The Last Shall Be First

The Genealogy of Russian Historical Exceptionalism and the Road to Revolution, 1830-1917

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"Better the illusions that exalt us than ten thousand truths."

~ Alexander Pushkin

Abstract

The legitimacy of Russia's October Revolution of 1917 is widely debated due to its divergences from a western-centric Marxist view of historical progression. In particular, socialism was hastily declared amid underdeveloped economic conditions while being executed via authoritarian means. Scholars have long sought to either critique or justify such conspicuous departures from Marxist Orthodoxy and Occidental normativity. This thesis looks past the Marxist and western-centric parameters of discussion to instead investigate the indigenous intellectual traditions which prefigured, influenced, and shaped these peculiar characteristics of the Russian Revolution. Contrary to the dominant view that the Russian revolutionary tradition was essentially unilaterally defined by a 'Westernizing' worldview, this thesis discloses alternative roots of revolution in an anti-western philosophy that diametrically opposed the former ethos. To draw this connection across eight decades, this study uncovers ideological continuities across multiple movements, otherwise thought to be mutually-hostile, ultimately identifying and organizing a novel genealogy of ideas. This investigation finds that the non-western 'aberrations' of the Russian Revolution were rather a logical continuation of an intellectual heritage which precisely sought to bulk Western precedents for a historically-exceptional road of the nation's own.

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE PREFACE of his magnum opus *Capital,* Karl Marx presented a Western-centric roadmap to socialism. Each society, Marx asserted, had to fulfill a series of developmental preconditions prior to manifesting a socialist revolution.[1] Crudely put, this particular chronology of preliminary historical stages was modeled after Western Europe's transition from feudalism to capitalism: agrarian commerce had to succumb to industrial economies, while absolute monarchies were to give way to constitutional democracies.[2] The degree to which these characteristics had developed in a society indicated its proximity to unlocking the anticipated socialist era. Further, there were no shortcuts on this itinerary of historical progression, Marx decreed, for a society "can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development."[3] By this logic, societies that presently lacked such characteristics of Occidental modernity were fundamentally deemed to be trailing behind on the timeline of historical development.[4] Accordingly, Friedrich Engels declared that the West must show "the retarded countries … by its example how it is done."[5] By this logic, Marxists deduced that the nations of Western Europe would be the first to reach the final stage of societal evolution: every country mentioned in the original *Communist Manifesto* as standing on the brink of a socialist

[1] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), 91–92.
[2] Olivia Blanchette, "The Idea of History in Karl Marx," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 26, no. 2 (1983): 82–122.
[3] Marx, *Capital*, 1:92.
[4] Marx argued that the societies which did not possess such hallmarks of Western historical development were "less developed" nations that would have to inevitably follow the West's footsteps: "The country that is more developed … only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future." See Ibid., 1:91.
[5] Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx & Frederick Engels: Selected Works in Three Volumes* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 2, 403-4.

revolution was a Western European one that had fulfilled such economic and political prerequisites of capitalist development.[6]

However, in 1917, the world's first 'Marxist' revolution occurred in Russia—a nation which scarcely resembled such descriptions of a society ripe for the socialist paradigm. Nearly two thousand miles east of the industrial fumes of London in which Marx published his works, Russia remained an "overwhelmingly rural, agrarian society."[7] Industrialization was but a recent development: over 90 percent of the labor force was still legally classified as peasants, who also constituted 85 percent of the entire empire's population.[8] Among the incipient population of urban workers, over 99 percent retained strong ties to the rural countryside, further testifying to the nascency and prematurity of the nation's transition into a modern economy when the age of socialism was already declared.[9] In the same vein, Russia's political progression remained a far cry from the liberal constitutions of the West that was expected to govern a capitalist paradigm. A mere 8 months of ineffectual and disputed attempts at a parliamentary democracy separated the end of the ancient Tsarist autocracy and the Bolshevik seizure of power.[10] In sum, the anomaly of the timing of the Russian Revolution, Polish historian Andrzej Walicki

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[6] See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*, Pbk. ed (1848; repr., London: Verso, 2012).

[7] Sarah Davies and James Harris, "The Working Class," in *Stalin's World: Dictating the Soviet Order* (Yale University Press, 2014), 113.

[8] Theodore H. Von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory 1892–1904," *The Journal of Economic History* 21, no. 1 (March 1961): 63. Furthermore, Von Laue notes that "the majority of workers themselves demanded to be called peasants." See ibid. Also see Dorothy Atkinson, "The Statistics on the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1917," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 4 (December 1973): 773-787, 773.

[9] Additionally, Theodore Von Laue emphasizes how "Those … who had broken completely with the village numbered one half of one per cent." Evidently, then, "the ties between city and country remained very close." In fact, most of these workers were also born in the village and moved to the city as the first generation to do so. See Von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory, 1892-1904," 64-5.

[10] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 457. Such a dwarfed period of 'liberal' history directly contradicted Marx's insistence on unhurriedly awaiting the full "matur[ation]" of each

writes, concerns "the fact that [it] almost coincided in time with the overthrow of absolutism [while] socialist production ha[d] been organized despite the relative backwardness and isolation of the country."[11]

The Controversy of the Revolution

These divergences from the Western historical model and expectations of classical Marxism have sparked prominent controversies and debates. Ever since the Russian Socialist Revolution, a rich tradition of anti-Soviet literature emerged among Western radical circles, decrying the alleged heresies of the premature commencement of socialism, a preclusion of a liberal phase of governance, and the authoritarian character of the resulting state.[12] In the immediate wake of the revolution, such criticism was exemplified by writings of the Polish-born German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg.[13] This stance has remained popular, as many recent scholars of socialist theory and praxis continue to insist that the Russian example erroneously departed from the 'correct' blueprint. Overall, these critics argue that

successive historical stage before moving on to the next. See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, Progress Publishers: 1977), 21.

[11] Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 7.

[12] Marx had insisted on the necessity of this liberal phase of political development, seen as the governmental superstructure behind capitalist economics, as essential for cultivating the working masses' political consciousness so that they could ultimately erect the socialist revolution through their own struggle. However, the Russian revolution's preclusion of such political developments in favor of an immediate socialist transformation instead saw the revolution essentially take place through a coup d'état imposed by the will of a small sect of revolutionary leaders from above, who implemented an authoritarian strategy that sought to force such unevolved conditions into existence—the dictatorial measures notoriously associated with the history of the Soviet regime. See Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, Marx's Political Writings 1 (London ; New York: Verso, 2010), 341; Karl Marx, "Provisional Rules of the International," in *The First International and After,* ed. David Fernbach (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), 375.

[13] For instance, see Rosa Luxemburg's critiques of the Russian Revolution's contradictions against Marxist doctrine in *Leninism or Marxism?* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1935).

Russia did not possess the economic or political "preconditions" to introduce socialism at that time, while also rebuking the resulting dictatorial nature forcing such an untimely approach as fundamentally un-Marxist.[14] Alternatively, numerous socialist theorists have also accepted the Russian peculiarities as valid adaptations of a flexible scripture. Influential Western Marxists such as the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci supported the Soviet regime and its methods while proclaiming that the Russian revolution had effectively revised Marx's insistence on the "fatal necessity of … the inauguration of a capitalist era" as necessarily preceding socialist revolution, concluding that "facts have left behind the ideologies."[15] Later, the prominent American Marxist economist Paul M. Sweezy expressed a similar validation of the Russian revolution's departures from theoretical orthodoxy by pointing out the ubiquity of its approach among nearly all later socialist revolutions in the 20th century: "The revolutions that put socialism on history's agenda took place not in economically developed countries, as Marx and Engels thought they would, but in countries where capitalism was still in early stages."[16] In essence, the core question of the controversy is summed up by the former British Labour politician and writer Meghnad Desai: "How could a revolution so contrary to the predictions of Marxist theory be labeled Marxist? … was the Russian Revolution an aberration, an accident of history? … There is perhaps a never-ending debate on the nature of the Russian Revolution."[17]

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[14]David Lane, "V.I. Lenin's Theory of Socialist Revolution," *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 3 (May 2021): 465; Gerald Meyer, "Anarchism, Marxism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Science & Society* 2 (Summer 2003): 218-22; Ilias Alami and Adam D. Dixon, "State Capitalism(s) redux? Theories, Tensions, Controversies," *Competition and Change* 24, no. 1 (October 2019): 70-94.

[15] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings* 1910-1920 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), vol 1, 130.

[16] Paul M. Sweezy, "Socialism: Legacy and Renewal," *Monthly Review* 44, no. 8 (January 1993): 6.

[17] Meghnad Desai, *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Static Socialism* (London: Verso, 2004), 110.

Rationale of Approach

This thesis does not seek to join the saturated scholarship and unresolvable debates regarding the legitimacy of the Russian Socialist Revolution apropos Marxist ideology, which has preoccupied much of the literature. Instead, this study is interested in the deeper intellectual roots underlying and prefiguring the revolution's controversial eccentricities. Within this topic, some intellectual historians have noticed an interesting turn in Marx's thought during the final years of his life: a handful of letters and unpublished drafts from the 1880s reveal that Marx began to accept the possibility for Russia to brew a socialist revolution along non-Western rhythms. However, as shown in British scholar Teodor Shanin's investigative study of this development, *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (1983), this revisionist perspective was deliberately prevented from being promulgated among the Marxist circles in Russia, where the ideology was instead established along the original principles of Western historical universalism.[18] In fact, these revisionist texts were kept secret until their rediscovery almost a decade after the Russian Socialist Revolution.[19] In other words, the Bolshevik generation of revolutionaries who ultimately created the eccentric revolutionary formula in 1917 did not their inspiration to do so from

[18] Upon receiving such a shocking concession from Marx, the leaders of the Russian Marxist movement, then (e.g. Georgi Plekhanov, Pavel Akselrod, etc.), refused to publish the document and even denied its existence when asked, once, about it. See Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and "the Peripheries of Capitalism,"* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 127–28. In the meantime, it is evident that these Russian Marxist leaders continued to abide by Marx's original framework, insisting that "in Russian history, there is no essential difference from the history of Western Europe," and continuing to proclaim the "universal historical" validity of the Western framework, valid to "all other countries," "as expressed in the works of Marx, Engels." See Georgi Plekhanov, "Our Differences," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1885; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 706–7; and "The Program of the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party," ibid., 711-12.

[19] In other words, the contents of this letter were kept secret until some copies were rediscovered much later and published in 1926—almost 10 years after the Russian revolution. See "David Riazanov: Discovery of the Drafts," in Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road,* 129-133.

within the Marxist tradition, but from elsewhere.[20] Building on this finding, then, this thesis investigates the pre-Marxist roots of Russian thought that prefigured the particular non-Western approach taken in the eventual revolution that was ultimately declared in Marx's name. In doing so, it identifies a series of successive movements, across generations, which altogether constitutes a long line of continuous ideas that ultimately influenced and shaped the revolution's peculiar character in question.

Argument

I argue that there existed a distinct ideological tradition which centrally asserted Russia's historical exceptionalism from the Western European model of historical evolution—a distinct set of ideas that can be traced into the Russian Socialist Revolution's controversial deviations from the Western paradigm. In particular, I track the genealogy of this intellectual heritage across three discrete political movements: from the conservative Slavophiles of the 1830s-40s through the socialist Narodniks of the 1870s, and finally to Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik Marxists who crafted the revolution of 1917 that so defied Western models.

Specifically, I argue that this belief in Russian historical exceptionalism was underpinned by a particular interpretation of Russia's underdeveloped conditions. Here, the conceptualization of the nation's societal 'backwardness,' rather than denoting a developmental lag behind the more-advanced West, was transvaluated to signify an alternative non-Western path of societal evolution. Such a view

[20] Lenin first read Plekhanov's works, "without which one could not have arrived at Social Democratic [Marxist] positions." Further, Lenin described Plekhanov's *Socialism and Political Struggle* as being the Russian equivalent of *The Communist Manifesto* in terms of generational significance and influence. See Leon Trotsky, *The Young Lenin,* trans. Max Eastman (New York: Doubleday): 131, 189-90.

promoted an accelerated historical trajectory for the country to pursue, which ultimately grew into the logic behind the eventual revolution's expedited timing and initiation amid such premature conditions. Additionally, I will demonstrate how this heritage of ideas, across different generations, consistently centered around an aversion to Western political liberalism. This commonality made possible an ideological continuity across otherwise politically-opposed movements; moreover, this anti-liberal stance ultimately evolved into the political strategy which justified the antidemocratic character of the Russian Revolution and its resulting dictatorial regime.

Thus, this thesis looks past the narrow Marxist parameters of debate that have engrossed much of scholarly attention. Instead, this study identifies an earlier lineage of Russian thought that deliberately sought to refuse the Western course of history, then tracking its evolution into the deviant 'Marxist' revolution in question. In doing so, this study challenges the popular narrative of an "aberrant" Russian Revolution that occurred in spite of its differences from the West,[21] instead revealing the inheritance of an intellectual tradition that had long anticipated and sought such a course of history.

Historiographical Significance

But what is significant or interesting about locating the roots of the non-Western character of the Russian Revolution within non-Western thought? By tracing the revolution's ideological roots to an intellectual current that explicitly rejected the Western historical model, this thesis fundamentally clashes with one of the most established historiographical narratives of Russian revolutionary thought. Indeed, the Russian radical heritage which culminated in devising the socialist revolution is widely

[21] Desai, *Marx's Revenge*, 110.

conceptualized as a linear tradition of thought that directly descended from the so-called 'Westernizer' philosophy.[22] Dating back to Tsar Peter the Great's campaign to 'Westernize' Russia, this was a worldview whose central doctrine was to shape Russia's future in accordance with Western European historical precedents. Glorifying the Western path of societal progression as representing "the universal progress of humanity,"[23] this philosophy was dedicated to bringing Russia out of its comparative 'backwardness' by precisely following in the footsteps of the Occidental example. As described in historian Marc Raeff's canonical work, *The Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia,* the Russian revolutionary intellectual tradition had its origins in the ethos of Petrine Westernization—to which it is linked via "a straight line."[24] Historian Richard Pipes similarly argues that "in Russia, the intelligentsia, both as an historical phenomenon and a social concept, has been intrinsically connected with the process of Westernization. It has come into being as a by-product of that process."[25] Thus, scholars commonly conceptualize the Russian Revolution, the ultimate product of this line of thinkers, as attempting to fulfill that original Westernizer mission.[26] As such, the Russian revolution's non-Western characteristics

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[22] For the most renowned works on this topic, see Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Penguin, 1978); and Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966).

[23] Petr Chaadaev, "Letters on the Philosophy of History," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 169.

[24] Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 171.

[25] Richard Pipes, "The Historical Evolution of the Russian Intelligentsia," *Daedalus* 89, no. 3 (Summer, 1960): 487.

[26] For instance, the English historian A.J. Toynbee conceptualized the Russian Revolution as "a latter-day attempt at Westernization … that … puts Peter the Great's work into the shade." See A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London, 1936-39), vol. III, 202. Additionally, Theodore Von Laue wrote a book titled *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective,* conceptualizing an era of this Westernizing theme, beginning with the Russian Bolshevik Revolution as his first example. See Theodore H. Von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Furthermore, Dmitry Shlapentokh describes the Russian historical experience of any "Russian modernization," in general, as "actually Westernization in the particular context of Russian history." See Dmitry Shlapentokh, "Bolshevism as a Fedorovian Regime," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 37, no. 4 (October – December 1996): 429.

have thus appeared as a historical anomaly, often explained as an aberration or lapse that diverged from the intended course of progression.[27]

Without intending to invalidate the revolutionary intelligentsia's connection to this tradition of thought, I will attempt to showcase the additional influential existence of another. In other words, this thesis seeks to illustrate how the revolution commonly believed to be the culmination of this Westernizer weltanschauung also held formative intellectual roots in the oppositional philosophical current which rejected Westernization. Thus, by providing a foregrounding of unexpected ideological seeds traced into core ideas of the revolution's creators, this thesis presents a new avenue of contextual explanations for the peculiarities of the Russian Socialist Revolution.

Furthermore, in tracing a timeline of ideological transmissions from origins to revolution, this thesis also penetrates the barriers thus far believed to have separated the movements that I portray as deeply interlinked. Specifically, by uncovering a line of continuity between the Slavophiles, the Narodniks, and the Russian Marxists, this study challenges the established historiography pertaining to each of these individual milieus regarding their relationships to one another, for these schools of thought are typically regarded as mutually opposed and ideologically antithetical.[28]As such, no work has previously considered these three separate ideologies as part of one continuous ideological lineage for any theme. Indeed, the Slavophiles were anti-revolutionary conservatives, while the Narodniks and

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[27] For instance, see E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23* (Penguin, London, 1973), 110-11; Frederick Busi, "The Failure of Revolution," *The Massachussetts Review* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 397-408; David Cunningham, "A Marxist Heresy? Accelerationism and its Discontents," *Radical Philosophy* 1 (2015): 29-38.

[28] See Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 176; Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 458; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 26. Also see Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

Marxists clashed in the nation's largest feud between rival socialist movements. Thus, by connecting such political rivals, this thesis constructs an intellectual genealogy which bridges the seemingly unbridgeable, thereby additionally contributing a reorganized pathway of Russian ideological history between the early-mid-19th century and 1917.

Methodology

Methodologically, I will draw from the most representative thinkers of each of the aforementioned movements, examining their views on Russia's historical development vis-à-vis the West—through essays, books, memoirs, letters, speeches, and party documents. The primary focus will be on how the ideas of each thinker may have contributed to the evolving intellectual heritage that ultimately influenced the Russian Revolution's divergences from Western expectations of its timing and politics. Accordingly, the ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism discussed in each chapter will be organized along two interrelated themes: 1) 'reversing backwardness' and 2) 'anti-liberal politics.' By maintaining this constant format across the analysis of different milieus, I will track the continuity of ideas as they move across rivaling movements and time periods. Beyond observing analogous similarities in concepts and logic between thinkers, I will additionally supplement such parallels with more explicit evidence of ideological transmission, borrowing, and influence—to concretize the ties between these seemingly-unrelated milieus.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 demonstrates how originally-conservative ideas of anti-Westernism were introduced into the Russian radical tradition, influencing the nation's earliest socialist theories. This section opens with a brief description of the Westernization ideals of the movement that is popularly believed to be the origin point of the Russian revolutionary tradition: the original 'Westernizer' movement of the mid-19th century. Then, the chapter will turn to the enemies of this worldview: the Slavophiles, a conservative faction of anti-revolutionary philosophers and theologians who constructed the first counterargument against the Westernization of Russia, which laid the foundations for the theoretical framework of Russian historical exceptionalism that will be tracked throughout the rest of this thesis. The Slavophiles posited a vision of Russia's historical evolution that celebrated the nation's underdeveloped conditions—its agrarian orientation and collectivist values—as a unique condition of Russia worth protecting from the specter of modernity. Advocating for a return to a pre-modern utopia exemplified by peasant communalism, the Slavophiles protested against the incursion of Western political liberalism. Instead, they sought the preservation of pre-liberal values, thereby calling for the Westernized Russian intelligentsia to return to the ways of the non-Westernized rural masses, who were to lead this restoration.

Next, I will show how these Slavophile ideas were transmitted into the Russian socialist heritage. The Slavophiles directly inspired one of the nation's earliest socialist thinkers, Alexander Herzen. His radicalization of such anti-Westernist principles produced the idea of reaching socialism through a non-Western route. Under this view, the 'backwardness' of Russian conditions presented a historically-exceptional situation in which the nation could bypass any intermediary historical stages, i.e., the

communalist traditions of the Russian peasantry would provide a basis for the immediate construction of a socialist society. Herzen additionally inherited the Slavophile's anti-liberal stance—but now recontextualizing such conservative pre-liberal aims for the radical post-liberal goal of a socialist society.

Chapter 2 illustrates how the ideas of the previous chapter grew into forming Russia's first mass socialist following—the Narodnik movement. Through the works of leading writers Nikolai Mikhailovsky and Vasily Bervi-Flerovsky, I will show how the Narodniks promulgated an ideology of Russia evading Western Europe's capitalist stage of historical development through a direct transition into socialism made possible by Russia's uniquely underdeveloped conditions. By connecting the earlier intellectual milieus of the previous chapter to the Narodnik movement, I will not only be confirming the anti-Westernizer roots of Russian socialist thought but also arguing against the common historiographical notion that Narodnik ideas emerged only after the emancipation of the serfs and in response to the advent of Marxist thought.[29] Additionally, I will present the anti-liberal continuities that saw the movement abide by similar political values of the previous thinkers, principles that will be exemplified through the revolutionary strategists Mikhail Bakunin and Pyotr Lavrov. However, this chapter will additionally show how the new material realities of a modernizing Russia heightened fears of the imminent arrival of capitalism. Such concerns gave rise to critical revisions in revolutionary tactics, namely in retracting the trust once placed on the peasant masses to lead the anticipated transformation of Russia. Through the works of Petr Tkachev, this chapter concludes with the new logic of revolution:

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[29] This argues against Andzej Walicki's *The Controversy of Capitalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 441-45. Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), and Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), all of whom portray the core ideas of Narodism as emerging in response to the post-emancipation era and contemporaneity of Marxist thought.

in order to ensure the successful execution of a historical shortcut to socialism amid the new, threatening conditions of modernity, the movement's ethos of anti-liberalism facilitated a seismic shift toward an authoritarian strategy of revolution—to forcefully align incompatible conditions with an anachronistic ideal.

Chapter 3 presents the final stretch of the intellectual timeline, illustrating how these ideas were ultimately inducted into the Russian Marxist consciousness which oversaw the actual revolution. This section opens with the decline of the Narodnik movement and the rise of Marxism in Russia as new economic trends seemed to confirm the latter's prognosis of historical development. The first half of the chapter will show how Marxism was established in Russia by Georgi Plekhanov, 'the father of Russian Marxism,'[30] who sought to hegemonize Westernizing principles in his crusade against the Narodnik belief in Russian historical exceptionalism—by insisting on the necessity for Russia to follow the Western road of capitalist development and political liberalism. The rest of the chapter will analyze how his pupil, Vladimir Lenin, who ultimately directed the socialist revolution, surprisingly strayed from such Westernizing doctrines, while appearing to revive the Slavophile and Narodnik ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism. Through a series of revisions to Marxist stage theory, Lenin planned an accelerated revolution to be launched amid conspicuously underdeveloped economic and political conditions. Further, I will show how Lenin's anti-liberal departures from 'Orthodox Marxism' additionally facilitated the implementation of an authoritarian strategy of revolution inherited from the later Narodnik revisions of the previous chapter. By connecting the Narodnik movement to Lenin's

[30] This is a popular epithet of Plekhanov and the subtitle of his most authoritative biography in English. See Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

thought and practice, I will thus challenge the popular historiographical portrayal of Narodism and Marxism as mutually-opposed and incompatible ideologies.[31] Further, in doing so, this chapter thus also contests a common historiographical explanation of Lenin's apparent deviations from 'Orthodox Marxism' as reflective of his individual innovations,[32] instead demonstrating that such ideas were inherited from earlier ideological movements in Russia. Altogether, this chapter thereby completes the intellectual genealogy linking the anti-Westernizer Slavophiles and the anti-Marxist Narodniks to the Russian 'Marxist' revolution of 1917, thereby providing a new explanation for the latter's peculiar divergences from Western precedents and expectations.

[31] See Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 176; Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 458; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 26. Also see Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

[32] Historians often claim that Lenin's apparent divergences from classical Marxism constituted a novel rendition: Michael Karpovich interprets such deviations as "Lenin's Marxism" being "sui generis." See Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin," *The Review of Politics* 6, no. 3 (July 1944), 346. Similarly, Robert Mayer argues that Lenin was "a genuine innovator" and created a "novel" theoretical framework. See Robert Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin," *Studies in East European Thought* 45, no. 4 (December 1993), 256-7.

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GENESIS: A SLAVOPHILIC SOCIALISM

"Russia, having spiritually broken away from Europe, lived a life separate from Europe's ... for both his appearance and his inner cast of mind ... were the result of an entirely different type of life, flowing from an entirely different fountainhead."[1]

~ Ivan Kireevsky

A RUSSIAN STATE decree of 1705 mandated that men "of all ranks" must shave their faces—or be fined. Any nobleman spotted in public with a beard was charged 60 rubles; uncomplying military officers were taxed 100 rubles, and any bearded peasant who stepped foot within city boundaries was fined 1 kopeck.[2] Why was the Russian government so preoccupied over the facial hair of its subjects? By this time, Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) had assumed the throne of the Russian Empire. His war on beards was but a microcosm of his larger campaign to 'Westernize' Russia. Beards had long constituted a symbol of one's allegiance to Russian Orthodoxy—particularly as a marker of difference from the Catholic and Protestant cultures of Western Europe, in which clean-shaven appearances were the norm.[3] In other words, the Russian monarch sought to systematically erase this traditional visual distinction

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[1] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 180.

[2] Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, 1st ed. (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 2000), 53.

[3] The Official Russian Orthodox Church Decree of 1551: "The sacred rules to all Orthodox Christians warn them not to shave their beards or moustaches or to cut their hair. Such is not an Orthodox practice but a Latin and heretical bequest." See ibid., 7.

between his people and other Europeans. Beyond beards, he instituted additional decrees that banned traditional Russian clothing, instead legally mandating that all subjects adhere to the latest standards of German and French fashion. The tsar scorned his nation's cultural differences from the West as representing what he called "Old Russian barbarism."[4] Accordingly, the crown attempted to remake Russia in the image of the West. In 1712, Peter dramatically moved the empire's capital from the historical heartland of Moscow to a new city built from scratch—deliberately situated at the Westernmost point of the Russian coast. He named it after himself, but specifically with a German suffix: 'Sankt-Peter*burg*' (St. Petersburg). Furthermore, the tsar hired only Italian and German architects in order to make the city look as 'Western' as possible in the latest Neo-Classical style.[5]

In addition to achieving outward conformity, the Russian sovereign also sought to 'Westernize' the Russian mind. Accordingly, Peter founded the state-sponsored practice of regularly sending Russian nobles to Western Europe, where they would be educated in Western literature and philosophy. Equating 'the West' with modernity, the Russian emperor sought to bring home the latest achievements of the European Enlightenment to modernize his nation. 20 years after Peter's death, the Russian polymath Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) reflected on what became a lasting national practice of Western tutelage:

> the sons of Russia, journeying forth to acquire knowledge in the various sciences and arts … foreigners arriving with various skills, books, and instruments … What benefit was brought to us by all the different sciences and arts … of which our forefathers, before the

[4] Ibid., 55.
[5] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, First Vintage Books edition (New York: Vintage Books, A division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2017), 187.

> days of Russia's Great Enlightener, were not only deprived but in many cases had not even any conception … through the enlightenment brought by Peter.[6]

However, this intellectual Westernization of the upper classes did not correspond, at all, to the socioeconomic conditions of the heartland. While the countries of Western Europe had ended the practice of legal servitude in the 15th and 16th centuries and began to govern via liberal constitutions in the 18th and 19th centuries, the tsars of Russia continued to rule through an unwavering autocracy, while perpetuating the ancient institution of serfdom.[7] The peasant population—most of whom were serfs until 1861—made up 97 percent of the empire's population under Peter the Great in the early 18th century, a figure that only declined to 85 percent by the 1917 Socialist Revolution.[8] Faced with such dissonant disparities between the Western ideals of progress in which they were educated versus the glaring underdevelopment at home, the Russian nobility could no longer ignore the increasingly-anachronistic realities of their society.

Over time, this pedagogical Westernization of the Russian aristocracy led to the emergence of a new sociological stratum known as "the intelligentsia," an elite circle of noble intellectuals dedicated to manifesting the Western ideals of progress in Russia.[9] The intelligentsia's *raison d'être* is often captured by the term "repentant nobleman": guilt-ridden and painfully-conscious of their privileged positions amid the suffering of the vast majority of their countrymen, these intellectuals, being the only literate

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[6] Mikhail Lomonosov, "Panegryic to the Sovereign Emperor Peter the Great," in *Russian Intellectual History*, ed. Marc Raeff (1755; repr., New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 35–36.
[7] Paul Bairoch, "International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980," *Journal of European Economic History* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 269.
[8] Dorothy Atkinson, "The Statistics on the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1917," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 4 (December 1973): 773.
[9] See Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1996).

segment of this bimodal society, felt an obligation to amend their nation's shortcomings.[10] Yet, unable to fight for change amid nonexistent institutions of legal reform beneath an unbending autocracy, the intelligentsia turned to formulating theories of societal transformation—to philosophize the way forward for their country's progress.[11] In this manner, historian Marc Raeff describes how this intellectual class of Russia became possessed by an intense conviction to rectify the deficiencies of their nation, which they were so acutely conscious of, through abstract ideas: "they put all their energies and will power into ideas and doctrines aimed at bringing about a radical transformation of reality."[12]

Though as ambitious as they were, the Russian intelligentsia was also deeply detached from the oppressed and illiterate masses on whose behalf they spoke. Reared on a foreign academic culture in wealthy cities far removed from the rural heartland, these theorists were profoundly disconnected from the subjects of their theories. At the same time, facing constant Tsarist censorship, most thinkers could only vocalize their ideas abroad, in exile—further adding to the rift between their abstract conceptualizations and the material realities at home.[13] This perpetual distance between the intelligentsia's metaphysical visions and the actual conditions of Russian society would prefigure tragic impracticalities of putting theory into practice, a predicament that would slowly unfold throughout the following 19th century and into the next—and throughout the course of this thesis.

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[10] C.A. Johnson, "The Eighteenth Century," *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies* 27 (1965): 641-646.
[11] Christopher Becker, "Raznochintsy: The Development of the Word and of the Concept," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 18, no. 1 (February 1959): 63–74.
[12] Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia,* 170.
[13] Martin A. Miller, *The Russian Revolutionary Émigrés, 1825-1870*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Context: The Westernizers & Western Historical Universalism

For a century since Peter's reforms, France had been the epicenter of Russian intellectual study and emulation. But following the French Revolutionary upheavals of 1789 and the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812, climaxed by the Decembrist Rebellion in 1825, the tsarist autocracy became alarmed by the spread of radical philosophies and sought to divert Russia's learning model to a country with less subversive tendencies.[14] Consequently, Emperor Nicholas I chose the German state of Prussia, which, like Russia, maintained a despotic model of governance.[15] As a result, 19th-century German thought became the primary source of intellectual inspiration for the emerging Russian intelligentsia. Most significantly, this era of German thought popularized the philosophy of history: "the philosopher's role was now to discern 'the march of history,'" historian Isaiah Berlin notes, "to discover where it was carrying mankind."[16] Thus, this century of Russian thought became primarily preoccupied with the need to define the nature of Russia's historical trajectory.

The central issue facing this generation of Russian thinkers concerned the fact that Western-European ideas ran far ahead of Russian societal development. Reckoning with this disparity, the Russian intelligentsia, the brainchild of Peter the Great's Westernization ethos, deduced a historical model in which Russia ought to follow and repeat Western historical precedents. Known as the 'Westernizers' of Russia, these thinkers conceptualized the history of Western Europe as representing "the universal progress of humanity."[17] This milieu unwaveringly relied upon "the intellectual life of

[14] Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, 136.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 137.
[17] Chaadaev, "Letters on the Philosophy of History," 169.

Europe," deferring to "the more developed Western countries" as representing the objective societal standard to emulate.[18] Viewing their own nation as lagging behind in historical development, this era of Russian intellectuals sought to model their nation's future according to the Western European example. Thus, they argued that Western ideas ought to be universalized in application to Russia—to bring the latter from its "backward" condition into the perceived progressive trajectory that the Occident possessed, which they viewed as "the march towards light and freedom."[19] In other words, the West was seen as the trend-setter of global history, dictating what was objectively progressive and representing what all societies ought to aspire to become.

The Russian philosopher Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) pushed this Westernizer premise to the logical extreme and exposed the humiliating implication of such a worldview. If Russia had to constantly mimic the West for any hope of historical progression, then what does that say about the nature of Russian civilization? He concluded that Russia lacked any historical originality of its own. The nation had no cultural contributions or innovations to make to the world and would forever play the role of a pupil learning from the achievements of the West. In this sense, Russians were deemed to be "children who have not been taught to think for themselves."[20] Chaadaev thus classified Russian culture as one that has become "wholly imported and imitative" of the West, with nothing home-grown from native roots; the country depended on endlessly appropriating the "ready-made" products achieved by the labor of Western advancement.[21]

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[18] Andrzej Walicki, "Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Russian Review* 36, no. 1 (January 1977): 1.
[19] Berlin, *Russian Thinkers,* 136.
[20] Chaadaev, "Letters on the Philosophy of History," 164.
[21] Ibid.

THE SLAVOPHILES

Such a shameful self-image of Russia's culture and its position in world history did not sit well with all members of the intellectual class. Though reared on "the same philosophical texts" as the Westernizers, a rivalling circle of Russian philosophers and theologians emerged between the 1830s and 40s, upholding conservative and traditionalist principles with the aim of refuting the Westernizer outlook. Known as the Slavophiles, these writers sought to posit an ideology that restored pride and purpose to Russia's significance in history.[22] This section will represent their thought through the writings of the movement's three most prominent thinkers: Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), Alexei Khomiakov (1804-1860), and Konstantin Aksakov (1817-1860). Though the Westernizers are widely recognized as the forefathers of the philosophical heritage that ultimately led to the Bolshevik Revolution, the ideas of the *anti-Westernizer* Slavophiles thus marks the start of an alternative intellectual lineage behind the revolution, which this thesis presents. The ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism begins with these conservative, anti-revolutionary theorists.

Positing Russian Historical Exceptionalism

In response to the notion that Russia ought to continuously emulate the West as the universal blueprint for historical progression, the Slavophiles asserted a separate timeline of historical development for Russia. In other words, they de-universalized the Westernizer conception of history that had become normalized in the Russian intellectual consciousness. Rather than there existing a single objective

[22] James Edie, ed., *Russian Philosophy, Volume I: The Slavophiles, The Westernizers*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 160.

timeline dictated by any one civilization for all others to follow, the Slavophiles asserted that each nation or people possessed "its own unique, individual, inner purpose." [23] In particular, these thinkers sought to define two separate teloses differentiating Russia from Western societies—the latter of which was conceptualized as a monolithic entity. Ivan Kireevsky, for instance, sought to "arrive at a general definition of two types of civilizations,"[24] declaring that,

> Russia, having spiritually broken away from Europe, lived a life separate from Europe's … for both his appearance and his inner cast of mind … were the result of an entirely different type of life, flowing from an entirely different fountainhead.[25]

In articulating this difference, the Slavophiles reasoned that the uniqueness of each civilization stemmed from the particularity of its foundational values. Aleksei Khomiakov postulated that the "entire … history of [a] society" was eternally governed by "its first principles, its organic origins," thus seeing each civilization "develop in its own way."[26] Similarly, Kireevsky explained that "the development of a state is simply the unfolding of the essential principles on which it is founded."[27]

Since the founding values of each society were believed to command its particular pattern of evolution and thereby determine its people's fate, the Slavophiles thus took to endowing oppositional 'foundational' characteristics between their nation and those of the West: "the principles underlying Russian culture are totally different from the component elements of the culture of European peoples,"

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[23] This nationalistic philosophy of history can be traced to German Romanticism. See Berlin, *Russian Thinkers,* 136.
[24] Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 204.
[25] Ibid., 180.
[26] Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 215.
[27] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 187.

Kireevsky exclaimed.[28] But what exactly were these differences? The Slavophiles defined 'the West' as a civilization fundamentally built on the principle of individualism, whereas Russia was founded on the virtue of communalism.

Reversing 'Backwardness'

Using this dichotomy of civilizational identities, the Slavophiles developed a worldview that sought to reverse the Westernizers' conception of progress and advancement vis-à-vis 'backwardness' and underdevelopment. The Westernizers believed in a linear progression in historical evolution from "primitive" collectivistic living, which they scorned, toward an increasingly individualized society, which represented the modernity of Western Europe that they aspired to attain for Russia.[29] Against this view, the Slavophiles posited the opposite connotations of these values: they identified Western individualism as promoting a destructive principle while celebrating Russian collectivism as safeguarding a utopian paradigm.

The modern individualistic societies of Western Europe that the Westernizers adored, the Slavophiles argued, was not an enviable archetype to mimic but rather one destined for failure. Kireevsky claimed that "European societies," historically developing through "a spirit of individual separatism … held together only by private and party interests," faced the inevitable fate of self-implosion: in such a society, "separate private parties … pursued their own purposes and individual policies at the expense of

[28] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 180.
[29] See Walicki, "Russian Social Thought," 8.

the state as a whole," ultimately resulting in constant conflicts that would tear a people apart.[30] By this logic, he concluded that "European civilization was bound in the end to destroy the whole social and intellectual edifice which it had erected."[31] Likewise, Khomiakov proclaimed that the individualistic West "carried the seeds of its own destruction," deducing that the civilization's decline and collapse was "a historical necessity."[32] Such claims, though factually unfounded, nevertheless mark a significant departure from the norm of viewing the West as the exemplary model of history. These views effectively introduced, to the Russian intelligentsia, the notion that the Western mode of historical progression ought to not be followed but rather evaded. This belief would be passed down as a core premise of the later socialist generation that sought a non-Western path of development.

In defending the virtues of Russia's contrasting collectivistic structure, the Slavophiles did not merely paint it as a superior societal model but specifically portrayed this 'backward' culture as embodying the very form of society that the modern West had sought to attain. In this manner, Khomiakov declared that "only we [Russians]" could provide the answer to the "riddle" of the West's social strivings.[33] Russia's ancient communalistic ways, the Slavophiles believed, represented exactly what the progressive West was searching for: "they are looking for this idea in the West … but they are unable to find it; for it cannot spring from the West's social principles."[34] In this sense, the Slavophiles alluded to how 19th-century Western radical movements had begun conceiving of the ultimate stage of societal evolution as one which fostered a collective freedom, i.e., striving for socialism. Specifically, Khomiakov

[30] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 187.
[31] Ibid., 188.
[32] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 211–13.
[33] Ibid., 212.
[34] Ibid., 220.

explained how "the West, trying to reconcile freedom with unity," postulated visions "under the names of communism or socialism;" however, "all attempts to discover or create such a principle" in their culture "have failed."[35] Their individualistic mentality "was incapable of grasping that law" which the communalistic people of Russia had preserved in their "pre-individualized" ways of life.[36] Indeed, the latter had managed to preserve a certain premodern "wholeness" and "integrality" of life unspoiled by individualistic norms or a division of labor.[37] Similarly, Kireevsky boasted of how Russia's traditionally-communalistic society featured "neither a rigid separation of immobile social estates, nor privileges granted to one estate at the expense of the others … nor class contempt, class hatred, and class envy."[38] Here, the Slavophiles presented their 'backward' world as exemplifying the haven from class struggles and social disparities that Western radicals had envisioned would be achieved in a socialist utopia.

Thus, the Slavophiles essentially argued that pre-modern Russia already possessed the elements for building the very kind of society that modern Western social theoreticians were unsuccessfully seeking to attain. In this way, the Slavophiles flipped the Westernizer view of historical evolution on its head by positioning an underdeveloped Russia as ahead of the advanced West on the timeline of progressive development. Hence, Khomiakov proudly proclaimed, "having first secured these principles for itself … history calls upon Russia to take the lead in universal enlightenment."[39] In this manner, the Slavophiles effectively reversed the image of Russia as an eternal pupil of Western instructions; now, Russia would lead the West at its own game of spearheading the latest historical paradigms: *the last shall*

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[35] Ibid., 213.
[36] Ibid., 212-13. Also see Walicki, "Russian Social Thought," 13.
[37] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 190.
[38] Ibid., 197.
[39] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 226, 229.

be first. This Slavophile trope would soon be passed down to later radical thinkers who believed that Russia would reach socialism before the Western world.

If the Slavophiles concluded that the most coveted forms of society were not to be found in the modernized West but rather in ancient 'communal' principles preserved by Russia, where were such glorified values to be found, exactly? Since Russia had been systematically westernized by the crown for centuries, where then were these non-Western traits stored in a post-Petrine[40] Russia? The answer thus necessarily lay in the segments of society most isolated from the cosmopolitan centers of Western education, i.e., the most unmodernized, underdeveloped, and 'backward' constituents of the empire: the rural peasantry. The Russian peasantry lived in the agrarian village commune, a social structure which the Slavophiles believed to be the basis of all their claims regarding Russia's 'communalistic' culture and the collective freedom sought after by Western dreams of socialism. So central was the peasant commune to the Slavophile ideology that Khomiakov claimed that "hardly a line of Russian history can be understood unless one has a clear idea of the commune and its internal life."[41] Historian Alan Kimball describes this institution as embodying "some of the most primitive agricultural practices known to Europe."[42] Accordingly, the Westernizers berated it as a 'primitive' relic of the past which must be cleared on the way to evolving "higher" forms of social organization.[43] Reversing such views, the Slavophiles declared that "the commune is that highest principle which is not destined to find anything higher than

[40] The term "Petrine" is the adjective denoting matters relating to Tsar Peter the Great.
[41] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 228.
[42] Alan Kimball, "The Russian Peasant 'Obshchina' in the Political Culture of the Era of Great Reforms," *Russian History* 17, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 259–60.
[43] See Andrzej Walicki, "Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Russia," *The Russian Review* 36, no. 1 (January 1977): 13.

itself."[44] Moreover, the Slavophiles believed that the peasant commune—"the great repository of hope for the future of Russia"—served as the foundation of the utopian Russia which they sought to build.[45] Thus, Khomiakov claimed that "upon [the commune's] development can be developed the entire civil order."[46]

By believing the ancient peasant commune as constituting the basis of perfecting the social architecture of Russia, the Slavophiles thereby put forth the seemingly-paradoxical mentality of viewing the most underdeveloped parts of society as providing the key to reaching the highest ideal of societal evolution—a notion that would become central to every thinker of this intellectual genealogy from here on. Aware of the shocking transvaluation that such a claim made apropos the conventional views on linear historical progression, Aksakov swore that "Russia will put the [Westernized] theoreticians to shame and reveal an aspect of her greatness that no has ever suspected," i.e., a greatness contained in the aspects of Russian society typically least expected to yield promise.[47] Altogether, the Slavophiles introduced the concept of Russia possessing a superior, non-Western path of historical development made possible precisely by the purported advantages of its societal 'backwardness.' This particular argument for Russian historical exceptionalism will comprise the central logic of all following theorists and movements which this thesis will track.

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[44] Aksakov, quoted in Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 35.
[45] Kimball, "The Russian Peasant 'Obshchina,'" 259-60.
[46] Khomiakov, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 33.
[47] Konstantin Sergeevich Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 233.

Anti-Liberal Politics

If Russian society's most 'backward' and unwesternized aspects held the key to realizing the highest forms of freedom which the West themselves were striving for, the Slavophiles argued, then this premise additionally invalidated the need to adopt the modern political institutions of Western Europe. More specifically, this attitude amounted to a contempt for political liberalism as a concept. The Westernizers of Russia had long pleaded for the adoption of the Western liberal paradigm, which consisted of constitutional governance, property rights, and other legal institutions typically associated with a society's advancement past feudalism. For instance, Nikolai Fonvizin (1745-1792) typified this Westernizer demand for Russia to emulate Europe's liberal institutions. He cried out for "real political freedom," "the rights of property," and the need for a "stable code of laws" still absent in Russia.[48] Viewing Western Europe as embodying the most enlightened methods of societal organization, he hoped that Russia would adopt "those privileges which are enjoyed by the peoples of Europe, with their sound institutions."[49]

However, the conservative Slavophiles, believing that pre-liberal forms more closely approximated the societal ideal, rejected these Occidental norms—instead viewing the ancient peasant commune as exemplifying a superior way of social organization. Firstly, the Slavophiles repudiated the liberal conception of land division, i.e., the rights of private property. Preferring Russia's traditionally-communalist approach to sharing land among the community, Kireevsky derided the "private, personal

[48] Denis Fonvizin, "A Discourse on Permanent Laws of State," in *Russian Intellectual History*, trans. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 96–105.
[49] Ibid.

character" that was "the foundation of Western development;" instead, he emphasized how "landed property, the source of personal rights in the West, was here [in Russia] the property of society," rather than that of any individual.[50] Secondly, the Slavophiles felt that the Western liberal conception of law was entirely inapplicable to the way in which the Russian peasant commune governed itself. Elaborating on the alleged uniqueness of the traditional commune's administrative framework, Khomiakov held that the peasant inhabitants operated "on legal principles which are peculiar to our people," which he cited as "another proof of the gulf dividing us [from Westerners]."[51] Similarly, Kireevsky asserted that, in contrast to the "Western jurisprudence," Russian society did not depend on "jurists" or "some legislative assembly," but rather rested solely on the "customs and way of life" of the agrarian masses and their unwritten forms of "local" self-governance in the communal village.[52] Further, beyond cultural incompatibility, the Slavophiles also rejected the practical efficacy of Western liberal legislation. For instance, Kireevsky ridiculed the "formalistic tendency of European jurisprudence," which he claimed "concentrated on the wording at the expense of true justice."[53] In contrast, the Russian communal traditions, devoid of legal formalities, "gave preference to genuine equity over superficial formalism … preferring evident genuine justice to literal formal meaning."[54] This belief in the futility of perceived justice via written codes, as opposed to material social justice via a fair distribution and sharing of resources, would reappear among the later socialist thinkers of this chapter and beyond—in the form of a revolutionary anti-liberalism.

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[50] Kireevsky, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 33.
[51] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 225.
[52] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 198.
[53] Ibid., 178.
[54] Ibid., 197-8.

Above all, the Slavophiles rebuked the liberal notion of constitutional rights and political liberties as inapplicable to the governance of Russian communal life. Aksakov insisted that "political freedom is not freedom," fixating on the notion that true liberty came only with the pursuit of "communal freedom"—as if the two were diametrically-opposed concepts.[55] Generalizing the dispositions of his nation's rural constituents to characterize a monolithic Russian identity, the Slavophiles extrapolated the peasants' lack of involvement in political affairs to signify the complete irrelevancy of politics in the Russian mentality. Aksakov observed that there is simply "no desire for political rights" among the peasantry, thereby making the lofty conclusion that "The Russian people is not a people concerned with the government:" they were essentially "apolitical" and did not possess even "a trace of desire for a constitutional order."[56] Thus, Aksakov dismissed all "Western concepts of liberalism" as an inferior and foreign philosophy that could only impede the natural communal way of life in Russia.[57] Hence, adopting such modern institutions would only take the society farther from the utopia that it, allegedly, already approximated in its most unmodernized form.[58] This Slavophile aversion to constitutionalism and political rights would interestingly constitute another central point of continuity in political stances between this conservative milieu and later radical movements.

However, the Slavophiles believed that these traditional, anti-liberal societal ideals, exemplified by the premodern communal peasantry, had come under threat due to the Westernizing forces promulgated by the nation's educated demographic. As such, Kireevsky criticized the new influx of

[55] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 237.
[56] Ibid., 233.
[57] Ibid., 232-3.
[58] Ibid.

modern liberal attitudes as having "arisen in the upper strata of society," among intellectuals who have sought to "embrace foreign forms and a foreign spirit."[59] Aksakov, too, claimed that the "upper class," indoctrinated by "the foreign influence" of Westernization, "had renounced its Russian principles."[60] Specifically, the Slavophiles were reprimanding the Westernized intelligentsia—the sociological product of Peter the Great—whom they believed were poisoning the ancient communalistic harmony of pre-modern Russia: "Under Peter began that evil," Aksakov asserted, "a dangerous deep-lying cancer for Russia."[61] Here, the Slavophiles bemoaned the consequent fissure that had been created between the nobility and the agrarian masses: "a cleavage had taken place in Russian society," Aksakov cried, in which "the upper class had been torn loose from Russian principles, concepts, and customs, as well as from the Russian people."[62] Khomiakov insisted that this "cleavage" was "a historical accident," imported from another historical timeline, i.e., that of Western Europe.[63] Should such foreign attitudes continue to permeate the society, the Slavophiles believed, Russia would lose its unique and superior historical trajectory and instead be inducted into the dreaded Western path of development.[64]

Political Praxis

The Slavophile solution to guaranteeing and manifesting Russia's promised course of exceptional historical development, then, was for the nation's Westernized intelligentsia to return to the ways of the native communal peasantry, whom they believe, alone, had preserved such sacred principles.

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[59] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 199, 206.
[60] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 244.
[61] Ibid., 242.
[62] Ibid., 243.
[63] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 217.
[64] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 207.

Indeed, Aksakov described the Russian peasantry as "the keeper of our historical instinct … [who] alone have largely preserved the essence of the Russian tradition in all its purity."[65] Similarly, Kireevsky claimed that "the ideas of our former learning has survived almost without a change among the lower classes of the people," who still lived in pre-modern, pre-liberal communes.[66] In this manner, the Slavophiles argued that the only way for Russia to fulfill its historically-exceptional path—evading the scourge of modernity and liberalization—was for the Westernized segment of society, i.e., the intelligentsia, to bow before the un-Westernized populace, i.e., the peasant masses, for the latter to lead the nation back to a sort of paradise lost. Thus, Kireevsky asserted that this can "be carried out only when that class of our nation … which is still saturated with Western ideas" returns to the people's "ancient" ways and "former native life," i.e., the communal principles of old.[67] Therefore, Aksakov concluded that "the specific remedy for the disease [is] to abandon that unnatural course of action [i.e., Westernization] and to return to one which is in conformity with Russian concepts and the essence of Russia," which he believed was embodied by the traditional societal values of the peasant commune.[68] As will soon be evidenced, this Slavophile narrative of the illiterate peasant masses leading the educated nobility to societal redemption would be inherited by the next generation's socialists as a central ethos of their revolutionary vision.

Basing their vision of societal transformation via a national return to the peasants' traditional ways, the Slavophiles clarified that their image of an achieved utopia would simply be the proliferation

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[65] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 249.
[66] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 195.
[67] Ibid., 206-7.
[68] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 248.

of the old peasant commune's structure nationwide. Kireevsky, at the end of his long treatise, concluded that "My only wish is that these principles of life … should become part and parcel of the beliefs of all estates and strata of our society."[69] Hence, the Slavophiles hoped that all of Russian society would be re-organized along this model of living. But what was this model of living in political terms? The answer is revealed in Kireevsky's description of the ideal future socio-political landscape of the nation:

> a countless multitude of small communities scattered over the face of the Russian land … each of them representing *its own consensus* … serving as the foundation for the edifice of society, the groundwork for its political structure.[70]

In other words, the Slavophiles hoped for Russia to develop into a federation of self-governing communes.[71]

Crucially, this emphasis on the devolving of political governance to the local sovereignty of each community translated into a staunch opposition to any overbearing central authority that may infringe upon the individual autonomy of each commune. Though they were monarchists insofar as they were, politically-speaking, conservative traditionalists, the Slavophiles were so ardently against the idea of governmental interference that they even dared to critique the tsarist regime. This stance was especially salient in the writings of Aksakov, who disdainfully described how Russian monarchical rule had become "a domination of the state over the land," insisting that the government had "encroached upon the people [and] invaded their life and customs."[72] Portraying such a development, though perhaps inaccurately, as a Western-inspired political model introduced by Peter the Great, Aksakov mourned

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[69] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 207.
[70] Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and Its Relation to the Culture of Russia," 197.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 242-3.

how, since the Petrine precedent, "the Russian monarch was transformed into a despot, and his willing subjects into slaves."[73]

But in refusing the liberal model of limited government and constitutional rights as an effective check against authoritarian abuses, the Slavophiles instead sought to keep government entirely out of all local communal self-administration. Indeed, in preaching this principle of "noninterference," Aksakov claimed that the ideal Russian society was one in which "the state ... does not meddle in the life and ways of the people, does not force them to live according to its rules."[74] Even arguing that "Order has never been [successfully] maintained in Russia by governmental measures," Aksakov claimed that a harmonious and functional Russian society was one that consigned all governing affairs and power to the self-management of each communal unit.[75] Thus, the Slavophiles' political opposition to liberalism, for sake of "retain[ing] ... communal freedom," translated into an opposition against centralized authority altogether.[76] Not only would the broader anti-liberalism of these conservatives be shared by later socialists from the opposing end of the political spectrum, but the Slavophiles' repudiation of tsarist authoritarianism and critique of the ruling state would provide further cross-political commonalities for the radical revolutionaries of the following generation.

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[73] Ibid., 243.
[74] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 239.
[75] Ibid., 232-234.
[76] Ibid.

ALEXANDER HERZEN

In 1847, the out-spoken Westernizer Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) left Moscow to evade further state persecution, as his radical activities had confined him to house arrest in the previous years.[77] He departed for Western Europe, not knowing it would be the last time he would ever walk on Russian soil. Most remembered for his London-based journals *The Bell* and *The Pole Star,* Herzen regularly published revolutionary material abroad, in Russian, to be then smuggled into Russia beneath the Tsarist censors.[78] Though constantly writing about his homeland, Herzen would remain removed to this distant setting in which he imagined all his visions of a Russia he never saw again.

Herzen traveled to Western Europe at the peak of the region's revolutionary events. Wielding the Westernizer faith in the progressive direction of the Occident's teleology, he had high hopes that this wave of social upheavals would finally see the West establish what was anticipated to be the ultimate form of societal freedom: socialism. However, his hopes were quickly shattered by the famous failure of the 1848 revolutions.[79] Disillusioned, he began to look toward his native Russia for an answer to his philosophical dissonance.

In doing so, he was inspired by the very Slavophiles whom his fellow Westernizers viciously opposed. Herzen was thus a peculiar Westernizer for frequently treading between the lines of factional hostility, particularly in his sympathy for Slavophile ideas. Consequently, Herzen occupied an awkward middle ground in the polarized arena of 19th-century Russian philosophy, often rejected by both ends of

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[77] Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism: 1812-1855* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), 134-151.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 374-77.

the political extreme: "My position is a strange one," he wrote in his diary, "to [Slavophiles], I am a man of the West; to their foes, I am a man of the East … in our age these one-sided definitions have no place."[80] In a later essay, Herzen revealed that his peculiar views could not be categorized into any one particular allegiance: "The Slavophiles accuse us of a Western turn of mind. The Westernizers accuse us of Slavophilism."[81] Upon hearing about the death of Konstanin Aksakov in 1861, Herzen published a poignant eulogy in which he disclosed his great reverence for his ideological "opponents," referring specifically to "Kireevsky, Khomiakov, and Aksakov," i.e., the three Slavophile thinkers discussed earlier:

> these noble, tireless activists, these *opponents,* who were closer to us [the Westernizers] than many of *our own,* … with tears and a pious feeling we close the lid on their coffins … *The turning point in Russian thought* began with them … Yes, we were their opponents, but very strange ones. We had a *single* love … we and they were struck by a single, powerful, instinctive … passionate feeling …. A feeling of boundless, all-embracing love for the Russian people, the Russian way of life, and the Russian way of thinking. And like Janus or a two-headed eagle, we gazed in different directions while *our heart beat as one.*[82]

Here, Herzen validated the Slavophile contribution to Russian thought and social discourse, specifically regarding the turn away from Western models and toward indigenous concepts. Crucially, he did not conceive of their principles as necessarily conservative; rather, he was able to draw radical implications from their ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism: "The point is that we have not joined the *conservative era* of our existence … for us conservatism is … ideological imitation of the West."[83]

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[80] Alexander Herzen, *Dnevnik* (17 May, 1844), quoted in Malia, *Alexander Herzen,* 312.
[81] Herzen, "We Stand Accused," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1858; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 85.
[82] Herzen, "Konstantin Sergeevich Aksakov," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1861; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 124–25. Herzen's italics.
[83] Herzen, "At This Stage," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1863; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 84.

Ultimately, Herzen would borrow the ideas of the conservative and anti-revolutionary Slavophiles and radicalize them into a revolutionary philosophy for socialism.

Radicalizing Russian Historical Exceptionalism

In reaction to the failure of Europe's revolutionary wave, Herzen became disillusioned with the progressive direction of the Western historical trajectory altogether. Regarding "the question of the future of Europe," he wrote, "after studying it for ten years ... I am bound to say that I see neither a speedy nor a happy outcome."[84] Reflecting on what he described as "the complete failure of the revolution in France, the unfortunate outcome of the revolution in Vienna, and the comic finale of the revolution in Berlin,"[85] Herzen shockingly turned to Russia, whose stubborn economic underdevelopment and unbudging Tsarist autocracy typically rendered the nation one of the least likely candidates for a revolutionary transformation. In doing so, he reinstated the Slavophile call for Russia to reject Western models of development and to instead cultivate a course of societal evolution allegedly particular to the nation. In this manner, Herzen proclaimed a uniquely-Russian path to socialism.

Reversing 'Backwardness'

In order to justify this apparent paradox of turning away from the advanced West and toward an underdeveloped Russia as the source of future progressive hopes, Herzen challenged the standard

[84] Alexander Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 634.
[85] Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1851; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 22.

linear conception of historical development. Citing the failure of Western societies to reach the anticipated era of socialism, Herzen derived a peculiar theory on the exhaustion of a nation's capacity for further progressive evolution. Specifically, he argued that the countries of Western Europe had been leading the vanguard of global progress and the forward motion of universal history for too long and, as a result, have now "tired" out and hit a plateau.[86] Drained from an industrious past of constant progress and advancement, the West could go no further—it had retired from societal evolution: "Europe is close to 'satiation,'" Herzen declared, "and in her tiredness she tries to settle down and crystallize, finding her enduring social situation in a *petit-bourgeois way of life.*"[87] In other words, the West had stagnated, and its present condition would be its final form. Bearing a "worn-out morality,"[88] it would "settle down for the rest of time."[89]

Thus, like the anti-Westernizer Slavophiles, Herzen was postulating a theory on the decline of Western civilization. However, unlike the Slavophiles, Herzen conceded that the West had in fact been exemplary up until this point. Indeed, it is *because* it had been so historically industrious that it was now hitting a limit for any further growth. Consequently, its rich history of progressive achievements had now become a "burden" weighing it down from making any new historical innovations: In a series of letters titled *From the Other Shore,* Herzen argued that "Europe would never create the 'new world' of democratic socialism" precisely due to "the burden of her past."[90] Through this logic, Herzen argued

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[86] Herzen, "Robert Owen," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1861; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 157.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Herzen, "The Russian People and Socialism," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1851; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 147.
[89] Herzen, "Robert Owen," 157.
[90] Herzen, *Frantsiia i Italiia,* thirteenth letter (June 1849), quoted in Malia, *Alexander Herzen*, 374.

that the West was held back from moving forward by the amount of previous progress it had accumulated: "your road has become so encumbered by the monuments of the past that you hardly are able to take one single step ahead."[91]

Though Russia's old teacher had become paralyzed, Russia need not also emulate its stasis, Herzen asserted; rather, the nation now ought to trailblaze its own way forward. In this manner, like the Slavophiles, Herzen sought to liberate Russia from Western tutelage: he asserted that "we are finished with pupil-like imitation … we should be leaving Peter's school … instead of parroting the words of others … we ought to [find] … something in the life of our own people, in our national character."[92] In this way, Herzen borrowed another page from Slavophile doctrine and proclaimed that Russia was not tied to the patterns of Western history: "Russia … is a quite special world, with *her own* natural way of life, not European … but Slavic."[93] Thus, Herzen resisted the universalist premises of historical development touted by his Westernizer comrades.

So, if the West had hit a wall in its attempts to reach the socialist stage of history, Russia, in occupying a separate trajectory, was therefore unaffected. On the contrary, Herzen reasoned that it was now time for Russia to lead the way forward to the socialist goal that the West was now failing to reach: "Now the West has been shaken, while we have emerged from our torpor; we … advance, while it tries

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[91] A.I. Gertsen (Alexander Herzen), *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (Complete Collection of Works and Letters), ed. M.K. Lemke (Petrograd, 1919-1925), VIII (1854-1887), 151, quoted in Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,* 168.

[92] Alexander Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1859; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 635–36.

[93] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.

to hold its place."[94] Thus, when analyzing the prospects of evolving socialism, Herzen wrote that "There is no such possibility in the West," but "in Russia I see the possibility at hand."[95]

What was Herzen's reasoning behind such lofty claims that pronounced the end of Western historical growth and the dramatic rise of Russia? Whereas the Slavophiles had posited such theories to invalidate the Westernizer self-scorn of Russia lacking original historical achievements of its own—having supposedly appropriated all innovations from the West, to quote Chaadaev from earlier—Herzen actually embraced this humiliating premise for his nation. Indeed, he admitted that the West had always been more advanced than Russia, who was the student: "there can be no doubt that European forms of civic life were incomparably superior, not only to those of ancient Russia, but also to our present ones."[96] He also stomached the idea that Russia did not have its own long list of historical achievements like the West and thus had to learn everything from the Occident.[97]

However, it was precisely through this premise that Herzen extrapolated the opposite conclusions: "We have nothing legitimately ours … We have received our education, our learning, at the end of a knout," but "We are independent *because* we have nothing."[98] In this way, he built atop the Westernizer critique of Russian 'backwardness' and flipped the implications of being an underdeveloped nation. Under this view, Russia "was a sort of moral *tabula rasa"* without the "debris of centuries" that "encumbered" the further growth of the over-developed West.[99] Thus, whereas Western civilization was

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[94] Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," 635.
[95] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.
[96] Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," 635.
[97] Herzen, "The Russian People and Socialism," 147.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Malia, *Alexander Herzen,* 307.

now exhausted and "old," Russia would arise with "the freshness of youth," having all of its creative energies still in the tank.[100]

Herzen, like the Slavophiles, thereby transvaluated the image of Russia's 'backwardness' to now denote an *advantage* in attaining the very social forms which the West could not manifest itself. The West's developed condition was thus now seen as an impediment to further advancement, while Russia's lack thereof would now prove beneficial for its future progress:

> The stumbling blocks over which Europe has tripped scarcely exist for us. In the natural simplicity of our village life, in our uncertain and unsettled economic and judicial conceptions, in our vague sense of property rights, in our lack of a strong middle class .... we have an *advantage* over nations that have been completely formed and are exhausted.[101]

Here, Herzen highlighted Russia's lack of socioeconomic development, by Western standards of modern society, as a redeeming quality. But more specifically, he believed that this absence of modern infrastructure in Russia allowed the nation to preserve a particular social structure that would allow this 'lagging' society to surpass the advancements of Western Europe: "a social organization incomparably superior to that of the West," i.e., the peasant commune.[102]

Herzen theorized that the archaic peasant commune would serve as the vehicle through which Russia would manifest an exceptional road to socialism. He held that the peasant commune of Russia stood as "the basis of our national life" and one which embodied the principle of a "communistic possession of land."[103] Consequently, he believed that such a social structure had imbued the Russian

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[100] Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia," 23.
[101] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.
[102] Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," 635.
[103] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.

people at-large with "a natural tendency toward socialist institutions."[104] In other words, Herzen argued that the ancient and rudimentary model of communalistic living, preserved by the peasants of Russia, constituted a foundation on which a socialist society could be more easily established. Explaining his logic, he clarified that these traditions of "*communal possession* presuppose a strong *communal organization* as the prime basis of the entire edifice of the [new] state which must evolve on these foundations."[105] Hence, Herzen proclaimed that the old peasant commune would be the spine on which the new socialist society would be directly constructed: "on it will be built the Rus[sia] of the future!"[106]

In this way, Russia's premodern condition thereby more closely approximated a socialist paradigm than the modern West: Herzen boasted that the communal peasantry of Russia were therefore "nearer to the new social system by their way of life than all the European peoples."[107] The peasant commune, then, provided Russia with a unique highway to socialism—one which was unavailable to Western society: the Russian commune "constituted the soil in which a new social order may easily arise, a soil that … scarcely exists in Europe."[108] Through the preservation of this ancient communal structure in Russia, Herzen alleged that the basis of the final form of societal evolution was already in place: "the rural commune in Russia [had] long ago raised a feature of socialist utopias to the status of a *fait accompli.*"[109] In this view, again reminiscent of the Slavophile outlook, Herzen proclaimed, "what is only

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[104] Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia," 23.
[105] Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," 636.
[106] Herzen, "Revolution in Russia," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1857; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 64.
[107] Herzen, quoted in Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works in Five Volumes,* trans. Julius Katzer (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), vol. 1, 130.
[108] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.
[109] Herzen, quoted in Aileen Kelly, *The Discovery of Chance: The Life and Thought of Alexander Herzen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 325.

a hope for the West ... is already an accomplished fact for us."[110] In other words, the very underdevelopment of Russia, in retaining the primeval commune, had thus ironically positioned the nation closest to reaching what was deemed to be the most advanced state of societal development.

Accordingly, Herzen argued that Russia, in already possessing these proto-socialist structures through its old communal arrangements, therefore need not give them up to adopt the presently-more-modern institutions of the West—since the final goal of evolving socialism constituted a return to a communalistic society at the end, anyway. Such a step 'forward,' then, would seem pointless and counterintuitive if one's starting point was already closer to the final objective. As such, Herzen explained that for Russia to achieve socialism,

> we need not pass through those swamps which you have crossed; we need not exhaust our forces in the twilight of [your] political forms ... We have no reason to repeat the epic story of your emancipation ... Your labors and your sufferings are our lessons. History is very unjust. The latecomers receive instead of gnawed bones the [right of] precedence [at the table] of experience. All development of mankind is nothing else but [an expression of] that chronological ingratitude.[111]

In other words, Herzen reasoned that Russia did not have to first 'catch up' to Western Europe's level of development before setting its sights on a transition to the final stage of societal evolution. Specifically, he ridiculed the notion of having to relive all of the historical intermediary steps that Western societies had to process through on its way to finally deriving the concept of socialism as an ideal: "In our ideas ... in [our] literature ... we have lived through Western history, and it would hardly seem necessary for us

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[110] Herzen, quoted in Alexander Polunov, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914*, ed. Thomas C. Owen and Zakharova (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 68.

[111] A.I. Gertsen (Alexander Herzen), *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (Complete Collection of Works and Letters), ed. M.K. Lemke (Petrograd, 1919-1925), VIII (1854-1887), 151, quoted in Gernschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,* 168. Gernschenkron's brackets.

to repeat in toto."[112] Here, Herzen touted the "latecomer" advantage that his trailing nation possessed—the fact that Russia could instantaneously adopt the originally-Western objective of achieving socialism without having to wait and endure through those intermediary periods of historical development themselves. Rather, Russia could aim at a direct socialist transition from its presently underdeveloped state. Thus, Herzen, when asking "[why] we should attempt to overtake [the West] over the same long road when we can take a *shortcut* instead," concluded that "Good pupils often *skip* classes."[113] This line of reasoning would later be inherited by the following chapter's thinkers, who sought an expedited road to socialism for Russia—one that skipped the capitalist intermediary stage of the West.

Anti-Liberal Politics

If Russia was indeed poised to make this direct leap into the socialist age, Herzen believed, then it also did not make sense to adopt the present political paradigm of Western Europe, i.e., its liberal-political institutions, which were otherwise viewed as a more progressive governing system than Russia's monarchical despotism. Here, the Slavophiles' pre-liberal principles converged with Herzen's post-liberal aims upon similar political conclusions—united in a firm rejection of liberalism's relevancy and desirability to Russia's peculiar situation.

Regarding the constitutional frameworks and legislative systems of the West typically associated with increased liberty, Herzen repudiated them all—not necessarily for being completely ineffective, but for falling short of the socialist standard of freedom which he believed was so imminent in Russia. For

[112] Herzen, "Russian German and German Russian," 635.
[113] Ibid.

instance, on the topic of reforming the judicial system along the Western liberal standard, Herzen declared, "I agree that the daily brigandage of the Russian law-courts is even worse, but it does not follow from this that your laws and your courts are just."[114] Here, it becomes clear that Herzen, though acknowledging the greater degree of injustice perpetuated by the presently-'backward' institutions of Russia and even the relative superiority of Western ones, nevertheless refused to adopt such a step forward; he would only accept the maximum, which he believed would come through the socialism that Russia was allegedly on the brink of establishing.

Explaining his stubborn impatience, Herzen moaned, "we are too oppressed, too unfortunate to be satisfied with *half-freedom*," a term with which he used to describe the Western system of constitutional rights and liberties.[115] In fact, like the Slavophiles, Herzen deemed political rights to be "a disgusting lie," even ridiculing the liberal motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" as failing to grant the people a de facto freedom.[116] In other words, Herzen rejected the utility of the Western norm of legal formalities and written code that only granted liberties de jure, thus echoing another Slavophile stance. Insisting that "the difference between your [Western] laws and our [Tsarist] decrees lies only in the formula which introduces them," Herzen did not believe that true social justice was attained until there was a just, socialist re-allocation of physical resources among the populace.[117]

Focused on liberating the agrarian peasant masses, Herzen additionally warned that a liberal paradigm would help to bring about the rise and empowerment of a bourgeois social class, as seen in the

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[114] Herzen, "The Russian People and Socialism," 147-8.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 148.
[117] Ibid.

West, which would constitute another oppressing force over the working classes and thus delay their liberation further: "All efforts to create in our midst an urban bourgeoise in the Western sense … result in empty and absurd consequences."[118] In this way, he concluded that "We already bear too many chains to fetter ourselves with new ones voluntarily."[119] Thus, Herzen believed that a liberal era of Russian history would only excessively delay the complete eradication of social inequities and injustices that could otherwise be achieved via a more direct path of societal evolution. This stubborn avoidance of intermediary political improvements, in addition to seeking to prevent the development of a 'liberal bourgeoise' in Russia, would become central doctrinal tenets among the later thinkers of this intellectual genealogy.

Herzen also rejected the liberal approach toward land-ownership laws, i.e., private property, as incompatible with the superior land-sharing practices preserved by the communal Russian peasantry. While abroad in Europe, Herzen recorded his observation that the Western sense of property was historically absent among Russian peasants, thereby echoing Slavophile arguments. In one of his letters from France, Herzen poetically shunned the Western conception of an individualistic possession of land as a foreign notion to his nation's people:

> One thing offends the eye and wrenches the Slavic soul: high stone walls, encrusted with broken glass, separate the gardens, the *potagers,* and sometimes even the fields. They represent a certain immortality of exclusive possession, a certain insolence of the right of property.[120]

[118] Herzen, "Revolution in Russia," 63.
[119] Herzen, The Russian People and Socialism, 148.
[120] Herzen, *Frantsiia i Italiia,* fifth letter, quoted in Malia, *Alexander Herzen*, 366.

In contrast, he praised the Russian peasantry, for "in their eyes the land was still common property, the *res nullius* to which every man has a right."[121] Here, Herzen again emphasized how Russia allegedly possessed a unique institution uncorrupted by such Occidental practices: "Our peculiarity, our originality is the village [commune] with its communal self-governance, with the peasants ... with the absence of personal land ownership..."[122]

Political Praxis

In spurning the Western blueprint of political progression into liberalism, Herzen instead sought for Russian society to model its future around, what he believed to be, the pre-existing foundations of a socialist polity: the peasant commune. Untouched by the scourge of liberal politics, the agrarian peasantry had purportedly preserved the basis of cultivating a communist future. Accordingly, he urged his fellow Russian intellectuals to find the correct formula of societal evolution not from the modern-political theorists of Western Europe, but from the illiterate villagers of the domestic Russian countryside. In this spirit, Herzen commanded the revolutionary youth of Russia: "Where then are you to go ...? *To the people! Toward the people!* That is your place ...!"[123] Like the Slavophiles, Herzen used the term 'the people' to specifically denote the peasantry. In this way, he similarly instructed the Russian intelligentsia to return to the un-westernized agrarian masses: to "live with the common folk" and "take [up] the work of social reconstruction together with them."[124] Just as the Slavophiles had mourned,

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[121] Herzen, "A Letter to I.S. Turgenev," 635.
[122] Herzen, "Forward! Forward!," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthe (1856; repr., Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 49.
[123] Herzen, "The Colossus Awakens!," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1861; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 636.
[124] Herzen, "Revolution in Russia," 63

Herzen rued how his intellectual social stratum had alienated itself from the broader populace: in describing "the terrible result of the complete rupture between national Russia and Europeanized Russia," he noted how "Every living link had been broken between these two parties and they had to be renewed."[125] Herzen poignantly described the tragedy of this social divide that resulted the Westernization of the Russian intelligentsia class:

> For us [the intelligentsia], brought up away from home, that tie had weakened. A French governess had charge of us and we learned later on that our mother was not she, but a downtrodden peasant woman.[126]

In this mission of returning to "the people," Herzen sought "to unite the two Russias [sic] between whom Peter's razor has passed."[127] Here, Herzen thus inherited, from the Slavophiles, what was originally a conservative reaction against the Westernization of the Russian intellectual society; in radicalizing these ideas into a socialist philosophy, Herzen laid the roots of a revolutionary movement whose political methodology and praxis was centrally premised on a reliance upon the uneducated masses to realize the intelligentsia's utopian visions. This notion would be passed down as a core—and later, problematic—principle of the following generation's thinkers in the next chapter.

Ultimately, Herzen, like the Slavophiles, believed that a successful realization of the envisioned utopia—in his case, the direct establishment of a socialist society in Russia—would be achieved by standardizing the commune model across the nation: "[to] spread the customs of the rural commune to all estates, cities, and the entire nation."[128] Again echoing the Slavophiles, Herzen emphasized the self-

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[125] Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia," 9.
[126] Herzen, "Konstantin Sergeevich Aksakov" 125.
[127] Herzen, "Revolution in Russia," 63.
[128] Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia," 24.

governing nature and local autonomy of the peasant commune system: "each rural commune in Russia is a little republic, self-governing for its internal affairs," he claimed.[129] In this way, Herzen similarly reached a firm stance against the prospect of a central authority infringing upon the local self-administration of each community.

But perhaps more so than the Slavophiles, Herzen took this notion of devolving power to a more extreme extent—often approaching conclusions that appeared to renounce the institution of a state altogether. Indeed, he believed that the commune represented the freedoms of a "pre-governmental state and condition."[130] Furthermore, he conceptualized the exemplary peasant inhabitants of the communes "as apart from and hostile to the state."[131] In fact, he opposed the prospect of a 'liberal revolution,' i.e., replacing an autocracy with a constitutional democracy, to avoid the continuation of another form of formal authority, no matter how reformed it may be: "Russia will never make a revolution with the aim of doing away with Tsar Nicholas only to replace him with tsar-members of parliament, tsar-judges and tsar-policemen."[132] Regarding such anti-statist principles, it is worth noting that Herzen worked with the French thinker Pierre Proudhon, often known as the "father of anarchism,"[133] on the latter's Parisian newspaper, *La Voix du Peuple.*[134] Overall, this hostility toward centralized authority would be passed down to the following generation's socialist movement that Herzen inspired. However, this version of

[129] Herzen, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 45.
[130] Herzen, "Revolution in Russia," 64.
[131] Herzen, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 47.
[132] Herzen, "The Russian People and Socialism," 148.
[133] See Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989).
[134] Judith E. Zimmerman, "Herzen, Proudhon and 'La Voix Du Peuple': A Reconsideration," *Russian History* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1984), 422-450.

anti-liberalism would eventually undergo deep revisions by the end of the following chapter, when the political logistics of the revolutionary process was strategized amid new challenges.

CONCLUSION

Peter the Great's campaign to Westernize the Russian nobility created an intellectual class deeply conscious of their nation's underdevelopment vis-à-vis Western Europe. As philosophies of history became popularized in the 19th century, crucial questions emerged around what was to be done about Russian society's persistent 'backwardness' and the nation's evolutionary trajectory. The Westernizers surmised the need to follow in the footsteps of Western European development, modernizing Russia along the historical precedents and societal models demonstrated in the Occident. However, the Slavophiles arose to oppose this linear view of progress in which Russia forever trailed behind the West. Instead, they defended Russia's underdevelopment as rather indicative of a non-Western historical path—one that would lead to a superior form of societal freedom: a communalistic society predicated on the ancient peasant commune. It is within this anti-Western, conservative milieu of the 1840s that a peculiar ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism began—one that will be traced into the Russian Revolution of 1917. A contemporary of the Slavophiles, Alexander Herzen, borrowed and integrated these originally-conservative ideas into a radical framework forecasting Russia's unique road to a socialist future. Arguing for the historical advantages of underdevelopment, Herzen posited the notion that Russia's lack of modernization had instead positioned the 'backward' nation to be closer to attaining the highest form of society than the advanced West. Specifically, through Russia's preservation of the old

peasant commune, the nation thus possessed a collectivistic model of living on which it could directly evolve a socialist paradigm.

In believing that it was precisely their nation's 'backwardness' that allowed this exceptional road of development, both the Slavophiles and Herzen repudiated Western Europe's model of modern political liberalism as a counterintuitive turn for their society's trajectory. Believing that the desired political model to aspire to was instead held by the communal peasantry, they preached a return of the intellectuals to the agrarian masses as the method of moving forward and realizing the vision. Further, in emphasizing the commune's self-sufficiency and self-governing practices, they concluded that the ideal Russian societal model, based on this communal structure, would also lack the need for centralized authority.

But ultimately, this grandiose faith in an exceptional course of historical progression was premised upon a romanticized perception of the Russian masses as embodying the values and foundations of the perfect society which these intellectuals imagined and hence sought to attain through them. Indeed, Khomiakov confidently defended his abstract evaluations of the communal populace without citing evidence, claiming that, "There is no need to look for proof—anyone who searches his conscience will admit that I am right."[135] Similarly, Aksakov held that his propositions "require no proof—for a close look at ... the Russian people as they are today will suffice."[136] In reality, the Slavophiles were gentry aristocrats who never lived among the agrarian peasantry.[137] Herzen was also outside of

[135] Khomiakov, "On Humboldt," 223.
[136] Aksakov, "On the Internal State of Russia," 234.
[137] Michael Hughes, "'Independent Gentlemen': The Social Position of the Moscow Slavophiles and Its Impact on Their Political Thought," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 71, no. 1 (January 1993): 66-88.

Russia when began to formulate these theories and remained abroad until his death.[138] Consequently, the viability of their prescriptions for the illiterate masses to lead the educated intelligentsia into the utopia of the latter's dreams would precipitate a logistical crisis when the revolutionary inheritors of these ideas sought to develop a practical strategy for realizing such visions in the next chapter.

[138] Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism: 1812-1855* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 134.

2

THE NARODNIKS: OLD DREAMS, NEW REALITIES

"It was a revelation, rather than a propaganda ... It was a powerful cry which ... summoned the ardent to the great work of the redemption of the country and of humanity. And the ardent, hearing this cry, arose, overflowing with sorrow and indignation ... with a joy, an enthusiasm, a faith, such as one experienced only once in a life, and when lost one never found again ... It was not a political movement. It rather resembled a religious movement ... this movement did not and could not bear contact with the stern and horrible reality."[1]

~ Sergei Kravchinsky

ON THE FOURTH of April 1866, Dmitry Karakozov restlessly stood by the gilded gates of the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg. The twenty-six-year-old, a twice-expelled student of noble birth, was waiting to see the Tsar—to kill him. When the monarch finally strolled out of his royal estate to greet an enthusiastic crowd of his subjects, Karakozov emerged with a pistol. Yet just before the shot was fired, a peasant courageously rushed forward to shove the armed assailant, diverting the bullet that would have marked the first regicide in Russian history. As more peasant witnesses converged to defend their beloved ruler, Karakozov cried out in disbelief: "Fools! I did this for you."[2]

Karakozov was typical of his milieu: an intellectual from an aristocratic background who came to scorn his own class as the oppressors of the downtrodden masses. Like the thinkers of the previous

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[1] Sergei M. Kravchinsky, *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life*, 2nd ed. (1882; repr., London: Sagwan Press, 2015), 25–26.

[2] Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov: Imperial Russia, Modernity, and the Birth of Terrorism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 177.

chapter, the revolutionaries of this era continued to pin their grand visions of a seismic transformation of Russian society on the alleged virtues and potentialities of the rural peasantry on whose behalf they spoke, wrote, and philosophized. During his trial, when asked why he cultivated such murderous ambitions, Karakozov replied, "Your Highness, you offended the peasants! ... you swindled the people."[3] Yet, 'the people,' whom the intelligentsia had upheld as the cornerstone of their revolutionary vision, were disarming the subversive endeavor launched in their name.

Five months later, Karakozov was sentenced to death by hanging. However, the way in which his attempt on the Tsar's life was thwarted by the very subjects of his radical theories foreshadowed a fundamental issue of the Russian revolutionary movement that would arise at the end of this decade. Found in Karakozov's pocket, that day, was a hand-written manifesto addressed to "my beloved simple Russian people," whom he sought to save and liberate.[4] In it, he wrote "I have looked for the reason for all this [suffering] in books, and I have found it."[5] Here, Karakozov exemplified the separation between the abstract philosophies of the intelligentsia and the realities of the illiterate masses whom they claimed to represent. This divide between the visionaries of revolutionary change and the actual subjects of their theories would become increasingly exposed over the following decades, forming the backdrop behind the evolution of the inherited ideas in this chapter.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, n.d.), 347.

[5] Ibid.

Context: The Abolition of Serfdom and a Changing Russia

Karakozov was specifically acting on the discontent that arose from the results of the long-awaited abolition of serfdom, enacted five years earlier by the very sovereign whom he tried to murder. In 1861, Tsar Alexander II issued the Emancipation Manifesto, which formally brought an end to Russian serfdom, legally freeing over 23 million peasants who had been generationally tied in bondage for centuries.[6] The revolutionary writer Peter Kropotkin, in his memoirs on the day of the emancipation, quoted Herzen: "Alexander Nikolaevich [Tsar Alexander II], why did you not die on that day? Your name would have been transmitted in history as that of a hero."[7] In the wake of this apparent triumph for progressives, it became clear that the long-awaited liberation of the peasantry had failed to bring them real freedom. Above all, this so-called "Great Reform" immediately resulted in devastating economic consequences for the people it had claimed to emancipate. Specifically, the peasants were heavily burdened by mandatory retribution fees called "redemption payments" and new taxes, coupled with a loss of sufficient land to farm on.[8] Consequently, this agrarian populace was subjected to a harsher state of suffering, which would not be addressed by the government over the following two decades.[9]

It is within this setting of a worsened oppression of the masses, exacerbated by governmental reform, that the ideas of the previous chapter grew into the basis of a mass revolutionary-socialist

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[6] Arthur Mee, J.A. Hammerton, and Arthur D. Innes, *Harmsworth History of the World*, vol. 7 (London: Carmelite House, 1907), 5193.
[7] Peter Kropotkin, "Memoirs of a Revolutionist," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 604.
[8] Vladimir P. Tomoshenko, "The Agrarian Policies of Russia and the Wars," in *Readings in Russian History*, ed. Sidney Harcave, vol. II: The Modern Period (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1962), 8.
[9] Ibid., 11.

movement: "Narodism"—also known as "Narodnichestvo," whose followers are called the "Narodniks." The movement's name was derived from the Russian word "*narod*," which translates to "the people," a term that specifically connotated "the working people" of Russia, who, in this era, "consisted almost entirely of peasants."[10] Accordingly, the movement is also frequently translated into English as "Populism," whose followers were known as "the Populists."[11] Though their identity was centered around the rural peasantry, the Narodnik movement and its doctrines were entirely formed by the intellectual class.[12] As such, the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev recounted the Narodnik movement as "a pure product of the intelligentsia."[13]

In light of the failure of the emancipation policy, the Narodniks were furious on behalf of the downtrodden people whom they claimed to represent. Yet 'the people' themselves did not elicit the same reaction. Kropotkin, continuing in his memoirs, noted,

> Where were the uprisings which had been predicted? ... With their usual good sense, the peasants had ... accepted the conditions imposed upon them, although these conditions were heavy ... They knew perfectly well how difficult it would be to pay the redemption tax for the land, which was in reality an indemnity to the nobles in lieu of the obligations of serfdom ... they accepted the ruinous charges.[14]

Thus, just like the story of Karakozov, the intelligentsia's visions did not always align with the sentiments of the people who constituted the basis of their dreams. Historian Christopher Ely describes how

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[10] Richard Pipes, "Russian Marxism and Its Populist Background: The Late Nineteenth Century," *Russian Review* 19, no. 4 (October 1960): 328; Pipes, "Narodnichestvo," 442-43.

[11] This thesis will use the term "Narodnik" and "Narodism," as opposed to "Populist" and "Populism"—though synonymous and interchangeable—to avoid the potentially-misleading connotations which the latter terms hold outside of the specific Russian socialist movement's context.

[12] Lazar Volin, "The Russian Peasant and Serfdom," *Agricultural History* 17, no. 1 (January 1943): 41.

[13] Nikolai Berdyaev, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 4.

[14] Kropotkin, "Memoirs of a Revolutionist," 605.

"Russian Populists [Narodniks] constantly imagined and reimaged the *narod* ('the people'/peasantry) in ways that suited their own needs."[15] Moreover, the revolutionary writer Nikolai Morozov claimed that the Narodnik leaders "turned the peasantry into a god,"[16] while intellectual historian James Billington characterized the movement as "a new Christianity."[17]

Additionally, the abolition of serfdom initiated a gradual transformation of the Russian socioeconomic landscape that would see the ideas of the previous generation grow increasingly unfeasible, impractical, and anachronistic apropos the original setting in which they were first formulated. Before 1861, Russia truly lacked nearly all of the hallmarks of the modern industrial-capitalist West. Such a paradigm appeared plausibly out of reach, while the agrarian communal structure of the nation showed no signs of decay. Russia, unlike the West, did not even have "a real credit system" nor "any capital market" until the emancipation of the serfs.[18] Historian Roger Portal concluded that "We can establish the fact of a rapid and massive change in technological development only after 1860," and the resulting social transformations "was the result of the law liberating the serfs and took place after 1861."[19] Specifically, there was then a rapid expansion of railroads, an influx of foreign capital, and the construction of new networks connecting the once-isolated agricultural regions with the big cities amid an expansion of the commercial market.[20] Moreover, Portal notes, the emancipation,

> ... freed the labor market, established new legal relationships in production, and opened the way for the emergence of a genuine proletariat ... industrial development [and] the

[15] Ely, *Russian Populism,* 4.
[16] Nikolai Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1947), 91, quoted in Ely, 88.
[17] See James H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).
[18] Roger Portal, "The Problem of an Industrial Revolution in Russia in the Nineteenth Century," in *Readings in Russian History*, ed. Sidney Harcave, vol. II: The Modern Period (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1962), 25.
[19] Ibid., 24-26.
[20] Tomoshenko, "The Agrarian Policies of Russia and the Wars," 10.

> accelerated expansion of the consumers' market, [which] ended the limited market, almost exclusively peasant, that had kept the social system in a relatively passive condition.[21]

Thus, during this era, the peasant commune began to indicate its first signs of decline as Russian society appeared to be entering an era of increasing modernization akin to the Western European experience, which the theorists of the previous chapter had believed Russia would skip over. Thus, the idealized communal instincts and values of the peasant, who was now economically freed from bondage—and his commune, which was now falling under the stresses of capitalist forces—would have to stand the test of time.

Yet significantly, these modernizing conditions would not fully pick up until the last two decades of the century. As economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron noted, "The emancipation of the peasantry was no doubt a decisive step in widening the tension and thereby facilitating subsequent economic development;" however, this "did not lead immediately to a period of rapid industrialization," which would not come to Russia until the mid-1880s and 1890s.[22] This thus left the era in an awkward position in which the material conditions of the nation were still distanced from a capitalist paradigm of Western modernity enough for the revolutionary theorists to continue to dream of a historically-exceptional, direct transition to socialism. However, at the same time, the gradual rise in signs of socioeconomic advancement would begin accumulating enough doubts within the movement to eventually necessitate revisions to the political praxis of the old ideals. In short, this post-serfdom era, in which the Narodnik intelligentsia wrote, constituted an ambivalent setting. As such, this chapter will

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[21] Portal, "The Problem of an Industrial Revolution in Russia in the Nineteenth Century," 26-7.
[22] Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective,* 156.

trace the profound continuities of the ideas of the Slavophiles and Herzen within the Narodnik movement—in addition to tracking the ideological turns and adaptations made in the wake of increasingly sober assessments of shifting Russian realities and the true nature of 'the people' whom the intellectual class had idealized from afar.

'CLASSICAL' NARODISM

Despite the watershed moment of government reform coming with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the following years were marked by a firm Tsarist crackdown on radical activity.[23] Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, the ideas from the previous chapter soon concretized into a distinct ideology and exploded into a mass revolutionary moment:

> Questions long since broached—for example, the place of the commune in Russian life, the nature of the Russian people and Russia's historical path—now assumed greater prominence and a new importance. It is in this period that revolutionary [Narodism], in its classical form, may be said to have taken shape.[24]

Most historians agree that the 'classical' age of the Narodnik movement emerged at the end of the 1860s and flourished into the mid-1870s.[25] Drawing from the writings of the most influential thinkers and leaders of this movement, the following sections examine the continuity and change in thought within the inherited notion of Russian historical exceptionalism, specifically through the continued themes of 1) Reversing 'Backwardness' and 2) Anti-Liberal Politics.

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[23] W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 247.
[24] Ibid.
[25] See Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 26; Ely, *Russian Populism,* 71; Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 248.

Maintaining Russian Historical Exceptionalism

Between the late 1860s and the early 1870s—when the Narodnik movement emerged—the works of Karl Marx were beginning to gradually disseminate among the Russian intelligentsia. Marx had emphatically declared, in his magnum opus *Capital,* that "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future!"[26] With the increasing spread of Western Europe's industrial-capitalist paradigm into surrounding lands, Marx began to confidently assume that the history of the West stood as the universal template according to which all other underdeveloped societies, like Russia, would soon follow. In fact, this conclusion followed from a passage in which Marx mocked Alexander Herzen's theory that the Russian condition was unique and exceptional from the Western blueprint of historical progression. Marx claimed that Russia, too, would soon succumb to the Occidental tide of history.[27] Reacting against the specter of Western historical universalism, the works of the Narodnik writers Nikolai Mikhailovsky and Vasily Bervi-Flerovsky reveal a deep inheritance of ideas from three decades prior.

After publishing his magnum opus in 1869, Nikolai Mikhailovsky became "the most influential" Narodnik writer of this era.[28] His journal *Notes of the Fatherland* "became the center of an intellectual and cultural renaissance" of Russian socialist thought.[29] Interestingly, unlike the thinkers of the previous generation, Mikhailovsky's writings appeared to reflect the start of growing concerns over the viability of Russia's exceptional road, in light of modernizing conditions. Rather than immediately and

[26] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, n.d.), 13.
[27] See Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, 57.
[28] Ely, *Russian Populism,* 87.
[29] Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 247.

completely dismissing Marx, Mikhailovsky indeed pondered that "one should thoroughly assess whether the sort of historical process that Marx described is truly avoidable or not."[30] Now the question of Western universalism vis-à-vis Russia's historical road had begun to acquire its first underlying doubts and uncertainty: "And so, where do we go? ...," Mikhailovsky wrote, in his journalistic notes of 1872, "Shall we follow in the footsteps of Western civilization?"[31] He began to acknowledge that the Western path of industrialization and capitalism was now a possibility in Russia: "just raise the tariff and dissolve the village commune ... Industry then would grow like a mushroom, as in England."[32] However, he ultimately reaffirmed, at-length, the historically-exceptional vision of Russian development first proposed by the Slavophiles and made socialist by Herzen. In fact, Mikhailovsky published an article critiquing Marx's assertions of Western historical universalism and the inevitability of Russian industrialization, instead insisting that his country possessed "a different path of development from that which Western Europe has followed."[33]

Vasily Bervi-Flerovsky (1829-1918) was a Russian sociologist and economist who "is now little remembered and receives less attention" than the other Narodnik thinkers.[34] Like Mikhailovsky, Bervi-Flerovsky wrestled with the same question regarding the road ahead for his nation's course of societal evolution. His major work, *The Condition of the Working Class in Russia,* published in 1869—the same

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[30] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, quoted in Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, 57.
[31] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1872; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 652.
[32] Ibid., 653.
[33] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, quoted in Karl Marx, "Letter From Marx to the Editor of the Otecestvenniye Zapiski," trans. Dona Torr, *International Publishers*, 1968. For the original text, see N.K. Mikhailovskii, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii,* vol. 4 (St. Petersburg, 1909), 167-8, 171.
[34] Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 248.

year as Mikhailovsky's magnum opus—helped to initiate the Narodnik school of thought by providing a basis of economic grounding behind the ideas that were now concretizing into a movement.[35] Historian Andrzej Walicki describes him as "the most important economic publicist" of the Narodnik movement "of the [eighteen-]seventies."[36] W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord claim that his work "seems to have affected [Narodnik] revolutionaries more deeply than any other work with the exception of Lavrov" (the latter of whom will be discussed later in this chapter).[37] Specifically, Bervi-Flerovksy's study detailed the growing concerns of the deprivation of the countryside that had been developing since the abolition of serfdom, a trend which hinted at a potential rise of a capitalist economy. In fact, even Karl Marx admitted that this book by Bervi-Flerovsky was "the first work to tell the truth about Russian economic conditions."[38] However, Bervi-Flerovsky's subjective interpretations and prescriptions, after his objective statistics, would amount to a fundamental rejection of Marx's prognosis for Russia's future: seeking to explain away this prospect of a Westernization of Russian conditions while stubbornly defending Russia's allegedly-unique historical trajectory into socialism, Bervi-Flerovsky set the tone for the Narodnik movement. Rather than accepting a capitalist future, he insisted that Russia should refuse Western precedents and go its own way:

> [We] may reason thus: Europe has passed down that same path along which we are traveling, it has lived through the same phases; if we go in its tracks we shall get ourselves out of trouble in the same [way] that it has done; why should we wring our hands and rack our brains over the laying down of a new road when there is an old, well-trodden

[35] Ibid.
[36] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 110.
[37] Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 248.
[38] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Correspondence 1846-1895. A Selection with Commentary and Notes,* trans. Donna Torr (London, 1936), 282-3.

> path. *Thus we have reasoned up until now … we were constantly afraid of taking … a step too quickly.*[39]

Here, Bervi-Flerovsky critiqued the Westernizer mentality that had prevailed up until now: the way in which Russia had been blindly and cautiously following the West's footsteps as a safe historical model to emulate, afraid to embark on a more original and expedited course.

Overall, these Narodniks reaffirmed the notion that Russia possessed a non-Western trajectory of societal evolution. In a remarkably similar manner to Herzen and the Slavophiles, they appeared to explain this notion by reversing the implications of their nation's 'backwardness' and underdevelopment to instead signify superior historical outcomes. Further, in sharing such views, these thinkers additionally reached anti-liberal conclusions—as well as the accompanying political formula of seeking a return to the peasant communal model.

Reversing 'Backwardness'

Mikhailovsky

Mikahilovsky sought to clarify how Russia could feasibly evade Western modernity, bypassing the historical stage of capitalism, and directly transition to socialism: "there is another way" of arriving at a socialist society, he claimed, which "consists in the development of those relationships of labor and ownership that are *already* in existence, albeit in a very crude and primitive form."[40] Specifically, Mikhailovsky was referring to his nation's retention of the "primitive" peasant-communal structure of

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[39] Vasily Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1869; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 256.

[40] Mikhailovsky, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," 653.

agrarian Russia. Instead of eradicating it in the name of Western modernization, he, like Herzen, saw it as providing the basis of directly constructing a socialist society. In other words, in the spirit of the Slavophiles, Russia's underdevelopment ought not denote a symptom of trailing behind a single Western-centric universal historical roadmap, but should rather indicate a separate way forward—precisely through the retention of its underdeveloped features.

Mikhailovsky thus set out to rationalize and justify his defense of Russia's underdeveloped condition vis-à-vis the Western conception of linear historical progression. Like the earlier thinkers, he reversed the conventional implications of societal 'backwardness' apropos progress and advancement. In his magnum opus *What is Progress?,* Mikahilovsky noted that the Western-European view of progress consisted of society's ever-increasing complexity, specialization, and division of labor. Such a process, he argued, actually constituted the decay of "integral individuals," i.e., creating a more advanced society at the cost of the "wholeness" of the human being.[41] In this way, such perceived societal advancements instead functioned to destroy the fullness of a one's original and natural freedom. But what is true progress, then? Mikhailovsky answered: it is "the gradual approach to[ward] the integral individual, to the fullest possible and most diversified division of labor among *man's* organs, and the least possible division of labor among *men*."[42] Here, Mikhailovsky appears to have unconsciously borrowed Slavophile concepts: specifically, the idealization of the "wholeness" and "integrality" of "pre-individualized" society. In other words, this position echoed the Slavophile defense of primitive

[41] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, "What Is Progress?," in *Readings in Russian Philosophical Thought: Philosophy of History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), 112.
[42] Ibid., 124.

communalism against modern individualism. Moreover, the ideal of a pre-modern "wholeness," to Mikhailovsky, was specifically embodied and preserved by the Russian peasant commune, in which enclaves of "undivided labor" still remained.[43] Through this logic, Russia's societal underdevelopment was redeemed as virtuous and desirable.

In portraying Western progress and advancement as constituting a societal decline and human retrogression, Mikhailovsky, like the Slavophiles, thereby situated his image of utopia in the past:

> We see today ... a surprisingly rapid decline of ... doctrines which used to treat these principles as the foundation of the whole edifice of society ... This looking backward ... to the more remote past ... [where] outlived forms of social life are being discovered, and social forms which are outliving their time are recommended to be preserved.[44]

But to reconcile his idealization of the past with his goal of a socialist future—a backward-looking romanticism with a forward-looking objective—Mikhailovsky devised a seemingly-paradoxical argument, which held that 'backwardness' more closely approximated the most advanced ideal. To do this, he explained societal stages of development in a dichotomous assessment between "different *levels*" versus "different *types* of development."[45] Explaining his formula, Mikhailovsky stated: "A certain *type* of development may be superior to another, and yet may be on a lower *level*."[46] Decoding this abstract principle, Mikhailovsky explained that Russia, less societally developed than the industrialized and capitalist West, indeed belonged to a lower "level" of development; yet its preservation of old communal forms saw it embody a superior "type" of society, i.e., possessing the same "type" of social structure as the highest societal form: the communal world of socialism. In this manner, Mikhailovsky again

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[43] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 52.
[44] Mikhailovsky, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 57.
[45] Mikhailovsky, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," 653.
[46] Ibid.

redefined the notion of Russian 'backwardness' to instead denote superiority over the modern West, an assertion deeply reminiscent of the Slavophiles and Herzen:

> If one considers, for instance, the *level of economic development* in England and in Russia, preference must be given to the former, but this will not prevent me from regarding the English economic system as the lower *type.*[47]

Additionally, beyond such abstract formulations, Mikhailovsky also articulated this transvaluation of Russian underdevelopment in the material terms of an easier path toward a socialist transition:

> The labor problem in Europe bears a revolutionary character, since there it requires the *transfer* of the means of production into the hands of the workers, the expropriation of the present owners. In Russia the labor problem is a conservative one, inasmuch as what is needed here is merely the *retention* of the means of production in the hands of the workers, a guarantee of the [communal] property rights of the present owners.[48]

Here, Mikhailovsky illustrated how the road to a socialist society was far simpler in Russia, where the land was already collectivistically shared—as opposed to Western Europe, where the populace, expropriated by capitalism, would have to essentially reinvent the wheel of communalistic arrangements. Thus, Mikhailovsky concluded that the modern developmental phases of the West need not be repeated by Russia—for whom it would constitute an excessive and counterintuitive step—given the more expedited path to socialism that this nation exceptionally possessed in its still-'backward' condition.[49]

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 654.

Bervi-Flerovsky

Though more renowned for his economic analyses, Bervi-Flerovsky nevertheless revealed nationalistic sentiments, reminiscent of the Slavophiles, in how he argued for a reversal of the prevailing image of a 'backward' Russia lagging behind a more advanced West. Rather than merely declaring an independent path of societal evolution, Bervi-Flerovsky revealed that he was deeply concenred about his nation's perpetually-trailing position relative to Western Europe: since Russia, until now, has only progressed by means of assimilating the Occident's innovations:

> If we continue to go down the path which we have been on up until now, then we are inevitably bound always to remain at the tail-end of the civilized world; if I follow a person and go timidly step after step down the track he has left then I shall without any doubt always remain behind.[50]

Thus, the socialist Bervi-Flerovsky appears to have inherited the originally-Slavophile insistence for Russia to not only pursue a different timeline of development from the West, but to also seek to surpass it:

> As soon as we find enough courage to make up our minds to do this [and] accept our destiny with dignity and take our path without turning aside, with an open, fearless gaze, we shall see that we have not lost the prospect of not only putting our affairs in order but even playing a great historical role.[51]

Here, it is important to note that Bervi-Flerovsky had to avoid the unprintable word of 'socialism,' which he implied as Russia's "great historical role," i.e., contributing a new societal paradigm to world history.[52] To fulfill such an envisioned role, Russia, in other words, would have to take its own unique historical

[50] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia" 256-7.
[51] Ibid., 256.
[52] See Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 113.

path and reach the socialist stage *first,* before the West.[53] Thus, like the Slavophiles and Herzen, Bervi-Flerovsky sought to flip the notion of Russia's developmental inferiority and temporal tardiness by instead insisting that Russia would assume a historically-leading position, rather than remain mere pupils of Western Europe. This originally-Slavophile mentality in which 'the last shall be first' was thus remarkably explicit in Bervi-Flerovsky's work that was otherwise known for its economic contributions.

Additionally, Bervi-Flerovsky, in seeking to reverse the image of Russian 'backwardness,' also appeared to reiterate the notion that the presently-leading nations in historical development were approaching a state of stasis and decline, soon to be overtaken by the underdeveloped countries:

> We see in modern civilization, at the head of which stand[s] Europe ..., a fundamental defect, one of those defects which have dug the graves of civilizations and have made it inevitable that new leaders with fresh forces have come to take the place of the old ones.[54]

Here, Bervi-Flerovsky seems to have revived Herzen's view of the 'wearing out' of 'old' nations versus the promise of Russia's purported national 'youthfulness.' As such, Bervi-Flerovsky, like Herzen, insisted on the fundamental inability of the West to evolve a socialist society: "The Western European rural proletarian will not manage to do this [achieve socialism] in the near future, indeed he may never manage it."[55] Further, like the Slavophiles, Bervi-Flerovsky diagnosed such "defects" of these advanced Western nations particularly in their individualistic and competitive norms—as opposed to the communalistic ways of mutual assistance exemplified by pre-capitalist Russia: a "healthy ... civilization ... would enable [its people] to help one another ... not prevent one another from doing so."[56] Only such

[53] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia" 256
[54] Ibid., 257.
[55] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia" 257.
[56] Ibid.

civilizations, like Russia, have maintained the potential to leap into the socialist framework, having already possessed a foundation of collectivistic living. Thus, Bervi-Flerovsky reasoned that Russia must not give up its beneficial underdevelopment—its retention of traditional communal institutions—for a Western modernity that was farther from the socialist age into which Russia, he believed, could directly enter.[57]

Anti-Liberal Politics

Believing that Russia's historically-exceptional road to socialism hinged upon its retention of its 'backwardness,' the Narodniks therefore believed that adopting the modern developments of Western European society would be counterintuitive to Russia's course of historical progression. As shown above, this framework sought a bypassing of a capitalist economic age; but additionally, this logic also mandated the preclusion of a liberal political phase. This rationale against political liberalism became a dogma and "obsession" of the Narodnik movement.[58] As such, historian Andrzej Walicki notes that the Narodnik movement was politically characterized as bearing a "negative attitude towards political freedom"[59] and a "deepest distrust of liberal constitutionalism," insisting that the socialist struggle was fundamentally "set in opposition" to the liberal cause.[60] Indeed, historian Christopher Ely confirms that the Narodniks saw liberal institutions as the political counterpart of the era of capitalist economics which the movement precisely sought to evade.[61] Under the guise of electoral politics and parliamentary

[57] Ibid.
[58] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism* 81.
[59] Ibid., 85.
[60] Ibid., 81-2.
[61] Ely, *Russian Populism,* 90.

representation, they felt that the liberal system would only benefit the new bourgeoisie that would arise under such a paradigm, thereby prolonging the oppression of the working classes.[62] Thus, Mikhailovsky, in a passage deeply reminiscent of Herzen, claimed that the liberal revolutions of the West "merely had the effect of replacing privileges based on birth by privileges based on wealth" as the working class "escape[d] the tight grip of feudalism … [but] immediately fell into the clutches of bourgeois capitalism."[63] In an uncanny resemblance to the earlier Slavophile position, Mikhailovsky repudiated the liberal notion of "political freedom" and insisted that "we [Narodniks] reject these rights" offered by a constitutional model of governance.[64]

Instead, the foundations of the ideal form of societal organization that the Narodniks sought was believed to have been embodied by the nation's communal peasantry. Thus, in calling for Russia to spurn Western models, Bervi-Flerovsky, in a nearly-identical manner as the previous thinkers, preached the need to instead embrace and preserve the ancient communal ways of the peasants as the structural basis of the envisioned utopia. Beyond evading the allegedly-false freedoms of liberal governmental politics, Bervi-Flerovsky similarly believed that the old communal model was also more conducive to a socialistic freedom via collectivist landholding, as opposed to the liberal notion of private property:

> … attention must of course be paid above all to the attitude towards the land. Here we see that our peasant has shown incomparably more tact and common sense than his

[62] Ibid.

[63] Mikhailovsky, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," 654.

[64] "For a man who has tasted the fruit of the general-human tree of knowledge nothing is more attractive than political freedom … But if the rights, which this freedom will give us, are to prolong for us the role of a colored, fragrant flower—in such case we reject these rights and this freedom! Curse upon them, if they only increase our debt to the people, instead of enabling us to discharge it! … By recognizing the top priority of the social reform we renounce the increasing of our rights and freedom, since we see these rights as instruments of the exploitation of the people and the multiplying of our sins." Mikhailovsky, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 90.

> Western European counterpart. He has understood a great truth which the Western European worker has never understood.[65]

Indeed, Bervi-Flerovsky mocked how "Western European political economy vainly preaches" about "the most productive land," but "it will never achieve its goals so long as the principle of … private property exists."[66] Instead, he held that "Communal ownership leads … to a rational distribution of the land among the workers."[67] This defense of collectively sharing land among the community, in contrast to Western legalities of exclusionary ownership, was thus another principle held in common by the Narodniks and their ideological predecessors.

Political Praxis

With these views, Mikhailovsky argued that "it would be a vain undertaking" to strive for a "liberal" paradigm.[68] Believing that the Russian peasantry already possessed the basis of the socialist society which they sought to evolve nationwide, Mikhailovsky asserted that, instead of progressing to liberalism as Western Europe had done, a more direct method of progression was already available in Russia: "Give them [the peasantry] a firm guarantee that this [the existing landowning relations] will remain theirs, and the Russian labor problem will be solved."[69] Similarly, this plan of action is also seen in Bervi-Flerovsky's insistence that—as Herzen and the Slavophiles instructed, three decades earlier—the intended societal transformation would be completed "if the principle of the communal ownership

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[65] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia," 257.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Mikhailovsky, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 59.
[69] Mikhailovksy, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," 653.

of the land was made universal in Russia."[70] In this vision, there would be a natural and immediate transition from peasant communalism to nationwide communism, and hence no need for any intermediary stage of incomplete and counterintuitive progress as would occur under an era of liberal politics and governance.

If the ideal social structure they strove toward was to be achieved through a preservation and expansion of the peasantry's existing model of communal self-governance, the Narodniks thus preached the need to have the peasants, themselves, show the way forward for the intended political structure which the intelligentsia sought for the nation to evolve at-large. Here, the radical Narodniks, just as Herzen had done earlier, thereby revived what was originally a Slavophile call for the Westernized intelligentsia to bow to the un-Westernized peasantry as the antidote to their nation's historical-developmental issues. As historian Richard Wortman writes, "members of the intelligentsia of the 1870s [i.e., the Narodnik generation] … envisioned the peasants as virtuous brethren in distress, whose life still preserved the elements of justice and humanity lacking in the urban educated milieu."[71] In this way, as the Slavophiles first suggested, the uneducated masses would lead the educated intelligentsia into the promised future.

In fact, Bervi-Flerovsky argued at length on how the educated demographics had to "turn to people of peasant origin and ask them … to put their affairs in order;" moreover, he even held that the "learned … had to give way to the illiterate peasant intelligentsia," thereby attaching the 'intelligentsia'

[70] Bervi-Flerovsky, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 111-12.
[71] Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 137.

epithet to the most uneducated members of society.[72] Similarly, Mikhailovsky emphasized that the intelligentsia should subordinate their own values, often "too abstract to serve as a guiding principle," to instead "have to find some social element" as their north star: "Such a social element exists. It is the people. The people not in the sense of the nation but as the sum total of the working population," i.e., the peasantry, since their ways most closely approximated the envisioned utopia: "[they] may bring us closest to our intended goal."[73] Reflecting on the peasants he had studied in the Siberian countryside as the subject of his magnum opus, Bervi-Flerovsky concluded, "I am convinced that there [among the peasantry] lies within that estate the hope of Russia, the guarantee of her future glory and greatness."[74]

To summarize, the Narodniks thereby continued the political stances of the preceding thinkers, as all were united in opposition to the liberal paradigm as inapplicable and harmful to the Russian course of societal evolution. But more specifically, these different milieus all rejected liberalism particularly because they ultimately believed that the ideal political archetype of societal organization for which they were striving was embodied by the Russian peasantry's model of a communal polity. This in turn, once again, perpetuated the belief in the need for the intelligentsia to defer to the peasantry—counting on the latter to provide the basis of realizing this grand vision of a national transformation.

Through this political commonality, it thus also becomes clear how such ideas from the conservative Slavophiles were transmitted to radical socialist thinkers: they ideologically converged on a shared hostility toward a common political enemy of Western liberalism. However, this cross-political

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[72] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia," 253.
[73] Mikhailovsky, "Literary and Journalistic Notes of 1872," 654.
[74] Bervi-Flerovsky, "The Condition of the Working Class in Russia," 253.

phenomenon appears to have gone unnoticed: historian Andrzej Walicki correctly observed this anti-liberal characteristic of the Narodnik movement, even pointing out that the socialist Narodnik aversion to the liberal paradigm, in fact, deemed the Tsarist autocracy as more tolerable than the "false" constitutional democracy of a "bourgeois" republic;[75] but nevertheless, he claims that such anti-liberal concepts were "peculiar and distinctive" to the Narodnik movement and arose "not earlier than at the beginning of the [eighteen-]seventies"[76]—thereby failing to notice how the same particular political stances can be traced back to the Slavophiles of the opposite end of the political spectrum.

Specifying A Revolutionary Praxis: Bakunin and Lavrov

Until now, within this heritage of ideas, the details of a political praxis for actualizing the envisioned transformation have been rather vaguely formulated. The anti-liberal politics of these thinkers have consistently precipitated a general formula in which an intellectual 'return' to the peasant masses was expected to somehow bring about the communistic utopia, i.e., a proliferation of the communal ideal into a nationwide social structure. Within this generation of Narodniks, the details behind such values would finally be fleshed out in the form of a revolutionary strategy—particularly by the Narodnik leaders Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and Pyotr Lavrov (1823-1900). Bervi-Flerovsky and Mikhailosvky were primarily concerned with the cultivating the theoretical basis behind this ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism—rather than addressing the practical details of how the envisioned revolution would take place as well as the exact structure of the resulting post-revolutionary society.

[75] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 83.
[76] Ibid., 82, 85.

Indeed, Bervi-Flerovsky was an economist and Mikhailovsky was a layman sociologist; ultimately, neither were directly involved in revolutionary planning. However, this side of the question was especially concentrated on by Bakunin and Lavrov, the two figures most influential in brainstorming the logistics behind an actual revolution within the Narodnik movement in the 1870s, i.e., the peak of its 'classical' era. Much more than the previous thinkers, these figures were revolutionary leaders primarily involved in on-the-ground activism, seeking to bring about the revolution not only on paper. As such, these two theorists extensively detailed how the long-dreamed-of revolution ought to unfold, therefore developing the Narodnik revolutionary praxis.

Firstly, Bakunin and Lavrov perpetuated the notion of an intelligentsia return to and reliance upon the peasantry—now in explicitly-revolutionary principles: they deduced that the awaited social transformation would be conducted via a revolutionary uprising of the peasant masses themselves; further, the intelligentsia ought not play a domineering role over this mass grassroots movement. To arrive at these conclusions, both Bakunin and Lavrov maintained the premise that the desired political structure which they sought to evolve nationally was solely preserved by the communal peasantry. As historian Samuel H. Baron notes of these two figures, "Both … saw the collectivistic peasant commune as the nucleus of the agrarian socialist order they proposed to erect."[77]

Bakunin, like the previous thinkers, deemed the "collective ownership of the soil" exhibited by the Russian peasant commune as representing the "embryo" of the "communal political organization"

[77] Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 13.

of the desired future.[78] Having these agrarian masses as the basis of his socialist vision, Bakunin thus concluded that the keys to unlocking the new age lay outside of the intelligentsia and solely within the peasants: "[the movement] must go to the people, undoubtedly," Bakunin wrote, "because nowadays ...especially in Russia, there is no longer life, or any cause of future outside the people."[79] From this position, Bakunin deduced that the upcoming revolution must, likewise, also come from the masses themselves. In other words, he was devising a grassroots model of mass revolution, declaring that "Freedom can be created only by ... a total rebellion of the people, and by a voluntary organization of the people *from the bottom up."*[80] Here, Bakunin expanded the old principle of humbling the intelligentsia before 'the people' to now denote a strict warning against the intellectual class from assuming too large a role in executing the revolution:

> But neither the writers, nor the philosophers, nor their books are enough to build a living, powerful, socialist movement. Such a movement can be made a reality only by the awakened revolutionary consciousness, the collective will, and the organization of the working masses themselves. Without this, the best books in the world are nothing but theories spun in empty space, impotent dreams.[81]

In other words, the success of the movement centrally depended on the activity and will of the masses, without whom the intellectuals, such as himself, were useless.

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[78] Mikhail Bakunin, quoted in Alan Kimball, "The First International and the Russian *Obshchina,*" *Slavic Review* 32, no. 3 (September 1973): 498.
[79] Mikhail Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1873; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 283.
[80] Mikhail Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1873/statism-anarchy.htm.
[81] Mikhail Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/letter-frenchman.htm.

Similarly, Lavrov praised the peasant commune as "the single genuine element of political life existing in Russia."[82] Following a comparable logic to Bakunin, he, too, believed that the revolution ought to ultimately be led by the communal peasantry themselves—through a "popular uprising" in which the rural people led the charge rather than his own class of intelligentsia theorists.[83] Detailing the principles of his revolutionary strategy in his émigré journal *Vpered,* Lavrov declared: "Paramount for us is the premise that the reconstruction of Russian society must be carried out not only with the welfare of the people as its objective, not only for the benefit of the people, but also *by the people.*"[84] In particular, Lavrov sought to prevent the prospect of the intelligentsia ever forcing its own principles onto the intended constituency of benefit, who were to remain the true vehicles of revolution. Rather, such values must ultimately arise out of the masses themselves: "The contemporary Russian activist must, in our opinion, abandon the obsolete view that revolutionary ideas formulated by a small section of the more highly developed minority may be imposed on the people."[85] Accordingly, in his essay "Knowledge and Revolution," he repeatedly emphasized,

> ... the movement which must make them masters of the Russian land you expect to come *from the people themselves;* the program for the new order ... *must come from the people themselves* and the regulations, statutes and declarations ... we expect will be written *at the people's bidding.*[86]

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[82] Pyotr Lavrov, *Narodniki-propagandisty, 1873-78 godov* (Saint Petersburg: Andersona i Loitsianskago, 1907), 112, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 84.
[83] Pyotr Lavrov, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 73.
[84] Pyotr Lavrov, "Program of the Journal 'Forward!,'" in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1873; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 269.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Pyotr Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1873; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 270. Lavrov's italics.

In the same vein, Bakunin, too, warned against the potential elitism of the intelligentsia in taking over the revolution: he explicitly condemned those who "arrive … at the conclusion that because thought, theory, and science … are in the possession of very few, these few ought to be the leaders of social life, not only the initiators, but also the leader of all popular movements."[87] The movement ought to remain a populist one.

Having agreed on a 'bottom-up' scheme of revolution led by the people themselves, Bakunin and Lavrov sought to prevent an intelligentsia-dominated movement for the additional reason that such a scenario may lead to the establishment of a new authority oppressing the populace. Maintaining grassroots principles, they underscored the need to prevent any intellectual leader from erecting a new overarching authority over the people. Lavrov clarified that "Nobody has the right to foist on the people his own program, to seize power and set up on the basis of his own lofty individual reason."[88] More specifically, he held that,

> Anyone who has the welfare of the people at heart should seek not to set himself up *in authority* with the help of a successful revolution and lead the people towards some goal clearly perceived only by the leaders … rather he should seek to make the people consciously set themselves goals … and he should seek to become no more than the instrument of these social strivings when the time comes.[89]

Indeed, Lavrov precisely feared that "that socialist revolutionaries, having successfully overthrown the central government, may take its place," thereby clarifying that "We do not want any new coercive authority to take the place of the old."[90] Bakunin, too, felt that if the intelligentsia allotted itself too

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[87] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1873/statism-anarchy.htm.
[88] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution" 270.
[89] Lavrov, "Program of the Journal 'Forward!,'" 269. Lavrov's italics.
[90] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," 270.

much power and influence in the revolution, then the uprising would result in the construction of another state, now ruled by the intelligentsia claiming to be representing the people: "This fiction of a pseudo-representative government serves to conceal the domination of the masses by a handful of privileged elite," he explained.[91] In such a scenario, Bakunin warned that the masses would be dominated and silenced by the intellectual stratum: "the inevitable result" of such a dynamic between the intelligentsia and the masses whom claimed to fight for would be "the slavish subordination of the unskilled and ignorant majority to the so-called educated, exploiting minority," i.e., a new state ruled by the leaders of the revolution.[92]

Markedly, here, Bakunin and Lavrov's fear of a revolution devolving into representative-state rule specifically referenced their contempt for political liberalism. In the scenarios which they were warning against, they were referring to the Western-European precedent of a revolution that fought for a representative democracy and constitutional reform, which they both viewed as a continuation of the lower classes' oppression. Bakunin believed that the idea of "popular representation" was inherently contradictory and a "lie" in that it would ultimately be "only a system for governing the masses from above, through an intelligent and therefore a privileged minority" who claims to "allegedly understand

[91] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1873/statism-anarchy.htm.
[92] Mikhail Bakunin, "Our Program," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1868; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 644.

the genuine interests of the people better than the people themselves."[93] In fact, Bakunin felt that the only difference "between a monarchy and the most democratic republic" was that,

> a republic ... will oppress and plunder the people in exactly the same way, and for the sake of the same classes and purses, but in the name of the will of the people ... it will hardly be any easier on the people if the stick used to beat them is called the people's stick.[94]

Similarly, Lavrov condemned this liberal model of representative governance, seen in Western societies, as neglecting the true needs of the people: "In their eloquent debates about the subtleties of the constitutional system, they always forgot about existing economic needs of the majority and remained opaque to them."[95] As such, Lavrov claimed that such a system of perceived progress was in fact a "sickly illusion" which only goes half-way: "you cannot drain the sea by scooping it out with a spoon, or cure the people by giving microscopic local aid ... A *temporary* palliative to reduce acute pain at a particular moment."[96] Evidently, Bakunin and Lavrov's development of a more refined revolutionary praxis continued to remarkably maintain the original political hostilities against liberalism expounded by the Slavophiles and Herzen, three decades earlier.

Finally, Bakunin and Lavrov also perpetuated and intensified the principles against centralized authority and statism inherited from the Slavophiles and Herzen. Lavrov called for the disintegration of the standard state structure: "States in the form in which they exist are hostile to the working class movement, and they must all break up once and for all in order to give to a new social order in which the

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[93] Mikhail Bakunin, "The State and Anarchy," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1873; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 646.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Lavrov, quoted in Ely, 90.
[96] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," 270.

greatest freedom" would be realized at once.[97] In particular, like his ideological predecessors, Lavrov was protesting against "centralized governments," instead calling for power to be federated to "autonomous small groups of communes."[98] Bakunin was more explicit and extreme in voicing the anarchist ideal that Herzen, thirty years prior, seemed to approach. Bakunin argued that the best form of government, following the revolution, was no government at all: "No state, however democratic its forms may be ... is capable of giving the people what they need, that is, the free organization of their own interests from the bottom up, with no interreference, tutelage, or coercion from above."[99] As such, he declared that "the administrative and governmental machinery must be permanently smashed and not replaced by another;" instead, like Lavrov and the previous generation's thinkers, he held that the political solution was to guarantee the local autonomy of the communes: granting "complete freedom ... to all the communes ... is equivalent to dissolving the state, and initiating the social revolution."[100]

Thus, Bakunin and Lavrov, in devising the Narodnik revolutionary praxis behind this ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism, preserved the core political values of the preceding thinkers of this intellectual genealogy, while further detailing a particular political methodology behind the anti-liberal vision of actualizing the intended societal transformation. In doing so, they came full-circle, concluding that the image of a completed revolution as the standardization of the communal model nationwide until the Russian landscape resembled a vast federation of communes. Bakunin held that "the political

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[97] Pyotr Lavrov, "Our Program," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1873; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 651.
[98] Lavrov, quoted in Ely, 89.
[99] Bakunin, "The State and Anarchy," 646.
[100] Mikhail Bakunin, "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/letter-frenchman.htm.

organization of the future must be nothing other than a free federation of free workers ... in ... *artels"*—a term synonymous with 'commune.'[101] Therefore, he envisioned the final revolutionary objective to be "the organization of society through a free federation, formed from the bottom up ... into communes, [and] then the federation of communes."[102] Similarly, Lavrov's ultimate vision for "a new and better order" was "a federation of free peasant centers."[103] Moreover, in the program of his journal, he summarized the political rationale of the Narodnik movement—and, in doing so, also unconsciously reiterated the mission of the preceding thinkers of the previous chapter: "For the Russians, the communal ownership of land by the peasantry provides the special basis on which the future ... of the Russian population can develop," and therefore, the political mission was "To make the communal assembly the basic political element of the Russian social system."[104] Interestingly, this objective of a radical socialist revolution's outcome was almost identical to the Slavophiles' descriptions of the nature of their intended conservative utopia.

A Divergence in Praxis

However, despite such a profound extent of agreement on such principles of revolutionary praxis, Bakunin and Lavrov noticeably diverged in their assessment regarding the 'readiness' of the peasantry to carry out the revolution at this moment in time. Though both theorists were explicit in

[101] Bakunin, "Our Program," 644.
[102] Mikhail Bakunin, "An Epistle to My Italian Friends," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1871; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 645.
[103] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution" 270.
[104] Lavrov, "Our Program" 652.

demanding that the revolution ultimately be for the people and made by the people, this divergence led to differing views over the precise preparatory role of the intelligentsia as well as the timing of the revolution. This disagreement marked the start of an ideological splinter in the intellectual genealogy.

Bakunin swore by an unwavering confidence in the complete self-sufficiency of the peasantry to complete the envisioned revolution at any given moment in which he was writing. Here, his rationale was carried by his absolute idealization of the peasantry's present capabilities. Just as the Slavophiles mythologized the peasantry as a finished product who constituted the complete embodiment of their political ideals, so too did Bakunin idealize these subjects as already possessing all that was needed to launch the revolution he had dreamed of: "Among the Russian people there exist on the largest scale the … prerequisites for social revolution."[105] However, displaying another point of similarity to the Slavophiles, Bakunin never provided concrete evidence for such presumptions, even rhetorically asking, "Does one need to demonstrate how legitimate their hatred [of the state] is![?]"[106] He claimed that "there is no need for a profound analysis of the historic conscience of our people in order to the define the fundamental traits which characterize the ideal of our people."[107] As such, Bakunin projected his own abstract political ideals onto this illiterate peasantry, claiming that they displayed "a quasi-absolute autonomy, communal self-government, and … the thoroughly hostile attitude of the commune towards the state."[108] Approximating an almost-mystical or religious explanation of this premise, he insisted that

[105] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 278.
[106] Ibid., 282.
[107] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," trans. Sam Dolgoff (Marxists Internet Archive, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1873/statism-anarchy.htm.
[108] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 279.

"an invincible force lives [within them]."[109] Accordingly, he arrived at the conclusion that the peasant masses were completely ready to conjure the revolution and bring forth the utopia that intellectuals such as himself had theorized, insisting that such values were contained within the rural peasantry, intrinsically.

Given this view of the peasantry, Bakunin thereby completely rejected the notion of the intelligentsia's role in educationally assisting the peasantry in any aspect. These rural villagers, the soul of an authentic Russian spirit, had absolutely nothing to learn from the Westernized intelligentsia: "What are you going to teach the people? Is it not what you yourselves do not know and cannot know, and must first learn from the people?"[110] Bakunin thus claimed that the intelligentsia could not provide or clarify any ideal to the people, who already possess it in themselves:

> ... if the people do not themselves fashion such an ideal then nobody will be in a position to give it to them ... no one, no individual, society or people, can be given something which does not already exist in them ... One would have to be an absolute idiot or an incurable doctrinaire to imagine that one might give the people anything, bestow on them any sort of material benefit or new intellectual or moral content, any new truth, and lend their life at will some new direction.[111]

On this topic, Bakunin critiqued the Westernizer Petr Chaadaev from the previous generation: "as the late Chaadaev said thirty-six years ago with precisely the Russian people in mind, write on them what one pleased, as on a blank sheet of paper."[112] In contrast, Bakunin believed that all values which the intelligentsia sought must arise out of native principles, allegedly safeguarded by the peasantry, alone: "because they are rooted in the people themselves and lending this ideal the best course which leads most

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[109] Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. Marshall S. Schatz (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 216.
[110] Ibid., 198.
[111] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 278
[112] Ibid.

directly and rapidly towards the goal."[113] In this way, the radical Bakunin appeared to reiterate what was originally an anti-Westernizer narrative of the earlier conservative generation, i.e., the Slavophiles, through this notion that the educated classes were in need of returning to the pre-modernized masses, who were the preserver of an ancient virtue and wisdom that the foreignized elites had supposedly lost. Altogether, Bakunin's beliefs amounted to the implication that the revolution was truly imminent: if 'the people' already possessed in their ancient values all that was needed for the reconstruction of Russian society, and the intelligentsia had nothing to contribute to them, then there was no point in waiting—the revolution should happen now. Thus, Bakunin concluded, "There is no village in Russia which is not deeply discontented …one can say that there is no village in Russia which would not revolt" at this moment.[114]

On the other hand, Lavrov had a different perspective in understanding the role of the intelligentsia apropos the perceived 'readiness' of the masses for revolution—a view that was ultimately reflective of an era of increasing doubts. Although, as aforementioned, Lavrov continued to affirm that the revolution out to ultimately be carried out by the people themselves and that the intelligentsia must refrain from imposing its own values on the people, he nonetheless made the case for a more significant part to be contributed by the educated class. In fact, it was from his ascetic dedication to 'the people' that he deduced an expanded role for intellectuals like himself to be played in the preparatory stages of the planned uprising. On one hand, Bakunin held that "the common people are not doctrinaires [nor]

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[113] Ibid., 279.

[114] Even Herzen, who published his works on this topic over twenty years prior, never went to this extreme in terms of the literal immediacy of his envisioned revolution. Herzen, though referring to a younger Bakunin, wrote that the latter often "mistook the second month of pregnancy for the ninth." Alexander Herzen, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 53.

philosophers. They have neither the leisure to concern themselves with many questions," in his argument for prioritizing the people's allegedly-innate abilities over the intelligentsia's philosophical abstractions and theories.[115] Yet Lavrov took this same premise to reach an opposite conclusion. In his magnum opus *Historical Letters* (1869), particularly in the fourth letter entitled "The Price of Progress," Lavrov concluded that the intelligentsia owed a debt to the uneducated commoners. He held that their own existence of being a privileged class with the luxury to ponder philosophical questions, seek justice, and dream of progress was all owed to the toil and suffering of the downtrodden masses: "Mankind has paid dearly in order that a few thinkers might sit in their studies and speak of *its progress.*"[116] More specifically, he held that the enlightenment of the intelligentsia, "this progress achieved by a small minority," was ultimately "bought by the *enslavement* of the majority."[117] As such, he was disgusted that his fellow intellectuals did not do anything in return for the people who made such a sacrifice: "one should be horrified … at the fact that it has cost so much and that so little has been done for the price."[118] Thus, Lavrov argued that the intelligentsia ought to pay it back to the people.

In this way, by giving this critique of the intelligentsia and charging them of a debt,[119] Lavrov thus also endowed them with a new responsibility—and hence a new significance and expanded role to be played in preparing for the liberation of the masses. Thus, in order for the intelligentsia to exonerate itself of its debt to the people, it had to acknowledge its intellectual capabilities granted to them at the

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[115] Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchism," 280.
[116] Pyotr Lavrov, "Historical Letters, 4th Letter: The Price of Progress," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1868; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 264.
[117] Ibid., 263.
[118] Ibid., 264.
[119] Mikhailovsky described this mentality as the "conscience-stricken gentry." See Walicki, *The Controversy of Capitalism,* 28.

cost of the masses' constant labor, and therefore utilize such skills toward assisting the people's liberation. As such, he declared the obligation of the intelligentsia to play a contributing role in such a manner:

> If I am a cultivated person, then I am *obliged* to do this and ... by seeking and spreading more truths, clarifying my ideas about the most just social order and striving to put it into effect ... doing everything I can for the suffering majority in the present and the future.[120]

More specifically, Lavrov concluded that for the revolution, the intelligentsia must play "the role of initiators, expounders, assistants to the people."[121] Unlike Bakunin, he believed there *was* something which the intelligentsia could in fact teach the people; moreover, to Lavrov, they were obliged to do so. In particular, unlike Bakunin, who was so confident in claiming how the peasants were all consciously discontented and ready to revolt, Lavrov believed that the people did not fully understand the cause of their suffering until the intelligentsia clarified them—"making them realize the ... cause of their sufferings ... which they experience, which they sense *but do not understand;"* hence, he sought for the intellectual class to "point out to them ... the means at their disposal, tell them how to act to throw off, trample on and destroy this evil."[122] In other words, Lavrov believed that the intelligentsia could and must fully awaken the peasants to the cause of their condition and the need for revolution, while explaining to them how exactly to launch it. Here, he endowed the intelligentsia revolutionaries as playing "the role of prophet of the people's freedom."[123]

Thus, though Lavrov believed that it would still ultimately be the masses themselves who would be the primary vehicle of the revolution when the time does come—for he still believed that they

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[120] Lavrov, "Historical Letters, 4th Letter: The Price of Progress," 268.
[121] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," 270.
[122] Ibid., 271-2.
[123] Ibid., 273.

possessed the potentialities and power to set their communal traditions as the basis of the new society—Lavrov now added that this process would require some degree of the intelligentsia intervening. The latter had to provide the understanding that would be the impetus to put the people into motion and unlock their presently-hidden abilities, essentially steering them in the right direction: "It is the responsibility of this section of the civilized Russian minority not to impose its own ideas on the people … but to explain to the people their true needs … and to point out to them *the force which resides in them but of which they are not aware*."[124] Therefore, Lavrov insisted that the act of providing educational preparation for the masses would only function to awaken the people to their own allegedly-pre-existing but latent ideals; in this way, Lavrov was thus able to reconcile his appeal for an increased role of the intelligentsia with the movement's principle of refraining from imposing the intelligentsia's thought onto the people—precisely by claiming that such ideals already existed within the people's subconsciousness but were just presently reticent and needed cultivating.

In fortifying this stance, Lavrov, unlike the previous thinkers discussed thus far, elaborated more on a more unromantic reality of the distance between the intelligentsia and the rural masses—the gap between their grand visions of progress apropos the idealized people's actual state of mind: "[we] … are separated from the people by one and a half centuries of history, estranged from them by virtue of our way of thinking and way of life, and by the tradition of serfdom."[125] To address this issue, Lavrov thereby

[124] Lavrov, "Program of the Journal 'Forward!,'" 269.
[125] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," 270.

insisted that it would "require study … time and labor devoted to serious intellectual preparation" in order to make the revolution by the people actually feasible.[126]

Consequently, Lavrov's prognosis of the situation thereby implied that the revolution, unlike Bakunin's vision, was not so immediate. Rather, it would have to be delayed until the intelligentsia finished readying and awakening the masses for the anticipated uprising. Indeed, Lavrov noted that "given the unpreparedness of the majority and its low level of literacy, we cannot address ourselves directly to it [the revolution's initiation]," immediately.[127] As such, he deduced that the revolution would have to take place more so "in the distant future and is a social ideal that should continually be borne in mind without the self-deception of hoping that it can be realized either today or tomorrow."[128] If the revolution was still to be carried out by the peasantry, then it could only occur once that constituency had been fully 'prepared.' In this manner, he declared, "Only when the course of historical events itself shows that the time for the revolution has come and that the Russian people are prepared for it can one consider that one *has the right* to call upon the people to bring about this revolution."[129] Therefore, though still seeking a direct transition to socialism, Lavrov believed that this process could not be properly executed before a patient preparatory phase of educating the expected participants of the revolution.

Here, one can observe how a core assumption of the original vision behind Russian historical exceptionalism began to gradually erode. The idealistic image of 'the people'—the total faith in the

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[126] Ibid., 273.
[127] Lavrov, "Program of the Journal 'Forward!,'" 269.
[128] Lavrov, "Our Program," 651-2.
[129] Ibid., 652.

agrarian masses as readily possessing the nearly-messianic capabilities of summoning the theorized utopia—started to chip away in this genealogy of thought. This was a reflection a new era in which doubts began to arise regarding the actual disposition of the illiterate peasantry upon whom the intelligentsia had, for so long, entirely rested their grandiose visions. Lavrov was perhaps the first thinker in this intellectual timeline to begin displaying more of a dispassionate edge against the quixotic presumptions that had persisted up until now. Hence, Lavrov warned against, and perhaps foreshadowed, the increasingly-salient realization of the lurking gap between the abstract theories of the intelligentsia and its removal from peasant realities and the masses' practical capabilities:

> … and all those benefits which can be so deftly and smoothly drawn up on paper, when one is alone with one's brimming thoughts, in the absence of all real obstacles, all the real multiformity of the conditions in which the people dwell, all the real multiformity of the conditions in which the people dwell, all the real routine which weighs so heavily on our people as on any other society.[130]

Lavrov therefore asserted the need for revolutionaries to commit to a more sober assessment of the circumstances: "One must adopt an objective and critical attitude to the cause one passionately loves … calmly weigh up the possibilities, bowing to necessity."[131] Specifically, he warned against what he saw to as sentiments clouding judgment, for "the more passionately [one] loves his social ideal, the more he jeopardizes calm discussion."[132] Instead, what was needed was "a critical study of the ways in which social ideas … may be put into effect."[133]

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[130] Lavrov, "Knowledge and Revolution," 270.
[131] Ibid., 276-7.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

In summary, within the planning of the revolutionary praxis of the Narodnik movement, the divergence between the doctrines of Bakunin and Lavrov illustrated one of the first instances in which the original principles of the ideological heritage came under pressure to adapt to the new doubts of the post-emancipation era. Specifically, Lavrov's cautious appeals—regarding the present 'unreadiness' of the masses and the need for the intelligentsia to assist them in preparation—captured the rise of new attitudes of uncertainty. As will soon be evidenced, this intellectual shift was directly associated with the appearance of signs foreboding a possible rise of capitalism in Russia, as well as fears of a potential decline of the peasant commune's stubborn bulwark against the modernity which these thinkers had hoped to bypass. Nonetheless, Lavrov still clung to the classical political praxis insisting on a bottom-up revolution ultimately led by the peasantry themselves, which would evolve a society in which authority was deferred to local communal self-governance. However, his added caveats for this vision entrusted the intelligentsia with an expanded role, albeit a temporary one, for the preparation of 'the people.' Though this adaptation may have seemed moderate in the moment, it would ultimately function to open up a slippery slope along which the ideology's political principles would soon undergo a reversal of the original grassroots values, coupled with the rise of intelligentsia elitism—as the doubts and concerns to which his adaptations were reacting would continue to grow in scale across the next few years within the changing landscape of an increasingly-modern Russia.

Era of Doubts

Voluntarism

Directly linked with Lavrov's belief that the intelligentsia possessed the ability and responsibility to intervene and actively bring about modifications and improvements in present conditions was the philosophical notion of *voluntarism.* This belief that the unfolding of history was not predetermined, predictable, or unchangeable became central to the Narodnik ideology in response to new doubts that heightened the contingency of revolutionary plans. It became a crucial philosophical lever to fall back upon and pull amid rising uncertainty. Eventually, it constituted a means through which the intelligentsia revolutionaries could forcefully attempt to prolong the continuity of old visions against increasingly-incompatible realities. This would become particularly useful when it became more apparent that the old ideals were beginning to outlive the conditions in which they were conceived.

Lavrov's polemic against his own class's debts to the people concluded that "one must *redeem* evil by one's deeds in life," specifically stating that one can only "absolve [one]self from responsibility for the bloody price of [one's] cultivation if [one] use[s] this cultivation to reduce evil in the present and the future."[134] In other words, Lavrov asserted that the intelligentsia ought to actively strive toward rectifying society's ills and correcting its wrongs. This stance had seismic implications, for it implied that if certain elements of reality were presently misaligned with the idealized theory and vision, one ought not to accept the dissonance but rather seek to actively enact changes which bring reality closer to the imagined ideal. This stance additionally signified the Narodnik movement's rejection of the universalist

[134] Lavrov, "Historical Letters, 4th Letter: The Price of Progress," 267.

theories that portrayed a particular trajectory of historical evolution as "inevitable" and "natural" and necessarily conforming to "objective" laws—a characteristic view of Western-European philosophies of the time, such as Marxism.[135] In fact, the Narodniks viewed such beliefs as apologist tools of capitalism that justified the suffering of the masses in the name of the "iron laws of political economy," fostering a sort of complacency or powerlessness of people against the direction of historical development.[136] In response, Narodnik thinkers asserted the possibility of, and obligation for, one to resist developments that one deemed to be unfitting—to correct the path of history according to their rationalized principles of justice. As W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord note, the Narodniks protested against

> [the determinists'] attempt to explain man's behavior in the light of rigid, supposedly scientific laws as a product of environment or physiological factors over which man had no control, these materialists had tended ... to deprive man of the free will to change his society .... It was important to the theoreticians of the ... [Narodnik] period ... to free ethical and sociological speculation from the jurisdiction of an inflexible scientific method ... They wished to assert that man had freedom to make moral choices and to change his society, indeed they demanded that he do so.[137]

The intensification of this philosophical principle reflected a reaction to the newfound doubts of the times in which the presumed inevitability of Russia's historical exceptionalism began to come under question. Centrally, the prospect of an emergent capitalist epoch, which they had so confidently believed that Russia would evade amid a direct transition to socialism, grew increasingly plausible. Thus, something may need to be *voluntarily* done to ensure that the old intended historical blueprint was not jeopardized. In this way, the Narodniks thus adhered to voluntarism as a means of stubbornly clinging

[135] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 30.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Leatherbarrow and Offord, *A Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 249.

onto the feasibility of their old dream in the face of dissonant realities: if the realities did not align with the theories, then could *make* them align. Crucially, this would soon bear further implications in endowing the intelligentsia with a greater role in the revolutionary process.

Among the primary leaders of the Narodnik movement, Lavrov and Mikhailovsky were the most outspoken preachers of this voluntarist philosophy. Mikhailovsky, in his essay "What is Progress?," argued against the determinist philosophy of history, insisting that one cannot "know accurately and clearly that there is a certain order in the appearance on the historical scene."[138] Here, Mikhailovsky classified determinism as "the objective method in sociology," which he critiqued as too far removed from the human individual's "*subjective*" disposition and capability, i.e., one's values, objectives, and desires which could indeed be willed into existence: "Nature, which neither laughs nor cries, has no aims, no aspirations, no interests ... But man does have aims."[139] Consequently, he argued for,

> eras[ing] from our mental make-up the belief that there is good sense in the ordering of the universe ... the way in which natural phenomena successively supplant one another, or else we must make no distinction between development and decomposition.[140]

Mikhailovsky, refusing to accept the potential advent of capitalist exploitation in Russian society, thus defended a philosophical method that allowed him to reject the natural spontaneous developments of the times and instead believe that his contrary ideals could still be realized. Like Lavrov, whom he cited in sharing this view, Mikhailovsky pronounced the implication that follows from this stance: the intelligentsia, most intellectually equipped to judge what is conducive or harmful for historical progress,

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[138] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, "What Is Progress?," in *Readings in Russian Philosophical Thought: Philosophy of History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), 115.
[139] Nikolai Mikhailovsky, "What Is Progress?," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1869; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 259–60.
[140] Ibid., 259.

ought to make an intervention in the course of history: "critically thinking individuals," he claimed, ultimately possessed superior and necessary tools to contribute to the people's revolution, i.e., an impetus to be "introduced from outside into the communal archaic world of the Russian peasantry."[141]

Similarly, Lavrov in an essay directly referring to Mikhailovsky's "Formula for Progress," argued that history itself has no meaning, but rather all meanings are imparted to it by the thinking individual, who is indeed capable of manifesting their abstract principles: "In the historical perspective set by our moral ideal, we stand at the end of the historical process."[142] As such, the unfolding of history is subjectively defined and *made* by capable thinkers who can actively change reality in accordance with their ideals:

> Progress consists in the development of consciousness and ... incorporation of truth and justice .... It is a process which is being accomplished by means of the critical thought of individuals who aim at the transformation of their culture.[143]

Thus, unlike their ideological ancestors who were so confident that this historically-exceptional route of Russia would naturally unfold, the Narodniks of this era began to prepare for alternatives. In doing so, they justified and bestowed upon the intelligentsia further responsibility and a greater contributing and intervening role within the movement—to bend reality to the vision should the two begin to misalign. By the end of this chapter, this philosophical lever will be pulled to the extreme, amid the intensification of doubts, to justify even stronger measures of an intelligentsia intervention, for the sake of salvaging the fading dream at all costs.

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[141] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 69.
[142] Pyotr Lavrov, "Historical Letters," in *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James Edie and Mary-Barbara Zelding, trans. James P. Scanlan, vol. 2 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), 131.
[143] Ibid.

'To The People,' 1874

Thus far, this ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism had only existed in the imaginations and theories of the intelligentsia. In other words, the grand ideas that this thesis has tracked were limited to a small circle of intellectuals and their philosophical texts, none of which was actually read by the illiterate masses for whom the story was written. But in the summer of 1874, the long-theorized ideal would finally be put to the test. Almost three decades since the Slavophiles first touted the communal peasantry as the basis of an aspired utopia, followed by Herzen's call for revolutionaries to realize their dreams by going 'to the people,' the Narodniks, who made this old vision into a mass movement, finally went *to the people*.

In fact, the "overwhelming majority" of participants in what was precisely titled as the "to the people" event had "accepted the revolutionary strategy of either Lavrov or Bakunin."[144] Indeed, though the two thinkers diverged over the revolution's timing and the intelligentsia's exact role, they nevertheless both insisted that the impending societal transformation was still to be ultimately realized by a peasant uprising. Historians widely portray this event as the climax of the Russian Narodnik movement.[145] Overall, the movement was composed of optimistic intellectuals venturing into the agrarian countryside to greet the subjects of their utopian narratives, announcing the revolutionary advent of the new age that they had philosophized for so long. In greater detail, historian Avrahm Yarmolinksy records,

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[144] Leatherbarrow and Offord, *Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 251.

[145] Jonathan Bromley, *Russia 1848-1917* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2002), 202; Ely, *Russian Populism,* 106-7; Anne Pedler "Going to the People: The Russian Narodniki in 1874-5" *The Slavonic Review* 6, no. 16 (June 1927): 130-131.

> ...more than two thousand students ... and aristocrats were swept away by a spirit of self-renunciation. In almost every province in European Russia, young intellectuals dressed as peasants and set out from the cities to live among them, join in their daily life, and bring them the good news that a new age was dawning. Rich landowners gave away their possessions ... agnostic Jews had themselves baptized as Orthodox in order to be more at one with the peasantry; women joined in the exodus in order to share equally in the hopes and suffering.[146]

Thus, "fired with messianic zeal," historian D.C. Offord notes, these visionaries went into the rural villages "attempting to immerse themselves in the peasants' world so as to better inculcate them with socialist and revolutionary ideas."[147] This narrative of the event appears to be confirmed by a government memorandum written by the minister of justice, Count Konstantin Ivanovich Palen, who recorded that,

> The investigation has established that many young people, in some cases abandoning their studies, donned peasant garb, provided themselves with false identification papers, and went under the guise of common laborers 'to the people,' as they put it, with the purpose of implanting revolutionary ideas in them by means of printed pamphlets and word of mouth propaganda.[148]

In particular, Minister Palen was shocked to find that these revolutionaries all hailed from privileged and upper class backgrounds, i.e., people "who enjoy material security and a more or less honored social position," including "daughters of actual privy councilors" and "the daughter of a major general;" yet all were seemingly possessed by a "blind fanaticism" of this vision of returning to the humble masses, and thereby going "to live among the people, working as day laborers in the fields, sleeping together with the peasants."[149] Moreover, Palen traced this movement back to "publications, mainly the works of Russian

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[146] Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 114-6.
[147] Derek Offord, *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17.
[148] Konstantin Ivanovich Palen, "Palen's Description of the Movement 'To the People,'" in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1875; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, n.d.), 654.
[149] Ibid., 655.

emigres," writing in exile, as "books and publications printed abroad [were] smuggled into Russia" behind Tsarist censors.[150] Further, he noted the predominant influence of "the theories of Bakunin" as well as the role of "the journal *Vpered,* published abroad by Lavrov."[151] This observation thus further confirmed the central role of these two thinkers in fomenting this event—in addition to underscoring their physical distance from Russian reality, writing outside of the nation.

Altogether, the long-philosophized vision was put to the test—and failed. The idealistic intelligentsia went to the people, but they did not find the communal peasantry of their theories. As historian Anne Pedler notes, the various memoirs and accounts of these revolutionaries reflect the same story: they "found that the peasants were neither such promising revolutionaries nor such good socialists [as they] had hoped."[152] In fact, they "found the peasantry as suspicious" of these intellectuals and "as apathetic" to such theoretical visions "as ever."[153] Ultimately, "there was hardly one peasant revolt as a result of their efforts."[154] Furthermore, by the autumn of that year, Offord records, about 1,600 of the 2,000 activists had been arrested and jailed, while "failing to make the slightest headway in fomenting agrarian revolution."[155] The other activists returned to their cities, "having accomplished nothing."[156] As such, Pedler, notes, "There is very little for the historian to write about" beyond what could simply be described as a complete failure and disappointment.[157]

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[150] Ibid., 654-5.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Pedler, "Going to the People," 130-141.
[153] Ibid., 135.
[154] Ibid., 131.
[155] Offord, *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880s,* 17.
[156] Pedler, "Going to the People," 138.
[157] Ibid., 131.

Looking back, a general feeling of disillusionment and "depression" prevailed following the failure of the movement, as revolutionaries began to concede their "false ideas about peasant life."[158] One former revolutionary, Sergei Kravchinsky (1851-1895), described the painful sensation of disillusionment that engulfed the Narodniks: "this movement did not and could not bear contact with the stern and horrible reality."[159] Another revolutionary, looking back, admitted that "We took the whole thing so easily and so superficially."[160] The Narodnik activist Yakov Sefanovich (1854-1915), firmly disenchanted, revealed at his trial his sober realization that "a peasant revolution would not shake Russia even if the whole intelligentsia were allowed to move freely among the people and spread their propaganda without hindrance."[161]

The revolutionaries had been thoroughly let down and forced to come to terms with the vast disparity that separated their visions from the reality of the people whom they had glamorized from afar. Looking back 30 years later, Lavrov admitted that the Narodniks had suffered from a "pathological disorder" which fostered an excessive optimism and naive assumptions that were bound to crumble into "sinking spirits and hopelessness."[162] Acknowledging the degree to which the intelligentsia had projected their own hopes onto the people, the revolutionary Vladimir Korolenko similarly reflected:

> It seemed that all of Russian society looked to the *narod ['the people']* for some kind of formula for a new life ... this naivety was shared ... it offered our generation what the previous generation of thinking realists had lacked: it brought faith not in mere formulas and abstractions. It gave our aspirations a kind of wide, vital foundation.[163]

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[158] Ibid., 139.
[159] Sergei Kravchinsky, in ibid., 139.
[160] Ibid., 140.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Pyotr Lavrov, *Narodniki-propagandisty, 1873-78 godov* (Saint Petersburg: Andersona i Lotsianskago, 1907), 290-3, quoted in Ely, *Russian Populism,* 162.
[163] Vladimir Korolenko, *The History of My Contemporary*, trans. Neil Parsons (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 178.

Noting the delusional fervor behind such aspirations and presumptions, Sergei Kravchinsky further articulated the irrational romanticization of rural masses as a projection of the intelligentsia's own passions onto a people whom they had hoped would redeem all the wrongs of Russian society:

> Nothing similar had been seen before, or since. It was a revelation, rather than a propaganda ... and summoned the ardent to the great work of the redemption of the country and of humanity. And the ardent, hearing this cry, arose, overflowing with sorrow and indignation for their past life, and abandoning home, wealth, honours, family, threw themselves into the movement with a joy, an enthusiasm, a faith, such as one experienced only once in a life, and when lost one never found again ... *It was not a political movement. It rather resembled a religious movement,* and had all the contagious and absorbing characters of one.[164]

In short, the Narodnik intellectuals had "placed unfulfillable expectations on the peasantry, exaggerating their everyday survival strategies as a sign of future universal importance," and thus emerged inevitably disappointed when the reality of the masses' indifferent disposition fell short of their grandiose presumptions.[165] As such, historian Christopher Ely concluded that "never again would the [Narodnik] impulse to merge with the peasants find such a pure form as it did during the summer of 1874."[166]

Alexandr Engelgardt's Letters from the Country, 1872-1887

Amid this era of disillusionment, Alexandr Engelgardt, a former rector of the St. Petersburg Agricultural Institute, was, like many other members of the intelligentsia, deeply interested in the peasantry and studied the village commune as the basis of genuinely cooperative institutions for the rest

[164] Kravchinsky, *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life*, 25–26.
[165] Ely, *Russian Populism,* 91.
[166] Ibid., 106-7.

of Russian society to emulate.[167] After being arrested for suspicions of such studies becoming political, he was sentenced to a life of permanent internal exile, barred forever from the cities in which the radical discussions took place.[168] Returning to his wealthy family estate outside Smolensk, Engelgardt soon received a request from Mikhailovsky's journal 'Notes of the Fatherland' to write about his firsthand experiences with the peasantry in the countryside. Prior to the 1874 'to the people' mission, the intelligentsia desperately lacked such a close assessment of the masses.

Though enthusiastically undertaking this study with the intention to prove and confirm the long-standing theories of the peasant commune as the cornerstone of communal values through which Russia could realize its vision of a direct transition to socialism, his studies instead revealed a disappointing portrait of the peasants. Through his *Letters from the Country* amassed across 15 years, Engelgardt concluded that the traditional peasant way of life was not as the intelligentsia had imagined. Specifically, he found that the commune actually did little to redistribute wealth, failed to embrace egalitarianism, and was "strictly patriarchal, even despotic;" additionally, he did not find the values of socioeconomic equality that the Narodnik intellectuals had presumed were central to the communes: "[some] households thrive while the weak are subject to further deprivation."[169] But moreover, much of this disappointing reality, he found, was part of a growing national trend: any hints of the communal virtues of the peasantry—the supposed bulwark against Western modernity—that did indeed still exist were steadily declining and vanishing as a result of what appeared to be the intrusion of capitalist

[167] Ibid., 164.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Alexander Engelgardt, *Letters from the Country, 1872-1887*, trans. Cathy A. Frierson (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 85.

economic forces into the countryside. In particular, he noted that, increasingly, the peasants became "deep down as self-interested as their educated, urban counterparts;" as such, each peasant would "gladly become a wealthy *kulak* if he could."[170] Further, the peasant commune's existence became underpinned, now, for reasons that were "purely economic" and based on profit incentives.[171]

In sum, Engelgardt concluded that the emancipation of these former serfs had brought out the self-interested sentiments of the peasant farmer, who was now free to explore the free-market prospects of gain and profit. Such a finding was a far cry from the communistic image of the peasantry, so central to the ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism. Indeed, the theories were premised, necessarily, upon the image of an uncorrupted people of egalitarian ways and collective freedom representing a total resistance to Western individualistic practices as well as the norms of economic and political modernity; such presumptions had underpinned the prospect of Russia's highway to socialism. Thus, the old vision—formed in pre-emancipatory conditions and without having actually visited the peasants, i.e., the Slavophile mythology, made socialist by Herzen—now appeared to be outdated. The mythical image of 'the people,' and their promised historical role, was thus further shattered.

Revisions and Concessions

In the wake of the failure of the 'to the people' movement, as well as the disenchanting findings of studies such as that of Engelhardt, many disillusioned Narodniks began to give up on the dream of a direct progression into the socialist paradigm. With the communal peasantry totally falling short of their

[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

idealized expectations, many revolutionaries had turned away from the core tenets of the ideological heritage constituting Russian historical exceptionalism. During the second half of the 1870s, numerous Narodniks began to concede that the 'backward' peasant commune could no longer be relied upon as the vehicle of progress. Rather, they started to accept the changing socioeconomic conditions of the times which they had feared for so long: they came to terms with the fact that this ancient agrarian institution was "doomed to natural dissolution" and had to make way for new modern modes of social organization as precedented by the industrialist West.[172] In fact, Lavrov's followers, at this time, now increasingly believed that the socialist revolution in Russia must be postponed until capitalism and a new industrial proletariat, rather than the old agrarian peasantry, had reached a "sufficient level of development."[173] In this manner, many also began to concede the need for liberal political institutions, which they had, for so long, repudiated as an excessive and counterintuitive development for Russia's exceptional historical trajectory. As Vera Figner recalled in her memoirs, "We saw that our case in the countryside was lost … What was lacking was political freedom."[174]

Altogether, these activists came to terms with the fact that something was fundamentally incorrect in their theoretical doctrine and strategy. There was, it seemed, no longer any historical advantage in their nation's underdevelopment. Now, it appeared that Russia ought to economically industrialize while adopting the corresponding political systems of Western modernity; if so, then Russia did not possess an exceptional road of history after all, but rather had to conform to the Western

[172] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 93-4.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Vera Figner, quoted in ibid., 100.

universalist model. In this way, it seemed, there would be no direct transition to socialism. Instead, Russia, like the history of Western-European societies, appeared to require the undergoing of an intermediary stage of historical development that all theorists of this intellectual genealogy until now had precisely sought to bypass. Thus, the antimonies of the ideology—a radical formula for socialist progression founded upon originally-conservative premises of retaining societal underdevelopment—appeared hopeless as Russia seemed to approach the dawn of a capitalist age.

'REVISIONIST' NARODISM

However, in the wake of this mass disillusionment, one particular thinker was not ready to give up on these seemingly-outdated theories. Pyotr Tkachev (1844-1886) was a Narodnik revolutionary theorist and writer whose peculiar views often found him relegated to the sidelines of 'Classical Narodnik' discourse and principles.[175] Primarily writing in the wake of the disenchantment that precipitated the decline of the Narodnik movement, Tkachev sought to salvage the seemingly-implausible visions of old. To defend the notion of Russian historical exceptionalism, Tkachev attempted to exonerate the validity of the Narodnik socialist model against the Western universalist premises of the Marxist doctrine, which was becoming increasingly popular in Russia. However, to do so amid these increasingly-anachronistic material conditions, Tkachev resorted to positing deep revisions for particular aspects of the original doctrine. Ultimately, he preserved a remarkable continuity of the

[175] See Leatherbarrow and Offord, *Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 248.

ideological heritage—but at the cost of adapting a new political praxis beneath a redefined interpretation of anti-liberalism.

Salvaging Russian Historical Exceptionalism

Tkachev staunchly rejected the increasingly-popular notion of Western historical universalism, touted by the rising Marxist movement. Continuing in the spirit of his intellectual predecessors, Tkachev insisted that Russia still possessed a separate path of historical development that more directly and quickly reached the socialist age than the road traversed by the more 'advanced' nations of the West. Just as Mikhailovsky had feuded with Marx earlier in this chapter, here Tkachev was feuding with Marx's co-ideologist, Friedrich Engels, on the viability of Russia's allegedly separate telos. Engels, explicitly critiquing the beliefs of the Russian Narodniks, insisted that the peasant commune "does not prove by any means that this drive makes possible a jump directly from the *artel* [commune] to the socialist society."[176] Rather, the German philosopher asserted the need for such 'backward' and outdated communal forms to make way for the capitalist era of economic development; this was to be a necessary step on a much longer road to socialism, which the histories of Western Europe were purportedly exemplifying:

> it is necessary above all that the *artel* itself becomes capable of development and divests itself of its original form, in which it serves the capitalists rather than laborers ... and at least rises to the level of the Western European co-operative associations ... The *artel* [Russian commune] in its present form is not only incapable of this, it is necessarily destroyed by large-scale industry unless it is further developed.[177]

[176] Friedrich Engels, quoted in Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 52.
[177] Ibid.

Against this, Tkachev, in his "Open Letter" of 1874 to Engels, argued that this Western-centric formula did not apply to Russia's peculiar conditions: the Western universalist timeline was "totally unsuitable for our country," he claimed.[178] In a proclamation that could be seamlessly inserted into an old Slavophile treatise, Tkachev declared that "the character of our country is absolutely exceptional" and "has nothing in common with the character of any other nation of Western Europe."[179] Specifically, he held that the Western path to socialism—which required capitalism as a necessary precondition—was "completely inappropriate to our struggle;" instead, Russia possessed its own particular timeline of societal evolution that "require[d] an absolutely unique revolutionary program," which accordingly reflected the different "social-political conditions" between his nation and the West.[180]

Reversing 'Backwardness'

Specifically, Tkachev defended the idea that Russia, unlike Western Europe, could indeed proceed directly into socialism, precluding the capitalist phase of historical development. In his essay "On Historical Leaps," Tkachev provided a philosophical breakdown of this logic: in abstractly describing the stages of a society's evolution, he ultimately affirmed his nation's ability to "proceed from the first premise to the last, passing over the middle one … to leap directly from a lower rung to a higher one over all the ones in between."[181] In this way, Tkachev, like the previous theorists, continued to seek

[178] Pyotr Tkachev, "Offener Brief an Herrn Friederich Engels [Open Letter to Mr. Friedrich Engels]," in *Soziales Aus Russland: The Polemic between Friedrich Engels and Petr Tkachev, 1874-1875*, trans. Alan Kimball (1874; repr., Eugene: University of Oregon, 2010).
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Pyotr Tkachev, "On Historical Leaps," in *A Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1868; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987).

the direct attainment of the final intended form of development rather than processing through any intermediary or transitional historical phase. Moreover, like Herzen, he insisted that Russia, within "the near future," would attain this socialist paradigm before the most industrially developed nations of the West[182]—thereby reviving the 'last-shall-be-first' mentality first introduced into this ideological genealogy by the Slavophiles.

But how would such an exceptional path of development be realized? Tkachev, like the preceding thinkers, once more pointed to the underdeveloped state of his country as providing the basis of this superior avenue of historical progression. In other words, he reinstated the theme of reversing the implications of 'backwardness.' Engels had argued that the West must show "the retarded countries … by its example how it is done," referring to the notion that Russia was lagging behind in development and had to catch up to Occidental standards.[183] Indeed, Engels held that Russia's preservation of the remnants of agricultural "communal property" only represented that its conditions were "here at a still very undeveloped stage" and in fact "a fetter and a brake … at a certain stage of social development" that needed to be "abolished" for sake of progress.[184]

Yet Tkachev, in response, argued that it was precisely this underdeveloped nature of Russia that allowed for a more direct path of progressing into the socialist age. He therefore explained, at length, how the various elements of Russian societal difference from the developed Western countries—that

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[182] Pyotr Tkachev, "Offener Brief an Herrn Friederich Engels [Open Letter to Mr. Friedrich Engels]," in *Soziales Aus Russland: The Polemic between Friedrich Engels and Petr Tkachev, 1874-1875*, trans. Alan Kimball (1874; repr., Eugene: University of Oregon, 2010).

[183] Friedrich Engels, *Marx & Engels: Selected Works in Three Volumes* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 2, pp. 403-4.

[184] Engels, quoted in Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road,* 52.

were commonly perceived as inferior and 'backward'—instead allowed for a more conducive road to socialism. Specifically, while Marxists argued that developing an industrial labor force was an essential step toward fomenting a socialist revolution, Tkachev pointed to Russia's lack of industrialized elements as a beneficial characteristic:

> The urban proletariat does not exist among us, this is of course true. But for that reason we do not have a bourgeoise either. Between the suffering people and the state which suppresses them, there is no middle class among us.[185]

In this way, Tkachev argued that the path to revolution was thereby simplified for Russia, containing less obstacles and enemies to overcome during the class struggle. Further, he cited how "Our upper classes ... have developed no strength, neither economic (they are too poor for that) nor political (they are too undeveloped)" as another feature creating an expedited trajectory for Russia.[186] In other words, this exceptionally-direct road to socialism was made possible by how the nation *lacked* the very features of development that Western socialist thinkers had deemed as necessary preconditions. More broadly, Tkachev reasoned that "capitalist power is found in Russia up to now only in embryo," and hence there is no need to struggle against this entire stage of history; without it, one could proceed onto the final socialist phase through a "considerably easier" temporal itinerary.[187] In this way, "very little is needed" for a socialist revolution to be successful in underdeveloped Russia.[188]

Furthermore, he cited Russia's most populous demographic, the peasantry—whom the Marxists scorned as drags on the historical timeline of advancement toward socialism—as another point of

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[185] Tkachev, "Open Letter to Friedrich Engels."
[186] Ibid. Tkachev's parentheses.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

historical advantage. Here, Tkachev conceded that "Our people are ignorant (undeveloped), and that's a fact. *But for that reason* the folk ... have instilled in them the principle of communal rule."[189] Like Herzen and Bakunin, he claimed that such communistic values were innately built into the people's dispositions and instincts: "The folk are, so to speak, communist by instinct, by tradition. The idea of collective property is so firmly infused in the world view of the Russian people," he asserted.[190] With the mass populace traditionally adjusted to the collectivistic model of communal life, the collectivistic structure of a socialist society was thus within close reach.[191] In this way, Tkachev deployed the same logic as that of all preceding theorists of Russian historical exceptionalism, i.e., that these primitive characteristics of Russia approximated the final state of socialism much more than the advanced societies of the West: "it is clear that our people, despite their ignorance (lack of development), stand significantly closer to socialism than the peoples of Western Europe, although the latter are more educated (developed)."[192] Here, Tkachev, again embracing the underdeveloped conditions of his nation as constituting the very key to a superior and expedited path to the highest and final social form, thereby reiterated the rhetoric of transvaluating the image of Russia's 'backwardness' to instead denote a beneficial feature on the timeline of progress.

[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid. Tkachev's parentheses.

Anti-Liberal Politics, Redefined

Continuing the intellectual tradition of his predecessors, Tkachev believed that a liberal political paradigm would be both excessive and counterintuitive to Russia's exceptional path of an uninterrupted progression into the socialist epoch. Indeed, Tkachev sought to "leap directly" over any intermediary stages of development, such as the era of "constitutional" governance of the Western model.[193] However, unlike the preceding Narodniks—as well as Herzen and the Slavophiles—Tkachev redefined this doctrine of anti-liberalism to denote new political measures required to realize the old vision. As we recall, his intellectual forefathers had consistently spited liberal frameworks in favor of a return to the communal form of local self-governance preserved by the peasantry, a stance which prompted the anticipation of a movement centrally dependent on the masses leading from below. However, writing in the era of intelligentsia disillusionment, especially in the wake of the failure of the 'to the people' movement, Tkachev bent the original political praxis to meet the new demands of the times.

More than any of the previous thinkers, Tkachev had to deal with the alarming rate at which Western modernity appeared to be arriving at Russia's doorsteps. Refusing to concede the prospect of bypassing this now-seemingly-unavoidable era, Tkachev stressed the need for an immediate execution of the socialist revolution—before it was too late. In the program of his journal *The Tocsin,* Tkachev accordingly centered the ethos of his publication around the urgency of having to curb such modernizing developments in Russia. He sought to salvage the nation's fading features of underdevelopment, which underpinned the exceptional historical pathway. In the program, he warned that,

[193] Tkachev, "On Historical Leaps" 288.

> the fire of 'economic progress' has already touched the foundations of the life of our people. Under its influence the old forms of our communal way of life are crumbling, the very 'principle of the *obschina* [peasant commune],' a principle which is supposed to be a cornerstone of the future social structure we all dream of, is being destroyed.[194]

In other words, like previous thinkers, Tkachev acknowledged the peasant commune as the basis on which the entire vision rested, but he now warned of its impending doom to the new historical forces. Continuing, he mourned how "on the ruins of those forms which are being burnt down, new forms, the forms of bourgeois life, are coming into being ... the principle of individualism, of economic anarchy ... is setting in," giving way to "the interests of private property, the interests of trade and industry, the interests of the bourgeois world which is coming into being."[195] Thus, Tkachev warned that if there is any further delay in revolutionary action, Russia will indeed succumb to the Western rhythm and enter the capitalist and liberal paradigm: "Tomorrow [our country] will become *constitutional and modern* ... So hurry!"[196] Tkachev thereby concluded that the window of opportunity for a direct transition was closing quickly: "Such moments are not frequent in history. To let them slip by means ... to put back the possibility of social revolution for a long time ... So do not delay!"[197] In other words, the old vision could still be realized while the forces of Western modernity were still "weak right now and yet to mature," but the opportunity to bypass them was now fading by the second.[198]

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[194] Pyotr Tkachev, "Program of the Journal 'The Tocsin,'" in *A Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, ed. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1875; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 288.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid., 289.
[198] Ibid., 288.

A Revolutionary Praxis Without 'The People'

However, while the dire need for an immediate revolution was growing by the second, the traditionally-expected base of such a revolution—the peasant masses—had proven in recent years to be utterly unprepared for such a feat. Refusing to wait for them to come into 'readiness,' Tkachev believed that the 'ready' segment of society, i.e., the intelligentsia, ought to take the reins, now.[199] In doing so, it appears that Tkachev combined aspects of both Bakunin and Lavrov to form a strategy that ultimately rejected both: sharing Bakunin's belief in an immediate revolution but rejecting his faith in the readiness of the masses, while sharing Lavrov's doubts over the peasants' readiness but rejecting his prognosis for patiently cultivating their revolutionary consciousness—Tkachev then reached a conclusion that precisely violated the very principle held in common by both Bakunin and Lavrov: the intelligentsia would have to completely take matters into their own hands and proceed without 'the people.'[200] Tkachev insisted that there were no viable means to actually enlighten and prepare the illiterate peasant masses in time for the revolution which ought to occur now. Disillusioned by the recent failure of having gone 'to the people,' he asserted that the peasant masses suffer from "the absence of a clear understanding among them of their interests."[201] Ridiculing "every attempt of the educated to grow close to the ... peasants," Tkachev revealed his complete distrust of the people to know what is best for themselves:

> we have ... nothing that would grant us the right even to hope someday to unite the frightened, crippled, ignorant masses of the laboring people ... in a well-structured and

[199] Tkacehv, "Open Letter to Friedrich Engels."
[200] Pyotr Tkachev, "Excerpts from 'Nabat,'" in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1875; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 656.
[201] Tkachev, "Open Letter to Friedrich Engels."

> disciplined union of all workers who understand fully what their situation is and furthermore what the means for its improvement are.[202]

As such, he also held that "a workers' literature is unthinkable in Russia, but even if it were a possibility it would be absolutely useless because the immense majority of our people are unable to read."[203]

Thus, in contradiction to the previous generations' insistence on ultimately deferring to the masses as the primary agents of realizing the new society, Tkachev now concluded that the revolutionary process could only be entrusted to the intelligentsia, in its *entirety*. In this way, Tkachev shunned the grassroots precedents of a mass involvement of the people, deeply criticizing what he deemed to be the ideals of "utopian revolutionaries," who sought "an organization which repudiates all subordination and centralization and accepts only a federative link ..."[204] Instead, Tkachev completely subverted the old principles of a bottom-up mass revolution, expressed so clearly by both Bakunin and Lavrov, despite their differences, and embraced by all preceding thinkers of this ideological heritage. The revolution would now have to be launched without 'the people,' altogether. What was needed instead, Tkachev asserted, was "a closely knit organization ... disciplined, hierarchical, subordinating,"[205] i.e., "an organization based on *the centralization of power.*"[206] In other words, Tkachev was calling for the doors of participation to be closed and strictly limited to a small elite group of intellectuals who allegedly knew how to best lead the way on behalf of the masses. He thus flipped the praxis into a top-down model. As such, Tkachev held that,

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal 'The Tocsin,'" 292.
[205] Tkacehv, "Excerpts from 'Nabat,'"656.
[206] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal 'The Tocsin,'" 292.

> This great task can be accomplished … only by the people who understand it … people who are highly developed intellectually and morally, that is to say the minority. This minority, by virtue of its higher intellectual and moral level of development, always had and is bound to have intellectual and moral power over the majority.[207]

Such a blatant proposal for complete intellectual elitism over the uneducated masses was precisely what the earlier thinkers had condemned.

Authoritarian Conclusions

Through this new approach, Tkachev additionally flipped another old principle of this intellectual genealogy: the adherence to avoiding a revolution that resulted in the acquisition of governmental power by the intelligentsia, a notion which the preceding thinkers held would only perpetuate the oppression of the masses. Against this tenet, Tkachev explicitly declared that "a true revolution … can be brought about only on one condition: the seizure of governmental power by the revolutionists."[208] In other words, the revolutionary leaders ought to "seize state power into their own hands," a coup d'état.[209] Moreover, he justified such a principle on the intellectual superiority of the "minority," who "embodying as they do the best intellectual and moral forces of society, they necessarily possess and … cannot help but possess, *power*."[210]

Thus, while the previous thinkers of this intellectual tradition had rejected political liberalism as oppressive for its perceived governmental infringement upon the local autonomy of the masses, Tkachev also sought to evade the liberal model—but not for opposing centralized governance like the previous

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[207] Tkachev, Ibid., 290-1.
[208] Tkacehv, "Excerpts from 'Nabat,'" 656.
[209] Tkachev, "'Program of the Journal 'The Tocsin'" 291.
[210] Ibid.

generations, *but rather for an anti-liberal political form of the opposite extreme:* authoritarianism. In fact, Tkachev declared that "The revolution is not just the seizure of power. There is also the second step," which was "the creation of a revolutionary state."[211] This state, Tkachev explained, would dictatorially seek to ensure the success of the revolutionary process by decree.[212]

The reason behind such a seemingly-heretical strategy stemmed from the combination of Tkachev's two major premises: 1) the revolution had to occur now, or it would be too late, and 2) the populace were still 'unprepared' in lacking a developed socialist consciousness. This assessment of the situation implied the following issue that needed to be resolved: in the immediate wake of a successful seizure of power by the intelligentsia, the populace would still be 'unready' and thus would not be able to create the intended, resulting socialist society, themselves. Hence, the intelligentsia would have to enact the desired societal changes by systematic enforcement—through the new "revolutionary state['s]" decrees that would "bring about the social revolution through a series of reforms in the sphere of economic, political, and legal relationships within the social body."[213] In fact, Tkachev believed that the actual process of manifesting the new social paradigm would be carried out by the new overarching state: "the revolution itself ... is brought about by a revolutionary state which ... fights and destroys the conservative and reactionary elements in society and abolishes all the institutions that obstruct the establishment of equality ... and ... brings into being the institutions that favor them."[214] In this way, Tkachev held that the actual revolution, in establishing the correct social values of the new society, was

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[211] Ibid., 291.
[212] Tkachev, "Excerpts from *Nabat,"* 656.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.

one that was to be brought by force, even artificially, from above. Thus, instead of first preparing the people to realize their socialistic values before going forward with the revolution, as Lavrov would argue, Tkachev believed that the intelligentsia ought to go ahead now and complete the revolution first—and then, post-facto, educate the people on the new values of the revolutionary society in the image of the intelligentsia. Having to unnaturally and retroactively bridge that gap, he imagined the revolutionary state as functioning to "change the given conditions of a society's way of life" and "introduce into it the opposite principles … to change man's nature itself … to re-educate him."[215] In this way, Tkachev seems to have creatively solved the predicament of an 'unready' constituency that needed slow educating—by instead placing this preparatory phase after a premature revolution, thereby still preserving the logistics of a direct transition, de jure, but with the addition of an authoritarian state.

Voluntarism

Evidently, Tkachev's revolutionary strategy was underpinned by the philosophical principle of voluntarism. Explicated earlier by Mikhailovsky and Lavrov as a justification for a slightly expanded role of the intelligentsia in consciously aiding the initiation of the revolution, this principle was deduced in correlation to their rising doubts in the people's present self-sufficiency as well as the increasing concern that capitalist historical forces were beginning to grow roots in Russia. As shown above, these two concerns reached the extreme for Tkachev, who completely lost faith in the people themselves to lead the revolution while also firmly explicating that Western modernity had indeed begun to penetrate into

[215] Tkachev, "'Program of the Journal 'The Tocsin,'" 290.

his nation's exceptional conditions. Consequently, Tkachev deployed the voluntarist principle to the maximum and put forth a vision which emphasized the immediacy of the revolution so much so that it had to be willed into reality against unharmonious circumstances.

> You've talked for long enough about 'preparation' and 'preparation ... The revolutionary does not prepare the revolution; he 'makes' it. So make it! Make it soon! All vacillation, all procrastination is criminal!"[216]

Thus, the revolutionaries had to seize the opportunity before it was too late, thereby launching the revolution by themselves, forsaking any 'unready' conditions at the time, including the mass constituency. Consequently, all loose ends and existing discrepancies between the ideal and reality were to then be forced into alignment by means of dictatorial intelligentsia rule. Socialism was to be dictated into existence.

CONCLUSION

From the late 1860s through the 1870s, the ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism, posited by the Slavophiles and made socialist by Alexander Herzen, evolved into the core ethos of a revolutionary movement: Narodism. Believing in a unique road of societal progression for their nation, the Narodniks rejected the universality of Western historical models and their applicability to the Russia paradigm. In particular, they believed that Russia ought not pass through the capitalist experience as the more advanced nations of the Occident had done. Rather, they insisted on bypassing Western modernity via a direct transition from their underdeveloped state into a socialist society.

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[216] Ibid., 289-90.

Though historians typically document the emergence of Narodnik ideology as arising in response to the post-emancipation peasant crisis,[217] this chapter has shown that the core ideas of the Narodnik milieu can be traced to an earlier generation of pre-emancipation thinkers. Indeed, across the writings of Mikahilovsky, Bervi-Flerovsky, Bakunin, Lavrov, and Tkachev, the idea of an exceptional Russian historical timeline remarkably followed the same core tenets as those of the theorists from the previous chapter. Specifically, the concept was, again, justified by reversing the implications of Russia's societal 'backwardness' to denote a historical advantage, i.e., a shortcut to socialism, while additionally yielding a continued hostility against political liberalism.

Moreover, by tracing the origins of the Narodnik philosophy to the earlier, pre-emancipation context, this chapter has displayed an emerging issue and conceptual paradox which explains the ideological modifications that did occur, in this era, beneath the greater continuity in thought. During this time, the effects of the abolition of serfdom were beginning to affect Russian society in ways that the originators of this intellectual tradition could not have foreseen or experienced. Indeed, the 'backwardness' of Russian society, on which the theories of historical exceptionalism were founded upon, was now beginning to fade as capitalist forces increasingly threatened to penetrate the nation. Thus, such revolutionary and progressive hopes of socialism paradoxically depended on retaining societal underdevelopment against such modernizing trends. Consequently, a precautionary 'voluntarist' philosophy evolved, justifying potentially-needed interventions against unwanted historical trends; however, this philosophical caveat would soon prove to open a slippery slope in

[217] Ely, *Russian Populism,* 71; Leatherbarrow and Offord, *Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 248; Walicki, *The Controversy of Capitalism,* 82-5.

implications—when the material conditions grew even more unfavorable for the ideal of a direct transition to be feasibly realized, by the chapter's end.

The original vision was fundamentally based upon an idealistic image of 'the people,' as the intelligentsia believed that the rural masses already possessed the foundational values and structures of the utopia which they imagined; as such, the agrarian folk, rather than the intelligentsia, would have to be the constructors of the new era. Continuing and evolving this notion in this era, Bakunin and Lavrov developed a revolutionary strategy for a socialist revolution based on a mass peasant uprising. However, as the intelligentsia gradually grew more doubtful of the people's actual possession of such qualities, or lack thereof, they began to reckon with the increasingly-apparent paradox that was the narrative of an illiterate peasantry leading the educated intellectuals into the promised land. Such a framework, originally created by the Slavophile ethos of a conservative return to a pre-modern world, proved increasingly impractical for the revolutionary-socialist inheritors of those premises. To adapt, leaders like Lavrov added the corollary of an expanded intelligentsia role of now seeking to train and educate the masses for revolutionary preparation.

However, as the disillusionment intensified following the failure of the 'to the people' movement, in which the intellectual class finally made contact with the subjects of their theories, coupled with piercing evidence of a steady decline in communal practices among the people, the intellectual heritage would have to adjust—bending a component of the original praxis to accommodate these new circumstances and realizations. This was accomplished in the Revisionist Narodnik branch of thought, whose ideas were founded by Tkachev. The latter derived a way to preserve the vision of an exceptional Russian path, i.e., a direct transition into a socialist epoch, when the necessary conditions now proved

to be missing. In particular, he resorted to revising the political praxis of the ideology—redefining the tradition's anti-liberal politics to now denote authoritarian means. This saw the introduction of a technocratic model in which the intelligentsia would execute the revolution on behalf of an incapable people, resulting in a dictatorial state that would then decree the nonexistent conditions into reality. In other words, if the values of the envisioned utopian society could no longer count on naturally sprouting from the masses below, as the earlier thinkers had assumed, then they would have to be forced into actuality from above.

Though these views initially seemed to mark an extreme turn from the movement's original ethos, they soon became the dominant strategy among the remaining Narodniks of the late 1870s, as it became clearer that the only way to practically realize the old vision amid new realities was through such a ruthless model of praxis.[218] Soon, Tkachev's views deeply inspired the founding principles of a Narodnik faction named *The People's Will,* to which the "majority" of remaining Russian Narodniks had flocked to by the end of the decade.[219] Indeed, the group's philosophy represented that of a disillusioned intelligentsia who was now willing to preclude a reliance on the masses to instead aim to seize power by themselves and launch the revolution on behalf of the people.[220] Historian Richard Pipes notes that the Narodnik movement "reached its zenith with the terror of *The People's Will,* after which

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[218] Walicki, *The Controversy of Capitalism,* 101-103, 107.

[219] Robert Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin," *Studies in East European Thought* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 260.

[220] Samuel H. Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins of Russian Marxism," *The Russian Review* 13, no. 1 (January 1954): 48. Moreover, the group became renowned for their use of terrorism against the state. See Astrid Von Borcke, "Violence and Terror in Russian Revolutionary Populism: The Narodnaya Volya, 1879-83," in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-century Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), 48-62.

it quickly lost ground to Marxism."[221] In other words, Revisionist Narodism would constitute the last major development in this intellectual heritage until the rise of the Marxist era, the milieu of the following chapter.

[221] Pipes, "Narodnichestvo," 441.

3

RUSSIAN MARXISM: AN EXCEPTIONAL REVOLUTION

"The fact that the proletariat reached power for the first time in such a backward country as the former Tsarist Russia seems mysterious only at a first glance ... It could have been predicted, and it was predicted ... Russia is a backward country ... Lenin solved the enigma of the Russian Revolution with the lapidary formula, 'The chain broke at its weakest link.' ... That is precisely why the backward countries assumed the first places in the succession of collapse."[1]

~ Leon Trotsky

TWENTY YEARS AFTER signing the 1861 Emancipation Edict that freed the serfs of Russia, Tsar Alexander II laid in a pool of his own blood. His legs were shattered, his stomach was torn open, and his face was disfigured. The royal carriage had been bombed by conspirators on behalf of *The People's Will.*[2] Before this March afternoon, the Tsar had survived six previous attempts on his life. However, he would not escape death a seventh time. Here, the Narodnik revolutionaries finally succeeded in their long-anticipated objective of regicide, which they believed would ignite the long-anticipated revolution. But the latter did not manifest. Instead, the following years represented a period of fatal decline for these socialist activists. Alarmed by the slaughter of their emperor, the state committed to extinguishing all revolutionary activity. Over the next few years, numerous arrests amounted to the demise of *The People's*

[1] Leon Trotsky, "In Defence of October: A Speech Delivered in Copenhagen, Denmark in November 1932" (Copenhagen, November 1932).

[2] Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 279.

Will organization, thereby liquidating the last surviving branch of the original Narodnik movement.[3] As a jailed revolutionary writer would later recall, "After the murder of Alexander II, a period of rigid hopelessness overcame the whole of Russia," an era which marked "the apparent failure of all revolutionary movements."[4]

After almost a decade of radical dormancy in the 1880s, new movements would arise to fill the vacuum. Following a period of revolutionary revival in the 1890s, a new party named the Socialist Revolutionaries was eventually established in 1902. Popularly referred to as the "neo-Narodniks," this faction revived much of the original movement's vision for Russia to pursue a direct transition into socialism.[5] Logically, then, historians trace the continuation and aftermath of the Narodnik ideology into the Socialist Revolutionary party.[6] However, this chapter circumvents this conventional view on the genealogy of ideas by, instead, tracking the continuity of Narodnik beliefs into the primary rivals of their creed: the Marxist movement, which was ultimately responsible for directing the Russian socialist revolution in the following century. This is an unconventional argument of continuity, for the relationship between the Narodniks and Marxists constitutes the greatest ideological rivalry and hostility within Russian radical thought of this period—not only according to historiography but as expressed by

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[3] See Robert Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin," *Studies in East European Thought* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 260.
[4] Vladimir Korolenko, *The History of My Contemporary,* trans. Neil Parsons (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 47-8.
[5] See Elizabeth White, *The Socialist Alternative to Bolshevik Russia: The Socialist Revolutionary Party, 1917-39* (Abingdon: Routeldge, 2011).
[6] See Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 187-204; Oliver H. Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism: Promise and Default of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, February to October 1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); Maureen Perrie, *The Agrarian Policy of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party from its Origins through the Revolution of 1905-07* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

the Narodniks and Marxists themselves.[7] At the heart of their disagreement was the Narodnik insistence on Russia possessing an exceptional path of societal development that deviated from Western models of historical progression, a dualistic dispute carried over from the Slavophile-Westernizer feud described in chapter 1.

I will trace a continuation of this debate through analyzing the theoretical works of the Russian revolutionary movement's two most influential Marxists: 1) Georgi Plekhanov, who introduced Marxism to Russia, and 2) Vladimir Lenin, the man who ultimately directed the Russian socialist revolution. Plekhanov, as the face of 'Orthodox' Marxism, will exemplify Russian Marxism's initial character as a westernizing ideology that sought to eradicate any belief in Russia's historical uniqueness. Specifically, this brand of thought preached the necessity of Russia's 'backward' features to make way for Occidental modernity. Capitulating to a complete emulation of Western developmental precedents, he argued that Russia had to fully pass through the capitalist stage of development before the nation could begin a socialist revolution. Then, I will present Lenin's ideology in comparison, arguing that he, though remaining a 'Marxist' in formality, surprisingly demonstrated significant reversions to the Narodnik and Slavophile vision of Russian historical exceptionalism. By viewing Russia's 'backward' features as providing a non-western and expedited course of development, Lenin sought to adapt the revolutionary blueprint to the persistency of a peasant demographic and the lack of a developed bourgeoise. Through these lens, I will examine Lenin's modifications of the traditional Marxist

[7] See Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 176; Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 458; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 26. Also see Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

framework of revolutionary stages, which I argue were altered into a formula which remarkably approximated the Narodnik idea of an immediate transition into socialism.

Additionally, this chapter tracks the continuities of the anti-liberalism component of this intellectual heritage. First, it will analyze how Plekhanov's strict adherence to the Western historical model mandated the necessity of Russia to undergo the liberal political stage. He deemed such a phase to be essential for the working class to develop the political consciousness necessary to build a self-led revolution establishing self-rule—a stance which adhered to Marx's original vision but also interestingly represented a continuation classic Narodnik political praxis. This will then be contrasted with how Lenin's expedited historical model saw a deliberate preclusion of the liberal stage, a principle which fostered an anti-democratic political strategy reminiscent of the Revisionist Narodnik model of intelligentsia domination, i.e., a revolution via an elitist coup from above followed by an authoritarian state.

Finally, by showing how these ideas then figured in the revolutionary planning and execution in October 1917, this chapter shows how the Slavophile-Narodnik intellectual heritage survived into the thought and events of the nation's socialist revolution and crucially influenced and shaped its infamous characteristics of premature timing and antidemocratic politics. More broadly, this chapter constitutes the final piece of a genealogy that traces an originally anti-western ideology formulated by conservative philosophers in the early and mid-1800s—to the doctrines behind the Russian Revolution and the founding of the Soviet Union.

PART I: THE TRIUMPH OF WESTERN HISTORICAL UNIVERSALISM

Context: New Creeds, New Conditions

Marxism in Russia

For a long time, the Tsarist authorities of Russia were unconcerned about Marxism. In fact, during the 1870s and 80s, the first two volumes of Marx's *Capital* passed through official tsarist censors. In his 1872 report on the first volume of *Capital,* the censor D. Skuratov remarked, "One can with certainty say that in Russia only a few will read the book and still fewer understand it."[8] When the second volume of Marx's magnum opus was similarly approved "without hesitation," the authorities described it as "a serious economic study comprehensible only to the specialist,"[9] accurately testifying to the continued esoteric nature of the Russian intelligentsia's distance from the majority of Russian people. Interestingly, Russian authorities reasoned that a buildup of Marxist forces in the nation could even benefit the Tsarist establishment in combatting its Narodnik rivals, who, at that time, were still "the major oppositional ideology."[10] In the middle of the 1890s, the Russian government acted on this logic by permitting a form of Marxism that sought to work through anti-revolutionary reforms, which was fittingly called 'Legal Marxism.'[11]

Perhaps ironically, it was actually the Narodnik movement which provided Marxism's initiation in Russia, before the two schools of thought became ideological arch-nemeses. The first translation of the first volume of *Capital* into Russian was provided by the Narodnik G.A. Lopatin, and volume two

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[8] Albert Resis, "Das Kapital Comes to Russia," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 2 (June 1970): 221.
[9] D. Geyer, Lenin in der russischen sozialdemokratie (Cologne-Graz, 1962), 7-8, quoted in Tony Cliff, *Building the Party: Lenin 1893-1914* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2002), 29.
[10] Baron, *Plekhanov,* 144.
[11] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 165.

was translated by the Narodnik N.F. Danielson.[12] Further, the Narodnik leader Pyotr Lavrov, described in the preceding chapter, even called Marx "the great teacher."[13] By the 1870s, Marxism became "more popular in Russia than in any other country."[14] However, Marx was only popular when he was deliberately cited out of context to support Narodnik views. Particularly, the Narodniks extracted from Marxism its arguments that condemned capitalism and showed its eventual doom. Likewise, they viewed Marx's description of political liberalism—the "illusory character of bourgeois democracy" that constituted the governmental apparatus of the capitalist age—as a confirmation of their traditional rejection of Western constitutionalism and "political freedom."[15] Historian Andrzej Walicki notes that "such an interpretation of Marxism was very widespread, even prevalent among the Russian [Narodniks]."[16]

However, the Narodniks could not accept the full context of Marx's historical framework, from which they cherry-picked its anti-capitalist and anti-liberal implications. Indeed, while they were impressed by Marx's scathing report on the atrocities of the capitalist period of history and the injustice of its accompanying liberal politics, they could not swallow Marx's diagnosis of such a historical stage as, nevertheless, a necessary era to process through and a net gain in linear progress, i.e., the *necessity* of this historical stage on a long, multi-stepped road to socialism. As such, one of the main ideological points of disagreement between the Narodniks and the Marxists was the former's refusal to accept the latter's

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[12] Richard Pipes, "Russian Marxism and Its Populist Background: The Late Nineteenth Century," *The Russian Review* 19, no. 4 (October 1960): 320.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 136.
[16] Ibid.

stubborn view of successive historical stages of intermediary phases preceding the socialist age. When applied to Russia, this framework—derived from the historical patterns experienced by Western European societies—implied that the process of capitalist development could not be avoided. In *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* Marx mandated that "economic formations cannot perish until they have achieved the full development of their productive forces."[17] In other words, socialist revolution in Russia *must* be preceded by a complete development of Russian capitalism. Similarly, Engels, in a polemical exchange with the Narodnik N.F. Danielson, insisted that Russia "was obliged to take over all the consequences which accompany capitalistic *grande industrie* [as had occurred] in all other countries ..."[18]

Such were the 'iron laws of history' preached by the Western historical universalism of the Marxist creed which fundamentally contradicted the central tenet of Narodnik ideology: that Russia's developmental trajectory was historically exceptional, i.e., that its present conditions of 'backwardness' would not give way to Western modernity but would rather provide a shortcut to the socialist millennium. Additionally, in repudiating the Marxist notion of historical *determinism,* the Narodniks instead believed in the ability of individuals to interfere in the historical process and direct the course of their society's evolution along their intended projections, i.e., *voluntarism.* Through this philosophy, they believed that they could capitalize on the underdeveloped, pre-capitalist conditions of Russian society that they believed constituted Russia's exceptionalism from the Western laws of historical

[17] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, Progress Publishers: 1977), 21.
[18] Friedrich Engels, *The Selected Correspondence of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels 1846-1895*, trans. Dona Torr (International Publishers, 1942), 499–500.

development, i.e., skipping over or accelerating past the capitalist paradigm and its dreaded phase of liberal governance—thereby leapfrogging into the final goal of socialism. However, the classical Marxist view offered no special position for Russia: like all other societies, it held, Russia would have to follow in the footsteps of the West. This meant that Russia's present 'backwardness' would, under the pressures of allegedly, historically-inevitable forces, gradually evaporate and align with the Occidental blueprint of historical progression. The agrarian peasantry would thus have to make way for an industrial proletariat of urban workers, and a new social class of bourgeois capitalists would have to launch the so-called 'liberal' revolution against the feudal monarchy (establishing constitutionalism, political rights, etc.)—all before the working class would finally be afforded its historical moment of preparing a socialist revolution. During the 1880s, the Narodnik movement still held "almost universal sway in Russian socialist circles." However, its steady decline over the following years was correlated with a perpetual rise in the new Marxist following.

Novel Material Realities

At the heart of the decline of Russian Narodism and the rise of Russian Marxism stood the changing material conditions in which these revolutionary thinkers posited and revised their historical theories. The early 1890s in Russia were marred by a severe famine that forced millions of peasants to move into the urban cities. This significant demographic shift saw the rapid growth of an urban proletariat—an entity that was, for so long, seemingly unique to the industrial West—which doubled in

size (from 1.4 million to 2.4 million) within a single decade (1890-1899).[19] Further, in 1892, Russia appointed a new minister of finance, Sergei Witte (1849-1915), who would oversee a colossal project, across the next decade, of rapidly industrializing the still-predominantly-agrarian society that was the Russian empire. In his first Budget Report, Witte declared his ambition to modernize the Russian economy. Considering his chief task to be "the development of the productive forces of the country," he sought to create national industries that could rival those of the advanced, capitalistic West.[20] Believing that "modern" industries represented "the chief civilizing factor in society," Witte was prepared to "remove the unfavorable conditions which cramp[ed] the economic development of the country" through wholesale reforms.[21] In particular, he sought to industrialize Russia through government-sponsored constructions of modern infrastructure, perhaps most notably through "a huge public works program" that included the building of the trans-Siberian railway, in addition to several other key lines that promoted the growth of commerce.[22] Moreover, he focused on expanding the heavy industries of southern Russia with its coal and iron deposits, aiming to build up the industrial potential and expand the industrial employment of the population.[23] Above all, Witte wanted his 'backward' nation to finally embrace the capitalist paradigm. Indeed, on top of "close cooperation" with the budding Russian capitalist class, Witte promoted the "kindling" of a "healthy spirit of enterprise," i.e., a capitalist mentality, which he viewed as an "enlightened operation" that "freed" the Russian people "from all

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[19] Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 329

[20] Sergei Witte, quoted in Theodore H. Von Laue, "The High Cost and the Gamble of the Witte System: A Chapter in the Industrialization of Russia," in *Readings in Russian History*, ed. Sidney Harcave, vol. II (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1962), 63.

[21] Ibid, 64-65.

[22] Ibid, 65.

[23] Ibid.

hampering traditions."[24] Heaping praise on "the capitalist virtues of initiative," Witte wrote in his Budget Report for 1896:

> That kind of speculation arouses and sustains the keen intellectual forces which guides and leads labor, capital, credit, exchange, which invents better techniques of production, which develops demand, finds and opens new sources of profit, broadens the field for national enterprise, shows ever new possibilities to entrepreneurs, introduces into production unexplored techniques, provides capital for existing enterprises—in a word that kind of speculation appears as the most energetic promoter of industrial progress, taking upon itself all those tasks which are connected with every forward step in the field of economics.[25]

Altogether, this new atmosphere provided a fertile breeding ground for new followers of Marxism in Russia. In response to these rising industrial trends, many socialist revolutionary thinkers thus began to shift away from the agrarian peasantry and to the budding urban proletariat as the new protagonists of their revolutionary Weltanschauung. Now, Narodnik frameworks began to appear increasingly outdated, while the Marxist view of history became a plausible, if not more fitting, explanatory methodology. During this era of change, historian Richard Pipes remarks, Marxism "seemed to answer more closely the needs of a rapidly industrializing Russia."[26] Indeed, this German ideology appeared to offer a "more up-to-date revolutionary doctrine" that attracted the frustrated Narodniks of this generation.[27] Consequently, historian Andrzej Walicki declared that in the 1890s, Marxism "became in Russia an influential current of thought and part and parcel of the Russian workers' movement."[28]

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[24] Ibid, 66.
[25] Sergei Witte, quoted in ibid.
[26] Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 330.
[27] Ibid, 331.
[28] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 165.

PLEKHANOV

Conversion

To effectively follow the rise of Marxism in Russia, one need not look further than Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918), widely recognized as 'the father of Russian Marxism.' Though formerly a Narodnik activist, he then almost single-handedly introduced this Western ideology to Russia and then remained one of its most prominent leaders and the very face of Russian-Marxist 'Orthodoxy' well into the next century.[29] As such, Plekhanov's intellectual transition to Marxism constituted a representative microcosm of the broader shift from Narodism to Marxism of the nation's revolutionary landscape.[30] To trace the origins of Plekhanov's conversion to Marxism, one must return to the origins of *The People's Will* organization, the subject of the opening anecdote to this chapter. *The People's Will* was born out of an internal Narodnik feud in 1878-79 between members of its mother organization: *Land and Liberty (Zemlya i Volya).* Standing at the forefront of the opposition to this Tkachev-inspired sect was Plekhanov, who admonished this faction for betraying the traditional principles of viewing the peasant masses as the ultimate agent of revolution. Thus, when the split occurred, Plekhanov led a new group by the name of *Black Repartition* (*Chernyi Peredel),* a title that connotated a commitment to grassroots work among the peasantry.

However, as one of its founders, Lev Deutsch, admitted in his memoris, *Black Repartition* "had no luck from the first day of its creation;" another leading member, Osip Aptekman, recalled, "Not in

[29] Samuel H. Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins of Russian Marxism," in *Readings in Russian History*, ed. Sidney Harcave, vol. 2 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1962), 81.
[30] Ibid.

fortunate times was the organization *Chernyi Peredel* born. God did not give it life, and three months later, it expired."[31] Indeed, Plekhanov's group was massively outcompeted in attracting recruits; meanwhile, *The People's Will* became the dominant faction of the Narodnik movement. Furthermore, due to an act of betrayal within *Black Repartition,* Plekhanov and his comrades were forced to flee from Russia. Following a series of police raids—which saw the group's printing press seized and the arrest of almost all of its members who had not yet left the country—the group essentially ceased to exist.[32] Yet its few members who made it out of Russia at this time would become the founders of Russian Marxism.

Before his emigration, Plekhanov "was by then the leading theoretician of Narodnik orthodoxy."[33] Through an 1879 article written for *Land and Liberty,* it is evident that Plekhanov abided by the standard Narodnik views described in the previous chapter: Indeed, Plekhanov formerly believed in Russia's historical exceptionalism from Western paradigms. As his biographer Baron notes, Plekhanov believed that "Russia differed from the West," specifically in that the underdeveloped features of the country meant that "Russia could attain socialism in a unique way," i.e., "Russia would attain socialism … without passing through a capitalist stage of development."[34] Further, by retaining the classical model of Narodnik revolutionary praxis, Plekhanov abided by the old vision that the revolution would be led by "the great mass of discontented peasants" who would then erect a "free federation of free communes" and destroy the "coercive, centralized state" through a "replacement, from the bottom up" of "an anarcho-collectivist order."[35]

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[31] Baron, *Plekhanov,* 44.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 147.
[34] Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Readings in Russian History,* 83.
[35] Ibid.

However, after fleeing to Switzerland in late 1879, Plekhanov, still disturbed by the failure of his classical Narodnik positions, began doubting his theoretical underpinnings. Perhaps most significantly, Plekhanov encountered Count Orlov's book, *Communal Property in the Moscow District.* The author presented persuasive statistics on the decline of the peasant commune, putting Plekhanov's ideological system in deep doubt. Indeed, Plekhanov later reported that this book "strongly shook" his convictions, for the data reported in it "undermined the very foundation of the Populist [Narodnik] outlook."[36] Looking at alternative socialist frameworks, Plekhanov began to learn German in order to read more of Marx's works.[37] Looking back on this period of his intellectual development, Plekhanov recalled that "the more we became acquainted with the theories of scientific socialism [a popular term for Marxism], the more doubtful became our [Narodnik beliefs] to us, from the side of both theory and practice."[38] In September of 1883, Plekhanov founded the *Emancipation of Labor Group.* Beginning with just five members and quickly reduced to three, this group, at that time, "was practically the whole of the [Russian] Marxist movement," historian Tony Cliff claims.[39] Though the group began in exile for a whole decade, historians widely view this organization as the foundation of Russian Marxism.[40]

REPUDIATING RUSSIAN HISTORICAL EXCEPTIONALIM

In 1883, Plekhanov wrote the first major Russian Marxist work, titled *Socialism and Political Struggle.* A year later, he published an expanded version of this pamphlet in the form a book titled *Our*

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[36] Plekhanov, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *The Russian Review,* 44.
[37] Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Readings in Russian History,* 85.
[38] Plekhanov, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 45-6.
[39] Cliff, *Building the Party,* 25.
[40] Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *The Russian Review,* 51.

Differences, i.e., distinguishing the ideological differences between Marxism and its primary rivals in Russia: the Narodniks. Plekhanov's earlier Narodnik convictions were founded upon the belief that Russia would exceptionally proceed onto socialism without a prior stage of capitalist development. Now, however, he asserted: "If ... we ask ourselves once again, 'Will Russia have to pass through the school of capitalism?' we shall reply unhesitatingly with another question: 'Why should she not finish the school she has already entered?"[41] Here, Plekhanov unequivocally asserted that Russia had entered "the capitalist phase of development" and that "all other routes are closed to her."[42] Consequently, a series of implications refuting the old belief in Russia's advantages of underdevelopment necessarily followed. Russian 'backwardness' did not provide a shortcut to socialism; rather, its distinctive features of pre-capitalistic society, once believed by the Slavophiles and Narodniks to convey a unique historical trajectory would instead be homogenized along the Western image of modernity.

Dispelling the Advantages of 'Backwardness'

Central to Plekhanov's argument, against Narodnik ideology, that the capitalist age had dawned in Russia, was that the peasant commune had begun to disintegrate. Plekhanov, insulting his old faction, asserted, "If one listens to our [Narodniks] then one really might think that the Russian commune was an organization quite exceptional in its durability."[43] However, after putting the commune through a deep statistical analysis, Plekhanov concluded that the future did not belong to these alleged harbingers

[41] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," 1972, 706.
[42] Plekhanov, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 46.
[43] Georgi Plekhanov, "Our Differences," in *Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord (1873; repr., Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 294.

of Russians socialism. Citing extensive data, Plekhanov observed that the Russian peasantry were gradually abandoning their communal habits and instead showing trends of "increasing inequality and individualism;" particularly, they began selling, purchasing, and renting land under profit incentives and even began employing hired labor.[44] Accordingly, Plekhanov deduced that the new capitalistic forces beginning to emerge in Russia were thus creating an economic environment "that cannot be sustained via the old system" of agrarian communalism, for "the development of a monetary economy and commodity production gradually undermines communal landholding."[45] Eventually, the peasant commune would undergo "drastic metamorphoses which [would] finally bring about its complete decay."[46]

At the same time, while "the previous 'ancestral' foundations of [the peasant commune's] economy are crumbling," Plekhanov insisted that "new forms of labor and life are in the process of formation"—specifically "in the industrial centers."[47] In other words, while the agrarian peasantry—so long believed to be the agent of Russia's socialist revolution—was fading away, a new socioeconomic class was coming into existence in the industrial regions under these new historical forces, i.e., the formation of a proletariat. Moreover, Plekhanov noted that the agrarian peasantry was transforming into this new class of urban laborers: "Our [Narodniks] are shedding bitter tears over the transformation

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[44] Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works in Five Volumes*, trans. Julius Katzer (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), vol. 1, 451.

[45] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Documentary History,* 294-5.

[46] Ibid., 295. Interestingly, Plekhanov also noted that it was the abolition of serfdom in 1861 which first put into motion these new forces that were finally coming into visibility: "Until the elimination of serfdom almost all Russia's social economy and … state economy too was a natural economy favorable in the highest degree to the preservation of the commune … The reform of the 19th February [abolition of serfdom] was a necessary concession to the new economic current … The commune did not know how and indeed was unable to adapt to the new conditions. Its organism broke down and only the blind now fail to notice the signs of its decay." See Plekhanov, ibid., 296.

[47] Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, vol. 1, 120.

of the Russian peasant into a proletarian."[48] Moreover, Plekhanov declared that "if capitalism was to dominate the economic life of Russia, the proletariat," which he described as "that inevitable by-product of capitalist development," would now, "rather than the peasantry," serve as the "mass basis for the socialist revolution" in this new age of struggle.[49] Consequently, Plekhanov concluded that these newly-formed proletarians would be the sole carriers of the revolutionary mission: "Only the working class in our industrial centers is able to assume the initiative for a communist movement."[50] In other words, the shift from Narodism to Marxism replaced the rural worker with the urban toiler as the new agent of revolutionary change.

Taken altogether, Plekhanov proclaimed the triumph of Western historical universalism over the idea of Russian historical exceptionalism. He believed that these new developments would bring about the erasure of Russia's 'backwardness': "a complete negation of the Asiatic stagnation that was once Russia's distinctive feature."[51] He argued that these trends confirmed that Russia would not proceed along some unique path of historical development touted by the Narodniks, and the Slavophiles before them; rather, the nation would follow the Western path of societal evolution. In conclusion, Plekhanov declared, in "Russian history, there is no essential difference from the history of Western Europe."[52] Should these recent developments continue at this pace, then "our socialism will cease to be

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[48] Georgi Plekhanov, "On the Tasks of the Socialists in the Campaign Against Famine in Russia," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1892; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 709.
[49] Plekhanov, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 49.
[50] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Source Book,* 707.
[51] Plekhanov, "On the Tasks of the Socialists in the Campaign Against Famine in Russia," 709.
[52] Plekhanov, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 50.

'Russian,' and will merge with world socialism, as expressed in the works of Marx, Engels."[53] Touting the universal validity of the Western example, Plekhanov, at the Congress of the newly-formed Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (the Marxist Party), insisted that the Russian Marxist revolutionary program would operate along the same principles as Marxists "of all other countries."[54] In sum, he believed that Russia was now being drawn into "a universal historical moment."[55] In this way, Plekhanov thus resumed the tradition of the Russian 'Westernizers.' In fact, Plekhanov was quite conscious of his position within the traditional dichotomy of Russian intellectual history. According to Walicki, Plekhanov viewed Russian Marxism as "the final stage in the development of Russian Westernism;" specifically, he saw the ideological clashing between the Narodniks and his Marxists as a "continuation of the famous controversy between Slavophiles and Westernizers" of the 1830s-40s—from over 40 years prior.[56] Given these new socioeconomic trends that were seemingly aligning Russian historical development with the path traversed by the West, Plekhanov thus believed: "The time has come to dispel the Slavophile fog," by instead embracing the universal applicability of the Western historical model in Russia.[57]

Furthermore, underpinning Plekhanov's immense confidence in his claims that Russia would truly take the Western path was his unwavering subscription to Marx's philosophy of historical *determinism.* Indeed, the "central category" of Plekhanov's interpretation of Marxism was this stubborn

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[53] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Source Book,* 706.
[54] Georgi Plekhanov, "The Program of the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1903; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 711–12.
[55] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Source Book,* 707.
[56] Plekhanov, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 163.
[57] Plekhanov, "On the Tasks of the Socialists in the Campaign Against Famine in Russia," 709.

belief in the "inevitability" and "necessity" of the historical stages laid out by Marx.[58] Thus, against Narodnik assertions of *voluntarism,* Plekhanov asserted the Marxist view of predetermined stages commanded by the "irresistible march of history."[59] Through this philosophical stance, Plekhanov thus insisted that his demand for the Western capitalist development of Russia was not based on the fact it was the best course of action, but rather because there was simply no other possible choice: obedience to such laws of history were "necessary and inevitable," he declared.[60] Indeed, Marx propounded this principle in the preface of the first edition of *Capital,*

> The evolution of every economic formation is a process of natural history, objective and independent of human will: a society 'can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development.[61]

Plekhanov soon announced that he was ready to make of Marx's *Capital* "a Procrustean bed" for Russia's course of historical development.[62] In other words, Marx's prescriptions had to be executed "with mathematical exactness" in all circumstances.[63] Russian capitalism was now deemed "historically *inevitable"* and a "necessary stage on the road to socialism;" consequently, "unless it goes through the school of capitalism, Russia cannot become capable of putting the socialist system into practice."[64]

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[58] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 158.
[59] Plekhanov, quoted in ibid., 159.
[60] Georgi Plekhanov, "Program for the Emancipation of Labor Group," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1884; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 707.
[61] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), 92.
[62] Plekhanov quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review*, 50.
[63] Plekhanov, *Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniya,* vol. ii (Moscow, 1956), 621, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 158.
[64] Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works in Five Volumes,* trans. V. Yeryomin, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 181.

However, despite these promising trends and signs of capitalist development, Russia was still far from truly completing such prerequisites deemed so essential for an eventual socialist revolution. Indeed, historian Simon Clarke notes, "The dilemma faced by Russian Marxists was that their revolutionary ideas ran far ahead of the degree of development of the workers movement" and its material conditions.[65] As such, Plekhanov sighed that "Present-day Russia ... suffers ... from the insufficiency of capitalist development."[66] Here, he remained true to Marx's insistence that all stages of history must be processed through in its entirety before a society could move onto the next:

> No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.[67]

Thus, Plekhanov concluded that Russia ought to wait for all features of Western capitalist society to fully take root—to properly progress through time in strict accordance with the Western historical itinerary and all of its intermediary stages of development.

Pro-Liberal Politics

Necessitating Liberalism

Since Plekhanov insisted on the necessity of Russia to emulate, in full, Western historical development, this meant that Russia not only had to complete the capitalist economic stage, but it also

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[65] Simon Clarke, "Was Lenin a Marxist? The Populist Roots of Marxism-Leninism," *Historical Materialism* 3, no. 1 (January 1998): 18.
[66] Plekhanov, "Program for the Emancipation of Labor Group," 708.
[67] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, Progress Publishers: 1977), 21.

had to undergo such a phase's accompanying political stage of liberalism. In Western European history, this was the political component of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, typically exemplified by the French Revolution of 1789, in which the absolute monarchy gave way to an ascendant bourgeois-capitalist class which established constitutional and democratic institutions.[68] Specifically, this historical category was expected to bring in a "bourgeois-constitutional regime;" this was the 'liberal' political superstructure of, and counterpart to, the economic stage of capitalism—a Western political paradigm that had for so long appeared impossible to establish against the perpetual autocratic Tsardom of Russia.[69] Since the bourgeoise was expected to usher in this pre-socialist legal and governing structure, Engels thus declared, "the bourgeoise is just as necessary a precondition of the socialist revolution as the proletariat itself."[70] This was to represent a new socio-political age, at the end of which would then finally arise the socialist phase.[71] Thus, according to Marx's blueprint for the road to socialism, the completion of this essential, intermediary historical stage concluded with the working class rising up to overthrow the "liberal bourgeoise."[72]

However, Russian society was conspicuously missing the ingredients needed to create this liberal stage as there was not yet a bourgeoise to initiate it and then be overthrown. Indeed, Plekhanov noted that "one of the most harmful consequences of this backwardness of production [in Russia] has been and still is the underdevelopment of our middle class [i.e., the bourgeoise]."[73] The implication, then, was

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[68] For reference, see James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[69] Plekhanov, "Stat'i iz 'Chernogo Peredela,'" *Sochinennia,* I, 124-5, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 46.
[70] Engels, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 145.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 178-9.
[73] Plekhanov, "Program for the Emancipation of Labor Group," 708.

that Russian socialists had to ironically await the maturation of their class enemy, who were meant to exploit them, in order to manifest this political stage—all for the sake of strictly replaying the Western course of history. Plekhanov was so insistent on emulating the Western model that he held that socialists even had to help the bourgeoise come into being and support them in establishing their liberal politics. Under this framework, the socialists had to cooperate with and aid a rising bourgeois demographic in their (expected) historical struggle against the feudal monarchy—for the sake of winning political and constitutional liberties. As historian Simon Clarke notes, Plekhanov's strict Marxist observance meant that the socialists "had to forge a tactical alliance with the liberal bourgeoise," specifically with the aim of "democratic reform against … the autocracy;" further, "the peasantry could not provide such an ally," for peasants were deemed by Marxist dogma to be a "doomed class which sought to resist the development of capitalism" which this stage of struggle had sought to bring forth.[74] Similarly, Pavel Axelrod—Plekhanov's comrade and the second most influential Marxist in Russia at the time—in an appeal to Marxist historical laws, mandated that "we cannot … avoid by any devices … the objective historical demand of 'political cooperation' between the proletariat and the bourgeoise in absolutist Russia."[75] In other words, Marxism demanded "precisely a rapprochement and an alliance with the liberals in the common struggle for political freedom."[76]

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[74] Simon Clarke, "Was Lenin a Marxist? The Populist Roots of Marxism-Leninism," *Historical Materialism* 3, no. 1 (January 1998): 19.
[75] Pavel Akselrod, "Speech at the Fourth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (Stockholm, April 1906; 13th Session: On the Situation and Class Tasks of the Proletariat," in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky et al., vol. 3 (1906; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 716.
[76] Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 154.

This thus amounted to a model that refuted the very political liberalism opposed by the Narodnik and Slavophile political traditions. As we recall from the previous chapter, the Narodniks were fundamentally "opposed" to the liberal struggle, for their objective was "not to win political rights within the state system" nor even to "reform" it; they felt that "political freedom … had little or no relevance, they thought, to the needs of peasant Russia."[77] Moreover, "political liberty was intimately associated with, and beneficial mainly to, to the bourgeoise," i.e., supporting such a cause would simply empower another ruling class continue the oppression of the very laborers they sought to liberate.[78] Thus, whereas the Narodniks sought to bypass this stage of capitalist politics and proceed directly to the socialist one, Plekhanov instead preached its necessity—in line with the Western formula of historical progression. Thus, against Narodism and Slavophilism's long-held resentment of liberalism, Plekhanov declared that the upcoming stage of revolution ought to be fought in "the interests of the liberals."[79]

Touting his Marxist formula of Western historical progression, such a stage was seen as necessary on the long road to socialism. Along this rigid framework, Plekhanov "by no means believe[d] in the early possibility of a socialist government in Russia," for such an era ought to be preceded first by a parliamentary democracy.[80] Thus, Plekhanov argued that only after this stage had been completed—which should then transform Russia into a "Western-style democracy," could the working class then finally receive the green light for overthrowing what would then be the new ruling bourgeoise: to enter

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[77] Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review,* 47.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, 116-17.
[80] Robert Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin," *Studies in Eastern European Thought* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 262.

the socialist stage, at last.[81] Indeed, Plekhanov crucially synthesized the liberal political struggle with the socialist objective, a heretical modification in the eyes of the Narodniks. He argued that only by way of liberalism could socialism ultimately be attained.

Thus, instead of the single-staged revolution touted by the Narodniks, Plekhanov put forth the necessity of a two-staged path to socialism. Moreover, Plekhanov repeatedly stressed the need to cleanly separate the two stages of the expected revolutions, i.e., to not rush or neglect the crucial intermediary period of development. In *Socialism and Political Struggle,* Plekhanov insisted that one should limit the aims of the first revolution to strictly liberal-bourgeois objectives, i.e., the "demand for a democratic constitution," and to not overstep into the socialist demands of the next phase.[82] Thus, against Narodnik urgency and immediacy, Plekhanov preached what he called "the long and difficult capitalist way"—arguing that the ultimate socialist revolution must be separated from the initial "political revolution" (the overthrow of the absolute monarchy) "by a period of time sufficiently long [enough] to enable the fullest capitalist development of the country," which would develop the necessary liberal political structure.[83]

Accordingly, in the Manifesto of the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party in 1898, Plekhanov emphasized a complete commitment to "making the attainment of political freedom the chief immediate task" of the revolutionary program: "The Russian working class must

[81] Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works,* 117.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Plekhanov, *Sochinennia,* III, 325, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 156.

[now] bear … the cause of achieving political freedom."[84] In the program of his own *Emancipation of Labor Group,* too, he declared that "the immediate task" of the party was "to create free political institutions in our fatherland," struggling for "a democratic constitution."[85] This demand for socialist participation and commitment to the struggle for political liberties in Russia represented "the first and foremost point of departure of Marxism from classical [Narodism],"[86] the latter of which had viewed such a struggle as only benefitting a class enemy, and hence continuative to their direct objectives.

Working Class Consciousness and Self-Liberation

But what was important about establishing political frameworks seemingly only beneficial to the class enemy, which has thus far been stringently admonished by the Slavophiles and Narodniks? Plekhanov argued that the historical purpose of having this liberal phase prior to the eventual socialist revolution was for the sake of the working class gaining "political maturity," awakening their political consciousness.[87] Thus, he emphasized "the value of political liberty" not just for the rising bourgeoise but also for the working class,[88] specifically for the sake of politically educating the Russian proletariat in the "political school" of legal activity in a "law-observing parliamentary state."[89] Plekhanov explained that this "indispensable" step was "the first step toward accomplishing the great historical mission of the

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[84] Georgi Plekhanov, "The Manifesto of the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (March 1898)," in *A Source Book For Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, Alan D. Ferguson, and Andrew Lossky, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1903; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 710.
[85] Plekhanov, "Program for the Emancipation of Labor Group," 708.
[86] Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 328.
[87] Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works,* 117
[88] Plekhanov, "Stat'i iz 'Chernogo Peredela,'" *Sochinennia,* I, 125, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *The Russian Review,* 47.
[89] Plekhanov. *Sochinennia,* III, 325, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 156.

proletariat"—in their long, gradual journey toward achieving a properly-managed socialism.[90] In particular, this political process was meant to raise up "an advanced working class with political experience and education," ensuring that "the proletariat is conscious of its own strength."[91] In other words, Plekhanov demanded that the working class be prepared, under the institutions of political liberalism, "for conscious participation in the sociopolitical movement."[92]

In this way, Plekhanov saw the liberal-bourgeois phase as necessarily awakening the working class to their own capabilities of political activity and struggle—becoming class-conscious—so that they would be ready to later lead their own socialist revolution by themselves. Indeed, Plekhanov repeatedly insisted that "this class can achieve liberation only by its own conscious efforts."[93] Such a stance was in line with Marx's vision of an ultimate socialist revolution launched by the workers themselves: Marx held that "the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself."[94] Engels summed up Marx's stance in the preface of the 1890 German edition of the *Communist Manifesto:* "Marx rested solely upon the intellectual development of the working class" as the basis of a self-liberation.[95] Thus, Plekhanov believed that "only when this class begins *consciously* to address itself to the root causes of its servitude and to the essential conditions of its emancipation" can one "expect" a proper socialist revolution.[96]

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[90] Plekhanov, "The Manifesto of the First Congress," 710.
[91] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* II, 76-77, in Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 261.
[92] Plekhanov, "Program for the Emancipation of Labor Group," 708.
[93] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Source Book,* 707.
[94] Karl Marx, quoted in Raju Das, "Politics of Marx as Non-sectarian Revolutionary Class Politics: An Interpretation in the Context of the 20th and 21st Centuries," *Class, Race and Corporate Power* 7, no. 1 (2019): 2.
[95] Friedrich Engels, "Preface to the German Edition of 1890," *The Communist Manifesto,* ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 110-111.
[96] Plekhanov, *Our Differences,* DH 295.

Opposing Intelligentsia Elitism

By necessitating workers' consciousness, this stance was fundamentally against an intelligentsia takeover of the revolution. Plekhanov warned that no other group or leadership—not even his own socialist intellectual class—should take the reins of a revolution which ought to "remain a class movement of the working masses."[97] Indeed, he insisted that "No executive, administrative or any other committee is entitled to represent the working class in history … the emancipation of that class must be its own work."[98] Therefore, Plekhanov was against any form of a revolutionary coup or 'seizure of power' that could be launched to interrupt the gradual process of the working masses developing political consciousness and building up the revolution through their own merits.

These views directly collided against the strategy put forth by Revisionist Narodnik strategies, exemplified by Petr Tkachev and *The People's Will,* of an intelligentsia co-opting of the revolutionary process on behalf of a people who were yet politically conscious. In fact, Plekhanov, in *Our Differences,* explicitly attacked "the adherents of the *Nabat [Toscin]* group" (Tkachev's faction) for believing that "revolutionaries had only to 'seize power,' and the people would immediately adopt the socialist forms of communal life."[99] In *Socialism and Political Struggle,* Plekhanov thus put forth a resolute rejection of this strategy, instead demanding that the revolutionary strategy be focused on having the working masses themselves be the ones to carry out their own liberation: "The social democrat [Marxist] wants the worker to *make his own revolution,"* as opposed to the revisionist-Narodnik strategy which "demands

[97] Plekhanov, The Manifesto of the First Congress of the RSDWP, March 1898, SB 710.
[98] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* 2: 166, 288, in Walicki 155.
[99] Plekhanov, *Our Differences,* SB 706.

that the worker *support* a revolution that others have instigated and directed on his behalf."[100] Thus, Plekhanov accused this form of praxis as "[wanting] to replace the initiative of the class by that of a committee and to change the cause of the whole working population ... into the cause of a secret organization" rather than that of a mass movement.[101]

This stance was again grounded in the deterministic framework of Marxism. Marx had firmly rejected the idea of a sudden seizure of power by a minority group of revolutionaries executed without the masses, condemning such an act as hinging on "the will, rather than the actual conditions ... as the chief factor in the revolution."[102] Instead, Marx believed that without such a voluntaristic intervention, the development of the masses' political consciousness would naturally evolve, deterministically, under the bourgeois-liberal stage of domination. Oppressed by the bourgeoise but habituated to the new avenues of political struggle which these oppressors brought with them, the masses of oppressed workers would, on their own accord, develop the necessary political consciousness to eventually perform the fated revolution.[103] In this vein, Plekhanov insisted that "social revolution hinges ... not on the 'possible' success of conspirators but on the sure and irresistible course of social evolution."[104] In fact, Marx held that a paradigmatic shift such as a socialist revolution ought not be a momentary event but rather an epochal process.[105] Plekhanov, too, clarified that "This process ... takes place only gradually ... over a very long period, but once it has reached a certain degree ... it can no longer be halted by any 'seizures of

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[100] Plekhanov, *Our Differences,* SB 706.
[101] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* 2: 279, in Walicki 155.
[102] Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, 341.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Documentary History,* 295.
[105] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, Progress Publishers: 1977), 21.

power' on the part of this or that secret society."[106] As such, Plekhanov believed that a "seizure of power by a minority" would thus be "premature," consequently "perpetuat[ing] the [political] immaturity of the class" that was supposed to develop gradually on its own: in such a scenario, "the people, far from being educated for socialism, would even lose all capacity for further progress."[107] Therefore, Plekhanov argued that "the function" of a Marxist revolutionary was not to *make* the revolution on behalf of the struggling masses, but rather to patiently wait for the people to gain consciousness so as to generate their own organic movement.[108]

Interestingly, despite this justification via Marxist determinism, Plekhanov, here, essentially retained his pre-Marxist, classical Narodnik position. Indeed, as we recall from the beginning of this chapter, Plekhanov, while still a Narodnik, dramatically refused to join *The People's Will* for their abandonment of the mass struggle in favor of a conspiratorial seizure of power by a revolutionary minority. In an early essay from his Narodnik days, Plekhanov remarked that "If … the socialists … would lose contact with the … masses," then the movement "would gain little or nothing from the overthrow of absolutism."[109] So, when "the majority" of Narodniks began to turn away from the old ideal of mass struggle and toward Tkachev's revisionist model of a top-down revolution via the seizure of power performed by the intelligentsia minority, Plekhanov refused to join them on principle of staying true to the old principle of a bottom-up struggle of classical Narodism.[110] In this way, when Plekhanov

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[106] Plekhanov, "Our Differences," *Documentary History*, 295.
[107] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* III, 81, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 156.
[108] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* II, 279, quoted in Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat,"
[109] Plekhanov, "Stat'i iz 'Chernogo Peredela,'" *Sochinennia,* I, 125-7, quoted in Baron, "Plekhanov and the Origins," *Russian Review*, 48
[110] Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 260.

converted from Narodnism to Marxism in the early 1880s, he did not have to deeply modify this aspect of his commitment to popular self-activity. Evidently, he wrote in the preface to his Marxist work *Socialism and Political Struggle:*

> The desire to work among the people and for the people, the certitude that 'the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves'—*this practical tendency of our Narodism is just as dear to me as it used to be.*[111]

Though no longer a Narodnik, Plekhanov continued to reject that particular brand of a top-down socialist revolution—but now justified from a Marxist perspective of the deterministic stages of history.

Opposing Authoritarianism

Furthermore, Plekhanov's stance against the strategy of an intelligentsia hegemony over the masses fundamentally warned against the revolution descending into authoritarianism. Believing that "a high level of economic development" and thus "a high level of proletarian class consciousness are conditions *sine qua non* of true socialism," Plekhanov argued that trying to organize socialism from above, in a still-underdeveloped society, would see the authorities in charge "resort to the ideals of patriarchal and authoritative communism"—because the new regime would have to unnaturally force socialist conditions into existence; such would be the consequences of launching a premature, voluntarist seizure of power against the determinstic, stage-by-stage, script of history that would have naturally evolved the desired conditions.[112] Outlining his fears, Plekhanov expressed his concern that *"Narodnaia*

[111] Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works,* vol. I, 49.
[112] Plekhanov, *Sochinennia,* vol. III, 81, quoted in Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism,* 155-156.

Volia's [The People's Will's] idea of a provisional government will not hand over the power it has seized to the representatives of the people, but will become a permanent government."[113] In an article critiquing the Revisionist Narodnik strategy, Plekhanov underscored his conviction that an authoritarian regime would be the by-product of a "working class [that] has not been prepared for the socialist revolution."[114] In an 1890 essay on the French Revolution, Plekhanov explained that a "revolutionary dictatorship" formed, then, precisely because the historical conditions, and thus the people's consciousness, were not yet ready for that stage of revolution:

> only terror could preserve the dominance of the proletariat given its position at the time and the completely insoluble economic contradictions ... If the proletariat had been more developed, if the economic conditions necessary for securing its well-being had existed, then there would not have been any need to resort to terrorist measures.[115]

Therefore, one had to wait until socialist conditions became an "objective necessity of economic development," in accordance with the deterministic laws of history, which would then render any coercive or dictatorial measures unnecessary.[116] In the proper scenario of constructing the socialist society in accordance with the natural tempo of Marxist stagism, Plekhanov believed, the revolution would be "democratically" achieved, in a manner that featured "popular sovereignty," "universal, equal, amid direct suffrage," "broad local self-government," and "unlimited freedom of conscience, speech, the press, assembly, strikes, and unions."[117]

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[113] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* II, 81-82, quoted in Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 262.
[114] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* II, 294-5, quoted in ibid., 263.
[115] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* IV, 62-63, quoted in ibid., 264.
[116] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* IV, 64, quoted in ibid.
[117] Plekhanov, "Program of the Second Congress," 712.

Historiographical Misinterpretations of Marx

The term "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" is frequently misunderstood for its presumed connotations of authoritarianism. Historian Hal Draper has successfully shown that this phrase, coined by Marx and Engels, *did not* possess the anti-democratic connotations it acquired in the 20th century, i.e., under the Soviet Union. Indeed, this slogan "did not refer to … a type of government," but rather "merely indicated the class content of the future socialist state."[118] The term 'dictatorship' when used by Marx and Engels, professor Robert Mayer clarifies, simply denoted which social class was dominant in a given era, i.e., a concept of the class-wide rule of the proletariat through democratic institutions.[119] In his 1874 article "Program of the Blanquist Commune Refugees," Engels contrasted the dictatorship of "the small number of those who made the coup" against "a dictatorship … of the entire revolutionary *class,* the proletariat," the latter of which stood for the antithesis of dictatorship of a party or government.[120] Similarly, Plekhanov clarified that this "dictatorship of the proletariat" only denoted a social class gaining control of a state and "not a state of siege or coercive measures," instead being "completely consistent with democratic practices and civil peace;" in fact, "parliamentary and other legal political activities … do not contradict the dictatorship of the proletariat; *they prepare for it*."[121] Thus, one of Plekhanov's most emphatic points in *Socialism and Political Struggle* criticized the tradition promulgated by Revisionist Narodniks such as Tkachev and those in *The People's Will* on his belief that "there is no more difference

[118] Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 3 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), 213.
[119] Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 257-8.
[120] Friedrich Engels, Werke (Berlin: Dietz, 1970-1989), XVIII: 529, quoted in ibid., 258.
[121] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* XI, 317-318, quoted in ibid., 266.

between heaven and earth than between the dictatorship of a *class* and that of a *group* of revolutionar[ies]."[122]

Yet, nevertheless, the term became popularly associated with its use under the Soviet Union's authoritarian regime. Hal Draper, in *'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat' from Marx to Lenin* argues that Lenin, the primary leader of the revolution and founder of the Soviet state, inherited this distorted dictatorial interpretation of Marx's terminology from his former mentor Plekhanov.[123] In fact, many other works have sought to argue this narrative that identified the origins of Soviet authoritarianism via Plekhanov.[124] However, as this chapter has shown, Plekhanov firmly and consistently opposed such authoritarian measures as antithetical to the bottom-up model of praxis that he had maintained consistently in his Orthodox-Marxist framework of deferring to the development of the masses' consciousness to lead their own revolution of democratic objectives.

So, where then does the eventual authoritarian nature of the 'Marxist' Russian revolution and Soviet rule come from, then? The following section argues that it came from Plekhanov's successor, Vladimir Lenin, who acquired such ideas from the Revisionist Narodnik branch of thought rejected by Plekhanov.

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[122] Plekhanov, *Sochineniia,* II, 77, quoted in ibid., 261.

[123] See Hal Draper, *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 81-83.

[124] See Jonathan Frankel, "Voluntarism, Maximalism; and the Group for the Emancipation of Labor (1883-1892)," *Revolution and Politics in Russia*, ed. A. & J. Rabinowitch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) and Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press).

PART II: HISTORICAL EXCEPTIONALISM REINCARNATED

Context: Russia's Persistent Underdevelopment

In stark contrast to the initial socioeconomic trends of the 1880s and 90s that had inspired Plekhanov to believe that Russia had finally embarked on the Western course of development, the turn of the century presented a vastly-different picture. Despite the initial blimp of rapid industrial progress that had suggested a firm entry into the capitalist paradigm of the Marxist standard, Russia remained a predominantly-agrarian society. In Russia, unlike Western European models on which the Marxist framework was based, proletarians laboring in urban factories were a far rarer sight than the continued norm of peasants toiling in the rural fields. In fact, over 90 percent of the national work force was still legally classified under the peasant demographic.[125] By the start of the 1900s, the numbers showed that agriculture was still leading over industry and also remained the primary source of income for the Russian people.[126] In short, the pace of Russian industrialization had slowed down.

Moreover, it was also revealed that the economic progress thought to have been made was not as significant as had been presented by the government. Specifically, the economic policies of Witte that had originally led to an impression of a rapidly industrializing Russia turned out to be vastly inflated and misleading. Indeed, statistical investigations on Witte's administration exposed the fact that the minister's reports of a revenue increase of 73 per cent between 1890 and 1900 was in actuality a mere 22 per cent, a rise that was explained by a simple increase in taxation during that era.[127] Additionally, the

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[125] Theodore Von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory, 1892-1904," *The Journal of Economic History* 21, no. 1 (March 1961): 63.
[126] Theodore Von Laue, "The High Cost and the Gamble of the Witte System: A Chapter in the Industrialization of Russia" in *Readings in Russian History,* ed. Sidney Harcave, vol. II (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1962): 74.
[127] Ibid., 71.

total revenue in the government budget of 1900 was overreported by 52 percent of the actual amount.[128] Ultimately, by the end of the decade, Russian conditions remained "far behind those of Western Europe."[129] Witte himself admitted in 1899 that "In Russia this [industrial] growth is yet too slow, because there is yet too little industry, capital, and spirit of enterprise."[130] Thus, after a decade of Witte's policies, "Russia had not escaped from the old impasse."[131]

Why did Russia fail to sustain enough economic growth to manifest the Marxist vision of a full capitalist transition? The answer lies in the unnatural character of Russian industrialization—a phenomenon which nearly entirely hinged upon the state's artificial attempts to develop the society against its natural rate of growth. In a private letter to the Tsar, now entitled 'The Secret Memorandum of 1899,' Witte admitted that the growth of the nation's new commercial economy was almost completely dependent upon constant government intervention: "Every measure of the government … now affects the entire economic organism and influences its further development."[132] The primary issue with this methodology was that such government policies had sought to force Russian industries to produce at a high level before a mass market emerged within the nation. Unable to rely on domestic revenues but still insistent on catching up to Western modernity, the state relied on foreign loans: "The influx of foreign capital is, in the considered opinion of the minister of finance, the sole means by which

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 73.
[130] Sergei Witte, "Secret Memorandum on the Industrialization of Russia," in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. Ralph T. Fisher, trans. George Vernadsky, vol. 3 (1899; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 758.
[131] Von Laue, "The High Cost and Gamble," 72.
[132] Witte, quoted in ibid., 65-6.

our industry can speedily [develop]," Witte wrote.[133] But in doing so, Russia accumulated the largest foreign debt of any government in the world.[134] In this way, these new Russian industries came into being without any relationship to the Russian consumer. As such, State Comptroller General Lobko stated in his 1900 report to the Tsar that "there is no more doubt that the crisis is caused by the artificial and excessive growth of industry in recent years;" specifically, "industry, based on ... extensive government orders" and "foreign capital" that ultimately "grew out of proportion to the development of the consumers' market, which consists chiefly of the mass of the agricultural population, to which 80% of our population belongs."[135]

Besides accumulating foreign debts, the price of the state's ambitions to artificially catch up to the Western timeline of development largely fell on the backs of the stubborn demographic which such industrial policies sought to erase: the peasantry. Such acute discrepancies between forced industrial production and a lagging domestic market translated to the peasant masses shouldering most of the increased taxes. Indeed, Witte admitted in his secret report to the Tsar, "these excessive costs have a destructive influence over the welfare of the population, particularly in agriculture. They cannot be sustained much longer."[136] General Lobko, in his report, noted that "the chief burden of that system lies undoubtedly upon the agricultural mass," who were forced "to bear almost the entire burden of direct and indirect taxes."[137] Indeed, Witte later admitted, the rural population paid for Russian

[133] Witte, "Secret Memorandum," 757.
[134] P.L. Lobko, quoted in Von Laue, "The High Cost and Gamble," 75.
[135] Ibid., 74.
[136] Witte, "Secret Memorandum," 759.
[137] P.L. Lobko, quoted in Von Laue, "The High Cost and Gamble," 75

industrialization.[138] Following a decade of an agricultural crisis, it became clear that the state's developmental aims could no longer be maintained once such burdens broke the peasant's back, to which Witte admitted: "the paying powers of the population" were exhausted.[139] The prevailing opinion by the end of the century was that industrialization devastated the Russian peasantry, i.e., the bulk of the nation's population.[140]

Thus, with the government displeased by the failure to sustain lasting economic growth and the working masses distraught by their financial ruin, Russian society at-large began to turn on Witte's policies. By 1899, the Tsar himself lost faith too. In August 1904, Witte was forced to step down from the Ministry of Finance. The disgraced minister ultimately concluded that "Russian society and government … were incompatible with the economic order which he envisaged."[141] With Russia's industrialization project floundering while devastating the welfare of the populace, Plekhanov's vision of the Westernization of Russia's historical development no longer appeared convincing nor desirable. As such, the fork in the road opened up once more: should Russia wait out these growing pains as part of a long, multi-staged journey that, as Marx promised, would ultimately end in socialist liberation? Or should the nation seek to cut out these intermediary troubles via a more direct route to the promised land? As this dilemma returned to the forefront of Russian historical philosophy and revolutionary thought, one of Plekhanov's Marxist pupils would seek to answer this age-old question: Vladimir Lenin, the architect of the Russian socialist revolution.

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[138] Ibid.
[139] Witte, quoted in ibid., 72
[140] Ibid., 74.
[141] Ibid., 78.

LENIN

Historiography

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov "Lenin"[142] (1870-1924) was "the principal leader and organizer" of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—the event which established the world's first self-declared socialist state: the Soviet Union.[143] In the context of Russian intellectual history, Lenin is widely viewed as the culmination of nearly a century of revolutionary thought: he is remembered as the figure who finally brought the intelligentsia's long-theorized revolution from esoteric abstractions into the annals of actual history. Given the conventional narrative of Russian radical thought, described at the start of this thesis, which concentrates on its roots from the Westernizer philosophy, Lenin is thus widely viewed as the culminative product of the Westernizer school that had sought to reshape Russia along the ideals of progress and liberation learned from the Occident. Writing in 1953, British historian E.H. Carr noted that "Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders were … steeped, like Marx himself, in the tradition of western humanism, western rationalism and western radicalism."[144] Eight years later, German-American legal scholar Rudolf Schlesinger stated, "Lenin was the supreme Westernizer who completed the work of Peter the Great."[145] Fast forward to the mid 1990s, in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union, the historiography continued to abide by this Westernizer perspective: Professor of Government Peter Rutland noted that "from Peter the Great to Lenin … Russian leaders have tried to inject … Western

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[142] The surname "Lenin" was one of over 150 pseudonyms which Vladimir Ulyanov used; however, he has since been remembered almost solely by this particular moniker and will hence be referred to as "Lenin."
[143] V. Myatokin, "Lenin (1870-1924)," *The Slavonic Review* 2, no. 6 (March 1924): 465; John Schwarzmantle, "Nationalism and Socialist Internationalism," *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 646.
[144] E.H. Carr, "Stalin," *Soviet Studies* 5, no. 1 (July 1953): 6.
[145] Rudolf Schlesinger, "British Studies of the History of the Soviet Union," *Science & Society* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1961): 17.

modernity into Russian political culture;"[146] in the same decade, Mark Medish wrote of Lenin in the same sentence as Peter the Great and Gorbachev as "the great 'westernizers' of Russian history."[147] Reflecting on the series of revolutions which followed the Russian socialist revolution, Theordore Von Laue wrote a book titled *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective,* tracing a century of this Westernizing ethos, in which Lenin was his first example.[148]

Thus, when explaining Lenin's execution of the revolution in ways that did not fit Western normativity, historians have largely conceptualized such divergences as aberrations, irregularities, or exceptions to the broader storyline of Westernization.[149] Of the scholars who have tried to provide a reasoning for Lenin's failure to fully conform to the Westernizer weltanschauung of which he was supposedly a pupil, most scholars have portrayed such incongruences as personal quirks unique to his time and thought. Indeed, historian Michael Karpovich's study holds that Lenin's ideological peculiarities were "*sui generis,"*[150] while political scientist Robert Mayer portrays Lenin as a "genuine (if unwitting) innovator," whose deviations were "novel," and ultimately "went his own way."[151]

However, this thesis explains such peculiarities of Lenin's ideology and praxis not as anomalous 'deviations' from one monolithic Westernizer script, but instead as constituting evident symptoms of

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[146] Peter Rutland, "Whither Russia," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 84.
[147] Mark Medish, "Russia: Lost and Found," *After Communism: What?* 123, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 74.
[148] See Theodore H. Von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[149] Meghnad Desai, *Marx's Revenge: The Resurgence of Capitalism and the Death of Static Socialism* (London: Verso, 2004), 110; E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23,* 1 (Penguin, London, 1973), 110-11; Frederick Busi, "The Failure of Revolution," *The Massachussetts Review* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 397-408; David Cunningham, "A Marxist Heresy? Accelerationism and its Discontents," *Radical Philosophy* 1 (2015): 29-38.
[150] Michael Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin: P.N. Tkachev," *The Review of Politics* 6, no. 3 (July 1944): 346.
[151] Robert Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin," *Studies in East European Thought* 45, no. 4 (December 1993): 256-7, 277.

influence by another tradition: the *anti*-Westernizer heritage of thought that asserted Russian historical exceptionalism and anti-liberalism. To do so, this section explains Lenin's Marxist modifications not as sudden adaptations to his time, but rather as outgrowths of the earlier ideas of the Narodniks and Slavophiles. Hence, this section seeks to trace the idiosyncrasies of Lenin's theories and practice to lesser-known thinkers from movements which have either not been considered in relation to his Marxist milieu or have been simply categorized as hostile and antithetical to his creed.

As shown at the start of this chapter, the Narodnik ideology was formally at odds with Marxism, exemplified by Plekhanov's crusade against Narodnik doctrine. However, this section will argue that Lenin, Plekhanov's pupil,[152] was deeply influenced by much of the ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism promulgated by the Narodniks—and the Slavophiles before them—which his Marxist teacher so emphatically rejected. Such an argument of intellectual continuity not only fights against the secondary historiography, but also against Lenin's own public denouncements of Narodism. Additionally, this proposition contradicts the official Soviet view on the relationship between Lenin, Marxism, and Narodism, which insists that Lenin was an orthodox Marxist who, like Plekhanov, opposed Narodism by principle: as Clarke notes, "According to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, Populism [Narodism] and Marxism-Leninism constitute two radically opposed political and theoretical traditions."[153]

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[152] Lenin first read Plekhanov's works, "without which one could not have arrived at Social Democratic [Marxist] positions." Further, Lenin described Plekhanov's *Socialism and Political Struggle* as being the Russian equivalent of *The Communist Manifesto* in terms of generational significance and influence. See Leon Trotsky, *The Young Lenin,* trans. Max Eastman (New York: Doubleday): 131, 189-90.

[153] Clarke, "Was Lenin a Marxist?," 1.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that some studies have noticed a similarity between Lenin's revolutionary tactics and those of one particular thinker: Pyotr Tkachev, the Revisionist Narodnik presented at the end of the previous chapter.[154] However, such studies have only compared the two figures through rather narrow parameters. Focusing on a resemblance in their approach to seizing power via coup-like tactics, the scholars have otherwise missed a much bigger story, surrounding this link, which this thesis has been presenting. Taking a more temporally expansive approach—that has not only incorporated the other Narodnik thinkers as well as earlier figures (such as Herzen) and other preceding political movements (such as the Slavophiles)—this thesis shows the motion of a broader intellectual heritage, which preceded and then evolved through Tkachev on the way to culminating in Lenin's peculiar thought. Thus, Lenin's similarities with Tkachev's revolutionary strategy are, moreover, symptomatic of a larger inheritance of ideas lurking behind such tactics (i.e., the ideology of Russian historical exceptionalism) from which both figures reached similar conclusions in political praxis to accommodate such shared views on the nature of their nation's historical trajectory.

Conversely, more recent studies have tried to discredit the utility of the aforementioned studies comparing Tkachev and Lenin. In particular, such works have argued that the studies comparing the two have relied on erroneously categorizing them within the revolutionary philosophy of 'Jacobinism,' which was akin to the thinkers' tactical policies.[155] This counter-argument correctly observes that the term 'Jacobin,' in the Russian context, was invented by political opponents as a way to discredit the

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[154] Rolf Theen, "The Idea of the Revolutionary State: Tkachev, Trotsky, and Lenin," *The Russian Review* 31, no. 4 (1972): 383-397; Albert Weeks, *The First Bolshevik: A Political Biography of Peter Tkachev* (New York: New York University Press, 1968); Michael Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin: P.N. Tkachev," *The Review of Politics* 6, no. 3 (July 1944): 336-350.
[155] For instance, see Robert Mayer, "Lenin and the Jacobin Identity in Russia" *Studies in East European Thought* 51, no. 2 (June 1999): 128, 136.

school's alleged followers; hence, those labeled under that tradition did not use that title to reference such a political model.[156] However, this chapter will show that, in spite of this 'Jacobin' title being debunked, the connection between Lenin and Tkachev still existed; but unlike the earlier scholars, this study will not rely on a 'Jacobin' link, but rather on a different and deeper tradition of thought: the continuity of Russian historical exceptionalism.

Life and Influences

Before arguing for ideological continuity into Lenin's thought via an analysis of his theoretical works, this section will first reveal non-abstract connections and personal influences to provide a foreground, which will then help to concretize an affirmative inheritance of ideas. In the same vein as the preceding thinkers discussed in this thesis, Lenin came from a typical intelligentsia background: that of an educated noble. His father, Ilya Nikolaevich Ulyanov, was decorated with the Order of Stanislav, given "first class" distinction, and referred to as "His Excellence."[157] This rendered him "a high-ranking nobleman," specifically placed fourth in a table of fourteen ranks.[158] According to Lenin's recollections, when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, his father mourned in the Simbirsk cathedral. Indeed, Ilya Ulyanov demonstrated "an unquestioning support of the tsarist autocracy" until the end of his life.[159] The Ulyanov family was part of the establishment in Russian society. Yet this was also the same privileged stratum which ironically produced nearly all of the revolutionaries who sought to overthrow

[156] Ibid., 142-144.
[157] Cliff, *Building the Party,* 1.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., 2.

the very system from which they hailed and benefited—as exemplified by the children of the Ulyanov household.

Less than six years following the murder of Tsar Alexander II, the eldest Ulyanov son, also named Alexander, was already plotting to kill the succeeding monarch: Alexander III. Lenin's older brother was a revolutionary activist with deep ties to the Narodnik movement and ideology. In particular, Alexander Ulyanov led a faction of *The People's Will* party during its final years of influence.[160] In 1887, his group had planned to bomb the emperor's carriage on the very day in which the new monarch was honoring the anniversary of his father's assassination.[161] However, the plot was uncovered by the police, and the conspirators were arrested. While being tried in court, Ulyanov made a political speech before being sentenced to death; he was hung in the coming months.[162] Lenin was only 17 at the time, and his brother's execution by the state left a deep impression on him. Indeed, Lenin's wife testified that "the fate of his brother undoubtedly, profoundly influenced Vladimir Illich [Lenin]."[163] Years after this formative event, when Lenin was sitting in prison, for the first time, due to the new revolutionary career he had embarked on, he was asked what he had planned on doing after his release, to which he replied: "What is there for me to think about? … My road has been paved by my elder brother."[164]

Before his execution, Lenin's brother was the main ideologist of his faction, having written the program of the political platform of the group. Interestingly, when discussing the merits of the

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[160] Mark A. Aldanov, *Lenin* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1922), 4.
[161] Philip Pomper, *Lenin's Brother: The Origins of the October Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 123.
[162] Ibid., 159.
[163] N.K. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin,* vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1930), p. 5.
[164] E. Foss, *The First Prison of V.I. Lenin* (Ogonek, 1926), 5, quoted in Cliff, *Building the Party,* 4.

increasingly-popular Marxist model of historical progression, the program noted the existence of "the possibility of another, more direct transition to socialism" given that in Russia there existed "special, favorable conditions in the habits of the people and in the character of the intelligentsia and of the government."[165] Furthermore, the document conceded the probability of the capitalist development of Russia—but *only* when left untouched: it emphasized that such a stage of history would stand between the present and "the process of transition to socialism" only "if there is no conscious intervention on the part of a social group."[166] Such Narodnik ideas of Russia possessing a unique situation in which the capitalist stage of history could be *voluntaristically* evaded on the road to socialism thus centrally figured in the thought of Lenin's brother, and as we shall see, would later influence Lenin's peculiar application of Marxism. Further, this party document also displayed a hostility toward the political liberalism which classical Marxists such as Plekhanov had stressed for sake of developing the political consciousness of the working masses to self-lead their revolution; rather, the document seemed to particularly echo the Revisionist Narodnik strategy, popularized by Tkachev: the program held that the task of "organizing and educating the working class" had to be deferred as the mission of upheaval was to instead be executed by the intelligentsia.[167] As we will see, these non-Marxist positions would reappear in Lenin's modified Marxism.

Lenin moved to Marxism during the early 1890s. During that time, according to his close ally Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), Lenin became acquainted with the works of Plekhanov, "without which one

[165] N.K. Karataev, *Narodnicheskaia ekonomicheskaia literature* (Moscow, 1958), 631, quoted in Cliff, *Building the Party,* 16.
[166] N.K. Karataev, *Narodnicheskaia ekonomicheskaia literature* (Moscow, 1958), 631, quoted in ibid., 17.
[167] V. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvennoi mysl,* vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1908), 335, in ibid.

could not have arrived at Social Democratic [Marxist] positions" in Russia.[168] Lenin testified that Plekhanov's first Marxist treatise, *Socialism and the Political Struggle,* had a significance for Russia comparable to the magnitude of that of *The Communist Manifesto* for the West; more broadly, Lenin recalled, the works of Plekhanov "reared a whole generation of Russian Marxists," including himself.[169] Thus, Trotsky concluded that "The Marxist generation of the 1890s [in Russia] stood on the foundations laid down by Plekhanov," for "Next to Marx and Engels, Vladimir [Lenin] owed the most to Plekhanov."[170] Lenin completed his rite of passage into Marxist circles by writing polemics against the Narodniks. Recalling this formative era of his career, Lenin stated, "One cannot develop new views other than through polemics."[171] During this time, he published multiple articles attacking Narodnik positions, with the first work printed in 1894.[172]

Yet, despite these explicit recantations of Narodnik ideology, one of Lenin's earliest Russian Marxist organizations was remarkably close to a Narodnik political sect. Lenin was a leader of *Souiz borby,* a Marxist group which maintained deep connections with *Gruppa narodovoltsev* (an offshoot of *The People's Will* group) during the 1890s. In fact, this Narodnik organization published two of Lenin's earliest pamphlets, exchanged speakers with *Souiz Borby* at public events, and even cooperated together in revolutionary planning.[173] The relations between these two factions were so intimate that there were

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[168] Trotsky, *The Young Lenin,* 131. Also note that the term "Social Democrat" was essentially synonymous with "Marxist" at the time.
[169] Ibid., 189.
[170] Ibid., 189–90.
[171] Vladimir Lenin, *Collected Works,* trans. Stepan Apresyan, vol. 18, 297.
[172] Lenin, *New Economic Developments in Peasant Life* (when he was 23), *On the So-Called Market Question* (1893), *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How they Fight the Social-Democrats* (1894). Also see Lenin, *A Characterization of Economic Romanticism* (1897), and *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899).
[173] Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 334.

talks of a potential merger, a plan that was ultimately uncovered by police arrests and interrogation. Markedly, according to the police investigation, the officers were so confused by the similarity of theory and practice between Lenin's 'Marxist' group and that of the Narodnik faction that the police deemed Lenin's *Souiz Borby* to have been a direct descendent of Narodnik organizations, displaying what they believed were "identical convictions."[174]

Furthermore, even within Lenin's polemics against the Narodniks to establish his Marxist credentials, there can be a found a conspicuous hesitance to dismiss Narodnik values in full. In fact, in *The Economic Content of Narodism* (1894-5), there is a section in which Lenin argued that certain Narodnik ideas are worth preserving. In particular, Lenin critiqued the attack on Narodism put forward by the Marxist Peter Struve (1870-1944) as over-emphasizing the differences between Marxists and their Narodnik foes.[175] "It is clear," Lenin argued, "that it would be absolutely wrong to reject the whole of the Narodnik program indiscriminately and in its entirety," claiming that, contrary to Struve's beliefs, many "general ... measures" of Narodism "are progressive."[176] Specifically, Lenin pointed at how "The Narodniks" seem to understand the harms of capitalist progression "far more correctly" than his fellow Marxists, who welcomed such a development too incautiously.[177]

Later, Lenin would reveal his opinion that certain aspects of Narodism have even served as inspiration for Russian Marxists such as himself: "The Russian Social Democrats [Marxists]" have always recognized the necessity to extract and absorb the revolutionary side of the Narodnik doctrine

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[174] See the police reports in ibid.
[175] Lenin, *Collected Works,* trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, vol. 1, 500.
[176] Ibid., 503.
[177] Ibid., 504.

and trend."[178] In his political pamphlet *What is To Be Done?*,[179] written between 1901 and 1902, Lenin reflected on his belief that many Russian Marxists, reared in the backdrop of the revisionist era of the Narodnik movement, must have grown up admiring *The People's Will*:

> Many of them [Russian Marxists] had begun their revolutionary thinking as adherents of *Narodnaya Volya* [*The People's Will]*. Nearly all had in their early youth enthusiastically worshipped the terrorist heroes. It required a struggle to abandon the captivating impressions of those heroic traditions, and the struggle was accompanied by the breaking off of personal relations with people who were determined to remain loyal to the *Narodnaya Volya* and for whom the young Social Democrats had profound respect.[180]

In fact, there is evidence that the young Lenin had intensively studied Narodnik writings at one point. According to Trotsky's recollections, Lenin's records from the Samara Library for the year 1893 were recovered, which revealed that "Vladimir [Lenin] did not miss any relevant publications, whether official statistical compilations or economic studies by the Narodniks."[181] In particular, there is evidence which suggests that Lenin was quite interested in Pyotr Tkachev, who, as aforementioned, led the revisionist

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[178] Lenin, *Collected Works,* trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, vol. 4, 246.

[179] Furthermore, it is evident that Lenin titled his revolutionary pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* precisely after the book of the same name by an earlier Narodnik writer named Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889). According to Lenin's comrade Nikolai Valentinov, when Sergei Gusev, a fellow revolutionary, asked Lenin if "it was no accident that in 1902 you called your pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?"*—as an allusion to Chernyshevsky's original work—Lenin replied, "is this so difficult to guess?" Moreover, when many of his Marxist comrades critiqued the original Narodnik rendition as an outdated and irrelevant piece of literature, Lenin defended its merits: "I declare that it is inadmissible to call *What Is To Be Done?* primitive and untalented. Under its influence hundreds of people [in Russia] became revolutionaries. It also captivated me. It ploughed me over again completely. It is a work which gives one a charge for a whole life. Untalented works cannot have such influence." Additionally, Valentinov recalled that Lenin once revealed that "Chernyshevsky was my favorite author," explaining how he owed to this Narodnik thinker the philosophical basis on which he would later learn Marxism: "Chernyshevsky introduced me to philosophical materialism … I got the concept of [the] dialectical method from him; this made it much easier for me to master the dialectic of Marx later on," before seemingly categorizing Marx and Chernyshevsky within the same tier of revolutionary acclaim: "It is said that there are musicians with perfect pitch: one could say that there are also people with perfect revolutionary flair. Marx and Chernyshevsky were such men." See Nikolay Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 63-64, 66-7.

[180] Lenin, *Collected Works,* trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, vol. 5, 517-18.

[181] Trotsky, *The Young Lenin*, 192.

era of Narodnik thought, which fostered the last popular Narodnik groups (such as *The People's Will*) before Russian Marxism began dominating Lenin's generation. Contrary to the American journalist Louis Fischer's biography *The Life of Lenin,* in which he claims "there was no evidence that Lenin was a follower of Tkachev, whom he mentions once—unfavorably,"[182] a vivid testimony from one of his closest contemporaries implies the contrary. At the turn of the century, Lenin's personal secretary, Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, was helping to collect revolutionary literature for Lenin and recalled that within "Mr. Ulyanov's [Lenin] table," there were "Tkachev's works, bound in wine-colored buckram" as part of his collection.[183] Bonch-Bruyevich's memoirs further reveal that Lenin attentively read the works of Tkachev and even recommended them to new recruits:

> Vladimir Ilich read through and examined most carefully all of this old revolutionary literature, paying particular attention to Tkachev and remarking that this writer was closer to our viewpoint than any of the others ... We collected articles that Tkachev had written and handed them over to Vladimir Ilich. Not only did V.I. read these works by Tkachev, he also recommended that all of us familiarize ourselves with the valuable writings of this original thinker. More than once, he asked newly-arrived comrades if they wished to study the illegal literature. "Begin," V.I. would advise, "by reading and familiarizing yourself with Tkachev's *Nabat* .... This is basic and will give you tremendous knowledge.[184]

Thus, having established these concrete links of influence from, and admitted reverence for, such aspects of the Narodnik milieu, the following analysis of Lenin's theoretical works regarding ideological similarities will therefore reveal not merely an analogism of ideas but rather an inheritance of continuity.

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[182] Louis Fischer, *The Life of Lenin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 45.
[183] Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, in Albert Weeks, *The First Bolshevik,* 102.
[184] Ibid., p. 5.

REVIVING RUSSIAN HISTORICAL EXCEPTIONALISM

As the chief theoretician behind the 'Marxist' Russian revolution and executive leader of the resulting Soviet state, Lenin unwaveringly claimed a strict allegiance to orthodox philosophical principles until his death. Thus, any attempt to investigate his deviations from the official dogma would necessitate reading past the frame and filter which he maintained for plausible deniability of any ideological heresies. Accordingly, Andrzej Walicki, in a message to fellow intellectual historians, claimed that "the essence of Leninism has to be uncovered in its hideaway," recognizing "the necessity 'to read between the lines.'"[185] Always working within the formal frameworks of the dogma, Lenin "tried to camouflage his revision at any cost."[186] This section, in investigating the continuity of the earlier ideological tropes in Lenin's thought, seeks to uncover the extent to which Lenin's revisions of classical Marxist code reflected a revival of or return to such ideas that his catechism had formally rejected, i.e., the intellectual heritage that has been the subject of this thesis. In particular, it will focus on how Lenin creatively bent and reinterpreted Marxist doctrines toward the logic of the earlier ideas without always making flagrant or even conscious proclamations of doing so.

Ideological Flexibility

Long before he precipitated a schism within the Russian Marxist party in 1903—which created the Menshevik-Bolshevik factional divide—Lenin already expressed hints of his unwillingness to confine

[185] Andrzej Walicki, quoted in Ondrej Marchevsky, "V.I. Lenin and the Case of P.N. Tkachev's thought Impact," *International Center for the Study of Russian Philosophy* 1, no. 7 (2020): 106.
[186] Ibid.

the scope of his revolutionary vision to the rigidity and literalism of Plekhanov's 'orthodoxy.' In his draft for the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (the Marxist Party) program written at the end of 1899, Lenin admitted that he "do[es] not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable;" rather, "on the contrary," he viewed the ideology as "only ... the foundation stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life."[187] In a statement that deeply echoed a belief in Russia's particularism against any universal frameworks that could be standardized in application, Lenin asserted that "an *independent* elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists," ... for this theory provides only general *guiding* principles, which, *in particular,* are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany, and in Germany differently than in Russia.[188]

Specifically, the area in which Lenin seemed most inclined to customize to Russia's peculiarities was that of the timing and manner of the nation's progression through history vis-à-vis the Western model of development: crucially, this topic was the central point of disagreement between the Narodniks and the Marxists—and the root of the divide between the broader philosophies of Russian historical exceptionalism versus Western historical universalism. Surprisingly, at one point in an 1894 article that obstinately critiqued the Narodniks, Lenin claimed that Marxism had "nothing whatever to do with ... faith in the *necessity* of each country to pass through the phase of capitalism and much other ... nonsense."[189] Specifically, Lenin derided what he called a "narrow objectivism," a term which denoted

[187] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 4, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, 211-12.
[188] Ibid., 211-12.
[189] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 1, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, 338.

the stringent adherence to Marx's doctrine of historical *determinism* as exemplified by the teachings of Plekhanov and the original Russian Marxist following.[190] Lenin felt that maintaining such exactness to the classic formula had overly "confined" the revolutionary framework from more flexible applications.[191] Here, Lenin was thus opposing the 'orthodox' Marxist stance of an uncompromising obedience to "the inevitability and necessity" of the original Western-centric historical schedule, which demanded a patient awaiting of each intermediary temporal stage of societal evolution not yet present in Russia to fully manifest—before the distant era of socialism could be reached.[192] Throughout his career, Lenin attacked what he called the "gradualist" approach which Marxists like Plekhanov represented, i.e., an almost passive reliance on the laws of history to play out by themselves, an approach dependent on the faith that such forces were pre-determined.[193]

Against this slower framework of a fixed course of history, Lenin displayed a conspicuous hastiness in his vision of a socialist revolution—one that was deeply reminiscent of the Narodnik thinkers. Indeed, historian Adam Ulam noticed that Lenin's view of the revolutionary timeline seemed to suggest "this terrible impatience, the utter inability to conceive of a breathing spell."[194] Like the Narodnik philosophy, such a rushed demeanor was coupled with an inclination to intervene in the clockwork of history. Here, Lenin appeared to reinstate much of the Narodnik philosophy of *voluntarism,* i.e., the belief that individuals could 'will' Russia into its aspired social order. This

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[190] Ibid., 499.
[191] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 1, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, 499.
[192] Ibid.
[193] See Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 5, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, 313-320.
[194] Adam Ulam, *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 249.

Narodnik belief of a historically-interventionist approach to revolution is perhaps best captured by Andrei Zhelyabov (1851-1881)—a member of *The People's Will* and one of the chief organizers of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II—who said, "History moves too slowly, it needs a push."[195] Markedly, Lenin remarked that the Russian Marxists needed "Social-Democratic [Marxist] Zheliabovs."[196] In fact, Lenin, across a series of essays, emphasized the role of active initiative and revolutionary will in shaping historical outcomes.[197] Just before he initiated the socialist revolution in October 1917, when Lenin was impatiently observing Russian developments from exile, he expressed, in *Letters From Afar* (1917), his view that the nation was about to undergo "an extraordinary acceleration of world history" insisting that "it was also necessary that history make particularly abrupt turns."[198]

In fact, Lenin's desire to rush toward a socialist revolution was repeatedly condemned as violations of Marxist doctrine by Plekhanov and his 'Orthodox' colleagues, who warned against the dangers of interfering with the organic timeline of societal evolution. Specifically, they argued that an accelerationist intervention in the process of Russian development would constitute a dangerous attempt of prematurely constructing a historical stage whose necessary preconditions had yet to appear in Russian society. This critique was most notably observed during the 1906 congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in Stockholm, when Plekhanov and his Menshevik faction keenly criticized Lenin and his Bolshevik sect for trying to "thoughtless[ly] construct 'socialism' under such

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[195] Andrei Zhelyabov, quoted in David Footman, *Red Prelude, The Life of the Russian Terrorist Zhelyabov* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).
[196] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 5, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, 509. Again, the term 'Social-Democrat' was synonymous with 'Marxist.'
[197] See Lenin, *Where to Begin* (1901), in *Collected Works,* vol. 5, 13-24; Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), in *Collected Works,* vol. 5, 347-530; Lenin, *One Step forward, Two Steps Back: The Crisis in Our Party* (1904) in *Collected Works,* vol. 5, 203-425.
[198] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 23, trans. M.S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, 297.

[present] circumstances:" the nation's material conditions were still too industrially underdeveloped and capitalist structures were still premature; consequently, Lenin's critics held, Russia was not 'ready' to reach for the post-capitalist socialist phase, which stood at the end of Marx's linear timetable of societal progression.[199]

Reversing 'Backwardness'

How, then, did Lenin justify this hurried approach to a socialist revolution while remaining formally adherent to Marxist principles? This section argues that Lenin did so by reviving the Narodnik and Slavophile argument of identifying historical advantages within societal 'backwardness'—a theme which he re-formulated in Marxist terms and concepts. Granted, by this time, the peasant-communal structures on which such themes were originally specifically based, among the previous movements, had declined enough to no longer constitute a prime talking point. Yet, nevertheless, it appears that Lenin inherited the heart of the logic behind this old belief. In particular, this characteristically Narodnik and Slavophile logic of reversing the implications of societal underdevelopment can be strikingly observed in Lenin's theory of 'the weakest link.' For context, Marxists had long assumed that the ripest locations for socialist revolution were the societies in which capitalism was most highly developed, i.e., where class antagonisms were most acute. However, Lenin derived a formula, in Marxist terminology, explaining how the most advanced nations had actually grown farther from socialist prospects, while the most underdeveloped and 'backward' societies had become the prime candidates for manifesting the

[199] Kichitaro Katsuda, "Russian Intellectual History and the Gorbachev Revolution," *International Journal on World Peace* 8, no. 2 (June 1991): 33.

revolution first. This argument flipped the Western script of linear progress in a manner deeply reminiscent of the pre-Marxist theorists of Russian historical exceptionalism.

In 1916, Lenin published the book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism.* Through a series of economic analyses, Lenin explained that capitalism evolved into a form unforeseen by Marx, who had been dead for over three decades now: it had become a global system in which the most-developed capitalist nations began exploiting the labor of workers from 'backward' societies, thereby bringing externally-extracted wealth back home. In doing so, these developed nations were able to inflate the standard of living for their domestic working-class population, thereby quelling the inter-class hostilities. Under this diminished level of economic discontent, a socialist revolution of the working class could no longer occur in these highly-developed capitalist nations.[200] At the same time, the sharp decline in living standards, from which the laborers of the dominant nations were shielded, were instead displaced onto the working populations of the colonial peripheries.[201] As a result, these 'backward' societies now contained the sociological stratum most inclined to revolt. Lenin thereby concluded that the first proletarian revolution would now have to occur in one of the most underdeveloped countries within this global system, with Russia embodying the paradigmatic case. In this vein, Lenin deduced that the socialist revolution would first break out where the "chain" of world capitalism had its "weakest link," i.e., where its forces were least developed.[202] Therefore, Lenin asserted against the prognosis of Marx and Plekhanov a line of reasoning that was characteristic of all Narodnik thinkers and Herzen's Slavophile-

[200] See Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), in *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), vol. 1, 667-766.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

esque model of history: it was now "easier for the [socialist] movement to start" in a "backward country" unburdened by deep capitalist development, once believed to be the most significant precondition for a socialist revolution.[203]

Through this logic of reversing the implications of 'backwardness,' Lenin thereby re-positioned Russia's place in the queue of socialist revolution to the front of the line. Well before formalizing his theory of the 'weakest link,' as early as 1902, Lenin had proclaimed that the Russian working class was "the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat," i.e., the first in charge.[204] Later in 1905, Lenin envisioned that the Russian uprising would "carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe,"[205] essentially acting as the spark or inspiration to set their Western neighbors into motion. As historian David Lane notes, a peculiar feature of Lenin's thought was the idea "that the developing and exploited countries—Russia being the paradigmatic case—have become the vanguard of socialist revolution."[206] This flipping of the conventional Western-centric narrative of linear progression toward socialism deeply echoed the Slavophile and Narodnik perspectives on history in which Russia would beat the West to its own aspirations and even teach the West how to move forward. Such a stance

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[203] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 26, trans. Yuri Sdobnikov and George Hanna, 471. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), who would later play an indispensable role in helping Lenin actualize his vision in the Russian Revolution of 1917, explained Lenin's theory of the 'weakest link' in a speech (eight years after Lenin's death). He elaborated on how "the proletariat reached power for the first time in such a backward country as … Tsarist Russia," a "fact that … seems mysterious only at first glance" in the context of traditional Marxist frameworks; he explained that though "Russia is a backward country," it was "part of the world economy … an element of the capitalist world system;" as such, though it itself was not yet deeply capitalist in development, its working masses bore the exported burdens of the developed capitalist nations that brought about revolutionary conditions; thus, "the sharper the antagonisms" grew in the major capitalist countries, "the more difficult it became for the weaker participants" of the system and "That is precisely why the backward countries assumed the first places in the succession of collapse:" "In this way the chain … broke at its weakest link." See Leon Trotsky, "In Defence of October: A Speech Delivered in Copenhagen, Denmark in November 1932" (Copenhagen, 1932).

[204] Lenin, quoted in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975) 22.

[205] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 9, trans. Abraham Fineburg and George Hanna, 57.

[206] David Lane, "V.I. Lenin's Theory of Socialist Revolution," *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 3 (May 2021): 465

effectively inverted the notion that Russia was perpetually a student of the exemplary West, occupying the shameful position of trailing behind and needing to catch up to the advanced Occident: an image which the Russian national consciousness has had to wrestle with since the program of Petrine Westernization discussed in chapter one. Thus, by embracing the counteracting Narodnik and Slavophile spirit that 'the last shall be first,' Lenin thereby reintegrated into Marxism the notion that societal 'backwardness' represented not an obstacle but rather a shortcut to the historical finish line.

Touting the virtues of underdevelopment as a historical advantage on the road to socialism, Lenin thus displayed a contradictory attitude toward Plekhanov's insistence on the necessity of ridding Russia's 'backward' features in alignment with the Western image of modernity. This is most prominently seen in Lenin's refusal to completely dismiss the utility of the Russian peasantry in the upcoming socialist revolution. In contrast, Plekhanov had deemed this agrarian constituency to be a 'hold-over' demographic which needed to be replaced by an industrial proletariat—a necessary marker of a mature capitalist society truly ready to progress into the subsequent socialist stage. At a meeting with the representatives of 'Orthodox' Marxism—Plekhanov and Pavel Axelrod—in Geneva, Lenin brought with him a copy of *On Agitation (Ob Agitatsii).* This was a pamphlet written by the Jewish socialist Arkadi Kremer, which had expressed Narodnik views: in particular, it argued that "Our urban workers are not, like those of the West .... A social revolution would succeed only if the industrial workers supported the peasants."[207] Lenin demanded that the Marxists re-publish this pamphlet—to the dismay of the 'Orthodox' leaders. Though they eventually capitulated to this request, Plekhanov and Axelrod

[207] Quoted in Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 333.

made sure to preface the publication with a long commentary to point out its un-Marxist ideas: specifically, they wrote that "the program was no more or less a reversion to the old Bakuninist program the Marxists long left behind."[208]

Against Plekhanov's Marxist literalism, Lenin would continue to see revolutionary value in the Russian peasantry. In fact, he even stretched Marx's "proletariat" concept to include not just the urban industrial workers but also the peasants, whom he would call the "rural proletariat."[209] Further, as historian Ondrej Marchevsky has noticed, the term Lenin used for working class was "definitely the Narodnik term," a habit that "was the subject of mockery among the Marxist circles."[210] Later, in a 1909 letter to his comrade Ivan Skvortsov-Stepanov, Lenin once more defended the revolutionary value of the Russian peasantry, while also expressing his contempt and doubt of any utility of the liberal bourgeoise which 'Orthodox' Marxists had insisted were necessary allies in revolution:

> While fighting Narodism as a wrong doctrine of socialism, the Mensheviks [the 'Orthodox' faction led by Plekhanov and Axelrod], in a doctrinaire fashion, overlooked the historically real and progressive historical content of Narodism ... Hence their monstrous, idiotic, renegade idea ... that the peasant movement is reactionary, that a Cadet [liberal] is more progressive than a Trudovik [the ideological heir of the Narodnik movement in Lenin's time].[211]

This aversion to awaiting the full proletarianization of the peasantry and the emergence of the liberal bourgeoise, which Plekhanov had preached in his multi-stepped road to a socialist revolution, significantly recalled the Narodnik and Slavophile sociological stances—but also placed Lenin in a thorny theoretical position apropos his Marxist allegiance.

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[208] Ibid.
[209] Lenin, *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats,* in Tucker, *The Lenin Anthology,* 9-10.
[210] Marchevsky, "V.I. Lenin and the Case," 103.
[211] Lenin, Collected Works, vol.16, 119-20.

Modifying Marxist Stages of Revolution

How could Lenin reconcile his defense of Russia's underdeveloped features—its persistent peasant population and lack of a substantial bourgeoise—with the Marxist model of revolution? Indeed, the latter blueprint, as illustrated earlier by Plekhanov, required two separate stages of revolution, the first of which was to nullify those very 'backward' sociological aspects before the second, and socialist, one could be launched. Despite the apparent incompatibility, Lenin once more integrated his Narodnik-esque vision of accelerating to socialism amid premature conditions within the Marxist lexicon.

This ideological adaptation was particularly evident in his reaction to the 1905 revolution. On the 22nd of January 1905, a wave of unrest broke out across the Russian Empire, largely against the Tsar and ruling nobility, lasting almost two and a half years. Ultimately, despite some political concessions made by the crown, the conclusion of the event saw the defeat of the revolutionaries and the retention of the throne.[212] Orthodox Marxists such as Plekhanov had hoped that this event would constitute the moment in which Russia enacted their version of the liberal revolution, as precedented by various Western-European nations, in which an emergent bourgeoise would take political control to accommodate the new capitalist economy with a constitutional and democratic model of governance. Only after this revolution and the full completion of its historical stage of development could the socialist uprising then be launched.[213] Though a legislature, the Duma parliament, was finally established in Russia, it was essentially powerless due to the Tsar's retention of complete veto powers.[214] Overall, the

[212] See Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905* (Stanford University Press, 1988).
[213] See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, Progress Publishers: 1977), 21.
[214] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 457.

revolution was ultimately seen as a failure.[215] As such, Russia had yet to complete even the first of two anticipated revolutions on the long road to socialism.

At the core of this failure stood the striking absence of a substantive bourgeoise demographic upon whom Marx had entrusted the historical role of executing this stage of political transition. If it was not already clear by then, the 1905 revolution confirmed the fact that, in Russia, "the growth of a native bourgeoise had been stunted."[216] In response, Plekhanov and the 'Orthodox Marxists' maintained their faith in the universal 'iron laws' of Western historical progression: they preached the need to await the maturation of a Russian bourgeois class to arise and fulfill this mission, as their Western counterparts had done earlier. However, Lenin did not want to wait. Assessing the predicament of a prepubescent Russian bourgeoise, plus an insufficient population of industrial proletarians, as well as the persistent masses of un-proletarianized agrarian peasants, Lenin made a fascinating adaptation to ideology. Through a logic deeply reminiscent of the Narodnik philosophy, rather than delaying revolutionary action until Russian conditions finally aligned with Western precedents, Lenin sought to work with the underdeveloped features of Russia as they were at present—and found in them advantages that expedited the road to socialism.

In *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905), Lenin responded to these circumstances by declaring that the 'bourgeois' revolutionary stage would not be carried out by a Russian bourgeoise: "the abortive 1905 revolution proved … that the weak Russian bourgeoise was

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[215] See J.L.H. Keep, "Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 34, no. 82 (December 1955): 180-199.

[216] George Brinkely, "Leninism: What it Was and What it Was Not," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 152

incapable of carrying out the prerequisite democratic revolution to bring Russia into full capitalist development."[217] In their place, then, Lenin proposed that this phase would instead be executed by the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat *and the Peasantry."*[218] This adapted scheme revealed further continuities with pre-Marxist Russian thought. First, by refusing to leave out the agrarian peasantry in his model of revolution, as Plekhanov did, and instead grouping them alongside the industrial proletariat as fellow constituents of the same working class, Lenin echoed the Narodnik and Slavophile insistence on a Russian-specific framework that catered to the nation's peasant-dominant orientation. Secondly, by dismissing the role and utility of the liberal bourgeoise in this event, and replacing them with another social class, Lenin essentially cut out the very demographic around which the 'liberal-bourgeois revolution' was originally and fundamentally premised on. In other words, the working class would carry out the bourgeoise's revolution on behalf of them. In this way, Lenin disregarded the Marxist guidelines in all but the name with which he labeled this stage. Through this modification, Lenin thus technically avoided proposing the single-staged model of revolution propounded by the Narodniks by formally titling the upcoming revolution as a 'bourgeois' one—though demanding that it be executed by the very population that was to launch the final socialist phase.

Leninism's parallels to the earlier pre-Marxist intellectual traditions which he purported to reject did not stop here. As we recall from the previous section, Plekhanov had emphatically insisted that not only ought there to be two different revolutions—the 'liberal-bourgeois' and then the socialist one—but the two events had to be significantly separated from each other to ensure that each phase was fully

[217] Ibid.
[218] See Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 9, 236-7.

processed in accordance with the Western model of successive eras of development, i.e., to counter the old Narodnik desire to rush or skip to the socialist conclusion. However, in the same essay, Lenin explained that his version of the two-stage framework would not be separated to such an extent. He indicated that "from the democratic ('liberal-bourgeois') revolution we shall *at once* … begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way."[219] It is clear that Lenin was, as he wrote, in a hurry to "pass on as quickly as possible to the new and higher task—the socialist revolution."[220] Thus, Lenin envisioned that the two revolutions mandated by Marx and Plekhanov would, in Russia, almost coincide in time, moving directly from one to the next, the first to the last. In this way, Lenin appeared to further demonstrate a revival of the Narodnik and Slavophile belief that Russia's present lack of modern-Western features need not prompt a need to catch up through patient imitation of Occidental precedents; rather, their absence allows for a more direct and immediate pursuit of the final ideal.

Thirteen years later, Lenin re-affirmed these views. In an article titled *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918), Lenin accused "the Mensheviks," the 'Orthodox' faction led by Plekhanov, for "substituting liberalism for Marxism" through their excessive warnings against a rushed approach to the stages of revolution.[221] Lenin critiqued their conclusion that "the proletariat therefore must not go beyond what is acceptable to the bourgeoise" during the first stage of revolution "and must pursue a policy of compromise with them."[222] Averted to any alliance with the capitalist class enemy, a

[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 237.
[221] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 28, p. 294.
[222] Ibid.

pact which Plekhanov had preached as necessary, Lenin insisted that the working class should ignore the interests of the liberal class—to "not allow itself to be 'bound' by the reformism of the bourgeoise," but instead pushing straight on into "a socialist revolution."[223] In the same work, Lenin additionally responded to accusations of trying to skip the bourgeois stage of revolution by claiming that "we [Bolsheviks] have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process."[224] However, when elaborating on his purportedly Marxist-friendly approach to the revolutionary process, Lenin once again displayed a refusal to separate the distinct stages, condemning the Mensheviks for "[an] attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second, to separate them," while demonstrating a clear intent to effectively accelerate into the socialist finale: "the revolution cannot now stop at this stage … whether one likes it or not [it] will demand steps forward, to socialism."[225] In other words, Lenin appeared to have found a loophole in formally labeling two distinct stages but, as seen from this passage, practically and functionally squeezing them into one continuous process—in essence, a singular and direct transition into socialism reminiscent of the Narodnik mission.

In sum, Lenin's peculiar views on the nature of Russian historical development toward socialist revolution seemed to display an apparent revival of the particular ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism of the Narodnik and Slavophile ideologies, which were, by principle, hostile to the Marxism that Lenin purported to obey. Indeed, Lenin's insistence on the imminence and immediacy of socialist revolution in an underdeveloped Russia saw him spurn 'Orthodox' Marxist principles by

[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid, 299-300.
[225] Ibid.

seeking to capitalize on the 'backward' features of the nation, particularly in his defense of the un-proletarianized agrarian peasantry's utility and his preclusion of the historical role of the liberal bourgeoise—positions which deeply recalled the attitudes of the Narodniks and Slavophiles whom Plekhanov repudiated in the name of Western historical universalism.

Anti-Liberal Politics

Viewing liberalism as a counterintuitive development in his expedited roadmap of Russian societal progression, Lenin's philosophy thus continued the anti-liberal tradition characteristic of the Slavophiles and Narodniks. As shown by his adjusted Marxist framework, Lenin perpetuated this attitude by essentially displacing the liberal bourgeoise and their class interests from his modified model of revolutionary stages: Lenin's historically-exceptional prescription for Russia's road to socialism therefore neglected the "bourgeois-democratic" phase, i.e., the liberal stage of political development.[226] In doing so, Lenin frequently exhibited the political positions of his pre-Marxist predecessors. Like the Slavophiles and Narodniks, Lenin refused to heed to the Orthodox Marxist insistence on allying with the liberals. As early as 1896, in a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, Plekhanov and Axelrod confronted Lenin about his conspicuous aversion to the "liberal bourgeoise:" Axelrod, in his memoirs, recalled that he told Lenin, "You show ... exactly the opposite tendency" on this topic of a liberal alliance, to which Lenin replied: "You know, Plekhanov made exactly the same remarks about my articles. He expressed his thoughts in picturesque fashion: 'You,' he said, 'turn your behind to the liberals, but we our face.'"[227]

[226] Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 238-239.
[227] Perepiska G.V. Plekhanova i P.B. Akselroda, vol.1, Moscow 1925, 271, quoted in Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 332.

Further, Lenin's animosity toward the liberal demographic—his "most hated, most feared enemies of all"—and their political concepts was often articulated in the same manner in which the Slavophiles and Narodniks characterized liberal institutions as promoting a false sense of freedom, which Lenin similarly bashed as "constitutional illusions."[228] Moreover, like the Slavophiles and Narodniks, Lenin justified his aversion to liberalizing Russian politics by insisting on Russia's incompatibility with Western political paradigms: when Lenin called for the immediate and complete disenfranchisement of the liberal constituency, he argued that "depriving" this segment of society "is a purely Russian question ... a question of the specific national features" of Russia.[229]

Yet despite these fundamental similarities, Lenin did not deduce the same political implications of the anti-liberalism that typified the Slavophile and *Classical* Narodnik milieus, i.e., an opposition to centralized authority that sought to devolve power to the masses. Rather, Lenin's version of anti-liberal politics was inherited from *Revisionist* Narodism. This line of thinking was exemplified by Tkachev's philosophy and the principles of *The People's Will*, which reversed the original praxis of revolution by preaching the need for intelligentsia hegemony over the people. Under such a view, a small sect of intellectual leaders took over the people's mass movement via an anti-democratic coup d'état that precipitated a dictatorial state. This elitist strategy not only flipped the original praxis of Slavophilism and Classical Narodism, but it also represented the very form of revolution which the Orthodox Marxists warned against. However, amid the broader genealogy of ideas that this thesis has been tracking, this was

[228] V.I. Lenin, *Pobeda kadetov i zadaci rabocej partii, Sochinenija* (4th ed.), X (1947), 195, in Donald W. Treadgold, "The Constitutional Democrats and the Russian Liberal Tradition," *American Slavic and East European Review* 10, no. 2 (1951): 94.
[229] Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 28, 256-7.

the ideological strain of anti-liberalism inherited by Lenin—a strain which deeply shaped the anti-democratic nature of the Bolshevik revolution that has bulked the Westernizer narrative of the evolution of Russian radical thought.

Disregarding a Political Awakening of the Masses

The slippery slope toward an authoritarian execution of the socialist revolution begins with how Lenin's anti-liberalism led to a neglect of developing the political consciousness of the working masses. Indeed, Lenin's approach of subordinating the liberal stage of historical development manifested in the exclusion of the political programs which Plekhanov and the Orthodox Marxists had deemed essential for awakening the masses to their revolutionary autonomy. As Richard Pipes notes, throughout Lenin's career, the organizations he led "largely ignored the political program which constituted perhaps the main plank in the Russian Marxist platform."[230] Additionally, the Russian Marxist Vladimir Akimov (1872-1921), a contemporary of Lenin, remarked that "not a single proclamation of [Lenin's group] revealed any *political* tendency."[231] As discussed in the previous chapter, the term 'political,' in the Russian context, specifically denoted the Western-European, liberal political framework of constitutional and representative governance meant to stimulate mass participation in politics. To Plekhanov and Axelrod, this "failure to think in Marxist political terms," seemed to indicate "a rejection of the principles on which Russian Marxism had always rested."[232] As such, Plekhanov critiqued the

[230] Pipes, "Russian Marxism," 335.
[231] V. Akimov, *Materyaly dilya kharakteristiki razvitiya rossiiskoi sotsialdemokraticheskoi rabochei partii* (Geneva, 1904-1905), quoted in ibid.
[232] Ibid., 333.

Tkachevian ideas of *The People's Will* on these same lines: "they do not understand that the *political* education of the masses … constitutes the chief precondition for the success of the revolution."[233] In other words, this political infrastructure, which Lenin spited for its associations to liberal interests, constituted the means by which the working class was to develop the self-consciousness necessary to self-lead their eventual socialist revolution.

However, Lenin, like the Revisionist Narodniks, did not want to wait for the masses to slowly evolve the revolutionary consciousness needed to self-construct the revolution. Consequently, Lenin, like Tkachev in the disillusioned generation of Narodniks, shifted the locus of revolutionary activity from the working class to the intelligentsia. Instead of hoping that the 'unready' masses would eventually become conscious of their own political interests and reach socialist conclusions, the intelligentsia, who already possessed a revolutionary consciousness, should take control of the movement on behalf of the people. Under this logic, Lenin, in his pamphlet titled *What Is To Be Done?*, argued that the stimulus for revolution would have to come from *outside* of the masses: "there could not have been Social-Democratic [Marxist] consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without."[234] Meanwhile, Lenin reasoned, the socialist consciousness stemmed from the privileged stratum of society to which revolutionary theorists, such as himself, belonged: "The theory of socialism … grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals."[235] Here, Lenin even cited how "the founders of modern

[233] Plekhanov, quoted in Mayer, "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 275.
[234] Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 5, 375-6.
[235] Ibid.

scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia"—to justify his elitist conclusion, insisting that "in the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy [Marxism] arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement," but rather "arose as a ... among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia."[236]

A 'Revolution' Without The People

Thus, Lenin's version of the anti-liberal ideological inheritance manifested in the form of the technocratic conclusions of the Revisionist Narodniks—believing that the theorists of revolutionary ideas ought to assume authority of the movement on behalf of the ignorant masses. This logic was captured, earlier, by Tkachev's insistence that,

> This great task can be accomplished ... only by the people who understand it ... people who are highly developed intellectually and morally, that is to say the minority. This minority, by virtue of its higher intellectual and moral level of development, always had and is bound to have intellectual and moral power over the majority.[237]

Following this line of reasoning, Lenin declared the need for a new type of party structure. As opposed to the vision of a mass movement of the working class at-large that the Orthodox Marxists had preached, Lenin sought to restrict authority to the intellectual elite. Specifically, Lenin sought to create a 'vanguard' party, i.e., a small sect of the most politically conscious and prepared revolutionaries to lead the way for

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[236] Ibid. Yet in contradiction to Lenin's logic, Marx had previously declared, "We cannot ally ourselves ... with people who openly declare that the workers are too uneducated to free themselves and must first be liberated from above." Against this elitist model, Marx unwaveringly asserted that "the consciousness of a profound revolution, the communist consciousness, arises from the class itself." See Karl Marx, "Circular Letter to Bebel, Libeknecht, Bracke, et al," in *The First International and After,* ed. David Fernbach, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), 375.

[237] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal," 290-1.

the rest of the population.[238] Here, Lenin envisioned a group of specialists or "professional revolutionaries."[239] This specialization of revolutionary activity further implied that the revolution would be executed by a small, compact circle of individuals: "specialization necessarily presupposes centralization," Lenin wrote, "and in turn imperatively calls for it."[240] This insistence on the centralization of the revolutionary movement bore remarkable parallels with the strategy advocated by the Revisionist Narodnik Tkachev, in the previous chapter, who called for "a closely knit organization … disciplined, hierarchical, subordinating"[241]—"an organization based on *the centralization of power*."[242] In both cases, the idea was for a highly exclusive sect of revolutionaries to be separated from the rest of the population. According to Robert Mayer, Lenin believed that the exclusivity of such a group would even require it to be removed from the working class itself: "this organization would stand outside the class itself … since it could not consist of full-time factory workers."[243] Indeed, Lenin wrote, at-length, on the need to "confine the membership of such an organization only to those who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity."[244] Furthermore, this minority sect would even hide its planning from the masses on whose behalf it claimed to work: Lenin clarified that such an exclusive party structure would also require "the strictest secrecy."[245] Yet all this was justified as ultimately beneficial for the people

[238] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 5, pp. 440.
[239] Ibid., 466.
[240] Ibid., 470.
[241] Tkacehv, "Excerpts from *Nabat,"* 656.
[242] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal," 292.
[243] Mayer, "Lenin and the Concept of the Professional Revolutionary," *History of Political Thought* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 256.
[244] Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 5, 464.
[245] Ibid., 480.

in whose name such a process was declared: indeed, Lenin believed that the masses were "better served if they deferred to the expertise of the specialist."[246]

By planning a 'revolution' on behalf of the 'unready' masses, who were denied a participatory role in it, Lenin was thereby calling for precisely the sort of elitist-conspiratorial strategy that Plekhanov had warned against. Seeking to seize power from the top-down as opposed to raising a mass uprising from the bottom-up, Lenin's political strategy was inherited from the Revisionist Narodnik branch of thought. Markedly, this inheritance additionally included, and logically precipitated, a dictatorial approach to the post-revolutionary society.

Justifying Authoritarianism

If this elitist seizure of power on behalf of the people was prompted by the present 'unreadiness' of the masses to create their own revolution in time, such an 'unreadiness' would not disappear overnight in the new post-revolutionary society erected by the intelligentsia alone. Indeed, in contrast to the Orthodox Marxist model that preached the delaying of the revolution until the working class came to socialist convictions en masse, Lenin's strategy would create a post-revolutionary realm in which the population was largely still lacking a developed socialist consciousness. Thus, just as the rushed 'revolution' was forced against the tempo of natural conditions, so too, now, must the new authority in power artificially force their subjects into alignment with their ideals that ran ahead of the larger nation's organic pace of progression. In other words, due to the premature circumstances in which this revolution

[246] Mayer, "Lenin and the Concept," 257.

was to be declared, the actual era of socialist reality would still have to be ushered into existence. Consequently, the period following the hasty seizure of power would have to be a *transitional phase,* i.e., socialism had to be constructed through decrees from above. In the words of the Tkachev, the Revisionist Narodnik who originated this strategy in the last century, "The revolution is not just the seizure of power. There is also the second step ... the creation of a revolutionary state."[247] Here, Lenin's anti-liberal politics would translate into dictatorial measures.

Working from this logic, Lenin planned an authoritarian regime to take control of the new society. As early as 1905, he declared that "a provisional revolutionary government must act dictatorially [for] the task of such a dictatorship is to destroy the remnants of the old institutions,"[248] i.e., the societal remnants that did not yet naturally dissipate due to this early voluntaristic intervention in the timeline of historical development. 12 years later, on the eve of the revolution, he clarified that such a dictatorship would "take life in its entirety under their control,"[249] in order to mold the present reality into alignment with the aspired socialist image, "for the purpose of leading the great mass of the population ... in the work of organizing socialist economy."[250] In this manner, Lenin precisely echoed Tkachev's justification for dictatorial measures, who, over forty years prior, argued for the necessity of a "revolutionary state which ... fights and destroys the conservative and reactionary elements in society" and then assumes comprehensive control over all aspects of life—bringing about revolutionary changes through state dictations "in the sphere of economic, political, and legal relationships within the social body."[251]

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[247] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal," 291; Tkachev, "Excerpts from *Nabat,"* 656.
[248] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 9, 131.
[249] Lenin, quoted in Brinkley, "Leninism," 158.
[250] Lenin, *Selected Works,* Moscow, vol. II, 157.
[251] Tkacehv, "Excerpts from *Nabat,"* 656.

Further, since the population below still lacked a socialist consciousness, they would also lack a genuine desire for and understanding of the new socialist society being proclaimed from above. As such, Lenin had foreseen that his seizure of power would encounter "resistance to the revolution not only by capitalists … but also by the vast mass of the working people."[252] Again claiming to be acting in the interest of the masses even if they did not yet comprehend it, Lenin thereby insisted that the vanguard of intellectual elites ought to create a "state apparatus" designed to "break resistance of every kind."[253] In *The State and Revolution* (1918), Lenin wrote spoke of the necessity of "state power, the centralized organization of violence, for the purpose crushing the resistance" that would inevitably arise.[254] Seeking to correct their views into alignment with that of the ruling intelligentsia, Lenin thus also planned on the 're-education' of the masses along the principles of the leading party. In other words, he sought to force a socialist consciousness onto the people and intended to "fight to instill into people's minds acceptance of Soviet state control."[255] Again, this tactical heritage can be traced back to Tkachev's argument for the revolutionary state "to change man's nature itself … to re-educate him."[256] Revisionist Narodism thus prefigured this rationale: "when the minority does not want to wait for the majority to become itself conscious of its own demands, it would then turn to "impos[ing] this consciousness on

[252] Lenin in Brinkley, "Leninism," 159.
[253] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 26, 109.
[254] Lenin, *Selected Works,* 157.
[255] Lenin, quoted in Brinkley, "Leninism," 160.
[256] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal," 290.

the majority."[257] In this spirit, Lenin insisted that Russian people would "have to give up their autonomy and allow the professionals [to take charge]."[258]

To convey ideological legitimacy within Marxist doctrine, Lenin justified such dictatorial ends by redefining the Marxist term 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' As aforementioned in the previous section, the original term denoted the coming-to-power of a social class at-large—not the hegemony of a single party of leaders. Lenin, however, made it a central slogan of Bolshevik rhetoric and deployed the term "far more than any other Marxist ever had,"[259] while using it to justify his intended authoritarian measures and suppressive policies. In fact, he even clarified that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is an absolutely meaningless expression without … coercion."[260] Elsewhere, he explained that "dictatorship means unlimited power based on force, and not on law."[261] In his *April Theses,* written just before the actual revolution he was to lead, Lenin, describing the proposed state that was to follow the seizure, indicated that "such power is a dictatorship, i.e., it rests not on law, not on the formal will of the majority, but on direct, open force."[262] In a prescient observation of the logical conclusions of Lenin's approach to revolution, Plekhanov warned that the Bolsheviks "obviously confuse the dictatorship of the proletariat with dictatorship *over* the proletariat," arguing that in such a "centralized organization there

[257] Tkachev, "Zadachi revoliutsionnoi propagandy v Rossii" (1874), III, 64, quoted in Theen "The Idea of the Revolutionary State," 387.
[258] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 5, 466.
[259] Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 272.
[260] Lenin, quoted in Valentinov, *Encounters With Lenin*, 71.
[261] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 31, 340.
[262] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, 239.

is no place for the proletariat," a structure that would inevitably devolve into absolute rule of the leading minority.[263]

In sum, Lenin's authoritarian praxis was the logical outgrowth of his model of a revolution launched prior to the natural development of the people's own consciousness, will, and initiative for entering the stage of history that he sought to immediately introduce. By rejecting Plekhanov's 'orthodox' Marxist adherence to a patient unfolding of the successive temporal stages that awaited the natural maturation of material conditions and the population's mentality—most crucially via the liberal stage of developing mass political involvement and consciousness—Lenin sought to rush to the historical conclusion in a manner highly reminiscent of the Narodniks. And in doing so, he appeared to have inherited the Revisionist Narodnik variant of anti-liberal politics. The latter was exemplified by the teachings of Tkachev, a thinker who similarly sought the immediate realization of a socialist revolution in Russia before the people were ready to undertake such an endeavor themselves. The resulting praxis of revolutionary transition thus planned a revolution to be commenced without the people, followed by a period of dictatorial rule in which the intellectual minority would force an anachronistic reality into alignment with their untimely image of the future.

REVOLUTIONARY THEORY IN PRACTICE

Throughout all these years of theorizing the revolution—serially writing pamphlets, essays, and treatises which now fill over 50 volumes of collected works across tens of thousands of pages—Vladimir

[263] Plekhanov, quoted in Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 275.

Lenin was commenting from the sidelines. In fact, he was removed from direct involvement in any revolutionary activity in Russia ever since he was exiled to eastern Siberia in 1897.[264] In 1900, to evade the Tsarist police, he left for Western Europe. Moving between Switzerland, Germany, and England,[265] Lenin formulated his theories for Russia's future from afar and had his writings smuggled in.[266] As such, his significant adaptations to Marxist stage theory was completely conceived thousands of miles away from the action. Lenin's work would remain restricted to abstractly theorizing from a distance until 1917, when the 'February Revolution' broke out in St. Petersburg. [267] Mounting military defeats, widespread hunger, and a scandal-ridden monarchy ignited mass demonstrations on the streets and violent armed clashes with police, ultimately concluding with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, the end of the Romanov dynasty, and the fall of the Russian Empire.[268] Yet, here, too, Lenin played no part, but merely saw this as an opportunity to finally return to Russia, after being kept out by the Tsarist police for the last 17 years. With the threat of arrest now removed, Lenin finally returned to Russia in April 1917, and began putting his theories into practice.

Coming back to a Russia in which authority was only *de jure* in the hands of a 'provisional government' and in which the populace was deeply divided over what the next political form should be for the nation, Lenin saw his opportunity to strike. Remaining true to their Marxist Orthodoxy, Plekhanov and the Menshevik Marxists saw the recent February Revolution as the initiation of Russia's "bourgeois-democratic" era, under which Russia would slowly evolve a matured capitalist economy

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[264] Christopher Read, *Lenin: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Routledge, 2004), 31.
[265] Helen Rappaport, *Conspirator: Lenin in Exile* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 32-33.
[266] Christopher J. Rice, *Lenin: Portrait of a Professional Revolutionary* (London: Cassell, 1990), 69-70.
[267] The city was renamed Petrograd at the start of the First World War due to anti-German sentiment.
[268] See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

alongside liberal-constitutional politics—seen as the intermediary and necessary preparatory stage prior to a socialist revolution.

Lenin, however, had different ideas. Retaining his peculiar ideological convictions inherited from and influenced by the heritage of Slavophile and Narodnik thought, Lenin sought a direct and immediate transition to the socialist age. Upon returning to Russia, historian Martin Malia writes, Lenin "cast aside the two-stage revolution entirely."[269] Ella Belfer similarly notes that Lenin "renounce[ed] the idea of two revolutions [and] faithfulness to historical determinism" to instead "preach immediate transition to a social revolution."[270] This is all, in essence, true. But more specifically, Lenin still tried to maintain, in formality, the Marxist dogma of two revolutions. He did so by claiming, in his *April Theses,* that through the February Revolution, "the bourgeois, or the bourgeois-democratic, [stage] in Russia is *completed;"*[271] yet less than two months had passed before this declaration—a timespan that could barely constitute a true historical epoch in the original Marxist sense preached by Plekhanov.[272] Even despite this explanation and justification, Lenin also nearly admitted that he had discarded with the two-stage formula altogether: in *Letters on Tactics,* Lenin wrote, "To deal with the question of 'completion' of the bourgeois revolution ... is to sacrifice living Marxism to the dead letter ... In real life, however, things have *already* turned out differently ... This fact does not fit into the old [original Marxist] schemes."[273] Indeed, in Trotsky's account titled *Lessons of October,* he noted how many Marxist colleagues, even Bolsheviks, were concerned about how "the bourgeois-democratic revolution is not completed," to

[269] Martin Malia, "Lenin and the 'Radiant Future,'" *The New York Review* (November 2001).
[270] Ella Belfer, "Zemlya vs. Volya," *Soviet Studies* 1, no. 3 (1978): 310.
[271] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, 44.
[272] Ibid., 19-26.
[273] Ibid., 45-46.

which Lenin confirmed, "It is not. The formula is obsolete … And it is no use trying to revive it."[274] With this expedited formula of historical stages, Lenin thus, called for the "immediate seizure of power" by the Bolshevik socialists against the "liberal" provisional government that had only just come into being just over 30 days prior.[275] Across just two days in late October,[276] the Bolsheviks executed its conspiracy of a coup, seizing control of the capital city of Petrograd and then taking control of the Winter Palace, declaring such an event a completed socialist 'revolution.'[277]

This directness toward the final historical stage and unwillingness to process through the intermediary stages of history as precedented by the West thereby illustrates the significant extent to which the Narodnik and Slavophile precursing ideas of Russian historical exceptionalism had survived in continuity into the actual Russian socialist revolution. Indeed, Lenin, in his own words, sought to "do the utmost to facilitate and accelerate the transition to the socialist revolution."[278] As such, he noted that "on the very first day of the proletarian, socialist revolution, private ownership of land was abolished in Russia;"[279] all this "we accomplished instantly, at one revolutionary blow," featuring a series of firm extermination of all things capitalist and liberal, i.e., "all the big capitalists, owners of factories, joint-stock companies, banks, railways, and so forth, were also expropriated without compensation."[280]

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[274] Ibid., 42-54.
[275] The April Theses were declared on the 17th of April 1917; the Provisional Government was established on the 15th of March 1917.
[276] October 25-26 via the Julian Calendar; November 7-8 via the Gregorian calendar.
[277] Alexander Rabinowich, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (2004), 273-305.
[278] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 28, 314.
[279] Lenin, ibid., 313-14.
[280] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 30, 109.

Lenin's insistence on the immediacy of revolution also reflects the thought of the late Narodnik generation: specifically, the idea that Russia's historically-exceptional path is but a short window of opportunity that, if not intervened upon *voluntaristically,* would fade away as conditions became more developed. Thus, just as Tkachev, decades earlier, cried, "Today the whole future of the country is still in the hands of revolutionaries, tomorrow it will be too late,"[281] Lenin similarly urgently warned:

> The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal. With all my might I urge comrades to realise that everything now hangs by a thread; ... we must not wait. We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on. We must not wait! We may lose everything! ... The value of the immediate seizure of power.[282]

More broadly, this attitude also recalled the Slavophile and Narodnik idea that Russian underdevelopment constituted a form of advantage, i.e., its backwardness and distance from the modernity of capitalist-economic and politically-liberal developments—which Westernizers believed was essential to progressing further—instead precisely provided its exceptional path to reaching the end goal more directly. As such, Lenin concluded in a 1917 pamphlet that "Owing to ... the greater backwardness of Russia ... the revolution broke out in Russia earlier than in other countries."[283]

Furthermore, by seeking to eliminate any waiting period of further historical development preceding the socialist age, Lenin's preclusion of the liberal stage of political development also manifested along the same form of anti-liberal praxis advocated by the Revisionist Narodniks. As opposed to the Orthodox Marxist model of a necessary liberal phase of cultivating the masses' political consciousness,

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[281] Tkachev, "Program of the Journal," 288.
[282] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 26, 234.
[283] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 25, 368.

Lenin bypassed the 'unready' masses by way of a coup d'état from above. On the eve of the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin argued that the party must "alone" seize power—without waiting for the masses to get behind it.[284] Lenin did not want to wait for the people to democratically come to socialist conclusions, which the Marxist deterministic model predicted would occur among the working class by the end of processing through the liberal era. Instead, Lenin, in *Toward the Seizure of Power,* asserted that, regarding the notion of receiving mass support from below, "such a guarantee history has never proffered, and is absolutely in no position to proffer in any revolution."[285] Continuing, Lenin held that the Bolsheviks ought not wait for a democratically-decided decision by the masses through representative voting, but rather through more direct measures which bypassed any sort of constitutional or democratic procedure:

> To wait for the Constituent Assembly, *which will obviously not be for us,* is senseless ... With all my power I wish to persuade the comrades ... that on the order of the day questions that are not solved by conferences, by congresses (even by Congresses of Soviets), but ... by the struggle of armed masses.[286]

Two weeks after the Bolshevik coup d'etat, elections for the Constituent Assembly were held, constituting the sole free and "truly democratic election" ever held in 1,000 years of Russian history.[287] The result indicated a total defeat of the Bolshevik Party, receiving less than a quarter of the vote, losing to the Socialist Revolutionary Party.[288] Seeing that he did not have popular support, Lenin refused to abide by the will of the masses as expressed constitutionally in this liberal-democratic institution. Thus,

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[284] Lenin's *Collected Works*, vol. 26, 19-21.
[285] Lenin, quoted in Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin," 348.
[286] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 26, 234.
[287] Kichitaro Katsuda, "Russian Intellectual History and the Gorbachev Revolution," *International Journal on World Peace* 8, no. 2 (June 1991): 25.
[288] Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy*, trans. by Harold Shukman (London: Harper Collins, 1994), 173.

the very next day, the Bolsheviks locked down the building and declared that the Assembly had been dissolved.[289]

Instead of such democratic and representative measures of a liberal paradigm, Lenin opted to lead by authoritarian rule. He argued that this more direct approach of asserting the intelligentsia's will on behalf of the people would make "the masses" goal "a reality more quickly and effectively than will a parliamentary republic," and that such will proceed "more effectively for the benefit of the people if the whole state power is in its hands."[290] Indeed, "after the October Revolution, Lenin increasingly touted the ability of experts to solve the proletariat's problems and insisted that they [the party leaders] be given autonomy to do the work."[291] Here, Lenin was justifying the need for a "revolutionary dictatorship," which he noted constituted "an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America," i.e., the West which he felt Russia was a historical exception from.[292] Over the next two years, Lenin would forcefully expel all other parties and interest groups from the government—not only those representing other social classes such as the liberals, but also fellow socialists such as Plekhanov's Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries who won the election.[293] This was the birth of the one-party state, a notion which Martin Malia called an "unprecedented political system" up until

[289] Read, *Lenin: A Revolutionary Life,* 139.
[290] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, 53-54.
[291] Mayer, "Professional Revolutionary," 260.
[292] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, 38.
[293] Stephen J. Lee, *Lenin and Revolutionary Russia* (London: Routledge, 2003), 98-99.

that point,[294] which soon became authoritarian dictatorship that the Soviet Union would become notorious for.

Under this model, the revolution was declared by the intelligentsia before the mass populace and the societal conditions were ready for such a transition. Hence, this gap in 'correct' consciousness justified the authority of a 'transitory' state that would force the party's ideals onto the people. As such, the role of the Leninist party and official doctrine of the new state was to politically educate the workers in socialist doctrine and "dispel societal false consciousness," correcting them toward a state-mandated mentality.[295] This logic held, too, for the material realities and resources of Russia, which were still far from developed enough to realistically enter the communist dream. Consequently, in the decades to follow, the people would be dictatorially commanded to work to bring about the missing conditions of the new age they had sought to rush into. In this way, the state's all-embracing authority was justified as a temporary means to a distant end. Indeed, Lenin, less than a year after the Bolshevik coup, outlined the blueprint for the following steps to "complet[ing]" the revolution: In "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" (1918), Lenin clarified that a true realization of the promised socialist society was "only just beginning."[296] Until then, the populace had to pledge an "iron discipline while at work" and an "unquestioning obedience to the orders of individual representatives of the Soviet government … unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader;" the masses had to surrender their autonomy to the revolutionary dictatorship, trusting that the latter's mandated plans of action

[294] Martin Malia, "Lenin and the 'Radiant Future.'"
[295] Lenin's *Collected Works*, vol. 31, 316-317.
[296] Lenin's *Collected Works*, vol. 27, 235-77

would eventually bring about the promised utopia—"only its fulfilment will give us a socialist system."[297]

Conclusion

> In the last he ever wrote, Plekhanov recalled a remark from a fellow Marxist leader:
>
> I am rem[ind]ed of what Victor Adler said to me half-jokingly and half-seriously: 'Lenin is your son.' I replied: 'If he is my son, he is obviously illegitimate.' I think that the Bolsheviks' tactics are completely illegitimate conclusions drawn from those tactical positions which I preached, relying on the theory of Marx and Engels.[298]

From his conversion until his death, Plekhanov, the 'father of Russian Marxism' had sworn by what he believed were the original principles of the Western philosophy which he popularized in his nation. Inspired by promising trends of industrialization, Plekhanov sought to dispel the notion of Russian historical exceptionalism and declare the indisputable advent of Western modernity. Preaching a multi-staged itinerary of historical progression modeled after Occidental rhythms, he argued that Russia could not rush into the socialist age through some unique and expedited path but rather had to humbly follow in the footsteps of Western developmental precedents. Thus, in dismissing the notion of a historical advantage and shortcut via societal 'backwardness' and preaching the necessity of an era of political liberalism, Plekhanov ultimately asserted the conviction that Russia was not historically exceptional, after all, but rather belonged to the Western universal timeline of history. Crusading against the Narodnik movement, Plekhanov introduced a foreign socialist methodology that reared a new

[297] Ibid.
[298] Plekhanov, quoted in Mayer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 276.

generation of Russian revolutionaries, who would ultimately bring about the long-theorized revolution. Yet his pupil who ultimately brought the revolution to fruition, Vladmir Lenin, deeply modified the original doctrine—revisions that ultimately resulted in the rushed and technocratic nature of the Russian Socialist Revolution.

These controversial characteristics of the Russian Socialist Revolution evidently displayed a continuity of the older indigenous ideas that the Orthodox Marxist creed had rejected. Despite the decline of the original Narodnik movement, its intellectual heritage of Russian historical exceptionalism ultimately survived into Lenin's theory and practice. Though the peasant commune was declining, the concept of 'reversing backwardness,' first begun by the Slavophiles, appeared to deeply figure in Lenin's approach to justifying the timing of the revolution. Through his theory of the 'weakest link,' he rationalized how the socialist revolution would first arise not among the most developed capitalist societies of Western Europe, but rather in the most underdeveloped peripheries. Through such a theoretical corollary, Russia's 'backwardness' would, indeed, provide a more expedited course of progression into the highest stage of development. Further, instead of awaiting the completed proletarianization of the peasantry and the emergence of a domestic bourgeoise—which the Western-centric Orthodox Marxists had mandated as historical preconditions—Lenin sought to capitalize on his nation's incomplete or premature conditions: he devised a strategy of incorporating the peasantry alongside a fledgling proletariat as the demographic to complete a stage of revolution otherwise reserved for a liberal segment of society that had yet to develop. Moreover, within this adapted framework of stage progression, Lenin repeatedly emphasized the need to instantaneously proceed into the socialist

phase—ultimately presenting an accelerated and voluntaristic vision of revolution that only formally maintained Marxism in name, while essentially calling for a direct transition into the socialist epoch.

As part of this mentality, in seeking to practically cut out the liberal political phase which the Orthodox Marxists insisted ought to precede the socialist era, Lenin displayed a conspicuous revival of the anti-liberal positions of the earlier theorists of Russian historical exceptionalism. Unconsciously echoing the Slavophiles, Herzen, and the Narodniks, Lenin was similarly hostile to the development of liberal institutions and constitutional frameworks, which Plekhanov's Westernizing worldview had prioritized. Yet, crucially, Lenin's inheritance of the anti-liberal tradition particularly featured the political praxis of the Revisionist Narodnik branch of thought, i.e., the last turn in the intellectual genealogy's evolution before the original movement's decline amid the rise of Russian Marxism. Indeed, the Revisionist Narodnik's political strategy for ensuring a rushed revolution and direct progression to socialism in the absence of suitable conditions and an unprepared populace proved fitting for the comparable circumstances in which Lenin sought to construct such a historical transition. Accordingly, then, Lenin rejected liberalism to choose authoritarianism, ultimately precluding a popular movement from below in favor of an elitist coup from above—putting the intelligentsia in power of a technocratic state through which to actualize the missing conditions of communism through dictatorial command over the masses. The idea of an exceptional Russian path of historical progression, which survived, evolved, and adapted across multiple generations of thinkers, finally culminated in this ruthless manifestation. Reflecting on the unprecedented nature of the revolution he led, Lenin proudly recalled in an essay titled "Our Revolution" (1923), that his nation uniquely possessed and capitalized on "the

opportunity to create the fundamental requisites of civilization in a different way from that of the Western European countries."[299]

[299] Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 33, 476–80.

CONCLUSION

ON THE 28TH of December, 1922, the Soviet Union was officially proclaimed, formalizing the establishment of the world's first self-declared socialist state.[1] Five years after seizing power in October 1917, Lenin and his Bolshevik faction had prevailed through a bloody civil war, crushing resistance and securing authority over the former Russian Empire. Marxism was declared the official ideology of the state. Yet this foreign philosophy, bred in the industrially-advanced and politically-reformed lands of Western Europe, did not expect its vision for the next stage of history to be first attained by such an underdeveloped nation to the East, a still-predominantly agrarian society fresh out of a monarchical autocracy. Nor did the original theorists behind this doctrine intend for the supposed epoch of working-class liberation to come through a dictatorial regime that sought to decree the conditions of communism into existence.

Though this event has long appeared to be conspicuously divergent from the original code through which it signaled its legitimacy, this thesis has shown how the Russian Revolution's peculiarities from Western historical frameworks deserve an alternative angle of analysis. Rather than focusing on how it departed from the models it claimed to follow, this thesis has instead shown how such apparent divergences from one philosophical tradition may, rather, stand as consistent continuations of another. In identifying an unexpected ideological ancestry that prefigured, survived, and evolved into core ideas

[1] John Schwarzmantle, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 643-651.

behind the Bolshevik Revolution, this thesis has sought to open an alternative contextual foreground for explaining the roots of this controversial event.

In particular, this thesis has tracked an intellectual tradition whose genealogy can be traced from an anti-Westernizer philosophy, formulated by monarchist conservatives in the early-to-mid-1800s, to the faction of revolutionary radicals who ultimately launched the socialist revolution at the start of the new century. In doing so, this narrative specifically challenges the prevailing conception of the Russian revolutionary heritage as having unilaterally grown out of the Westernizer school—by instead presenting an ideological ancestry founded against that very ethos. In this way, the revolution's departures from Western normativity, instead, signified the manifestations of a prefiguring worldview precisely founded on making such departures from the West.

This intellectual inheritance centered around the concept that Russia's timeline of historical progression was exceptional from that of Western Europe. This notion was first posited by the conservative Slavophiles in the 1830s-40s, as a reaction against the Western image of Russia as a 'backward' society perpetually lagging behind and belatedly following the West's trend-setting developments. These thinkers responded by turning this notion on its head: reversing the connotations of 'backwardness,' they celebrated Russia's underdevelopment as rather signifying a separate and superior road of societal evolution from that of the West. Specifically, they insisted, Russia's 'backward' holdouts against modernity would prove to provide a more conducive path to attaining the very type of societal ideal which Western progressives were chasing: a collectivistic freedom, i.e., socialism. This belief system glorified the nation's emblem of underdevelopment, its communalistic agrarian communities, as the basis of its dream of beating the Occident to a communistic utopia.

The politically-ambivalent Alexander Herzen in the 1840s-50s sympathized with these Slavophile concepts and radicalized such premises into an explicitly socialist vision. Russia, he declared, by virtue of its retention of archaic communalistic foundations, possessed a shortcut to evolving a socialist society, thereby precluding the need for modernizing along Western examples. In other words, the original conservative call for a temporal return from Occidental modernity now evolved into a vision of skipping over it, i.e., seeking to leapfrog into the next stage of history. These ideas were then inherited by the Narodniks of the 1870s, who clashed against the Western universalism of the increasingly-popular Marxists, instead continuing to assert Russia's exceptional path of bypassing the capitalist paradigm to proceed directly from, and through, its 'backward' conditions into the socialist future. Finally, such ideas evidently survived into Lenin's peculiar application of Marxism. Through a series of theoretical modifications to the Marxist framework of successive-stage progression, Lenin embraced and capitalized on the nation's underdeveloped features to push a premature Russia into the anticipated age of socialism.

In identifying such continuities, this thesis has also carved out a novel lineage of intellectual evolution which ties together seemingly-incompatible and mutually-hostile schools of thought. Interestingly, this study has found that such political hostilities and differences ultimately converged through a common aversion to the liberal paradigm. Indeed, the Slavophile longing for a pre-liberal Russia seemed to horseshoe with the post-liberal objectives of the Narodnik and Bolshevik socialists. Yet it is also within this continuous theme that one finds a doctrinal flexibility that allowed this ideological heritage to survive not only across different political philosophies but also through the changing material circumstances that constantly challenged the feasibility of such idealistic visions. As such, the notion of

anti-liberalism was redefined in terms of political praxis to accommodate the perpetuation of the old vision amid new realities.

Indeed, the political differences and generational separations between each constituent milieu of this ideological lineage inevitably gave rise to logistical impracticalities and antimonies—in maintaining the feasibility of the inherited ideals as they grew ever more anachronistic from the original contexts in which they were posited. Ever since the Slavophiles' conservative aims were remade into radical-socialist ones under Herzen, the following generation of Narodniks had to reckon with the paradox of striving for a progressive evolution via the retention of societal underdevelopment. At first, the hole in practical logic was filled by a mythical image of 'the people' and their supposedly communistic ways, which was expected to be the vehicle of conjuring the intended socioeconomic transformation. However, once the masses were increasingly revealed to not have embodied such sophisticated philosophies, coupled with a decline of communal arrangements amid a modernizing Russia, the dream of a historically-exceptional road had lost the hollow foundations on which it was first built. In other words, perhaps Russia was not naturally predisposed to make this back-to-front leap in the race of historical development, after all. To fill this enlarging gap between infeasible realities and a stubborn adherence to the exceptional plot, the intelligentsia increasingly saw the need to intervene—to forge the ideals once thought to have uniquely and organically existed in their society. What was once believed to sprout from 'the people' below now had to be imposed onto the same people from above. Thus, Lenin inherited a blueprint in which he ultimately tried to rush his 'backward' nation into the promised utopia, where the missing preconditions now had to be forced into reality. In this way, perhaps one could say that the last became first; but at what cost?

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