was responsible for keeping an eye on the activities of the larger, more moderate, group. Among other things, Hell had the "right" to assassinate members who were no longer "in good standing".

convinced all the others that this was what needed to be done.

The murder itself was carried out very poorly. They strangled Ivanov in a grotto and dumped his body through a hole in the ice of a pond. However, Nechaev's hands were badly bitten by Ivanov in the struggle, Nechaev left his hat in the grotto, and the body was found four days later. After the body was found, the police investigated and Pryzhov, Nikolaev, and Uspensky were soon arrested. After the murder, Nechaev and Kuznetsov left for Petersburg and Nechaev said to him, "You're now a doomed man", quoting from his catechism. Kuznetsov was picked up in Petersburg in early December but Nechaev managed to elude the police and fled again into exile. All in all, 152 people were arrested and 79 tried. Uspensky was mistakenly hanged by his fellow prisoners in Siberia as a police spy. Only Kuznetsov would return to revolutionary activity after his jail term.<sup>254</sup>

Rumours about Ivanov's murder had spread to Geneva, but the truth was not known when Nechaev first appeared on the scene. The details of Nechaev's second trip abroad are not important for the purposes of this thesis except in summary. He was in exile for eighteen months before being betrayed to the Tsarist police. During that time he wrote, organized and published leaflets and pamphlets and declared himself the sole representative abroad of all Russian

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 370-373.

revolutionaries. More importantly, his attitude towards the revolutionaries changed. He now manipulated Bakunin and the other emigres.<sup>255</sup> With Herzen dead, he made advances towards his daughter, Natalie, in order to gain her wealth. He had broke with Bakunin, once Bakunin realized the truth about Ivanov's murder and about Nechaev's true beliefs, Nechaev stole letters belonging to Bakunin, Ogarev, and Natalie Herzen, to use as blackmail if he so decided. After they found out what Nechaev had taken, he said, "Yes, that is our system. We regard as enemies and are obliged to deceive and compromise all those who are not wholly with us."<sup>256</sup>

While Nechaev was in London, in 1870, he published an eight page periodical, Obshchina. The aim of this journal seemed to be to tell the West European radical press who he, and his likes, were and what they wanted. Some of it is as follows:

We are the children of hungry, deprived fathers and of mothers who have been driven to stupefaction and imbecility. We grew up surrounded by filth and ignorance, among insults and humiliations; from the cradle we were despised and oppressed by every possible scoundrel who lives happily under the existing order. . . . We are they whose whole past overflowed with bitterness and suffering, whose future holds the same humiliations, insults, hungry days, sleepless nights, and finally trials, jails, prisons, the mines, or the gallows. . . . We find ourselves in an unbearable position and, somehow or

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<sup>255</sup> Venturi, The Roots of Revolution, 381-382.

<sup>256</sup> Nechaev as quoted in Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, 163.

other, we want to get out of it. That is why in the alteration of the existing order of social relations consists all our wished for aspirations, all our cherished aims. We can want only a popular revolution. We want it and we will make it.<sup>257</sup>

It is clear in this passage that Nechaev, unlike many of the intelligentsia, was conscious of his class roots. He was not a bourgeois intellectual. In his writings can be found class hatred. This is something which Lenin, coming from a bourgeois family, did not share with him.

Nechaev eventually was betrayed to the Russian secret police in Switzerland on August 14th, 1872. The Swiss agreed to extradite him only if he was tried as a common criminal for the murder of Ivanov. They were not willing to extradite him as a political prisoner. In January of 1873, Nechaev was tried for the murder of Ivanov, found guilty, and sentenced to twenty years hard labour to be followed by exile in Siberia. However, his declarations at his trial and his civic execution, the public stripping of all civil rights, were enough to cause the Tsar to write that, "As a result of this we have every right to have him tried again as a political criminal. But I don't think that this would be of much use. It would only stir up passions. And so the more prudent course is to keep him for ever in

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<sup>257</sup> Nechaev, "Obshchina", as quoted in Gleason, Young Russia, 340.

prison."<sup>258</sup> The Tsar himself underlined these words and Nechaev, unknown to almost everyone, was kept in prison, not sent to exile in Siberia as he was sentenced by the legal court.

Nechaev was to have one more event in his life. While he was in prison he managed to sway most of the guards, "peasants in uniforms", to help him smuggle notes to and from the members of Narodnaya Volya, The People's Will. However, once the People's Will accomplished their task of assassinating the Tsar, Nechaev's influence was found out, the guards punished, and Nechaev died a lonely, completely isolated life.

#### NECHAEV'S WRITINGS-THE EPITOME OF A REVOLUTIONARY

The preceding pages have outlined the life of Sergei Nechaev. He lived his life as a revolutionary, following the rules he laid out in his "Revolutionary Catechism". His writings must be taken in context with his place in the revolutionary movement. Nechaev wrote mostly of revolutionaries and their duties, but there is some material on class, and the revolution in his writings as well. Three sources will be examined to gauge Nechaev's views on Class, the Party(revolutionaries), and the Revolution. These

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<sup>258</sup> as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 387. The Tsar himself underlined the words "for ever". He truly saw Nechaev as an extremely dangerous political prisoner.

sources are: "A Program of Revolutionary Action", "The Revolutionary Catechism", and "Fundamental Theses", Nechaev's last political tract. By doing so, the influence of Nechaev upon Lenin, with respect to these areas, should become clear.

In "A Program of Revolutionary Action",<sup>259</sup> Nechaev is concerned with laying out what should be done for the upcoming revolution.(see above) He says the following about the situation in Russia:

We cannot fail to recognize that the chief reason for the misery of our society issues from its bad economic structure, permitting and legitimating the dominance of the strong over the weak, the parasitism of the capitalist on the exhausted worker. . . . They[capitalists] gather up from them the entire product of their labour, leaving them only the bare essentials to sustain their hungry and cold existence. . . . If you reflect about what's around you, it must seem like a kingdom of the insane.<sup>260</sup>

Nechaev believed, as did many others, that the working classes were downtrodden and that something must be done about it. He also believed that the working class would need assistance in realizing the need for change. He continues in the "Program" by stating that the "narod will realize that right and might are on its side, and then they will be victorious. This outcome is inevitable. Everything we do must hasten it, by explaining to the narod its

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<sup>259</sup> "A Program of Revolutionary Action" is reprinted in full in Appendix I.

<sup>260</sup> Nechaev, "A Program of Revolutionary Action", as quoted in Pomper, Nechaev, 56.

strength, the necessity of unification and revolt."<sup>261</sup>  
 Nechaev did not believe that the masses, on their own could do anything to change their situation. He realized that they, the revolutionaries, must hasten it by prodding the people to revolt and revolution. Nechaev, just like his colleague Tkachev, believed that what was needed was a revolutionary party, to **make** the revolution for the people.

Nechaev wrote in the "Revolutionary Catechism", that the revolutionaries must prepare for revolution and spur the masses to revolt. Take the following excerpts for example:

16. When a list of those who are condemned is made and the order of execution is prepared, no private sense of outrage should be considered, nor is it necessary to pay attention to the hatred provoked by these people among the comrades or the people. Hatred and the sense of outrage may even be useful in so far as they incite the masses to revolt . . .

17. The second group comprises those who will be spared for the time being in order that, by a series of monstrous acts, they may drive the people into revolt.

22. The Society has no aim other than the complete liberation and happiness of the masses-i.e., of the people who live by manual labour. Convinced that their emancipation and the achievement of this happiness can only come about as a result of an all-destroying popular revolt, the Society will use all its resources and energy toward increasing and intensifying the evils and miseries of the people until at last their patience is exhausted and they are driven to a general uprising.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>262</sup> Nechaev, as taken from "The Revolutionary Catechism", in Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin, 27-28.

Nechaev, as a Jacobin, did not fully trust the masses, but worked in their behalf. He wanted to use the masses as a revolutionary force. He was of the belief that the worse off the people, the better the chances for revolution.

Only a little in Nechaev's writings can be found about the nature and the timing of the revolution. He understood, as did Lenin, that one could make a revolution. Nechaev believed that the ultimate goal was a social revolution:

the full freedom of the rejuvenated personality lies in social revolution. Only a radical reconstruction of absurd and unjust social relations can give people enduring and genuine happiness . . . as long as the present political structure of society exists, economic reforms are impossible, and the only way out-is political revolution, the annihilation of the nesting places of the existing power, a reform of the state. Thus, social revolution-is our final goal and political revolution-is the only means for achieving this goal.<sup>263</sup>

Nechaev, and Lenin after him, did not think that a social revolution was an immediately attainable goal. Political revolution, the overthrow of Russian autocracy, was the first step in revolution. Nechaev believed that there were historical laws, but that these laws were not bound by time. He wrote that,

one must recognize the historical law and, not waiting for this law to appear in all of its fullness by virtue of time and circumstance, which is inevitable-since all things occur in due course-to hasten this development, prepare it, try to

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<sup>263</sup> Nechaev, "A Program of Revolutionary Action" in Pomper, Nechaev, 57.



affect minds in such a way that this development would not be unexpected for them and they would act consciously, as calmly as possible..<sup>264</sup>

He put forth the idea that one could believe in the determinacy of history, but at the same time could act as a voluntarist.

Nechaev also put forward ideas on the nature of the revolution in his "Revolutionary Catechism". He outlined the need for a revolution which would fundamentally alter society. Although he stated the necessity for a political revolution, he also stressed the need for social changes. Take the following excerpts from the Catechism as examples:

23. By a revolution the Society does not mean an orderly revolt according to the classic western model-a revolt which always stops short of attacking the rights of property and the traditional social systems of so-called civilization and morality. . . . The only form of revolution beneficial to the people is one which destroys the entire state to the roots and exterminates all the state traditions, institutions and classes in Russia.

24. With this end in view, the Society therefore refuses to impose any new organization from above. Any future organization will doubtless work its way through the movement and life of the people; but this is a matter for future generations to decide. Our task is terrible, total, universal, and merciless destruction..<sup>265</sup>

Nechaev's conception of destruction, total and merciless, is something which can be found in Lenin's thought as well. As discussed in Chapter Two, Lenin was concerned not so much

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>265</sup> Nechaev from "The Revolutionary Catechism", in Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin, 28.

with the social revolution, as with the political revolution; the destruction of the old regime. However, the greatest influence that Nechaev writings had upon Lenin, is the role of the professional revolutionary.

Nechaev, as mentioned, lived his life as he dictated others to live theirs. His conception of a revolutionary involved a number of key components including, ruthlessness, extreme discipline, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the cause. In "A Program of Revolutionary Action", Nechaev calls for the need to "define in detail the structure and rules of the revolutionary organization", and for the drawing up of a catechism to clarify these rules.<sup>266</sup> On his first trip abroad Nechaev did just that, and drew up, with the aid of Bakunin, "The Revolutionary Catechism". The Catechism can be considered a guide to revolutionary behaviour and much of the content of it can be found also in the Bolshevik Party's code of discipline. The Catechism has been included in full as an Appendix, but here are some excerpts:

1. The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, no name . . .
3. The revolutionary despises all doctrines and refuses to accept the mundane sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science: the science of destruction . . .
4. The revolutionary despises public opinion. He despises and hates the existing social morality in

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<sup>266</sup> Nechaev, in Pomper, Nechaev, 59

all its manifestations. For him, morality is everything which contributes to the triumph of the revolution. Immoral and criminal is everything that stands in its way.

6. Tyrannical toward himself, he must be tyrannical toward others. All the gentle and enervating sentiments of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude and even honour must be suppressed in him and give place to the cold and single-minded passion for revolution . . .<sup>267</sup>

These excerpts should give a good account of Nechaev's views on the role of the revolutionary. Recalling Lenin's call for professional revolutionaries, it becomes clear that Lenin must have been influenced in this respect by Nechaev.

## CONCLUSION

Nechaev lived and died the life of the revolutionary which he portrayed in his Revolutionary Catechism. Spasovich, the great Russian barrister, said of Nechaev at the trial of Nechaev's followers that he was, "A revolutionist of the deed and not of the word".<sup>268</sup> Indeed little is left of Nechaev's writings, of which there were never many. As previously mentioned it is, thus, hard to **prove** Lenin's debt to Nechaev. However, some secondary evidence is available, as well as some of Lenin's own words, as recalled by others. Only one issue of Nechaev's journal, Obshchina, ever appeared. However, Lenin, over thirty years

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<sup>267</sup> excerpts from Nechaev's "Revolutionary Catechism" in Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin, pp 24-25.

<sup>268</sup> Nomad, Apostles of Revolution, 216.

later still gave this one issue great importance as one of the revolutionary journals worthy of republication.<sup>269</sup>

Early into the revolution, Lenin told Angelica Balbanoff, replying to her question about the use of dishonest means to seize power, that, "Everything that is done in the interest of the proletarian cause is honest."<sup>270</sup> This is almost a direct substitution of proletarian for revolutionary in Nechaev's Catechism.

Maxim Gorky, the famous Russian writer, and one-time colleague of Lenin's, wrote about Lenin's tactics during the early stages of the revolution. Gorky wrote, in talking about the Bolsheviks, that,

the sensible elements of the democracy must draw further conclusions, they must decide: is the road of conspirators and anarchists of Nechaev's type also their road.<sup>271</sup>

Gorky saw that the tactics of the Bolsheviks were virtually the same as the terrorists of the 1860's and 1870's. Three issues later, Gorky would again directly relate Lenin's tactics to Nechaev's when he wrote, "Vladimir Lenin is introducing a socialist order in Russia by Nechaev's method-full steam ahead through the swamp".<sup>272</sup> In implicating

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<sup>269</sup> Pomper, Nechaev, 144.

<sup>270</sup> Lenin, as quoted in Gleason, Young Russia, 388.

<sup>271</sup> Gorky in Novaya Zhizn, No 174, Nov 7th (20), 1917, as taken from Page, Lenin, 80.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 80.

Lenin with Nechaev, Gorky was hoping to enlighten the people about Lenin's tactics.

Berdyaev, once a Marxist himself, wrote of Nechaev, that "he was a zealot and a fanatic, but by nature a hero. As a means of realizing social revolution he preached deceit and pillage and pitiless terror."<sup>273</sup> Berdyaev continued by relating the fact that Nechaev's demand for iron discipline preceded Bolshevism. Rolf Theen concurs by stating that the concept of a professional revolutionary, in Lenin's thought, had a precedent in the works of Tkachev and Nechaev.<sup>274</sup> Bender points out that Lenin never wavered from his conception of the Party as a small highly disciplined party. He points out that most of this must come from Nechaev.<sup>275</sup> Richard Pipes illustrates the environment of Lenin during his formative years. Lenin, having been moved from Kazan to Samara by his mother, met N.S. Dolgov, of Nechaev fame. Dolgov in turn introduced him to two women who had been in Zaichnevsky's Jacobin organization.<sup>276</sup> In fact, Lenin was surrounded by Jacobins and ex-terrorists of the People's Will. With evidence and opinions such as these, there can be little doubt that Lenin was influenced by Nechaev. Bonch-Bruyevich, a close friend of Lenin's and one-time

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<sup>273</sup> Berdyaev, The Russian Idea, 117-118.

<sup>274</sup> Theen, Lenin, 75.

<sup>275</sup> Bender, The Betrayal of Marx, 187.

<sup>276</sup> Pipes, Revolutionary Russia, 33-34.

Secretary of People's Commissars, wrote the following, clearly showing how Lenin treated Nechaev:

Vladimir Ilyich often mentioned the cunning trick the reactionaries play with Nechayev(sic) through the light-fingered hands of Dostoyevsky. He thought The Possessed a work of genius, but sickening, for as a consequence people in revolutionary circles have started to treat Nechayev negatively, completely forgetting that this titanic revolutionary possessed such strength of will and enthusiasm that even when he was in the Peter and Paul Fortress, submitting to terrible conditions, even then he was able to influence the soldiers around him in such a way that they came wholly under his influence. People Completely forget that Nechayev possessed a talent for organization, an ability to establish the special technique of conspiratorial work everywhere, and an ability to give thoughts such startling formulations that they were forever printed on the memory. . . . All of Nechayev should be published. It is necessary to learn and seek out everything he wrote, and where he wrote, and we must decipher all his pseudonyms., and collect and print everything he wrote. And Vladimir Ilyich said these words many times.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> as taken from Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin,  
34.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis started out by presupposing that Lenin made some fundamental revisions to Marx's political economy with respect to class, the party, and the revolution. It then went on to trace the major sources of these revisions to Russian revolutionary thought, in particular to the influence of Chernyshevsky, Tkachev and Nechaev. What results is a clear separation of Marx and Lenin. Marx was concerned primarily with human emancipation. He was writing in Western Europe where, for the most part, political emancipation had been achieved. Lenin, living in autocratic Russia, was almost solely concerned with the defeat of Russian Tsardom. He wanted a particular political emancipation, that of Russian society. However, these three theorists, together with the Marxists discussed in Chapter Three, were by no means the only Russian thinkers who influenced Lenin. Many others had a role of great importance in Russian revolutionary history of whom some are barely known outside of Russia. These include such figures as Belinsky, Bakunin, Zaichnevsky, and Zheliabov. Together

they all form the indigenous stream of Russian revolutionary thought which imprinted itself upon Lenin's psyche.

Berdyayev pointed out in some of his works, particularly The Russian Idea, that there were ethical inconsistencies in the application of Marxian ideas by the Bolsheviks to the situation in Russia. He believed that there was more than terror and Marxism in Russian communism. He argued that one needs to have an understanding of Russian mysticism and its messianic thought.<sup>278</sup> For Berdyayev, most Russian thinkers had a messianic component to their thought. That is, that throughout history, Russian thinkers, including Peter the Great and the Communists, believed that the Russians were the chosen people.<sup>279</sup> The Russians would show the world how to proceed to a higher level of living. In other words, Russian chauvinism. The Russian people have been said to be, by nature, dogmatic. Everything for them takes on a religious, or pseudo-religious, aspect. Russians have always looked for a way to change their own drab reality. There is a need to escape in Russian thought.<sup>280</sup> This need to escape is evident in Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, and especially Nechaev. In Nechaev's early letters there were constant pleas to Nefedov to help him escape from Ivanovo. For Nechaev, the cruel realities of capitalism in

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<sup>278</sup> Berdyayev, The Russian Idea, xiv-xv.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 8

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 27-29.



Russia, were too much to bear. His youth undoubtedly helped turn him to revolutionary activity and the pursuit of a new social system. Lenin, as well, expressed a desire to change the situation and "escape" into socialism. Lenin needed to escape from Russian Tsardom. His escape was more political emancipation than human emancipation.

Berdyaev also claims that there are elements of Belinsky and Bakunin in Bolshevism. He sees Belinsky asserting the Bolshevik morality well before it was espoused by them. Belinsky exclaimed,

I have come to understand the French Revolution. I have come to understand even bloodthirsty hatred towards anyone who desires to separate himself from his brotherhood with mankind. . . . I am beginning to love mankind in the manner of Marat. To make the smallest part of it happy I think I would exterminate the rest of it with fire and sword. The social organization of life, social organization, or death.<sup>281</sup>

Bakunin, despite being hostile to Marxism, had some elements which were common to Bolshevik theory, including the messianic concept of Russia leading the world and an "anti-democratic" element in his anarchism.<sup>282</sup> Another who had a profound affect on Lenin was the terrorist member of "The People's Will", Zheliabov. Lenin's sense of urgency had found earlier expression in Zheliabov, who stated that, "History moves too slowly, it needs a push."<sup>283</sup> In brief,

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>283</sup> Theen, Lenin, 71.

in Russian thought there is a predominance of the society over the individual, of the "people" or "proletariat" over the "man" or worker. This can be seen in Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Tkachev, Bakunin, Nechaev, Lenin and others. Russian thought, in short, is not so much concerned with the well-being of man in society but rather the well-being of the society of men.

However, this is in opposition to Marxism. Marx sought the liberation of man; the freeing of man from his state of alienation.<sup>284</sup> He sought human emancipation. For Marx, the notion of man was supreme, but in Russian thought, the notion of the supremacy of mankind reigned. Marx distrusted the Russians in general. For a quarter of a century he warned about Russia's "messianic striving for world domination".<sup>285</sup> At the end of his life, Marx expressed his beliefs that Russia was not ready for socialism, as envisaged by Engels and himself. He believed, that under the right circumstances, the populists' notions of revolution could be applicable for Russia. Marx admired the terrorism of Narodnaya Volya, "The People's Will", and criticized the emigre "socialists". He criticized the members of the other faction of Land and Freedom, Chernyi Peredel, whose members included Plekhanov, Axelrod, and

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<sup>284</sup> Berdyaev, The Russian Idea, 94-95.

<sup>285</sup> Rubel, "The relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism" in Pipes, Revolutionary Russia, 301.

Zasulich. Marx considered these future Russian Marxists utopians and said that,

[the revolutionaries] who left Russia voluntarily and . . . in order to carry on propaganda in Russia, moved to Geneva! What a quid pro quo. These gentlemen are against all political-revolutionary action. Russia is to make a somersault into the anarchist-communist-atheist millenium! Meanwhile, they are preparing for this leap with the most tedious doctrinairism, whose so-called principles are being hawked about the street ever since the late Bakunin.<sup>286</sup>

Marx, who had no love for Bakunin, did not support the early Russian Marxists. Rather, he supported the heroic actions of the terrorists who sought to assassinate the Tsar. Paradoxically, Marx's political legacy to his Russian "disciples" was to refrain from being Marxists and join in the common revolutionary struggle to overthrow Tsarism.<sup>287</sup> Lenin, even in these respects, did not follow Marxist teachings. Marx would have had Lenin work with the terrorists and populists, not against them. Lenin joined with Plekhanov and the early Marxists and sought to liberate Russian society, not Russian individuals. He did not follow the path which Marx laid out for him. He did, as did Marx, hold the terrorists of Russian revolutionary tradition in high esteem and, as previously mentioned, absorbed some of their ideas, particularly those of the Russian "Jacobins", into his own thought.

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<sup>286</sup> Marx to F.A. Sorge, as quoted in Rubel, "The Relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism", 304.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 310.

The word "Jacobin" derives from the French Revolution. However, for this thesis, the definition can be considered to refer to one who seeks to change society by having a minority seize state power and use it to further the revolution on the people's behalf. There is, however, a link between the French Jacobins and the Russian Jacobins. That link is their philosophy of utopian perfectionism. They both believed that the means existed to bring mankind to a new level of happiness and well-being.<sup>288</sup> Albert Mathiez, in his book, Le Bolchevisme et le Jacobinisme, said the following in 1920 on the similarities between the French Jacobins and the Russian Bolsheviks:

History never repeats itself exactly. But the resemblances that our analysis has shown to exist between the two great crises of 1793 and 1917 are neither superficial nor casual. The Russian revolutionaries copy their French prototypes voluntarily and knowingly. They are animated by the same spirit. . . . Times differ; civilization has marched on for a century and a quarter. But because of its backwardness, Russia resembles illiterate, agricultural eighteenth-century France more than is generally believed. It will be interesting to observe, and rich material for reflection, if the rhythm of the two revolutions follows the same beat until the end.<sup>289</sup>

The best known Russian Jacobins include Zaichnevsky, Tkachev, and Nechaev. They are all characterized by a driving will to seize power and institute revolution from

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<sup>288</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, "The Jacobin Ancestry of Soviet Communism" in The Russian Review. 17, 1958, 253.

<sup>289</sup> as taken from Rubel, "The relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism", 314.

above. Fanaticism is their trademark. According to Bonch-Bruyevich, Lenin read,

"with the greatest care and attention" Tkachev's Nabat, the journal Obshchina, and Nechaev's proclamations, as well as other revolutionary pamphlets. Lenin was most interested in Tkachev and highly recommended the "rich literature of this original writer" to his followers.<sup>290</sup>

Lenin was heavily influenced by the Russian Jacobins. He did not accept a two-stage theory of revolution; that is a bourgeois revolution and then a social revolution. He believed that Russia was ready for the kind of revolution that Marx envisaged in the Communist Manifesto.<sup>291</sup> This was undoubtedly due to the influence of Tkachev and his theory of "skipping stages". Berdyaev saw Lenin as a recipient of the messianic and Jacobin tradition of Russian history. He wrote that Lenin,

united in himself traits of Chernyshevsky, Nechaev, Tkachev, Zhelyabov, with traits of the Grand Princes of Moscow, of Peter the Great and Russian rulers of the despotic type.<sup>292</sup>

Lenin was obviously influenced by these Russian thinkers when he determined, that for him, the fundamental aspect of Marx's teachings on the state was that "the working class must **destroy, smash, explode** . . . the entire state

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<sup>290</sup> Theen, Lenin, 76.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>292</sup> Berdyaev, The Origins of Communism, 115.

machine".<sup>293</sup> Lenin did not mean all states, but was concerned only with the Russian state and the Russian revolution. His concern was not the emancipation of mankind, but the political emancipation of Russia from the Tsarist yoke.

Lenin and Marx did not differ all that much with respect to the notion of class. However, as previously mentioned, Lenin had to deal with the Russian population, and its majority of peasants. Here he built upon Marx by adopting some of Chernyshevsky's ideas. However, the fact remains that Marx believed in the masses', the proletariats', ability to emancipate themselves from bourgeois society. However, Lenin did not believe the masses would develop anything other than "trade-union consciousness" on their own. In Tkachev's words, "Taken as a whole the masses do not and cannot believe in their own strength. They will never on their own initiative begin to fight against the misery that surrounds them."<sup>294</sup> Lenin believed that the Russian masses could not emancipate themselves from the Russian autocratic society.

The biggest differences between Lenin and Marx are with respect to the nature of the revolution and the

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<sup>293</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, "Bukharin, Lenin and the Theoretical Foundations of Bolshevism", in Soviet Studies. 21(4), April 1970, 456.

<sup>294</sup> Tkachev, as quoted in Venturi, Roots of Revolution, 402.

revolutionary party. Lenin altered Marx and changed the emphasis from the emancipation of a class of society to the emancipation of the "toilers" of Russian Society. Here again, one can see the difference between calling for human emancipation versus calling for political emancipation. Marx wrote of the inevitability of the revolution. Lenin wrote of the making of the revolution. His preoccupation with the destruction of the Tsarist state is a result of the influence of Nechaev who wrote in "Principles of Revolution", that, "We must devote ourselves wholly to destruction, constant, ceaseless, relentless, until there is nothing left of existing institutions."<sup>295</sup>

For Marx, the revolutionary party, the Communists, were simply the most advanced segment of the working class. They would help to raise the consciousness of the rest of the proletariat. However, Lenin, following the teachings of Chernyshevsky, Tkachev and Nechaev formulated the notion of the professional revolutionary. The most important traits of a revolutionary were dedication and obedience. For Lenin, the origin of a revolutionary was not important as long as they would obey the rule of the party, and of Lenin. This differs greatly from Marxism, where the proletariat emancipate themselves from bourgeois society.

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<sup>295</sup> Nechaev, as quoted in Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, 152.

The differences between Lenin and Marx can be summarized as a difference in "moments". Marx was concerned with the inevitable historical emancipation of the proletariat, from the bourgeois society which had created them, and thus, with the emancipation of all men. On the other hand, Lenin was concerned with his **moment of history**. That is, Lenin was concerned with Russia of the late 1800's and early 1900's. What he sought was the liberation of this society, from Tsarist autocracy. Lenin was able to mask his ideas under a Marxian facade, but the differences, once out in the open, become virtually unmaskable.

This thesis has examined the differences in Lenin's and Marx's thought with respect to class, the party, and the revolution. The differences between them are not minor. Marxism offered hope to the Russian revolutionaries in the late 1800's. They had seen the peasants as a revolutionary, and naturally socialist class. However, these hopes were dashed when pilgrimages to educate the people, and terrorist acts, all failed to incite the peasantry into action. Lenin married the Marxian conception of a focused revolutionary class, the proletariat, to Russian revolutionary theory and the Russian revolutionary situation. In this way, Lenin was able to "seize" the leadership of the Russian revolutionary situation. Lenin, learning from Tkachev's and Nechaev's mistakes, did not openly profess his views as "Jacobin". He was able to use Marxian language, such as the dictatorship



of the proletariat, to mask his Jacobin tactics. Lenin simply fused Marxism with his own revolutionary tradition. Lenin was not a "Marxist". He was a "Russian" who used Marxism as it applied to his needs. He was, as Karl Radek stated, "The Will to Revolution".

APPENDIX I  
A PROGRAM OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

As Taken from Pomper, Sergei Nechaev, 56-59.

We cannot fail to recognize that the chief reason for the misery of our society issues from its bad economic structure, permitting and legitimating the dominance of the strong over the weak, the parasitism of the capitalist on the exhausted worker. Some work from early morning until late at night and receive for it a miserly wage, insufficient to support them and to restore their wasted energy. Instead of clothes they have filthy, pitiful rags, instead of a dwelling-some kind of repulsive kennel, a damp, stinking cellar, and even this only in the happy event that they have work. And what are the others doing all the while-those upon whom they depend for work, and consequently for their existence? They gather up from them the entire product of their labour, leaving them only the bare essentials to sustain their hungry and cold existence. In order to avoid this irksome task of collecting, they hire managers, foreman, etc., etc., and for this *dolce fariente* they are afforded every possible comfort and consideration. The more developed among them use the money taken from peasants and craftsmen to encourage the fine arts and literature, or they deplore the sad fate of the paupers and engage in petty charity. If you reflect about what's around you, it must seem like a kingdom of the insane-so strange and unnatural are the mutual relations of people, so strange and incomprehensible their placid attitude in the face of a mass of filth, meanness, and injustice which issues from our social structure. You steal and consider yourself honest, you give the person you've robbed of hundreds some kind of pittance and sincerely consider yourself his benefactor. This goes beyond naiveté-it's insanity. But how are we to understand that such things are considered normal by those who have been robbed themselves? Such an arrangement can't continue forever. The narod will realize that right and might are on its side, and then they will be victorious. This outcome is inevitable. Everything we do must hasten it, by explaining to the narod its strength, the necessity of unification and revolt.

The full freedom of the rejuvenated personality lies in social revolution. Only a radical reconstruction of absurd and unjust social relations can give people enduring and genuine happiness. But it is impossible to achieve this under the present political structure because it is in the interest of the existing power to prevent it by all possible measures, and as is known, the authorities possess all possible means for this purpose. Therefore, as long as the present political structure of society exists, economic reforms are impossible, and the only way out-is political

revolution, the annihilation of the nesting places of the existing power, a reform of the state. Thus, social revolution-is our final goal. In order to make use of this means, to apply it to the cause, we already have methods worked out in the history of previous revolutions. It is up to us to apprehend them consciously, that is to grasp that since they are phenomena repeating in history one must recognize the historical law and, not waiting for this law to appear in all of its fullness by virtue of time and circumstance, which is inevitable-since all things occur in due course-to hasten this development, prepare it, try to affect minds in such a way that this development would not be unexpected for them and they would act consciously, as calmly as possible, and not under the influence of passion, their eyes bloodshot. Of course, many years have intervened between earlier revolutions and our era, many changes have occurred, and consequently the methods must necessarily be modified and adjusted to the present time, but all the same a law is a law, and we may modify methods, introduce new principles into them, but we cannot ignore them.

We must try to create the greatest possible number of revolutionary types, to develop in society consciousness of the necessity and possibility of revolution as the only means for achieving the best order of things, and carefully construct a revolutionary organization.

In order to achieve this we must distribute certain types of proclamations in a certain spirit, arrange *skhodki* and personal protests as preliminary probes, as a practical method for developing revolutionary types and for separating from the masses the types which are already developed, finally, as a method for bringing together both individuals and numerous but uncoordinated circles; recruit people and form everywhere private *kruzhki* with the same direction and the very same single goal-revolution; set up *kassy* toward the formation of a revolutionary fund; try to enter into relations with European revolutionary organizations and maintain constant ties with them. We must infuse into our organization those social-economic principles, which will be at the bases of the future state and political order. The organization must be established according to the spirit of decentralization and on the law of mobility, that is, its members must move from place to place, that is, after a certain time move from one place to another, which is necessary because the activity in various places calls for it, and the organization at first will not be in any condition to send separate agents to every locality, and because this kind of activity maintained constantly by the same person in one place will undoubtedly attract too much public notice and place the agent in a dangerous position, form which follows inevitably, the authorities will make it impossible for him to act. It is decentralization in the sense of a weakening of the main center and the allocation

of a great deal of initiative to the activities of provincial centers. Then, those entering the organization must renounce property, studies, family ties, insofar as the latter (family and studies) might impede the activities of the members-to demand total renunciation of them the organization cannot, since this would restrict without need or cause individual freedom, which is incompatible with an organization based upon rational principles. Until May the activity of the best people must be concentrated in Petersburg and Moscow, and also in part in other university cities. At this time a protest of university students and those of other institutions of higher education for the right to have official *skhodki* must be prepared and completed; and simultaneously the principle of propaganda must be applied to the poor by the very same poor-it follows that an organization must be formed from the poor. Beginning in May activity must be transferred to provincial and district towns and concentrated mainly among the *raznochintsy* [roughly educated commoners], seminarists and provincial poor, etc. Beginning in October all of the forces of provincial activity and activity concentrated in the capitals by propagandists must be introduced into the milieu of the *narod* itself (which is difficult in the summer because of the heavy working season). Therefore, in October at least three-fourths of the active workers must move from the capitals to the provinces, toward the western border, to Dinaburg-an important route for emigration, and thus the preparation of the area around this route has special significance. From May until September no more than one-fourth of the members will remain in the capital. Specialists from among the best writers on the social and natural sciences must be among them. Before September, they must define in detail the structure and rules of the Russian revolutionary organization, create a catechism, the rules of which must be observed by everyone entering into direct relations with the organization; define the activity of the center and the provinces, the methods and everything relevant to the creation of particular protests (of course, theoretically) in the mass of people in 1870, as well as the rules for agricultural and artisans' associations; provide instruction in other methods of recruitment; create the form of the future state structure and define the time of revolution. In October members from all of the provinces must assemble, and all off the problems that have been theoretically solved must be discussed and accepted by a majority. From this moment the organization must begin systematic revolutionary activity embracing all of Russia.

NB. The composition of the form in which the future state structure will be organized must occur with the agreement of revolutionaries abroad and consequently a system of foreign correspondence will be created. The best time for the uprising is-the spring of 1870, because in this

year many serious and immediate problems will be confronting the narod, and because in the event that the uprising fails in the central areas, the summer period will be favourable for a separate war along the Volga and Dneper and for the concealment of large masses of the narod in the forests. The major condition which the members of the organization must observe is to avoid diffusing themselves through multifaceted activities, and once having taken up the cause, to push aside everything not relevant to it, to expend all of their means and all of their time, insofar as their material resources permit, since at this time the organization is not able to provide material security for its members, and consequently, they must expend a certain amount of time on the acquisition of the means to live, if they aren't able to get private stipends or haven't their own resources.

**APPENDIX II**  
**THE REVOLUTIONARY CATECHISM**

As taken from Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin, pp 24-29.

**The Duties of the Revolutionary toward Himself**

1. The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property and no name. Everything in him is wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution.
2. The revolutionary knows that in the very depths of his being, not only in words but also in deeds, he has broken all the bonds which tie him to the social order and the civilized world with all its laws, moralities and customs and with all its generally accepted conventions. He is their implacable enemy, and if he continues to live with them it is only in order to destroy them more speedily.
3. The revolutionary despises all doctrines and refuses to accept the mundane sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science: the science of destruction. For this reason, but only for this reason, he will study mechanics, physics, chemistry, and perhaps medicine. But all day and all night he studies the vital sciences of human beings, their characteristics and circumstances, and all the phenomena of the present social order. The object is perpetually the same: the surest and quickest way of destroying the whole filthy order.
4. The revolutionary despises all public opinion. He despises and hates the existing social morality in all its manifestations. For him, morality is everything which contributes to the triumph of the revolution. Immoral and criminal is everything that stands in its way.
5. The revolutionary is a dedicated man, merciless toward the State and toward the educated classes; and he can expect no mercy from them. Between him and them there exists, declared or concealed, a relentless and irreconcilable war to the death. He must accustom himself to torture.
6. Tyrannical toward himself, he must be tyrannical toward others. All the gentle and enervating sentiments of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude and even honour must be suppressed in him and give place to the cold and single-minded passion for revolution. For him there exists only one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction—the success of the revolution. Night and day he must have but one thought, one aim—merciless destruction. Striving

coldbloodedly and indefatigably toward this end, he must be prepared to destroy himself and to destroy with his own hands everything that stands in the path of revolution.

7. The nature of the true revolutionary excludes all sentimentality, romanticism, infatuation and exaltation. All private hatred and revenge must also be excluded. Revolutionary passion, practice at every moment of the day until it becomes a habit, is to be employed with cold calculation. At all times and in all places the revolutionary must obey, not his personal impulses, but only those which serve the cause of the revolution.

#### **The Relations of the Revolutionary toward his Comrades**

8. The revolutionary can have no friendship or attachment except for those who have proved by their actions that they, like him, are dedicated to revolution. The degree of friendship, devotion and obligation toward such a comrade is determined solely by the degree of his usefulness to the cause of total revolutionary destruction.

9. It is superfluous to speak of solidarity among revolutionaries. The whole strength of revolutionary work lies in this. Comrades who possess the same revolutionary passion and understanding should, as much as possible, deliberate all important matters together and come to unanimous conclusions. When the plan is finally decided upon, then the revolutionary must rely solely on himself. In carrying out acts of destruction each one should act alone, never running to another for advice and assistance except when these are necessary for the furtherance of the plan.

10. All revolutionaries should have under them second- or third-degree revolutionaries-i.e., comrades who are not completely initiated. These should be regarded as part of the common revolutionary capital placed at his disposal. This capital should, of course, be spent as economically as possible in order to derive from it the greatest possible profit. The real revolutionary should regard himself as capital consecrated to the triumph of the revolution; however, he may not personally and alone dispose of that capital without the unanimous consent of the fully initiated comrades.

11. When a comrade is in danger and the question arises whether he should be saved or not saved, the decision must not be arrived at on the basis of sentiment, but solely in the interests of the revolutionary cause. Therefore it is necessary to weigh carefully the usefulness of the comrade

against the expenditure of revolutionary forces necessary to save him, and the decision must be made accordingly.

### **The Relations of the Revolutionary toward Society**

12. The new member, having given proof of his loyalty not by words but by deeds can be received into the society only by the unanimous agreement of all the members.

13. The revolutionary enters the world of the state, of the privileged classes, of the so-called civilization, and he lives in this world only for the purpose of bringing about its speedy and total destruction. He is not a revolutionary if he has any sympathy for this world. He should not hesitate to destroy any position, any place, or any man in this world. He must hate everyone and everything in it with an equal hatred. All the worse for him if he has any relations with parents, friends or lovers; he is no longer a revolutionary if he is swayed by these relationships.

14. Aiming at implacable revolution, the revolutionary may and frequently must live within society while pretending to be completely different from what he really is, for he must penetrate everywhere, into all the higher and middle classes, into the houses of commerce, the churches and the palaces of the aristocracy, and into the worlds of the bureaucracy and literature and the military, and also into the Third Division and the Winter Palace of the Tsar.

15. This filthy social order can be split up into several categories. The first category comprises those who must be condemned to death without delay. Comrades should compile a list of those to be condemned according to the gravity of their crimes; and the executions should be carried out according to the prepared order.

16. When a list of those who are condemned is made and the order of execution is prepared, not private sense of outrage should be considered, nor is it necessary to pay attention to the hatred provoked by these people among the comrades or the people. Hatred and the sense of outrage may even be useful in so far as they incite the masses to revolt. It is necessary to be guided only by the relative usefulness of these executions for the sake of the revolution. Above all, those who are especially inimical to the revolutionary organization must be destroyed; their violent and sudden deaths will produce the utmost panic in the government, depriving it of its will to action by removing the cleverest and most energetic supporters.



17. The second group comprises those who will be spared for the time being in order that, by a series of monstrous acts, they may drive the people into inevitable revolt.

18. The third category consists of a great many brutes in high positions distinguished neither by their cleverness nor their energy, while enjoying riches, influence, power and high positions by virtue of their rank. These must be exploited in every possible way; they must be implicated and embroiled in our affairs, their dirty secrets must be ferreted out, and they must be transformed into slaves. Their power, influence and connections, their wealth and their energy will form an inexhaustible treasure and a precious help in all our undertakings.

19. The fourth category comprises ambitious officeholders and liberals of various shades of opinion. The revolutionary must pretend to collaborate with them, blindly following them, while at the same time prying out their secrets until they are completely in his power. They must be so compromised that there is no way out for them, and then they can be used to create disorder in the state.

20. The fifth category consists of those doctrinaires, conspirators and revolutionists who cut a great figure on paper or in their cliques. They must be constantly driven on to make compromising declarations: as a result the majority of them will be destroyed, while a minority will become genuine revolutionaries.

21. The sixth category is especially important: women. They can be divided into three main groups. First, those frivolous, thoughtless and vapid women, whom we shall use as we use the third and fourth category of men. Second, women who are ardent, capable and devoted, but who do not belong to us because they have not yet achieved a passionless and austere revolutionary understanding; these must be used like the men of the fifth category. Finally, there are the women who are completely on our side-i.e., those who are wholly dedicated and who have accepted our program in its entirety. We should regard these women as the most valuable of our treasures; without their help we would never succeed.

### **The Attitude of the Society toward the People**

22. The Society has no aim other than the complete liberation and happiness of the masses-i.e., of the people who live by manual labour. Convinced that their emancipation and the achievement for this happiness can only come about as a result of an all-destroying popular revolt,

the Society will use all its resources and energy toward increasing and intensifying the evils and miseries of the people until at last their patience is exhausted and they are driven to a general uprising.

23. By a revolution the Society does not mean an orderly revolt according to the classic western model-a revolt which always stops short of attacking the rights of property and the traditional social systems of so called civilization and morality. Until now such a revolution has always limited itself to the overthrow of one political form in order to replace it by another, thereby attempting to bring about a so-called revolutionary state. The only form of revolution beneficial to the people is one which destroys the entire state to the roots and exterminates all the state traditions, institutions and classes in Russia.

24. With this end in view, the Society therefore refuses to impose any new organization from above. Any future organization will doubtless work its way through the movement and life of the people; but this is a matter for future generations to decide. Our task is terrible, total, universal and merciless destruction.

25. Therefore, in drawing closer to the people, we must above all make common cause with those elements of the masses which, since the foundation of the state of Muscovy, have never ceased to protest, not only in words but in deeds, against everything directly or indirectly connected with the state: against the nobility, the bureaucracy, the clergy, the traders, and the parasitic kulaks. We must unite with the adventurous tribes of brigands, who are the only genuine revolutionaries of Russia.

26. To weld the people into one single unconquerable and all-destructive force-this is our aim, our conspiracy and our task.

### APPENDIX III: SELECTED APPENDIX OF NAMES

- Belinsky, Vissarion--a literary critic in the mid-1800's. He belonged to the Westerner Group in opposition to the Slavophiles. His writings were extremely critical of the existing social and political conditions. Although he died in the 1840's, many of his ideas were espoused by the young radicals and "new men" of the 1860's.
- Berdyaev, Nicolas--a revolutionary and writer. His beliefs were based in religion. A one-time "Marxist" and later supporter of the Russian liberals.
- Bernstein, Eduard--German socialist and executor to Engels estate. Shocked orthodox socialists by proposing major revisions to Marxist theory.
- Bulgakov, Sergei--writer and professor. A one-time Russian Marxist who later became a priest in 1917. While still a revolutionary he became a critic of Marxism along with others such as Struve and Berdyaev.
- Carey,- An American Economist who advocated the harmony of class interests. He used the United States as an example of a situation where all classes prospered. He was vehemently denounced by Chernyshevsky.
- Cherkezov, Aleksandr--owner of bookstore in Moscow which served as a center of revolutionary activity. Nechaev's activities in Moscow were based at his bookstore. Cherkezov was a one-time member of Ishutin's organization and later escaped Siberian exile to work with Lavrov in London.
- Dolgov, Nikolai--Member of Nechaev's first circle of the People's Revenge(or Vengeance). Later became an Socialist Revolutionary. He possibly had some influence on Lenin's period in Kazan.
- Gusev, S.I.--One-time secretary of the St. Petersburg committee of the RSDRP. A prominent Bolshevik and founding member.
- Ivanov, Ivan--member of Nechaev's first circle of the People's Revenge. Attended the Petrov Academy and was in charge of recruiting for Nechaev's group there. Later was murdered by Nechaev and their circle for not completely subordinating to Nechaev's will.
- Karakazov, Dmitrii--Tried to assassinate the Tsar on April 4th, 1866. Released a wave of reaction known as the "White Terror".

Khalturin, Stepan N.--A young revolutionary held in high esteem by Lenin. He was executed in 1882 for the assassination of General Strelnikov, the military procurator of Odessa. He also attempted to blow up the Tsar in the Winter Palace in 1880 but failed. He was direct in his approach, planning and execution. For Lenin he was a perfect revolutionary.

Kucherov-- A biographer of Chernyshevsky. He was particularly concerned with Chernyshevsky's economic views.

Kuznetsov, Aleksei--A member of Nechaev's circle in the People's Revenge. He was a student at the Petrov Academy and Nechaev assigned him to stirring up discontent in the merchant community. He supplied funds, from his wealthy family, for Nechaev's escapades.

Lopatin, German--A young Russian revolutionary who tried to rescue Chernyshevsky from Siberia but failed. He later set himself to the task of uncovering the truth about Nechaev and the murder of Ivanov. He was responsible for the downfall of Nechaev among the non-Jacobin revolutionary community.

Martov,- A leading Russian Marxist. One of the original editors of Iskra and one-time colleague of Lenin's. Considered by many to be on par with Lenin. Later became a prominent Menshevik.

Ogarev, Nicholas--A Russian emigre. Held in high esteem by many revolutionaries. First as a colleague of Herzen and then as a colleague of Bakunin and through him, Nechaev. Collaborated with Bakunin and Nechaev in releasing a series of proclamations.

Pavlovna, Vera--The main character in Chernyshevsky's What is To Be Done?. In the novel she has a number of dreams which illustrate the way things should be, that is, socialism.

Postnikov, V.E.- Released a book in the winter of 1891-92 on the rural conditions in Southern Russia. In it, he illustrated that the Russian village was undergoing class transformation as the wealthy villagers exploited the smaller and weaker villagers.

Potresov, A.N.--A leading Russian Marxist. An original member of Iskra's editorial staff and a prominent revolutionary.

Pryzhov, Ivan G.--member of Nechaev's circle. Was a poor member of the lesser nobility. His most famous book was The History of Taverns in Russia. He was easily manipulated by Nechaev and played a part in the murder of Ivanov.

Rakhmetov--A fringe character in Chernyshevsky's What is To Be Done?. He is the example of the new men; strong and dedicated only to the revolution. Many young Russian men got sick trying to imitate Rakhmetov by eating raw beef in large quantities.

Ripman, Fedor--a member of Nechaev's first circle of The Society of the People's Revenge. He was in charge of recruiting useful members of the population, the underworld.

Speranskii, M.M.- Responsible for codifying the Russian laws in the early 1800's. However, his reforms did little for the common man, who still was unable to get equal justice.

Stakhevich, S.G.- A young revolutionary who became acquainted with Chernyshevsky during a Siberian exile. He had a number of conversations with Chernyshevsky which have been recounted in his memoirs.

Struve, Petr--An early Russian Marxist who later became a Russian liberal. Once a collaborator with Lenin, but Lenin eventually broke with this "philistine". Responsible for drawing up the first Manifesto of the RSDLP.

Tugan-Baranovskii, M.I.--A Russian revolutionary who was known as a social democratic economist. He was a leading member of the Legal Marxists. Many young men of the 1890s learned their Marxism from the likes of Struve and himself, rather than from Plekhanov and the older Marxists. He would, like Struve, eventually abandon Marxism.

Uspensky, Petr--a Russian revolutionary and colleague of Nechaev's. Helped Nechaev start his first circle in Moscow and aided in the murder of Ivanov. He was later mistakenly hanged as a spy by fellow exiles in Siberia.

Valentinov, Nikolay(N.V. Volsky)--Russian revolutionary and author of Encounters with Lenin. Once part of Lenin's circle of followers in Geneva but broke with him due to the influences of Bulgakov and Tugan-Baranovskii.

Zasulich, Vera--Embroidered in Nechaev mystique by receiving the letter describing his dramatic "escape" from Peter and Paul Fortress. Later she became famous for shooting Trepov, the military governor of Petersburg. Eventually, she became a Marxist and died a Menshevik.

Zheliabov, Andrei Ivanovich--a member of the People's Will who assassinated Alexander II in March, 1881. A leading conspiratorial terrorist whom Lenin greatly admired.

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