THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION, 1917-1953: SOME GENERAL ASPECTS

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by

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PREFACE

In this thesis I have attempted to give some indication of the divergence of the theory underlying the Soviet Constitution from the principles of classical Marxism.

The scope of this subject is such that each facet with which I have dealt merits further extensive study and analysis, although I would humbly submit that such further consideration would serve only to verify, substantially, the main conclusions which I have reached.

The subject of the thesis is dynamic. The period with which I have dealt is too recent and too momentous to permit complete objectivity to be achieved, and I can only express the hope that my dislike of the arbitrary use of power has been tempered by my enthusiasm for economic, social and political experiment based on profound humanitarian motives.

The bibliography omits my most important acknowledgement, and I therefore take this opportunity of thanking Mr. D. Novak for his invaluable advice and assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the Soviet Constitution adopted by the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. on December 5th, 1936. It is primarily concerned with the extent to which, in certain selected areas, the Constitution accurately reflects the principal tenets of classical Marxism, and it also deals briefly and generally with the degree of accuracy with which the actualities of the Soviet scene are reflected in the Constitution.

The Soviet scene is indeed dramatic. It presents to the West a novel political structure based on a challenging philosophy, and a socio-economic experiment of unparalleled magnitude. The system of soviets, and the concepts of democratic centralism and of classless society, are all elements of a new social system which may radically affect the pattern and progress of our civilisation.

The Communist claim of the solution of the economic and social problems which beset Capitalism is effectively crystallised in the Soviet Constitution. This document is more than a statement of political principles or a description of a social, economic and political structure. It is, in effect, the proclamation of the establishment of socialism. It claims the attainment of the classless society which is to be the basis for the final advance to communism as conceived and prophesied by Marx and Engels.

There is one particular facet of this claim which, as has been pointed out, will form the subject of this thesis. This deals with the

question of whether socialist society as described in the Constitution is a true reflection or product of Marxism.[1]

We will attempt to answer these questions by treating broad themes or topics relating to various aspects of the Soviet State structure. In each case we will compare the relevant Marxist concept with that on which the Constitution is based, and we will also compare, in each case, the Constitution with the reality of the contemporary U.S.S.R.

After offering, as a historical context for the discussion, a short account of the evolution of the Soviet Constitution, the topic of the Soviet State will be considered. This chapter will be devoted to the Marxist and Communist concepts of the States and to the theoretical problems created by the continued existence of the State. The administrative apparatus of the U.S.S.R. will then be discussed, followed by the system of Soviets and by the Communist Party and the concept of democratic centralism.

An analysis of these topics should present a broad picture of the political structure of the Soviet Union and should also serve to acquaint the reader with the theoretical foundations upon which the Soviet State and Constitution rest.

The discussion has been limited chronologically to the period 1917-1953, a period originating with the Revolution and ending with the death of Stalin, events which, it is felt, delineate a distinct phase of the history of the U.S.S.R.

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1. In the course of answering this question, some general comments on the accuracy with which the Constitution in the areas under discussion reflects the Soviet scene may not be out of place, although of necessity such comments must in the circumstances be based largely on reported observations and opinions.

That the analysis of such a topic is necessary and timely requires no extensive argument. Judged by material standards alone, political Communism has many lessons to offer. Within a span of forty years, a handful of revolutionaries have guided a multi-national state from defeat, chaos and civil war to a world-power status similar to that of the United States. An overwhelmingly peasant State has become an industrial giant threatening the technocratic leadership of the West, and a backward and conservative population has evolved within two generations an unprecedented standard of literacy.

In Communism, the democratic system or "way of life", which the West claims as its own unique contribution to human society, now faces its greatest challenge.

The political and economic struggles which now rage are but external facets of the challenge, which is indeed all-embracing, and which, by its seriousness and success, compels an urgent re-evaluation and restatement of democracy by the West.

I. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION

Bertrand Russell once described the Russian revolution of 1917 as "one of the great heroic events of the world's history".[1] Often predicted, and dramatically rehearsed in 1905, the revolution which finally overthrew the Romanov dynasty was caused by the utter bankruptcy of the Tsarist regime and by the incredibly complete collapse of the Russian political and military machine under the impact of war.

Although the details require no expatiation, it is necessary to emphasise the totality and rapidity of the collapse of the Russian economic and political structure, for this is the main reason for the second, or October, revolution of 1917, which involved the rapid transfer of revolutionary leadership from the conservative Kadets under Milyukov to the right Social Revolutionaries led by Kerensky and thence to the Bolsheviks on the extreme left.[2]

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1. Bertrand Russell, The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1920), p. 1.

2. The observations regarding the situation in Russia in 1917 are based largely on the following works:

N.N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution 1917 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).
G. Von Rauch, A History of Soviet Russia, translated by P. & A. Jacobsohn (New York: Praeger, 1951), Vol. I.
I. N. Steinberg, In The Workshop of the Revolution (New York: Rinehart, 1953).
W. H. Chamberlain, The Russian Revolution 1917-1921 (New York: MacMillan, 1935), vol. I.
L. Schapiro, The Origin of the Communist Autocracy (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1955).
V. Chernov, The Great Russian Revolution, translated by P. E. Mosely (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).
L. Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, translated by M. Eastman (London: Gollancz, 1934).

Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Kadets and the Social Revolutionaries could offer no solution to the political and social chaos which existed in Russia in the spring of 1917, and consequently they were not able to adapt themselves rapidly enough to meet the dangers inherent in such a badly deteriorating situation.

Two major factors prevented any such adaptation on the part of the Kadets. The right wing of Russian politics which they represented had a traditional respect for the Russian monarchy and could not look with any enthusiasm upon any political structure which did not include the monarchy as its focal point. Owing to this traditional loyalty, the Kadet Party insisted upon the continuance of the war against the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg Empires. These two pillars of Kadet policy were diametrically opposed to the rising popular resentment against both the monarchy and the war policy, and it is not therefore surprising that the Kadets rapidly lost any significant popular support which they might have held and quickly became identified with the counter-revolutionary elements.

The Social Revolutionaries, also, to a large extent, supported a pro-war policy. The Mensheviks, who comprised the more numerous and more popular wing of the Russian Social Democrats, were, for their part, rendered ineffective by their dogmatic insistence upon the fact that the revolution which had broken out could be a bourgeois revolution only, and that only after its successful completion could economic and social conditions mature to the point at which the second and proletarian revolution would break out. In the light of this dogma, the Mensheviks were obliged to exhort the proletariat to assist the bourgeoisie to take power but not to take power itself, an exhortation which was not likely to prove either popular or effective when the proletariat was carrying the

brunt of the revolutionary struggle.

It might have been expected, perhaps, that the Bolsheviks also would find themselves in this dilemma, for they, too, had accepted the orthodox Marxist concept of a dual revolution. It was not until the first month of the revolution, when Lenin published his April Theses, that the Party learned that a seizure of power by, and on behalf of, the proletariat would not represent a contravention of Marxist principles.

Lenin was a political tactitian, and he was quick to realise in 1917 that the Bolsheviks, in spite of their numerical inferiority, could seize power if they identified themselves with the basic demands of the revolutionary masses. This realisation was followed by his enunciation of the theory, similar to Trotsky's, of continuous or permanent revolution, which, he realised, provided a vehicle for the transformation of the revolution in Russia from a bourgeois to a proletarian revolution.[3]

Thus under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks occupied, in November, 1917, a power vacuum created by the overthrow of the Tsar and by the ineffectiveness of the Kerensky regime. Recognising the basic demands of the revolutionary masses, the Bolsheviks secured massive popular support by proclaiming their faith in the spontaneous system of soviets, by publicly recognising and encouraging the seizure.

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3. It is perhaps worthy of note that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution meant two things at two different times. Originally, and as concurred in by Lenin in 1917, it predicated the possibility of the rapid transformation of revolution from a bourgeois to a proletarian character. After 1917, and more particularly in the middle nineteen-twenties, the theory was associated with the concept of a continuation of the Russian revolution to a general European revolution, and it was in opposition to this concept that Stalin's platform of "Socialism in one country" developed.

of land by the peasantry, and by advocating an immediate withdrawal from the "capitalist" war. On this platform the Bolsheviks rode the crest of a vast social upheaval, and emerged, albeit tenuously, as the new rulers of Russia.

With regard to the question of competition for power, Timasheff observes: "Other things being equal, among the competitors for power in a highly disintegrated society, those men possess a greater chance to gain victory and receive the authority for reconstruction who offer a program (a) nearest to the expectations of the revolutionary mass and (b) best adjusted to its cultural level".[4]

This observation applies exactly, of course, to the Bolsheviks in 1917, and their revolutionary program was deliberately designed by Lenin to meet the demands of the revolutionary masses.

External military pressure, internal revolution, and concentrated leadership had contributed to the success of the Bolsheviks. External dissensions granted them stability of tenure. For, whilst the war-weary European powers were heartily opposed to, and even afraid of, the Bolshevik government, they made relatively weak and unconcentrated attempts to support the "White" opposition in Russia, and their efforts to overthrow the new regime were severely curtailed by the menacing attitude of organized Labour in the West.

The attempts made by the Western powers to destroy the Bolshevik regime were attributable not to their fears of Russian aggression but rather to their fears of the spread of revolutionary doctrine and practice,

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4. N. S. Timasheff, The Great Retreat (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946), p. 67.

stimulated by the example of a successful revolution in Russia, and, for some time after November, 1917, there appeared to be a strong possibility of a rapid extension of the revolution from the left in Europe. In Bavaria, soviets on the Russian pattern sprang up, and in Hungary the short-lived regime of Bela Kun was established.

The hesitancy and traditional caution of the Social Democrats in both Germany and Austria, however, prevented the anticipated westward extension of the "red tide" and, after the repulse of the Russian attack on Warsaw in March, 1921, an uneasy truce based on mutual exhaustion was established between the Bolshevik regime and the West.

In Russia the exhaustion was absolute. The destruction caused by the war and by the two revolutions was tremendous. Industrial output in 1920 was only eighteen per cent of the pre-war level, and in 1921 a disastrous famine reduced vast areas of Russia to complete starvation. In the same period, the Bolsheviks destroyed the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks as political entities, and even intra-party democracy was being stifled by persecution of the "Workers' Opposition".[5]

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5. The threat to Lenin's leadership of the Bolshevik Party, and indeed the threat even to the maintenance of power by the Bolshevik Party, presented by the "Workers' Opposition" and by other restless factions of the Bolshevik Party and of the surviving remnants of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary Parties, was averted in 1921 only by the fact of the outbreak of the Kronstadt Revolt, which served to rally the dissident political elements within the Party behind Lenin in defence of the revolution and which enabled him to brand all opposition as counter-revolutionary. It is somewhat ironical that the Kronstadt Revolt, which has been described as the "Unknown Revolution", was a revolt against the Bolshevik regime by those sailors who, in 1917, had formed one of the most advanced revolutionary elements and one of the most ardent and active groups supporting the Bolsheviks in their seizure of power. It is, accordingly, difficult to underestimate the significance of the Kronstadt Revolt and of its suppression by the Bolsheviks. For an account of this subject, see Voline, The Unknown Revolution, translated by H. Cantine (London: Freedom Press, 1955).

The tactical sense of Lenin reacted quickly to the growing mass unrest and to the economic plight of the country, and he, as a consequence, dictated the withdrawal from forced requisitions and "War Communism" to the New Economic Policy, which in essence involved a retreat to a mild form of capitalism. This opportunism provided for the Communists, as Lenin had hoped and expected, the opportunity to establish political stability based on economic recovery, and it also served to ameliorate to some degree the fears of the Western Powers regarding the extension and severity of the regime.

It was in the period of War Communism, during the first year of the new regime, that the Bolsheviks wrote their first Constitution, which was promulgated on July 10, 1918, as the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Republic. The main principles of this Constitution, as enunciated by Lenin, were, (1) all power belongs to the Soviets; (2) the Russian Soviet Republic is organised on the basis of the free union of free nations; (3) the Soviet state is a socialist state in which no exploitation exists; (4) work is the duty of every citizen.

On December 27, 1922, the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets accepted a report from Stalin which planned the establishment of a Soviet Union, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded officially three days later.

The creation of the federal structure as described in this Constitution was to some extent the result of the collapse of militant communism after the withdrawal of the Red Army from Poland and after the retreat to the New Economic Policy. It may also have been attributable to the Communist Party leaders' desire to establish, in the face of a hostile

world, a more closely knit organisation of Communist Republics than had previously existed. Further, of course, this centralised federative structure was necessary because of the closely integrated, planned economy which was being introduced in respect of all the Republics concerned.

Unlike the later Constitution of 1936, the first Constitution of the U.S.S.R. did not include a "bill of rights", but merely established a federative structure and, with heavy emphasis on centralism, laid down the relative spheres of responsibility of the central All-Union Government and of the member Republics. Under the terms of this Constitution, which by 1929 applied to nine member Republics, the areas of foreign policy, economic planning, defence, justice, education and public health were the responsibilities of the Union. All other responsibilities were exercised by Union-Republic Ministries or by Ministries of the Republic.

By 1936, when the second Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was formulated, the membership in the federal State had risen to eleven. The essence of this Constitution was not merely the proclamation of a bill of rights granting freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, etc., but also of the existence of socialism and therefore of the fact that full communism was now open for attainment. The economic recovery under N.E.P., the intensification of a planned economy under the First Five Year Plan, and the mass liquidation of the kulaks and other non-proletarian groups- all these facts were used to support the claim that a classless society had been attained and socialism established.

Another salient feature of the "Stalin" Constitution was the legal recognition of the Communist Party, described in Article 126

as follows:

> . . . the most active and politically-conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class, working peasants and working intelligentsia voluntarily unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to build communist society and is the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state.[6]

This description ratified and emphasised the fact of a one-party system in the U.S.S.R., and described the role which the Communist Party had, in effect, been playing since 1917.

As was implied in the reference to the "retreat" to the New Economic Policy, the road to socialism in the U.S.S.R. was not a direct one, and it is possible to divide the history of Russia and the U.S.S.R. under the Communist rule into distinct phases, the number and character of which are dependent on the criteria adopted.

Thus, Timasheff, who is concerned primarily with the ebb and flow of socialist policies and influences in the U.S.S.R., finds four distinct phases or periods between 1917 and 1945.[7]

The first phase was that of War Communism which lasted from 1917 to 1921. In this period, with certain serious reservations, a high degree of socialism, characterised by nationalism, spontaneity of the soviets, intra-party democracy, and a "revolutionary" foreign policy, was

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6. F.L. Schuman's translation, Russia Since 1917 (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1957), p. 506.

7. N.S. Timasheff, op. cit., Chapter XI.

achieved.

In the second phase, that of the New Economic Policy, which lasted from 1921 to 1929, a sharp reversal of the socialist experiment occurred in both economic and political aspects, particularly in regard to the partial reinstatement of private capitalism and the emergence of a personal autocracy in the person of Stalin. The third phase, from 1929 to 1939, was characterised by an intensification of the trend towards dictatorship, being marked by the overthrow of Bukharin and the "Right Opposition", but this tendency was counter-balanced, in the socialist scale of measurement, by the full introduction of a planned, a State-controlled economy. This took the form of collectivisation of the peasantry and a drive towards industrialisation, and it provided Stalin with the opportunity of eliminating the kulaks and claiming the establishment of a classless society.

Timasheff's fourth and final phase covers the period 1939 to 1945, a period which he regards as one characterised by a sharp and steady withdrawal from socialist principles and practices, notably in the fields of culture, foreign policy, and political doctrine, the reason for the withdrawal being the intensification of patriotism.

In the light of more recent experience, it may now be legitimate to extend this fourth stage of nationalism and dictatorship to Stalin's death in 1953, to add a fifth stage from 1952 to 1956, characterised by the rejection of the "cult of personality", and to suggest that the revival of Stalinist elements may now be increasing the possibility of the emergence of a sixth stage marked by a return to Stalinist autocracy.

The stages described by Timasheff are, however, valid only for a certain criterion which he appears to describe as the advance to socialism. Certainly, it is possible to split down the period into different phases if more specific criteria, such as economic or political affairs, are selected.

However, Timasheff's analysis is sufficient for our purpose in that it provides a brief background into which the 1936 Constitution can be fitted. It also brings out strongly the fact that from 1923 to 1953, the dictatorship of the U.S.S.R. was personified by Stalin rather than by the Party, and no survey of the period is complete without some brief reference to the emergence and dominance of the "man of steel".[8]

Stalin had never been a close friend of Lenin, and his background, experience and inclinations were radically different from those of the majority of the Party leaders. He was not an intellectual, he had made only one short visit to Europe, and he came from a lower station of society than did either Lenin or Trotsky. The latter, together with Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, shared greater affinities with Lenin than did Stalin, and, to the Party at large in 1923, it must have appeared that any one of them enjoyed a finer opportunity than he of assuming Lenin's mantle.

In the first year of the Bolshevik regime, after playing a relatively minor role in the revolution,[9] Stalin had been given the post of Commissar of Nationalities, but it was the post of Commissar of Workers'

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8. See I. Deutscher, Stalin: A Political Biography (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), for an excellent account of the emergence of Stalin, and of the Stalin era.

9. N.N. Sukhanov, op. cit., writes but briefly and slightingly of Stalin.

and Peasants' Inspectorate which he assumed in 1919 that really provided him with a tool for the assumption of the leadership of the Party. This Commissariat was responsible for the supervision of the State apparatus and this vast area of responsibility, coupled with the General Secretaryship of the Communist Party which he assumed in 1922, made Stalin the "master link" between the government and the Party, enabling him to occupy with his personal supporters most of the key positions in both the government and the Party. The fact that, as late as 1922, no one opposed this appointment to the Inspectorate is, perhaps, some indication of the lack of respect in which Stalin was held, and both Zinoviev and Trotsky referred openly and slightingly to his apparent lack of ability.

To indicate, therefore, that Stalin's ascendancy came as a complete surprise to the Communist Party is, perhaps, to exaggerate for the sake of brevity, but it is true to assert that, not until the last twelve or eighteen months of Lenin's life did there appear to be any indication at all of Stalin's growing importance in the Party, and not for a long time after Lenin's death was Stalin's supremacy finally revealed.

The prosaic, methodical and persevering characteristics which he displayed in carrying out his organization tasks served to obscure his purpose from his intellectually more gifted compatriots, and Lenin's political testament was the first indication of alarm at Stalin's real and potential power.

After Lenin's death, the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin came into being in 1926 and ruled the Party, Stalin, as always, remaining studiously in the background. It was, however, at his instigation that the triumvirate provoked and attacked Trotsky at the Party Conference of January, 1926, and ousted him from the leadership.

The story of Stalin's political manoeuvres from 1924 onwards is a detailed one and requires no elaborate description. In 1925 he and Bukharin, on a "left" platform, overthrew Zinoviev and Kamenev at the Fourteenth Party Congress. In 1927, Trotsky was finally expelled from the Party and Zinoviev and Kamenev compelled to recant their political errors. This trend towards a personal dictatorship was intensified during the period 1929-1938, when Bukharin and the "Right Opposition" were eliminated, and the great purges of the 'thirties removed the great majority of the Bolshevik hierarchy of 1917, and with it all vestiges of opposition to the Stalinist autocracy.

Until his death in 1953, Stalin exercised a virtually unchallenged dictatorship and was imbued and invested with all the patriarchal characteristics of the Tsars, showered with adulation, hailed as the defender of the revolution and elevated to the highest mansions of Communist hageology.

It is not surprising therefore that the Soviet Constitution of 1936 was described as the "Stalin" Constitution. Thus Yakolev declared in 1936 that "we are obliged to the best Leninist, the creator of the new Constitution, the great son of the Soviet people of whom our nation is proud, who in the family of every worker and peasant is called the father of toilers - our leader, Comrade Stalin",[10] and Khrushchev also glorified the Vozhd when, in a speech to the Eighth Congress of Soviets, he stated:

> . . . In the Stalin epoch, the epoch of victorious socialism, the working class under the leadership of our great leader will

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10. Quoted in F. L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 215.

conduct a far-reaching battle for the final victory of communism and for its triumph the world over. [11]

As we have indicated, the essence of the Constitution of 1936 was that it formally claimed the attainment of socialism and of the classless society. The fact that such a formal proclamation was effected is in itself indicative of the evolution of constitutionalism in the U.S.S.R. and in Communist thought.

In this connection, it should be noted that, although there are references in the works of Marx and Lenin to the form of government which might emerge after the proletarian revolution, there is little or no reference in Marxist and early Bolshevik theory to constitutionalism in the sense of the issuance of formal legal instruments ratifying the establishment of a new political and social order.

Indeed, it may perhaps be assumed that, in the light of Marx's and Lenin's concepts of a transformed and withering State, and of the less clearly enunciated principle of revolutionary legality, the idea of a formal constitution embodying a static set of rules and laws would surely be foreign. Moreover, Marxist thought, which regards the State and law as superstructural, was reinforced and emphasised in pre-revolutionary Russia by a marked absence of constitutionalist tradition and instinct. It has, indeed, been suggested by G. C. Guins[12] that the exis-

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11. Izvestia, December 2, 1936; quoted in F.L. Schuman, ibid., p. 215.

12. G. C. Guins, Soviet Laws and Soviet Society (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1954), p. 5.

tence in Russia of a significant Anarchist school of thought may well have been due in part to a lack of that legal, constitutional sense with which West European political theory is imbued.

The issuance of the Constitutions of 1918 and 1924 did not completely belie this lack of constitutionalism since, with regard for instance to law, they did not essentially controvert the Bolshevik insistence that law was not a static code but rather a description and ratification of acts dictated by revolutionary necessity.

By 1936, however, constitutionalism in its wider sense appears to have developed in the U.S.S.R., and the prime significance of this development lay in the implicit termination of the idea of permanent revolution[13] and in the recognition that a dynamic state of transition based theoretically on a fluid interpretation of revolutionary necessity did not provide a sufficiently stable framework of legal doctrine for the administration of a State.

Thus, as Schlesinger observes:

> In the discussions of Soviet legal theorists, there are trends resisting the strict establishment of a rule of law in the Western sense, i.e., an unconditional binding of the State Machinery in general and of the judiciary in particular to the laws enacted by the State. These trends represent the traditions of the revolutionary emergency out of which the present U.S.S.R. arose, and the needs of which, in many critical periods, seemed superior to any other consideration.
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> The increasing demand for strict legality, with the adjective "revolutionary" merely describing the origin of the legality, arises from considerations of expediency in the working of the State apparatus.[14]

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13. The "idea of a permanent revolution" should not be construed as a reference to Trotsky's theories of permanent revolution, but to the concept of a constant state of flux and transition.

14. R. Schlesinger, Soviet Legal Theory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 232.

The Constitution of 1936 embodied this growing sense of constitutionalism in the U.S.S.R. and was a statement and description of a developed political, economic and social structure. It formalised the legal foundations of the U.S.S.R. in its transitional phase from socialism to communism and to some extent, perhaps, reflected the bureaucratised society which often emerges after the revolutionary impetus has ebbed.

The importance of this Constitution, not only in the history of the U.S.S.R., but also in the development of Communist thought, is accordingly of great significance, for it implies the acceptance of a more normative and static concept of law than earlier Bolshevik theory and sentiment would have deemed permissible. It also, perhaps, tended to ascribe to the "State" a more decisive and permanent role than a purely Marxist, "superstructural" attitude would allow in a supposedly classless society.

In endowing the State with a legal entity, the Communists therefore posed themselves the problem with which we will deal in the next chapter. The problem was one of justifying a severe modification of Marxist theory to provide a theoretical basis for the existence of the State. It is obvious that the failure to solve this problem would have many serious consequences, not the least of which is the loss of any valid claim to the ideological inheritance of orthodox Marxism.

II. THE SOVIET STATE

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants. - The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 1.

The Soviet Constitution describes and reflects an established State form. It also claims the attainment of a classless society comprising "workers and peasants". When viewed in the context of Marxist political theory, the co-existence of these two facts presents a paradox, and a problem which faces Communism is the resolution of this paradox.

In order to analyse this problem concerning the State as clearly as possible, we will deal with it in four distinct phases, which are respectively the Marxist description of the origin, the nature, and the end of the State, the process leading to the disappearance of the State, the comparison of Marxist predictions regarding the State and its status in the Soviet Constitution, and, fourthly and finally, the evolution of Bolshevik theory to rationalise the fact of the State.

The State is conceived in Marxist theory as a phenomenon arising as a result of a system of social relations which is itself determined by economic forces. This concept springs from a basic Marxist hypothesis which Engels described in a preface to The Communist Manifesto written some twenty years after the publication of the Manifesto in 1848. "That proposition (the central proposition of The Communist Manifesto) is: that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained

the political and intellectual history of that epoch".[1]

Marx made the same point regarding the fundamental importance of economic criteria in the social analysis when he wrote:

> In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation on which rises legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.[2]

These passages do not, of course, indicate that there is any necessity for the emergence of the State as a kind, or element, of a political superstructure, and Engels claimed, on the basis of historical precedents described somewhat idealistically by Morgan in his Ancient Society, that societies had existed in which a system of simple economic production had predominated and in which there had been no such political institution as the State.[3]

As production relations evolved, however, as individual production exceeded individual needs, so the surpluses thus generated were used as a means of acquiring and exercising power. This power became the criterion of social relations; society was divided into the "haves and have nots" the master and the slave. Society, in short, was divided into classes each of which had distinct and opposing economic interests to maintain.

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1. F. Engels, Preface to The Communist Manifesto, published in Communist Manifesto: Socialist Landmark. A new appreciation written for the Labour Party by Harold J. Laski, together with original texts and prefaces. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948).

2. K. Marx, Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: Kerr, 1904), p. 11.

3. See F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State (Moscow: The Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), Chapters III and IV.

Clearly, the most powerful class enjoyed the greatest opportunity to mould the political superstructure to its basic need of maintaining and increasing its own power, and Engels described how such a need was met:

> Thus, in the Grecian constitution of the Heroic Age, we still find the old gentile system (community based on Kingship and "simple" production relations) full of vigour; but we also see the beginning of the decay: father right and the inheritance of property by the children, which favoured the accumulation of wealth in the family and gave the latter power as against the gens; differentiation in wealth affecting in turn the social constitution by creating first rudiments of a hereditary nobility and monarchy; slavery, first limited to prisoners of war, but already paving the way to the enslavement of fellow members of the tribe and even of the gens; the degeneration of the old inter-tribal warfare to systematic raids, on land and sea, for the purpose of capturing cattle, slaves, and treasure as a regular means of gaining a livelihood. In short, wealth is praised and respected as the highest treasure, and the old gentile institutions are perverted in order to justify forcible robbery of wealth. Only one thing was missing: an institution that would not only safeguard the newly-acquired property of private individuals against the communistic traditions of the gentile order, would not only sanctify private property, formerly held in such light esteem, and pronounce this sanctification the highest purpose of human society, but would also stamp the gradually developing new forms of acquiring property, and consequently of constantly accelerating increase in wealth, with the seal of general public recognition; an institution that would perpetuate not only the newly-risen class divisions of society, but also the right of the possessing class to exploit the non-possessing classes, and the rule of the former over the latter.
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> And this institution arrived. The state was invented.[4]

According to Marx and Engels, therefore, the State arises out of class conflict. "A product of society at a certain stage of development, it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel."[5]

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4. Ibid., pp. 177-178.

5. Ibid., p. 194.

The State, then, is a suppressive political instrument evolved to maintain and favour the interests of the predominant class in society. It is purely a weapon of the ruling class, and as production relations evolve, as one ruling class replaces another, so the State becomes the servant of the new master. After the disruption of primitive communism, and until the class struggle ceases, the State is always in existence precisely because dialectical materialism postulates the continuous generation of contradictions, the continuous emergence of new classes in the womb of the old society.

Having defined the State as a superstructural political entity arising out of class struggle and evolved for the purpose of repression,[6] the next step in the analysis is to argue that if ever class differentiation disappears, the State must also disappear.

This eventuality, the end of the class struggle, and the consequent disappearance of the State, is precisely what Marxism predicts. Thus The Communist Manifesto declares that if the proletariat carries through a successful revolution against the bourgeoisie, becomes the new, dominant class and abolishes the old conditions of production, "then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for

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6. Law also is a superstructural entity. Gumplowicz wrote in his General Theory of State that "Law is conceivable only in a state. It exists and falls with the state." Kelsen has observed in his Communist Theory of Law that "the Marxian theory of law is inseparably connected with the theory of state," and Marx has observed that "every form of production creates its own legal relations". An interesting problem in this connection is the form which law will take in a communist society, when class struggle has disappeared and when law, as a normative system by which class supremacy is ratified and regulated, has also consequently lost its raison d'etre. Although Marx does not deal with this question at any length, it can only be assumed that, in a communist, classless society, law will emerge as a sort of Natural Law depending for its execution on enlightened interest rather than on coercion.

the existence of class antagonism and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class".[7] This point was also clearly expressed by Engels:

> When ultimately it [the State] becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with the class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary. The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished', it withers away.[8]

Finally, in this connection, let us note the emphatic manner in which Engels postulates the inevitability of the disappearance of the State:

> The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no conception of state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this cleavage. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. The society that will organise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the

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7. K. Marx and F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 146.

8. F. Engels, Herr Eugen Duhrings Revolution in Science (Chicago: Kerr, 1935) pp. 308-309.

> producers will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into the Museum of Antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.[9]

This statement regarding the inevitable "withering away" of the State leads directly to the second phase of our discussion, namely, the process or chronological sequence of events, which culminates in the disappearance of the State.[10]

First, there is effected "the overthrow of the dominance of the bourgeoisie, the conquest of political power by the proletariat."[11]

This overthrow is achieved at a stage in the development of production and social relations, and, therefore, of the class struggle, when the bourgeois State can no longer withstand the pressure exerted by the proletariat. Because, moreover, the ruling class will not surrender power voluntarily, the revolution must always be political, and often violent, in nature.[12]

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9. F. Engels, The Origin, pp. 283-284.

10. It is important to discuss this process because communism in the form of a classless, Stateless society was not the unique preserve of the Marxists. The Anarchists also aspired to the attainment of a communist society, but differed essentially from the Marxists in that they believed in the abolition rather than in the "withering away" of the State. The abolition would be accomplished, according to the Anarchists, by the Revolution, and there would be no need for any "dictatorship of the proletariat" as postulated by the Marxists.

11. The Communist Manifesto, p. 142.

12. Towards the end of his life, Engels appeared to have been considering the possibility that the proletariat could achieve power through exercise of the franchise (see his Introduction to K. Marx's The Class Struggles in France, p. 20). This view was doubtless dictated by such measures as the British Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, but it is clear that the enunciation of such a view is not compatible with the central Marxist position that the ruling class will not concede power peacefully.

The effect of this successful revolution is the transfer of State power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. Lenin himself pointed this out when he emphasised that "The passing of State power from one class to another is the first, the main, the basic principle of the revolution".[13] It is important to note, however, that in Marxist theory, the transfer of State power does not mean the preservation of the mechanism or apparatus of the State. Rather, the Marxists, and Lenin in particular, emphasise that the revolution could be successfully accomplished only by the complete destruction of the State in its pre-revolutionary form. Thus Marx warned that the working class "cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its purposes"[14] but must "break up"[15] the governmental authority. Similarly, Engels, who regarded the Paris Commune as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, described it as "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word".[16]

Lenin also insisted that "Revolution must consist not of the new class commanding and governing with the help of the old state machine, but in the smashing of the machine, in their governing with the help of a new machine".[17]

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13. V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 15.

14. K. Marx, The Civil War in France (London: Lawrence, 1933), p. 37.

15. K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (London: Lawrence, 1924), p. 131.

16. Letter to A. Bebel, in K. Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, Appendix I, p. 161.

17. Lenin, op. cit., p. 96.

Finally, Stalin repeated this point in his lectures in 1924, later published as The Foundation of Leninism, when he indicated that "The triumph of the dictatorship means the crushing of the bourgeoisie, the break-up of the bourgeois state machine, and the replacement of the bourgeois democracy by the proletariat democracy".[18]

Thus the proletariat seizes State power but "puts an end to the state . . . as a state". What is the apparatus with which the proletariat replaces the State? "What", asked Marx in his Critique of the Gotha Programme, "are the changes which the state will undergo in the communist society? What are the social functions analagous to the functions of the existing state, which will be left there?"[19]

Marx provided the answer in the Critique when he stated that, in the transition period separating the revolution from full communism, "the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".[20] In the Paris Commune Marx found what he thought was the embryo of a post-revolutionary form of government, and Engels, as we have seen,[21] called it the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his State and Revolution, which he wrote in 1917, Lenin repeated the Marxist theme and Stalin later described the nature and purpose of the dictatorship:

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18. J. V. Stalin, The Foundations of Leninism (London: Modern Books, 1926), I, 118.

19. K. Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, p. 27.

20. Ibid., p. 28.

21. Above, Chapter II, p. 20.

> The dictatorship of the proletariat is the chief fulcrum of the proletarian revolution, its main instrument. The first aim of the dictatorship is to break the resistance of the exploiters. Next it must lead the revolution on to final victory, to the complete triumph of socialism. The revolution can achieve the first conquest of the bourgeoisie, the overthrow of the bourgeois dominion, without the dictatorship of the proletariat. But if the resistance of the bourgeoisie is to be crushed, if the conquests of the revolution are to be maintained, if the final victory is to be won by the establishment of Socialism, this special revolutionary organ, the dictatorship of the proletariat, must be created in the appropriate phase of the revolution.[22]

Again, he asserts that "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a revolutionary authority forcibly imposed upon the bourgeoisie".[23]

Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat is regarded as a dictatorship by the majority of the people over the remnants of the defeated bourgeoisie; as a new apparatus composed of armed workers; as a coercive authority which lasts at a diminishing rate until the classless society emerges.[24] Lenin even goes as far as to say that a Marxist is one "who extends the acceptance of the class struggle to the dicta-

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22. J. V. Stalin, op. cit., p. 110.

23. Ibid., p. 114.

24. The term "dictatorship of the proletariat" has been the subject of much misunderstanding, and the harsh adjectives common to the Communist vocabulary have done much to emphasise the ruthlessness and arbitrary nature of this dictatorship. However, there is a significant school of thought which asserts that the "proletarian dictatorship" was to Marx and Engels the antithesis of the "bourgeois dictatorship" of the modern State and that, in this context, it connotes or implies merely a liberal democracy which would extend to the bourgeoisie the political rights now enjoyed by the working classes. See e.g., Sidney Hook, Reason, Social Myths, and Democracy (New York: Humanities Press, 1950), pp. 134-139; and also Laski, Communist Manifesto: Socialist Landmark, Introduction, pp. 63-67.

torship of the proletariat".[25]

It may be noted at this point that the organ of government which the dictatorship - according to the Bolshevik leaders in Russia in 1917 - employs is the soviets, organs which we shall examine in greater detail in a subsequent chapter. Stalin described the soviets, which were a spontaneous creation of Russian society in 1905 and 1917, as "the most comprehensive mass organisations of the proletariat", as "the only mass organisations which enrol all the oppressed and exploited", and as "the most powerful instruments of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, of the political activity of the masses, of the revolt".[26] In the context of the Russian scene, therefore, the Bolsheviks regarded the soviets as instruments of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The final stage envisaged in the Marxist theory of the State is that which marks the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the necessity for which disappears with the socialisation of the means of production, with the elimination of the remnants of the bourgeoisie, and with the arrival of the classless society. It is at this stage that the State "disappears" into "the Museum of Antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe". The disappearance is the result of the elimination of class differences, and of the consequent removal of the only raison d'être of the State.

This final stage is, therefore, the advent of the full communist

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25. V.I. Lenin, op. cit., p. 30.

26. J.V. Stalin, op. cit., p. 118.

society. There is, at this stage, no State in the historic sense of the word. There is merely an administrative apparatus of "such comparatively simple processes as to be within the reach of any literate person".[27]

This disappearance or "withering away" of the State takes, of course, considerable time and, according to Lenin, "The transition from capitalism to communism represents an entire epoch".[28] In this connection, however, an essential point to remember is that, although the final "withering away" of the State machine can take place only when a classless society is attained, the process actually begins with the initiation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This point is extremely significant in so far as the subsequent Communist rationalisation of the power of the Stalinist State is concerned, and it may be well to remember that in their discussions of post-revolutionary society neither Marx nor Engels drew any distinct line between the first and second stages of socialism or communism.[29] According to them, therefore, the appearance of the dictatorship of the proletariat would mark the beginning of the attack on class differences

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27. V. I. Lenin, op. cit., p. 38.

28. V. I. Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (New York: International Publishers, 1934), p. 35.

29. Both Marx and Engels appear to have regarded "socialism" and "communism" as synonymous terms, although it may be possible that in certain cases they regarded "communism" as a social objective and "socialism" as a philosophy and as a program designed to attain communism. The Russian Communists, however, appear to differentiate between the two terms by regarding "socialism" as the first or lower phase of communism and "communism" as the higher, final phase. Thus Vyshinsky, in his work, The Law of the Soviet State, pp. 124-125, describes the "Stalin" Constitution as "The Constitution of victorious socialism, " which " . . . confirms faith in its forces among the toilers of the U.S.S.R. and mobilises them to struggle for the complete triumph of communism".

and of the trend from "a government of persons" to an "administration of things". For the dictatorship would be exercised only against a minority and, under a socialised economy, mankind would advance steadily to the classless and Stateless society. Certainly, prior to and immediately following the revolution of 1917 the Bolsheviks generally propounded this view. In 1919, for instance, the Communist Party's program expressed the expectation that money would soon be abolished as a means of exchange and that this abolition would first be realised in the relations between State enterprises.

Hazard provides two further examples:

> Lenin expressed his hopes for the future of industrial administration when he reported that the Supreme Council of National Economy represented the type of organization which would ultimately triumph throughout the governmental apparatus. Presumably he thought it would lead to a "withering away" of the State.[30]

> In viewing Soviet statutes on social security and the judicial decisions concerned with tort claims, it is evident that Soviet policy makers no longer think in terms of the replacement of the tort suit by the social security payment, as they seem to have done in the early years when law was expected soon to wither away.[31]

It is now possible to crystallise our discussion by asserting that Marxism, as preached by Marx, and by the Bolsheviks up to at least 1919, postulated the emergence of a classless communist society with no State or law in the historic sense, but only an administrative apparatus without coercive powers, and based on a system of social relations

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30. Hazard, Law and Social Change in the U.S.S.R. (Toronto: Casswell, 1953), p. 37.

31. Ibid., p. 244.

founded on "natural" moral principles.

This theoretical situation is a far cry from the "Stalin Constitution" and the arguments of the chief legal apologist of the U.S.S.R., Vyshinsky. In the Constitution of 1936, a single class, or classless, society is claimed to have been attained: "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants". Yet, where are the signs of the withering away of the State? Where is the pure "administration of things", envisaged by Marx and Engels? Why does not Soviet society reflect the social situation which, according to Marxist theory, should have been in existence with the achievement of socialised production and a classless society? How could Stalin, and the Bolshevik theoreticians of the nineteen-thirties, claim to be Marxists when the discrepancies between the Soviet State and Marxist predictions were so marked?

The development of the theory of the State from Marx to Stalin is an involved one. The theory was subject to constant modification in the light of the continuing emergence of hard political facts and situations. The fact that the revolution succeeded in what was basically a rural, agricultural, rather than an industrial, country, and did not spread throughout Europe, that the retreat to the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) was necessitated, that a prolonged struggle against internal enemies was waged, that the rival claims for personal leadership had to be resolved - all these facts and experiences imposed the necessity of modifying Marxist prognostications and changing Communist policies ostensibly based on Marxism.

At this point it may be advantageous to stress the passionate belief of the first generation Bolsheviks, and indeed of all the early Russian Marxist groups, in the inevitability of the advent of communism, and their fierce and genuine intentions regarding the early introduction of socialism after the revolution. The possibility of post-revolutionary autocracy and suppression was not anticipated and was far removed from the sincere intentions of the Bolsheviks. How, then, do we account for the rapidity with which, even in Russia, Bolshevik Communism became synonymous with coercion and dictatorship, with mass suppression, with rigid autocratic leadership and with the strengthening of State power?

The transformation begins with the seizure of power in 1917. The experience of 1905, involving the spontaneous creation of workers' soviets, had fired Lenin's imagination, had drawn for him a picture of a Russian industrial commune of the type described by Marx, and had, above all, convinced Lenin of the possibility of mass participation in government. In his polemic, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Lenin had enthused as follows:

> But a state of the commune type, a soviet state, openly and directly tells the people the truth by declaring that it is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry, and by this very truth it attracts tens and tens of millions of new citizens who are oppressed in any one of the democratic republics, but whom the soviets draw into political life, into democracy, into the governing of the state.[32]

As Meyer has pointed out, this represented a sort of anarcho-syndicalist phase of Lenin's thought, when he genuinely expressed his

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32. V. I. Lenin, op. cit., p. 81.

intentions of effecting actual mass participation in government. In November, 1917, a law was issued, in the first month of the rule of the new regime, establishing workers' control over industry, and, four months later, Lenin reiterated his demand for "universalisation of accounting and control over the entire production and distribution of products".[33] Again, Meyer quotes Lenin as writing, in November, 1917:

> Fellow workingmen, remember that you yourselves now govern the state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take the whole business of state into your own hands. Your soviets are from now on the organs of state authority; they are plenipotentiary, deciding organs.[34]

In 1919, when signs of change towards less democratic rule were already emerging, Lenin was still reiterating his determination to rid Russia of the old bourgeois type of State. Thus, in a lecture delivered at Sverdlov University, he declared:

> The machine called the state . . . the proletariat casts it away, averring it a bourgeois lie. We have taken this machine from the capitalists - taken it for ourselves. With it . . . we shall smash exploitation of every kind and - when there shall be no more the possibility of exploitation in the world, when there shall be no more possessors of land or of factories, when there shall be no more surfeiting of some while others are starving - only then, when these possibilities exist no more, will we turn this machine over to be broken up. There will then be neither state nor exploitation.[35]

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33. Quoted in Meyer, Leninism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 132.

34. Ibid., p. 200.

35. V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, Twentieth Century Legal Philosophy Series (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), V, 115.

This quotation deserves particular attention, for, whilst it emphasises Lenin's determination to get rid of the State apparatus, it also appears to indicate his gradual realisation that certain practical considerations were arising which tended to refer to the remote future the implementation of the process of the withdrawing away from the State.

A further point to remember is that for quite a few years after 1917 the value of the Russian revolution was seen, by the Bolsheviks, to be primarily in that it provided the springboard for a revolution which would soon sweep the more "advanced" capitalist countries of Europe.

Moreover, Lenin and many other Marxists felt strongly for some time after the October Revolution that the failure of a general revolution in Europe would mean the overthrow of the Russian revolution. As late as March, 1918, Lenin emphasised that international imperialism could under no conditions co-exist with the Soviet Republic, and in the same year, he again stressed that "We live not in a State but in a system of States, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialistic States for an extended period is unthinkable".[36]

For some years after 1917 it did indeed appear that this prognostication might prove to be true, and it was not until after the reverse at Warsaw in March, 1921, and the rapid deterioration of the Communist cause throughout Europe, that the Bolsheviks finally began

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36. V.I. Lenin, 'The Food Tax', a speech delivered to the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party on March 15, 1921.

to face and tackle the problems of creating and maintaining a politically isolated State in a more general way.

Coincident with these external influences there were, as we shall note in a later chapter on the Communist Party and Democratic Centralism, internal influences in the forms of War Communism, civil war, growing popular hostility to the Communists, rising intra-party friction and disunity, which forced the Communists radically to increase State power at the price of subversion of the democratic socialist principles upon which their philosophy and program were founded.

One of the tasks which was imposed upon the Soviet inheritors of Marxist theory was to provide a theoretical modification of Marxism adequate to support the political structure which political isolation and economic dislocation demanded. For, as the dream of attaining full communism became obviously more remote, the necessity for emphasising it, for strengthening faith in Marxist science and method, became even greater. Hence, while still regarding Marx as the prophet and founding father, the reinterpretation of his vision to fit harsh realities had to be brought about. Lenin had already provided a precedent for such a modification of Marxism in his concept of the small centralised Party as the vanguard of the proletariat. One might note at this point that, although the adaptation of theory was not in itself un-Marxian in that it was based on changing conditions, the reinterpretation did involve a radical change in the "political forecast" offered by Marx. As a matter of fact, as we shall note, the change was so radical as to affect a basic premise of Marxism concerning the superstructural nature of the State and Law.

Vyshinsky, who has already been referred to as a legal apologist for the Stalinist State, provides some indication of the gradual drift towards this modification of the Marxist thought on the State and Law in the post-revolutionary era:

> Law - like the State - will wither away only in the highest phase of Communism, with the annihilation of capitalist encirclement. . . . Until then, however, there is necessity for general control, firm discipline in labour and in community life, and complete subordination of all the new society's work to a truly democratic state.[37]

Vyshinsky was not the first to consider the necessity for such a reinterpretation; and Lenin himself had felt the need for it. This point is brought out clearly by Scott, who writes:

> While giving lip service to the class will strand of thought, with its talk of the state's withering away, Lenin actually introduced through the back door the state which Marx and Engels had ejected through the front. The State and Revolution might almost be regarded as written for this purpose. In it Lenin combats the withering away doctrine accepted at the time as the orthodox Marxist view. He sought to alter this view by emphasising a distinction that played only a small part in the writings of Marx and Engels: the difference between the lower and higher phases of communism. The state is to wither away, said Lenin, only when the higher phase of communism is reached, an entire historical period from the time at which the proletariat seizes power. Until that time the dictatorship will exist and with it the state. . . . Lenin seeks to escape the problem by casting the withering away of the state so far into the future that it ceases to be embarrassing.[38]

Scott is a severe critic of Communism, and one can hardly accept the inference that Lenin lacked sincerity when he emphasised his belief in the disappearance of the State. Yet, Lenin was a political realist, and the revolutionary fervour which he shared with his Marxist

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37. A. Vyshinsky, The Law of the Soviet State (New York: MacMillan, 1951), p. 52.

38. Scott, Anatomy of Communism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 54.

colleagues was not the less genuine because of the clarity of his analysis of hard political facts and necessities. The State and Revolution was, amongst other things, a sincere expression of intentions, and Lenin is not to be blamed for his foresight in noting difficulties to be encountered in the immediate realisation of Marxist prophesies. As we have noted,[39] the Bolsheviks, immediately after assuming power, gave legislative evidence of their intentions and hopes regarding the "withering away" of the State. This, however, does not contradict the possibility that, when writing The State and Revolution in 1917, Lenin had foreseen the difficulties involved in the rapid implementation of such a process and had, accordingly, as on previous occasions during the Iskra period, started to modify, either consciously or subconsciously, Marxism without conceding any diminution of his fierce doctrinal orthodoxy.

Thus, in The State and Revolution, Lenin began to distinguish between the two phases of socialism and to defer to the second or higher phase the more utopian aspects of Marxist predictions, such as the withering away of the State, and to stress the length of time involved in the completion of the first phase and the transition to the second.

The reasons for such a reservation by Lenin undoubtedly lay primarily in the internal difficulties which, he foresaw, might emerge after the revolution, for, as we have seen, he was convinced that external influences at least would tend to promote rather than hinder the advance to socialism. Before his death in 1924, this conviction

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39. See above, Chapter I, p. 30.

proved false and Lenin began to appreciate the problems of an isolated Soviet Socialist State. However, it was left to Stalin (and partly to Vyshinsky) to develop fully the second major argument, based on political isolation, for the intensification of State power and the removal of the "withering away" stage to a safe chronological distance. Stalin insisted on the necessity of first achieving "the annihilation of capitalist encirclement" as a pre-condition of the diminution of State power. The clearest statement of his position is as follows:

> Consider, for example, the classical formulation of the theory of the development of the socialist state given by Engels. . . . Is this proposition correct? Yes, it is correct, but only on one of two conditions: (1) if we study the socialist state only from the angle of the internal development of the country, abstracting ourselves in advance from the international situation; or (2) if we assume that socialism is already victorious in all countries, or in the majority of countries. . . . Well, but what if socialism has been victorious only in one country, and if, in view of this, it is quite impossible to abstract oneself from the international conditions - what then? Engels' formula does not set him this question, and therefore could not have given an answer to it. . . . But it follows from this that Engels' general formula about the destiny of the socialist state in general cannot be extended to the partial and specific case of the victory of socialism in one country only, a country which is surrounded by a capitalist world. . . . [and which] cannot, therefore, abstract itself from the international situation, and must have at its disposal a well-trained army, well organised primitive organs, and a strong intelligence service - consequently, must have its own state, strong enough to defend the conquest of socialism from foreign attack.[40]

The validity of the argument, in terms of the need for the continued existence of the State, is unquestionable, but it is equally clear that the attempt to resolve the contradiction between the exist-

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40. J. V. Stalin, op. cit., I, 30.

ence of the State and the Marxist "theory of the development of the State" fails completely. Marxism deals in concrete, factual situations, and the development of the State inthe manner described by the Marxist is a historical inevitability. In such circumstances Stalin's claim that Engels did not consider the problem in the context of the international situation is preposterous, for in making such an assertion, Stalin charges Engels with having dealt with the State under abstract and "impossible" terms. Further, if Stalin's reasoning is correct, one might assume that Marxism implied that the State would wither away only if the revolution broke out simultaneously all over the world or, failing that, only if it were possible to abstract the State from the international situation.

What Marx and Engels really implied was that "socialism in one country" was an unattainable situation precisely because the free development of society would be prevented or distorted by bourgeois pressures. Stalin is therefore certainly correct when he indicates that "Engels' general formula . . . cannot be extended to the partial and specific case of the victory of socialism in one country", not because the case is different but because the victory of socialism in one country only is impossible. This argument of Stalin's provides an interesting example of the lengths to which the Communists have gone to retain the ideological mantle of Marxism and to avoid any admission of contradictions between fact and Marxist theory.

In Stalin's case an ulterior motive for the full and emphatic development of the concept of "socialism in one country" may have lain

in the necessity for developing a dramatically opposed theoretical platform to that of his arch-rival Trotsky, whose concept of permanent revolution had been eagerly accepted by Lenin in 1917. This point does not perhaps require any further comment, but certainly, in the middle and late nineteen-twenties, Stalin was at great pains to stress the need for State power and, consequently, to put into the distant future the withering away process.

It may well be that Stalin felt that this modification of the theory of the State imposed strains even upon the Party because, as Hunt points out, Stalin was anxious, at the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth Congresses, to emphasise the need for the State and to note that his concept of the role of the State was in accordance with Marxism. Hunt notes the significance of Stalin's warning to the Soviet Communists, at the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1939, "not to look at the classical Marxist writings for 'ready made solutions' of their problems, or suppose that they understood 'the essence of Marxism' because they had learned 'by rote' a few of its general tenets".[41]

There lies in this emphasis by Stalin on the role of the State a more significant, and indeed a deeper, modification of Marxism, which eventually undermined one of its basic tenets. For any undue emphasis upon the positive role of the State must of necessity stress its dynamic role in society. The more positive the role of the State is said to be, the less parasitic and superstructural it becomes.

Thus, the new conception of the role of the State implicitly challenges the classical Marxist distinction between the fundamental or

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41. Quoted in Hunt, op. cit., p. 183.

substructural role of economic relations and the superstructural role of the State and Law. If such a distinction is successfully attacked, then the primacy of economic relations is open to question and the whole Marxist edifice of dialectical materialism also becomes open to question.

Admittedly, Stalin did not pursue the argument for the power of the State to this point. Yet, it must be realised that his insistence upon the role of the State in society, irrespective of the valid reasons which he gave, began to raise the possibility of the emergence of such a dilemma. Obviously, a serious modification of Marxism, to which the Communists have been forced by their rationalisation of State power, must be noted in this fact. It was to be expected that the Soviet Constitution would reflect a concept of the State based upon the Communist modifications of Marxist theory which we have just reviewed. In spite of the alleged existence of a classless society, a claim which we shall shortly examine, there is no indication whatsoever of the withering away of the State in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the State has been strengthened and buttressed by a revised legal concept evolved in the crucible of political events. The higher phase of Communism and with it the withering away of the State have been removed to a remote future, and the State is accorded a solidity, primacy and premanency not envisaged in Marxist thought.

We have already noted that the Soviet Constitution claims the existence in the U.S.S.R. of a classless society, a claim which is implicit in the first article of the Constitution. This article says:

"The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants", that is, a State of one class comprising the toilers in industry and agriculture.

It is, of course, possible to assert with some validity that the U.S.S.R. is socialist, in the sense that private capitalism has been virtually abolished and that the State exercises complete control over the instruments of production. It should be noted, however, that this remark relates to the economic facet only of Socialism. Socialism is, however, a philosophy of life and embraces concepts of individual freedom and political and social obligation which must be realised in practice before any claim to the attainment of Socialism can be successfully established.

A second part of Article 1, however, is the claim that, by 1936, a classless society had been achieved; classless in the sense that there existed in the U.S.S.R. an unstratified society of workers and peasants unified and directed by the Communist Party as its vanguard. This claim did not, of course, imply that the Soviet leadership would not admit the existence of groups other than the proletarian peasant class, but it involved the assertion that such groups were not representative of opposing class interests, and that, following the liquidation of the kulaks during the First Five Year Plan, the existence of distinct classes based on divergent economic interests had disappeared.

The validity of such a claim is central to the success of the Soviet experiment, at least in so far as it purports to be the realisation of Marxist prognostication. For if a classless society has

not been achieved, it means that the dictatorship of the proletariat and the control of the instruments of production which the dictatorship effects have failed to secure the social ends postulated in Marxism. This point serves to explain why the introduction of the New Economic Policy was accompanied by the compensating intensification of the role of the State as an instrument of repression over the nascent and resurrected capitalist forces that might emerge under the N.E.P.

In discussing legal development during N.E.P., R. Schlesinger, for instance, refers to "both sides of that general evolution: the establishment of an economic regime that gave ampler space to private capitalism, and the strengthening of the dictatorial features of the political regime to check the growing capitalistic forces".[42]

All the available evidence would appear to suggest that the Soviet leaders had, in fact, by 1936, succeeded in eliminating, if not a capitalistic psychology, at least all those classes other than the proletariat and the poorer peasantry, which had played such a dynamic role in the last period of Tsarist Russia and which had tended to emerge again under the wan economic sunshine of N.E.P. The upper and lower bourgeoisie, which before the Revolution found political expression in the Constitutional Democrats led by Milyukov, did not long survive the revolution and the rigours of War Communism, and the recovery of the stature of the entrepreneur under N.E.P. was ephemeral. Moreover, the drive to the kolkhos and mass agrarian collectivisation at the beginning of the nineteen-thirties spelled the drastic and ruthless

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42. R. Schlesinger, Soviet Legal Theory: Its Background and Development (London: Routledge and Paul, 1951), p. 85.

elimination of the rich and middle peasantry personified by the kulak.

Class elimination, however, was the easier half of the Bolshevik problem. The more difficult element of the problem lay in avoiding the creation of economic conditions favouring the rise of new classes nurtured in the womb of the new society. It is indeed in this area that there exists some doubt about Communist success.

Two major social factors would appear to account for the emergence in the U.S.S.R. of new social groups since 1917. These are the existence of a huge State apparatus, staffed by a specialised bureaucracy, as a deliberate product of Leninism, and the growth of a technocratic leadership based on the rapid technological development of the U.S.S.R.

The element of the bureaucracy which might be described as the doctrinal aristocracy is the Communist Party, which we will consider at greater length in a later chapter. For the moment, suffice it to remark that, despite the intentions of Lenin and the first generation Bolsheviks, the economic and social disparities between the Party membership and the masses appear to have increased with the solidification of the Party as the ruling clique in the State.

The original Lenist concept of equal pay and status for equal labour disappeared with the increasing enjoyment of power and its appurtenances by the leaders. In referring to the period after 1934, Moore writes:

> One outstanding characteristic of this era has been the endeavour to reconcile the older Leninist doctrine that the masses are the masters of their country and their fate with the fact of the concentration of power at the top levels of the Party. Lenin's theory of a conspiratorial and disciplined

> elite provided a basic starting point in this process. Under Stalin there is a recognizable tendency for the reigning ideology to approach more closely the actual facts of the distribution of power in the Russian state.[43]

Thus, although it might be rash to describe the Communist Party Leaders, and the members generally, as elements of an hereditary caste system, the stress upon the role of this elite, as well as the economic and social privileges attendant upon the status, were in 1936 beginning to give evidence of the emergence of a reigning oligarchy. In this connection it may be significant to note that, between 1926 and 1934, the working class element of the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. dropped from about thirty-five per cent to nine per cent,[44] thus emphasising the growing disparity between government and the governed.

This development of inequalities, which might support the introduction of new classes and sectional interests into the Soviet scene, was stimulated by the necessities of the technological and industrial development of the U.S.S.R. It grew to such significant proportions by 1931 that Stalin was beginning to provide for a theoretical recognition of this fact.

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43. B. Moore, Soviet Politics: The Dilemma of Power (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 221, 222.

44. Ibid., p. 258. These figures relate chiefly to the number of production workers in the Party. It is often the practice of Soviet sources to quote "worker" element percentages on the basis of production workers plus those who are of working-class origin, thus incorporating a large number of people who are actually at managerial levels in Soviet society. Obviously, the use of such a method can lead to erroneous conclusions regarding the relative strength of socio-economic groupings within the Party.

Moore precisely described this evolution:

> In introducing the new Soviet Constitution in 1936 Stalin stated that the Soviet population was divided into two major classes, the working class and the peasantry, and a third group, the intelligentsia, which as a genuflection in the direction of Marxist orthodoxy he called a stratum. The members of all three groups were defined as being equal in rights within the Soviet society, and Stalin further asserted that under Soviet conditions the amount of social distance and the political and economic contradictions between the groups were diminishing and indeed were being eliminated. Even as he made these declarations the actual relations between and withing the major social groups were moving in a very different direction under the impact of social forces which Stalin himself had set in motion in 1931. For in that year, faced by severe problems in relation to the productivity of labour, and an extraordinary high rate of labour turnover under the first Five Year Plan, Stalin launched an attack against 'equity-mongering' and wage equalisation and began a movement for personal incentive based on differential rewards.[45]

In 1934 Stalin emphasised that "It is time that it was understood that Marxism is an enemy of equalisation",[46] and he described the "harm these infantile equalitarian exercises of our Left blockheads caused our industry."[47] Any attempt within the Party to assert equalitarianism and to resist the capitalistic principle of personal economic incentive was thus met with vigorous and fatal charges of Left deviationism.

This theoretical shift provided the rationalisation for the Stakhanovite movement and for the tremendous increase in the number of relatively highly paid and socially privileged technical and administrative officials who staffed and directed the new economic, political and industrial machine in the U.S.S.R. By 1939, the Soviet bureaucracy had swelled to an approximate total of 10,000,000, and comprised a bloc representing some seventeen per cent of the population of the U.S.S.R.

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45. B. Moore, op. cit., p. 236.

46. Quoted ibid., p. 238.

47. Quoted ibid.

This rapid increase in non-proletarian, non-peasant elements was accompanied by an equally rapid increase in economic disparity and in differences of the standards of living. Impressive statistics of sharp salary and wage differentiations in the Soviet Union since 1931 have been produced by various observers.[48]

In this connection, again, Timasheff has gone so far as to refer to this rise in the importance and number of the technocratic or managerial class (which he categorises generally as Non-Party Bolsheviks) as "one of the main social processes characterising the period",[49] and he also emphasises the significant economic disparities even within the working class itself. He then summarises the "class" situation in the U.S.S.R. in the nineteen-thirties as follows:

> The social strata are: (a) the ruling elite plus a few fellow travellers; (b) the Non-Party Bolsheviks; (c) the peasants and the artisans; and (d) the paupers or the formerly dis-enfranchised [sic]. This post-revolutionary society is still in flux. Further changes are probable. But the velocity of change has substantially decreased, and for the individual the chance of gaining higher social status is no greater than in bourgeois society.[50]

As Moore has pointed out, the measure of social and economic disparity is evidence of class development only when social stratification crystallises, that is, when perpendicular social mobility ceases. Thus, although by 1936, the year of the Stalin Constitution, there was much to suggest that there were in the U.S.S.R. wide economic and social disparities, there does not (in spite of Timasheff's claims)

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48. See, e.g., H. Schwartz, in some of his writings.

49. N. S. Timasheff, The Great Retreat, p. 308.

50. Ibid., p. 310.

appear to be sufficient evidence accumulated to indicate any serious horizontal crystallisation in society. New social groups were emerging, the working class content of the Party was diminishing, and it may be that there was a somewhat greater limitation of access to higher educational facilities. However, it would be rash to assert that, at least by 1936, definite antagonism based on class differentiation had appeared, although, as Moore concludes, "All these forces are at work in the Soviet Union, and it is a safe prediction that they will eventually result in the emerging of a class system resembling in many ways that in the United States excluding the South."[51]

We have thus concluded our brief analysis of the Communist claims embodied in Article 1 of the Soviet Constitution of 1936.

We have noted that the legal concept of the State involves a radical departure from Marxist predictions and the threat of an even more radical attack on one of the basic tenets of Marxism, the superstructural nature of the State.

In terms of the first article of the Constitution being a realistic statement about contemporary Soviet society, it may be suggested that the claim to a classless society, whilst enjoying considerable validity, may be threatened by the continuing development of social forces in the form of technical and bureaucratic aristocracies and by the consequent emergence of social stratification and new class conflicts.

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51. Moore, op. cit., p. 240.

What is definite is that there exists in the U.S.S.R. a State machine of unparalleled size and complexity, of a type and power far removed from Marxist and Leninist concepts. It is with the extent of this apparatus that we shall now deal.

III. GOVERNMENT IN THE SOVIET UNION

The highest executive and administrative organ of state authority of the U.S.S.R. is the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R.- The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 64.

Vyshinsky described the State administration of the Soviet Union as "an indissoluble unity of administrative and economic government",[1] extending to "all sides of the economic and social life of the people".[2] In contrast, Engels' famous description of the evolution of the role of the State after the successful proletarian revolution is: "Government of persons is replaced by administration of things".[3]

The disparity between the fact of the extent and complexity of the Soviet administrative system on the one hand, and the prediction of classical Marxism on the other, is marked. As in the case of the concept of the State, this disparity has arisen primarily as a result of the pressures which economic and political circumstances have exerted upon the Communists.

It has been noted[4] that the State was regarded by Marx and Engels as a superstructural entity owing its existence to class struggles, and losing its raison d'être when class struggles ceased.

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1. A. Vyshinsky, The Law of the Soviet State, p. 369.
2. Loc. cit.
3. F. Engels, Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science, p. 309.
4. Above, I, 19.

Therefore, as the classless society emerges, as the State gradually disappears, the necessity for a technique and a complex apparatus of government steadily decreases. As differences in economic power are eliminated, as social tensions fade, so the need for a suppressive executive mechanism dies away, and natural, harmonious social relations develop, with their own regulatory system based on moral principles and standards dictated by the social consciousness of the individual. A suppressive system thus becomes unnecessary and government applies only to the administration of things.

Neither Marx nor Engels was at any great pains to amplify the concept of the "administration of things", since such a development followed logically from the "withering away" of the State, since the concept belonged to a somewhat distant stage of the Marxist prognostication, and since the analysis of contemporary society and the problem of evolving a technique of revolution were subjects of more immediate interest to them.

Lenin, of course, was not in such a happy situation. The revolution had already occurred. The Bolshevik Party was the instrument and the spearhead of the proletarian revolution in Russia. The dictatorship of the proletariat was a political and social fact, and Lenin was accordingly obliged not only to define the Marxist concept of government more precisely than had been done hitherto, but also to take measures to implement those policies which would serve to realise Marxist aspirations and predictions.

As we have noted, one of the "phases" of Lenin's development was similar to the theory of anarcho-syndicalism, in which phase he expressed his confidence in the ability of the proletariat to participate

in government, to control the apparatus of government. This phase of his thought sprang from a rather naive view of the development of capitalist management and administrative techniques and was perhaps typical of the heavily theoretical proclivities of the professional Russian revolutionaries. In his The State and Revolution Lenin stressed the need for intensification of the State control of industry. The administration of this State control was, however, to be removed from the hands of the professional bureaucracy and was actually to be carried out by the average working man. Moreover, at this time, Lenin did not think that this syndicalist attitude was unrealistic in contemporary conditions. Sukhanov, for instance, in discussing Lenin's plans on the eve of the Russian revolution, records that

> Lenin's ideas included 'the thoroughgoing revision of the whole government apparatus and its replacement by administrators from among the working class', 'the liability to election of all officials', compulsory parity between specialists' wages and the average workers'. And there were some other phantasies which all vanished at the first contact with reality.[5]

Although Sukhanov was, of course, very critical of Lenin and the Bolsheviks generally, the accuracy of his observation tends to find support from Lenin himself who, in The State and Revolution, offers the following quotation from Marx's The Civil War in France:

> The Commune was formed of municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in various wards of the town, responsible to and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged members of the

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5. N.N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution, p. 570.

> working class. . . . The judicial functionaries were to be divested of their independence. . . . Like the rest of the public servants, magistrates were to be elective, responsible, revocable.[6]

Lenin goes on to amplify and assert:

> Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, heads of a standing army), the majority can itself fulfil all these functions; and the more the discharge of the functions of State power devolves upon the people generally, the less need is there for the existence of this power.[7]

Again, in attacking the revisionist Edouard Bernstein's rejection of this concept of "primitive" democracy, Lenin explains:

> Capitalistic culture has created large-scale production factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and on this basis the great majority of functions of the old "state power" have become so simplified and can be reduced to such simple operations of registration, filing and checking, that they will be quite within the reach of every literate person, and it will be possible to perform them for 'workingmen's' wages, which circumstances can (and must) strip those functions of every shadow of privilege, of every appearance of 'official grandeur'.[8]

Finally, one might offer a quotation from Lenin's treatise, How to Organise Competition, written in January, 1918, in which he emphasised that "we must break the old, absurd, savage, despicable and disgusting prejudice that only the rich (i.e., the educated) can administer the state, since every rank and file worker who is able to read and write can do organisational work".[9]

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6. Quoted in V.I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, pp. 36, 37.

7. V. I. Lenin, op. cit., p. 37.

8. Ibid., p. 38.

9. V. I. Lenin, How to Organise Competition, in Lenin: Selected Works, II, 258.

As we have noted, all this was tied up closely with the expectations that the State would wither away, and whilst it expressed the aspirations of Marx and Engels, it is clearly open to the charge of primitivism which the revisionists laid against it.

Owing to the pressure of the economic and social collapse of Russia during and immediately after the revolution, however,[10] this naive approach to the question of mass participation in the administration of the State was rapidly revised in spite of considerable opposition.[11]

This revision was carried out at Lenin's insistence, and it had to cover two main points. First, it was necessary to dismiss the notion that a revolutionary, makeshift State apparatus would suffice to carry the country into a higher phase of socialism. Second, it was necessary to provide for the re-admission of the expert and the bureaucrat.

As early as April, 1918, only six months after the inaugur-

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10. Hunt goes so far as to assert that "the attempt to run the country in this manner was certainly one of the factors which reduced it within two years to a condition of utter prostration." R.N.C. Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism (London: G. Blas, 1950), p. 145.

11. See, for instance, the official History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939), p. 255: "The 'Workers' Opposition' put forward a slogan demanding that the administration of the entire national economy be entrusted to an 'All-Russian Producers' Congress'. They wanted to reduce the role of the Party to naught, and denied the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat to economic development. The 'Workers' Opposition' contended that the interests of the trade unions were opposed to those of the Soviet state and the Communist Party. They held that the trade unions, and not the Party, were the highest form of working-class organisation. The 'Workers' Opposition' was essentially an anarcho-syndicalist anti-Party group."

ation of the new regime, Lenin was reluctantly concluding that the bourgeoisie was the main source of expert skill, and he publicly admitted that these experts were already receiving higher salaries than those of general administrative personnel. At the Eighth Party Congress, as Hunt points out, we find Lenin insisting upon the necessity of using these bourgeois experts, and at the Ninth Party Congress in April, 1920, he declared that "for the work of organising the state we need people who have state and business experience and there is nowhere we can turn for such people except the old class; . . . We have to administer with the help of people belonging to the class we have overthrown." [12]

Thus, Lenin is clearly acknowledging that the simple "administration of things" is not a mechanical task which the literate workingman can perform, and is consequently insisting on the use of the remnants of the defeated bourgeoisie to carry on the administration of the State.

This in itself raises a further problem of trusting a class enemy to faithfully serve the proletarian State introduced avowedly to annihilate the bourgeoisie. Fainsod has described this problem in these words:

> The pre-Revolutionary bureaucracy was a repository of established governmental routines and procedures, but its skills were not readily adaptable to the new order, and in any event, many of its members regarded their new overlords with enmity. The Party itself attracted few members trained in the arts of civil administration. The problem of transforming a revolutionary party into a governing party presented real problems. The qualities that made for success in agitation and propaganda were not easily transferable to industrial management or other administrative responsibilities. . . . The Party leadership resorted to a variety of expedients in order to cope with the problem of its inadequate administrative resources. Since it

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12. Quoted in R. N. C. Hunt, op. cit., p. 146.

> could not dispense with the old-regime specialists and bureaucrats, it enlisted them in its service and surrounded them with Party and police controls in order to ensure their loyalty.[13]

Another student of Soviet affairs, E. H. Carr, commenting on this matter, writes:

> The task of managing a state demands different qualities from the task of making a revolution - even opposite qualities. . . . The prolonged civil and international war created a situation in which revolutionary enthusiasm continued to be more valuable than the organisation of civil administration, but with the coming of NEP consolidation was the order of the day, and the issues it presented were of a practical kind. Many of Lenin's last articles were devoted to the problems of bureaucracy.[14]

Coupled with this recruitment of bourgeois administrators, the Party set up industrial academies and implemented a long-term program for the development of administrative and organisational skills.

Three significant factors served to hasten the creation of a vast administrative edifice in the Soviet State. First, the planning designed to centralise and control the whole of Soviet industry was initiated in 1920 when the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia was created. This gave notice of an extension of State control over the entire economy, and imposed upon the government a task which not even the highly developed bureaucracies of the West were equipped to carry out.

The extent of this task was greatly increased by the second factor, namely, federalism, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Repub-

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13. M. Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, (Cambridge:Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 330.

14. E. H. Carr, "Stalin", Soviet Studies (Oxford: Blackwell, July, 1953-54), V, 3.

lics was established in December, 1922.

The federal structure made it necessary to create not only uniform administrative agencies for the member Republics, but also central, "all-Union" ministries to deal with matters pertaining to the responsibilities of the central government of the U.S.S.R.

Thirdly, the rapidly growing necessity for developing the military strength of the U.S.S.R. to meet the threat of Fascism served not only to increase that element of the State apparatus concerned with military affairs, but also to hasten the industrialisation of the U.S.S.R. through the Five Year Plans. As Hazard remarks, "The simple administrative structure of the early years was not to last",[15] and Towster notes that the increase in the scope of government in the U.S.S.R. was paralleled by the decrease in emphasis upon the withering away of the State:

> As, however, the enormity of the transformation sought revealed itself in the process of persecution . . . The Soviet leaders' conception of the scope and duration of governmental power also grew. And the Soviet government has actually operated as a crisis government over the greater part of its existence, making extensive use of the immense authority of the dictatorship to mobilise men and materials for the titanic task of construction, war and reconstruction.[16]

The Constitution of 1936 gave ample indication of the scope of government in the U.S.S.R. and of the size of the bureaucracy required to administer a State machine of unparalleled size. Article 6,

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15. J. N. Hazard, Law and Social Change in the U.S.S.R., p. 37.

16. J. Towster, Political Power in the U.S.S.R. (Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 381.

for instance, describes the extent of State property, ranging from natural resources to industrial utilities and to "state-organized agricultural enterprises", as well as "municipal enterprises and the bulk of the dwelling-houses in the cities and industrial localities." Article 7 refers to "The common enterprises of collective farms and co-operative organisations." Article 11 states that "The economic life of the U.S.S.R. is determined and directed by the State natural-economic plan" , . ."The State has, in fact, as implied in the Constitution, become identical with the whole of society and with the national economy, and it is not therefore surprising that the bureaucratic elements which Lenin hated and feared are among the most rapidly growing elements in Soviet society. Harper indicates in this connection that, from a State apparatus of one million people which the Bolsheviks inherited from the Tsarist regime, the number swelled to four million by 1927 and to a reported 11.5 million by 1937.[17]

Fainsod, noting that "One of the salient outgrowths of modern totalitarianism is the bureaucratisation of its power structure", goes on to observe:

> The Soviet bureaucracy manifests many of the traits characteristic of bureaucratic behaviour generally. . . . . Its scope is all-embracing . . . It seeks to organise the total experience of man in Soviet society. Every branch of the economy and every form of social experience, from art, music and letters to sports and the circus, are subject to administrative regulation and direction. The totalitarian imperative drives to transform the nation into a hierarchy of public servants operating within a framework of disciplined subordination to state purposes.[18]

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17. S. N. Harper and R. Thompson, The Government of the Soviet Union (New York: Nostrand, 1949), p. 189.

18. M. Fainsod, op. cit., p. 328.

The origin of the administrative, or executive, arm of the Soviet Government may be traced to November 8, 1917, when the Second Congress of Soviets decreed the creation of "a Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government, which would be called the Council of Peoples' Commissars." This Council, or Sovnarkom, as it was known, was accountable to the Congress of Soviets and to the Central Executive Committee, and was responsible for the administration of the affairs of the State, being described in the first federal Constitution as "the executive and administrative organ of the C.E.C. of the U.S.S.R." This body also enjoyed some legislative powers in addition to its executive power, although these legislative powers were partly withdrawn by the Constitution of 1936. Thus the Council, known since 1946 as the Council of Ministers, has the right to issue decrees and ordinances, but only within the framework of existing law.[19]

By 1936 the Council had become "the most continuously operating and most potent organ of the Soviet hierarchy in both the administrative and legislative fields",[20] and "the greatest producer of obligatory, state-enforced, activity-guiding norms in the Soviet system".[21] Article 68 of the Constitution gave it the following functions:

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19. M. Fainsod, op. cit., pp. 362 - 375.

20. J. Towster, op. cit., p. 276.

21. Ibid., p. 276.

(a) Coordination and direction of the work of the all-Union and Union-Republican Ministries of the U.S.S.R. and of other institutions under its jurisdiction;

(b) Adoption of measures to carry out the plan of the national economy and the state budget, and the strengthening of the credit-monetary system;

(c) Adoption of measures to secure public order, defence of the interests of the State, and the safeguarding of the rights of citizens;

(d) Exercising general supervision in the sphere of relations with foreign states;

(e) Directing of the yearly quotas of citizens subject to call for active military service, determining the general organisation and development of the armed forces of the country;

(f) Formation, in the case of necessity, of special committees and chief administrations attached to the Council of Ministers on matters of economic, cultural and defence organisations.

Further, under Article 69, the Council enjoys the right, on matters within its competence, to suspend or annul orders and decrees of the Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics, and to annul orders and instructions of the Ministers of the U.S.S.R.

Although the formal power of the Council of Peoples Commissars was somewhat eclipsed during the war years by the State Committee of Defence, the Council of Ministers, the Chairman of which is generally known as the "Premier" of the U.S.S.R., stands at the apex of the vast pyramidal executive and administrative apparatus of the U.S.S.R.

The membership of the Council was originally thirteen, a figure which rose to fifteen in 1935, to twenty-six in 1938, and to sixty-four in 1946, another reflection of the staggering growth in the State apparatus. This body also has a large number of Committees and

other bodies attached to it covering many social and scientific activities, ranging from religion to telegraphy, and from meteorology to agriculture.

Yet, when the Sovnarkom was established in 1917, it was extremely simple, its apparatus uncomplicated by the administrative demands of a federal, multi-State structure. The commissariats were collegial in nature (a genuflection in the direction of syndicalism), with the Commissar serving as Chairman of a Collegium appointed by the Council of Peoples' Commissars. Lenin insisted upon this principle of group management in order to satisfy the widespread desire for mass participation in government. Although, by the end of 1918, he had begun to realise that collegial management involved serious delays in decision making, the considerable opposition within the Party to any withdrawal from this policy served to delay the full introduction of the practice of single management until at least 1929, when the administrative demands of the first Five Year Plan emphasised the need for a reduction in discussion and an increase in the rapidity of decision-making. The strengthening of an autocratic psychology in the U.S.S.R. in this period may also have contributed to this reversal of administrative policy. The collegiate principle was re-established in 1956 but it is worthy of note that the decision of the minister was upheld in the event of disagreement between him and the ministry collegium.

The structure of the Soviet administration, with the Council of Ministers as its apex, is now essentially the same as it was at

the formation of the U.S.S.R. in 1923, namely a pyramidal hierarchy ranging downwards from the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. to the Council of Ministers of the Union-Republics, to the Regional administrative units (such as oblasts and autonomous republics), to raions or district units, and, finally, to local units comprising towns and villages. The largest cities report directly to the Republic, the medium size cities in the R.S.F.S.R. to the oblasts of that Republic, and the small towns to the raions.[22]

At each level of this structure, the administration reports not only to the next higher executive level but also to the Soviet at that same level, thus ensuring, at least theoretically, a marked degree of "popular" influence and control.

The necessity for maximum compatibility between the demands of centralisation and autonomy in a federal State was the primary reason for the creation of the "all-Union" and Union-Republic Ministries which together comprise the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. Briefly, the all-Union Ministries are central administrative departments responsible throughout the U.S.S.R. for a particular sector of industry or for a particular utility, for example, the coal industry and the railways. From the various production-territorial sections of these Ministries is exerted the control over the relevant industry in the various territories of the U.S.S.R.

The Union Republic Ministry, on the other hand, is more like

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22. This pyramidal structure is more effectively described by the Chart in Appendix 'A'.

a federal counterpart of a Republican Ministry, which it actually supervises. Its officials report directly to both the Union Republican Ministry in Moscow, and to the Council of Ministers and the Soviet of the Republic in which it is situated. It is, in essence, the Headquarters of the relevant Republican ministry. Obviously, the Union-Republic structure is less centralised than that of the all-Union Ministry, which fact serves to spread the burden of government and to create an illusion of local sovereignty.

In terms of numbers, the all-Union ministries rose from five in 1924 to thirty-six in 1947 and decreased to twelve in 1953. The Union-Republic ministries also followed this pattern, rising from five in 1924 to twenty-three in 1947 and decreasing to thirteen in 1953. By 1956, the number of the latter had once again risen to twenty-three and of the former to twenty-two. Articles 77 and 78 of the Constitution detail the ministries of each type.[23]

As of 1924, the Ministries of the U.S.S.R. had been broadly divided into three categories, namely all-Union, Union-Republican and Republican Ministries, which division preserved some degree of local autonomy. However, in the early nineteen-thirties most of the Ministries in the last category were transferred to the "shared" or Union-Republic category, this emphasising the steady shift to centralisation. In spite of the transfer in 1944 of the Ministries of

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23. These details are taken from Fainsod, op. cit., pp. 333, 336, and do not reflect more recent changes which have occurred in the Soviet Union since 1953.

Foreign Affairs and Armed Forces from the All-Union to the Union-Republican category, the tremendous development of industry and communications has continued this trend towards centralisation with the consequent emphasis upon the importance of the all-Union Ministries.

A further significant feature of the development of the administrative apparatus of the U.S.S.R. has been the rapidly increasing emphasis on economic affairs. Thus, although only two of the sixteen Commissariats established by the Constitution of 1918 covered economic affairs, their number, relative to other ministries, according to Fainsod,[24] rose as follows after 1924:

Ministries	1924	1936	1947	1949	1952	1953
Administrative-political	4	5	6	7	8	7
Social-cultural	0	1	3	3	3	2
Economic	6	12	50	38	40	16

In the initial period of War Communism effective economic control was at a minimum, principally because the machinery of control was weakened by the lack of skilled administrative staffs, by the chaos of civil war, and by the mass opposition to centralised bureaucracy. The disappearance of these obstacles by 1924 served to increase centralising tendencies at a time when the implementation of the New Economic Policy appeared to be allowing for the partial re-admission of private capitalism, and, with the introduction of the First Five Year Plan in 1928, the area, penetration and intensity of economic control in the Soviet State reached unprecedented proportions.

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24. M. Fainsod, op. cit., p. 334.

The economic interest displayed by the State may be said to have legally originated with the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia (Goelro) in 1918. In February, 1921, a second Commission, known as the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), was created by statute to organise labour, industry and material distribution during the period of War Communism. According to Hazard, "The precise nature of its activities is hard to determine from this distance as Soviet authorities refer to its early days only in passing as marking but a milestone at the beginning of planning."[25]

The first federal Constitution of the U.S.S.R., adopted provisionally in July, 1923, gave the central government not only the usual economic responsibilities accorded to a State executive, but also that of formulating and implementing an economic plan for the whole of the U.S.S.R. To this end a Supreme Council of National Economy, known as S.T.O., was created to supervise all nationalised industries. Gosplan was made into a Commission of this Supreme Council of National Economy, and in 1938 it became a permanent Commission of the Sovnarkom and played a vital role in the economic organisation of the U.S.S.R.

Originally, Gosplan appears to have been responsible merely for the combining of the production plans of the several Commissariats, and in 1925 and 1926 control of planning indices was published by it. By 1928, when the decision to advance from N.E.P. to the First Five Year

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25. J. N. Hazard: Law and Social Change in the U.S.S.R., p. 39.

was taken, Gosplan was equipped to formulate the production objectives of the Plan, to lay down for the Commissariat of Finance the fiscal requirements of the Plan, and to estimate and allocate the raw materials required for the fulfilment of the Plan.[26]

The tremendous administrative tasks imposed by the First Five Year Plan and its successors, under the aegis of Gosplan, have affected every sector of the Soviet administrative system and have been responsible more than any other single factor for the vast increase in the size and range of the executive apparatus of the U.S.S.R.

The plan is indeed the central fact of Soviet scene, dominating industry, affecting the whole of domestic and even foreign policy, and playing a large part in Party politics, as the struggles between Stalin and Trotsky, as well as Kruschev and Malenkov, indicate.

It is hardly necessary to enter here into the details of the economic reorganisation involved in the transition from NEP to the planned economy. Suffice it to say that the First Plan involved more than just a percentage increase in productivity. It also involved the rapid, controlled transition of the U.S.S.R. from an overwhelmingly rural, peasant country to one with a large-scale, modern industrial economy. This drive towards industrialisation, in the words of Towster, "imposed its own imperatives."[27] After the blaze of propaganda

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26. For an account of the evolution of this "economic-administrative" apparatus in the U.S.S.R. see: (a) M. Fainsod, op. cit., pp. 338, 339; (b) S. N. Harper and R. Thompson, The Government of the Soviet Union, (Toronto, New York, London: Van Nostrand, 1949), Chapter VIII.

27. J. Towster, op. cit., p. 86.

came the harsh necessity of acquiring production disciplines, administrative and organisational techniques, and design skills. Peasants had to be trained in industrial practices, Party polititians to be converted to factory managers, and engineers had to be turned out by the thousands from an educational system which was in the process of being rapidly reconstructed and extended. Incentives had to be reintroduced in violation of doctrinal orthodoxy, and a whole system of economic authority had to be evolved to unify and coordinate the tremendous effort being exerted.

This coordination, which has by material standards achieved a significant degree of success, was the responsibility of Gosplan. Using as its reference points the general aims of the Party enunciated through the Central Committee of the Party, the Sovnarkom and the Supreme Council of National Economy, Gosplan translated them into sets of major integrated objectives in terms of productivity. Production goals were established for all major industries as well as agriculture. Labour was recruited, trained and drafted to the production fronts. Standards were set, raw materials produced, rationed and distributed. Railways, rolling stock, and all transport were organised and developed. All aspects of the Plan and its implementation were constantly revised, controlled and monitored. All this called for a degree of organisation unknown to the West, and it involved bureaucratic control of every facet of national life.

It was to be expected, therefore, that Gosplan, as the planning authority in which was vested the planning responsibility for this vast

enterprise, should play a leading role in the Soviet administrative apparatus. Its Chairman was thus a member of the Council of Ministers. In 1948, the responsibilities of Gosplan were broken down and shared with two new bodies, Gossnab (the State Committee for Material Technical Supply) and Gosstech (the State Committee for the Introduction of Advanced Technique), but the imperatives of centralised planning and decision-making in the economic field led to a re-unification of these responsibilities under Gosplan after Stalin's death. Since 1953, however, the responsibilities and activities of Gosplan have been centred more on planning aspects rather than upon the implementation of plans and the allocation of raw materials to meet these plans.

Other products of the economic dominion of the State are the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank, which organise, effect, and allot the finding of these economic programs, as well as monitoring closely the expenditures and preparing the State budgets.

A brief reference to other controlling bodies, such as the Ministry of State Control, the Ministry of Justice, and the State Commission in the Civil Service, completes our brief sketch of a State executive and administrative system of an unprecedented ambit, size and complexity, representing a significant experiment in the State control of all aspects of society.[28]

This structure is very different in character and contents from

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28. See M. Fainsod, op. cit., Chapter 12, and S. N. Harper and J. Thompson, op. cit., Chapter XII.

the simple administration envisaged by Engels and by Lenin. The prognostication of the "government of persons" being replaced by the "administration of things" shows no sign of being validated, whilst the Marxist and Bolshevik concept of workers' control over industry and government has disappeared completely. Instead, there now exists in the Soviet Union a vast specialised bureaucracy regulating and planning every aspect of Soviet life and comprising its own specific social stratum. For the development of technology has been paralleled in the modern State by the development of the technique of administration, and the result of such a development has been a tendency towards the social stratification of the group in which such skills reside. The signs of such a tendency have long been realised in the U.S.S.R., and the sharp reduction in the number of Ministries in 1953, following Stalin's death, may well have been in part attributable to attempts to reduce the power of the centralised bureaucracy. Yet Stalin, also, had taken measures to combat bureaucratic influences. Under his leadership, the Communist Party frequently "spot-checked" industrial management, groups of workingmen had temporarily participated in management activities, and frequent "purges" of top-heavy managerial structures had been effected. Finally, the attention of the Soviets and other bodies had been unceasingly referred to these problems through the press and radio.

But all these measures, all these attacks upon the stultifying tendencies of bureaucratism could neither conceal nor seriously curtail the inevitable entrenchment of a distinct class, holding specific skills and thereby enjoying special privileges. The bureaucracy in

the U.S.S.R. is a product of the State control and organisation of all aspects of society, and it will remain as a distinct and potent factor in Soviet affairs as long as the State itself remains. This, as we have noted, is likely to be for a long time.

The one final facet upon which some comment is required relates to the assertion, in Article 64 of the Constitution, that the Council of Ministers is the highest executive organ in the U.S.S.R.

The Council of Ministers, the successor to the Council of Peoples' Commissars, is a sort of executive body appointed by the Supreme Soviet, and its Chirmanship is normally held by one of the top members of the Soviet State. Since 1917 the post has been held successively by Lenin, Rykov, Molotov, Stalin, Malenkov, Bulganin and Khrushchev, which gives some measure of the importance of the post and consequently of the functions of the Council of Ministers.

It is essential, however, to realise that the importance, power and authority of the individuals named did not rise from the fact of their holding the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers. Rather it is the reverse, i.e., their holding this post derived from the power which they already held. Thus, Stalin and Khrushchev have derived their power from their position as Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and their assumption of the Premiership was an acquisition of a further title of honour rather than a seizure of the source of authority.

It may also safely be asserted that the supreme executive power in the U.S.S.R. does not reside in the Council of Ministers, but rather in the Central Committee of the Communist Party - perhaps, more corr-

ectly, in the Praesidium of the Central Committee-and only the fact that the same people are at the head of both organisations serves to retain any illusion that the Council of Ministers is a source of power in the State.

It is the Party which formulates the basic assumptions of the Five Year Plans and which details the platform of Soviet foreign policy. It is the Party which effectively controls the instruments of national security and military policy, and it is the Party, speaking through the Secretary of the Praesidium of its Central Committee, which controls and rules upon all aspects of Soviet affairs, including the arts and sciences. History and biology, architecture, linguistics, literature and so on - all are expected to conform to a line evolved and monitored by the Party, and the Council of Ministers is essentially a subordinate body which merely implements plans formulated in some detail by the Party. Thus, although the Council of Ministers is the apex of an administrative structure unparalleled in size and complexity, the real formulation of policy is effected by other bodies of greater executive power.

As we shall see, this comment is also true to some degree of the Supreme Soviet, which is also subject to Party influence. It is necessary to make it in order to avoid any unfortunate analogy with executive structures, such as that of the United Kingdom, where the executive is answerable only to Parliament. In the U.S.S.R. the constitutionally defined executive in effect answers to the Supreme Soviet, but both groups in reality answer to the Communist Party, which is the source of all power in the U.S.S.R. This being the case,

it is obviously relevant and necessary to draw attention to the fact that the realities of power in the U.S.S.R. belie the importance which the Constitution ascribes to the Council of Ministers.

IV. THE SYSTEM OF SOVIETS

The highest organ of state power in the U.S.S.R. is the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. - The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 30.

As we have noted in the chapter on the Soviet State, the Paris Commune of 1871 provided Marx with a clue to the type of spontaneous popular government which would emerge as the embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat after the successful proletarian revolution. In Marxist theory, this government will last only as long as the dictatorship of the proletariat, and will disappear with it when Communism has been established.

In Russia, the political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat remained a relatively minor point in the accepted body of the theory of Marxism. In the revolution of 1905, however, there emerged in several Russian cities a popular revolutionary organisation which closely resembled that of the Paris Commune. This was the soviet, or council, a spontaneous organisation of labour delegates from the factories, created for the purpose of expressing the grievances of the workers and of unifying their demands. Vyshinsky has described these soviets as "a new revolutionary form of the people's creativeness . . . created solely by revolutionary strata of the population, in violence of all the laws and regulations of Tsarism,

. . . [and as] "manifestations of the self-help of the people, who had arisen to struggle against Tsarism."[1] The soviets were indeed the product of a vast gulf which existed in Tsarist Russia between the rulers and the ruled, between the bureaucracy and the proletariat. Perhaps they were also the result of the tremendous political agitation carried on amongst the workers by the left wing parties, comprising the Social Revolutionaries, the Anarchists, and the Social Democrats.

Lenin himself described the use and significance of the soviets in his pamphlet of 1905, The Dying Autocracy and the New Organs of National Authority, and, in another work, he again referred vividly to the emergence of this political phenomenon:

> In the fire of battle a peculiar mass organisation was formed, the famous Soviet of Workers' Deputies, meetings of delegates of all factories. In several cities in Russia these Soviets of Workers' Deputies began to play more and more the role of a provisional revolutionary government, the role of organs and leaders of rebellion. Attempts were made to organise Soviets of Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies, and to combine them with the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.[2]

Karl Kautsky, a famous German socialist and one of Lenin's adversaries, also eulogistically extolled the Soviets as "The most all-embracing form of proletarian organisation", and he asserted that "The Soviet organisation is one of the most important phenomena of our time. It promises to acquire decisive importance in the great decisive battles between Capital and Labour towards which we are marching."[3]

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1. A. Vyshinsky, The Law of the Soviet State, p. 141.

2. V.I. Lenin, The Revolution of 1905 (New York: International, 1934), p. 84.

3. K. Kautsky, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, p. 53, quoted in V.I. Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (New York: International Publisher, 1931), p. 39.

Trotsky, the author of the concept of Permanent Revolution, when contemplating this new phenomenon in the calm of his prison cell, commented in the following penetrating way on the Soviet as a political form: "The Soviet was in reality an embryo of revolutionary government. . . . The Soviet is the first democratic power in modern Russia . . . There is no doubt that the first new move of the revolution will lead to the creation of Soviets all over the country."[4]

With the exception of Lenin, the Bolsheviks do not appear to have originally appreciated the real significance of the soviet, perhaps because they thought that the soviet would compete with them for influence amongst the workers, and because, therefore, they could not envisage the possibility of integrating the work of the soviets and the Bolshevik Party. Rather ironically, perhaps, it was Lenin who saw the nature and value of the soviet as an organisational form. From Switzerland he urged the St. Petersburg Bolsheviks to reverse their policy of hostility to the soviets and to attempt to secure control of them, thereby identifying the Bolsheviks with mass aspirations and gaining working class support. Thus he wrote, "Comrade Radin . . . . is wrong to pose the question: The Soviet of Workingmen's Deputies or the Party? It seems to me that the solution ought to be: Both the Soviet of Workingmen's Deputies and the Party.[5]

Radin may not have been wrong, however, since it does not appear to have been found possible, in the Soviet Union, to effect any

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4. L. Trotsky, The Year 1905, quoted in B. D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, (New York: Dial Press, 1948), p. 369.

5. V.I. Lenin, Our Tasks and the Soviet of Worker's Deputies, in Sochineniya (4th ed., Moscow, 1949), x.,3.

balance of power between the Soviets and the Party, compatible with the real independence of the former.

Precisely because of their different views on the role of the Party and the political and revolutionary potential of the proletariat, the Mensheviks, the other wing of the Social Democrats, enjoyed much greater influence in the soviets of 1905 than the Bolsheviks. It was not, indeed, until 1917 that the Bolsheviks succeeded in seizing control of the soviets.

The question of the soviet and the Bolshevik attitude to it again came to the fore in March, 1917, when the bread riots in St. Petersburg sparked the revolution which finally overthrew the Romanov dynasty. The State Duma, which had been the advisory puppet legislature under the Tsarist regime, was challenged at an early stage in the revolution by the creation of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with its headquarters in the Tauride Palace. Thus a sort of dual government was created, a dual power, with the Duma being controlled by the Constitutional Democrats but with the sympathy and support of the masses centred in the more left wing body, the soviets.

It was at this point that, for obvious tactical reasons, Lenin began to regard the soviets as the vehicle by which the proletarian revolution[6] and the Bolshevik assumption of power could be achieved.

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6. Lenin's view that in Russia the bourgeois revolution could pass over immediately to the proletarian revolution, or at least a revolution and post-revolutionary government dominated by the proletariat, is not too dissimilar from Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution. Strong hints as to the possibility of the adoption of this argument had already been given by Lenin in his Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution which he wrote in 1905. See particularly Chapter VI of that work.

In The April Theses, which he presented to the Party immediately upon his arrival in St. Petersburg in April, 1917, Lenin was at pains to emphasise the role of the soviets and to assert their conformity with the historical demands of Marxist doctrine by drawing attention to their similarity to the Paris Commune:

> But revolutionary epochs, beginning with the end of the nineteenth century, bring to the fore the highest type of democratic state, the kind of state which, in certain respects, to quote Engels, ceases to be a state,'is no state in the proper sense of the word.' This is the state of the type of the Paris Commune, a state replacing the standing army and the police by a direct arming of the people itself. . . . This is the type of state which the Russian Revolution began to create in the years 1905 and 1917. A Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers', Peasants', etc., Deputies, united in an all-Russian Constituent Assembly of the people's representatives, or in a Soviet of Soviets, etc., . . . (will be set up) upon the initiative of millions of people who, of their own accord, are creating a democracy in their own way.[7]

As a result of the acceptance of The April Theses, the Bolshevik Conference of April, 1917, adopted the slogan "All Power to the Soviets", and Lenin continued to assert and emphasise that the soviets were the Russian form of the proletarian dictatorship and to reject Kautsky's theses that the soviets could not mature from a class to a State organisation.

> From the point of view of practical policies, the idea that the Soviets are necessary . . . but must not be transformed into state organisations is infinitely more absurd than from the theoretical point of view . . . an organisation like the Soviets, which embraces all workers, all industries, all the soldiers, and all the toiling and poorest sections of the rural population - such an organisation in the course of the struggle, by the simple logic of attack and defence, auto-

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7. V. I. Lenin, The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution (London: Martin Lawrence, 1932), p. 18.

matically has to raise the question of power point blank.[8]

In May, 1917, Lenin wrote "An Open Letter to the Delegates of the All-Russian Soviets of Peasant Deputies", in which he proclaimed that "We aim at a republic in which the whole power of the state, from top to bottom, belongs exclusively and entirely to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies."[9]

Again, in the draft of an article on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, written in June, 1917, we find Lenin's assertation that the Bolsheviks "hold that the unique institution known as the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies is the nearest approach to an all-people's organ for the expression of the will of the majority of the people, a revolutionary proletariat."[10]

Finally, one might be permitted to quote from Soldatskaya Pravda of May 16, 1917, which reported on the rapidly growing power of the Soviets as follows:

> In a whole series of provincial localities the revolution progresses by the proletariat and the peasantry organising on their own initiative into Soviets. . . . This growth, in scope and intensity, of the revolution in the provinces marks, on the one hand, the growth of the movement towards giving over all power to the Soviets and towards control by the workers and peasants themselves over production; on the other hand, it marks the preparation, on an all-Russian scale, of forces for the second stage of the revolution which must give all state

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8. V. I. Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, p. 44.

9. Quoted in Lenin: Collected Works, Vol. XX, Book II, p. 59.

10. Quoted Ibid., p. 243.

power into the hands of the Soviets or other organs expressing directly the will of the majority of the people.[11]

Although the failure of the "July days" produced a general disillusionment within the Bolshevik ranks concerning the potential of the soviets, Lenin continued to cling to his theory that the control of the soviets would lead to the control of the revolution, and it was the subsequent Bolshevik seizure of majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets that paved the way for the successful Bolshevik coup in October. "Having received a majority in the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in both capitals, the Bolsheviks can and must take state power in their own hands",[12] wrote Lenin from his temporary exile in Finland, and, in October, State power passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The honeymoon of the Bolsheviks and the soviets ended, of course, almost as soon as it began, for it involved a basic clash between the concept of mass participation in the administration of the State, and the Leninist concept of the Party as the controlling element of the revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We will note many attempts by Lenin to provide room in the new State structure for both elements, attempts which were doomed to failure owing to the incompatibility of popular government and elite control of the State.

The solution of this problem, however, although decided actu-

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11. Soldatskaya Pravda, quoted ibid., p. 409.

12. V.I. Lenin, The Bolsheviks Must Seize Power, in Lenin: Collected Works), Vol.XXI, Book I, p. 221.

ally in favour of the Party, was never allowed to reduce, theoretically, the importance of the soviets as an experiement in mass democracy. By the terms of the first Russian Constitution of 1918, "Sovereignty in the Russian state . . . lies in the local soviets."[13]

In this Constitution, the first paragraph of which declares that "Russia is a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies", the basic framework of government founded on the system of soviets was to be what Lenin termed "a higher type of democratic institution", replacing the bourgeois parliamentary structure. By the terms of the Constitution, all those who worked elected delegates to the local soviets. These local soviets chose executive committees and sent delegates to assemblies for larger areas. At the top of this pyramidal structure was the All-Russian Congress of Soviets which contained about 1400 members and met twice a year. Between its meetings, power was exercised by the executive committee elected by it.

It is important to realise that the soviets, in Communist theory, represehted a radical departure from "bourgeois parliamentarianism" in at least one important respect. Basing his position on Marx's appraisal of the Paris Commune that "it should have been not a parliamentary, but a working institution - legislating and executing statues at one and the same time", Lenin insisted that, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, the division of powers must disappear and the soviets must act as the legislative, executive and

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13. R. G. Getell, "The Russian Soviet Constitution", The American Political Science Review, November, 1919, XIII, 294.

judicial bodies in the State. As Vyshinsky remarks, "The specific peculiarity of the state of the Soviets is that here is no contrasting of the legislative body with the entire mass of the population immediately participating in state government and in building up the state."[14]

The pyramidal structure of the soviets as legally established in the Constitution of 1918 was complicated when the Constitution of 1923 established a federal system in the U.S.S.R. This Constitution, in effect, consolidated the alliance between the R.S.F.S.R. and the Ukraine of 1920, and between the R.S.F.S.R., the Trans-Caucasian, and the White Russian Republics of 1922. Under the terms of the Constitution, the apex of the organisation of soviets became the All-Union Congress of Soviets, with its praesidium, the Central Executive Committee. Reflecting the origin of the soviets, as factory workers' organisations, it should be noted that their structure at this time was based on production or functional rather than territorial units.

The Stalin Constitution of 1936 effected important changes in the structure created under the first federal constitution. The representation on the primary organs of the soviet system was changed from a functional to a territorial basis. The All-Union Congress became the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., comprising two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. All soviets below that level were unicameral and comprised only a Soviet of the individual Republic of the Soviet Union. Suffrage became direct and secret as opposed to the "show of hands" previously in force, as well as universal and equal. Moreover, the executive, or Praesidium, of

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14. A. Vyshinsky, op. cit., p. 73.

the Supreme Soviet, does not enjoy, between meetings, the same powers as did the Central Executive Committee before 1936.

At the base of this massive pyramid are the workers and peasants electing representatives to soviets of villages, towns, districts, cities, etc,. At the top of the structure, and also directly elected, is the Supreme Soviet, the "supreme organ of state power" in the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities have about 700 members each voting on a simple majority, and, when in joint session, are constitutionally capable of amending the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. by a two-thirds majority in each chamber. The Supreme Soviet elects not only its own Praesidium (composed, until recently, of 33 members), but also the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Court, both of which are answerable to it. Thus, theoretically, the Supreme Soviet is indeed constitutionally designed as the supreme State organ in the U.S.S.R., and enjoys control over all legislative, executive and judicial powers.[15]

That its predecessor, the All-Union Congress of Soviets, was originally and genuinely intended as an active executive as well as a legislative body is evidenced by the fact that in 1917 and 1918 the Congress was convocable on a three-monthly basis. This was changed to a yearly basis in 1921 and, in 1927, to a two-yearly basis. After

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15. See Appendix B for a diagramatic presentation of the structure of the soviets.

1931, the Congress was not convened again until 1935.

As the convocations of the Congress decreased in frequency, so their size increased. Thus the membership rose from 649 in the first session in 1917 to 2016 at the eighth convocation in 1936. In this period, the mantle of authority tended to pass to the Central Executive Committee. The Congress became in effect a platform from which the Party delivered decisions for "rubber-stamp" ratification, the passive audience of popular representatives approving the decrees of the autocracy. Thus, within the structure of the soviets, the Central Executive Committee became the virtual head, enjoying the same rights, powers and jurisdiction as the Congress, including the right to appoint or dismiss members of the Sovnarkom.

Like its parent body, however, the C.E.C. grew unwieldy in size, rising from 246 members in 1917 to 757 in 1935. As the mumbers rose, the effectiveness of the C.E.C. as a decision-making body declined, and inevitably the C.E.C. gave way to its own praesidium.

As we have noted, the 1936 Constitution created the Supreme Soviet as the supreme organ of power, and this body in turn elected its own Praesidium which, however, held a more subsidiary position than the C.E.C. Moreover, the nineteen-thirties saw an increasing emphasis being placed upon the legislative rather than the executive role of the Supreme Soviet.

This mighty pyramidal structure then represented what Stalin has described as comprehensive mass organisations "of the oppressed

and exploited", as "powerful instruments of the revolutionary struggle of the masses", as "direct organisations of the masses", as "the embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[16]

The soviets were thus the instruments of mass participation in, and mass control of, the government. Elective in nature at all levels of society from the rural commune to the Supreme Soviet, they were intended as checks upon the administration and as policy-makers for the administration.[17] Lenin, as we have seen,[18] had gone to great lengths to emphasise the nature of the soviets, and Stalin also described at length this new form of State organisation. "The Soviet power is the unification and transformation of the local Soviets to constitute a general State organisation of the proletariat as the vanguard of the oppressed and exploited masses and as the ruling class. This united State organisation is the Soviet Republic."[19]

Stalin goes on to assert that while classes exist,

> . . . the Soviet power is the most comprehensive and the most democratic . . . the most international of all State organisations that are possible in a class society . . . in virtue of its structure, it facilitates the guidance of the oppressed and exploited masses by their vanguard, the proletariat . . . in uniting legislative and executive authority in a single organ . . . the Soviet power established direct ties between

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16. J. V. Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, in Leninism (London: Modern Books, 1938), Vol. I, p. 119.

17. For general accounts of the system of soviets, see R. M. Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, Chapter II, S. N. Harper and J. Thompson, The Government of the Soviet Union, Chapter VII, and V. Karpinsky, op. cit.,

18. Above, Chapter III, p. 71.

19. J. V. Stalin, op. cit., p. 119.

> the workers on the one hand, and the administrative apparatus on the other . . . is able to withdraw the army from the bourgeois command . . . is able to pave they way for the gradual dying out of the state . . . is the long sought and at length discovered political form within whose framework the complete triumph of socialism will ultimately be realised.[20]

From the example of the Paris Commune of 1871, the Marxist version of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been transplanted to the Russian scene in the form of the soviet. It is interesting to note that, in the course of an interview which Stalin granted to the first American Labour Delegation in September, 1927, he ascribed to Lenin, as one of his contributions to Marxism, "the discovery of the Soviet form of government as the State form of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[21] From the earliest days of the Soviet regime to the 1936 Constitution the primacy of the soviet, as a legislative and executive body, was emphatically asserted. There would accordingly appear to have existed an unbroken chain of development, from Marx to the present day, of the concept of popular government in the transitory stage between the revolution and full communism.

Yet it would be illusory to assume that such conditions as are described in the 1936 Constitution reflect the real situation in the Soviet Union, and reference has already been made to the fact that the close alliance of the Bolsheviks and the soviets could not and did not long survive the revolution of 1917.[22] It should be stated

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20. Stalin, ibid., p. 120

21. Interview with the First American Labour Delegation in Russia (September 19, 1927). Published ibid., II, 44.

22. See above, Chapter III, p. 76.

now that the strangulation of the soviets occurred basically because of the Leninist concept of the Party. For, if Lenin discovered the soviets as a form of government, he also discovered something else, namely, the concept of the Party, which conflicted violently with the concept of the soviets, and this conflict posed a serious problem to Communist theoreticians. Although we shall deal with the concept of the Party more fully in the next chapter, it may be noted here that the Party as Lenin saw it was a small dedicated minority which would lead the proletariat through the revolution, crystallise its desires, and think and act for it at a political level; in brief, it would serve as its vanguard.

As we have noted,[23] Lenin saw in the soviets not only a form of transitional government, but also a vehicle by which the Bolsheviks could obtain control of the masses and sweep into power with them. The corollary of this was that the alliance could last only as long as the soviets represented the most revolutionary wing of the popular revolt, and only as long as they were successful. Lenin thus described the evolution of power after the overthrow of Tsardom as involving, first, a division of power between the provisional government and the soviets - the revolution being still in its bourgeois form - and, second, the assumption of power by the proletariat, the revolution reaching now the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In his April Theses we find Lenin emphasising (or almost rationalising) this approach:

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23. Ibid.

> The peculiar feature of the present situation in Russia is that it is a transition from the first stage of the Revolution, which, owing to the fact that the proletariat was not sufficiently class conscious and organised, gave power to the bourgeoisie, to the second stage, which should transfer power to the proletariat and the poor sections of the peasantry.[24]

In the early phase of the revolution of 1917, as in the case of that of 1905, the soviets were dominated by the Menshevik faction of the Social Democrats and to a lesser extent by the Social Revolutionaries. It is extremely important to note this fact because neither of these groups could accept the thesis that, in the current state of the development of Russia, the revolution could be anything more than a bourgeois revolution which would be followed by a proletarian revolution only after a considerable period of consolidation and of maturing of production relations on the pattern established by "scientific" socialism. In this theoretical context, the Mensheviks could envisage the proletariat, in the soviets, carrying out only a supporting role in the bourgeois revolution, or, at most, carrying through the revolution on behalf of the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the soviets, prior to the end of July, 1917, did not play a vital role in the dictation of State policy. What is even more important is that the soviets, by their comparative inactivity, in many respects tacitly accepted the policy of the Kadets in the Duma regarding the continuation of the war. Keremsky was typical of the "moderate" socialists who not only accepted this policy but actually helped to carry it out in the Provisional

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24. This is a passage from the second of the theses presented by Lenin to the Caucus of the Bolshevik members of the All-Russian Conference of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on April 17, 1917. See Lenin, Vol. XX, Book I, p. 97.

Government. The failure of the "July days" was mainly attributable to this passivity of the soviets, and the result was a temporary abandonment by the Bolsheviks of their slogan, "All Power to the Soviets", which they had adopted in April. This abandonment would last, of course, only until the control of the soviets could be seized by the Bolsheviks.

Thus, in July, 1917, Lenin wrote:

> Soviets can and must make their appearance in that new revolution, but not the present soviets. . . . Even then we shall advocate the organisation of the entire state according to the soviet pattern, that is true. I am not discussing soviets in general but am talking about the struggle against the present counter-revolution and against the treachery of the present soviets.[25]

Thus the soviets were useful to the Bolsheviks only if they moved from a moderate to the extreme left position, occupied by the Bolsheviks. This shift actually occurred because of mass dissatisfaction with any policy favouring the continuation of the war.

By October, 1917, the Bolsheviks had secured control over the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets, and as a consequence the "proletarian" revolution was initiated and carried out. As we have noted,[26] the soviet structure was then constitutionally recognised, but the tactical need for the alliance of the soviets and the Bolsheviks had by then substantially disappeared, and the inherent contradiction between the concepts of the Party and of the soviets was forced into the open by the imperatives of power politics.

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25 V. I. Lenin, "On Slogans", op. cit., XXI, 55.

26 Above, Chapter III, p. 77.

By April, 1918, the Left Opposition within the Communist Party was voicing complaints against the Party interference with the local soviets. As an American observer, Moore, puts it, "At this time all ideas about the soviets as a new social invention sensitive to the will of the masses were pushed rudely into the background."[27]

In this connection it might be noted that one of the principal slogans of the Kronstadt mutineers in 1921 was: "Soviets without Communists", and that only the outbreak of this revolt, which rallied all the dissident elements in the Bolshevik Party behind the leadership in defence of the revolution, saved Lenin from a serious revolt over this issue.

The Eighth Party Congress, held in March, 1919, had tried to arrive at some formal definition of the realtions between the Soviets and the Communist Party, and had proclaimed:

> The Communist Party seeks especially the realisation of its program by its . . . complete dominance in the contemporary state organisations - the soviets . . . the R.C.P. must conquer for itself undivided political dominance in the soviets and actual control over all their work . . . The Party should endeavour to guide the activity of the soviets, not to supplant them.[28]

In spite of this final qualification, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Lenin aimed at a supremacy in and over the soviets which, bearing in mind Lord Acton's dictum on power, could easily lead to a complete undermining of the constitutional position of the soviets.

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27. B. Moore, Soviet Politics: The Dilemma of Power (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 129.

28. Quoted in L. Schapiro, The Origin of Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First phase, 1917-1922., (London: Bell and Sons, 1956), p. 184.

Lenin's reversal of his 'anarcho-syndicalist' phase, and his growing impatience with democratic processes at such a critical juncture, assisted in the process of strangulation of freedom of discussion within the soviets. By the same token these factors resulted in the transferring of decision making from the Congress of Soviets to the Party hierarchy. In spite of this obvious process both Lenin and Stalin continued to stress the importance of the soviets. In 1926, for instance, we find Stalin reiterating that "The Party . . . leads the Soviets . . . but it cannot and should not replace them."[29]

If the Party did not replace the soviets, its method of accomplishing their eclipse was more effective. This method took the form of the elimination of all opposition parties within the soviets, and indeed in Russia as a whole, and of the filling of most of the important posts in the Soviet hierarchy with the leading members of the Communist Party.

The eclipse of the soviets began in the period of "War Communism", when the strain of war and economic stagnation virtually imposed upon the Communists the choice between dictatorship and abdication from power. For instance, Trotsky's abolition of Soldiers' Councils within the Red Army, together with the introduction of compulsory military service, re-introduced the tradition of a professional army and made a mockery of the Marxist concept of the armed masses. As Rosenberg remarks:

> The creation of the Red Army was a vital necessity for Russia in those days. Nevertheless, it marked the first definite and decisive breach with the Soviet system . . . As early as

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29. Quoted in B. Moore, op. cit., p. 132.

> 1918 the local Soviets in places where detachments of the Red Army were garrisoned . . . could not interfere in any way with the dispositions of the regimental commanders. This meant the reconstruction of an important part of the edifice of the authoritarian middle-class State.[30]

Rosenberg proceeds to comment on the considerable opposition aroused in Russia against the creation of the Red Army, and quotes Trotsky, one of the founders of the Red Army, as upbraiding the Left Wing Social Revolutionaries and Anarchists for their "reactionary federalist doctrines". Rosenberg's conclusion is that "Ever since 1918 it was evident that government by Soviets had become an illusion in Russia. . . . . This extremely complicated system is in reality only a cloak for the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party."[31]

The domination of the soviets by the Communist Party was facilitated by the provisions of the Constitution of 1918, such as voting by show of hands, and other clauses which a power hungry executive could obviously use to advantage. Paragraph 23, for example, stated that "To safeguard the interests of the working class as a whole the R.S.F.S.R. denies to individuals and groups rights which they may use to the detriment of socialist revolution." Moreover, an electoral commission was provided for with power to refuse the exercise of the vote, and elections of candidates could be annulled. Obviously, these constitutional provisions presented the opportunity for considerable abuse. Schapiro offers evidence that the opportunity was taken in full measure and in this connection he quotes from the Menshevik address to the

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30. A. Rosenberg, A History of Bolshevism (London:Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 118.

31. Ibid., p. 121.

Moscow Soviet in March, 1920:

> We say nothing of the innumerable instances of direct acts of violence against the will of the electors, terrorisation, pressure, and other abuses, which took place in the electoral campaign. But it is impossible to be silent about the shocking inequality of electoral rights conceded to different categories of workers. Unheard of privileges are conferred on the higher organisations as are in communist hands . . . Constituency boundaries are manipulated at will . . . Twenty four hour limits for the nomination of candidates play straight into the hands of the party which enjoys the monopoly of the means of communication . . . Who can affirm, in such conditions, that the results of the election can with any degree of accuracy represent the real will and feeling of the workers?[32]

After November, 1917, of course, only one opposition party, the Mensheviks, had any legal existence, and delegates of such groups as the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Anarchists were allowed only a consultative voice in the Congress of Soviets. The Mensheviks themselves had been subjected to violent attacks immediately after the Revolution, and State trials of some of the Mensheviks were held in 1920 and 1921 in a desperate attempt to reduce their influence in the soviets and Trade-Unions by branding them as counter-revolutionaries. However, Menshevik strength amongst the proletariat and in the soviets continued to be great and there is little doubt that, by 1921, a strong wave of public opinion was flowing against the Communists. It was only after the violent and arbitrary destruction of Menshevik sources of power in the Trade-Unions and by flagrant abuse of electoral laws, culminating in 1921 in mass arrests, that the Communists succeeded in reducing Menshevik opposition to impotency. Lenin, the champion of proletarian freedom, proclaimed at that time that "We shall keep the Mensheviks and the Social Revolution-

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32. Quoted in L. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 177.

aries in prison."[33]

It was left to Maria Spiridonova, the illustrious foe of Tsarist autocracy and a leading member of the Socialist Revolutionaries, to pen, in her "Open Letter to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party", the most vivid indictment of the Bolshevik betrayal of the basic principles of the soviets, an indictment all the more dramatic because Spiridonova was at the time herself a prisoner in Bolshevik hands:

> The destruction of our Party signals the destruction of the Soviet revolution. . . . It was truly a revolution of the working people, and Soviet power was drawn from their depths. Provincial and district Soviets were elected spontaneously. . . . But your policy has turned out to be utter deceit of the working people . . . . With your cynical attitude to the Soviets; with your high-handed disbanding of Congresses and Soviets and the unpunished arrogance of Bolshevik agents, you are the true mutineers against the Soviet power.[34]

All non-Communist groups within the soviets were thus reduced to impotence by the application of terror, whilst within the Party, as we shall see, the Left and Workers' Oppositions were eliminated in the name of Party unity. By the time of Lenin's death the soviets had become a cypher, masking the power of the Communist Party, and the atrophy of this instrument of mass democracy continued under the relentless pressure of the Stalinist autocracy operating through the bureaucracy of the Party. The Constitution of 1936, in declaring the Supreme Soviet to be "the highest organ of State power in the U.S.S.R.",

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33. Quoted Ibid., p. 205

34. Quoted in I.N. Steinberg, The Workshop of the Revolution (New York: Rinehart, 1953), pp. 245, 246.

was thus perpetuating a fiction and was ascribing to the soviets a power which its "rubber-stamp" function openly belied. Democracy from below, operating from and through the soviets, had disappeared by 1936, and the dynamic of the soviet structure had reversed its direction.

Originally, of course, the soviet had been regarded as the embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, an organisation which would facilitate mass control of government by providing for mass participation in decision making and by reflecting the social desires of the proletariat and the peasantry.

In actuality, however, as a result of Party control, the possibility for expression of political opinions was soon stultified, and increasingly the soviets became a platform for the enunciation and ratification of Party politics. Thus The Soviet Encyclopedia of Government and Law, published in 1925, declared that "not a single important political or organisational question is decided by our Soviet and other mass organisations without guiding directions from the Party.[35]

In fact, therefore, instead of political control being exerted upwards through the soviet system, policy decisions were directed downwards from the Party through the soviets. In this way the soviet system became, on the one hand, an instrument for the popularisation and dissemination of policies, and, on the other hand, a means of guaging and assessing, as far as possible, the nature and extent of popular reaction to Party measures.

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35. Quoted in Moore, op. cit., p. 131.

In a State in which all means of communication are controlled by the administration, the ability of the foreign observer to gauge popular reaction to any policy is very limited. Modern totalitarian methods make it simple to localise and suppress any active expression of discontent and the same methods render suspect any deductions drawn directly from election results.

As has already been indicated,[36] the electoral system detailed in the Constitution of 1918 provided opportunities, which were taken, for considerable abuse. It also ensured a disproportionate representation in the soviets for the proletariat. Thus, originally, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets was composed of one representative for every 25,000 urban voters and one representative for every 125,000 rural voters. Moreover, these representatives, or deputies, were elected only indirectly, thus making for a limitation of popular control which was increased by the practice of co-option.

By the terms of the Constitution of 1936, the Soviet of the Union was to consist of deputies chosen from districts of 300,000 population each, whilst the Soviet of Nationalities consisted of 25 deputies for each Union Republic, 11 for each Autonomous Republic, 5 for each Autonomous Region, and 1 for each National Region. The vote was no longer denied on the basis of class, and, as already noted,

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36. See above, Chapter III, p. 88.

suffrage became universal, direct, equal and secret.[37]

These provisions formed an admirably democratic basis for the Soviet system, and the results of the first election held on December 12th, 1937, under this new system, could be nothing but gratifying to the Soviet leaders. In this election, ninety-six per cent of the electorate voted, and ninety-eight per cent of the votes cast were in fabour of the "Bloc of Party and Non-Party People."[38]

This voting pattern was continued in the elections of 1946 and 1954 when "pro-government" element of the votes cast totalled approximately ninety-nine per cent in each case. Although, since there is no official opposition in the U.S.S.R., it is not possible to produce irrefutable evidence of the lack of validity of these election statistics, the recurring, overwhelming, electoral approvals of the Soviet system and policies by their very unanimity tend to cast reasonable doubt upon the obvious conclusions to be drawn from them. This doubt generally does not relate to the arithmetical accuracy of the returning officers. Rather it concerns the selection of candidates and the nature of the electioneering. The control of the Party at all levels is such that there is little, if any, chance of any politically unacceptable candidate

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37. These details are drawn from F. L. Schuman, Russia Since 1917, pp. 215-216. A diagrammatic statement of the electoral basis established by the 1936 Constitution, is presented in Appendix 'C'.

38. M. Fainsod, op. cit., p. 258.

nominated or even advanced for nomination. Secondly, owing to total control of the media of communication, the electorate is submitted to tremendous pre-election propaganda in favour of the selected candidates.

In short, while the election results acclaimed so enthusiastically in the U.S.S.R. may be significant in that they reflect a general approval of the regime, the methods of obtaining these results are such that they do not invalidate the argument that the soviets exert little, if any, "grass-roots" pressure on the Soviet leadership.

Thus, the direction of control had, in the U.S.S.R., been completely reversed from that envisaged in and before 1917, and from that proclaimed in the "Stalin" Constitution. Instead of holding "supreme power", the Supreme Soviet is in a secondary position to the Party leadership.

Stalin described the Soviets as one of the "belts" and "levers" of the dictatorship of the proletariat which links up the Party as the "workers' vanguard" with the masses. He wrote:

> with their manifold national and local ramifications taking the form of administrative, industrial, military, cultural and other State organisations together with a multitude of spontaneous mass groupings of the workers in the bodies which surround these organisations and link them up with the general population, the soviets are the mass organisations of all those who labour in town and country. They are not Party organisations, but are the direct expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. All kinds of measures for the strengthening of the dictatorship and for the upbuilding of Socialism are carried out by means of the soviets. Through them, the political guidance of the peasantry is effected. The soviets unite the labouring masses with the proletarian vanguard. . . . Lenin identified the Soviet system with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and he was right to do so, for the soviets, our soviets, are organisations in which the masses of those who labour are

> united round the proletariat under the leadership of the Party.[39]

This last sentence, with the exception of the reference to the "leadership of the Party", is an acceptable statement on what the soviets, as instruments of the dictatorship of the proletariat, should be in the first stage of communism, according to classical Marxist concepts. However, both Lenin and Stalin (and more particularly Lenin) appear to have found it difficult to appreciate the inconsistency of insisting upon the special position of the Party whilst at the same time proclaiming the independence and authority of the soviets. For the Leninist concept of the Party involved the transfer of sovereignty, of "State power", from the soviets to the Party, with the consequent demise of the soviets as a dynamic element of a post-revolutionary society. In a sentence, the soviets lost "State power" and became an instrument of government, an arm of the administration, a medium for the communication of power rather than the source of it.

The old Marxist concept of the Paris Commune, as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that of the soviets as the Russian "form" of the Commune, became distorted to a degree of which the successive soviet election results have given ample evidence. As in the case of the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Soviet as a source of power has become a fiction of the Constitution of 1936, a fiction which barely conceals the reality of the power of the Communist Party, or, more specifically, of the Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Party.

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39. J. V. Stalin, Leninism, I, pp. 30, 48.

In a few brief lines Wolfe expressed the gist of the rise, decline and fall of the soviet:

> It was conceived in the matrix of the Menshevik 'autonomous local revolutionary self-administrations' . . . It was nourished by Trotsky's and Parvu's doctrine of 'permanent revolution' . . . . In 1917 it was to mature . . . into 'the organised power of the masses themselves over their component parts . . . and the embryo of revolutionary government.' And it was to go into decline after 1918, in accordance with the Leninist formula of a single party that controls all mass organisations. . .[40]

It is to the "Leninist formula of a single party", to the reality of power in the U.S.S.R., that we must now turn our attention.

IV. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

And the most active and politically-conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class, working peasants and working intelligentsia volountarily unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to build communist society and is the leading core of all organisations of the working people, both public and state. - The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 126.

One of the central tenets of Marxism is the concept of the spontaneity of the proletarian revolution. This tenet must in turn be the core of any discussion of the emergence of the Bolshevik Party, the existence of which is closely related to Lenin's modification of the Marxist concept of spontaneity.

The central hypothesis of dialectic materialism is that the thesis will generate within itself its own antithesis, the relationship between these opposites will mature, and from the struggle will emerge the synthesis, which will in turn form the thesis of the next dialectical cycle.

In socio-economic and class terms this dialectic implies that the bourgeois society of Marx's day was inevitably developing, through the growth of capitalism, its own internal contradiction in the form of the proletariat. This contradiction would mature by the increasing polarisation of wealth and status until the revolution broke out spontaneously.

Resolution by revolution is, in this context, an event which would need to occur at a precise and predictable point in the socio-economic development of a State. Plamenatz makes this point in the following observation:

> Marx had written, in the passage accepted by all Marxists as the classic exposition of his fundamental doctrine, that 'no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed, and new, higher relations of production never appear before the conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society.'[1]

Thus the disappearance of a social order occurs at a precise stage in the evolution of society, and the proletarian revolution which, according to Marx and Engels, is the means by which the old, bourgeois order is overthrown, also occurs at a similarly precise stage. It might, of course, be argued that it follows from this analysis that an active role in precipitating the proletarian revolution would result in its premature eruption, and that the socialist must therefore adopt virtually a passive role. In this connection an American observer writes:

> The revolution was to be the direct organised action of the proletariat as a class - or it was not at all. Marx and Engels did not recognise any other agent of the revolution nor any 'substitute' for it, for substitution would signify the immaturity of the class as such. The 'greatest productive force is the revolutionary class itself'. The 'conquest of political power' can only be the result of the political movement of the working class which as a class opposes the ruling classes. The class organises itself into a 'party', but this party develops naturwuchsig out of the 'soil of modern society itself'; it is the self-organisation of the

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1. J. Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism (London: Longmans, 1954), p. 217.

proletariat.[2]

Nevertheless, in spite of this connotation of spontaneity, Marx did assign a role to the politically conscious element of the proletariat, a role which consisted of acquainting the proletariat with the iron laws of the dialectic, of explaining the role of the proletariat in social evolution, and of imbuing the proletariat with a class consciousness and solidarity which would enable it to set up and carry through the revolution and the dictatorship with the minimum of exertion.

Marx and Engels believed, with the example of the Paris Commune to support them, that from here on the liberated masses would spontaneously exercise and participate in their own dictatorship over the remnants of bourgeois society, and would from thence advance to full communism.

In Russia, this advance to communism was confidently expected by at least three politically conscious segments of the intelligentsia, only one of which, however, adopted the road to communism pointed

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2. H. Marcuse, Soviet Marxism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 26. This work provides an excellent account of the Leninist modification of classical Marxism, although I must express emphatic disagreement with at least one of its conclusions. This point relates to the assertion that "Violence was at least not inherent in the action of the proletariat" (p. 25). Marcuse may well have drawn support from Lenin who, in State and Revolution, expresses the opinion that violence will "generally" occur. My own opinion on this point is that any such conclusion throws doubt upon the determination of the ruling class to maintain power and upon the hypothesis of polarisation. To accept the conclusion, therefore, is to modify Marxism to the point of contradicting its fundamental principles.

out by Marx.

First, we note the Anarchists who believed that full communism could be achieved after the revolution, without the necessity of resorting to temporary repression in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Second, there were the Social Revolutionaries, the heirs and successors of Populism and the Narodnaya Volya, who believed that, owing to the weakness of the bourgeoisie in nineteenth century Russia, the bourgeois-capitalist stage could be by-passed in Russia and that it would be possible to proceed directly to a largely agrarian communism, based on the Russian mir.

Finally, there was the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, a Marxist organisation which had evolved from the Emancipation of Labour group of 1883. The elder statesman and acknowledged leader of the Party was G. Plekhanov, who had been almost solely responsible for the introduction of Marxism to Russia and who was in fact known as the "father of Russian Marxism".

The views advanced by the Social Revolutionaries regarding the possibility of by-passing capitalism enjoyed some measure of support from "respectable" authority, for Marx and Engels themselves, in considering the special nature of the Russian situation, had accepted the possibility of by-passing capitalism and of achieving a communist society based on the rural commune. In 1882, Marx and Engels had included the following passage in the introduction to Vera Zasulich's Russian translation of The Communist Manifesto:

> If the Russian revolution sounds the signal for a workers' revolution in the West, so that each becomes the complement of the other, then the prevailing form of communal ownership of land in Russia may serve as the starting point for a communist course of development.[3]

This view was encouraging, since the Russian revolutionaries thought of the revolution in Russia primarily as a starting point for a general European revolution. The authority of Marx and Engels for a time, therefore, lent some weight to the Populist arguments.

In the eighteen-nineties Plekhanov sharply attacked the Populist position, and argued that by then capitalism in Russia was not a future stage which could be escaped, but was in fact already in its embryonic form, and making rapid headway. Thus, the bourgeois-capitalist stage could not be by-passed, and Plekhanov asserted that the proletariat in Russia must first assist the bourgeoisie in achieving the bourgeois revolution, and then work to develop its own class consciousness in preparation for the maturing of socio-economic conditions for the proletarian revolution.

The argument regarding the existence of nascent capitalism in Russia was brought home sharply to the Russian intelligentsia as a whole by the publication in 1898 of a significant work entitled The Development of Capitalism in Russia. This book drew attention to the tremendous rapidity of the growth of capitalism in Russia in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as well as to its author, a rising star in the Social-Democratic party by the name of Vladimir

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3. Quoted in B. D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, p. 111.

Ilyich Ulyanov, later known under the revolutionary pseudonym of Lenin.

The Social Democratic Party leadership in the eighteen-nineties comprised Plekhanov, Axelrod and Vera Zasulich, while the younger element included Lenin, Martov, Potresov and Trotsky. Having disposed of the Populists, the Social Democrats were primarily concerned with combating the "economists" and "legal" Marxists, and necessarily paid much attention to the role of the Party in Russia and to the attitude to be adopted regarding the concept of spontaneity.

Plekhanov insisted that the role of the Social Democrats was to sharpen the class consciousness of the proletariat in preparation for the coming struggle. Thus he proclaimed:

> The indispensable condition of the victory of the proletariat is the consciousness by them of their position, of their historical role, and of their social and political tasks. The new socialists consequently consider it is their chief, not to say their only, obligation to aid the growth of this consciousness of the proletariat, which they call, for short, its class consciousness.[4]

It should be noted that Plekhanov was insisting upon the active role of the revolutionary intelligentsia in developing the class consciousness of the proletariat, and in doing so he was injecting an element of determinism into Marxism which might have proved unacceptable to Marx and Engels, in so far as it suggested that class consciousness was being developed from without, and thus tended to qualify

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4. Quoted in L. H. Haimson, The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 55.

the concept of spontaneity.

Nevertheless, Plekhanov continued to proclaim his faith in the inevitable development of social forces and to assert that the Party could act in a supporting role only.

The workers' strike of the early eighteen-nineties "shattered", as Haimson puts it, "the fine web of theory, exposing the breach between the ignorant masses and the intellectual elite which had idealised them, the gap between the immediate demands and needs of the masses and the ideology of the intelligentsia."[5]

Yet the Social Democrats, with one or two significant exceptions, ignored these lessons and went on believing in the inexorable evolution of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and went on diligently recruiting mass support for the Party.

One of the exceptions was Lenin, whose mentality could not accept the purely educational role assigned to the Party by Plekhanov. Two of Lenin's characteristics, a deep hatred for the bourgeoisie and a driving impatience with "unrealistic" theorising, compelled him to effect a serious modification of Plekhanov's Marxism regarding the concept of spontaneity and of the Party. These modifications were developed essentially in two pamphlets, written in 1901 and 1902 respectively, and entitled, Where to Begin and What is to be Done, the first pamphlet being in the nature of an introduction to the latter.

In What Is to be Done, Lenin wrote: "We said that there could

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5. Haimson, op. cit., p. 58.

not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. This consciousness could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness."[6]

He then proceeded to denounce the Social Democrats on the issue of spontaneity:

> And so, we have become convinced that the fundamental error committed by the "new tendency" in Russian Social-Democratic thought lies in its subservience to spontaneity, and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a mass of consciousness from us Social-Democrats. The more spontaneously the masses rise, the more widespread the movement becomes, so much more rapidly grows the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of Social Democracy.[7]

This insistence that the proletariat could not develop its own political consciousness was repeated by Lenin in his One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, when he wrote:

> We are the Party of the working class. Consequently, nearly the whole of that class . . . should work under the guidance of our Party, should create the closest contacts with our Party. But we should be guilty . . . were we to believe that, under capitalism, all or nearly all of the workers will become class conscious and will be prepared to share the activities of the vanguard, the socialist party. . . . We should be deceiving ourselves and closing our eyes to the immensity of the task . . . were we to overlook the distinction between the vanguard and the masses.[8]

Lenin, therefore, implicitly rejected the Marxist concept of

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6. V. I. Lenin, What Is to be Done, in Lenin, Collected Works, IV, 114-115.

7. Ibid., p. 134.

8. V. I. Lenin, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, ibid., VI., 205-206.

spontaneity by denying the ability of the proletariat to achieve its political ends independently, and emphasised to a much greater degree the element of determinism in Marxist theory. In doing so, he ascribed a new importance, and a far more active role, to the Party. Furthermore, in the light of Russian conditions, he attempted to modify the whole concept of the Party, as then conceived in Social Democratic theory.

The Social Democrats had envisaged themselves as a democratic Party of the masses, intent on educating and on drawing them into the party. Lenin, however, partly because of his attraction towards the idea of conspiratorial organisation, but mainly because of his realisation that a mass socialist party on the German pattern could not function effectively, or even survive, in the police State of Tsarist Russia, insisted that the Party be small, comprise only "full time" revolutionaries, and that it be rigidly directed by its Central Committee. Thus he was to write in One Step Forward, Two Steps Back:

> Bureaucratism versus democratism, i.e., precisely centralism versus autocracy, such is the organisational principle of revolutionary social democracy as against that of the opportunists. The latter principle strives to go from below upward, and therefore defends as far as possible and wherever possible autonomy and democracy. . . . But the organisational principle of revolutionary social democracy strives to go from the top downwards and defends the enlargement of the rights and plenary powers of the central body against the parts.[9]

Regarding, more specifically, the application of this centralist principle to the Social Democratic Party, Lenin wrote:

> If we begin with a solid foundation of a strong organisation

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9. Quoted in B. D. Wolfe, op. cit., p. 259.

> of revolutionaries, we can guarantee the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims both of social democracy and trade unionism. If, however, we begin with a wide workers' organisation supposed to be acceptable to the masses, when as a matter of fact it will be acceptable to the gendarmes . . . we shall achieve the aims neither of social democracy nor of trade unionism. . . . I assert: 1) that no movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders to maintain continuity; 2) that the wider the masses drawn into the struggle . . . the more urgent the need for such an organisation. . . . 3) that the organisation must mostly consist of persons professionally engaged in revolutionary activities; 4) that, in an autocratic state, the more we confine the membership to professional revolutionaries . . . the more difficult it will be to destroy the organisation.[10]

Lenin then asserted that "Only a centralised, militant organisation that consistently carries out a Social-Democratic policy . . . can safeguard the movement,"[11] and declared: "Give us an organisation of revolutionaries and we shall overturn the whole of Russia".[12]

Lenin's organisational principles, so valid for Tsarist Russia, and already formulated by him in the publication Iskra, aroused a storm of protests in the German and Russian Social Democratic Parties, and were at the root of the schism which was to take place publicly at the Social Democratic Conference in 1903 in London.

Vera Zasulich perhaps most clearly defined the new Leninist concept of the Party, its dangerous centralist tendencies, and its break with the traditions of socialism:

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10. V. I. Lenin, What Is to be Done, in Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. IV, Book II, pp. 194, 198.

11. Ibid., p. 194.

12. Ibid., p. 201.

> Socialism is the first movement in history to base its entire course on the organisation and independent action of the masses. The ultra-centralism advocated by Lenin is not something born of a positive creative spirit but of the negative sterile spirit of the watchman. His line of thought is cut to the control of Party activity, not to its fructifying; to its narrowing, not to its unleashing; to the role of taskmaster, not of gatherer and unifier.[13]

And again, Rosa Luxemburg wrote:

> The discipline which Lenin means is impressed upon the proletariat not only by the factory, but also by the barracks and by modern bureaucratism, in short, by the entire mechanism of the centralised bourgeois state . . . It is only by breaking through and uprooting this slavish discipline that the proletariat can be educated for a new discipline, the voluntary self-discipline of Social Democracy.[14]

Trotsky, in commenting on this Leninist innovation, penned his famous prophecy: "The organisation of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organisation; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee."[15]

In spite of the opposition of a large majority of the Party, Lenin's views eventually triumphed, but not without splitting the Russian Social Democratic Party. This split occurred at the London Conference held in 1903, when the wording of Article 1 of the Party Constitution was debated. Lenin proposed that a Party member should be defined as one "who recognises the Party's program and supports it by

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13. Quoted in B. D. Wolfe, op. cit., pp. 256, 257.

14. Quoted ibid., pp. 162, 163.

15. Quoted ibid., p. 253.

material means and by personal participation in one of the Party organisations. This stand was opposed by Martov, who desired a more open party. Martov won his point on the subsequent vote, but Lenin, determined to secure his end, later won a majority of one on the question of the composition of the board of the Party publication, Iskra. He immediately named his group the Bolsheviks, the men of the majority.

In writing of this occasion, Trotsky remarked:

> In 1903 the whole point at issue was nothing more than Lenin's desire to get Axelrod and Zasulich off the editorial board . . . I did not fully realise what an intense and imperious centralism the revolutionary party would need to lead millions in a war against the old order. . . . [16]

Discussing the importance of the schism of 1903, Wolfe notes that Lenin opposed an amendment referring to class consciousness by indicating that it would give the mistaken idea that the development of such consciousness in the proletariat was a spontaneous thing. Wolfe observes:

> This dogma, obscure as yet in its implications, was at the very core of 'Leninism'. From it flowed an attitude towards the working class, towards its ability to think for itself, to learn from experience . . . towards its spontaneous movements such as might take place without orders and control from the party of socialist theoreticians and professional revolutionaries.[17]

These heavy modifications of Marxism - the revised concept of spontaneity, the idea of the elite Party and the theory of democratic centralism - formed the core of "Leninism" and became the central tenets of the Bolshevik Party in opposition to the more orthodox Mensh-

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16. Quoted ibid., p. 254.

17. Ibid., p. 239.

evik faction of the Social Democratic Party. Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons for their forceful enunciation lay in the special conditions in Russia, and it is perhaps a tribute to Lenin's realism that the organisation which he proposed, and the principle of democratic centralism which he advocated, provided the only efficient basis for the revolutionary struggle against Tsarism.

At this juncture, it may be well to discuss briefly the principle of democratic centralism which was later to be officially adopted as the operative principle of the Communist Party.

A resolution of the Eighth Party Congress in March, 1919, declared:

> The party is in a position in which the strictest centralism and the most stringent discipline are absolute necessities. All decisions of higher headquarters are absolutely binding for the lower. Every decision must first of all be executed and only after that an appeal to the corresponding organ is permissible. In this sense, outright military discipline is indispensable in the party at the present time.[18]

A resolution of the Second Congress of the Comintern stated: "The main principle of democratic centralism is that of the higher cell being elected by the lower cell, the absolute binding force of all the directives of a higher cell subordinate to it, and the existence of a commanding party centre indisputable for all leaders in party life, from one congress to another."[19]

This attempt to strike a balance between democracy and effic-

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18. A. G. Meyer, Leninism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 99.

19. Ibid., p. 100.

ient executive action was to be sorely tried by the stress of subsequent political conflict, and it is regrettably indubitable that democracy later died at the altar of centralism. There was, of course, the inevitable tendency on the part of the hierarchy to make more and more executive decisions with less and less reference to the forum of the Party. Elections tended to be gradually and extensively replaced by co-option and appointment, thus destroying democratic control over the Party hierarchy. Nor was this purely a logical and unconscious development of the imperatives of power, for Lenin actually remarked that the electoral principle was "sheer utopianism . . . In view of the conditions prevailing under Tsarism", and that "it would be folly to sacrifice the interest of the organisation for the sake of democracy."[20]

Throughout the period of 1903 to 1917, then, Lenin evolved and led a Bolshevik Party based on his ideas of organisation and on his theory of democratic centralism, and largely motivated by the demands of the struggle against a police State. Moreover, during this period, Lenin also developed a further modification of Marxism, a concept similar to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. This modification was to affect radically the subsequent development of the Party.

Inspired by the revolution of 1905, Lenin began to see the possibility of State power passing directly from the Tsarist autocracy to the proletariat. He still acknowledged that the next revolution could not be socialist: "Marxists are absolutely convinced of the bourgeois

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20. N. Popov, Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, edited by A. Fineberg, (Moscow, Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1934) I., pp. 94, 95.

character of the revolution."[21] However, because the Russian bourgeoisie was weak, the brunt of the struggle had to be borne by the proletariat. (So far, Plekhanov would have endorsed these views). But then, Lenin argued that a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry could be established as a result of the revolution. Thus he felt that, if the proletariat and the peasantry were to bear the brunt of the struggle, they should not, after achieving success, stand back as Plekhanov and Martov expected them to do, and allow the bourgeoisie to assume control of the State. Lenin seemed to think that the State could be controlled by the proletariat and the peasantry without necessarily impairing the essentially bourgeois nature of the State.

This theory seemed to be at a half-way point between classical Marxism and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, and its obvious inconsistencies drew attention to a problem with which the Bolsheviks would later be faced. All Lenin's previous ideas on spontaneity and the rule of the Party had been based on a framework of the orthodox Marxist argument that the first revolution would be bourgeois and that, after a long period of the growth and maturing of the proletariat, the proletarian revolution would take place and the majority would then rule over the minority. In this case, the Bolshevik Party would act as the vanguard of a majority in the State and gradually transfer power to the class-conscious and politically developed proletariat.

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21. V. I. Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution (New York: International Publishers, 1935), p. 37.

But Lenin's new modification, bearing on the seizure and retention of power by the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution, changed this idea of the role of the Party. Lenin realised that the next revolution would require a coalition of the proletariat and the peasantry, whose class interests did not coincide. The proletariat would thus be a minority, and in such circumstances the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry could be exercised only by the vanguard of a class which was neither politically mature nor in the majority. The argument is clearly a justification of a dictatorship by a party, and this, in fact, is precisely what happened in 1917. The major reason for the development of this last modification of classical Marxism by Lenin was his firm conviction that a second revolution was imminent and that State power could be seized by the opportunist. In keeping with his opportunistic tendencies, he began to prepare the way for the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Thus, to the question posed by Peguy in 1900, "I should like to know who will exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat", Lenin was prepared, in 1917, to answer: the Bolshevik Party.

Presumably the only reason which Lenin could advance for regarding the Bolshevik Party as the vanguard of the proletariat was that the other left wing parties were not prepared to carry through the revolution completely, being still hampered by their insistence upon the bourgeois character of the revolution. Certainly the Menshevik commanded greater support among the proletariat than the Bolsheviks, while the Social Revolutionaries dominated amongst the

peasantry. In this instance, however, we may conclude that Lenin regarded opportunism as advantageous and therefore legitimate and "orthodox".

Lenin's views on this point were dramatically publicised in The April Theses of April, 1917. Faced with the social and political situation in Russia as it was in the spring of 1917, Lenin's peculiar tactical genius indicated that the ideal opportunity for seizing power was at hand. We have already noted in our previous discussion of the soviets that the Bolshevik methods of seizing power were twofold. First, the alliance with, and control over, the soviets and the consequent acquisition of mass support; and, second, the formulation of a political platform geared to the basic revolutionary demands of the masses, namely, bread, land and peace. These methods succeeded and the Bolsheviks emerged in November, 1917, as the ruling elite in Russia, determined to maintain power by any means.

Plamenatz writes on this issue as follows:

> As early as 1885 Engels foresaw such a turn of events. In a letter to his friend Weydemeyer, he wrote: 'I have a notion that our party, thanks to the perplexed helplessness and laxness of all others, will one nice morning be forced into government.' It would then, he continued, forsake specific proletarian aims for petty bourgeois aims, since it would have to fight for its very life. At the same time, it would have to make premature 'communist experiments and jumps' and would promptly 'lose its head'. Bloody reaction and counter-reaction would follow, all to the compromise of Marxism in general. 'I cannot very well see how it can come otherwise. In a backward country . . . which possesses an advanced party . . . at the first serious conflict and as soon as real danger sets in, the advanced party will come to power, and that is certainly before its normal time.'[22]

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22. J. Plamenatz, op. cit., p. 181.

Marcuse writes:

> The construction of the Leninist party (or party leadership) as the real representative of the proletariat could not bridge the gap between the new strategy and the old theoretic conception. Lenin's strategy of an avant garde acknowledged in fact what it denied in theory, namely, that a fundamental change had occurred - in the objective and subjective conditions for the revolution.[23]

One of the first significant indications of this change in "conditions for the revolution" was the suppression of the Constituent Assembly, for which State-wide elections had been held on November 25, 1917, under a decree of the Sovnarkom of November 9, 1917. The results of these elections were that out of a total of 707, the Bolshevik Party elected 175 representatives, whilst the Right Social Revolutionaries secured 370, the Left Social Revolutionaries 40, the Mensheviks 16, and the Kadets 16. As Carr indicated, this was not necessarily an overwhelming vote of "no-confidence" against the Bolsheviks, but it certainly was not an expression of support for them. Two days after the convocation of the Assembly on January 18, 1918, the Sovnarkom dissolved it and the Bolshevik rule was maintained. In making the speech proposing the dissolution, Lenin asserted that "There will be all sorts of errors and blunders. . . . The transfer of all power to the Constituent Assembly is nothing but the old policy of 'conciliation' with the malevolent bourgeoisie. . . . The Constituent Assembly, which failed to recognise the power of the people, is now dispersed by the will of the Soviet power".[24]

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23. H. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 32.

24. Quoted in F. L. Schuman, Russia Since 1917 (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957,), p. 101.

This is an interesting statement in that it provides the ruling party with the capacity to distinguish between a majority vote and the real will of the people, a most useful vehicle for the maintenance of power.

That the dissolution of the Assembly was not received with the serious opposition that could have been expected may have been due to two factors. The first one was that the Right Social Revolutionaries, the majority party in the assembly, were not supporters of the soviet system of government, and therefore the Left Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and other left wing groups did not oppose dissolution of the Constitution Assembly, in order to maintain the soviets in which they held a strong position. The second factor was that Bolshevik power was largely concentrated in the urban areas, thus enabling them to minimise the degree of popular opposition to the dissolution.

Whatever the reasons, the Bolsheviks maintained power and used it to exert pressure on other parties and to consolidate their own position. They continued to proclaim that they were the vanguard of the proletariat, exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat rather than a dictatorship of the Party.

Thus, in a discussion at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin stated:

> Tanner says that he stands for the dictatorship of the proletariat but that he pictures the dictatorship of the proletariat to be something different from what we do. He says that by dictatorship we mean, in essence, the dictatorship of its organised and class-conscious minority . . . A political party can organise only a minority of the class, in the same way as the really class conscious workers in every capitalist society comprise only a minority of all the workers. That is why we must admit that only this class conscious minority can guide the broad masses of the workers and lead them. And if

> Comrade Tanner says that he is opposed to parties, and at the same time is in favour of the minority representing the best organised and most revolutionary workers, showing the way to the whole of the proletariat, then I say that there is really no difference between us.[25]

The Bolshevik attemps to maintain power were assisted rather than hindered by the Civil War, which served to focus the Bolshevik Party in public attention as the defender of the revolution. It also served to minimise the opposition of other left wing parties to the coercive and suppressive activities of the Bolsheviks, because any such opposition or critisism would immediately be branded as counter-revolutionary and would immediately and ruthlessly be treated as such. Thus the revolt of the Kronstadt sailors in March, 1921, coming at a time when critisism from the Left and from within the Party, combined with rising popular discontent, threatened to overthrow the regime, served as an excuse for the suppression of criticism, the dissolution of the only legal opposition, the Mensheviks, and the ending of all vestiges of democracy in Russia. By this time not only the Kadets and the Right Social Revolutionaries, but also the left wing Revolutionary parties, comprising the Anarchists and the Left Social Revolutionaries, had already ceased to exist, and Bolshevism reigned supreme. Within the Party, moreover, the "Left" and "Workers'" opposition had been quashed.

Lenin thus passed on to his successors an instrument which was geared in autocracy and which would have collapsed without it. Within

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25. Quoted in H. Kelsen, The Political Theory of Bolshevism (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), p. 52.

the Party democracy had disappeared and centralism was the keynote of the Party organisation. This bureaucratisation of the Party was completed by Stalin who, in developing his personal ascendancy, fulfilled Trotsky's prophecy by establishing a dictatorship at the expense of Trotsky himself and almost the entire leading core of the Bolshevik revolutionaries, including Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky.

Stalin at the same time engaged himself vigorously in the task of denying the charge of dictatorship of the Party and of limiting Lenin's admissions in this respect. His argument is somewhat involved:

> (a) Lenin did not regard the formula 'the dictatorship of the Party' as being irreproachable and exact, for which reason it is very rarely used in Lenin's works . . . . (b) On the few occasions that Lenin was obliged, in controversy with opponents, to speak of the dictatorship of the Party, he usually referred to the 'dictatorship of one party', i.e., to the fact that our Party holds power alone, that it does not share power with other parties. Moreover, he always made it clear that the dictatorship of the Party in relation to the working class meant the leadership of the Party, its leading role. . . . (c) Those comrades who identify, or try to identify, the 'dictatorship' of the Party, and consequently, 'the dictatorship of the leaders', with the dictatorship of the proletariat are wrong from the point of view of Leninism . . . for they thereby violate the conditions of the correct relations between the vanguard and the class.[26]

The Party is referred to by Stalin as "the highest form of proletarian organisation within the working class and among the organisations created by the workers", "the vanguard of the working class", "the organised detachment of the working class".[27] Stalin goes on to remark that "The proletariat needs the Party for the establishment and

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26. J. V. Stalin, Leninism, I, 50.

27. Ibid., pp. 162-167.

for the maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Party is an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat."[28]

Within this party there is an "iron discipline" necessary to the fulfilment of its role, an iron discipline which could brook no thought of opposition. In this connection Stalin writes:

> The origin of all faction-building within the Party is opportunism. . . . If we are to wage successful warfare against imperialism we needs must clear all such persons out of the Party and must conduct a ruthless fight against them.
>
> The assumption that such persons can be won over by moral suasion within the Party, within the framework of one and the same Party, is an unsound and dangerous theory. It is a theory which dooms the Party to paralysis and chronic illness, threatens to hand it over bag and baggage to a policy of opportunism. ... The proletarian parties must expel the opportunist and reformist elements. . . . The more drastic the purge, the more likelihood is there of a strong and influential Party arising.[29]

Obviously, such a statement provided ample opportunity for branding any difference of opinion within the Party as opportunism, and there is no evidence of any reluctance on the part of Stalin to use this technique. To an even greater degree than was the case under Lenin, Stalin limited freedom of discussion and emphasised centralising tendencies; and the Stalin "era" was strewn with victims of the process.

The conditions favourable to Stalin's autocracy were, however, in existence prior to Lenin's death, and their emergence, by as early as 1923, confirmed the worst fears of the early Russian Social Democrats. In this respect the modifications of Marxism which had been effected by Lenin to provide theoretical justification for the role of the

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28. Ibid., p. 171.

29. Ibid., pp. 173, 174.

Communist Party completely distorted some of the main tenets of classical Marxist political theory. If it is possible to point to any basic reason for such serious deviations from Marxism, perhaps one might point to the fact that the special situation of Russia demanded special measures. But, as noted by Marx, a revolution made sense in Russia only in the context of a revolution in Europe. In 1917 Russia was not ready for a proletarian revolution, because the proletariat had not advanced in numbers or maturity to a position when a truly proletarian revolution could be achieved. Consequently, in the absence of such a large and mature proletariat, the seizure and maintenance of power on its behalf could only be premature, and completely un-Marxist. The maintenance of power by the Bolsheviks emphatically involved a change in ends: after 1917, and more particularly after 1921, when all hopes of European revolution faded, power became the chief end of Communist policy. Indeed, no other aspiration could logically justify Communist actions.

Thus, in spite of all arguments to the contrary, the present consolidation of power and the role which the Communist Party has played in the U.S.S.R. must be regarded as completely inconsistent with the central tenets of Marxism.

Article 126 of the Constitution states that the Communist Party is "the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to build communist society and is the leading core of all organisations of the working people, both public and state".

In order to determine the real significance of the Communist

Party in the Soviet system, we must consider its size, its structure, its apparatus and its scope of influence.

In essence, the Party, up to the death of Stalin (and afterwards with certain modifications), had a pyramidal structure extending throughout the Soviet Union and officially claiming to operate on the principle of democratic centralism. As we have seen, this operating principle provides for elections of Party leaders to ensure democratic control, although the widespread practices of co-option and appointment have largely subverted this principle and have led to an undue emphasis on centralism.

The skeleton of the structure of the Communist Party emerged in 1919 when, following the death of Sverdlov, the Eighth Party Congress re-organised the Party apparatus. This Congress, the supreme organ of the Party, directed its Central Committee to create as the essential elements of Party machinery three bodies: the Political Bureau (Politburo) comprising five members of the Central Committee; the Organisational Bureau (Orgburo), also comprising five members of the Central Committee; and the Secretariat, headed by a General Secretary. In terms of functions, the Politburo held the responsibility for deciding all questions requiring immediate action, the Orgburo was charged with the directing of all the organisational work of the Party, and the Secretariat was accorded a subsidiary role to the other two bodies with no specifically defined functions.[30]

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30. It is worthy of note that Stalin was appointed to both the Politburo and the Orgburo, and that, in 1922, he also became General Secretary. In this connection Fainsod, in How Russia is Ruled, p. 153, writes: (cont.)

The growth of the Party administrative apparatus over the next few years was a product of the rise in the Party membership, a rise from about 40,000 in March, 1917, to about 1,500,000 in 1928. In 1922 one in every five members was engaged in full-time Party work. As the Party apparatus grew in size and complexity, so the relative extent of the power and influence of the Orgburo and the Secretariat grew with it, primarily because of the responsibilities of these bodies for the Party organisation and the controlling of Party appointments.

As early as October, 1923, Trotsky complained:

> The bureaucratisation of the Party apparatus has developed to unheard of proportions by means of the method of secretarial selection. There has been created a very broad stratum of party workers, entering into the apparatus of the government of the party, who completely renounce their own party opinion, at least the open expression of it, as though assuming that the secretarial hierarchy is the apparatus which creates party opinion and party decisions. Beneath this stratum . . . there lies the broad mass of the party, before whom every decision stands in the form of a summons or a command.[31]

This bureaucratisation of the Party was accompanied by increasing centralisation, and the Secretariat included regional bureaus to supervise and direct regional Party activities. It was these

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30.(cont):"The assignment of Stalin to the Orgburo was to have momentous significance. An old committeeman of the Sverdlov stripe, his capacities were adapted to questions of interior Party management. Unlike some of his more intellectually scintillating associates, in the Politburo, who spurned organisational details, he was quick to realise the crucial importance of the Party apparatus in deciding the issue of supremacy within the Party. The Orgburo became his first base of operations in building his own machine."

31. Quoted ibid., p. 155.

bureaus which provided Stalin and his successors with the opportunity to ensure that all important regional posts were held by their adherents.

The pyramidal structure of the Party apparatus extends broadly over the same area and in the same depth as the soviets. With the Praesidium of the Central Committee responsible to the all-Union Congress at its apex, the Party extends through a series of levels from the Union Republican Party Congresses, each with their own Central Committee and executive bureau, through the regional, area and territorial groupings to a basic organisation which used to be called a cell, and which is now a "primary" organization, to be found, e.g., in Trade Unions, factories, offices, collectives and State farms. These organs strongly influence and closely monitor all governmental and soviet activities. They also approve and to a large extent provide the cadres from which important government posts are filled and from which nominations for the soviets are largely obtained. Although the concept of election to Party posts is still preserved, the practices of co-option and appointment from the centre have largely atrophied this democratic basis of the Party, the membership of which is carefully controlled and rigidly limited.[32]

In the nineteen-twenties the apex of the Party organisation underwent changes as a result of the struggle for power within it. In 1923, upon Stalin's recommendation, the membership of the Central Comm-

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32. The death of Lenin was the occasion for the first mass admission to the Party when the Central Committee, in honour of Lenin, "proclaimed a mass admission of politically advanced workers into the Party ranks." History of the C.P.S.U. (B.), p. 268.

ittee was increased from 25 members and 15 alternates to 40 members and 17 alternates, and again in 1924 to 53 members and 34 alternates. Ostensibly these increases took place in order to provide for promotion of Party members and to increase the "experience content" of the Central Committee. The real reason was, however, Stalin's desire to extend his control from the Party apparatus to the highest organs of Party power by packing the Central Committee with his own supporters.

This tripartite summit of the Party remained the same until 1952. At the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952, however, the Politburo and Orgburo were abolished and replaced by a single body, the Praesidium, which comprised 25 members and 11 alternates. After Stalin's death in 1953 this was reduced to 10 members and 4 alternates. Theoretically, this body is only a special organ of the Central Committee of the Party and reports to it. In reality, however, the Praesidium is the most powerful body not only in the Party, but also in the entire State structure, and it is here, rather than in the Supreme Soviet, that "supreme power in the U.S.S.R." lies.

The membership of the Praesidium provides us with the key to the whole structure of power in the U.S.S.R. As "chosen" by the Nineteenth Party Congress, the Praesidium included all ten of the Central Committee Secretaries, all thirteen of the vice-chairmen of the Council of Ministers, a former secretary of the Komsomol (the Communist Party youth organisation), some regional Party leaders and other outstanding personalities. Since, moreover, all these were members of the Supreme Soviet, the concentration of power in the hands

of the members of the Praesidium will be readily appreciated.

The Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party is effectively the apex of the three pyramidal structures of the Soviet government, the Party, and the Soviets. The leadership is common to all these hierarchies; they draw their source of power and their status from their position in the Party, and as such they depend for their elevation on status rather than election.

The Constitution of 1936 is thus correct in describing the Party as "the leading core of all organisations of the working people". Moreover, the Party is more than that, and, in assigning supreme power to the Supreme Soviet, the Constitution fails to reflect the absolute power of the Communist Party.

It might be advantageous at this stage to glance very briefly at the composition of the Party, from two aspects, namely, the class content and the ethnic composition.

With regard to this aspect, Plamenatz has pointed out that "Lenin's ambition was to endow Russia with a strong and disciplined Marxist party including both intellectuals and workers, a party strong enough to restrain the caprice of the intellectuals and give them a sense of responsibility by binding them to the workers in common loyalty to a cause." 33

In the initial stages the Bolshevik Party was almost wholly comprised of middle class intellectuals. By the beginning of 1917 the membership of the party stood at approximately 24,000. By Jan-

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33. J. Plamenatz, op. cit., p. 223.

uary, 1918, the membership rose to 115,000, the workers comprising 56.9 per cent of the total and the peasants 14.5 per cent. From 1918, the numerical strength of the Party continued to rise steadily with the exceptions of the periods 1922-1925 and 1934-1938, the second period being one of extensive purges designed to cure the Party of functionalism. By 1952, the strength of the Party reached approximately 6,000,000 members and 870,000 candidates. Although this still represents but a small percentage of the total population, the figures do not take into account the Komsomol and other organisations affiliated to the Party.

However, a cause of some concern to the Party leadership in the nineteen-twenties was the rapidly declining percentage of workers in the Party. The 56.9 per cent of 1918 shrank to 41.0 per cent in 1921 and, in spite of tremendous effort, did not again reach the 1918 percentage until 1929. This decline was primarily attributable to the relative increase of the peasant element, and the recovery in the late nineteen-twenties was due to a deliberate recruiting drive aimed at the proletariat.

In terms of ethnic content,[34] in spite of many attempts by the Party, there has been no radical change in the overwhelming predominance of Russian membership, which in 1926 comprised 72 per cent of the total. This was high in relation to the fact that the Russians formed only 52.91 per cent of the population of the U.S.S.R. What is perhaps even more significant is that the Ukraine, one of the most nationalist and separatist of the Republics, which in 1926 numbered 21.2 per cent of the total population, had a Party membership of only

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34. The references to Party structure and contents are largely based on Fainsod's comprehensive account of the Soviet system, How Russia is Ruled.

5.88 per cent in 1922 and only 11.72 per cent in 1927.

Obviously, as the trend towards industrialisation and towards the breaking down of national barriers continues in the U.S.S.R., one might reasonably expect that the content of the Party will change quite rapidly in favour of industrial and non-Russian elements.

Whatever the changes in composition, ethnic content and structure, there is little doubt that the Communist Party will continue as the source of supreme power in the U.S.S.R., and will exercise for some time to come a rigid dictatorship, in the face of growing pressure from a restless intelligentsia and a relatively highly educated proletariat. Small in number relative to the over-all population, but holding all the key posts at all levels of the soviets and the State administration, monitoring all social and political activities, drawing trained cadres from the Komsomol, and obeying without question the dictates of its Praesidium, the Party has evolved into a highly centralised organisation which provides the only road to power, by which all commands of the leadership are disseminated, and from which all State power emanates.

In spite of such techniques as self-criticism, the element of democracy in the Party is not and will not be significant until democratic elections at the base are restored.

With regard to the scope of Party activities, no subject is immune from its control. Music, art, architecture, literature, biology, linguistics - in brief, all the branches of the arts and sciences - have been made to conform to the demands of the proletarian

culture as expounded by the Party. The Party lays down the principles of foreign policy, the economic goals of the Five Year Plans, the type and level of education, and the activities of the Trade Unions. The Party supervises elections, approves candidates and controls communications. The Party in the U.S.S.R. is omnipotent. The Bolshevik slogan of "All power to the Soviets", echoed in the 1936 Constitution, is in actual fact a façade behind which real power has been transferred to the Party, robbing all other State organs of vitality.

Within the Party, the same emphasis on centralism is reflected, and a long trail of mass purges testifies to the fate of those who questioned the policies emanating from the Politburo and the Praesidium.

In spite of the insistence of Lenin and Stalin, the dictatorship of the Party, as opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat as envisaged by Marx and Plekhanov, has become a fact, and there is little sign of any recovery of that democracy which was to have qualified and popularised the concept of centralism.

The Constitution of 1936, therefore, does not accurately present the true relation of the Communist Party to Soviet society, but it is both accurate and frank when it recognises the existence of one Party rule. This fact is theoretically justified on the grounds that, since a party is part of, and should represent, one class, there need be only one party to represent the interests of a single class which, it is claimed, exists in the Soviet Union. As Stalin declared: "In the U.S.S.R. there is ground for one party, the Communist Party. In the U.S.S.R. only one party can exist, the Communist Party, which

courageously defends the interests of the workers and peasants to the very end".[35]

Schuman provides a fitting comment that can be used as a summary of the observations advanced in this chapter:

> Here the fiction of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' confronted the fact of rulership by a managerial elite. Here the juridical theory of government by soviets, local, regional and national, faced the practice of the monolithic and monopolistic oligarchy of the Party. Within the Party Lenin's concept of 'democratic centralism', postulating the responsibility of the leaders to the led, gave way to Stalin's totalitarian machine, ruthlessly exacting obedience from the led to the leaders. Within the leadership, collective deliberations and decisions often gave way, prior to Stalin's demise, to a species of Caesarism.[36]

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35. J. V. Stalin, op. cit. p. 43.

36. F. L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 218.

CONCLUSION

The principle applied in the U.S.S.R. is that of socialism. . . . The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 12.

Any critical analysis of the political system of the U.S.S.R. and the theory on which it is based must start from a realisation of the comparative novelty and magnitude of the Communist experiment. To stress the purges, disasters and blunders on the one hand, or the technical, material and cultural achievements on the other, must fail to give a balanced account of the development of the Soviet Union.

At the same time, universally acceptable criteria for success or failure of a social and political system have not yet been evolved. For the purpose of this thesis, a single criterion has been chosen which should be acceptable to the proponent as well as the opponent of the Soviet system. This criterion is the closeness of the relationship between the Soviet system as defined in the Constitution of 1936 and the principles of Marxism, and it has been chosen because the Communists claim as their greatest success the creation of a State system in conformity with these principles. In the course of this thesis, we have briefly considered the various topics in relation to a secondary criterion, namely, the accuracy with which the Constitution mirrors the actualities of the U.S.S.R.

Our analysis has indicated that there is little relation between the Soviet State system and that prognosticated by Marx and Eng-

els. Instead of the withering away of the State, there has been evolved in the U.S.S.R. a State power of unprecedented concentration. Instead of an "administration over things", there has been constructed an apparatus of government unparalleled in its scope and intensity of activity. Instead of the development of democratic workers' government, democracy has atrophied and an autocratic and often ruthless government over the governed, rather than by the governed, has been established. Finally, there has emerged as the hard core, as the real source of power in the State, a political party based on a concept foreign to Marxist political theory.

It is fashionable among the critics of the Soviet Union to attribute these developments to "Leninism", on the assumption that Lenin's political practices had, as a matter of deliberate policy, distorted the principles of Marxism. As we have seen, such criticisms are not entirely groundless. However, two factors of immense importance helped to shape these Leninist developments, and these should be taken fully into account before deciding on the correctness of this view.

The first is that the Russion revolution of 1917 did not spread to Europe. As we have noted, a study of Marxist theory would indicate that Russia was the last country in Europe in which a socialist revolution might be expected, and the only reason why the Social Democrats looked forward eagerly to a Russian revolt was that they expected it to be the springboard for a general revolution in Europe. In actual fact, the revolution in Russia was expected to be only a bourgeois revolution. It was only when power was seized by the Bolshe-

viks, and the European revolutions failed to materialise, that the Russian Communists eventually found themselves faced with the problem of building a socialist State in a hostile capitalist world.[1] In these circumstances the State could not wither away, but had, in fact, to be consolidated and strengthened. The Communist error lies not in consolidating the State, but in insisting that such a policy was consistent with Marxist principles.

The second factor concerns the evolution of the highly centralised party, a development for which no basis can be found in Marx's writings. In this case, as has been pointed out already, it is perhaps a tribute to Lenin's realistic approach that he correctly assessed the requirements of the struggle against the Tsarist police State and demanded a tightly knit organisational structure to which the Social Democratic Party as envisaged by Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich did not conform. The nature of this struggle helped to shape the Bolshevik Party and necessitated the adoption of democratic centralism as an operational principle.

What is surprising, in the light of Lenin's correct assessment of the struggle against Tsarism, is the degree of naivity which he displayed in dealing with the problem of the administration of the State. After his assumption of power Lenin quickly realised that the simple "bookkeeping" in which the proletariat could easily engage was a

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1. It has already been noted that according to classical Marxism there was no such problem because the idea was inconceivable. Stalin went to great lengths to "explain" Engels on this point in order to prove that his theory of "Socialism in one Country" was not inconsistent with Marxism. His attempt failed. See above, Chapter II.

highly complex operation requiring specialised administrative skills and experience. It may be suggested that the ignorance of the revolutionary intelligentsia, particularly the Bolsheviks, on this question, was the result of profound lack of any tradition of State service and bureaucratic management, an ignorance which led to undue expectations regarding the possibilities offered by the machine age.

The fate of the soviets represents perhaps the most tragic aspect of the evolution from Marxism to Stalinism. The Paris Commune was noted by Marx as a spontaneous class organisation, and Lenin and Trotsky were correct in recognising the soviets as the Russian version of the Commune, for the soviets displayed a genuine spontaneity and a voluntary collaboration on a completely democratic basis. The phenomenon of 1905 occurred again in 1917, and it seemed for a few months that revolutionary enthusiasm could create a lasting organisational structure for a mass democracy. But the dream was rudely shattered. The demands of the civil war and the economic situation could not wait for democratic solutions. Moreover, the Bolshevik determination to stay in power involved the annihilation of organised political opposition in the soviets and trade unions, and the soviet system was rapidly reduced to a "loud sounding nothing" which served as an elaborate façade behind which the power of the Party was developed.

By the time of Lenin's death in 1924 the major deviations of Soviet Communists from Marxism were already well advanced. Democracy was strangled, the centralist party emerged, and the foundations of a mighty State structure were laid down.

Under Stalin these trends were merely carried to logical con-

clusions. The State and its power were further buttressed by Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country", the Party oligarchy developed into personal dictatorship, the apparatus of government increased in size, scope and complexity, and the soviets became even more atrophied.

Schuman comments pithily on these developments:

> The structure of power in the Soviet State was defined by its founders in 1917 as a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. By 1928 it had become an oligarchy of the Party leaders. By 1938 its lines of arbitrary authority and fear-inspired obedience had begun to resemble an Autocracy, albeit never legitimized, embodied in a Vozhd who was the son of a Georgian cobbler. By 1948 and thereafter, in ever greater measure until his passing, Stalin's despotism was rigidly superimposed upon the oligarchs and in the fashion of its functioning had little in common, apart from semantic continuity, with the regime that emerged from the October Revolution.[2]

The reference to "semantic continuity" is worthy of note, for it draws attention to the insistence with which the Communist leaders have reiterated, in spite of blatant examples to the contrary, that Marxist principles form the basis of Soviet policies. The absurdity of this claim should not obscure the value to be gained from making it. This idea is effectively expressed by Popper:

> The most likely development is, of course, that those actually in power at the moment of victory - those of the revolutionary leaders who have survived the struggle for power and the various purges, together with their staff - will form the new ruling class of the new society, a kind of new aristocracy or bureaucracy; and it is most likely that they will attempt to hide this fact. This they can do, most conveniently, by retaining as much as possible of the revolutionary ideology, taking advantage of these sentiments instead of wasting their time in efforts to destroy them. . . . And it seems likely enough that they will be able to make fullest use of the rev-

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2. F. L. Schuman, Russia Since 1917, p. 338. "Semantic continuity", of course, also has its applications in the West where democratic principles have suffered not inconsiderable distortions.

> olutionary ideology if at the same time they exploit the fear of counter-revolutionary development. In this way, the revolutionary ideology will serve them for apologetic purposes; as a vindication of the use they make of their power, and as a means of stabilising it - in short, as a new 'opium of the people'.[3]

Any discussion of deviations from Marxist theory as reflected in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 must also make reference to the characters of Lenin and Stalin, if only to appreciate the reasons why such obvious deviations were effected by such ostensibly aggressive adherents of Marxism. Thus, at several points in our discussion, references pertinent to this matter have been made enabling us to evolve effective character sketches which perhaps deserve summarising and reiterating at this point.

Axelrod once wrote of Lenin as follows: "There is no other man who is absorbed by the revolution twenty-four hours a day, who has no other thoughts but the thoughts of revolution, and who, even when he sleeps, dreams of nothing but revolution."[4]

This complete absorption in the revolution was combined in Lenin with a passion for organisation, a flair for leadership, a keen tactical sense and a daemonic energy. Sympathy with the disenfranchised and conspiratorial techniques were characteristic of the Russian intelligentsia, but Lenin added to them a fierce hatred of autocracy, sharpened on account of the execution of his brother Alexander in 1887,

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3. K. R. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies (London: Routledge and Kegan: 1945), II, 138.

4. Quoted in B. D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, p. 229.

for revolutionary activities. Although an intellectual, he could not regard the forthcoming revolution with the objective detachment of Plekhanov, and this personal embroilment led directly to an impatience and an opportunism which produced distortions of Marxist theory as well as suppression of democratic elements in post-revolutionary Russia.

However, one feels that the deviations were rarely conscious. The seizure of power by the Bolshevik Party was a plain fact, but Lenin was convinced that his party was acting on behalf of the proletariat and in accordance with Marxist principles. Similarly, the subsequent suppression of the Left opposition parties and of the Kronstadt Revolt was regarded as necessary to the preservation of the achievement of the revolution as well as the continuation of the regime. One gains the impression of absolute sincerity in Lenin at all times, with personal supremacy being regarded by him as a natural ingredient and by-product of success rather than as a central ambition.

In Stalin's case the verdict is rendered the more difficult by the impassivity and comparative obscurity of his character. Appearing but dimly beside the burning brilliance of Lenin, Trotsky, and even Zinoviev and Kamenev, playing only a minor part in the revolution, relegated to Party managerial operations, and enjoying only small oratorical skill amidst a plethora of this talent, Stalin was not looked upon as significant, and the realisation of the extent of his power came as a complete surprise to his contemporaries.[5]

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5. Stalin is not mentioned in John Reed's famous work, Ten Days That Shook the World (New York: Klopfer, 1935). Thus, in spite of an enthusiastic preface by Lenin, the book did not find favour in the U.S.S.R. after the advent of Stalin.

But the post-revolutionary period was a period of bureaucratisation, and organisation was Stalin's forte. He was a man more than willing to involve himself in mundane administration and this facilitated his domination of the Party and State apparatuses It was not until too late that his more "revolutionary" colleagues discovered that Stalin's organisational talent was coupled with tactical adroitness and ruthless personal ambition.

Here was a man more eager to extend the power of the State, and of the Party in the State, in accordance with the trends established in Lenin's life and under the mask of revolutionary ideology. Here was, above all, a realist, opposing Trotsky's dreams of extending the revolution to Europe, and more intensely aware of the realities of power politics and the need for the strengthening of the U.S.S.R. Finally, here was a nationalist. Although a Georgian, Stalin was far more Russian than the revolutionary Bolshevik clique which had spent the greater part of its active career amidst the emigré flotsam in Western Europe. It was perhaps because of this that Stalin never really regarded the Russian revolution as merely a starting point for a European revolution, and that he had little compunction in purging the mass of the first generation Bolsheviks whom he had joined but never understood.

Thus the Marxist deviations started under Lenin were deepened and extended rather than corrected during the Stalin era, while at the same time the insistence upon the verbal adherence to the ideology was intensified.

The 1936 Constitution was a legal, constitutional form of the emphasis on the myth. For it proclaimed the establishment of social-

ism, of a one-class society, and, while describing the unique position of the Communist Party, it still insisted that supreme power in the State lay with the Supreme Soviet.

However, we have not written off these claims as groundless in every respect. If the U.S.S.R. is not socialist in the political and moral sense, there are good reasons for asserting it to be so in the economic sense, and the socialisation of the economy is certainly producing material results which have tended to vindicate centralised planning. Secondly, although the U.S.S.R. has not yet achieved a classless society and new forces are emerging which may yet militate against such an evolution, there is, nevertheless, in Soviet society a high degree of vertical mobility and a lack of rigid stratification, the only parallel to which in the West may have been in the U.S.A. in the second half of the nineteenth century. The tremendous development of education and literacy is aimed at producing technical skill at all levels to facilitate the management of a dynamic State in a technological era, and a reward of special educational and professional achievements in the U.S.S.R. has been an increase in the standards of living and of social status. In such circumstances a society as stratified as those in the West has not yet developed and may possibly be avoided if democracy in the U.S.S.R. can be resuscitated.

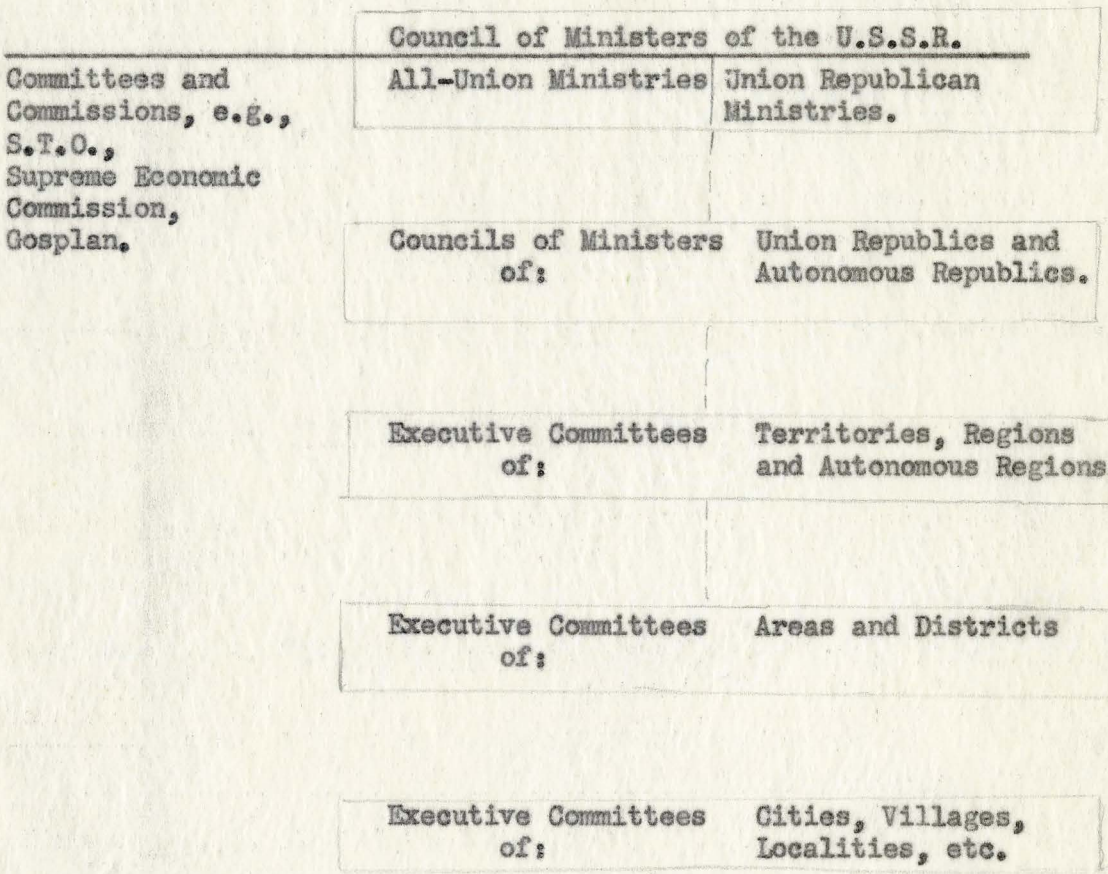
In other respects, however, the Soviet scene belies the Constitution which should describe it, principally in the fact that democracy has atrophied and that the intended democratic institutions, the Soviets, are not a source of power in the State.

The Party is the central feature of Soviet life. As the only avenue to personal promotion, the arbiter of national policy in all its aspects, the monitor of all facets of life, and the repository of Marxist truths, the Communist Party dominates the U.S.S.R. to a degree which is unparalleled in the West.

If any democratic trend is to appear in the U.S.S.R., it must first appear within the Party, and, indeed, the current concept of collective leadership may be an uneasy experiment in this direction. Should this tendency continue, the central question of the evolution of the U.S.S.R. will be the flexibility of its political system.

Appendix A.

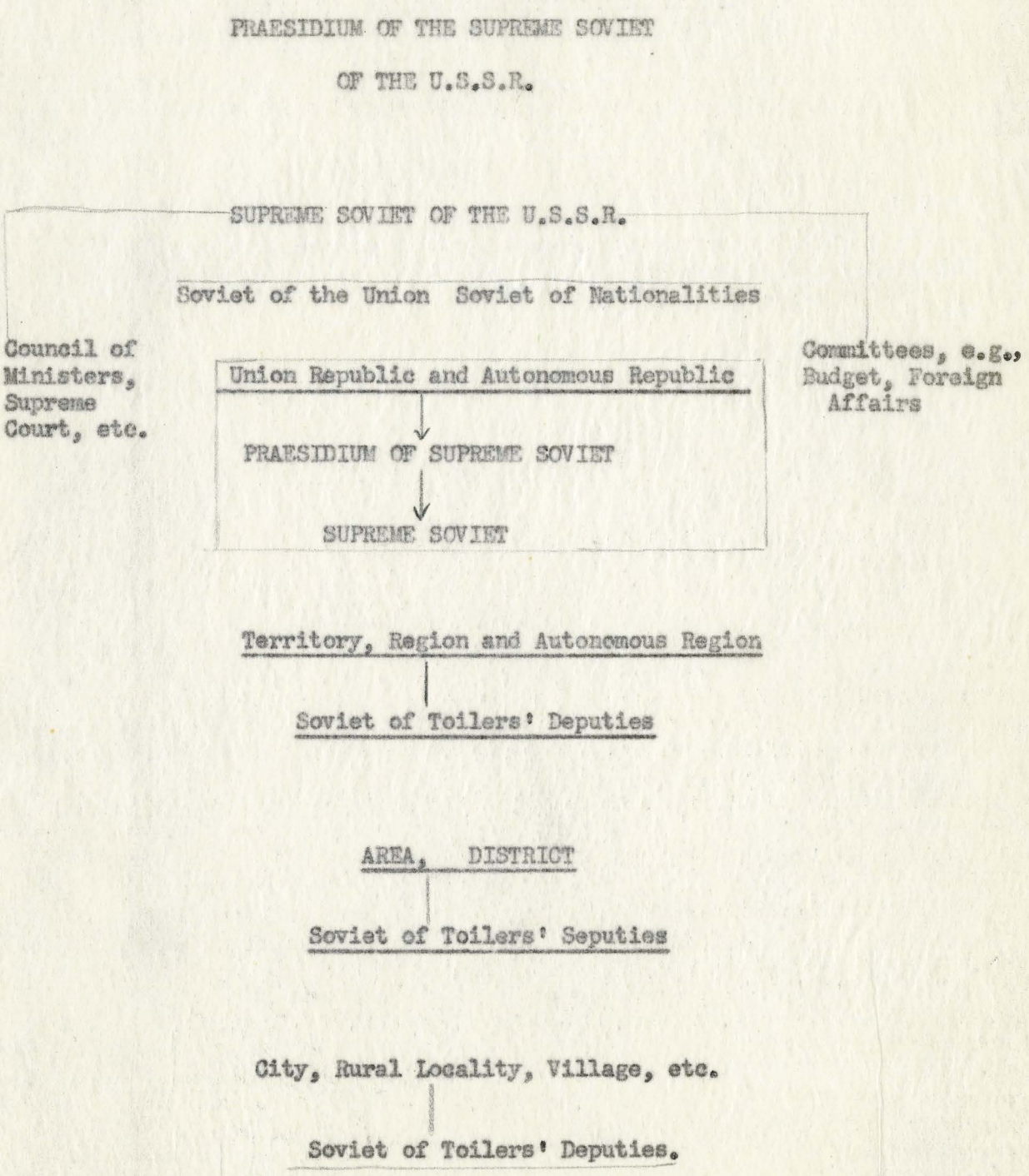
The Administrative Structure of the U.S.S.R.



Based on J. Towster, Political Power in the U.S.S.R., p. 415.

Appendix B.

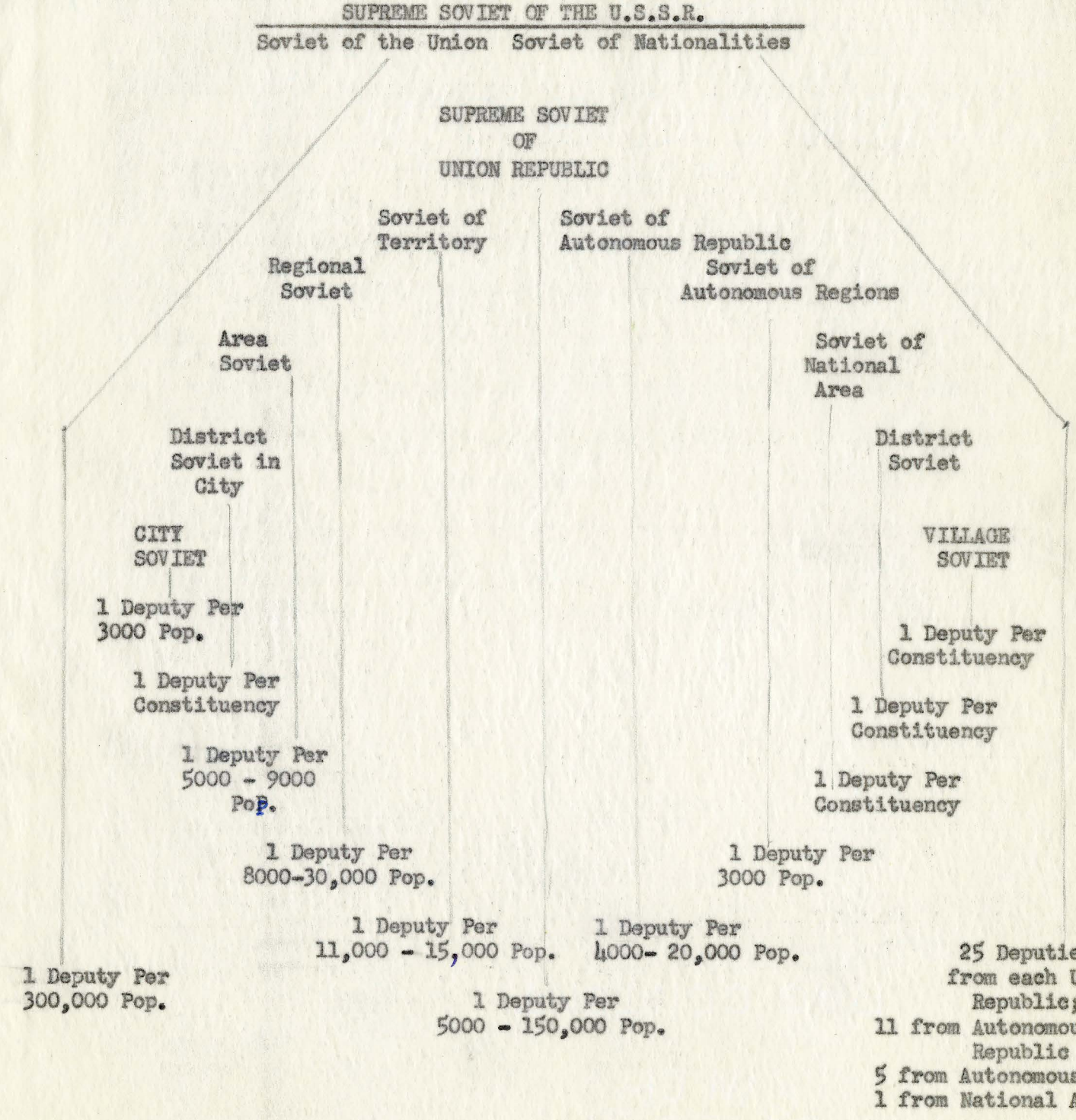
The Structure of the Soviets in the U.S.S.R.



Based on J. Towster, op. cit., p. 415, and V. Karpinsky, The Social and State Structure of the U.S.S.R., p. 120.

Appendix C.

Electoral System of the U.S.S.R.



Based on V. Karpinsky, op. cit., p. 140.

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The discussion of the topic of this thesis has been considerably facilitated by the increased attention paid to the U.S.S.R. by Western observers since 1945. This attention appears to have been largely motivated by the serious challenge posed by Communism to Western Democracy, a challenge somewhat abruptly recognised when Soviet military strength became obvious.

This point is emphasised not only by the plethora of literature on Soviet institutions which has been published since the end of the Second World War, but also by the significant absence of comprehensive and definitive studies of the Soviet State prior to 1939.

As indicated, this deficiency is now being rapidly corrected, although one must observe that, in some cases, the motivation for the work has affected its objectivity.

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