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"Unite the Left":
Contextualizing Bukharin's *ABC of Communism* and Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University

by
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Richmond, Virginia
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Special thanks then go to the people who facilitated my first trip to Russia in 2009, Jaki and Igor. The countless Russians who patiently repeated themselves while I tried to follow along conversations in the early stages of learning the language deserve credit as well.

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Thank you to Dr. Joseph Bendersky for reminding me that I "should be neither a prosecutor nor a defense attorney" in this work. I have attempted where possible to balance multiple interpretations, and to take these figures from the past on their own terms.

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Thank you to Stephen F. Cohen for your inspiration.

Notes on Transliteration and Typography

As with any English-language work on Russian topics, certain care goes into rendering Russian names, titles, and sources in a comprehensible manner. I have followed the several norms that exist in the field as of today, which include substituting the standard transliteration practices with commonly known English names (Trotsky for Trotskii or Ilyich for Il'ich). Otherwise, I preserve the Library of Congress system for lesser-known figures like Krupskaia (over Krupskaya) or Preobrazhenskii (over Preobrazhensky.)

On typography, I make careful use of capitalization on several key terms. Both the Marxists and Anarchists spoke of a coming Revolution, which I capitalize as a proper noun to reflect its very real imminent existence in their minds, whereas Miliukov's sense in the early 1900s that revolution in the abstract was in the air stays lowercase. The State refers to Marxist and Anarchist conceptions of same, whereas a lowercase state engages in diplomacy. I treat endonyms like Socialist and Anarchist as proper nouns, and Socialism and Anarchism as distinct philosophies; socialized medicine or anarchic modes of production remain lowercase. Alexander Berkman capitalizes the People, and I have adopted this in my own prose for both Socialist and Anarchist thoughts on the exalted masses. In some cases, I capitalize Capital as well when it is being treated as a proper noun in both Socialist and Marxist analyses. This extends for the most part to quotations, especially translations from Russian which rarely include capitals of key terms (whereas Berkman, probably due to a knowledge of German, regularly capitalizes key terms.) Finally, I have changed the spelling of British English words in quotations to conform to American English standards (standardize in place of standardise)

Abstract

In 1919, Nikolai Bukharin, the leading theoretician of the Bolshevik Party, published a manual entitled *The ABC of Communism* meant to put the governing ideology of the newly formed Soviet State into eminently readable terms. Alexander Berkman, a Russian Anarchist who strongly supported the October Revolution, became disillusioned with the new regime in 1921 and left the country. He later published his own tract entitled *The ABC of Anarchism*. This thesis pits these two theoretical works against each other as historical documents embodying the nature of leftist polemics that has characterized the movement since the dissolution of the First International. Both Bukharin's and Berkman's books engage in polemical self-definition by means of defining the other. By emphasizing Bukharin's contributions to Bolshevism, this paper rescues the nature of the Bolshevik Party as a group of thinkers with wide-ranging beliefs in contrast to the historiographical trends that continue to emphasize Lenin as the only important figure in the party. I translate and analyze under-utilized articles that Bukharin published in New York from 1916-1917, and in Moscow in 1917 before the Revolution. In looking at Berkman's critiques of Bolshevism in practice, the historiography of the Russian Revolution is enriched with analyses of the Party from the left, where it usually emphasizes criticism from the right. No major historiography exists on Berkman, and thus I typify his thought by reconciling his letters with his published works. The tension in both Bukharin and Berkman in matching theory and practice is also a major component of this work and has its roots in the original splits of the Russian *narodnik* movement on the need for a vanguard.

Introduction

In 1919 the Bolsheviks held the VIII Party Congress which, among other items like founding the Comintern, adopted the first new Party Program since 1903. As a means of making the Program more accessible to all Russian society – the majority of whom had only recently become semi-literate – Nikolai Bukharin co-authored with Evgenii Preobrazhenskii a primer on Bolshevism aptly entitled the *ABC of Communism*. Though the dreams of a future society as envisioned in this *ABC* were never realized in the Soviet Union, this historical document serves as the most widely read exposition of Marxism as understood by the Bolsheviks at the time of the October Revolution. The *ABC of Communism* has been widely ignored in the scholarly literature, which removes a necessary benchmark against which to measure early Bolshevik practice. The *ABC* only appears in passing in histories of the early Soviet period or in the few biographies of Bukharin himself.

That the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) split in 1903 into the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks is well established as are the chronicled debates between the two factions in the revolutionary months of 1917 and the first years of Soviet rule. Eventually, the Mensheviks in exile helped to shape Western historiography of the Soviet Union, as pointed out by Frederick Corney in a 2004 review of compiled Menshevik Internationalist documents. Mensheviks of course had a considerable axe to grind in their criticisms of the Soviet State, and Corney suggests that historians should view their writings as "intense…partisan arguments over the nature and direction of the new political and social order." This is only natural because, like the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks were engaged in an "extended effort at *self-definition* in a time of intense political, social, and ideological upheaval." Their "every word," Corney writes, was "required to be an active argument in this

battle." Thus, "defining oneself" also required "defining the other" as an antithetical ideological opponent.[1]

Corney also published an annotated analysis of the 1924 "literary debate" within the Bolshevik Party entitled *Trotsky's Challenge*. Trotsky had published a piece called "The Lessons of October" in which he explained everything the Bolsheviks had done wrong before the Revolution and took credit for everything that had gone right in October. Having only joined the Bolshevik Party in the summer of 1917, the Old Bolsheviks took understandable umbrage with Trotsky's assertions and unleashed venomous articles throughout the year criticizing Trotsky himself and the newly minted specter of "Trotskyism" within the Party. Corney describes the emerging "counter-narrative" as "profoundly shaped – indeed defined – by Trotsky's narrative." Corney also notes that the tendency for infighting and the quest for the "correct" ideological position had characterized all of Russia's left groups since roughly 1907, in the wake of the failed 1905 Revolution.[2]

Apart from the Mensheviks, other groups quarreled with the Bolsheviks in the decisive months of 1917. To the right, there were the Right faction of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the centrist bourgeois parties like the Kadets and Octobrists, and monarchist or far-right groups like the Black Hundreds. In October, the Bolsheviks forged a tenuous alliance with other far-left parties like the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the Menshevik-Internationalist faction, and the Anarchists. Though devoid of a centralized leadership or hierarchy, we can point out that the most prominent Anarchist in Russia was

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[1] Frederick C. Corney, "Party History – What It Is and Is Not," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 1 (2004): 207-17.

[2] Frederick C. Corney, "Anatomy of a Polemic," introduction to *Trotsky's Challenge*, ed. Frederick C. Corney (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 17, 37. Failed in that no Social Revolution took place, and the Duma was very quickly sidelined by Nicholas II.

Prince Peter Kropotkin, and that various other Anarchists of some renown like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman played roles in the early Soviet years as well. By the end of the Civil War, the Anarchists became disillusioned with Bolshevism in practice, due in no small part to the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising in March 1921. Kropotkin had also died a month prior, and his public funeral served as the last authorized gathering of Anarchists in the new Soviet State. Goldman and Berkman fled shortly thereafter and engaged in several polemics with the Bolsheviks over their policies, but ultimately gained no serious ground in either the Soviet Union or in the Western historiography.

Throughout the 1920s, Alexander Berkman spent considerable time criticizing the Bolsheviks, to more prominence than any other Anarchist of the time. Berkman first published three pamphlets with Berlin's *Der Syndikalist* which were then immediately compiled into a volume in America entitled *The Russian Tragedy* where he chronicled the failures of Bolshevism, especially the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, Kronstadt, and the turn to NEP. He then published an edited form of his diary kept while in Soviet Russia as *The Bolshevik Myth*. Finally, and most importantly, Berkman wrote his own primer on Anarchist philosophy which he called the *ABC of Anarchism*. He makes no specific reference to this work as a play on Bukharin's *ABC of Communism*, but he repeatedly singles out Bukharin's shrewd nature in his critiques of Bolshevism, and the choice of title certainly came as no coincidence. In this sense, the way that the Mensheviks exerted some influence on how to understand the Revolution in the West, Berkman wrote the most authoritative works towards an Anarchist critique of Bolshevism.

This thesis pits Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* against Bukharin's *ABC of Communism* in their respective contexts. I especially follow on Corney's discussions by noting the

polemical nature of each author's self-definition by defining "the other." Bukharin's opponents at the time were the reformist wings of the European Social Democratic parties who had hoped to guide their countries to socialism via parliamentary means, most notably Karl Kautsky, as well as the gradualist Mensheviks in Russia like Irakli Tsereteli. On the other side, Bukharin also criticized the Anarchist position for their unwillingness to take decisive action in achieving their goals. Berkman's primary opponent was the Bolshevik Party with their new Soviet State, and he devoted considerable space to criticizing Bolshevism in practice to set Anarchism apart as a greater Revolutionary theory. Obviously, both Bukharin and Berkman strongly criticized the capitalist order and capitalist States, but their proposals for achieving capitalism's demise slightly differed – a point that permeates both texts and serves as a major crux for their theoretical disagreements.

Sheila Fitzpatrick provides an additional lens through which to analyze these texts in an essay coincidentally from the same issue of *Kritika* as Corney's article on Menshevik self-definition. Fitzpatrick suggests that historians took too many Soviet declarations at face value, and that "anyone paying attention" would find discrepancies between words and deeds. For example, the Party announced an end to factions at the X Party Congress in 1921, yet even before the succession struggle after Lenin's death, the period was rife with squabbles between Party members. Fitzpatrick concludes that historians must examine this tension between practice and theory in their research.[3] In this case I take the *ABC of Communism* at face value as genuine *ambition* and use Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* as a reckoning of subsequent Soviet practices. This approach is not without flaws

[3] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 1 (2004): 27-54.

in its narrowness, but criticism of the Soviet Union from the right is exhaustive in the historiography, while few works use the Anarchist lens to examine the discrepancies Fitzpatrick calls our attention to.

The tension between theory and practice is thus another central point of this analysis. The Bolsheviks only had theory until October of 1917, and statecraft in practice forced modifications to these abstractions. At the same time, they did carry out a Revolution in practice which gave them considerable credibility in the eyes of Berkman and the Anarchists, who initially defended Lenin and Trotsky against all detractors; his infatuation with the idea of Revolution led him to publicly disregard any theoretical criticism of Bolshevik ideology. Only after he decided that the Bolsheviks had betrayed the Revolution in practice with their actions in the early 1920s did Berkman bring problems of theory to the fore, prompting the writing of his *ABC of Anarchism*.

I begin with a background on Bukharin as a unique theorist within the Bolshevik Party. This sets the stage for his unique voice that permeates the *ABC of Communism* and re-revises the historiography of the Bolshevik Party away from its classification as a clique supremely loyal to Lenin. Then, I describe Berkman's ideology and tension between theory and practice in the early Soviet years as it relates to the original split among the *narodniks* in the nineteenth century over whether or not the People needed a vanguard to guide them to liberation. Finally, the two texts in question are presented in their respective contexts with a comparative analysis of their historical theories and goals for the future society. Were they really as different as their authors suggested?

In Chapter 1's analysis of Nikolai Bukharin, we must also cover Marxist theory and the general guiding principles of Bolshevism leading up to October. The bulk of the chapter

looks at Bukharin's previously under-utilized writing in New York from November 1916 to April 1917. Bukharin had by that point pre-empted Lenin's famous study of imperialism, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, with a tract of his own (*Imperialism and the World Economy*) and had subsequently presented ideas on the nature of the capitalist State with the conclusion that smashing the State entirely provided the only way forward – an idea which Lenin refused to publish on the grounds that it was "semi-Anarchist" in nature and incorrect in its reading of Marx. Bukharin defiantly published these ideas in New York in a predominantly Menshevik newspaper, which illustrates the oft-overlooked aspect of the pre-Stalin Party, in that there was no unified, tightly knit organization. This chapter thus serves the dual purpose of returning to the concept of a de-centralized Bolshevik Party; and to typify the unique traits of Bukharin's thought at its apex before his return to Russia under the influence of a fast-moving Revolutionary movement, which adds to the historiography of his intellectual development. Bukharin's main biographer Stephen Cohen devotes only a few pages to his subject's time in New York and laments that he "did not explore adequately" this period.[4] I also briefly explore the major differences in Bukharin's work on the State with Lenin's later work *State and Revolution* as functions of different contexts at their respective times of writing. Once Bukharin returned to Russia, his writing became intensely partisan in nature, polemicizing against the Mensheviks in their views on the Provisional Government and the timing of a Socialist Revolution.

Chapter 2 focuses on Alexander Berkman and Anarchist ideology. Though Bakunin and Proudhon might have been the "first" Anarchists, Berkman most closely modeled his

[4] Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).; Stephen F. Cohen, e-mail message to author, December 13, 2019.

thinking on the Russian *narodniks* like his uncle Maxim Natanson or Peter Kropotkin, both of whom were members of the infamous Chaikovskii Circle at St. Petersburg University in the 1870s. The tension between the methods of these two *narodniks* had a profound impact on Berkman since Natanson was a vanguardist committed to Revolutionary action whereas Kropotkin believed in the good nature of the People to bring about the Revolution on their own from the bottom up. Berkman idolized both men and struggled to synthesize these two views on Revolution, eventually favoring Kropotkin after his attempt at Revolutionary action in America bore no fruit, and upon becoming disillusioned with Bolshevik vanguardism in practice. The bulk of this chapter looks at how Berkman's experience once back in Russia solidified his need to codify an appropriate theory to combat Bolshevism, due to the failings of Soviet practice and Kropotkin's deathbed lamentation that no such theory existed.

The final chapter directly compares Bukharin's *ABC of Communism* with Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* as historical documents in leftist polemics. Bukharin's work, though an exposition of Party ideology commissioned by Lenin, retains his own unique voice and especially his anti-Statist views. Writing in 1919, Bukharin also spends time criticizing those who had not supported the Bolshevik victory in October like the Mensheviks and the European "jingo-socialists." Berkman intended his manual to be a reexamination of "Bakunin, Kropotkin, and others" in direct "view of the Russian Revolution" and particularly the "Bolshevik regime," though he also criticizes Mensheviks and European Socialists for their failings.[5] In other words, both works engage in self-definition by defining the other.

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[5] Quoted in Paul Avrich and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 340.

Historiography

If Bukharin has been rendered a shadow of the Russian Revolution eclipsed by Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin; then Berkman is a ghost, completely absent from any analyses that explore the failings of the early 1920s. That two such important figures have remained outside the historiography of the Revolution requires looking at how scholars have characterized the era and other personages to highlight appropriate lacunae and how inclusion of Bukharin and Berkman might enrich the field.

John Reed's eyewitness account of the Revolution features Bukharin in passing, as a fellow train passenger who he hears is "more left than Lenin" and a speaker who the audience listened to "with shining eyes." Reed makes no mention of Anarchists.[6] William Chamberlin's two-volume work mentions Bukharin once as "a fiery popular orator and a leading theoretician," and briefly discusses the Ukrainian semi-Anarchist guerrillas led by Nestor Makhno, but not Anarchist theories or criticisms of Bolshevism from the left.[7] Trotsky adjusts these glowing assessments of Bukharin by oversimplifying Lenin's Testament, in which the Bolshevik leader suggested that Bukharin never really understood dialectics, to call him a "gifted but unreliable theoretician."[8] Trotsky also slams Kropotkin as being in

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[6] John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), 267, 272.

[7] William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution: 1917-1921* (New York: MacMillan, 1935), ii: 360, 236. Ernest Mandel calls Chamberlin's work "the most objective history of the Russian Revolution written by a non-socialist," Ernest Mandel, "Coup d'etat or Social Revolution?" in Fred Leplat and Alex de Jong, eds. *October 1917: Workers in Power* (London: Resistance Books/IIRE, 2016), 59.

[8] Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 368. Volkogonov provides the text of Lenin's Testament in full detail and provides a few pages of biography on Bukharin which corroborate the findings noted above but reveal nothing new. Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography*, trans. Harold Shukman (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 289.

league with the likes of "landlords, industrialists, and generals" for supporting the war in 1914, but does not dwell any further on Anarchism and its role in the Revolution.[9]

After the first generation of eyewitness accounts like these, it seems that the story had been told in its entirety, with Bukharin as a far-left theoretician and the Anarchists as half-hearted idealists or unphilosophical guerrillas who failed to overthrow the new Bolshevik regime. Stalin's *Short Course* in 1938 became the opposing view to Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* and historians would generally follow the timelines and important events of these two works and attempt to refute one or the other based on their own ideological dispositions. Ronald Grigor Suny exhaustively catalogues the historiography of the Revolution and the Soviet period at large, which is a story more of how theoretical frameworks changed than did the hard facts of the matter. Suny notes that until the onset of the Cold War, Chamberlin and Trotsky remained the standard fare, at which point Government funded studies in the west led to the so-called totalitarian model, which had its Marxist critics; before giving way to the revisionist school of possible alternatives to Stalin, which in turn had critics from the right that simply did not believe Marxism was a tenable governing ideology regardless of who sat in the Kremlin.[10]

For this analysis I will focus on three major accounts of the Revolution from the right: Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Russian Revolution*, Rex Wade's *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, and

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[9] Trotsky, *History*, 166. In his autobiography, Trotsky notes that Anarchist thought left him with the impression of "a theory very sweeping in its verbal negations, but lifeless and cowardly in its practical conclusions." Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 129.

[10] Ronald Grigor Suny, "Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century: How the 'West' Wrote its History of the USSR," in Ronald Grigor Suny, *Red Flag Unfurled* (London: Verso Books, 2017), 53-122. The totalitarian group is typified by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Adam B. Ulam, and Hannah Arendt; the Marxist response by E. H. Carr and Isaac Deutscher, the latter also a proponent of alternatives like Trotsky; Stephen Cohen advocates for the Bukharin alternative, Moshe Lewin not for one specific alternative but for a sympathetic social-historical approach; and the hardline anti-revisionists include Martin Malia and Richard Pipes.

Orlando Figes's *A People's Tragedy*. Fitzpatrick expresses considerable hostility to the Bolsheviks, the impetus evident in her prioritization of George Orwell's *1984*, a work of fiction loosely based on Stalinism, ahead of actual histories in her historiographical introduction. She argues the so-called "continuity thesis" which purports that Lenin inherently laid the groundwork for Stalinism with his authoritarian tendencies – tendencies that even violated what she suggests should have been "orthodox Marxism."[11] Wade strikes the most balanced tone of the three and argues that October was "neither a simple manipulation by cynical Bolsheviks of ignorant masses nor the carefully planned and executed seizure of power under Lenin's omniscient direction," though he laments that the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly in January of 1918 ended any prospect for western-style democracy in Russia.[12] Bukharin is again on the sidelines of these works, and the Anarchist position remains unacknowledged. Figes's account is important for being one of the first large works based on newly available archival material in the 1990s, however his hard bias is evident in the book's title, and the social history approach leaves his political analysis severely lacking. As the most extreme example, he makes the patently ridiculous assertion that aside from Lenin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev "all the other leading Bolsheviks were political midgets," which even despite his massive archival access, one might excuse him for leaving out Bukharin; but to also exclude Trotsky from this list is a glaring omission.[13]

In addition to these works specifically on the Revolution itself, two books on the entirety of the Soviet period provide excellent analyses of the Revolutionary era and

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[11] The Mensheviks apparently carried the torch of "orthodox Marxism," Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30. David Shub also notes that the unique "Leninist heritage" continuously separated the Communists (Bolsheviks in power) from the "democratic Socialists" of other European countries. David Shub, *Lenin: A Biography* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1967), 9.
[12] Rex Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), x, 298.
[13] Orland Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Viking Books, 1997), 391.

perfectly complement each other. Peter Kenez, a Hungarian émigré who participated in the 1956 revolt against the Soviet Union, writes from an oppositional standpoint. Kenez gives a fair reading of Marx, he no doubt had imbibed the doctrine in his school days in Communist Hungary, but criticizes the system on the whole for lacking a "market incentive" for which he blames most Soviet failures. Kenez gives considerable space to Bukharin in the early years of Soviet Power, and especially remarks on the "reversal" from being an advocate of War Communism to a defender of NEP.[14] Ronald Grigor Suny writes from an avowed Marxist perspective, though he maintains a critical eye in assessing the Soviet Union. Bukharin's reversal is covered under the writer's proficiency with the dialectical method, which acknowledges that changing circumstances required ideological adaptations.[15] Again, neither of these two authors focus on Anarchists to any extent.

Outside of the Anglosphere, Boris Kolonitskii writes that "paradoxically" in Russia since the full opening of archives in 1991, "much less work has been done on the history of the Revolution" than expected, probably because studying it has no relevance for modern Russian reality. Kolonitskii echoes Suny's analysis of Western historiography in writing that the story has basically already been told along the various ideological lines, that "no subsequent historians" have had significant influence since the "founding fathers" of the historiography like Trotsky or the anti-Communists who, while "fervently rejecting the conclusions" of Stalin's *Short Course*, also "reproduced the very structure of its narrative while reversing its evaluations."[16] German historiography after 1945 had the odd problem

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[14] Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union: From the Beginning to its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[15] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[16] Boris Kolonitskii and Yisrael Elliot Cohen, "Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution: New Challenges to Old Paradigms?" *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (2009): 34, 35.

of dealing with the DDR on the one hand, and steering clear of the Nazi anti-Bolshevik views on the other, and thus focused almost entirely on social and cultural history.[17] The most important of the non-English historiographies is the Chinese, which was seemingly unexplored in the West until 2018, and in some ways underemphasized in China itself. In 2013 the People's Publishing House began releasing a series of volumes on the Russian Revolution with an especial focus on NEP, as "the policies of the 1920s have long been seen as important reference points for nation building." The Chinese also began moving away from using the *Short Course* as a guidebook in favor of original historical research. Due especially to the language barrier, Chinese scholars have "little familiarity with the achievements of their Western counterparts," which may be a blessing as new discoveries are made without having to contend with the various historiographical strains noted above.[18]

With some cynicism, Donald J. Raleigh expected 2017 to usher in a slew of centennial works with nothing new to be discovered, but he nonetheless hoped for more analyses of the Civil War and an expansion of the Revolutionary period to 1921 or 1924.[19] George Gilbert concurs that "structural and conceptual innovation," or a geographical expansion especially to the Revolution in the Far East, might have enriched the historiography, but laments that the centenary "presented an opportunity for public commemoration that was not fully grasped." He notes especially that Lenin was "but only one" member of the Central Committee, and that the political history might be expanded to include other characters. The

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[17] Matthias Stadelmann, "The Russian Revolution in German Historiography After 1945," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 58, no. 1/2 (2017): 57-78.
[18] Zhou Jiaying and Zhang Guangxiang, "Chinese Scholars on Revolutionary Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 19, no. 3 (2018): 671, 680-81.
[19] Donald J. Raleigh, "The Russian Revolution After All These 100 Years," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015): 787-797.

only recent work to do this, which he notes, is Barbara Allen's work on Alexander Shliapnikov published through Haymarket.[20]

The most distressing of the recent historiographical trends is that the centenary works published by leftist presses have doubled down on focusing on Lenin and Trotsky, and almost completely exclude Bukharin and other Old Bolsheviks beyond what was seen in the less sympathetic works noted above. Neil Faulkner essentially restates the arguments of Trotsky's history in *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*, and notes that "Lenin was the political genius who built and led the Bolshevik Party," while Trotsky "was the genius who led the Petrograd Soviet at its decisive hour," while Bukharin was simply one of Stalin's victims in 1938.[21] Science fiction novelist China Miéville's *October* provides a vivid month-by-month retelling of 1917 that would certainly delight any younger reader sympathetic to Marxism, however he mentions Bukharin exactly once, again as a victim of Stalin in 1938.[22] Paul Le Blanc's *October Song* tell the story of Lenin in ways that emphasize the democratic nature of the Bolshevik takeover in an attempt to deemphasize the "continuity thesis," but keeps Bukharin only as a recurring sidekick to Lenin.[23] The best of these recent works is Tariq Ali's *The Dilemmas of Lenin* which provides the strongest overall historical analysis of the European Social-Democratic movement and the Russian *narodniks*, both of which profoundly shaped his protagonist. While Ali similarly excludes Bukharin at many turns, he does include more about the Anarchists than any of these other partisan Marxist writers. For

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[20] George Gilbert, "'New' Histories of the Russian Revolution?" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 21, no. 1 (2020): 159-172; Barbara Allen, *Alexander Shlyapnikov, 1885-1937: Life of an Old Bolshevik* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).
[21] Neil Faulkner, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 192.
[22] China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (London: Verso Books, 2017), 315.
[23] Paul Le Blanc, *October Song: Bolshevik Triumph, Communist Tragedy, 1917-1924* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

example, he notes that in the years leading to 1917, Anarchists and homegrown *narodniks* like Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, or Sergei Nechaev had more popularity in Russia than Marx or Engels.[24] There is a certain irony that modern leftists inadvertently echo the Cold Warriors' characterization of Bolshevism as a highly centralized dictatorial party where only Lenin mattered. I intend to intervene in this side of the field where such glaring omissions have been made, where opportunities for democratizing Bolshevism in a centenary year were ignored, and to generally move the discussion forward rather than to re-engage with Cold War narratives.

Nikolai Bukharin in the Historiography

On the one hand, Bukharin's absence from any retelling of the Revolutionary months of 1917 and the October seizure makes complete sense as he was in Moscow while all the action occurred in Petrograd. However, the few Western works on Bukharin focus more on his post-Revolutionary years than on his intellectual formation prior to 1917, or on his writing of the *ABC of Communism* once the Bolsheviks consolidated power. Sidney Heitman laid the groundwork for Anglophone studies of Bukharin in the 1960s by compiling a bibliography of Bukharin's writings and introducing the first new English edition of the *ABC of Communism* since it had previously been banned.[25] He also wrote prefatory remarks to a new collection of Bukharin's works published in Russian outside of the Soviet Union where he noted that Bukharin "exerted a far greater impact" on the history of Bolshevism "than is

[24] Tariq Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin: Terrorism, War, Empire, Love, Revolution* (London: Verso Books, 2017), 36.
[25] Sidney Heitman, *Nikolai I. Bukharin: A Bibliography, With Annotations, Including the Locations of his Works in Major American and European Libraries* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace for Stanford University Press, 1969); Sidney Heitman, introduction to Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, *The ABC of Communism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1966).

generally recognized in the West or officially acknowledged in the Communist bloc of states."[26]

After Heitman's work, Stephen Cohen broke considerable ground in 1973 by authoring the cornerstone biography of Bukharin, which provides the most detail on Bukharin's life and theoretical achievements to this day. Cohen especially dealt with Bukharin's later years as a proponent of NEP and gradual development of Socialism. He thus promoted Bukharin as a potential alternative to Stalin, which garnered him considerable fanfare within the Soviet Union in the 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev was implementing *perestroika*.[27] Subsequent works by Donny Gluckstein, Nicholas Kozlov and Eric Weitz, and Roy Medvedev focus almost entirely on his plight in the later 1920s and 1930s between his exile from the party, his arrest and prison sentence, and eventual execution.[28]

Scholars in the Communist world expanded on Cohen's work due to having greater access to sources, especially during *glasnost*. In the early 1980s Miklós Kun, grandson of the Hungarian Communist leader Bela Kun, began work on *Bukharin: His Friends and Enemies*, which goes into such a level of detail on other Bolsheviks and their interactions with Bukharin that the Russian translator of the book calls it "not just a biography, but the story of an era;" but he includes little on hard theory or the *ABC of Communism* in particular.[29] On June 21, 1988, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow hosted a conference on

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[26] Sidney Heitman, introduction to Nikolai Bukharin, *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii* (*The Road to Socialism in Russia*) (New York: Omicron Books, 1967), 33.
[27] Cohen, *Bukharin*.
[28] Roy A. Medvedev, *Nikolai Bukharin: The Last Years* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1980); Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, *Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin: A Centenary Appraisal* (New York: Praeger, 1990); and Donny Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin* (London: Pluto Press, 1994). Gluckstein goes the deepest into hard theory and criticizes Bukharin from an avowedly Trotskyist perspective.
[29] Iurii Fel'shtinskii, "Nekotorye slov ob avtore i ego knige (A Few Words on the Author and His Book)," in Miklós Kun, *Bukharin: Ego Druz'ia i Vragi* (*Bukharin: His Friends and Enemies*) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Respublika, 1992), 468.

Bukharin, collecting the essays into a volume entitled *Bukharin: Man, Politician, Scholar*. Interestingly, these analyses still required a deference to Lenin: Bukharin's disagreements with Lenin are categorized as "mistakes" and Bukharin's overall intellectual development "was a move towards Lenin."[30] Ignat Gorelov's biography of Bukharin from that same year also describes Bukharin's position in the early 1920s as a "mistaken line," while G. L. Smirnov, introducing a 1989 collection of the rehabilitated Bukharin's works, insists that Bukharin had primarily written "justification and advocacy for the Leninist understanding" of the transition from capitalism to Socialism, obviating any of Bukharin's independence.[31]

Chinese Communists, upon splitting from the Soviet Union's official line, brought Bukharin back into their thinking in the late 1970s to examine potential alternatives to Stalinism – as Cohen had suggested be done with his book. Cohen's work was translated into Chinese in 1982, as well as a new translation of the *ABC of Communism* and a three-volume collection of Bukharin's other works, the most important of which being those regarding NEP that eventually set the stage for Deng Xiaoping's reforms.[32]

Historiography specifically on Bukharin's *ABC of Communism* is thus extremely sparse. The book was republished into two editions in English, along with other works by Bukharin, in the 1960s. As noted above, Heitman introduced one and remarked that "no one who read it could remain unmoved or indifferent to it." For Communists, it was the new *Communist Manifesto*, their "bible;" for opponents, it was to incite the greatest fear.[33] The British Marxist

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[30] G. L. Smirnov, introduction to V. V. Zhuravleva, and A. N. Solopov, eds., *Bukharin: Chelovek, Politik, Uchenyi* (*Bukharin: Man, Politician, Scholar*) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1990), 4.
[31] Ignat Efimovich Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin* (Moscow: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1988), 41, 67; G. L. Smirnov, introduction to *N.I. Bukharin: Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma* (*N.I. Bukharin: Problems in the Theory and Practice of Socialism*) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1989), 3.
[32] James D. White, "Chinese Studies of Bukharin," *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 4 (1991): 733-747.
[33] Heitman, introduction to *The ABC of Communism*, unpaginated.

E. H. Carr introduced the other edition, providing a considerably longer exposition of the Party situation around the VIII Congress, and the textbook's "utopian" vision that he claims was nullified by NEP.[34] These later received reviews by Stephen Cohen, who points out that the *ABC* represented a "vivid sense of Bolshevik thinking" in the early years, and its continued reprint a "testimony" to its importance as a historical document and a chapter "in the history of Marxist ideas."[35] Aside from Cohen's reviews and these two introductions, there exist only two full-length articles which discuss the *ABC* in any detail, and neither focuses on how it encapsulates Bolshevik thought in general, or Bukharin's positions in particular.

Lars Lih in 1997 sought to revise previous discussions on the *ABC of Communism*, which he felt had obscured the meaning of the text beyond recognition through its appearances on the sidelines of various histories of the Russian Revolution. Lih identifies three main problems with prevailing interpretations of the *ABC*, and thoroughly criticizes each. First, there existed a belief that the manual came as a response to the stress of the civil war, but his analysis shows that it concords greatly with the European Social Democratic tradition of the time, in many ways more closely echoing the pre-war Karl Kautsky than even Lenin, so the "stress" of the war could not have played any major factor. Second, regarding the belief that the *ABC* was meant to chronicle actual Soviet policy at the time, Lih points out the litany of excuses to be found in the narrative for why the Bolsheviks had not yet been

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[34] Edward Hallett Carr, introduction to Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, *The ABC of Communism* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969).

[35] Stephen F. Cohen, "The *ABC of Communism* by N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky; The *ABC of Communism* by N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky; *Imperialism and World Economy* by Nikolai Bukharin; *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* by Nikolai Bukharin," *The American Political Science Review* 69, no. 4 (1975): 1421-1423.

able to implement their ideal program, suggesting the *ABC* was always meant to be statement of vision, not a documentation of the present. Finally, the more cynical scholars had suggested that the *ABC* served as a post hoc justification for the coercive emergency measures of War Communism, and that it laid the foundation for Stalin's later collectivization policies. Lih suggests that a better focus within the manual would be the "unquestioned assumption that Socialist methods" would be universally understood as superior, and that the document further exacerbated class hatred in Russia. In closing, Lih asks how the "exciting new archival finds" of the 1990s could be properly interpreted "if we do not have a secure understanding of the doctrinal basis of the Soviet system?"[36] Unfortunately for Lih, as noted above, no "exciting new archival finds" seemed to care one way or the other about the baseline Soviet doctrine or its chief proponent Nikolai Bukharin.

Sheila Fitzpatrick, who came under Lih's scrutiny above, addresses some of his concerns in "The *ABC of Communism* Revisited," but her piece focuses more on Preobrazhenskii's contributions to theories of education than Bukharin's theories of how society ought to order itself scientifically. She especially discusses how Preobrazhenskii stood at odds with Nadezhda Krupskaia, Lenin's widow who was deputy education commissar in the late 1920s.[37]

Alexander Berkman in the Historiography

While no proper biography of Alexander Berkman exists, three doctoral dissertations discuss his philosophy in depth. William Nowlin, Jr. in 1980 analyzed Berkman's contribution to Anarchist thought at large, using cornerstone thinkers from Proudhon to Kropotkin as

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[36] Lars T. Lih, "The Mystery of the *ABC*," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): 50-72.
[37] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The *ABC of Communism* Revisited," *Studies in East European Thought* 70, (2018): 167-79.

reference points. He also provides a detailed exegesis of Berkman's critiques of Bolshevik authoritarianism through works like *The Bolshevik Myth* and the *ABC of Anarchism*, and essentially creates an exegesis of the second part of the latter work which deals with the future ideal Anarchist society.[38] Rebecca Wesely places Berkman's earlier thought purely within the American context of his time, especially at the nexus of the American populist and progressive movements with little focus on the Russian period.[39] Linnea Burwood identifies the early post-prison Berkman as existing at a crossroads between his Russian *narodnik* youth and the American Anarchist circles exemplified both by the Haymarket martyrs and the German-Jewish émigré communities of New York, an area of his life that I summarize briefly in Chapter 2, before she moves on to essentially create an annotated guide to the *Bolshevik Myth* by reconciling it Emma Goldman's works dealing with the same period.[40] Paul and Karen Avrich's seminal dual biography on Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, *Sasha and Emma*, due to constraints of space can only offer a short few pages on the *ABC of Anarchism*, and focuses especially on how the Anarchists found themselves opposed to Bolshevik practices, but saying little of how this informed their ideological struggles.[41]

Based on the relative paucity of literature on Berkman's political ideology, and an almost complete lacuna regarding his *ABC of Anarchism* in particular, this thesis seeks to break significant ground in the historiography of leftist thought. Moreover, I maintain that the most accurate criticisms of Bolshevism require a fundamental understanding of the

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[38] William Gerard Nowlin, Jr., "The Political Thought of Alexander Berkman" (doctoral dissertation, Tufts University, 1980).
[39] Rebecca Jeanne Wesely, "The Triumph of the System: Alexander Berkman, Anarchism, and America" (doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 1981).
[40] Linnea Goodwin Burwood, "Alexander Berkman: Russian-American Anarchist" (doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2000), 89.
[41] Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 252-266.

ideological frameworks propounded in the canon of the greater left. An observer who misreads Marx would inevitably misunderstand the how and why of the Bolsheviks, while one who harbors hostility to Marxism would seek only to condemn. For his part, Berkman believed himself to be the first person qualified to report on the Russian Revolution, since the early analyses that had come out in his day were from Westerners who only spent a short time in Russia, did not speak Russian, and most importantly did not come of age in the Russian Revolutionary tradition.

Chapter 1| Bring Back Bukharin

The 2017 centennial of the Bolshevik Revolution saw many publishers seeking to, perhaps ironically, *capitalize* on the event by releasing new works on the subject. What might have been an extremely exciting series of monographs and journal symposia after 25 years of newfound archival access and hindsight since the disappearance of the Soviet system instead yielded rehashed narratives about Lenin. As noted in the Introduction, many of these works were quite good and modern leftist philosophers of some repute like Tariq Ali or Slavoj Žižek probably turned a whole generation on to the ideas of Lenin and the European Social Democratic tradition in general. Other authors like Paul Le Blanc successfully brought the approaches of social and cultural history to their studies of October. Where both approaches fell short was in expanding the political history to include the larger cast of characters involved in 1917. Writing political history is not necessarily writing regime history, especially since for the several years of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party preceding the Bolshevik takeover there was no regime to speak of, so the field could still benefit from considerable expansion beyond Lenin.

Of course, it is not entirely anachronistic to focus on Lenin in the time preceding October 1917 simply because he would then become the leader of the world's first Socialist State. Leon Trotsky (who, in heading the Military Revolutionary Committee, almost certainly did more than Lenin on the ground in the days leading up to the Bolshevik seizure) himself admits that while historical inevitability would have anyway led to the triumphant Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Lenin's leadership and timely arrival in April of 1917 shifted the tide of the more moderate Bolsheviks onto a hard left program which would eventually

gain mass support in time for victory.[42] Lenin's charisma and obstinance certainly played large roles in keeping people on *his* line, a fact his admirers approve of: Le Blanc reflects in the introduction to an analysis of Lenin's leadership that his own father uttered in simple terms that "Lenin was tough, and he was for the workers."[43] Indeed what else need one say about Vladimir Ilyich?

Perhaps such a succinct statement by an American worker can sufficiently describe the leading Bolshevik, but what to say about the rest of the Bolsheviks leading up to the Revolution? Did the Lenin cult always exist, as Orlando Figes suggests by writing that "Bolshevism was defined by a personal pledge of loyalty to him"?[44] Lenin's 1903 tract *What is to be Done?* is typically championed as an early explanation of the guidelines for Bolshevism; and one only needed to anachronistically use Stalin's command of the Party in the 1930s as supporting evidence.[45] Lars Lih convincingly disrupts this interpretation of *What is to be Done?* by noting that the climate and audience were intended to understand a desire to unite in service of overthrowing the Tsar, not as a guidebook for ruling a new State, that Lenin himself never referred to the pamphlet after 1907, and most interestingly for the present analysis, that it was not included in the reading list in the official guidebook for Soviet ideology, the *ABC of Communism*.[46] The 1917 Bolshevik Party was therefore not an

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[42] Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 283.
[43] Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), xv.
[44] Figes, *A Peoples' Tragedy*, 153.
[45] Shub for example notes that this book became a "revolutionary bible for his adherents," but as Lih's criticism shows, the book went largely undiscussed until Stalin's *Short Course* re-introduced it. Shub, *Lenin*, 72.
[46] Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: What is to be Done? in Context* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 4, 21-22, 30. Ironically enough, the same critics who regarded everything in Stalin's *Short Course* as false decided to accept as true the statement in that work that *WITBD* was a "fundamental Marxist" document since it conformed to their ideological hostility toward Bolshevism.

organization "defined by a personal pledge of loyalty" as described in 1903 Lenin's imagination, nor was it meant to be.

The 1970s brought two important works that dismantled the cartoonish view of the centralized Party worshipping Lenin, which makes Figes's assertion the more troubling as it ignores these major historiographical landmarks. Alexander Rabinowitch makes the overall fluidity and almost chaotic nature of the Bolshevik Party central to his analysis in *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*.[47] Rabinowitch's prose reads something like a Thomas Pynchon novel with dozens of characters appearing for one odd meeting of some odd committee in some odd hall only to never be heard from again. He deliberately does not explain this phenomenon in order to give the reader an approximate sense of how profoundly disorganized Bolshevism was in 1917; to say nothing of how little a "personal pledge of loyalty" existed with episodes like the editorial staff of *Pravda* burning Lenin's articles sent from Finland.[48] The very same editors had in months previous edited Lenin's articles sent from Zurich, contributing to what Lars Lih deems the "larger narrative of Bolshevism in 1917," as one that "emphasizes disruption and disunity."[49] Moreover, Boris Kolonitskii notes in his historiographical essay that Soviet historian Gennadii Sobolev had "convincingly" demonstrated "on the basis of a scrupulous study of the sources" that "rank-and-file participants in the Revolution adhered to contradictory, paradoxical ideas" utterly belying that any such thing as "Bolshevism" even existed.[50] Essentially no succinct statement can accurately capture the essence of Bolshevism, let alone the overall mood of 1917.

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[47] Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 311.
[48] Rabinowitch, *Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 181.
[49] Lars Lih, "Letters from Afar, Corrections from Up Close," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015): 800.
[50] Kolonitskii, "Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution," 39. He notes a second historian, Khanan M. Astrakhan, who showed that there was "not always a clear distinction between the Bolsheviks and the

The other pivotal work of the 1970s in service of a broader Bolshevism was Stephen Cohen's *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, which emphasized that his subject was far beyond a simple deputy to an almighty Lenin.[51] This work also created the study of potential "alternatives" to Stalinism, which only further refuted the centralized "loyal" Party thesis. This does not preclude that Lenin led the Party overall; in some regards Bukharin did ultimately defer to his "revolutionary teacher."[52] The controversy surrounding the journal *Kommunist* provides a telling example. Bukharin and other Russian exiles in Stockholm published one issue in 1916, with Lenin contributing, before disagreements between Lenin and Bukharin caused the former to demand the journal's dissolution – and Bukharin obeyed.[53] Some scholars took Cohen's lead and pointed out various discrepancies between Bukharin and Lenin, like Gorelov who notes that in early 1916 after Lenin rejected Bukharin's "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" for being too "anarchistic," Bukharin published parts of it in various other journals in Norway, Holland, and Germany.[54] Gorelov does not note, and was probably not aware, that Bukharin also published parts of this theory in the New York daily *Novy Mir*.[55] *Novy Mir* is interesting in itself for this discussion because prior to Bukharin's arrival in New York, the paper had a mostly Menshevik bent, publishing

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Mensheviks." Ernest Mandel outlines several events between 1918 and 1920 to show that "we have never seen a worker's party with so many differences of opinion and so much freedom of expression…as the Bolshevik Party of this period," Mandel, "Coup d'etat or Social Revolution?" 85.

[51] Cohen also notes that in 1917 there was no consensus regarding philosophical or political matters among the various Bolsheviks, *Bukharin*, 5.

[52] This line comes from Bukharin's letter to Lenin in August of 1916 before departing for America, quoted in Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 47.

[53] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 36; see also Leblanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, 201-11.

[54] Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 47.

[55] I say he was probably not aware because even Bukharin's own notes to "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" in 1925, indicate that an article discussing some of the work's conclusions entitled "A New Slavery" appeared in Dutch on November 25, 1916; though the Russian version, "Novoe rabstvo" came out in *Novy Mir* two weeks prior on November 11. The same note does indicate that some other unnamed pieces for *Novy Mir* summarized his findings on the State, though without article names to reference Gorelov might not have thought it appropriate to try and cite this.

articles by Plekhanov and Martov, not to mention Trotsky, who was far from being a Bolshevik at the time of his first piece in that paper in 1916.[56] It seems impossible to reconcile the caricature of a loyal, servile follower of Lenin's Bolshevik Party choosing to publish banned theory in a competing Party's paper.

New World, No Peace: Bukharin in New York

By early November of 1916, Nikolai Bukharin arrived in New York and began writing for the Russian Socialist émigré daily *Novy Mir* (*New World*). Though on the heels of a reconciliation with Lenin – for now only in personal terms, as Lenin still disagreed with Bukharin on theoretical matters – Bukharin made no mention of Lenin or the Bolshevik Party in his New York writings. When Leon Trotsky arrived in New York in January of 1917, he also joined *Novy Mir*, and Lenin's name continued to escape mention, even polemically. The express purpose of political agitation and propagandizing for Russian Social Democrats at that time was simply to analyze current events and to spread the gospel of what they saw as proper Socialism. Bukharin focused his attention on the question of the war and the nature of the imperialist State, and offered guidance on his internationalist approach to these problems.

Bukharin's war criticism followed that of most other Bolsheviks and far-left European Social Democrats of the time like Rosa Luxemburg. All generally characterized the war as an imperialist conflict related more to expansion of markets than the proclaimed moral values of the belligerents, and ridiculed overtures to the pursuit of peace by people like Woodrow Wilson while American capitalists profited from arms sales to Europe. Since both his

[56] Kun, *Bukharin: Ego druz'ia i vragi*, 62; Kun does not note that Trotsky also wrote for *Novy Mir* prior to 1917, but he did in fact submit articles in January of 1916.

Imperialism and World Economy and Lenin's elaboration in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* had circulated for some time; not to mention Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital* from which both borrowed heavily, he does little to explain the theories behind these pieces, but rather writes about the war with their premises in mind. Bukharin needed to explain how his perhaps abstract or theoretical views on imperialism manifested and impacted people directly, and *Novy Mir* would later credit him with bringing a stronger anti-war stance to the paper.[57]

The first pieces Bukharin contributed naturally centered on the war that had forced him to come to New York in the first place as Europe proved inhospitable to Russian Revolutionaries. A more detailed discussion comparing Bukharin and Lenin's views on the imperialist State follows below, but the main point of Bukharin's views on imperialism were that monopolized capital had bonded with State power into what he termed State Capitalist Trusts, and international trade thus became an international competition between states who would defend their national capital militarily. War was therefore inevitable, and peaceful capitalism was a fantasy. Inasmuch as a capitalist government professed a desire for peace, Bukharin claimed that they did not want an "everlasting peace," but only a peace for long enough "to prepare for a new war."[58] Emphasizing the financial ruin the war would bring on, he wrote about the national debts accruing "with dizzying speed," which would require higher taxes to pay off.[59]

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[57] A small note appears in *Novy Mir* to this effect on February 28, 1917 which also indicated that Bukharin had become chief editor of the paper by that time.
[58] Nikolai Bukharin, "Vseobshchaia liga mira, treteiskie sudy i razoruzhenie (Universal Peace League, Court Arbitration, and Disarmament)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 27, 1916.
[59] Nikolai Bukharin, "Chto sulit miru novyi god? (What Does the New Year Hold for the World?)," *Novy Mir*, Jan. 1, 1917.

Bukharin took especial umbrage with what he saw as confusion, indifference, or outright acquiescence on the part of the masses to the war aims of the ruling class. He decried the many Russian workers who "still believe the fairy tale (*skazka*)" about the war being for national defense or protecting small nations from German barbarism.[60] He reminded readers that the kings and "well-fed bankers" sat idly by adding up their profits while "blood flowed for two and some years" across Europe.[61] On Christmas Day Bukharin scorned the cognitive dissonance in the massive celebration of Christ's life while ignoring the son of God's call for "peace on earth," a refrain which "they repeat in the hundreds of thousands of Christian churches in all languages."[62] What could people do though in the face of such massive State Capitalist power?

Proper anti-war internationalist Socialism had the solution at hand for people to follow against the war, and Bukharin brought awareness of it to New York. "Only one thing" could "liberate the proletariat," he wrote, namely "Revolution and the overthrow of the ruling class and their governments" in an all-out "war against capital."[63] Including the overthrow of government is especially significant since it served both as an attack on the kowtowing European Social Democratic parties who had sided with their national governments and voted in support of war credits in August 1914, and a reminder that

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[60] Nikolai Bukharin, "'Progressivnye tsivilizatori' ili bandity? ('Progressive Civilizers' or Bandits?)," *Novy Mir*, Nov. 27, 1916.
[61] Nikolai Bukharin, "Zoloto i krov' (Gold and Blood)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 13, 1916.
[62] Nikolai Bukharin, "Rozhdestvo tvoe Khriste bozhe nash (Birth of Your Christ Our Lord)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 25, 1916.
[63] Lenin had requested of Bukharin to, first and foremost, have the Zimmerwald Manifesto published in English in America. While this may have also happened, from this early article it is clear that Bukharin chose to accept Lenin's leadership; Vladimir Lenin to Nikolai Bukharin, Oct. 4, 1916, *Lenin Internet Archive* Marxists.org. Bukharin, "Vseobshchaia liga mira." Additionally, in his Christmas piece Bukharin contrasted the religious tendency to seek a "life beyond material life" with the socialist aim to "achieve a humane life for all" here on Earth, which could only happen if people waged "a war against war and against the power of capital," Bukharin, "Rozhdesvto."

Bukharin viewed the State itself as the major hindrance to Socialist progress. Bukharin had hope though, since "between the hellish symphony of gunfire," the "solemn fighting songs of the coming Revolutionary International" could be "clearly heard."[64] Trotsky's first piece in *Novy Mir* a month later echoed this sentiment, noting that in the trenches the "critical thought" of Socialism had been "awakened by the cacophony of war."[65] These second points underscore the strong belief among Russian Revolutionaries that World Revolution was imminent and would later justify the Bolshevik seizure of power in a non-industrial country.

Things changed drastically in America on January 31, 1917, when Germany announced a resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, which had been halted after the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, and American commercial vessels became legitimate targets for German U-Boats. Bukharin reacted with a piece entitled "On the Edge of the Abyss," noting that while America had a relatively small commercial fleet, the bourgeoisie who controlled it had "only one ideal: gold" and "only one dream: profit;" in defense of which they were prepared to use the entire military apparatus of the State – as the merger of capital and State grew more complete. He admonished "the working class" to "understand where these 'humane' servants of the Golden Calf wish to lead them," and to remember "the class war against capital."[66] The "revolutionary Social Democracy," Bukharin clarified, was "not against each and every war," but only those "led in the interests of the ruling classes" and "the so-called defense of a capitalist fatherland."[67] Bukharin would later advocate for a Revolutionary War of Defense against Germany in 1918 based on this idea that a war in the

[64] Bukharin, "Zoloto I krov'."
[65] Leon Trotsky, "Da zdravstvuiet bor'ba! (Long Live the Struggle!)," *Novy Mir*, January 16, 1917.
[66] Nikolai Bukharin, "Na kraiu propasti (On the Edge of the Abyss)," *Novy Mir*, Feb. 3, 1917.
[67] Nikolai Bukharin, "Patsifizm i sotsial-demokratiia (Pacifism and Social-Democracy)," *Novy Mir*, Feb. 14, 1917.

interest of the international proletariat would indeed be justified. The present war was obviously an imperialist war though, and nobody calling themselves a Socialist could justifiably support it.

Defying Lenin: Bukharin's Anti-Statism Published

The most significant part of Bukharin's stay in New York was that in the pages of *Novy Mir*, his thoughts on the State that Lenin had just recently dismissed saw their first publication. Lenin had criticized Bukharin's reading of Marx and Engels as one that brought about "inexact conclusions" or "misrender[ed] the sense" of the original writings.[68] By publishing this theory elsewhere, Bukharin shows a defiance of Lenin that we have established as wholly characteristic of the time. Second, and more importantly, it puts into a dated printing that Bukharin was a driving force behind Lenin's later *State and Revolution*. Since Bukharin's "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" did not get published in the Soviet Union until 1925, and the 1926 collection *On the Approach to October* of Bukharin's 1917 writings only included those from Moscow, early Soviet citizens would understandably assume that Lenin crafted the ideas first. The *Novy Mir* articles thus need a proper place in the history of Bolshevism at large.

Bukharin's first major piece in New York regarding the modern State appeared within days of his arrival. Entitled "A New Slavery," the article outlined not only his belief that the relationship between capitalists and workers was but a continuation of the master/slave paradigm of yore, but also how it manifested itself in the form of a modern imperialist State. Leaders would lie about "freedom, humanity, and other fine things" while continuing the

[68] V. I. Lenin to N. I. Bukharin, Oct. 4, 1916, in *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 230-31. Available at *Marxists Internet Archive*.

"terrible massacre" of the present war, and similar wars would ensue unless "the working class put an end to the rule of capital." He then called on workers to first "clearly acknowledge" this truism, and to "understand that the way out of this situation" lay only with "*the collapse of the modern State*."[69] Bukharin thus equated the rule of capital with the State and cast imperialist wars of aggression as their natural outgrowth; calling in print for the overthrow of the State itself.

Whereas Lenin had obstructed the printing of Bukharin's pioneering theory on the State in official Bolshevik organs, and other leading European Social Democrats like Karl Kautsky, the so-called "Pope of Marxism," had turned to "reformism" by hoping to work within modern States to achieve Socialist goals, readers naturally balked at Bukharin's assertion that workers needed to bring about the *collapse* of the entire State. Isn't that the Anarchist position? Responding to such criticism, Bukharin laid out his theory in greater detail about a month later. In "State Capitalism and Marxism," Bukharin specifically wrote that there was no organization in the future Socialist society equivalent to that of the modern State, even according to Marx himself. Marx, Bukharin wrote, believed that the "essence of the State does not at all mean a central organization" in the abstract, but a very specific "organization of State oppression" led by the ruling class. Socialism, in its destruction of classes, would inevitably lead to a destruction of the State. He even stated that Marxists were "not at all" the "Statists" the Anarchists accused them of being, for Socialist means of production would organize *society* but not a *State* in and of itself.[70] The difference he saw between Socialists and Anarchists, then, was that "Socialists expect the economy to become

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[69] Nikolai Bukharin, "Novoe rabstvo (A New Slavery)," *Novy Mir*, Nov. 11, 1916, emphasis added.
[70] Nikolai Bukharin, "Gosudarstvennyi kapitalizm i Marksizm (State Capitalism and Marxism)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 2, 1916.

centralized and technologically perfected" as opposed to decentralized Anarchist propositions which would "carry us back to pre-capitalist forms" of production.[71]

In "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State," Bukharin had announced that the "Marxist point of view" held the State as "nothing but the most general organization of the ruling classes" with its "basic function" being to "preserve and expand the exploitation of the oppressed classes."[72] He repeated this almost verbatim in a separate *Novy Mir* piece adding capitalists and landowners (*pomeshchiki*) to the list of the State organization's members. He also deduced that the State specifically spent earnings from their "various taxes and other extortion" on armies and navies to defend the interests of these ruling groups.[73] If class were eradicated, then there would be no group to exploit another, and therefore no grounds for building a State to defend the exploiters, or to levy taxes to build the necessary armies to defend one nation's markets or capital from another.

Bukharin illustrated the unity of capital and State in various ways to prove his point. For example, he saw labor strikes as "one of the most demonstrative means of the proletarian struggle," and for the State to ban strikes, as the US did with railroad strikes in 1916, the government was defending Capital interests over People interests. Bukharin thus translated bourgeois concerns by noting that their talk about "'enemies of society' mean[t] they [were] talking about enemies of Capital."[74] In a sense the bourgeoisie were not maliciously lying with this claim, but rather reflecting the material conditions into which they were born. Marx taught that the material informed the ideological, and since anyone living in 1916 America

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[71] Bukharin, "K teorii imperialisticheskogo gosudarstva (Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State)," in *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii* (*The Road to Socialism in Russia*), ed. Sidney Heitman (New York: Omicron Books, 1967). Also available in English through *Marxists Internet Archive*.
[72] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."
[73] Nikolai Bukharin, "Vserossiiskaia grabilovka (All-Russian Robbery)," *Novy Mir*, Nov. 21, 1916.
[74] Nikolai Bukharin, "Pravo stachek v opasnosti (The Right to Strike is in Danger)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 11, 1916.

had been conditioned to believe that "society" was maintained through *laissez-faire* market economics and that the hierarchy of capitalist production always resulted in a net positive outcome through economic growth, anyone disrupting this system (i.e. subversion of the hierarchy by assuming power might come from the bottom of the supply chain rather than from the top executive chambers) would indeed be an enemy of that society. Bukharin simply pointed out the existing superstructure causing this mindset as if to implicitly say "there is another way."

Moreover, by 1916, the form of Capital as described by Marx had undergone a significant transformation, such that the theory needed updating. Cohen emphasizes especially that Bukharin's theory "offered a compelling explanation of why capitalism had failed to collapse from its inherent contradictions."[75] The updated theory was known as "Finance Capital" and Rudolf Hilferding had mostly already defined it. On this point, too, Bukharin found himself at odds with Lenin, who believed more that capitalist production was anarchic and inherently unstable, a disagreement that would continue to the time of NEP. Bukharin emphasized the *deliberate* organization of capital and termed the connection between capital and the State as a new form: "State Capitalism."[76]

Bukharin decried Finance Capital first and foremost as "the world overlord" which "kings, tsars, and presidents" all dutifully served (note the absolute lack of distinction between monarchy, autocracy, and [bourgeois-capitalist] democracy). In contrast to traditional, or industrial capital, Finance Capital was not measured in machinery or other tangible means of production, but rather in "sums of money" in the abstract. This capital

[75] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 30.
[76] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 35.

usually found itself in the hands of bankers, who would take money at some predetermined rate of adjustment and lend it (charging interest, of course); thereby forcing the "entire" organized industry "into the closest dependence on the major banks." In essence, interest and speculation gained power over actual production, and Finance Capitalists linked themselves to State power, which exacerbated imperialist tendencies by sending states into a global competition over financial markets, to say nothing of merging two forces against the working class.[77]

Briefly, I would like to end this section with some notes on Bukharin's thoughts on America and Americans. Cohen suggests that the brief six-month stay in New York "had little impact on Bukharin's thinking," which seems true given the above analysis and its correspondence with his European work.[78] Bukharin's analysis of American intervention in the war naturally revolved around the concept of State Capitalism. He called American "State power" an "interim director" of a massive capitalist trust, which operated in state loans, and the delivery of foodstuffs and (most importantly) ammunition to Europe. This "coup" in relations between the Old and New Worlds transformed America from a debtor to a creditor to Europe, and so American entry would only serve to "save profits" in these arenas. Bukharin's solution for Americans was of course to bring about the "destruction" of "bloody capitalist cliques" and seize power themselves to "liberate the world from the nightmare of eternal capitalist wars."[79] Bukharin especially took Henry Ford to task as a hypocritical "wolf in sheep's skin" for having claimed to support peace only to turn and participate in war

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[77] Nikolai Bukharin, "Chto takoe finansovyi kapital? (What is Finance Capital?)," *Novy Mir*, Jan. 23, 1917.
[78] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 43.
[79] Nikolai Bukharin, "Soed. Shtaty i velikoderzhavnaia politika (US and Great Power Politics)," *Novy Mir*, Feb. 6, 1917.

production for the American government.[80] By equating Ford with the government, Bukharin continued to see capitalism and the modern imperialist state as fully entrenched: State Capitalism.

The importance of Bukharin's sojourn in the New World thus begins and ends as an opportunity to freely publish his thoughts far removed from Lenin in any capacity. Bukharin became the editor of a non-aligned Socialist paper and worked alongside Trotsky, then a major thorn in Lenin's side. As he was able to with Lenin, Bukharin maintained a friendship with Trotsky, which says something of his character as someone who could separate personal and political.[81] Both of the Russians tried to get the American Socialists to internationalize their thought to little avail: The Socialist Party of America famously split over the question of the war in 1917. Trotsky's legacy in America is the journal *Class Struggle* which he and Louis Fraina co-founded in 1917 and which would feature articles from Bukharin. The introduction to the first issue notes that "the currents of European Socialist thought" have "hardly reached" the American workers, leaving them in "utter ignorance" of the international movement.[82]

"V.I. No Longer Has Any Disagreements with You"

Before comparing the content and contexts of Bukharin's and Lenin's works on the State, let us begin with a review of the divergence in their treatments on imperialism. It might have once been well known that Bukharin's *Imperialism and War* served as a blueprint for Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, though the latter "never publicly

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[80] Nikolai Bukharin, "Troitsa 'miroliubiia' i litsemeriia (Trinity of 'Peacefulness' and Hypocrisy)," *Novy Mir*, Feb. 7, 1917.
[81] Cohen suggests this, Cohen, *Bukharin*, 44. Trotsky suggests instead that Bukharin's "nature is such that he must always attach himself to someone" becoming "a medium for someone else's actions and speeches." In New York, that attachment was therefore of course to Trotsky; Trotsky, *My Life,* 273.
[82] Uncredited, "The Task Before Us," *The Class Struggle* 1, no. 1 (1917) May-June, 3.

acknowledged" this fact, and indeed both in turn were based on Rudolf Hilferding's work on Finance Capital.[83] The current left historiography unfortunately indicates that this is no longer so well known. Tariq Ali hails *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* as a "foundational text for understanding the first World War," China Miéville gives Lenin credit for describing "the epoch as one of monopoly capitalism entangled with the State," and Neil Faulkner's brief description of the concepts in the work imply that Lenin came to the conclusions on his own.[84] Bukharin escapes mention in all these glowing reviews.

Cohen on the other hand emphasizes Bukharin's book as "the first systematic theoretical explanation of imperialism by a Bolshevik."[85] He notes some discrepancies in the theories though, first noting that Lenin sees the "monopolization" of only part of the economy as emblematic of the inherent anarchic structure of capitalism which needed stabilizing, whereas Bukharin emphasized the intentionally organized nature of the system making its potential power all the more horrifying. Imperialism would render "economic and political nationalism anachronistic" as the merger between the State and Finance Capital led to mergers of various State Capitalist Trusts into an even greater Leviathan. Lenin focused on colonialism and put his stock in the potential for the colonized peoples to resist the continued uneven development between various States.[86] All the same, Lenin wrote the introduction to Bukharin's work, and even propagated some of its conclusions in early 1916 before writing his own *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, warning against the "petty-bourgeois pacifist argument" that war could be ended under capitalism when imperialism and war

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[83] Heitman, introduction to *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii*, 35.
[84] Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin*, 134; Miéville, *October*, 33; Faulkner, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*, 105.
[85] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 25.
[86] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 36.

were endemic to such a system.[87] M. C. Howard and J. E. King in their analysis continue this line of thought in noting that Bukharin believed that "productive forces had developed beyond the point where they could be operated efficiently" within any single nation-state.[88] Gasper's introduction to a Haymarket compendium of both Bukharin's and Lenin's works notes their "remarkably good job of explaining the development of capitalism" and the concordance the two share on the merger of the State with capital, which leads the competition between State Capitalist Trusts to manifest itself as war.[89] What is to be done with this massive new State led to disagreements between Bukharin and Lenin.

Marx never outlined a distinct *plan* for the Socialist Revolution, he merely declared its inevitability, and made various suggestions over time regarding the means of achieving this end. This could be why various schools of thought persisted in the Social Democratic movements before 1917, because nobody had seen beyond the concept of the State, and because Marx's views changed over time belying the existence of one singular "Marxism." Karl Kautsky had embraced a reformist position for the German Parliament, something Marx had considered possible in more "advanced" democratic countries, and which in 1895 Engels advocated for specifically within Germany.[90] Bukharin probably did not know this fact, as the entirety of the Marx-Engels corpus had not been published, and so he uses other direct Marx quotes on this point to the effect that "even radical and revolutionary politicians look for the source of evil not in the existence of the State, but in a certain form of the State, in

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[87] Shub, *Lenin*, 176-77. Shub makes no mention of Bukharin in this discussion on Lenin's work.
[88] M. C. Howard, J. E. King, "Imperialism and War: Bukharin and Lenin on Monopoly Capitalism, 1914-17," in *A History of Marxian Economics* (London: Palgrave, 1989), 246.
[89] Phil Gasper, introduction to *Imperialism and War* by Vladimir Lenin and Nikolai Bukharin (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 5.
[90] Frederic L. Bender, introduction to *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (New York: Norton Books, 1988), 33n5. Karl Kautsky was not a member of the Reichstag but advocated that the Party use parliamentary means to achieve Socialism.

place of which they want to establish another form," through reformist means.[91] Thus Bukharin saw in the reformists a desire to change the existing State and not to seek its extinction, and had armed himself with quotes from Marx and Engels to argue that this was not the correct path. Lenin specifically used *Anti-Dühring* and the *Origin of the Family* as his primary reference points, which were later works by Engels as if to pre-empt any counterarguments that would suggest that things had changed since the original publication of the *Manifesto* in 1848.[92] The German Social Democrats' vote in favor of the Imperialist War in 1914 also solidified the belief among the Bolsheviks that these reformists were in fact opportunists seeking personal power and not global liberation.

Thus Bukharin, and later Lenin, took to seeking an end to the capitalist State entirely. Such is the incendiary nature of Lenin's more popular work that the content of *State and Revolution* was used in the USA as evidence against the American Communist Party for "conspiring to overthrow the government." Critics of Lenin's work suggest that it was a deviation from his previous thought since it did not mention a Party vanguard, and belies "subsequent practice" after October, though this criticism tends to erroneously include Stalin's reign as a justification for this argument.[93] The context of Lenin's completing the tract in the summer of 1917 suggests that he formulated his thoughts as an ad hoc call to arms combining Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune with the actual growing power of the Soviets.[94] Riasanovsky and Steinberg echo this sentiment that Lenin sought an "ideal of a

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[91] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."
[92] Todd Chretien, introduction to *State and Revolution* by Vladimir Lenin (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 10-11.
[93] Robert V. Daniels, "The State and Revolution: A Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 12, no. 1 (1953): 22-23. This criticism forgets that the Party is only a means and not an end unto itself.
[94] He began the work earlier, Rabinowitch suggests it began in January 1917 in Zurich, Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 323; Cohen notes a February 1917 letter indicating work on an article "closer to

new type of State" based on the Paris Commune, while Howard and King point out that the "institutions of mass participatory democracy," i.e. the Soviets, were "analogous" to those formed in 1871 "through a union of the management apparatus" and "organs of popular democracy from below."[95] Suny and Cohen both note that the importance of the workers' State as an agent of transition distinguishes the Marxists from the Anarchists, despite having the same goal in the end.[96] Critics like Figes use the anachronistic lens to only call attention to the "strong repressive Party State" evident in Lenin's work, avoiding a deeper analysis that would include Lenin's conclusions and goals of a Stateless future.[97]

Apart from Cohen and Gluckstein, the historiography almost completely omits Bukharin from discussions on Lenin's work, specifically as it pertains to *State and Revolution*. Trotsky might be rightfully excused for not knowing about Bukharin's unpublished piece (not to mention his need to centralize Lenin at a time when Stalin was creating a Lenin cult and declaring himself the true heir and Trotsky and others the opponents) when he wrote that "Lenin restored to Marxism its significance as the theoretic weapon of the proletarian revolution" against the State.[98] Adam Ulam suggests that in the early 1920s Lenin became "furious that Bukharin…was reprinting parts of [*State and Revolution*]," obviously unaware

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Bukharin than Kautsky" and a desire to finally publish "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State," as well as Krupskaia's mention to Bukharin in May of 1917 that "V.I. no longer has any disagreements with you on the question of the State," Cohen, *Bukharin*, 42.

[95] Howard and King, "Imperialism and War," 254.

[96] Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 61. See also Cohen, *Bukharin*, 42; Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), ii.107; suggests even an "anxiety to distinguish their position from Anarchism."

[97] Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 465. The single reference Shub makes to *State and Revolution* synthesizes these two interpretations. He calls attention to Lenin's belief that the proletariat "needed the state to…'crush the antagonists,'" that is, to defend against counter-revolution until Socialism arrived. Again, no Bukharin in the analysis. Shub, *Lenin*, 310.

[98] Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, 709.

that Bukharin had expounded those ideas in the first place.[99] Richard Pipes classifies *State and Revolution* as a "nihilistic work which argues that the Revolution must destroy root and branch all 'bourgeois' institutions," and that it "served to justify [Lenin's] destructive instincts."[100] For the modern leftists, China Miéville extols Lenin's work as "an extraordinary, sinewy negotiation of remorseless anti-Statism," Tariq Ali calls it the "summit of [Lenin's] politico-theoretical achievements," and Neil Faulkner suggests that *State and Revolution* "revived the Marxist theory of the State in the context of Revolution."[101] Notice again that all of these authors praise or condemn *State and Revolution* as Lenin's central achievement, while none of them, including those writing after Cohen in 1973, make note of Lenin's reversal on the matter and Bukharin's pioneering work on this question. In only one notable recent left publication, the Deutscher Prize-winning *Reconstructing Lenin* by Tamás Krausz, did Bukharin return to the discussion on this treatise which served as "the philosophy of the October Revolution," noting that "virtually the same finding" regarding the Marxist conception of State power "was made by Bukharin, who was earlier criticized in this very field by Lenin."[102]

Bukharin and Lenin characterize the State in essentially the same terms, using references from Marx and Engels. Essentially, the State exists to protect the ruling classes from their victims, and therefore a Revolution would bring an end to this type of State creating an entirely new apparatus in the name of the formerly subjugated. Bukharin notes

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[99] Perhaps Ulam had no access, though his works are notoriously devoid of footnotes, so it is impossible to say what fury he refers to, Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual, Personal, and Political History of the Origins of Russian Communism* (New York: MacMillan, 1965), 353.
[100] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 468, 396.
[101] Miéville, *October*, 204; Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin*, 152, Faulkner, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*, 187.
[102] Tamás Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin: An Intellectual Biography* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2015), 177-78.

that Marx did not view capital as "a means of production *in und für sich*," but as a "social relationship" in which the State played the role of its defender. With the "disappearance of classes the State also disappears," meaning that the State has "both a historical beginning and a historical end."[103] Lenin interjects and calls for an intermediary form, a Proletarian "semistate," which would eventually render itself obsolete. But *only* this type of State dies off on its own accord; the bourgeois State requires a continued existence to protect the continued dominance of capital and could thus never die off.[104]

Both Bolsheviks also naturally engaged in considerable polemic in their respective works. Bukharin decried the "onetime priests of freedom, the democrats and the Socialists" who had recently "prostrated themselves before the boots of the Generals" by voting for war credits.[105] Lenin scorned the "social-chauvinists" of Europe as well, and updated his list of transgressors to include the then-prominent Irakli Tsereteli, a Georgian Menshevik who was most strongly advocating for cooperation with Kerensky's Provisional Government.[106] Bukharin even lamented later that he had written at a time when "there was such indiscriminate Social-Democrat glorification of the bourgeois State" that he felt the need to "concentrate all attention on the question of the explosion of this machine."[107]

In fact, so much had Bukharin devoted to this subject that he inadvertently glossed over the Dictatorship of the Proletariat which led to Lenin's original misgivings about Bukharin's piece as being too Anarchist.[108] When Lenin eventually did come to understand Bukharin's position, Howard and King remark on how "remarkable" it was that not since the

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[103] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of Imperialist State."
[104] Lenin, *State and Revolution*, 54.
[105] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."
[106] Lenin, *State and Revolution*, 37.
[107] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."
[108] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."

1890s had "Lenin deferred to the views of others on central matters of theory.[109] Cohen too notes that "Lenin's authority legitimized the tenet, but the true initiative was Bukharin's."[110] Neil Harding suggests that Lenin also went beyond Bukharin by addressing the "positive content of Socialism itself," not content with the latter's (accurate) characterization of the State and saying that it must be smashed.[111] The major difference in these two treatments lay in their respective contexts. Bukharin wrote in 1916 mostly as a polemic against the European Social-Democrats, not as a manifesto of any sort. Though Lenin began his work in January of 1917, he completed it in August of that year after the fall of Tsardom and the growing power of the Soviets in Russia. Knowing the imminence of a real Revolution, Lenin's work did have to serve the extended function as a programmatic document. Heitman also notes that Lenin typically had more of a "pragmatic eye of a realistic politician concerned with results" as opposed to Bukharin who "exuded a youthful idealism" and focus on pure theory.[112] Lenin simply expanded on Bukharin's brief sketch that the proletariat would seize state power and create a *provisional* workers' state, where the working class served as a *temporary* ruling class guiding the organization of production and society in such a way so as to eliminate class distinction altogether and thus render the State as obsolete. Bukharin had also noted in *Novy Mir* that the Russian Soviets of Workers' Deputies seemed to be "embryos of proletarian State power."[113]

Bukharin's "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" shows dialectically both how the modern State came into being, and how the proletarian Revolution would eliminate this

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[109] Howard and King, "Imperialism and War," 250
[110] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 43.
[111] Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought*, ii.84.
[112] Heitman, introduction to *Put' k sotisalizmu v Rossii*, 36. Gluckstein criticizes Bukharin on similar grounds, Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin*, 14-17.
[113] Bukharin, "Gosudarstvennyi kapitalizm."

State altogether. Despite Lenin's pronouncement that Bukharin "never understood dialectics," the two descriptions in this piece tell a different story. The State began as the "sole organization of the ruling class," eventually coming into competition with the rising power of industrial organizations, "especially in the epoch of finance capitalism." In the third stage, "the State swallows up these organizations and once more becomes the sole universal organization of the ruling class," and becomes the "contemporary imperialist robber state" which Bukharin fears as an "iron organization" and "New Leviathan" which makes the Hobbesian "fantasy…look like a child's toy." [114] Cohen makes a great deal of this pronouncement, for Bukharin's fear of the Leviathan pushed him towards his quest for a Stateless future.

This anti-Statist concept was in no way aberrative or alien to Marxism. Scholars note that Part II of *The Communist Manifesto* calls for the "abolition of bourgeois private property…and the nation-state." Specifically, the "bourgeoisie has called into existence forces of production that it cannot control" resulting in economic crises which then create a "revolutionary proletariat that is destined to dig the graves of capitalism with the tools furnished by capitalism." [115] Marx himself had been inspired by early Anarchists like Proudhon, whose *What Is Property?* Marx originally "hailed as a milestone" in political thought. Marx would later struggle with Anarchists who viewed his call to seize State power as "merely recreating class domination over society," whereas Marx hoped for a class "fully conscious of its status" and its "revolutionary mission" to *utilize* the levers of State power to

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[114] Bukharin, "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State."
[115] Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Introduction: Rethinking the *Communist Manifesto*" in Jeffery C. Isaac (Ed.), *The Communist Manifesto* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 7, 9-10.

create a classless and thereby Stateless society.[116] Donny Gluckstein writes that Bukharin's revival of this concept "refuted the most cherished belief of the Second International," pointing specifically to Karl Kautsky's insistence on gradualism by participating in State organs.[117] Even later critics of Bolshevism like Alexander Berkman, as will be seen in the next chapter, or Max Adler would contend that Lenin (therefore by extension Bukharin) was essentially correct in his reading of Marx – only that time showed the Dictatorship of the Proletariat turned into a dictatorship of the Party since Russia did not have a class-conscious proletariat in 1917.[118]

Moscow Calling: Bukharin Returns Home

Bukharin returned to Moscow at some point between April 10 and May 16, 1917, the dates of his last *Novy Mir* and first *Sotsial Demokrat* articles, respectively.[119] Not much evidence exists about his travels – Cohen reports simply that Bukharin took the Pacific route through Japan and Vladivostok, facing a brief detention in the Menshevik and otherwise Provisional Government-controlled Far Eastern region.[120] In Moscow he took up work commenting on current affairs for the daily paper *Sotsial Demokrat* while working out some theoretical pieces for a newly formed journal *Spartak*. These organs were meant to reach the working masses of Russia on a wider scale, with publishing in 130 towns across Russia by September of 1917.[121] A *Pravda* advertisement for the first issue of *Spartak* noted that the

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[116] Bender, introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*, 6.
[117] Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin*, 74n3.
[118] Max Adler, *The Marxist Conception of the State* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020), 137-38.
[119] The date of the first *Sotsial Demokrat* piece was May 3 of the Old Style calendar and moving forward my timeline will reflect the Old Style; the July Days are thus July 3-5 and the Bolshevik seizure of power comes in October rather than November. I used the New Style in this sentence to more accurately illustrate that over a month passed rather than three weeks.
[120] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 44; Cohen suspects Bukharin made it to Moscow by the end of April, 400n162.
[121] Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 52.

weekly journal's title honored the Roman slave leader and contained articles filled with the "spirit of Revolutionary International Socialism" providing "rich material" for understanding how "*our party*" views the issues of the day.[122] In contrast to New York, Bukharin was back to writing for Bolshevik publications.

On the theory front, Bukharin presented nothing new – indeed it seems that he simply needed to restate the views of Bolshevism and Marxism as the aftermath of the February Revolution led to growth in a readership curious about ways to move society forward. One of the few accurate political interpretations Figes makes is that the returning exiles like Bukharin, Lenin, and Trotsky "tended to be more international and cosmopolitan" than Stalin and Kamenev who had remained in Russia and thus had a more "narrow outlook."[123] Bukharin thus also wrote a considerable amount about affairs in Europe and the impending World Revolution.

Especially interesting is that Bukharin rarely mentioned his controversial anti-Statist viewpoint in Moscow, though he never contradicted it in any way either by backsliding into reformism.[124] In one *Spartak* piece, Bukharin grazed the surface of the subject by pointing out that, despite criticism to the contrary, the Bolshevik goal of worker power *was* power in the service of the whole of society. Others making such accusations that worker power would represent a new type of class oppression had "confused the period of developed Socialism, when all classes have already disappeared, with the transition period of the [proletarian] dictatorship" where workers guided development in the name of the whole of society.[125]

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[122] "'Spartak,'" *Pravda*, June 20, 1917. Emphasis added.
[123] Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 296.
[124] At this point, Lenin had come around to Bukharin's thinking (as confirmed by Nadezhda Krupskaia's remark to Bukharin that "V.I. no longer has any disagreements with you on the State" but for the many Social-Democrats of various stripes, including Stalin and Kamenev in April, this was still too Anarchist
[125] Nikolai Bukharin, "Ekonomicheskii razval i voina (Economic Collapse and The War)," *Spartak*, June 25, 1917.

That he did not delve deeper into the distinction, especially with the larger space afforded by a journal article than a daily paper suggests that he expected this to be obvious, even though his writings had only appeared in distant New York and Lenin had yet to publish *State and Revolution*.

Bukharin's writings in Moscow otherwise revert to the basic outlines of Marxism as interpreted by Bolsheviks, including by defining and criticizing Finance Capital in general, but included more strident calls in nearly every piece for Soviets and workers to seize power since the prospect of a Socialist Revolution suddenly seemed like a real possibility. He specifically applied his theories to the present situation in Russia, whereas in New York he wrote either in the abstract or about America specifically. Bukharin reiterated his description of the capitalist State as "just another organization" for capitalists, like a trust.[126] As he and Lenin had written elsewhere, this naturally led to imperialism, as the bourgeoisie of all the warring countries, like Ford in America, had united with the State and given over their factories and capabilities to national defense production. Only a worker-controlled State would avoid such a calamitous state of affairs.[127] While not yet concerned with Socialism in practice, Bukharin's inclusion of a more direct prescription of worker power indicated that the Bolsheviks were preparing to carry the Revolution forward sooner rather than later.

The creation of Finance Capital in Russia was recent, he wrote, but it had already found servile spokesmen like Pavel Miliukov. Thus, he informed the curious Muscovites

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[126] Nikolai Bukharin, "Liberaly i gorodskie sluzhashchie (Liberals and City Employees)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, May 19, 1917.
[127] Nikolai Bukharin, "Gosudarstvennyi kontrol' nad proizvodstvom i russkaia burzhuaziia (State Control Over Production and The Russian Bourgeoisie)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, May 25, 1917.

reading his paper that the Russian Revolution had in no way ended in February, as the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie continued, especially since the latter hid behind the imperialist war and national defense as a "means of strangling the [true] Revolution." If continuing the war was their means, then to continue the Revolution the proletariat had to "strangle the war" by, of course, placing all power into the hands of the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants Deputies who would immediately call for an end to the fighting.[128] This made sense in Bolshevik thinking as they alone called for "peace without annexations and indemnities," whereas the Provisional Government pushed for the opposite – a complete and total victory.[129]

Bukharin also represented the Bolsheviks especially by means of defining "the other," with the Menshevik affiliate of the Provisional Government Irakli Tsereteli earning the most of his ire. Lenin had already warned the Bolsheviks not to trust or support the new government placing his emphasis on Kerensky and L'vov, though he also advised "no rapprochement with other parties," and upon returning to Russia Tsereteli's collaborationism began to occupy the most "prominent place" in his rhetoric as well.[130] Further to the right, the Kadets were essentially low-hanging fruit for Bolsheviks, and so Bukharin's main goal was to differentiate the Mensheviks as non-Revolutionary false Marxists.

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[128] Nikolai Bukharin, "Rossiiskaia revolutsiia i ee sud'by (The Russian Revolution and its Chances)," *Spartak*, May 20, 1917. He also wrote that the Revolution continued several other times in *Sotsial Demokrat*: "Organizovannoe tvorchestvo (Organized Creativity)," May 27, 1917.
[129] Nikolai Bukharin, "Russkoe nastuplenie i tseli soiuznikov, (The Russian Offensive and Allied Goals)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, May 28, 1917.
[130] Vladimir Lenin, "Telegram to the Bolsheviks Leaving for Russia," *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 23 – 292. Available at *Marxists Internet Archive*. On Tsereteli occupying the most "prominent place, see Lih, "Letters From Afar," 816.

Tsereteli, a Georgian, had joined the second Duma at age 25 but his Social-Democratic tendencies eventually led to his exile to Siberia. After the February Revolution, he returned to Petrograd and led the city Soviet. Rabinowitch describes him as the "most influential advocate of collaboration with the liberals [i.e. the Provisional Government]" with a "staunch opposition to Bolshevism," traits which lead Figes to exalt him as the "only true statesman" affiliated with the Soviet.[131] From the time of the April Theses, Tsereteli derided Lenin as having broken with Marx and Engels by becoming an Anarchist sitting "on Bakunin's throne."[132] Suny notes that Tsereteli's actions to suppress the Bolsheviks in June of 1917 led to the "irony of ironies" when the Soviet's demonstrators ended up carrying placards bearing Bolshevik slogans like "All Power to the Soviets" and "Down With the Capitalist Minsters."[133] Before Lenin's return and April Theses, leading Bolsheviks like Stalin and Kamenev had "nothing of substance" separating them from the "reformists" like Tsereteli and the Mensheviks.[134] Once these Bolsheviks came in line however, the fact that the most visible leader of the greater Russian Social-Democracy represented not just an affront to Bolshevism, but to Revolutionary Marxism in general required that he be targeted.

Framing Tsereteli's collaboration with the bourgeoisie as a betrayal of Socialism had precedent in the earlier Bolshevik disavowal of the German Social Democrats, especially as pertained to the war question. Trotsky for example spent much of his time at *Novy Mir* informing New Yorkers about this problem, admonishing the American Socialists not to give

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[131] Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 116-17; Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 382.
[132] Quoted in Miéville, *October*, 111.
[133] Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 37-48.
[134] Faulkner, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*, 143; Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 41.

in to any of Wilson's overtures to "liberation" or "democracy" in his push for war.[135] Trotsky also later recalled the August 1914 session of the German Parliament where the Social Democrats voted in favor of war credits as one of the "most tragic experiences" of his life.[136] Before beginning to criticize Tsereteli, Bukharin similarly reviewed the schism the war had wrought on the European Social Democrats. For Bukharin, like any other Bolshevik, only those like Rosa Luxemburg or Karl Liebknecht had formulated proper responses to the war. He summarized their philosophy as being unwaveringly in support of a Revolutionary struggle at home "regardless of the state of affairs at the front." The front naturally represented the gains of the financiers and their imperialist government, which despite all claims to "national defense," was sending the nation to slaughter. "Only a socialist fatherland can defend the working class," Bukharin wrote, especially noting that the working class "under capitalism has no fatherland."[137] Then he offered in a piece after the horrific failure of Kerensky's June offensive in Galicia: "tell me how you feel about the war and I will tell you who you are." A self-proclaimed Socialist answering in favor of the war, as Tsereteli had done, meant that the person in question had ceased to be a Socialist.[138] By defining opposition with such a litmus test, Bukharin and the Bolsheviks secured their position as the strongest anti-war party – a consistency that would reward them as the year went on.

Bukharin also differentiated his views from Tsereteli and other parties by accusing opponents of misreading the situation at hand and not favoring complete Soviet power. He

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[135] For example, Trotsky wrote that Wilson's "decisive action" in severing relations with Germany and preparing for war was "taking off his pacifist slippers and trying on jackboots," Leon Trotsky, "Dlia chego Amerike voina? (What is the War to America?)," *Novy Mir*, Mar. 9, 1917.
[136] Trotsky, *My Life*, 236-37.
[137] Nikolai Bukharin, "Tri napravleniia v staroi Sotsial-Demokratii (Three Trends in the Old Social Democracy)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, May 16, 1917.
[138] Nikolai Bukharin, "Po povodu nastupleniia (On the Offensive)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, June 21, 1917.

called the Menshevik and SR cooperation with the Provisional Government a "huge mistake," when they should have instead put their effort into acquiring Soviet power.[139] Tsereteli, upon entering the "fully imperialist ministry" had "pounded his own chest and pathetically exclaimed" that he sought to "deepen the class struggle" from within.[140] Soviet power could have also apparently prevented the situation leading to the Kornilov Affair in late August, according to Bukharin.[141] Unfortunately for Tsereteli, he ceased to matter to Bukharin or to the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution, especially when Trotsky consigned his Mensheviks to the "dustbin of history." Even in seizing power, the Bolsheviks engaged in factionalism.

Bukharin, reporting gleefully in *Sotsial Demokrat* on the October success in Petrograd, felt the need to clarify what had happened, and where the future lay in *his* terms. He described the achievement as the beginning of a "semi-socialist" state of affairs, using the term to signify the "era of the dictatorship" rather than the hypothetical "classless Socialism" of the future.[142] In this way, he had no delusions about imminent Communism, and ensured that the populace would know that the work of building Socialism had only just begun. The *ABC of Communism* would later provide exceptional detail as to how this would happen and what the future would eventually look like.

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[139] Nikolai Bukharin, "Krizis vlasti (Crisis of Power)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, July 27, 1917.
[140] Nikolai Bukharin, "Obshchenatsional'nye zadachi' i grazhdanskaia voina ('The National Task' and Civil War)," *Spartak*, Sept. 16, 1917.
[141] Nikolai Bukharin, "Plany generalov (The Generals' Plans)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, August 29, 1917.
[142] Nikolai Bukharin, "K Sotsializmu! (Towards Socialism!)," *Sotsial Demokrat*, October 27, 1917.

Chapter 2 || Berkman Blasts Bolshevism

On July 23, 1892 Alexander Berkman, a Jewish emigrant from the Russian Empire,[143] entered the Pittsburgh office of Carnegie Steel brandishing a revolver and opened fire on the company's manager Henry Clay Frick. Frick had recently gained notoriety for hiring Pinkertons to suppress Amalgamated Association strikers, the steel workers' union representing Carnegie's employees. Though not a steel worker himself, Berkman felt that Frick embodied the oppressive nature of industrial capitalism at its most extreme, and that to make an example of the tyrant would create a domino effect leading to a nationwide liberation of all workers from the shackles of wage labor. Frick survived the attempt on his life, and Berkman earned himself a 25-year prison sentence. No Social Revolution took place in America.

Alexander Berkman subscribed to the Anarchist philosophy, especially as codified by Russian intellectuals in St. Petersburg during the latter half of the nineteenth century. His uncle Maxim Natanson had participated in the Chaikovskii Circle, a group of students at St. Petersburg University committed to radical ideas, which would also include Russia's most famous Anarchist, Prince Peter Kropotkin. Natanson later formed the group *Zemlia i Volia*, whose offshoot organization *Narodnaia Volia* successfully orchestrated the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. Berkman claims to have heard the bombs that shattered the Tsar's

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[143] Trying to create an accurate taxonomy of Berkman is difficult. He was born in the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire. He spoke natively both Russian and Yiddish, the latter enabling him to speak German and eventually English with ease. However, Berkman never identified himself as "Jewish," though he did apparently spend his youth in a religious school before being expelled over an essay denying the existence of God. It would be inaccurate to simply call him "Russian" though, especially in English without the distinction between *russkii* and *rossiiskii*. Thus, I have indicated his being from Russia without calling him "Russian" in the best way possible. Many scholars of the Revolution and Anarchism in general refer to both him and Goldman as "American," and the first section of this chapter illustrates how the American experience against his "Russian" heritage formed his views.

carriage that fateful day from his St. Petersburg classroom, and fondly recalled whisperings among his older relatives about "Nihilism."[144]

The Chaikovskii Circle engaged in constant debates on precisely *how* the Revolution would come about. There had been revolutionary mutterings throughout Russia, and the *chaikovtsy* intended to reach a "new level" of activity and build a "truly nationwide network" of activists. Originally, the Circle was meant to be "an order without written regulations, rituals, or a general hierarchy," but "the very opposite tendency developed" and its members began to write slews of Revolutionary Manifestoes. Perhaps due to the inherent decentralization of the group, the manifestoes exhibited a strong "confusion" reflecting the "variety of populist ideological conflicts" of the day. The first major split in the movement occurred in the early 1870s between Petr Lavrov and Mikhail Bakunin, then both in Zurich. Lavrov advocated that the "radical student intelligentsia alone comprehended the nature of Russian reality" and were thus singly "capable of bringing about a fundamental transformation of society" whereas Bakunin believed in the "spontaneous insurrections of an aroused peasantry" that the "intelligentsia could only help incite," but could not lead.[145] The essence of the split, which had the students back in St. Petersburg choosing sides, was over the need for vanguardism, and this tension lived in Berkman.[146]

Berkman's uncle Natanson supported the vanguardist wing of Russian *narodnichestvo*, which contributed to Berkman's desire to carry out Revolutionary action.

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[144] Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: Shocken Books, 1970), 83-84. This statement is questionable. Berkman vividly describes the windows of the classroom shattering, as if it were right above the site of the bomb as if the small bombs had such a wide blast radius. The assassination also took place on a Sunday – not generally a school day.

[145] Martin A. Miller, "Ideological Conflicts in Russian Populism: The Revolutionary Manifestoes of the Chaikovsky Circle, 1869-1874," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 1 (1970): 1-3.

[146] Tariq Ali makes a small note to the effect that Lenin also was inherently a product of the "pre-Marxist revolutionary tradition of Tsarist Russia," Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin*, 75.

Natanson held that the Party should embrace the "Revolutionary role of the student youth" with the "immediate strategy" of agitation and so-called *knizhnoe delo* (literary distribution in the villages) echoing Lavrov's belief that "the people had to be led by a Revolutionary Party." [147] Many scholars, especially those opposed to what became of Bolshevist vanguardism, write that the vanguardists were too elitist, whereas Bakunin had the distinctly Slavophil "deep admiration for the People."[148] While this admiration may have been well-founded, Franco Venturi finds that the "glorious failure of the 'going to the people' movement in the 1870s indicated that slow educational activity among the peasants was doomed, or at best would have required centuries of work to yield results." At the same time, he notes that the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 led to greater repressions and attacks especially on the members of The People's Will, rather than the collapse of Tsardom.[149]

As much as "Uncle Maxim" inspired Berkman, so too did the writings and character of Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin was almost Natanson's complete opposite in that he opposed the "idiots" who "believe that they can change the course of history with one kilogram of dynamite." In contrast to the vanguardists, Kropotkin placed a great emphasis on the power of the People.[150] Kropotkin's first major work in the Chaikovskii Circle in 1873 suggested that the means of production had to be owned in common, with no room for reform within the present social system, and that the Party must "orient itself exclusively to the *narod* rather than to the intelligentsia." [151] Years later, when speaking with Lenin after the

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[147] Miller, "Ideological Conflicts," 5-8.
[148] E. Belfer, "Zemlya vs. Volya. From Narodnichestvo to Marxism," *Soviet Studies* 30, no. 3 (1978): 297-312.
[149] Michael Confino, "Franco Venturi's Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 1 (2010): 106, 103.
[150] Confino, "Franco Venturi's Russia," 103.
[151] Miller, "Ideological Conflicts," 15; Trotsky describes this as "a weakness ever since youth for the *narodniks*," Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 166.

Bolshevik seizure, he suggested that the emphasis needed to be on "the creative genius of local forces," rather than a top-down Party approach.[152] Moreover, Kropotkin maintained a tinge of nationalism in his philosophy, by advocating against union with émigré or international Parties: Russia's liberation had to come from Russians themselves.[153] Berkman thus re-synthesized these two elements of Russian *narodnichestvo*, by always professing an utter adulation for the People, while also believing in the vanguardist nature inherent in Propaganda of the Deed.

Franco Venturi chronicles Russian radicalism in general, beyond just the Chaikovskii Circle. His seminal work *Roots of Revolution* over 50 years later is still the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. Venturi credits Nikolai Chernyshevskii, the author of the novel *What is to be Done?* for providing the movement "with its most solid content." Chernyshevskii believed that everything in Russia had to "be began again from the start" and in his novel introduces a side character named Rakhmetov who represents the ideal Revolutionary: a man devoted entirely to the cause, preparing himself for an inevitable Revolution through physical training, healthy eating, and abstaining from alcohol. Venturi's discussion on Natanson's *Zemlia i Volia* group notes that acts of terrorism figured into an overall program that also included information campaigns.[154] Perhaps the most important act of political terrorism in Russia before 1881 was Vera Zasulich's 1878 attempt on St. Petersburg's Governor Trepov, especially due to her subsequent acquittal in court – Karakozov's attempt on the Tsar a decade earlier seemed devoid of any intellectual or

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[152] Quoted in Christos Memos, "Anarchism and Council Communism on the Russian Revolution," *Anarchist Studies* 20, no. 2 (2012), 22.
[153] Miller, "Ideological Conflicts," 15-17.
[154] Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 597.

Revolutionary element and thus was not useful as a propaganda device. While her act did not directly lead to the assassination of the Tsar, it certainly inspired in some part the Revolutionaries who did so.

European Anarchists like Johann Most, a German Jew who moved to America in the 1870s, would codify terms like "Propaganda of the Deed" and *attentat*. A propagandistic deed put simply was an assassination of a suitable target whose crimes against society would justify his death and inflame the masses with Revolutionary fervor, bringing about the end to an unjust social order.[155] Constant debates within the Anarchist community followed, questioning how to decide on a target and how effective such an act would be. Working in service of the mass of People, Anarchists in this sense placed public opinion at the fore of all discussions on direct action. The movement also committed itself to creating the grounds for a Deed's success by spending an inordinate amount of time on publishing newsletters in an attempt to engender sympathy for their ideals.

Berkman arrived in New York at age 18 with these debates and traditions firmly ingrained into his young mind and immediately ingratiated himself into Most's circle, as well as the Jewish radical group Pioneers of Liberty. Berkman waxed romantic in his first memoir about how Most, whose last name was a homophone for the Russian word for "bridge," served as a bridge between the Old World and the New.[156] He immediately took up work with Most's German-language paper *Freiheit*, though only as a typesetter. Berkman and Most eventually split, due to the latter's intransigence with a rival Anarchist, whereas Berkman always favored a unified movement. On the other hand, Berkman remained connected to the

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[155] Johann Most, "Action as Propaganda," *Freiheit*, July 25, 1885.
[156] Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, 57, 78.

Pioneers of Liberty via their Yiddish-language daily the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* throughout his life. His first writings appeared in the *Shtime* in 1892, and he would later implore the paper in the 1920s to publish his experiences in Soviet Russia.

Upon learning that Frick had attempted to subdue the Carnegie strikers with force, Berkman felt that the public outcry was such that the grounds existed for an effective *attentat* to take place. When no Revolution followed, he had to reassess his evaluation of America, and by the end of his prison term came to a new understanding of how to reach American workers with his ideas. This turned to an obsession with propagandizing, and the formation of his own biweekly newspaper *The Blast*, which began in January of 1916. The paper's eighteen-month run showcases that though Berkman had to reformat his ideas for the American worker, he never fully abandoned his specifically Russian brand of Populism – or ceased to dwell on the nature of his childhood home. His articles also continued the Anarchist dialogue on choosing proper targets, in some ways perhaps a continued justification for his Deed against Frick; in others as a means of incensing workers to be on the lookout for whom to make an example of next. Finally, the writings embody and discuss his belief that for any future *attentat* to be effective, the masses needed sufficient awakening.

Like Bukharin, Alexander Berkman was in the United States when Nicholas II abdicated the Russian throne, and his first reactions likewise appeared in an American publication. Unlike Bukharin, though, Berkman had been in America for close to 30 years and had sufficiently "Americanized" his thought. The most profound impact that America had on Berkman was changing his blind faith in "the People" to come to Revolutionary action of their own accord. Since his *attentat* on Frick did not incite a Social Revolution, Berkman realized that the People needed coaxing to realize their position and their abilities to seize the levers

of power and actualize true liberty. But unlike the Bolsheviks, Berkman never advocated for an actual vanguard party or a Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Moreover, in contrast to *Novy Mir*, his biweekly paper *The Blast* was in English and in collaboration with other American Anarchists – not confined to the Russian émigré community. Finally, Berkman's propaganda rested more on the "destructive" nature of the Revolution with little to say about the future society. For Berkman, action and Revolution in the abstract served as his primary modicum of analysis.

Berkman's obsession after the failed *attentat* thus became propagandizing to his American audience. His act was originally planned "according to the moral effect" that he thought it would produce due to public disapproval of Frick, as Propaganda of the Deed. When no Social Revolution materialized sent him back to square one: Americans did not have the same Revolutionary tradition as Russia, so of course the workers did not take inspiration from his attack and rise up; they believed in ballots and unions, not bullets. Thus, he needed to create an "intellectual Revolution in the heads of the masses," reminding himself that "propagandists by Deed are at the same time agitators by word."[157] Berkman needed first to justify his Deed to Americans and thereby to hopefully prepare them for a time when a future Deed might have the desired Revolutionary outcome. To this end, he began publishing *The Blast* in San Francisco in 1916.[158] Here another difference with the Bolshevik Party emerges: Berkman had been writing for Emma Goldman's paper *Mother Earth* and his desire to publish

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[157] Alexander Berkman, "A Few Words as to My Deed," in Alexander Berkman, Henry Bauer, Bonnie Cleo Buettner, and Carl Nold, *Prison Blossoms: Anarchist Voices from the American Past* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 80-82.

[158] Berkman had been editing Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth*, but wanted his own paper with more frequent publication and less theory in favor of "timely and provocative articles" discussing the labor questions of the day; Peter Glassgold, Introduction to *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2001), xxii.

a separate organ did not cause any backlash as had happened to Bukharin and his cadre in Stockholm when Lenin forced the closure of the journal *Kommunist* in 1916.

As American as Berkman had become, though, he maintained a significant strain of Russian *narodnichestvo* in his writings, including a romanticization of the People, romanticization of self-sacrifice, and general advocacy of the use of violence to achieve Revolutionary aims. He had hoped that his attempt on Frick would become a call "to the beautiful, simple People" whom he idealized as having remained "so noble in spite of centuries of brutalizing and suffering."[159] Similarly, Berkman found "no higher calling" than to sacrifice his life before the American judicial system in order to bring about the Social Revolution with his Deed, later writing that imprisonment was "worth it a thousand times" due to its propaganda value against the brutality of the State.[160] The pages of *The Blast* included calls for violence – alerting the "down-trodden and disinherited" that all they needed to do was to "take the matter into their own hands and wipe the bloodsuckers off the face of the earth." [161] Berkman did not explain his vision for a society without the bloodsuckers, however. His later experience in Russia would create a sense of urgency in filling this theoretical void by composing a primer for Anarchist ideas and a future Anarchist society.

Berkman had always felt a sense of loss that Anarchism never properly caught on in America. Before his deportation he noted that "our ideas are misrepresented" by the false

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[159] Berkman, *Prison Memoirs*, 5.
[160] "No higher calling," Berkman, *Prison Memoirs*, 85; "worth it a thousand times," Alexander Berkman, "Eternal Values," *Mother Earth Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (1917).
[161] Alexander Berkman, "Same Old Fake," *The Blast* 1, no. 6 (1916). Other examples from the paper include a reminder that the laborers were "many" while those at the top were "few," and they only needed to transform this power into *will* to use it against their oppressors; Alexander Berkman, "If He Only Would," *The Blast* 1, no. 3 (1916).

equivocation of Anarchism with "social disaster and similar evils" like violence or outright murder. He believed that Anarchism was in fact the "negation of violence" by virtue of opposing governments "ever based on violence." This made Anarchism instead the "highest ideal of humanity" by emphasizing a liberty "based on cooperation in a community of interests."[162] For this reason, most of Berkman's writing on Russia had America as his target audience. Perhaps like Engels and Trotsky before him, Berkman suspected that America's extremely rapid industrialization would lead to a quickening of the Social Revolution; or perhaps like Emma Goldman he felt "conscious of the great debt" owed to American workers for their continued support over the years. Goldman after leaving Russia wrote that she "must raise [her] voice against the crimes committed in the name of the Revolution" for all to hear – so that American radicals might not be misled by the Comintern and wrongly support the Soviet government.[163] Regardless of the reason, Berkman returned his attention to America in the 1920s, though he never returned there, and seemed to have no intention of doing so.[164]

The Practice of Revolution

Introducing the compilation of Alexander Berkman's first publications after leaving Russia, *The Russian Tragedy*, William Nowlin, Jr. suggests that Berkman's defense of the Bolsheviks at large, despite the glaring problems he and Emma Goldman noticed upon returning to Russia, followed the same "end-justifying-the-means philosophy" that led him

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[162] Alexander Berkman, "Anarchism as Compared With Other Philosophies" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 109, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).
[163] Emma Goldman, "My Disillusionment in Russia," in *1917: Revolution in Russia and its Aftermath* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2018), 149, 202.
[164] Alexander Berkman to M. Eleanor Fitzgerald (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 20, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, February 11, 1922), 71.

to shoot Henry Clay Frick almost 30 years earlier.[165] Nowlin is correct in his assessment, and I would restate this claim as one that the pair favored, or were awestruck by, Revolution in practice irrespective of the theory behind it. John Reed, author of the seminal eyewitness account of the Bolshevik seizure *Ten Days That Shook The World*, gave the same assessment to Goldman shortly after her arrival in Russia by telling her that she was "confused by the Revolution in action" because she had only hypothetically conceived of one happening at some indeterminate date.[166] She and Berkman had not necessarily worked out how it would transpire and, following Kropotkin, had a faith in the People to naturally reorganize society once the government oppressor had disappeared, thus their optimism was sadly misplaced. On the other hand, Victor Serge in 1920 had advocated against theory altogether, calling for any and all radicals to "do practical work for the reconstruction of Russia."[167]

The Russian *narodniks* who laid the ground for Berkman's Anarchism had also struggled significantly with the tension between practice and theory. Because the radicals in the nineteenth century operated right "under the noses of St. Petersburg's extensive security police," they had to devote considerable energy to establishing and securing safe houses for hiding suspected political allies and discussion groups, therefore keeping "techniques…personal dispositions, and moral norms" at the fore.[168] Dialectically, this makes sense since the material conditions define the ideas of the time, and so therefore these early *narodniks* devoted more effort to ideas of security and practice of "Revolution," whatever

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[165] William Nowlin Jr., introduction to *The Russian Tragedy*, by Alexander Berkman (Orkney, UK: Cienfuegos Press, Ltd., 1976), vii. He makes the same claim throughout his dissertation, Nowlin, "The Political Thought of Alexander Berkman."
[166] Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 304.
[167] Paul Avrich, "Russian Anarchists and the Civil War," *The Russian Review* 27, no. 3 (1968): 297.
[168] Victoria Frede, "Revolutionaries in Deed," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 19, no. 3 (2018): 629-30.

that meant, than to the types of theoretical musings that the Trotskys and Bukharins were later afforded in the cafes of Vienna.

Alexander Berkman therefore welcomed both Revolutions in Russia. In May of 1917 he described the first Revolution as "the greatest event of modern times," noting that due to the "spirit of the Social Revolution" that had "long been gestating" in Russia, the overthrow of the Tsar was only "the first step toward a fundamental reorganization" of all facets of Russian life. The "revolutionary propaganda of the last fifty years" had led the peasantry to a point of "not being duped into contentment" by a reshuffling of bourgeois leaders: "The peasant wants the land. He knows that he cannot live on Constitutions."[169] Berkman made note that the month of March (February in Russia) had historically brought the Revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, thus March of 1917 would give way to a new May, "the day of new hope and life," invoking not only the spring thaw and blossoming flowers but also the "prophetic" choice of May 1 as the international workers' day.[170] Berkman held nothing but optimism and hope for the future of Russia, and by extension the world after the Revolution inevitably spilled over into Europe.

In 1917 Berkman had found himself afoul of American law once again, this time for agitating against war conscription under Woodrow Wilson's new espionage law. He was released in 1919 and immediately deported to "Russia" – though the country he had left no longer existed. Luckily, Berkman initially supported the Bolshevik takeover as it held promise for the kind of Revolutionary action he had always hoped for. He even worked for the Bolsheviks, with his comrade Emma Goldman, by traveling the country to acquire

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[169] Alexander Berkman, "The Russian Revolution," *The Blast* 2, no. 4 (1917).
[170] Alexander Berkman, "March and May," *The Blast* 2, no. 4 (1917).

artifacts and information for a proposed Museum of the Revolution. His travels would bring him face to face with dissenters, though he assured himself that the extraordinary situation – allied intervention in the Russian Civil War most importantly – required accepting the temporary situation of Bolshevik rule. This is because Berkman focused more on practice than theory. In practice, Lenin and Trotsky were Revolutionaries, therefore their philosophical differences did not matter as much. Likewise, when Communist practice went too far in suppressing the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921, Berkman turned against the Soviet regime at which point he emphasized their theoretical wrongs as the basis for their practical failings.

After the Bolshevik seizure in November, Berkman publicly sided with Lenin and Trotsky, as did Emma Goldman. Goldman accurately reflected that what had spontaneously transpired over the summer of 1917, including peasant land expropriation and the focus of power shifting from the Provisional Government to local Soviets, was later co-opted by the Bolsheviks. "Great as the Lenins and Trotskys may be," she wrote, they were "but the pulse-beat of the people."[171] Berkman focused more specifically on the power Trotsky had, both at home and around the world. In "two short months," he wrote, Trotsky had "done more for peace and humanity" than the bourgeois diplomats he had supplanted. As an example, Berkman noted that by Trotsky "personifying the spirit of Revolutionary Russia," the German government became "more afraid" of him and his propaganda "than Allied artillery," for "Revolutionary IDEAS are more fatal to autocracy" than the loss of a war.[172] The two Anarchists therefore held great anticipation about what would come globally of the

[171] Emma Goldman, "The Russian Revolution," *Mother Earth Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (1917).
[172] Alexander Berkman, "The Trotsky Idea," *Mother Earth Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (1918).

Revolution since a Revolutionary Party had come to power, thus in complete agreement with the Bolshevik rationale for October.[173]

More significant in understanding Berkman's thought then, especially for the present analysis, is the fact that he based his initial support on Bolshevik *practice*, rather than Bolshevik *theory*. Everybody knew, of course, that Anarchists and Marxists had irreconcilable theoretical differences, but Berkman felt it prudent to put these differences aside in service of the greater Revolution. Berkman also had no alternative theory per se; he occupied himself entirely with what Kropotkin later termed the "destructive phase" of Anarchist thought, and openly admitted to glossing over the problems of maximalist Bolshevism. Moreover, Berkman did not really believe that any theory was necessary, for "the People is the supreme truth;" that is, given a chance, given a great Revolutionary tempest, the People would naturally come to order themselves in the way he, following Kropotkin, foresaw.[174] In sum, theoretically Berkman and the Anarchists had the same beginning and end goals as the Bolsheviks: first a Revolution would eliminate the bourgeois class, and eventually a classless, Stateless society would emerge. The Bolsheviks advocated for vanguardism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as an intermediary period; Berkman and the Anarchists did not believe such a transitory period was necessary.[175]

All the same, some Anarchists had apparently criticized support for the Bolsheviks on theoretical grounds, but Berkman defended his views. In a *Mother Earth Bulletin,* he

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[173] Avrich also notes Berkman's belief that the Revolution would spread to Germany, Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 298.
[174] Alexander Berkman, "Random Thoughts and Otherwise" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 115, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).
[175] Kropotkin for example emphasized a latent spontaneity and "instinct of solidarity and cooperation;" Ya'acov Oved, "The Future Society According to Kropotkin," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 33, no. 2/3 (1992): 306.

seemingly understood the Bolsheviks as a guiding, temporary party, and he would oppose them should they form a "permanent government."[176] Understanding that the Bolsheviks had allied with the (Left) Socialist Revolutionaries, Syndicalists, and even Anarchists in Russia, he suggested that they did "not represent the narrow-minded Socialist type whose ideal is a strongly centralized Socialist government." He even apologized for the early stages of the Red Terror and the Civil War, claiming that it was "unfair to judge Trotsky and his co-workers" by actions that resulted from the "stress of a most momentous crisis." The "supreme justification of the Lenins and Trotskys" in Berkman's view was that they, like him, shared "the great passion to make the world fit" for "universal peace and brotherhood."[177] Goldman echoed this sentiment writing retrospectively that she initially defended the Bolsheviks as "embodying *in practice* the spirit of the revolution, in spite of their *theoretic* Marxism."[178] When Berkman and Goldman later turned against the Soviet government, we should not find any inconsistency in their beliefs, but rather a change in practical Bolshevism itself, as their initial support only rested on the assumption that the Bolshevik Party had become synonymous with the Russian Revolution.

Moreover, criticizing the Bolsheviks amid a global fight against the Revolution seemed to the Anarchists like it would aid the imperialist side. Emma Goldman did not find it prudent to aid in any anti-Bolshevik agitation as, despite the criticism she was hearing

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[176] It is unclear where he got this impression unless a copy of *State and Revolution* had made its way to America; or if his contacts with Russia had read this work and reported it to him. Bukharin's "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" was not published until 1924; perhaps Berkman had read *Novy Mir* though. He eventually in the *ABC of Anarchism* discusses how Marx advocated for a future Stateless society via a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat, but that was written 10 years later including after a stint in Soviet Russia where he might have acquired the knowledge. Elsewhere in *The Blast* he had scorned the "Statism" of Marxists and not mentioned the transition to a Stateless Communism.
[177] Alexander Berkman, "The Surgeon's Duty," *Mother Earth Bulletin*.
[178] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 8. Goldman italicizes "*in practice*" however I add emphasis on "*theoretic*" as well to enforce to the argument of this section.

around the country, she still felt that they held onto "Revolutionary sincerity and integrity" sufficiently warranting her faith. The *Nabat* commune in Kharkov, for example, had hoped that she and Berkman would join them in their struggle as two internationally renowned Anarchists. Unfortunately, Goldman felt that "as long as Russia was being attacked from the outside," she could not "speak in criticism" nor "add fuel to the fires of counter-revolution" at a time when "the country was still besieged on several fronts" which would thereby "mean working into the hands of Poland and Wrangel." To this end she also refused to meet with the proto-Anarchist guerrilla leader Nestor Makhno per the agreement of their museum contract.[179] Victor Serge likewise lamented that the opportunism of Pilsudski's Poland invading Ukraine and the callous recognition by Britain and France of Wrangel's "government" in Crimea made criticizing the Bolsheviks next to impossible.[180]

As another example, take Berkman's changing discussion on the Constituent Assembly which convened for only one day in January of 1918. Originally, having just emerged from a prison sentence in America and thus not finely attuned to the situation on the ground in Russia, he concluded that dismissing the Constituent Assembly saved the Revolution from becoming "the saddle of the bourgeois exploiters" to "climb upon the back of the Russian proletariat."[181] Echoing his and Goldman's belief that Bolshevism in practice served as a Revolutionary bulwark against any form of bourgeois counter-revolution, Berkman felt that all should defer to the Bolsheviks for the time being because "an absolute party" was the "only safe party in great crises."[182] After his stint in early Soviet Russia, he

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[179] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 110, 149.
[180] Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 476.
[181] Alexander Berkman, "The Surgeon's Duty," *Mother Earth Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (1918).
[182] Alexander Berkman, "Random Thoughts and Otherwise," Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 115, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

scorned the dissolution of the Assembly, suggesting that it came "only when [the Bolsheviks] were convinced that they would not have a majority."[183] Obviously after hearing the original figures that the Bolsheviks only received 25% of the vote in November 1917, whereas the nominal SRs were the favored party in the largely agrarian country, he had to walk back his previous views on the course of the Revolution in Russia.[184] In theory, he should have known that a party led by the incorrigible Lenin would never accede to shared governance. But Berkman's enthusiasm for Revolution in the abstract and favoring practice over theory as his early modicum of analysis led to his initial naïveté regarding the nature of Bolshevism.

As a historical framework, Sheila Fitzpatrick also favors analyzing practice over theory. Fitzpatrick's concern for the Soviet "reality" favors writing social history by looking at all strata of society – not just in reading declarations from high officials.[185] The problem with this approach is that it conflates political history with regime history and contributes to the continued erasure of the rank-and-file members of the Bolshevik Party. For his part, Berkman in some ways took official declarations at face value, as when he believed that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was meant only as a temporary institution, while at the same time he ignored that his ideology was against even this form of transitory power, and only analyzed practice; only noted the gains made by the Revolutionary masses throughout 1917.

After leaving Russia, Berkman and Goldman not only abandoned their support of the Bolsheviks, but they also reframed their modicum of analysis from practice to theory: Bolshevism failed because it was destined to as a Marxist ideology. Even after riding the wave

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[183] Alexander Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 16.
[184] The real problem with the Constituent Assembly was that the SRs had split and only the Left SR's still supported the land program then in force – but the whole "SR" party still got the votes from the countryside; explained in detail in Le Blanc, *October Song*, 111.
[185] Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History," 27-54.

of popular discontent in October, Berkman noted that Lenin's party unfortunately "had no faith in the People and their creative initiative," a flaw he attributed to their devout Marxism. As Social Democrats – the ideology of city folk – Berkman accused them especially of distrusting the peasantry *en masse*, favoring the objectively small number of industrial workers.[186] Goldman more forcibly decried Bolshevik messianism by stating that their most "basic principle" was that the country "must be *forced* to be *saved* by the Communist Party."[187] Berkman especially scorned Bukharin, the "foremost ideologue of the militant Communists" whose "cynical doctrinairism" advocated "terrorism" as the "method by which capitalistic human nature is to be transformed."[188]

Since Marxists were Statists in the eyes of Anarchists, all of this should have been evident, as it all was apparently the natural outgrowth of any kind of State. Goldman wrote that "the inherent tendency of the State is to concentrate, to narrow, and monopolize all social activities" whereas "the nature of Revolution is, on the contrary, to grow, to broaden, and disseminate itself in ever-wider circles." Especially after Kronstadt and splitting with the Left SR's, it became clear to her that "not only Bolshevism" had failed, "but Marxism itself. That is to say, the STATE IDEA" had failed due to its very nature.[189] The ideological retreat to the New Economic Policy compounded the sense of distrust Berkman had developed toward Bolshevism. Berkman wrote that the so-called Dictatorship of the Proletariat was

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[186] Alexander Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy* (Orkney, UK: Cienfuegos Press, Ltd.), 16. Berkman suggested that in any case, since "Marxism-Leninism could never speak to the peasantry," should the Bolsheviks make any "overtures" to the rural population, it would inevitably be "fakery" and "irreconcilable" with their doctrine; note the shift in criticism was no longer Bolshevik practice, but Bolshevik theory; Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 40.
[187] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 138.
[188] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 22, 41.
[189] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 214.

effectively "in no sense different from State capitalism."[190] Fitzpatrick's criticism of the Bolsheviks describes centralized planning as a "basic Socialist objective" in potential conflict with worker and union goals.[191] Tamás Krausz similarly describes the "mutually exclusive ideas of Soviet labor self-government" and those of "State Socialism."[192] These critiques may be materially accurate, but we must recall that the Bolsheviks insisted that the proletariat was in charge of the State: the State capitalism of NEP was proletarian capitalism, and centralized planning by the proletariat would inherently reflect worker goals.

Interestingly, Bukharin began to side with the peasants during NEP – or at least paid them some lip service. Here he might have agreed with Kropotkin who believed that the early stages of a Revolution should "first be provided with vital produce to encourage them to supply food for the cities."[193] He stood against the continuation of requisitioning as it would alienate the peasantry, though Fitzpatrick suggests this view was borne only of political convenience to not "risk breaking the worker-peasant alliance" central to Lenin's conception of NEP. When Stalin took over the party and advocated a more ruthless policy towards the countryside, Bukharin again "opposed coercion of the peasantry" and any policy which would incite a rural class war between peasants of various economic standing; notably suggesting that Stalin's anti-Kulak campaign was overstated.[194] For Berkman, too much damage had been done, and he had to campaign more aggressively against Statism in general, with a more detailed economic program as per Kropotkin's lamentations. In 1929 this would be realized as his *ABC of Anarchism*.

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[190] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 54. As Goldman succinctly puts it, "not even the dictatorship of the proletariat but the dictatorship of a small group *over* the proletariat," Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 39.
[191] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 69.
[192] Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin*, 322.
[193] Oved, "Future Society According to Kropotkin," 306.
[194] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 116, 126.

Of course, none of this is to say that Alexander Berkman lacked a concrete ideology before returning to Russia, as he did in fact have well-sketched out definitions of Anarchism, especially as compared to other ideologies. A handwritten note in the Alexander Berkman Archive shows his conceptions of Anarchism on the eve of the First World War.[195] Most importantly, Berkman differentiated the Anarchist Communist from the Anarchist Individualist. The former, his own philosophy, he defined as belief in the "common possession of the land and all means of production" with all social affairs being the result of "cooperation of voluntary groups" with no overarching State power. The Anarchist Individualist on the other hand believed in private property and "unlimited competition," but again without State controls. He did not believe that Anarchist Individualism held up to his own beliefs since "true liberty" rested on "cooperation in a community of interests," not individual self-interest. That is, nobody exists in a vacuum and therefore even without a State oppressor, the individualist philosophy forced one into the shackles of competition; Anarchist Communism is the only ideology for complete freedom.[196]

In late 1919, while back in prison for agitating against the war, Berkman also began to privately sketch some ideas critical of Bolshevism. He did not go public yet for reasons already mentioned: that any statements against the Revolution would certainly buttress reactionary and otherwise imperialist aims. In an interesting document entitled "Random Thoughts Original and Otherwise" Berkman jotted down various axioms that underpin his philosophy. Though not naming Marxists, he clearly criticized the Dictatorship of the

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[195] The papers only give the date January 25, no year. The IISG chronicles them as sometime between 1913 and 1916, and indeed one of the references to "events and tendencies of today" names Howard Elliott as the chairman of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad – a role he took on in July of 1913. Since Berkman makes no mention of the war, January 25, 1914 is the most likely date of these notes.

[196] Alexander Berkman, "Anarchism Compared with Other Philosophies" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 109, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).

Proletariat when he wrote that "the despotism of a class is as odious as the despotism of a Czar." Especially as a child of Russian *narodnichestvo*, Berkman could not accept his perceived Leninist belief in the outright supremacy of the urban proletariat over the peasantry. He also modified a Marxist idea in writing that "true Socialism means the substitution of the social motive for the private property motive," apparently interpreting worker ownership of industry as just as petty bourgeois as the Bolshevik criticism of peasant land plots. If industrial production only served the owners of the industries – be they bourgeoisie or worker soviets – rather than what would benefit the whole of society, then there was no difference.[197]

Not much differentiated Berkman from Kropotkin in this regard – at this point he did not contribute anything new to Anarchist philosophy. Kropotkin had already emphasized that people would naturally gravitate towards cooperation and equality in the absence of private ownership and governments, though he did not claim to have a "rational program for a future society," just a "scientific concept" to guide mankind based on his observations. Like Marx, Kropotkin "did not intend to depict a compulsory program." In contrast with Marx, Kropotkin believed that the farmers would "play a major role" in actualizing Revolution rather than the proletariat – a belief Berkman consistently echoed.[198]

Berkman's later criticism of NEP continues this line of reasoning by suggesting that the Bolsheviks either had to "give up their bloody dictatorship" and allow for the "free energies of the people to begin the economic upbuilding of the country" which would presumably be some form of agrarian syndicalism, or to "retain the dictatorship and

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[197] Alexander Berkman, "Random Thoughts Original and Otherwise" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 115, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.)
[198] Oved, "The Future Society According to Kropotkin," 303-06.

reestablish capitalism." By choosing the latter, the Bolsheviks effectively "gave up Communism" rather than "endanger the exclusive political control of the Communist Party." [199] Interestingly, Berkman does not suggest that he would have opposed a continuation of War Communism as they could have at least maintained the guise of carrying out a transition period to a classless, Stateless society. Berkman fervently opposed what he saw as the shrewd betrayal of their own Marxism in service of political power.

Anarchist scholars tend to agree with Berkman that NEP indicated that the Bolsheviks preferred power over ideology. Christos Memos suggests that NEP, as well as Kronstadt, "deprived" the Revolution "of its ideological and political justification."[200] Avrich remarks that the "major theme" to the Anarchist critique of Bolshevism was that "one big owner had taken the place of many small ones."[201] The underlying nature of these critiques rests on the original *narodnik* struggle between vanguardism and a wager on the People. If the People had come together and proposed, from *zemstvo*-like bodies, a unified national economy that would prevent overproduction of one commodity and underproduction of another, then could the Anarchists have opposed it?

This problem would later be brought to Goldman's attention by Kropotkin, who she reports had admonished the Anarchist movement for not having "given sufficient consideration to the fundamental elements of the Social Revolution" beyond "the actual fighting," what he termed the necessary "destructive phase" which would "clear the way for constructive effort." The Anarchists, he said, ought to devote more time to considering the

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[199] Alexander Berkman, "The Bolshevik Government and the Anarchists" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 185, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1922).
[200] Memos, "Anarchism and Council Communism on the Russian Revolution," 25.
[201] Avrich, "Russian Anarchists and the Civil War," 299.

"organization of the economic life of the country." That is, to creating a detailed theoretical program for achieving their desired Social Revolution beyond the vague calls for expropriation and the like found in his own *Conquest of Bread*.[202] Kropotkin did not have much to recommend on this front himself, he merely noted that the Bolsheviks were showing the world "how *not* to introduce Communism."[203] In "making a Revolution *for* the people," Lenin had followed the discredited line of *Narodnaia Volia*, rather than fostering a bottom-up Social Revolution.[204] Indeed, Berkman had not thought much of what to do in the intermediary stages either. He had strong feelings on Revolutionary action as a veritable "storm" after which all would enjoy the "common serenity of the sky," but how would society weather the storm? How would "those who have been beaten," i.e., the bourgeoisie, and "those who have not suffered," i.e., the victorious masses, reconcile?[205]

For his own part, Kropotkin, while refusing an official position in a State capacity, had attempted to influence the Bolshevik government, but to no avail. He had already tried having it both ways upon returning to Russia after the February Revolution where he refused a post in the Provisional Government but still tried to have influence over Kerensky. The proposals he made in both cases proved especially ironic as he advocated for a bottom-up *zemstvo*-style government of de-centralized councils. Essentially, for a union of Soviets – though without a central committee.[206] Strangely, Kropotkin also hoped that the bourgeoisie would "reorganize their enterprises so as to remedy the plight of the masses," something

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[202] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 94.
[203] Quoted in Memos, "Anarchism and Council Communism on the Russian Revolution," 26.
[204] David Shub, "Kropotkin and Lenin," *The Russian Review* 12, no. 4 (1953): 229.
[205] Alexander Berkman, "Random Thoughts Original and Otherwise" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 115, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1922).
[206] George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (New York: Shocken Books, 1971), 397-401.

that had never happened in history and that no Leftist could ever imagine happening.[207] Kropotkin's entire worldview was based on the goodwill of Man, especially Russians, such that the overthrow of the Tsar would inevitably lead to the federated communes of his dreams facilitated by a newly benevolent bourgeoisie. One scholar describes Kropotkin's belief in the "instinct of solidarity and cooperation, as well as a revolutionary spirit" that would guide the masses to the new social order.[208] Naïve, delusional, or otherwise, Kropotkin's belief in the People informed the entirety of Berkman's theory crafted in response to Bolshevism.

The Russian Tragedy

Shortly after leaving Russia, Berkman published a series of pamphlets intended to properly document what had been occurring in Revolutionary Russia. He first mentions plans for this activity while waiting in Riga for a visa to Germany, finally free from Russian censorship over his correspondence. His intention was that above all else the articles see publication in English, ideally in a radical paper but even in a liberal-centrist magazine like *The Nation*. Leveraging connections in the Yiddish community of New York, he eventually had some works published in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, for which he demanded higher pay since he was no ordinary correspondent: he had the necessary historical knowledge of Russia to provide more deeply accurate analyses. He maintained the rights to release his pieces in English as well, which eventually saw publication through Berlin's *Der Syndikalist* publishing house.[209] Three of these pamphlets were later collected as *The Russian Tragedy*,

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[207] Memos, "Anarchism and Council Communism on the Russian Revolution," 25.
[208] Oved, "Future Society According to Kropotkin," 306.
[209] Alexander Berkman to M. Eleanor Fitzgerald (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 20, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, December 9, 1921), 47-48, on censors and asking for more pay; (January 23, 1922), 64, on English publication as priority; (February 10, 1922), 70, on taking English rights to himself and offer to *The Nation*, 70.

his first major publication since the *Prison Memoirs*. The first pamphlet, itself entitled "The Russian Tragedy," began with an acknowledgement that the Russian Revolution had "been of incalculable educational and inspirational value to mankind," though by the time of his writing it had "failed of its ultimate purpose."[210] He equally condemned the "sheer ignorance" that he felt "characterize[d] the attitude of the great majority of people toward Russia and Russian events." [211] Berkman scorned the in-and-out observers who "see little and understand less" before returning home to print their "superficial impressions and half-baked opinions, regardless if they were favorable assessments or not. These types of reports had "no real worth" since the Russian Revolution was "an event of such tremendous worldwide importance" that "only the most thorough study" could do it "even approximate justice." Berkman had thus volunteered himself to be the one to make sure such a treatment was "done right."[212]

The second pamphlet, "The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party," made a special point to differentiate between what Berkman saw as a Social Revolution which took place in the summer of 1917 and the October seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.[213] Berkman chronicled the summer days when "the laboring masses" began the "destruction of the system of private ownership" by taking charge of factories in cities and expropriating land in the countryside. He especially noted the Anarchist tinge to this movement, and accused the Bolsheviks of having "followed the path marked out" by this "great popular outburst."[214] After her first meeting with Lenin in Moscow, Goldman similarly remarked that she saw in

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[210] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 3.
[211] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 5.
[212] Alexander Berkman to M. Eleanor Fitzgerald (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 20, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, October 2, 1921), 41.
[213] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 14.
[214] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 48.

Lenin an "approach to people that was purely utilitarian" in service of his own personal greater plan.[215] Quite simply, the Bolsheviks were "political opportunists" who had "deviated" from the "straight and narrow path" laid out by Marx and co-opted the Anarchist-tinged Revolution of the summer that had already organically come about.[216] Note that based on the above discussion, we can see that Berkman was mistaken in his supposition of any "path" having been laid out by Marx, who only spoke of the inevitable destination, to say nothing of this path being "straight and narrow" when it in fact had many routes based on changing material conditions.

Historians tend to agree with Berkman's assessment of a Bolshevik nod to the spontaneous, anarchist movement of the summer months as political opportunism. Fitzpatrick notes that advocacy for direct worker control was closer to "anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism than Bolshevism," a vanguardist ideology, but as "political realists" they did not want to lose the popular support the Party had in the various Soviets.[217] Rex Wade notes that the left coalition of Bolsheviks, Left SRs and Menshevik Internationalists was "giving voice to popular frustrations and promising a more certain fulfillment of the aspirations of the revolutionary masses."[218] Suny discusses how the Bolsheviks cheered on peasant expropriation as the true will of the People, and how they "reaped the harvest" from the degradation of the Provisional Government's control over the country.[219] Recall also that Bukharin's Moscow writings from before October noted that the masses were already

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[215] Goldman, "My Disillusionment in Russia," 42.
[216] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 30.
[217] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 55. She also invokes again her conception of "orthodox Marxism" to note that the Bolsheviks "overcame their Marxist scruples" and "caught the mood of the crowd" in the summer of 1917, 43.
[218] Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 292.
[219] Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 47-50. Kenez makes the same point, Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 25-26.

carrying the Revolution forward, there polemicizing against the centrist Mensheviks and collaborationists who he charged felt that all that could be accomplished had been accomplished in February.

After his disillusionment with the Bolsheviks, Berkman continued with fervent propagandizing – this time committed to exposing the nature of Soviet Power rather than the flaws of capitalism. Americans were the clear target audience of his three major works in this period, *The Russian Tragedy, The Bolshevik Myth*, and the *ABC of Anarchism* by publishing primarily in English, and by relating Revolutionary events to the American heritage. He was careful not to publish in the capitalist press, however, and especially worried about the wrong kind of criticism being levied against Soviet Russia.[220]

Apart from anti-Bolshevik tasks, Berkman also planned for a German edition of his *Prison Memoir* that would be a "popular edition" both in terms of an "accessible" price to the working class and "neatly and artistically" translated – the "literary form" of his work needing to be maintained while also being eminently readable at any literacy level.[221] This stemmed from his conviction that "eloquence is the talent of giving force to reason," meaning that "language should light and inspire" the reader.[222] He similarly demanded that the second edition of his Russian diary, *The Bolshevik Myth*, come out at a lower cost due to low worker salaries of the time.[223]

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[220] Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 316.
[221] Alexander Berkman to Verlag Der Syndikalist (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 165, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1925).
[222] Alexander Berkman, "Random Thoughts Original and Otherwise" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 115, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1922).
[223] The book never went to second printing in his lifetime since it did not initially sell very well, Boni & Liveright Publishers to Alexander Berkman (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 169, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, June 6, 1925).

Chief among Berkman's later goals in international agitation was fundraising for political prisoners in the Soviet Union. His bulletins on behalf of the Russian Aid Fund (which appeared at least in English, French, and German) restated similar claims from *The Russian Tragedy* and the first half of the *ABC of Anarchism* in short form. He began by acknowledging the October Revolution as "the most significant upheaval known in human history" for its shattering of an economy based on "human slavery and oppression" before characterizing the political reality as "the most absolute despotism," the economic reversal to "State and private" capitalism (this being the time of NEP), the problem of indoctrination to create "blind obedience" from "fanatical subjects whose wills are crippled," all under a social "condition of terror." The purpose of this exposition was to garner funds for "the first step" of "returning to the People the fruits of the Revolution," namely to secure the "immediate and unconditional liberation of the political prisoners."[224] As we saw above, Berkman and the Anarchists decoupled the Bolshevik State from the Russian Revolution itself; the latter being accomplished by the People and not the Party, therefore deserving of the proverbial fruit.

Another major concern for Berkman at this time was the infighting endemic to the radical Left. Berkman believed that the type of petty bickering, especially in public fora, kept "many good elements away from us" because potential comrades would "miss in our midst the very spirit…of helpfulness and solidarity" the movement was based on.[225] In particular,

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[224] Alexander Berkman, "Documents relating to the Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned and Exiled in Russia, later called Russian Aid Fund" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 129, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1927-1933).

[225] Alexander Berkman, "Circular, leaflet, and a financial account relating to donations to support Nestor Makhno and Sébastian Faure" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 130, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1929).

Berkman characterized recently published attacks on the German Anarchist Rudolf Rocker as "as baseless as they are base," motivated less by ideological differences than "petty personal envy and spite."[226] Even regarding attacks on Nestor Makhno, whom Berkman previously disavowed as not a real Anarchist, he felt that the "petty and despicable personalities" attacking the Ukrainian militant were "unprincipled, irresponsible and most injurious to the movement."[227] This same insistence on the appearance of unity echoes on his and Goldman's initial hesitance on speaking out against the course of Bolshevism in Russia, lest they inadvertently support the bourgeois governments and reactionary White Guards in their struggle against the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks had also realized this necessity on "factions" within the Party, though as we saw above, they did not succeed in barring any and all public polemic, with the "Literary Debate" surrounding Trotsky's "Lessons of October" as just one example. Berkman would of course never credit the Bolsheviks with doing something admirable, but he obviously agreed with the sentiment that a fractured movement is ineffective.

Kropotkin or Kronstadt?

We come to a major question concerning the turning point for Berkman in Soviet Russia. He and Goldman contend that the crushing of the Kronstadt Rebellion was the event that set them against Bolshevism for good. In March of 1921 the sailors at the Kronstadt naval base, which had shown enthusiastic support of Bolshevism in the summer of 1917 and played no small part in the Party's later victory, voiced their concern against the growing

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[226] Alexander Berkman, "Appeal by Alexander Berkman against the attack on Rudolf Rocker in the *Freie Arbeiter* (Berlin), an Anarchist publication" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 136, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1929).

[227] Alexander Berkman, "Appeal by Alexander Berkman against the attacks by Nestor Makhno on Volin. With a note" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 137, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1928).

centralization of the Communists. Fearful of any sort of "bridge" for a Menshevik or White counter-revolution, Lenin and Trotsky sent troops across the icy Gulf of Finland to suppress the rebellion.[228] Fitzpatrick refers to the Bolshevik turn against the Kronstadters, once "almost legendary figures" in official mythology as a moment of "trauma," and the Bolshevik spin on the situation by suggesting that White Army generals actually *led* the revolt became their "first major effort to conceal unpleasant truths."[229] Avrich, author of the most complete history of Kronstadt, suggests on the other hand that White Russian émigrés did indeed seek to co-opt the revolt and that many scholars ignore Lenin and Trotsky's "genuine anxiety;" whereas Soviet historians carried forth the idea that the whole affair was a White conspiracy. He concludes that the "full tragedy of Kronstadt" lies in the necessity of sympathizing with the rebels while also "conceding" that the "Bolsheviks were justified in subduing them."[230]

The biggest problem with the narrative of Kronstadt lies in the simple fact that the Kronstadt of 1921 was not the Kronstadt of 1917; just as much as the Bolshevik Party of 1921 was not that of 1917. There had been just as strong an inclination towards traditionally Anarchist ideas in the summer of 1917 in both camps before the Bolsheviks seized power, as noted by Berkman, Fitzpatrick, and others. The Anarchist tendency of Lenin favoring decentralization, Soviet Power, and land requisition as formulated in *State and Revolution* struck a chord with the sailors who had not proposed any other more Anarchist program. Throughout the course of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks argued, the original Kronstadters had then "been scattered to all corners of the country," rendering comparison of 1921 to 1917 erroneous. Avrich suggests that this was true in a sense, but argues that Kronstadt had

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[228] Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 136
[229] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 94-95.
[230] Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 5-6.

always had an unruly peasant composition – part of what made it such a successful force in 1917 – and remains unconvinced of this line of reasoning.[231] Whereas the Anarchists like Berkman had sought to decouple the Bolshevik seizure of October from the natural Revolutionary movement from the summer of 1917, the 1921 Kronstadters clung to the heroism of their forebears and emphasized the greatness of their part in the October victory and decoupled the emergent Communist Party from that triumph. The Kronstadters thus declared themselves the Third Revolution, which might have "made it possible for people to reconcile allegiance to the ideals of the [Second, i.e., October] Revolution" with the "record of the regime in practice." Robert Daniels notes, however, that due to the unintellectual nature of the 1921 Kronstadters, who only expressed their ideas in "simple slogans," they would have "in all probability brought to power some form of regime representing the predominant petty-bourgeois peasant physiognomy of the Russian nation," rather than anything truly Revolutionary.[232]

Throughout the Kronstadt affair, Berkman remained skeptical of Bolshevik characterization of the events unfolding. Reading the Kronstadters' declarations asking for free elections to Soviets, neither more nor less, he saw a continuation of the same libertarian ideology that had brought the Bolsheviks to power in 1917. He noted that indeed a former Tsarist general named Kozlovsky was in Kronstadt, appointed by Trotsky during the Civil War as a "bourgeois specialist," whom the Bolsheviks then conveniently accused of leading the revolt, despite a lack of evidence.[233] Goldman wrote that she "could not believe" that the

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[231] Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 88-94.
[232] Robert V. Daniels, "The Kronstadt Revolt of 1921: A Study in the Dynamics of Revolution," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 10, no. 4 (1951): 241-54.
[233] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 81.

Bolsheviks would "deliberately fabricate" that Kozlovsky led the revolt, and the two eagerly awaited clarification on the matter at a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet which they did not receive – the Bolsheviks simply doubled down on their story. Both Berkman and Goldman found Zinoviev's speech at the Soviet meeting unconvincing – his tenor apparently changed to such an extent that he betrayed his own disbelief in the words he uttered about a White counter-revolution.[234] At the same time it seems odd that the Anarchists would doubt the malicious intent of a White Guard only a short time after refusing to meet Nestor Makhno for fear of emboldening any counter-Revolutionary movement. Both Berkman and Goldman tell their stories in retrospect, so they have the influence of hindsight in shaping their memory, as well as an argument to maintain.

As committed Revolutionaries, neither Berkman nor Goldman could sit idly by and wait to see how the situation between Kronstadt and the Bolsheviks played out. Instead, they worked on a joint letter with other Anarchists in Petrograd informing the Party that they would "fight with arms against any counter-revolutionary attempt, in cooperation with all friends of the Social Revolution and hand in hand with the Bolsheviki." However, prior to a proper ascertainment of facts regarding the sailors' revolt, a "resort to bloodshed" would "serve only to aggravate matters" and actually "strengthen the bands of the Entente and of internal counter-revolution" that the Party seemed to fear so strongly. They ended the letter by proposing a commission to go to Kronstadt "to settle the dispute by peaceful means" which "in the given situation" would be "the most radical method" of "international Revolutionary significance."[235] Victor Serge wrote in retrospect that "panic" was the biggest

[234] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 167.
[235] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 169.

"mistake" on the part of the Bolsheviks and still contended that they should have taken up the Anarchist offer to mediate the crisis.[236] They unfortunately did not.

Scholars unanimously agree that the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion was the turning point for Berkman, Goldman, and many others in deciding to oppose Bolshevism, though this may not be entirely accurate.[237] Goldman characterized the suppression as a "crime against the Proletariat, against Socialism, against the Revolution" that epitomized the failures of Bolshevik Russia.[238] Had she already made up her mind against Bolshevism, though? Since Berkman and Goldman had committed themselves to accepting Bolshevism as Revolution in practice against any intrusion – against anything which would allow for counter-revolution – they only diverged on the question of Kronstadt. A month prior, Kropotkin had died, and only then did they learn of his disapproval of Bolshevism; Goldman had remarked on how previously she had been "impressed" with Kropotkin's "lack of bitterness toward the Bolsheviki."[239] If we reframe Berkman and Goldman's mindset around Kropotkin's death, we can see that while they saw problems with Soviet power in their tour around the country, the faith they maintained that it would all work out hinged on Kropotkin's tacit support of the Revolution. Upon discovering that he, their great teacher, had secretly harbored anti-Bolshevik views, they approached Kronstadt with a new mindset predisposed to doubting Bolshevik proclamations.

As an example, Berkman maintained a "favorable attitude towards the Revolution on the eve" of Kronstadt in a letter to his American editor "Fitzie," though with growing

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[236] Serge, *Year One*, 477.
[237] Harold J. Goldberg, "Goldman and Berkman View the Bolshevik Regime," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53, no. 131 (1975): 272. Peter Glassgold describes a "sad irony" in Berkman's initial support for Trotsky since the latter led the assault on Kronstadt, Glassgold, *Anarchy!*, 405
[238] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 6.
[239] Goldman, "My Disillusionment," 160.

reservations.[240] The letter concludes that the "character and development" of the ongoing Social Revolution depends "on the degree in which it will be imbued with the ideas and ideals of Peter Kropotkin," specifically those of "non-governmental Communism" based on individual freedoms.[241] Obviously if Kropotkin disapproved of the Bolsheviks, then their rule was not "imbued with the ideas and ideals" of Kropotkin, and thus Berkman's attitude would inherently become unfavorable towards the Communist Party.

Alexander Berkman's idolization of Peter Kropotkin appears clearly in all his life's writing. From his very first published article, apparently a Yiddish translation of Kropotkin, to his *ABC of Anarchism* essentially restating the tenets of *The Conquest of Bread*; Kropotkin always loomed high over Berkman.[242] In "Reminiscences of Kropotkin," Berkman described from the beginning his adulation stemming from Kropotkin's refusal to accept money from the movement to fund a speaking tour of America as "epitomizing…all the grandeur of his nature" declaring him "my ideal of a Revolutionist and Anarchist." Berkman memorialized Kropotkin as an "uncompromising enemy of State Socialism" and "Marxism in general," apologizing for his own early approval of the Bolsheviks due to their "great Revolutionary factor" leaving him effectively "blinded" to the "dangers inherent in the very philosophy of Marxism." The biggest problem the Bolsheviks had, in addition to a "mad passion for centralization" was a complete "ignorance of agrarian questions," something *narodniki* like himself or Kropotkin claimed to better understand. Kropotkin had assured Berkman not to lose faith, as the Revolutionary masses "were greater than any political Party." Berkman

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[240] Goldberg, "Goldman and Berkman View the Bolshevik Regime," 275.
[241] Alexander Berkman to M. Stella Fitzgerald (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 20, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, March 3, 1922), 13.
[242] Information about the first article comes from Avrich, however the Avrich Collection at the Library of Congress does not have any copies of this article and the New York Public Library does not seem to have the publication either; Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 47-48.

relayed Kropotkin's final wish to "impress most forcibly upon our own comrades" the need to deal with economic questions first and foremost.[243] This would encourage Berkman to write his *ABC of Anarchism* at the end of the decade.

[243] Alexander Berkman, "Reminiscences of Peter Kropotkin (In Memoriam)" (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 180, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1922).

Chapter 3 ||| *The ABC of Communism* vs. *The ABC of Anarchism*

What was the *ABC of Communism*? To use only the pages of *Pravda* to learn more about this book would be an utterly futile course of action. Dozens of passing references to the *ABC* appear only obliquely, but no announcement had appeared in October of 1919 to the effect that *Pravda*'s editor N. I. Bukharin had just released a primer on Communism for mass consumption; and no discussion on the contents of the book ever took place in the pages of the paper - ostensibly the theoretical organ of the Bolshevik Party. Since the original pressings of the *ABC of Communism* were of such poor quality that they did not last into the 1930s, a search for the book's existence starts to take on a mythical quality more befitting a Jorge Luis Borges tale than that of an iconoclastic document meant to spread Marxian Revolution the world over.

In late 1920 we learn that each district of the Moscow governorate could request up to 3,000 copies of the *ABC of Communism* for distribution as needed, and that each locality's reading room required having at least one copy on hand.[244] In February of 1921 we learn that the Turkish Communist Party was increasing its propaganda efforts by printing Turkish editions of the *Communist Manifesto*, a biography of Lenin, and the *ABC of Communism*.[245] The Bulgarian Communist Party formed a Party School in Sofia, we learn in June of 1921, which naturally used a new Bulgarian translation of the *ABC of Communism*.[246] The *ABC of Communism* found use at home that same summer, as we learn that several provincial schools had adopted Bukharin's primer for classroom use and that study groups had formed

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[244] "K svedeniiu vsekh raionnykh i uezdnykh komitetov RKP i RKCM Moskvy i Moskovskoi gub. (For the Information of all District and Country Committees of the RCP and RCSM of Moscow and Moscow Governorate)," *Pravda*, October 10, 1920.
[245] "Turetskaia Kommunisticheskaia Partiia (The Turkish Communist Party)," *Izvestiia*, February 18, 1921.
[246] "K s'ezdu Kominterna: Bolgarskaia kommunisticheskaia partiia (Toward the Comintern Congress: The Bulgarian Communist Party)," *Pravda*, June 1, 1921.

in places like Tsaritsyn.[247] Trotsky tells us in January of 1921 however that "to think that a young peasant can become a Communist" after simply reading "the *ABC of Communism* over the course of a month or two is fundamentally mistaken," since in Trotsky's view the book only resonated with "existing experiences" and could not totally reshape a reader's worldview.[248] Despite these protestations, in that same month workers at Petrograd's Dinamo Factory received copies of the *ABC of Communism* as graduation gifts for completing apprenticeships, and various reading groups continued to form as in the State Leather Tanning Factory which dedicated its first sessions to parsing the message of each and every chapter of the *ABC of Communism*.[249]

Why should the Turkish or Bulgarian Parties have used Bukharin's book instead of Marx's? What did this treatise contain that spurred so many reading groups across the country? *Pravda* never discusses these questions because perhaps it was understood that readers already had copies of the book – perhaps gifted to them by State employers? Did Bukharin not want to use his position at the helm of *Pravda* to promote his own ego by plastering the front pages with announcements of his latest masterpiece? Did every Bolshevik agree with the tenets of the *ABC of Communism* to the extent that it did not spur any heated debates as Trotsky's "Lessons of October" would a few short years later? Or was the book completely insignificant in the Party and society at large?

Moving away from Soviet sources, we find that the *ABC of Communism* came out in a French translation in 1923. One reviewer mentions that the *ABC*, as the central text of the

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[247] "Po Rossii (Around Russia)," *Pravda*, June 2, 1921; "Vospitatel'naia rabota sredi chlenov partii (Educational Work Among Party Members)," *Pravda*, August 9, 1921.
[248] Leon Trotsky, "Soveshchanie voennykh delegatov s'ezda sovetov (Meeting of Military Delegates to the Congress of Soviets)," *Pravda*, January 4, 1922.
[249] "Rezervy podkhodiat (The Reserves Fit)," *Pravda*, January 22, 1922; "Partiinaia zhizn (Party Life)," *Pravda*, June 8, 1922.

Third International headed by the Comintern in Moscow, accepted Marxism in its entirety, as well as "some returns to 'fouriérisme' in its plan of organization of work and consumption." By the time of this publication, the reviewer notes that although circumstances both in and outside Russia had changed to the point that the book "retains its utility as a historical study and doesn't lose any of its force as a doctrinal catechism." Communists especially would find in it an understanding of the guiding mentality of the Third International.[250] A second edition in 1925 only featured the second part of the *ABC* devoted to practical matters, but according to a review, since it reflected an "'outdated' period in the history of Soviet Russia" it no longer had "'universal value' for proletarians of all capitalist countries." By these two considerations, the reviewer suggests that "the critical mind of the reader will be able to draw more than one interesting conclusion" on the nature of Communism in Russia.[251] The French reviewers would lead us to believe that the importance of the *ABC of Communism* came and went, since within a few years of its publication the Soviet Union had not brought the predictions of that book to life.

Other European reactions to the book indicate that it portended some level of danger to society. A Spanish edition of the book in 1922 knowingly referred to the author as "the greatest theoretician of the Comintern" and that "whoever wishes to get to know that which in our days is called Communism" must read this *ABC*. Even by 1922, "despite the arrest of other revolutionary movements and the grave crisis" in Soviet Russia, the "importance of the ideas" in the book remained relevant, especially as revolutionary fervor threatened to uproot

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[250] R. P., "N. Boukharine et E. Préobrajensky – *A.B.C. du Communisme*," *Revue d'Histoire Économique et Sociale* 12, no. 2 (1924), 246.
[251] Edmond Laskine, "N. Boukharine – *A.B.C. du Communisme*,1 vol. de 171p.," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 13, no. 3 (1925), 339.

the "capitalist society that we all enjoy" across Europe.[252] The English translation by Eden and Cedar Paul for the British Communist Party, still the standard translation in use today, included a "Dedication" to the "adamantine incarnation of all the greatness and vigor of the proletariat" and to those "who when doing the Party's work have been hanged or shot by our enemies."[253] The Spanish translator clearly feared what had apparently already happened in England. But what did this incendiary little book have in its pages that caused such disarray?

In March of 1919, after the VIII Party Congress adopted the new Party Program, Lenin tasked Bukharin with converting the Program into an *ABC of Communism* to explain the "theory and practice of Bolshevism."[254] Ignat Gorelov calls it Bukharin's "most popular and famous work" and suggests that this was particularly for Comintern use, but we have seen above that it found some use within the Soviet Union itself.[255] Donny Gluckstein praises the work as remaining a "classic of Marxism" describing Bukharin as an eminent "*popularizer* of Marxism" with his direct prose.[256] Cohen remarks that, due to the book's wide reach, Bukharin's "fame approached that of Lenin and Trotsky."[257] This fame and "classic" status has seemingly vanished, as none of the new left works mention the *ABC of Communism*.

The pages of the *ABC of Communism* itself give some indication on the origins of the book as well. Bukharin notes that the Party needed a new Program since there had not been

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[252] Eduardo Ugarte Blasco, "Prólogo a la edición española (Prologue to the Spanish Edition)," introduction to Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, *The ABC of Communism*, trans. Eduardo Ugarte Blasco (Madrid: Editorial-América, 1922), 9-10.
[253] Eden and Cedar Paul, dedication to N. Buharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922).
[254] The Russian name of the book is *Azbuka Kommunizma*. *Azbuka* refers to a rudimentary primer; the ABC books given to children are called *azbuki*, but it can refer to more abstract theoretical concepts as well. Lenin refers for example to an "*azbuka kapitalizma*" as if to say the "basics of capitalism." The title of the book is rendered as ABC in the French, Spanish, and English editions discussed above, and Berkman's work in response was written in English specifically with the title *ABC of Anarchism*.
[255] Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 74-75.
[256] Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin*, 27.
[257] Cohen, *Bukharin*, 84.

a fully new one since 1903, when there was only one RSDLP and not even a Constitution on the horizon. The aims in 1903 were to achieve a bourgeois democracy, not to create a workers' Revolution. Since in 1917 the workers had grown stronger and demanded more from life, the Party responded in kind with a new appropriate Program.[258]

Self-Definition by Defining the Other

The *ABC of Communism* also functions as a polemical document, especially in the first sections devoted to countering "the other" which include the Mensheviks and the European Socialist Parties. Bukharin notes that some Mensheviks had apparently questioned the need for a new Program; implying that the Bolsheviks were wrongly "repudiating" the old Program. Reminding his opponents of the dialectical method, Bukharin notes that "the essence of Marx's teaching is to construct programs" based on the relevant material conditions of the time.[259] The "jingo-Socialists" of Europe, Bukharin writes, had put their Fatherlands over the International Proletariat in 1914, and the Mensheviks followed suit in 1917 – noting especially the case of Tsereteli's anti-Bolshevik (therefore, according to Bukharin, anti-People) remonstrations in the July Days and his advocacy against the use of force against the Provisional Government in October.[260]

Alexander Berkman agrees with all of Bukharin's criticisms of Bolshevik opponents in the polemical section of his *ABC of Anarchism*. He notes that the reformists of the European Social-Democracy were only engaged in "mere attempts to improve capitalism," reminding readers that if Marxism was truly Revolutionary, then how could it be effected by votes? He

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[258] Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, *ABC of Communism*, ed. Sidney Heitman (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 21. For the remainder of the references to the *ABC* the page numbers reference this edition, and Bukharin is credited as the sole author for brevity's sake; and because the relevant quotations come from his contributions to the *ABC*.
[259] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 22.
[260] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 151.

mockingly asks "is the Revolution to be fought" in Parliament?[261] In Germany, "the mother of the Socialist movement" there had been numerous so-called Socialists in power, but "what [had] they done for the Proletariat" after the Kaiser fled in 1918? They had "combined with the German bourgeoisie" to become the "bulwark of capitalism and militarism" by sanctioning the killing of Karl Kiebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.[262] Not much different had occurred in France, Austria, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Denmark, or Czechoslovakia, according to Berkman.[263] He concludes by noting that Marx and Engels had actually called for the State to die off, making parliamentarism anathema, as Bukharin had done with "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" in 1916.[264]

Interestingly, Bukharin criticizes the Anarchist groups several times in his narrative, especially as pertains to their proposed means – since he held agreement on the same end of a Stateless future. He writes that the Anarchists were "far more concerned with the dividing up than with the organization of production" by advocating for free and small communes. This, Bukharin suggests, would "not increase production" but would instead "disintegrate it." This echoes his admonition in "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" that the Anarchist "utopia…carries us back to pre-capitalist forms" of production. He explains that this is due to the Anarchists as being not workers, but the "loafer-proletariat" who ride on the backs of others and are "incapable of independent creative work."[265] Berkman responds to this criticism by noting that Anarchism "is *not* a return to barbarism or to the wild state of

[261] Alexander Berkman, *The ABC of Anarchism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Books, 1972), 109-11.
[262] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 115.
[263] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 115-16.
[264] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 123.
[265] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 77-78.

man."[266] As we will see, this quibbling over the path to Communism characterizes much of the difference between these two political tracts.

Though writing a Bolshevik treatise on orders from Lenin, Bukharin maintained his own voice and character throughout the *ABC of Communism* proving the continued absence of a tight-knit Party. As one small example, Bukharin included Alexander Bogdanov's works like *The Red Star* in the recommended reading sections, a philosopher Lenin despised but Bukharin obviously held in some esteem.[267] As another, on the question of imperialism, Bukharin puts his own *Imperialism and the World Economy* on the reading list to the exclusion of Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.[268] Nonetheless, Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* criticizes the Bolsheviks as an overly-centralized Party fully in service of Lenin's will. He writes that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat made no sense conceptually because "millions of people cannot be dictators," there can only be one, and that was Lenin. As examples, he cites the Party's about-face in April among other events.[269] We have already seen that the Anarchist tinge to the April Theses and *State and Revolution* came from Bukharin, so Lenin always getting "his way" belies the fact that said "way" was an amalgamation of many voices.

Most importantly, the narrative in the *ABC of Communism* has strong references to Bukharin's belief that the ultimate goal of Communism is a Stateless society. The VIII Party Program has no such references to Statelessness, but in recalling that Bukharin was the Bolshevik with the first and most ardent anti-State views we find evidence that Bukharin

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[266] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, xxvi.
[267] Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 35.
[268] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 137.
[269] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 160-62.

was writing for himself as much as for the Party. Bukharin explains that the State exists to protect the ruling classes and notes several times that the future society will have no classes, therefore "in Communist society there will likewise be no State."[270] The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, according to the *ABC*, would only be a temporary institution to guide to the State's eventual "dying out."[271]

Perhaps the greatest irony to be found in the present analysis is that Alexander Berkman singles out the anti-State Bukharin repeatedly as the worst of the Communists. Berkman repeats, as Bukharin did in "Toward a Theory of the Imperialist State" and his *Novy Mir* writings, that Marx and Engels advocated for Socialism *as a transition* to a Stateless society. Neither Marx nor Engels used the term Anarchism, due to lingering polemics with Bakunin or Proudhon, but the future society they envisioned was inherently Anarchist in nature. Berkman described the views of Marxists that the means of production and distribution should be socialized as "also in full accord with the ideas of most Anarchists."[272] Kropotkin had also apparently told Lenin that "our aims seem to be the same" with the major difference resting on the two theoreticians' methods of achieving these aims.[273] Although Bukharin was the one Bolshevik closest to Berkman on these matters of Marx and the State, Berkman described him as the "foremost ideologue of the militant Communists" who promoted "cynical doctrinairism" and a "fanatical quasi-philosophy."[274]

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[270] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 73.
[271] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 80. Here the English translators render *otmeret'* as "die out," as I have also done in any reference to what is usually rendered in English as "wither away." The German *absterben* originally used by Engels also has the root for death, so this makes for a better translation.
[272] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 110.
[273] Shub, "Kropotkin & Lenin," 384.
[274] Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*, 22, 41.

Critics of the *ABC of Communism* tend to decry it as too cold and scientific. The most obvious and *ad extremum* of these criticisms can be found in Russian literary works by anti-Communists like Evgenii Zamiatin's *We* or Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, both of which illustrate the callous nature of a future planned society by replacing human names with call signs and numbers all serving some massive bureaucratic apparatus. Academically, Richard Stites concurs and emphasizes the "totalitarian, dehumanizing aspect to War Communism" as permeating the pages of Bukharin's book, though elsewhere he rationalizes the emphasis on "order and mechanics" as borne of a fear of disorder wrought by an anarchic and unpredictable capitalism.[275] Stites supports his argument with a passage in the *ABC* on "statistical bureaus" which would calculate who produces what and when so that industry remains focused on the necessary rather than the commodity. A major oversight to this interpretation, and that of the novelists, is that Bukharin specifically decries any potential bureaucratization of life. That is, everybody will have acquired an appreciation for social labor – laboring for the good of all rather than the profits of a few – and all citizens would each in their turn spend a day in the bureau calculating the next round of production.[276] Bukharin thus emphasized the human aspect to the process by making it a social endeavor, rather than one created from abstraction. After toiling in various fields, one would spend a day in the bureau with a full understanding of the labor process and would in turn understand the macro-level impact of their labor on any given day by having seen the total sum of production for society.

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[275] Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 64; Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47.
[276] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 74.

While the *ABC of Communism* intended to teach the masses about Marxism in the most up-to-date material conditions of Russia, Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism* served both to teach about Anarchism and as a scorching indictment of Bolshevism. Berkman tells us on the very first page that he wants to tell us what Anarchism is *not* before he can tell us what it is, bring polemic to the fore of his exposition.[277] Even after publishing two works documenting the betrayal of the Revolution by the Bolshevik Party, Berkman obviously still had more to say to the extent that he devoted half of his primer on Anarchism to discrediting Bolshevism. Emma Goldman agreed that more needed to be said, and she enthusiastically told Berkman that she agreed with the need for "an ABC of Anarchism" to introduce something of greater "value" to the movement's theoretical base.[278]

The *ABC of Anarchism* also clearly keeps America in mind as its target audience. As Chapter 2 notes, Berkman spent his entire adulthood in that country and in speaking out against Bolshevism in the 1920s, Emma Goldman noted a sense of indebtedness to the workers of America. Berkman uses American events as examples in his narrative, like when he suggests how a counter-Revolution would play out in America noting especially the anti-Constitutional wealth-building practices and the nature of the ruling plutocracy (he uses American names like Jay Gould which must have been widely understood at the time.) When he discusses Germany, on the other hand, he includes a parenthetical after the term Reichstag to indicate that this is the name for the German Parliament – obviously he knew Americans to be rather unworldly.[279] In describing the nature of Revolution, Berkman asks his readers to recall how 1776 showed that "you can't defy or resist the will of a whole People"

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[277] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, xxv.
[278] Quoted in Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 340.
[279] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 112-13.

as a parallel for February 1917.[280] Finally, Berkman quotes none other than Thomas Jefferson who "wisely said, 'That government is best which governs least.'"[281]

Berkman concludes the first section of the *ABC of Anarchism* with something of a scorecard for Bolshevism in power. In the realm of politics, the Soviet system had devolved into the "worst despotism in Europe, with the sole exception of Fascist rule in Italy." Writing in 1929, he has a strong case here since Stalin had just begun his purging of the Party. Berkman notes especially Trotsky's exile as proof that Bolshevism allowed for no dissent. Economically, during NEP the Bolsheviks reintroduced "capitalistic ownership after it had been abolished by the direct action of the…proletariat," reinforcing his belief that the Revolution took place in the summer of 1917 as a bottom-up initiative. The introduction of Party managers into industry could not even be credited with restoring the benefits of capitalism since commerce and growth require "security of person and property," something unafforded to Soviet citizens.[282] Interestingly this suggests Berkman may have changed his original hierarchy which said that any Revolution would be better than capitalism; now he writes that bourgeois capitalism would at least have greater production than the stilted and overly managed hybrid system of NEP. On culture, Berkman writes that only "party fanaticism" is tolerated, socially the GPU (successor to the Cheka) reinstated Tsarist Siberian prisons, and morally the "dictatorship" was completely "counteracting" the "best instincts of man" which had been awakened in 1917 by "arousing fear and hatred."[283]

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[280] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 135-36.
[281] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 169.
[282] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 162-65.
[283] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 166-67.

How to Build the Future

Two competing philosophies underlie the *ABC of Communism* and the *ABC of Anarchism*, which mostly agree on the eventual ordering of society, but disagree on the means to get there. The roots of this discussion trace back to the differences between Karl Marx and Peter Kropotkin in their theoretical works the *Communist Manifesto* and *The Conquest of Bread*, as well as their respective conclusions in *Civil War in France* and *The Commune of Paris*. These differences further reflect the tension between theory and practice, and that between vanguardism and faith in the People that characterized the entirety of the Russian *narodnik* movement from the outset.

To reckon the Marxist theory behind Bolshevism, we must first address the question of the Bolshevik seizure itself, which two members of the Party, Zinoviev and Kamenev, famously opposed as premature. Marx had never explicitly stated that a society must be at a certain level of proletarianization before that lower class could overthrow its bourgeois masters, and no country in Europe had had a significant proletariat in his day; he had not even seen what such a society would look like.[284] Marx and Engels had also not dealt specifically with the "role of the bourgeois State in the preparation for a proletarian seizure of power," nor of the "proletarian State during the transition to communism."[285] Therefore to say that Russia had a proletariat of an insignificant size has no direct relation to Marxian theory. A proletarian Revolution probably wouldn't make sense if a country only had one factory amid an otherwise agrarian population, but Marx did not lay out some threshold at which point a society would be "ready." One could argue that a simple majority at 51%

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[284] Ellen Meiksins Wood, "*The Communist Manifesto* 150 Years Later," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 93, 102.
[285] Heitman, introduction to *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii*, 57.

proletarianization just as well as some overwhelming number like 85%, provided that any suitable criteria of who counts as a proletarian remained constant and agreed upon. The Bolsheviks expanded their base of support by including so-called "poor peasants" and soldiers into the ranks of who they considered to be proletarians, for example – a specificity not presented in Marx's writings.

Historians likewise find that the Russia of 1917 was not prepared for a Marxist Revolution. Kenez for example notes that since Lenin's April Theses ran "contrary" to Marxism, and that since the Bolsheviks were not taking over a "mature industrial society," they were operating under "circumstances unforeseen by their ideology."[286] But criticisms like this of the Bolshevik seizure only graze the surface of Marxist ideology and cherry-pick a narrow interpretation of the *Communist Manifesto* to use as a cudgel. Lars Lih's short but powerful biography of Lenin makes several key points that undermine these critiques. He opens with an important note that the Russian word *narod*, which Lenin used extensively, has an "emotional force completely lacking" in its English rendering as "the People." Before the fall of Tsarism, Lenin had always seen a chain of events that had his Party influencing the Proletariat, who, with their strong connections to the countryside, would then inspire the whole *narod* against Tsarism.[287] Leninist theory thus did not "exclude an exalted, even romantic view of the peasant in the Revolution," and thus created a dialectical definition of Marx's proletariat based on Russia's material conditions. As an example, Lih indicates an unpublished article from 1917, written by Lenin in Zurich, which emphasizes elevating the

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[286] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union,* 25, 30.
[287] Lars T. Lih, *Lenin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 14-15. Recall Alexander Berkman's capitalization of "the People" in his writing and my own imitation of this style as explained in the "Notes on Typography."

poor peasants.[288] Of course, anachronistic historians could look at de-kulakization and collectivization and then select the pieces of Lenin's work that might suggest an ingrained animosity towards the peasantry, along with a misinterpretation of Marx's "idiocy of rural life," to conclude that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were actually the fools misreading Marx.[289]

Apart from the various possible interpretations of what Marx might have intended to be the ideal condition for a Proletarian Revolution, critics of the Bolshevik seizure tend to dismiss a profound belief in the imminence of World Revolution. For the Bolsheviks, based on Bukharin's and Lenin's studies of imperialism, the inevitability of a dictatorship of Finance Capital to lead to further imperialist wars meant that the inverse, a Dictatorship of the Proletariat, would inevitably lead to World Revolution. Likewise, Bukharin wrote in 1919 that since "the party of Revolution rallies the Party of counter-revolution," so the threat of global Bolshevism "rallies the forces of international capital."[290] Again, critics uniformly suggest that after a premature seizure of power, the Bolsheviks then attempted to "spread" the Revolution westward, especially mentioning the Red Army's advance on Warsaw – cleverly omitting that Poland had invaded Russia and this "spreading" of the Revolution was actually a counter-offensive.[291] Consulting any of the writing during the World War period,

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[288] Lih, *Lenin*, 97.

[289] Hobsbawm makes the point on "idiocy" as relating to the Greek term *idiotes*, which Marx undoubtedly knew, signifying "narrow horizons" or "isolation from wider society." Eric Hobsbawm, introduction to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 11.

[290] Nikolai Bukharin, "Teoriia proletarskoi diktatury (Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat)," in *Put' k Sotsializmu v Rossii*, 64.

[291] Fitzpatrick especially calls the Bolshevik worldview as "comically distorted" and ridicules the tension between their "subjective" judgements and their supposed "scientific" Marxism in the 1920s simply because their expectations did not manifest themselves. She also writes that "they sent the Red Army to advance on Warsaw because…it seemed obvious that the Poles would recognize the troops as proletarian brothers rather than Russian aggressors," clearly forgetting that Poland had invaded Russia and the advance on Warsaw was a counter to Polish aggressors, Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 84. This case usually gets brought up in more recent works regarding World War II and Polish intransigence regarding a joint Soviet-British-French-Polish axis to resist Hitler; since the Poles "remembered" Warsaw 1920. Examples include Roger Moorhouse, *The*

like Bukharin's New York writings, we can see that the Bolsheviks actually anticipated that the pending Revolution was fermenting in the trenches across Europe as more and more proletarian soldiers began to realize, however latently, that the behemothian Imperialist State and the State Capital apparatus it harbored had caused their present strife more than any of the pretenses espoused by their respective governments. Chamberlin notes Lenin's obsession to even "the smallest details of the revolutionary movement in other countries" throughout 1919 in his expectation of World Revolution.[292] Critical historians use the failure of Socialist Revolutions in Germany and England in the early 1920s as proof that even those more advanced countries were not "ready." Anachronism again finds good use among those who are predisposed to opposing Bolshevism, but academic rigor suggests that we cannot use the events of the 1920s to explain the firm beliefs of people in 1917. The Bolsheviks may have been wrong in their overestimation of the pro-Socialist position of European soldiers, or underestimation of the reactionary potential among the European bourgeoisie and State apparatuses; but they were not swept away by an abstract quest for power and global domination.

Beyond dismissing these large swathes of the Bolshevik worldview in 1917, historians that criticize the Bolsheviks for acting outside of the confines of Marxism ignore what Marx himself actually said for Russia. In the preface to the 1882 Russian translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels referred to Russia as "the vanguard of Revolutionary action in Europe" since *Narodnaia Volia* had just assassinated Alexander II, and since Alexander III had become the strongest reactionary force in all of Europe, so

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Devil's Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939-1941 (London: The Bodley Head, 2014) and the almost comically ahistorical Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

[292] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution* ii, 378.

therefore the Revolutionary sentiment among Russians had grown proportionally. After a discussion of the peasant commune, Marx and Engels close by noting that "if the Russian Revolution becomes a signal for the proletarian Revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a Communist development."[293] The calls for the peasants to take the land in Lenin's April Theses, the alliance formed with the Left SR Party, and the inclusion of "poor peasants" in the descriptions of Soviet allies were thus not "opportunistic" and in opposition with a strictly "proletarian" Marxian outlook, "orthodox Marxism" as Fitzpatrick calls it; they were the exact formulations Marx and Engels called for in Russia to inspire a proletarian Revolution in Europe.

The *ABC of Communism* plainly tells us about the inevitability of World Revolution as well. Bukharin writes that in 1917 "no intelligent person could fail to see that the World War was leading to World Revolution," and therefore the present tract was intended for "the whole international proletariat." [294] Bukharin suggests that while the World War had officially ended, it had transitioned into an international civil war that began in Russia: "the bourgeoisies cannot bring about a lasting peace" since war and imperialism were endemic to State Capitalism, and the civil war in Russia would expand across the globe and result in a global "victory of the proletariat."[295] Justifying the Bolshevik seizure instead of the SR or Menshevik alternatives, which would have only served as a "bridge" to the ultimate victory of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, Bukharin explains that a class war could not end

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[293] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Preface to the Russian Edition of 1882," in *The Communist Manifesto* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 104-05. Engels quotes this Russian preface at full for the next English edition – why?
[294] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 22-23.
[295] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 127.

in any agreement "or in any sort of compromise;" there could only result a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.[296] As evidence that the reactionary forces were regrouping, the *ABC of Communism* describes the League of Nations as intending to create a worldwide capitalist trust bent on "crushing the incipient World Revolution." While the bourgeoisie was further internationalizing, then so must the internationalism of the proletariat be kept at the fore as demanded by Marx in his closing line of the *Communist Manifesto*, "Proletarians of the World Unite."[297]

As we saw in Chapter 2, Alexander Berkman supported the Bolshevik takeover and also believed that World Revolution was imminent; the Russian example would serve only as a spark to ignite the spirit that had accumulated in the trenches across Europe. Berkman notes in the foreword to the *ABC of Anarchism* that the World War had caused society to undergo a "radical change" in its questioning of the Capitalist order. He especially credits the Russian Revolution with influencing "the masses throughout the world," echoing the Bolsheviks' belief in the ripple effect of October.[298] His analysis of imperialist wars in general echoes that of Bukharin and Lenin in writing that the "stupendous holocaust" of the World War "was the legitimate child of capitalism, as all wars of conquest and gain are the result of the conflicting financial and commercial interests of the international bourgeoisie." [299] Berkman also praises the Bolsheviks against their enemies for being among the few who "did not betray the cause of the workers and join the patriotic jingoes" as had the European Socialist parties.[300] The Bolsheviks also knew in February that "putting one government in

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[296] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 129.
[297] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 133; reference to the internationalism in the *Communist Manifesto*, 140.
[298] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, xxi-xxii.
[299] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 29.
[300] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 142. Elsewhere Berkman notes that the European Social-Democratic parties "demonstrated the bankruptcy of Socialism" by going "from having been bitter enemies of militarism and war"

place of another would not help matters," and that the workers demanded a greater change, in spite of the protestations of the Mensheviks.[301] Though after this point Berkman opposes the Bolsheviks as vanguardists rather than advocates for a continued bottom-up Revolution, he did interpret the Revolutionary sentiment of the international proletariat in the same way they had, justifying the seizure of October.

Berkman also criticizes Lenin for co-opting a supposedly Anarchist position in 1917, though the timeline he uses does not accurately match up with how events transpired. For example, Berkman classifies "All Power to the Soviets" in Lenin's April Theses as really Anarchist in nature since it essentially called for decentralized councils instead of a large State. Berkman says this occurred at a time when the party was "discredited" with Lenin and Zinoviev in hiding, and Trotsky imprisoned; clearly referencing the fallout from the July Days three months after the April Theses were proclaimed, and up to six months after Lenin had formulated them.[302] As discussed in Chapter 1, Lenin likely wrote *State and Revolution* in an embryonic form even earlier than April based on Marx's telling of the Paris Commune. Berkman also incorrectly suggests that the Bolshevik calls for a general strike were a co-optation of an exclusively Anarchist tactic that they had ridiculed up until 1917, completely ignoring that Trotsky had advocated for a general strike to advance the Revolution in 1905 and that Bukharin had advocated for strikers in America through *Novy Mir*.[303]

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to "defenders of 'their' land" and pitting workers against workers across national boundaries, *ABC of Anarchism*, 120-21. Recall that Trotsky leveled this same critique against Kropotkin.

[301] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 142. Regarding the Mensheviks, Berkman ridicules their protestations by noting that "only because Marx had fifty years before said" that Revolution required a higher level of industrialization "did not appeal to the toilers," thus they lost any credibility among the masses, *ABC of Anarchism*, 138-39.

[302] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 148.

[303] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 145; Nikolai Bukharin, "Pravo stachek v opasnosti (The Right to Strike is in Danger)," *Novy Mir*, Dec. 11, 1916.

There is abundant evidence from Bolsheviks before October in favor of the belief in imminent World Revolution, when theory must be considered as paramount since practical implementation was a distant fantasy. Before the fall of Tsarism, Lenin had called for Russians to implement a (bourgeois) democratic Revolution at home, which would inspire the European Proletariat to bring about a Socialist Revolution.[304] After the Tsar's abdication, but before any real prospect of Socialist Revolution in Russia as Lenin had just been forced back into hiding in Finland after the July Days, the Party's VI Congress took place. The Congress naturally discussed the necessity (*edinstvennyi vykhod*) of a European Revolution in order for any hypothetical Revolution in Russia to succeed.[305] By the time the Revolution had been achieved, Rabinowitch notes that "Lenin's wager on international Revolution took center stage;" if that contingency failed, then the Revolution as it stood was doomed to failure; or at least to a "retreat" that soon followed in the form of NEP.[306] Thus the Bolshevik seizure was in no way an opportunistic endeavor in contrast to anything they had ever called for, nor in any violation of Marxist ideology.

Lars Lih's criticism against what he calls misreadings of the *ABC of Communism* include the claim that it represented a description of and justification for War Communism; and that this represented the arrival of Socialism, that the Revolution had borne its fruit.[307] Miklós Kun likewise suggests that the *ABC* was meant to show that Marx's prophecies were

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[304] Quoted in Lih, "Letters From Afar," 819.
[305] Gorelov, *Nikolai Bukharin*, 71.
[306] Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 13. M. C. Howard and J. E. King also note that there was a strong "internationalist rationale for a Russian Socialist Revolution" since the "principal threat to the Russian Revolution was external" by Bolshevik perception; Howard and King, "Imperialism and War: Bukharin and Lenin on Monopoly Capitalism," 256. Wade writes that "Lenin saw the Russian Revolution as a central part of a broader, sweeping world revolution," Wade, *The Russian Revolution,* 223.
[307] Lih, "The Mystery of the ABC," 50-72. A full discussion of this article appears in the Introduction.

coming to life before our very eyes.[308] Tamás Krausz writes that the *ABC* intended to give a "theoretical basis to the conflation of War Communism and the realization of Socialism."[309] In fact, Bukharin stresses several times throughout the narrative that the *ABC of Communism* outlined distant goals, not descriptions of current events. Bukharin right away introduces the tract as outlining "what our Party wishes to accomplish."[310] He expects the regulations on labor and distribution to last for 20-30 years until society and production have advanced to the point that there is enough of everything, and to assuage any necessity for someone to hoard a surplus.[311] He elsewhere suggests that this may take two to three generations or "a few decades:" he thus does not describe the present situation as Communism by any stretch, nor does he even necessarily expect to see Communism in his lifetime, he is only taking part in building a better future for all mankind.[312]

War Communism was not meant to showcase the actualization of the Bolsheviks' Marxist theory for ordering society. Stites correctly describes the system as "initially an emergency" policy, one that mimicked the State Capitalism of Germany during The Great War. [313] Rabinowitch in his analysis emphasizes the "importance of developing circumstances and responses to them," as if to remind readers that War Communism was not a planned or ideal system.[314] Heitman notes that until confronted with the practice of governance in 1917, "the Party lacked a coherent and detailed theory of the state during the transition period." [315] Liebman takes this period a step too far and suggests that the

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[308] Kun, *Bukharin: Ego druz'ia i vragi*, 102.
[309] Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin*, 322.
[310] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 23.
[311] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 72-73.
[312] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 75.
[313] Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, 46.
[314] Rabinowitch, *Bolsheviks in Power*, 13.
[315] Heitman, introduction to Nikolai Bukharin, *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii*, 57.

"Dictatorship of the Proletariat" had "left the realm of abstractions to enter that of political reality."[316] In the sense that the Bolsheviks led Russia ostensibly in the name of the Proletariat, this is true, but the full essence of their planned vision had yet to unfold.

The *ABC of Communism* thus does not describe War Communism as it happened, since that policy was fluid and changing with circumstances, and does not suggest that the Russia of 1919 was that dreamt of by the Bolsheviks for the previous 15 years. Moreover, Lenin had continuously warned that the "emergency measures" taken during the war "should not be taken for a normal proletarian policy" in a country with Russia's level of development.[317] War Communism was explained in greater detail by Bukharin in *The Economics of the Transition Period*, which also further explores the question of employing "bourgeois experts" or having full worker control.[318]

Berkman's criticism of War Communism in the *ABC of Anarchism* centers on the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as a means to an end. He writes that while "the Anarchists wanted the people as a whole to be the owners," the goal he earlier said that Marxists shared, "the Bolsheviki held that everything must be in the hands of the State" as a "dictatorship in the hands of themselves, of *their* political Party." The Bolsheviks disingenuously used the term Dictatorship of the Proletariat claiming themselves to be a vanguard Party for the proletariat, which Berkman suggests "quickly became a Bolshevik dictatorship *over* the proletariat." The shared end of communal ownership of production in the Anarchist thinking favored the means of People power, "without orders from any political party." Berkman falters here, though, since his faith in the People appears shaken

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[316] Marcel Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, trans. Brian Pearce (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 353.
[317] Heitman, "The Economics of the Transition Period," in Nikolai Bukharin, *Put' k Sotsializmu v Rossii*, 77.
[318] Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 131.

when he suggests they may be so "fired up by the great idea," i.e. Bolshevism, that they could be misled as to "by what means" that idea is being ushered in.[319] The same line of reasoning here led to the early *narodnik* split into vanguardism. Obviously criticizing the practice of Revolution is much easier from the sidelines than when actually hoping to actuate it oneself, as Berkman's teacher Kropotkin proved wont to do for both post-Tsarist governments of 1917.

Berkman also appears confused regarding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in January of 1918. Writing from America, we saw in Chapter 2 how he supported its dissolution since bourgeois parliamentarism would only be a trojan horse for reactionary forces to disperse of the Revolution. He admits again in the *ABC of Anarchism* that the Assembly would have been completely useless, now criticizing the Bolsheviks for even pushing to hold the Assembly in the first place. This now proves to Berkman that the Bolsheviks were only opportunists seeking power who "pretended to believe in majority rule" while really only hoping to install a Party Dictatorship.[320]

Bukharin had already countered this line of reasoning in the *ABC of Communism*, as Berkman's criticism was nothing new when he made it ten years later. Specifically criticizing the Anarchists of the day, Bukharin says that "anyone who is opposed to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is afraid of decisive action" because organized bourgeois resistance requires an organized proletarian force.[321] Berkman responds by claiming that during the entire Revolutionary period, "the Russian bourgeoisie did not make any organized and effectual

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[319] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 143-45.
[320] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 146-47.
[321] Bukharin, *ABC of Communism*, 81.

attempt to regain its possessions."[322] Berkman seems to believe that had the Bolsheviks not seized power, the Revolution would have peacefully continued and the bourgeoisie would have gladly taken part in continued expropriations – just as Kropotkin hoped – to say nothing of the international situation. Considering his and Goldman's reporting on the situation in Russia at the time, especially their fear of in any way emboldening the counter-revolutionary White forces or the foreign interventions from Poland and the entente powers, Berkman seems to have slipped into anachronism here: because the Bolsheviks eventually won, this says to him that there was no organized attempt to overthrow the Revolution. He does not disavow his own misgivings at the time – he could have convincingly written in 1929 that he was previously misled by Bolshevik characterization of the potential for counter-revolution – instead he remains silent on his own previous fears in service of his present argument.

We can see that Berkman was originally right to fear counter-Revolution in the early days of the Bolshevik government through other sympathetic accounts. A fellow disillusioned Anarchist, Victor Serge wrote that most of his generation "who were among the first ranks of Communist activists" had "nothing left but bitterness toward the Russian Revolution," though he felt a sense of understanding for the Bolshevik position in the early 1920s.[323] Serge recalls the "mass extermination of the vanquished proletarians" after the Revolutions of 1848 and the Commune of 1871, emphasizing that the "Russian Revolutionaries knew what was waiting for them if they lost."[324] Recall also Avrich's retelling of Kronstadt where he laments the "full tragedy" being in the necessity of sympathizing with

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[322] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 150-51.
[323] Serge, *Year One*, 467.
[324] Serge, *Year One*, 475.

the revolt while "conceding" that the Bolsheviks had legitimate and justifiable fears of a bourgeois co-optation of the revolt into a full-fledged counter-revolution.[325]

What is to be Done?

Karl Marx had only created an analytical framework based on class strife and from there extrapolated historical laws that he then used as predictors for the future of society. The *Communist Manifesto* served not as a call to arms for overthrowing governments, but as a lens with which to view society as capitalism emerged and progressed, and to be wary of the consolidation of the bourgeoisie.

Meanwhile, Marx's assessment of the Paris Commune gives clues to his developing theories on how the Revolution will come about. He famously writes that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own purposes," since that same machinery was borne of the material conditions of monarchism, feudalism, capitalism, and class rule.[326] Marx tells us also that the "working class did not expect miracles from the Commune" and that they had "no ready-made utopias to introduce," but rather, as the *Communist Manifesto* describes, the workers would "have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes" each in turn dialectically transforming the society and its inhabitants.[327] He emphasizes that the Commune of Paris had universal suffrage to make decisions, and that it would serve as a model for any other potential Commune, urban or rural; and makes no mention on whether or not they ought to be united under one State-like apparatus. Thus, he laid the groundwork for the "All Power to the Soviets" slogan, making it

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[325] Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 5-6.
[326] Karl Marx, *Civil War in France* (London: Electric Book Company, 2000), 75.
[327] Marx, *Civil War*, 85.

just as Marxist in nature as Anarchist, but did not *exclude* the possibility of a larger controlling system.

In this light we can find various paths to Communism, depending on the material conditions of a country at a given time. On the one hand with an advanced parliamentary system, as in Germany by the turn of the century, Engels himself advocated for reformism, a position Karl Kautsky took on. In the Russian context, since there was "no a priori blueprint for Socialism," Ron Suny notes that the "new political order was shaped and refined in response to historical events that the Bolsheviks could neither predict nor control."[328] True, Russia was more agricultural than industrial, and had there been greater industry the infiltration of Bolsheviks into innumerable Soviets across the world's greatest landmass could have perhaps easily turned into Socialism on its own. But October was based on the full belief in imminent World Revolution that would render Russia's lack of industrialization meaningless since she would soon be part of an international system with the highly industrial nations like Germany and Britain. Only when that World Revolution did not happen did the Bolsheviks have to address the upbuilding of industry in Russia itself and revert to a hybrid Revolution which was still proletarian in character but bourgeois in form: The New Economic Policy (NEP).

Since the *ABC of Communism* came before anyone had dreamed of something like NEP as a remote possibility, we cannot find plans for NEP in its pages. Moreover, Bukharin later became the strongest advocate for NEP within the party. Kenez calls this the most "extreme case" of Bolshevik "reversal" calling into question the *ABC*'s triumphant claims that Russia

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[328] Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 57. As a point of contrast, note Fitzpatrick's invocation of the *ABC of Communism* as evidence that the Bolsheviks were attempting to show that "the Party, with the scientific ideology of Marxism, was in full control of events," Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 79.

had abolished currency and achieved full Communism with his later embrace of NEP.[329] Heitman provides more nuance to this point in stressing that "like most other members of the Party," Bukharin was "torn between the intoxicating exhilaration of success and the more sobering considerations of the practical realities of the day."[330] But Lars Lih notes that for the Bolsheviks, "the Revolution is a *process* and the mission" at hand was to "lead it 'to the end' or *do kontsa*" which he calls a "key term in Bolshevik discourse."[331] Chinese historians note that Bukharin had "distinguished four stages in the Proletarian Revolution" as thought, political, economic, and technological. They thus defend NEP as the USSR going through this third stage of Economic Revolution by using bourgeois tactics in the name of the proletariat.[332] Mao Zedong himself noted that Lenin had "taken the universal principles of Marxism and adapted them to the practice of the Russian Revolution" by adapting dialectically to the material conditions of the time; namely the lack of World Revolution.[333] Bukharin also wrote in 1923 that although the *ABC of Communism* was Party canon, it was now "outdated, above all else, because the Program is outdated."[334]

For critics of Socialism, NEP solidifies their belief that War Communism proved Marxism to be a failed endeavor and market capitalism as the only way to grow industry. Fitzpatrick especially makes the point that NEP was an "admission" that the Bolsheviks "could not get along" in modernizing without petty-bourgeois capitalists.[335] For adherents of

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[329] Kenez, *History of the Soviet Union*, 42.
[330] Heitman, introduction to Nikolai Bukharin, *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii*, 44.
[331] Lih, "Letters from Afar," 817.
[332] White, "Chinese Studies of Bukharin," 739.
[333] White, "Chinese Studies of Bukharin," 743.
[334] Nikolai Bukharin, "Po povodu poriadka dnia partiinogo s'ezda (About the Party Congress Order of the Day)," *Pravda*, January 25, 1923.
[335] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 112. Kenez chronicles how NEP, with over 50% of industry in private hands, improved the conditions of a ravaged economy, *History of the Soviet Union*, 88-94.

Socialism, including Bolsheviks at the time like the co-author of the *ABC of Communism* Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, it was a betrayal of the Revolution – his line of anti-peasant thinking is what eventually led to Stalin's collectivization policies. The most extreme case was Trotsky's dissatisfaction that the Comintern had apparently even stopped trying for World Revolution in the 1930s, with Stalin's "Socialism in One Country" (the theoretical basis for NEP) as complete anathema to the purpose of October.[336] In the same way that neither Kautsky nor the Bolsheviks were "wrong," then so neither were Stalin nor Trotsky. Stalin had taken Lenin's lead on adapting to the material conditions of Russia and the international scene in the 1920s and carried them to their logical extreme; Trotsky ignored the dialectical method in service of carrying out his polemic against Stalin and wanted the Comintern of the 1930s to act as if it were still 1917 and Socialist Revolutions had not failed in England, Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Though maybe in purely theoretical terms the Comintern should have continued overt agitation, but to what avail?

Alexander Berkman likewise criticized NEP from the Anarchist viewpoint. For him, NEP proved that Marxists as Statists would always put political power ahead of ideological convictions; the same criticism the Bolsheviks had previously levied against Kautsky and the European Social-Democrats. And just as the Bolsheviks only turned on Kautsky after he supported the war and said, "of course, reformism is doomed to fail!" so Berkman turned on the Bolsheviks after NEP and said, "of course, Marxist Statism is doomed to fail!" Berkman writes that the *Communist Manifesto* "insists that the proletariat must get hold of the political machinery of the government in order to conquer the bourgeoisie" as evidence that Marx

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[336] Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?* trans. Max Eastman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972).

was always advocating for strong political power, and that this tension with the other already discussed anti-Statist views haunted the Bolsheviks and ultimately led to their failures.[337] NEP for Berkman "[nullified] all the Revolutionary achievements" of 1917 and served as a "death blow to Communism." The philosophy was rotten to begin with, he says, since "you can't grow a rose from a cactus seed."[338] While this is a correct reading of Marx's prescriptions of a State that guides society to Communism, Berkman had obviously not read *The Civil War in France* or the Preface to the Second French Edition of the *Communist Manifesto* after the failure of the Commune of 1871 which modified this call for taking over the existing political structure.

The historian has a significant advantage over these various actors in having access to an immeasurably larger corpus of Marx and Engels than any one of them had in the early 20th century. We have dozens of editions of the *Communist Manifesto* with all the various Prefaces written by Marx and/or Engels which at the time were scattered amendments to the original text. We have a larger collection of their correspondence than was available then as well. The historian therefore has a significant responsibility to adequately report on the fact that these varying interpretations of Marx were functions of incomplete records and were therefore all equally "correct." Moreover, we discover that there was not one "Marx" with one "Marxism," just as the major religions of the world have various sects that adhere more strongly to some tenets of the extended texts than to others.

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[337] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 112.

[338] Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*, 162-68. Elsewhere, Berkman proposed an article entitled "Russia in 1920 and in 1921: From Attempted Communism to Free Trade," indicating both that he believed War Communism to be a full attempt and eventual failure; and NEP to be a regression to capitalist economics. Alexander Berkman to M. Eleanor Fitzgerald (Alexander Berkman Papers, inventory number 20, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, December 9, 1921), 50.

In addition to the various readings of Marx, Alexander Berkman also had the influence of Kropotkin behind him, whose analysis of the Paris Commune significantly differs from Marx's. While Marx provided a more detailed review of the events of 1871 with historical materialist assessments of the class nature, Kropotkin remained extremely vague and only declared what "could have" happened. Engels notes that "If the Paris Commune was not based on the authority of an armed People against the bourgeoisie, could it have even lasted more than one day?" concluding that the blame for the Commune's failure should be that it "too little used its authority."[339] Kropotkin in contrast emphasized the "collective spirit" that launched the Commune, rather than the "conceptions of some philosopher" individual.[340] He decried the Council of the Commune as not breaking "with the tradition of the State" and how the Communards "let themselves be carried away by the fetish worship of governments and set up one of their own."[341] Kropotkin admits that Anarchist theory at the time distinctly lacked "some formula at once simple and practical" to guide people, but nonetheless maintained that had the Commune lasted "it would have been inevitably driven by the force of circumstances" towards full Anarchism.[342]

Berkman's criticism of October completely follows Kropotkin's predictions on how the "next" Revolution would occur. Specifically, that the rebels would carry out expropriations on their own free will, and that if some government came along, it would "merely sanction accomplished facts" before becoming a "useless and dangerous bit of machinery." This government would "make rules for what has yet to be freely worked out by

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[339] Quoted in Nikolai Bukharin, "Teoriia proletarskoi diktatury," in *Put' k sotsializmu v Rossii*, 65.
[340] Peter Kropotkin, *The Commune of Paris* (London: Freedom Pamphlets, 1896), 3.
[341] Kropotkin, *Commune of Paris*, 6, 10.
[342] Kropotkin, *Commune of Paris*, 6.

the people themselves" and "apply theories" where instead the whole of society "ought to work out fresh forms of common life" with its own "creative force."[343] As with his wishes on what should have come from the Commune, and his admonitions to Lenin, Kropotkin retains his original *narodnik* belief in the innate power of the People to manage everything for themselves, if only the State would disappear.

[343] Kropotkin, *Commune of Paris*, 14.

Conclusion

Scholars of the Russian Revolution have tended to focus on the centrality of Lenin and his writings to explain the theory behind the Bolshevik takeover of 1917. Later, in an attempt to understand Stalinism, historians attempted to draw connections between Lenin's strong personality and drive for centralization to indicate that Stalin was the natural outgrowth of Bolshevism. They cite especially an otherwise obscure pamphlet of Lenin's from 1902 entitled *What is to be Done?* which outlines the need for a strong and unified Party to effect meaningful change. These histories comparatively neglect the myriad characters who made up the original Bolshevik Party whose theories, alongside Lenin's, codified the platform that drew in the workers of Petrograd.

Nikolai Bukharin was but one additional member of the Party, but none had greater influence over Lenin on matters of theory. Bukharin pre-empted both of Lenin's most important wartime pieces *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *State and Revolution*. The latter especially requires careful attention, as Lenin originally ridiculed Bukharin's conclusions that Marx called for a future society without a State as too Anarchist, before eventually accepting this proposition in his own work.

On these matters, I have not broken new ground, as two major works of the 1970s already moved away from the Western historiographical anti-Cult of Lenin. Alexander Rabinowitch in *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* shows the chaotic nature of Bolshevism in 1917 and how it was far from pre-ordained that Lenin would lead the Party to power in October. Stephen Cohen broke significant ground with his biography of Bukharin, with the central argument that there existed numerous viable alternatives to Stalin within the original Party. Cohen especially emphasizes Bukharin's support of NEP in the 1920s as a path not

taken in the Soviet Union, which inspired the reforms instituted by both Mikhail Gorbachev at home, and Deng Xiaoping abroad.

Thus, we might have expected the ensuing decades to produce monographs on all the other original Bolsheviks. After all, the story of the American Revolution is not only the story of George Washington but also of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and non-governing theorists like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Noah Webster, and James Otis. The DK section of libraries should be overflowing with biographies of Lenin's closest confidant Grigorii Zinoviev, his biggest rival in the Party Lev Kamenev, original Politburo members Sokolnikov, Bubnov, Krestinsky, and Kaganovich, or theoretical opponents outside the Party like Alexander Bogdanov. Instead, the works of Rabinowitch and Cohen stand as an aberration in the historiography, and historians continue to write new stories of Lenin.

The centenary of the Revolution saw numerous new volumes from leftist publishers attempting to revel in the glory of the world's first ever Socialist Revolution. Since the archives had been open for 26 years, perhaps we might have finally gotten some stories of other heroic thinkers long forgotten or expanded readings of the preparations for the October seizure that feature the boots on the ground and tell the full story of the Military Revolutionary Committee. Perhaps reasoned defenses of Kamenev and Tsereteli as more amenable alternatives to Lenin might have served to draw more Americans to Marxism in the twenty-first century where the term Socialism is becoming significantly less of a faux pas than it was throughout most of the twentieth. Instead, apart from the few social histories, we got yet more Lenin. In an ironic twist of fate, the leftist publishers mimicked the anti-Marxist histories of an overly centralized Party and a Revolution made by one man, replacing criticism with adulation.

Nikolai Bukharin wrote the first official document of Bolshevism as a governing ideology, the *ABC of Communism*. This book served several purposes, the main being to educate the masses as to who exactly their new leaders were and what they believed, in part by explaining who their leaders were *not* and who they opposed. The *ABC of Communism* also features Bukharin's distinct voice with an emphasis on the future as a Stateless society. Where all the new histories have fallen short is in examining the tension between this goal and the turn to a State as strong as that of the fallen Tsars. The histories instead revert to an obscure pamphlet of Lenin's from 1902 that called for a tight-knit Party as if to prove that his intention all along was to install a repressive Party-State. It might be more elucidating to read a history about the Bolshevik consolidation of Power as a tragic regression of their anti-Statist ideology. One could blame the crisis of the Civil War; the foreign invasions from Poland, Britain, and the US; or the failure of the World Revolution that justified their rule in the first place. For this reason, I have sought to rediscover Bukharin's role in crafting Bolshevik theory so that future research will reflect the various voices in the Party and centralize the *ABC of Communism* as a cornerstone document, rather than *What is to be Done*?

Another explanation for Bolshevik failures once in power might be the old axiom that "power corrupts." Alexander Berkman levies this exact criticism in his polemical response to Bolshevik rule, the aptly entitled *ABC of Anarchism*. Berkman's book, like Bukharin's, sought to define a philosophy by defining what it was *not*. Anarchism is total freedom, Bolshevism is not freedom, therefore Anarchism is *not* Bolshevism. Berkman worked in the opposite direction as the Bolsheviks who had to bring their theories into practice; he began by first embracing Lenin and Trotsky as those bringing the Revolution to life, and when their

practices failed to live up to their goals, he attacked the theoretical underpinnings of Marxian State-based Socialism.

If we date the beginning of modern radical leftism as the foundation of the First International, we find that polemic and infighting are endemic to the movement. Karl Marx the Communist and Mikhail Bakunin the Anarchist could not reconcile their issues of theory and the organization dissolved after less than a decade in existence. Bakunin's spat with Marx echoed a similar debate he had with fellow Russian *narodniks* on the nature of the coming Revolution. Bakunin argued that the Revolution must come from below, on the initiative of the People creating federated Communes on the image of the traditional Russian peasant *mir*. Other Russian *narodniks* advocated for vanguardism, suggesting that the peasants needed guidance from above to realize their position, and how they should organize their freedom. Karl Marx had a similar approach favoring a Proletarian takeover of the State in order to manage society's transition to Communism. Lenin had come to radicalism through the Russian *narodnik* tradition and agreed with the vanguardists; upon discovering Marx he synthesized the two theories: The Revolution would be led by a vanguard to guide society to Marxian Socialism. Berkman followed on Bakunin and another advocate of bottom-up communal organization, Peter Kropotkin, and believed that the Bolsheviks were not needed; Russia would reorganize herself based on the creative power of the masses. These two irreconcilable views on *how* society would reach its ultimate future defined the disunity of the greater left at the time of the Russian Revolution.[344]

[344] The Mensheviks and European Social-Democratic parties would essentially be soft vanguardists, using Parliamentary and otherwise gradual means to achieve Communism.

In this thesis I have rediscovered Bukharin as a central figure in Bolshevik theory leading up to the Revolution by influencing Lenin's seminal works, and after the Revolution by publishing the popular exposition of the Party Program once in power. I focused especially on a neglected area of his intellectual development by using the articles written in New York between November 1916 and April 1917 which further prove the disunity of the Party, since the paper he wrote for was mostly Menshevik, and he published theory Lenin considered anathema. Future research might look in more detail at his writings in German-language periodicals and how he eventually came to the positions he did regarding Marxism and the State. Did he express dissatisfaction at any time before 1916 with the stated future aims of Socialist Parties? Or did the 1914 betrayal by the European Social Democratic Parties launch this inquiry into the nature and necessity of the State for Marxism? Later, how he argued with other members of the Party between 1917 and 1921 – after which point he became an advocate of NEP which is well-documented – might be an interesting endeavor.

Some historians indicate that there are two Bukharins with 1921 as his turning point. I say there might be three to four, and these could be hashed out further. Before October of 1917 he wrote only of theory and governing practice seemed a distant goal. Between October of 1917 and 1921, there was the issue of Brest-Litovsk and the Revolutionary War against Germany in order to ignite World Revolution there, the prime justification for Bolshevik power in the first place. World Revolution figures into the *ABC of Communism*, but at what point did he begin to see that it was not happening? In this same timeframe we have a Party trying to reconcile its theories with the realities of governance amid a Civil War and hostile foreign invasions. How much did power corrupt Bukharin? The final Bukharin after 1921 is one who applied the dialectic to the present situation and saw that in the absence of World

Revolution, Russia must take a different path to Communism, that of the bourgeois-capitalist Revolution.

On this last point, I am hoping to create a more nuanced analysis of what exactly "Marxism" is. Social Democrats at the time tended to choose one interpretation of how they understood the philosophy and criticized all others for incorrect readings. Historians have tended to follow the same path and say that either the Germans were wrong for parliamentarism since Marxism is by nature Revolutionary; or that the Bolsheviks were wrong for trying to leapfrog the stages of material development. If we take Marxism to be the entire Marx-Engels corpus, we find multiple prescriptions and suggestions for advancing the Revolution. As historians we can see them all, and can construct something of a "Marxist flow-chart" as follows:

1) Do you live in an advanced, industrialized, bourgeois-democratic society?
    - *a.* Yes – Join Parliament and begin gradual reforms toward Socialism.
    - *b.* No – Proceed to Question 2
2) Has your society achieved a bourgeois-democratic Revolution of any kind?
    - *a.* Yes - Is World Revolution imminent?
        - *i.* Yes – Ignite Revolution at home in such a way that the more advanced societies will follow. The disparity in material development will balance in an international system free from State capital exploiters.
        - *ii.* No – Work on developing industry domestically under the bourgeois-capitalist system, then await 2.a.i
    - *b.* No – Enact a bourgeois-democratic Revolution, then proceed to 2a.

Before 1905 the RSDLP, including the Bolsheviks, were at 2.b, seeking first to depose of Tsardom. In 1917, The Bolsheviks believed themselves to be at Step 2.a.i, but when the international situation adjusted such that 2.a.ii was the case, they correctly followed and worked on developing industry domestically with the bourgeois-capitalist mechanism that Marx so admired. Criticisms of this approach from anti-Marxists might easily say that the ultimate goal of any of these steps is pointless and that bourgeois capitalism is the most efficient and free way to organize society. However, those working within the confines of Marxism – which would be the only way to properly understand the motivations of these actors – must relieve themselves of the desire to emulate their preferred Marxists of the past in choosing one correct path and allowing for the inconsistencies within Marxism itself.

Outside of the Marxist circles, bantering over the means to the shared end of a Stateless future split the Marxists from the Anarchists. I showed how Alexander Berkman struggled with reconciling practice and theory after the Bolshevik takeover, before he ultimately succumbed to the age-old division within the greater left. His commitment to the idea of Revolution left him with no choice but to support the Bolsheviks initially. He also suspected that since the Revolution occurred across the summer of 1917 from the bottom up that the Bolsheviks were representing this popular initiative. He suggests that instead, the Bolsheviks co-opted this movement and misled the masses into supporting their Statist vision. While some sympathetic Marxist historians have suggested the opposite; that the Bolsheviks influenced the masses with their slogans and that the masses came to Bolshevism. We might instead say that the two entities worked in tandem feeding off each other. All the same, Berkman had ignored matters of theory until the practice became too much to bear, at

which point he worked backwards and said that the theory behind the power was rotten to begin with: of course it failed to produce anything positive.

Berkman agreed with the Bolshevik assessment of World Revolution, however. His defense of Bolshevism at the outset thus rested on a proper understanding of Bolshevik beliefs on the material conditions of the world in which they operated, and even agreed with their findings. The Mensheviks, Marxists on the other side, did not share this assessment, and believed that the February Revolution should have led to further bourgeois-democratic reform. It seems that what changed for Berkman was that he never stopped believing in the imminence of World Revolution, and that it especially could have come about if the Bolsheviks did not seize power. Ironically, he supported the reason for their takeover but then decried this same takeover for interfering with that supporting atmosphere of World Revolution.

The whole of this thesis has thus also focused on the tension between theory and practice. Berkman struggled more openly with this problem as shown in Chapter 2, though as noted above future research might delve more deeply into Bolshevik struggles in the years 1917 to 1921. The two cornerstone works of my subjects, the popular expositions of two competing philosophies for a future society, discuss the nature of theory and power in their own rights as well. Bukharin emphasizes the folly of parliamentarism and reformism, whereas Berkman emphasizes the folly of any intermediary Statehood in the name of the Proletariat.

In essence, the beginning and end of both the *ABC of Communism* and the *ABC of Anarchism* are the same. The integration of capitalism with governments brought us the World War, and the system will thus collapse under the weight of its own contradictions as

it becomes too much for the People to bear. In the end, there will be no State and all will be free. The middle sections of both philosophies, how to reach this end, caused the greatest disunity among the leftist movement since the 1860s, which is the struggle I have documented here.

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