AFTER REVOLUTIONS

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THE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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The Russian Revolution may be seen in three various ways:

Firstly, as an event in the history of Russia, which was caused by its inherent properties and social and political attributes, particular circumstances, contradictions and obstacles in its historical growth; secondly, as an incident of Russian history which fits into a more general pattern of revolutionary events, but which also may serve as its distinct 'sample,' a lesson, a warning for the rest of the world; the Russian Revolution thus would reveal more general rules, threats and controversies of social development, thereby suggesting to other societies the necessary preventive acts which would allow them to avoid the catastrophe of revolution; thirdly, the Russian Revolution may be seen as a structural element of a wider revolutionary process, an element that may be indispensable and essential; this universal context is not seen (as previously) in terms of an independent, though analogous example of a revolutionary event, but as the decisive environment of the Russian Revolution; in this take, we speak of the socialist, proletarian (and before that, bourgeois) nature of the Russian Revolution, of the way it fulfilled Marxist theory and its vision of history (though with the necessity for Western, universal adjustment), or a cruelly and irrevocably falsified Marxist utopia.

The article is devoted to these three interpretations of the problem.

Key words: Revolution, Russia, *De profundis*, Arendt, Marxism

1.

The Russian Revolution represents a topic particularly resistant to any attempts of reflective formulation and comprehension. This is due, firstly, to the extraordinary accumulation of dynamic and interdependent historical facts. We may arrive at views in direct contrast with each other: starting from a vision of events as the inevitable, fatalistic consequence of certain causes, and ending with a conviction of the absolutely arbitrary coincidence of chance circumstances; we may even attain more comprehensive and far-reaching arbitrariness in correlating and organizing these facts. Secondly, this 'anarchy of events' is combined with the great conceptual, theoretical and ideological potential of the Russian Revolution. Long before it began and long after it was over (whenever we appoint this end), and certainly while it lasted, it was variously described and explained, in multiple attempts to embed it into diverse conceptions, projects, theoretical, political, ideological, axiological, mythological schemes, including the historiosophical patterns which interest us the most at the moment. Each new attempt to conceptualize the Russian Revolution

is riddled with these circumstances and risks, but it also contains, for these very reasons, a certain creative potential – which may not be taken for granted, and yet may be postulated and expected.

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Firstly, as an event in the history of Russia, one caused by its inherent properties and social and political attributes, particular circumstances, contradictions and obstacles in its historical growth; revolution thus appears as a permanent threat, or a redemptive myth, as well as historical revenge for all the ills of Russian history;

Secondly, as an incident of Russian history that fits into a more general pattern of revolutionary events, but which also may serve as its distinct 'sample,' a lesson, a warning for the rest of the world; the Russian Revolution thus would reveal more general rules, threats and controversies of social development, thereby suggesting to other societies the necessary preventive acts which would allow them to avoid the catastrophe of revolution, or indicating the redeeming differences in the structure, dynamics and nature of these societies;

Thirdly, the Russian Revolution may be seen as a structural element of a wider revolutionary process, an element that may be indispensable and essential; this universal context is not seen (as previously) in terms of an independent, though analogous example of a revolutionary event, but as the decisive environment of the Russian Revolution; in this take, we speak of the socialist, proletarian (and before that, bourgeois) nature of the Russian Revolution, of the way it fulfilled the Marxist theory and vision of history (though with the necessity for a Western, universal adjustment), or a cruelly and irrevocably falsified Marxist utopia.

We may add that these three takes on the Russian Revolution are not quite distinct from each other, but overlap and intersect. This, however, does not undermine the proposed categorization, since it is usually the case, and should motivate one to constantly verify, but not discard such categories.

2.

Let us begin with the 'Russian' perspective. We may say that Piotr Chaadayev's *Philosophical Letter* of 1836 begun the trend of a radical, fundamental civilizational turn in Russian history, and this concept matured and was further radicalized in the annals of Russian social philosophy and under the influence of the despotic politics of the government, and was seen to have materialized in the mutinies and uprising of the 17th and 18th centuries. By the 19th century, revolution had become a general slogan, the myth and the objective of the Russian intelligentsia. It found its conceptual and theoretical expression in various forms of Occidentalism, anarchism, nihilism, the *Narodniki* movement, Marxism or Enlightenment, and its sway over the Russian liberalist movements (for instance, its influence on the program and ideology of the Constitutional Democrats) and Russian

bohemian circles was overwhelming. This universal conviction of the inevitability and self-evident purpose of revolution is somewhat constrained only at the end of 19th century by the Legal Marxism movement (this must be stressed, even if this restraint in relation to the idea of revolution meant merely pushing it into a more remote fully capitalist future for Russia), as well as during the Russian religious philosophical renaissance, which attempted to redefine the intellectual and conceptual history of the country, i.e., the tradition of intelligentsia, and thus problematize the political and intellectual issues and ideas of the Russian Revolution. This took a spectacular, even scandalous form on the pages of the famous almanac *Vekhi* (Signposts) published in 1909, in a desperate and ultimately futile search for a third way between the interlocked and mutually galvanizing radicalisms: the reactionary radicalism of Tsarism and the revolutionary radicalism of the left-wing intelligentsia. A confirmation of this failure and of the inevitability of Russian revolution, a record written in direct confrontation with the Revolution, and yet in some intellectual detachment from it, detachment originating from *Vekhi*, was the almanac *Out of the Depths (De Profundis)* published by the same authors ten years later. The analyses contained in this publication will be the primary material for our examination of the Russian Revolution as national fate and national catastrophe.

In the opinion of almost all the authors of *De Profundis*, those distinguished, eminent representatives of the Russian religious and philosophical renaissance, the Russian Revolution was inevitable, a natural result of the errors and flaws of Russian history. As Sergei Askol'dov wrote: 'of course, this ultimate manifestation of the evil, disorganizing forces of community in moments of revolution has its underlying causes in the preceding periods;'[1] moreover, 'by bringing evil to fruition and manifesting it in an obvious and, so to speak, ripened form, revolution at the same time also serves the good' – even if only indirectly and eventually. Nikolai Berdyaev agrees: 'our old national illnesses and sins led to the revolution and defined its character;'[2] 'a long historical path leads to revolutions, and they reveal a national uniqueness even when they convey heavy blows to national might and to national dignity;'[3] and even if Revolution in Russia is to be 'dismal, terrible, and dark, that it would include no rebirth of the people,'[4] a way must be sought not to return to prerevolutionary tyranny and injustice, but to post-revolutionary spiritual transformation. On the same subject, Sergei Bulgakov writes: 'if the revolution did not succeed, it was because of errors, weaknesses, and passions, but by itself it was necessary and beneficial

[1] Sergei Askol'dov, 'The Religious Meaning of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths (De Profundis) Articles on the Russian Revolution*, trans. William Woehrlin (Irvine, CA: Charles Schlacks Jr, 1986), p. 11.

[2] Nikolai Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 33.

[3] Berdayev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 33

[4] Berdayev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 50.

in any case.'[5] And Piotr Struve writes: 'the revolution was prepared and created from two ends: the historical monarchy with its jealous refusal to admit cultured and educated groups to authoritative participation in the structure of the state; and the intelligentsia of the country, with its shortsighted struggle against the state,'[6] while the forces of revolution 'entered into Russian development, not as organizing creative forces of construction, but only as disintegrating, destructive forces of subversion,'[7] demanding a healthy reaction in defense of the people, state, civilization, a religious rebirth, or, as Siemion Frank puts it, 'some kind of moral departure from the point of stagnation.'[8] A fitting summary of this embeddedness of Russian revolution in the history of Russia and its meaning would be, as stated by Alexander Izgoev: 'the lesson learned was terrible, but perhaps there was no other path to our recovery.'[9] This 'recovery' must come – let us make this unambiguous – not from revolution itself, but from the reactions to it, spiritual, religious responses caused by its violence and its destructive force, responses which reconstruct and restore national and state integrity.

The revolution itself is for the authors cited above a passive, secondary event, poor in historical value, and thus falsely dynamic, hysterical, fraudulent in its pretensions for political and historiosophical novelty. Lev Shestov even spoke of the conservative and in this sense reactionary, lethargic nature of the Russian Revolution,[10] which is therefore a denial of the futurist and avant-garde ethos of revolution as such. This feature of the revolution will be described particularly well, in a particularly striking way – also in the philosophical sense – by Berdyaev: 'Everything is illusory. Illusory are all parties, illusory are all authorities, illusory are all the heroes of the revolution. Nowhere can one discover a firm being,'[11] and this quality he defined as the 'absence of the ontological' within the Russian Revolution. During the same period, though in a different publication, Berdyaev writes of the 'spirit of nonbeing' and the 'spirit of nothingness' permeating revolution and revolutionaries, who passively grow out of the degenerate, 'putrid and devastating'[12] aspects of Russian history. Such an 'absence of the ontological,' as another author of *De Profundis* notes, was a denial and a falsification of the essential meaning of Marxism, especially in its original sense, and a denial of its accomplishments in Russia, where the

5 Sergei Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 77.

6 Peter Struve, 'The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 210.

7 Struve, 'The Historical Meaning of the Russian Revolution and National Tasks', p. 211.

8 Siemion Frank, 'De Profundis,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 234.

9 Alexander Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 144.

10 Lew Szestow, 'Czym jest bolszewizm', trans. C. Wodziński, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6-7. XI. 1999.

11 Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 39.

12 Mikołaj Bierdiajew, *Filozofia nierówności*, trans. J. Chmielewski, (Kęty: Marek Derewiecki, 2006), p. 6, 24, 9.

'[Marxist] struggle with *narodnichestvo* [Popularism] was, methodologically, a struggle for the right to objective knowledge. (…) In its original testaments, Marxism appealed to economic realism; it destroyed false *narodniki* idealism, and thereby, despite the desire of its representatives, facilitated the affirmation of true idealism in Russia.'[13] This idealism is here understood as Russian religious philosophy, which lays the foundation for realism and ontologism – and, paradoxically, for Marxism itself. In this case, 'the very transitions 'from Marxism to idealism,' of course, are not fortuitous.'[14]

Such metaphysical anti-ontologism takes the form of the sins of which the Russian Revolution was most frequently accused: nihilism and utopianism. The anti-ontological nature of utopianism is perfectly explained by Pawel Novgorodtsev in the subsequent essay in the collection: 'every utopia presents its own dream of universal organization and, along with that, of the simplification of life. They claim that one can find a single word, a single means, a single principle that has some omnipotent and all-healing significance; and that, in agreement with this principle, one can construct life according to reason,' while for the purposes of the current discussion we might say 'according to a decidedly subjective idea.' In any case, this is 'an interruption of history,' in essence a negation of life through a 'simplification of life.'[15]

Nihilism may be seen as the anthropological expression of anti-ontologism. As Berdyaev explains, nihilism is a radical, maximalist attitude, which gives no concessions, rejecting all barriers, limits, hard facts. Such ontological emptiness combined with unlimited ambition intensifies all projects and actions pushing each 'to the end, to the limit.'[16] In effect, it 'provides the grounds for confusion and substitution, for pseudo-religion,' and this appears to grant revolution a comprehensive importance and gravity, in which parodies, slogans and phrases profess the most exorbitant claim to reality. These claims may at times be attractive in their impressive sway and exaltation (or, more precisely, sickly sentimental sensitivity, a literary expression of which may be found in Ivan Karamazov's quarrel with God over the tears of a child), but their essence is precisely anti-ontological, nihilistic: 'let the whole world go up in flames,' since it cannot bring happiness to all; let the pursuit of universal happiness obliterate unhappy arbitrariness, diversity and uncertainty; let there be 'the total dissolution of all personal and multifarious existence into a featureless, qualityless universality,' in 'equality in non-being.' Precisely so: 'the Russian revolution also wishes to plunge all of Russia, and all of the Russian people, into just such a negative, absolute, empty, and nihilistic state'[17] (which is expressed in literature in the world of the

[13] Sergei Kotliarevskii, 'Recovery,' in *Out of the Depths,* p. 152.

[14] Kotliarevskii, 'Recovery', p. 152.

[15] Pavel Novgorodtsev, 'On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia,' in *Out of the Depths*, p. 188.

[16] Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 42.

[17] Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 56-58.

Grand Inquisitor and the figure of Shigalev). Devoid of a self-organizing essence, revolution becomes a theater of temporary intrigues and projects, manipulations, private interests and violence; revolution's intention is to 'turn the Russian people from reality and plunge them into the kingdom of illusions.'[18]

Let us repeat that above all, the Russian Revolution, in the opinion of all the authors of *De Profundis*, 'is the awful wages for the sins and maladies of the past, for the compounded lies, for the negligence of the Russian government and ruling classes in fulfilling their mission, for the hundred-year-long meanders of the Russian intelligentsia, inspired by abstract ideas and illusory, fraudulent phantoms.'[19] The final verifying judgment over this was the reaction of the people. In the face of revolution, 'the Russian people suddenly turned out not to be Christian,'[20] and it was clear that 'there are no longer monarchical feelings in the Russian people.'[21] The absence of the ontological in the revolution found its expression in the utopianism and nihilism of the revolutionaries, in the anti-modern obstinacy of the government, and also in the temporary nature of the ideals and behavior of the people. Populist convictions in the historical and moral substantiality of the people, of the people being the soil of Russia, turned out to be merely myths circulated by the intelligentsia, which concealed the moral transience, social dispersion, historical temporariness of the people element, its complete derivability in relation to revolutionary anti-ontologism. According to Novgorodtsev, it came to a point when it appeared 'that all may do with Russia what they wish.'[22] Vasili Rozanov wrote with some bewilderment in *The Apocalypse of our Time* that at the moment of Revolution, Russia 'disintegrated in the blinking of an eye,''from day to day,' miserably, without any exaltation and tragic mien, that 'all at once everyone forgot about Christianity.'[23]

Curiously, this anti-ontological aspect of the Revolution will be repeated many years later in the opinions and observations regarding the end of the Soviet Union. We may find an example of such an attitude in Alain Besançon's *Holy Russia* and other writings by the same author. One of the key proofs of the negative, anti-ontological nature of the entire structure and essence of the Soviet Union was for him the suddenness and peculiar imperceptibility of its demolition. This was the final proof which confirmed that communism was not rooted in existence, that it was fictional, unreal, that it lacked any outposts in the actual real life. As Besançon wrote, the Soviet governmental machine at the beginning of the 1990s 'threw in the towel and disintegrated. The Empire was dispersed in

18 Berdyaev, 'Specters of the Russian Revolution', p. 64.
19 Bierdiajew, *Filozofia nierówności*, p. 23.
20 Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods', p. 104.
21 Bulgakov, 'At the Feast of the Gods', p. 83.
22 Novgorodtsev, 'On the Paths and Tasks of the Russian Intelligentsia', p. 183.
23 Vasily Rozanov, *The Apocalypse of Our Time, and Other Writings*, (New York: Praeger, 1977).

but a single moment.'[24] Ryszard Legutko, clearly sympathetic to Besançon's view, also notes this aspect: 'though Besançon deferred making statements on the collapse of the USSR for a long time, this disintegration in itself in essence confirmed his diagnosis (…). The Soviet regime did not evolve, and it also was not revolutionized. One moment the USSR just vanished, and despite its gigantic power, this collapse was almost entirely silent.'[25] In this context we may note also the fate of Soviet Marxism, which 'during the escalation of Stalinism, and remaining in essence unchanged and still undergoing expansion and intensification even after Stalin's death, rather than the postulated living dialectical thought of Marx or at least Hegel began to resemble Medieval scholastics (of the worst variety) in its schematic, doctrinal, hair-splitting quality, with a tendency to dress up self-evident banalities as scientific profundities. It was obvious that this intolerable intellectual position was sustained only due to an artificial, interfering and coercive external (political) element, and that without it the entire masterful construction of Soviet Marxism would collapse – without causing anyone pain or even a semblance of regret – like a house of cards.'[26] And this is precisely what happened.

3.

Let us now turn to the second kind of approach to the Russian Revolution, with the universal context as the preeminent element. Let us examine revolution as such, and as a warning and historical lesson for the world. Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1963) provided an especially useful and effective supporting apparatus for these reflections.

As Arendt explains, revolutions are not simply transformations or sudden conversions; 'revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning.'[27] Revolution is supposed to constitute a new order. Its task is liberation, it is directed against tyrants and oppression usually at the moment when it becomes intolerable and drives the revolution's negating edge. However, the freedom attained coincides with the ushering in of 'an entirely new era,' 'with experience of a new

[24] Alain Besançon, 'Tezy o Rosji minionej i obecnej', trans. Wiktor Dłuski, in Alain Besançon, *Świadek wieku. Wybór publicystyki z pierwszego i drugiego obiegu*, vol. I, ed. Filip Memches, (Warszawa: Fronda, 2006), p. 263.

[25] Ryszard. Legutko, 'Gnoza polityczna: Besançon i Voegelin', in *Gnoza polityczna*, ed. Jan Skoczyński, (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 1998), p. 24.

[26] Janusz Dobieszewski, 'Współczesny renesans rosyjskiej filozofii religijnej. Perspektywy i zagrożenia', in *Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis XIV. Acta Slavica. Tradycja chrześcijańska Wschodu i Zachodu w kulturze Słowian*, ed. Adam Bezwiński, (Bydgoszcz: Filharmonia Pomoroska, 2006), p. 11-12. See also Janusz Dobieszewski, 'Sprawy rosyjskie u Alaina Besançona', *Pressje*, XXXV/2013, p. 204–205.

[27] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 20.

beginning,'[28] and only in such a case is it truly freedom. Freedom means liberation from oppression, but also from the continuation of a fundamental, constituting, subjective, political way of being. Revolution consists in the combination of the pathos of liberation with the pathos of novelty. Next (in the theoretical order, in the order of meaning), comes 'violence,'[29] which is not the exclusive property of revolution only, as well as a momentary impulse[30] (occasion) and a 'rotating, cyclical'[31] (emerging, disappearing and appearing anew) aspect of revolution as an 'irresistible flow,' a movement that cannot be stopped, a current that is 'overwhelming,' which brings us to a point of no return, 'irrevocable,'[32] usually resulting in the 'feeling of awe and wonder at the power of history itself.'[33]

In Arendt's opinion, revolution is a modern phenomenon and it emerged on the arena of history in two incarnations, which the author of *On Revolution* sees as the only possibilities: the American vs. the French Revolution. The first is for Arendt closest to the ideal requirements of revolution, especially in its libertarian bond between freedom and novelty (beginning). It is also a revolution that succeeded – it managed to liberate from oppression and constituted a new political (public, self-governing) order, a permanent order, the 'entirely new era,' and it 'did not devour its own children.'[34] Yet, this most ideal, 'correct' revolution was to be a historical exception. The norm (and this applies even to the description and evaluation of the American Revolution) was the way of the French Revolution. The struggle against oppression was almost immediately dominated not by the constitution of novelty and true liberty (which would conform to Arendt's model spirit of revolution), but by the secondary, coming now into the foreground, moments of violence and necessity, which were pushed forward by 'the social question,' completely new for the spirit of revolution and absent during the American Revolution. Violence, necessity, the struggle with poverty and – emerging out of these – the struggle for survival became the signal signs of revolution. Concentration, meticulousness, responsibility and also freedom, vision and realism in constituting the reality characteristic for the American Revolution were replaced in the French Revolution by a situation in which 'none of its actors could control the course of events, that this course took a direction which had little if anything to do with the willful aims and purposes of the anonymous force of the revolution if they wanted to survive at all.'[35] The Russian Revolution 'which for our century has had the same

28 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 29.

29 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 35.

30 Maria Brand, *Rewolucja bolszewicka w myśli Hannah Arendt: od obietnicy wolności do totalitaryzmu*, in *Totalitaryzm XX wieku: idee, instytucje, interpretacje*, ed. Bogdan Szlachta et al., (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010), p. 292.

31 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 47.

32 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 54.

33 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 50.

34 Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 44.

35 Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 51.

profound meaningfulness of first crystallizing the best of men's hopes and then realizing the full measure of their despair that the French Revolution had for its contemporaries,'[36] as Arendt writes, belongs to the very same current. The founding qualities of revolution - liberty and novelty – were transformed into 'the two-edged compulsion of ideology and terror.'

It may seem that in the Russian context this social element, that is, the struggle with poverty, was self-evident and the factual premise and purpose of the Revolution in Russia, in the realm of poverty, an underdeveloped country not unfamiliar with famine. Thus, we may suppose that for objective reasons the Russian Revolution could not have been about freedom (especially as a synthesis of liberation and constitution), but had to fight for the wellbeing of the people, or even for the survival of the people, with all the ruthless, fatalistic political and economic logic particular to such purpose. It may seem that what appeared as the degeneration of the revolutionary spirit during the French Revolution – when poverty instead of freedom became the foremost political force – was in the Russian context entirely justified. This complete concentration on the social issues, on poverty leads – as Arendt shows, grasping with exceptional aptness the psychological leaven and energy of the Russian Revolution – to the natural, and even lofty and praiseworthy transformation of the 'ocean of poverty' into the 'ocean of compassion,' which in turn becomes the ocean of joyful or at least suiting violence. This 'magic of compassion'[37] ('the most powerful and perhaps the most devastating passion motivating revolutionaries'[38]), this 'capacity to lose oneself in the sufferings of others' (valued above 'active goodness'[39]), seeing pity as the 'spring of virtue'[40] (which may 'possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself'[41]), Arendt perceptively identified as qualities of the French Revolution. But all these qualities are even more present – both in the literature of the subject and in public opinion - in the Russian context. Such an unmasking of cheap revolutionary sentimentalism is fully compatible with Berdyaev's attempts to expose the cheap and sickly sensibility of the Russian intelligentsia which lies at the origins of the Russian revolutionary movement, and which found its spectacular expression in the religious revolt of Ivan Karamazov, and its fulfilment in the world of the Grand Inquisitor (who appears exactly in this role in Arendt's writings).[42]

And yet, reducing the sources of the Russian Revolution to poverty and underdevelopment is far from simple. In the theoretical aspect it is contradicted by

36 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 57.
37 Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 81.
38 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 72.
39 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 81.
40 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 89.
41 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 89.
42 Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 82.

the generalized principle of revolutionary uprisings, one based on careful observation, while in the practical aspect – by the historical facts from the period before and after the Revolution in Russia. To begin with, let us tackle the first aspect. According to the widely held opinion, revolutions erupt not at the moments of extreme social crisis, in circumstances of appalling poverty and absurd injustice, but when the crisis begins to be overcome, the extremity is conquered and the dysfunctional state begins to mend itself, when social aspirations are raised and attention is drawn to social injustices, which are also - at least in some measure, seen as conquerable, and there is hope in the effectiveness of social action, the obtainability of a rational and useful life, accessibility to fair values, a critical but also creative reckoning with the past. Revolutions erupt not when society seems to be facing an abyss, when death, chaos and barbarity seem the only alternatives, but when the worst is left behind and new perspectives and possibilities arise, and when political power is in the hands of the forces which see such opportunities and perspectives as a threat. Let us now look at Russia and we will realize that the reforms of Alexander II created political and social advantages, which were further developed under the economic pressure of international competition as well as under the influence of internal liberal, revolutionary and national forces, and this reached its apogee in the 1905 Revolution. Stolypin's reforms were an attempt to find a 'third way' for Russia which was to lead the country out of the mutually propelling radicalisms of reactionary power and revolutionary movements. Notwithstanding errors, inconsistencies, obstacles, inhibitions, deceits and provocations, at the turn of the century Russia was an incredibly dynamic country, which was coming out of its protracted lethargy, rapidly modernizing itself, and therefore perfectly fulfilling the 'positive' condition of revolution described above. Richard Pipes writes: 'by 1900, with one exception, the patrimonial regime was a thing of the past: the exception was the country's political system.'[43] Moreover, 'it is generally agreed by economic historians that on the eve of World War I, by which time the value of her industrial production had risen to 5.7 billion rubles, Russia had the fifth-largest economy in the world, which was impressive even if, proportionate to her population, her industrial productivity and income remained low.'[44] Pipes cites the French economist Edmond Thery who wrote in 1912 that 'if Russia maintained until 1950 the pace of economic growth that she had had since 1900, by the middle of the twentieth century she would dominate Europe politically, economically, and financially.'[45] This view is supported by Andrzej Walicki, who cites the opinion of another economist, Alexander Gerschenkron, who wrote of the 'impressive achievements of the Russian economy at the beginning of 20th century.'[46]

43 Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 55.

44 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 79.

45 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* p. 189.

46 Andrzej Walicki, 'Miejsce ekonomii w moim ujęciu intelektualnej historii Rosji. Próba zwięzłego podsumowania', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 3(444)/2014, p. 10.

Poverty, destitution, underdevelopment are of course present during and before the Russian Revolution, but these are not the causes which are indispensable, initiating and permanent – they are not the deciding factors. The social question is situated here in a similar way as during the French Revolution – as the result of the revolutionary politics, as a project of the chosen logic or revolutionary necessity, which tries to appear as a natural necessity at the very foundations of human survival – the 'right to 'food, dress, and the reproduction of the species".[47] The Russian Revolution followed the path which had been marked as the revolutionary pattern by the French Revolution, and this pattern ousted and displaced another norm, to which Arendt gives her decided preference: the norm of civil society and of the freedom established by the American Revolution.

However, despite the decided success of the social question as the propelling force of revolution in the course of history, the real cause of revolution – the purpose of reclaiming liberation, freedom, dignity – was not to be ignored and constantly and most spectacularly tried to renew the meaning of revolution, even in the midst of social, poverty-combatting (and as a result, resorting to mass violence and terror) revolutionary realities. Arendt writes of the 'lost treasure'[48] of revolution, which continuously grappled for its own purposes in a noble and energetic fight, struggling to retain the original libertarian, constituting the pre-social, pre-natural, pre-necessity-bound essence of revolution. In France this was manifested in the revolutionary societies and communal councils, which fought with the Jacobean government and were crushed by the central power – not as an actual rival, but as the embodiment and alternative of the revolutionary norm.[49] In Russia, this was a system of councils which were first promoted, and next neutralized through the dictatorship of the party, and which were seen as dangerous not because of their actual current conflict with the government, but because of their alternative nature and originality in relation to the revolutionary government. Arendt writes that 'the communes, the councils, the Räte, the Soviets (…) clearly intended to survive the revolution,'[50] and this was the reason they became the object of growing resentment and pressure from the centralized government, and the turning point in Russia was the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921. Even if this rebellion became legendary, it manifested 'the failure of the revolutionary tradition to give any serious thought to the only new form of government born out of revolution.'[51] In the final count, revolutions of the 'French type' would end either in some kind of restoration, or in a single-party dictatorship. Even in the glorious American Revolution the project of the 'elementary republics' (municipal debates or council meetings) was by-passed when they were omitted in the Constitution, through

47 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 109.
48 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 280.
49 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 240-241.
50 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 256.
51 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 258.

'distortions and deformations' which finally resulted in the embarrassing limitation of the freedom of the people simply to election day itself.[52]

Let us add that this was not the only flaw or limitation of the American Revolution. Arendt, who decidedly prefers and affirms its model, is still aware of the price which was paid for the American Revolution's ideal, freedom-oriented and effective revolutionary nature. It did not have to side-track into the social issues because of the 'surprising prosperity' of the English colonies in America, which was made possible – just as in the Athenian polis – by the structural existence of common slavery; behind the American 'lovely equality' and American prosperity which included even the 'white trash,' stood the degrading destitution and hard labor of the black slaves.[53] Thus, the result of the American Revolution was not positive in its entirety and for Arendt in particular it becomes the object of bitter contemplations. This relates to the gradual displacement of the idea of universal happiness by 'private welfare,' 'the privacy of a home,' which essentially opposed the libertarian spirit of revolution, its interpersonal, political and public space.[54] Thus, not so much the participation in public affairs (in possession), but rather the space granted by the government for the private pursuit of happiness became the achievement of revolution; public affairs turned into duties and responsibilities, which the individuals try to rid themselves of as quickly as possible, so that 'their attention may be exclusively given to their personal interests.'[55] Liberty and government become opposites, moreover, – natural, permanent and evident opposites. As Arendt bitterly writes, as a result 'the American dream, as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under the impact of mass immigration came to understand it, was neither the dream of the American Revolution – the foundation of freedom - nor the dream of the French Revolution – the liberation of man; it was, unhappily, the dream of a 'promised land' where milk and honey flow.'[56]

This does not change the particular historical ethos of the American Revolution, nor does it negate the Russian revolution's belonging to the cannon of the French Revolution. The frequently made argument as to the continuation of the French Revolution on the part of the Russian Revolution involves their common origin: one spectacularly founded in France and no less spectacularly repeated in Russia.

There is one other, more general issue related to the way Arendt sees revolution. In her take, pathos or the greatness of revolution resides in its ability to establish new beginnings; revolution is permeated by the 'pathos of novelty' and the 'pathos of beginning,'[57] rooted in 'the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning,

52 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 249-250.
53 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 23, 25, 71.
54 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 130.
55 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 136.
56 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 139.
57 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 129, 37.

the high spirits which have always attended the birth of something new on earth.'[58] This is the most excellent act of human freedom, a manifestation of action (which is the highest form of human activity according to Arendt), and not merely of survival (always artisan, derivative) or (biological) life. 'It is by no means only we who call the men of the Revolution by the name of 'founding fathers', but that they thought of themselves in the same way,'[59] and they were right to do so; in their founding act was something of the measure of the absolute – free and productive. This beginning is based on the principle of the negation or questioning of the continuity of preceding historical events, indicating a breach, a fissure, a crack that requires 'repair,' 'restoration,' but also opens a completely new outlook; while the constitution of a beginning is – in Arendt's words – 'an unconnected, new event breaking into the continuous sequence of historical time.'[60] It brings with it 'a measure of complete arbitrariness,' which is the effect of it appearing 'as though it came out of nowhere in either time or space.'[61] This pathos of beginning appears to Arendt the most important manifestation of the power and splendour of revolution. She presents it as unquestionably positive, as a space in which freedom, novelty and action meet, while the risk connected with this – and there is something noble and spiritually powerful and sophisticated in accepting such a risk – makes man a being superior to God (since God due to His omniscience and omnipotence cannot experience risk, and therefore the fullness of freedom). However, this pathos of beginning appears to have a darker side to it, which Arendt overlooks, even though she suggests it involuntarily: 'great leaders (…) appear on the stage of history precisely in these [revolutionary] gaps of historical time.'[62] They are the agents of the revolutionary arbitrariness, and it – being arbitrary – may follow the most dangerous paths, first and foremost the path of leadership self-affirmation, which in turn may become (at first) a personalist particularization, which might next turn into various cults of the individual and reverence for the authoritarian power, in which, crucially, biological and necessity-driven aspects (filial sentiments, the cult of the mother Earth, kinship, traditional values, conservative and reactionary views, etc.) claim priority. Thus, even in the space that seems so permanent and solid, and exclusively connected with the fullness of revolutionary freedom-novelty, we find the potential for the degradation and degeneration of revolution, in its particularly foul form, because it is located at the very apex of the revolutionary eidos and ethos.

This leads us – not entirely by accident – to the issue of the most contemporary philosophical discussions, the issue which at least indirectly confirms the diagnosis provided above. The issue in question is the recent publication of Martin Heidegger's *The*

58 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 223.
59 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 203.
60 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.
61 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 206.
62 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.

Black Notebooks and Cezary Wodziński's *Metaphysics and Metapolitics* dedicated to them, who focuses on the comparatively new aspects (though of course, not entirely novel) in *The Black Notebooks*, that is, the philosophical basis of Heidegger's politics as well as broadly understood – and broadly and critically addressed – issue of Heidegger's role as the Rector in Heidelberg in 1933-34. As another Polish scholar perceptively and inspiringly notes, to grasp Wodzinski's idea of Heidegger's political thought in *The Black Notebooks* it is crucial to understand a certain term, or 'terminological compound,' that is, the 'pathos of inauguration.'[63] This expression combines the political exaltation, exhilaration and impatience which characterized Heidegger during this period, his revolutionary elation and pathos which we find in such expressions as 'complete metamorphosis' ('of our German essence'), 'final solution,' 'leap into the new beginning,' 'new foundation,' 'new order,' 'redirection of the entire nation,' 'fundamental break-through,' 'complete inversion,' 'new beginning,' 'total regeneration,' 'revolutionary reality' or 'rediscovery of the true beginning' in which 'The New is on the March! That which will change the world, man, gods.'[64] All this is brought about by the 'National-socialist Revolution,' and its rules are 'not in statements and 'ideas.' Only the Führer himself is the German reality and its law for today and tomorrow.'[65] Wodziński attempts to present, or even in some measure to excuse Heidegger's attitude rooted in this 'pathos of inauguration' (as an ill-conceived and time-bound transfer from the sphere of metaphysics into politics), but Lech Witkowski, cited above, is certain that this pathos is dangerous as a curse of the radical, revolutionary politics. It creates social excitement, sickly mobilization, which combines views and beliefs that 'we must definitely end everything that was here before us,' that a new beginning must be established, 'and we would be the guarantor, initiators and incarnation of its greatness,' that is, a 'resolute, strong and disciplined leap into the new beginning' must be accomplished, accompanied by 'faith in the metaphysical potential of the 'movement,' which must go on at any cost.' This exaltation cannot but lead to blindness, to the 'loss of vigilance based on one's awareness of one's responsibility and self-criticism,' effectually opening the field for barbarianism.

We may remember at this point that in relation to the Russian Revolution we were also dealing with attitudes similar to the pathos of inauguration. We are dealing here with the nihilistic negation of the previously existing world and setting in opposition to it an anti-ontological, moralistic and arbitrary ('violent') utopia, or a struggle with God over the tears of an abused child, based on falsified and sickly sensibility, which finds its resolution in the state of the Grand Inquisitor.

63 Lech Witkowski, 'Patos inauguratywności', *Przegląd Polityczny*, 143/2017, p. 155.

64 Cezary Wodziński, *Metafizyka i metapolityka*, (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2016), p. 34, 35, 57, 66-67, 73, 231.

65 Martin Heidegger, *Czarne zeszyty*, cited in Wodziński, *Metafizyka i metapolityka,* p. 65.

There is one more approach to the Russian Revolution to be discussed, the view which emphasises the universal aspect even more strongly than Arendt's theory; the approach which sees the Russian Revolution not as yet another – though perhaps more dramatic – example of the revolutionary species, but as an exceptional, original, even indispensable structural element of a wider, global revolutionary movement. This approach, as we know, is connected with the Marxist 'format' of the Russian Revolution.

Let us put aside the 'prehistory' of the issue, that is, the *narodniki* vision of the Russian Revolution and socialism in Russia and the fascinating debates between the *narodniki* and Marx and Engels on the chances of success for this revolution and this socialism – when success was not at all impossible.[66] Let us move straight away to the sphere of 'proper' Marxism which does not mean that we reject the importance of *narodniki* in underdeveloped countries, and their chances of success in history, or their 'privilege of underdevelopment' which was the basic premise for the *narodniki* in their hopes of a grand future for Russia.

One of the first and most important works which deal with underdeveloped countries and their role in the historical evolution of capitalism within the context of 'proper' Marxism is Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913). According to Luxemburg, the development of capitalism is possible only under condition of the existence of non-capitalist markets, internal and external pre-capitalist forms of social production. Without such a non-capitalist environment, accumulation and broadened reproduction, which constitute the essence of capitalism, would have been impossible. Such an environment is the indispensable buyer of capitalist over-production, the consumer of its surplus value. As an analysis of reproduction schemes shows, in a closed capitalist system the effect of production is higher than the purchasing, consumer capabilities of this system. Therefore 'the accumulation of capital, as an historical process, depends in every respect upon non-capitalist social strata and forms of social organisation'[67] in political struggle with them and incessant mutual interconnections. Yet, at the same time, through this process capitalism breaks and destroys pre-capitalist socio-economical forms, engulfing them within the framework of proper capitalist development. Thus, it destroys its own vital non-capitalist environment; through its development, it gradually limits its own capacity for development, inevitably creating conditions for its own destruction. Developing by ingesting all non-capitalist forms of production, capitalism is driving towards a moment when the entire humankind will in fact consist exclusively of capitalists and employed workers, and 'in a society consisting exclusively of workers and capitalists; accumulation will be impossible.'[68]

66 I address this issue in 'Rosja: Filozofia a rewolucja', in *Filozofia i ruchy społeczne*, ed. Katarzyna Bielińska-Kowalewska, (Warszawa: Książka i Praca, 2016), p. 19-32.

67 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trans. Agnes Schwartzschild, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 366.

68 Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, p. 237.

Thus, Rosa Luxemburg demonstrated the inevitability of the fall of capitalism as the consequence of its internal forces, which, however, is not synonymous for her with the inevitability of socialist revolution. When capitalism achieves its objective economic boundary, the final result is either the annihilation of culture or transition to a socialist mode of production.[69] Annihilation of capitalism which paves the way for socialism may, therefore, also entail the annihilation of humanity. 'Bourgeois society faces a dilemma; either a transition to Socialism, or a return to barbarism.'[70]

Analysis of Rosa Luxemburg's works seems to suggest that the barbarian outcome is all the more possible in the final stages of capitalist development. By entering the final forms of development, capitalism makes any kind of social manoeuvre impossible, it becomes a helpless compilation, disintegration and destruction of all subjects of social life. The socialist solution would therefore be connected with the existence of some remains of non-capitalist elements of the capitalist environment. Accounting for such an environment exposes the totalizing and contradictory nature of capitalism, and would allow for an external, critical viewpoint on its developmental processes, preventing the proletariat from limiting its demands and ideals merely to current needs. It would condition the historical scale and universal nature of socialist revolution. Revolution would require the following situation: a maturity of capitalism which would remove the need for the new order to face basic, threatening barriers of economic underdevelopment, combined with the particular immaturity of capitalism to ensure that the proletariat retains its identity, its socio-political autonomy, theoretical clarity and organizational efficiency. It would therefore appear that Rosa Luxemburg admits that from the point of view of Marxist orthodoxy of the Plekhanov type, revolution erupts always too early, while on the other hand, the proper environment for revolution is so abstract that any particular revolutionary upheaval might be considered to be 'premature.' This would be precisely Rosa Luxemburg's evaluation of the Russian Revolution in October 1917.

Let us now turn to the reflections of Vladimir Lenin, which in some sense constitute a continuation of Rosa Luxemburg's approach. For Lenin, just as for Plekhanov, the question raised by the *narodniki* as to the possibility and the need for capitalism in Russia is irrelevant. Capitalism is a fact in Russia. Still, this does not mean that the issues raised by the *narodniki* are to be dismissed. Russia's underdevelopment and the peasant problem are for Russian capitalism, and therefore also for Marxism, an inevitable structural element. In Rosa Luxemburg's view, underdeveloped countries, including Russia, constituted the indispensable capitalist environment; for Lenin, however, capitalism in Russia is something that 'has already completely and conclusively shaped itself.'[71] Lenin based his view on the

[69] Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital,* p. 237.

[70] Rosa Luxemburg, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, vol. I, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag) p. 270, cited in Tony Cliff, *Rosa Luxemburg*, www.marxist.org (accessed: 12.07.2019).

[71] Wlodzimierz Lenin, *Dzieła*, vol. 1, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1955), p. 540.

acknowledgement that the social aspect is the most crucial element within the concept of capitalism, as opposed to the economic aspect. 'Capital is a particular relationship between people, a relationship which remains unchanged during the high and low level of development of the comparable categories.'[72] Capitalism is defined not by the scale of production, but by the kind of social contradictions, by the relationship based on exploitation of the employed labour. Russia and underdeveloped countries are considered by Lenin as not an external environment of capitalism, but as its component.

But such a connection of Russia with capitalism (which seems to be much closer than in the previous takes) does not lead Lenin to conclude that the development of capitalism in Russia will finally lead to the country reaching the economic level of the most developed countries. The development of capitalism does not lead to a blurring of the differences between the areas of underdevelopment and maturity; on the contrary – it intensifies the divisions. The Russian example demonstrates clearly that capitalism assimilates and employs the forms of exploitation which are characteristic for the preceding epochs, and that exploitation is more ruthless and diverse. The *narodniki* idealised peasant community is a particularly fruitful sphere for such activity.

Thus, for Lenin, Russia is a fully capitalist country because of the nature of the basic social oppositions, however, this is a particular kind of capitalism because of its level of development.[73] Compared to the West, this is a weak form of capitalism, and its local weakness is the result of the global strength of capitalism. The uneven development is the structural quality of global capitalism, constantly reproduced by it and most beneficial for the most developed countries. In such a situation, the chance of revolution's success must be looked for not in Russia reaching a high level of capitalist development, but in the underdeveloped specificity of this place within the global capitalist system, in its role as 'the weakest link' of the system. We might, of course, hope for the socialist revolt in the most mature, developed and advanced spheres of capitalism, but the power of Western capitalism has also to be understood literally, as the most mature power of its defense against the revolutionary forces, as a considerable elasticity, an ability particular to developed capitalist countries to repress their controversies into the underdeveloped areas. The possibility for revolution is much greater wherever capitalism is weak – weak enough to crumble under the impetus of the revolutionary force, but also weak in the sense of its economic maturity.

Because of political and social factors (and also because of the state of public opinion), there are particularly favorable conditions for the revolutionary upheaval in Russia, for the takeover which will create an opportunity for socialist development; this is connected with the peculiar situation in Russia, with its historical conditions. The main task of revolution therefore is merely to overcome the enemy; and the much more demanding

72 Lenin, *Dzieła*, p. 228.

73 Andrzej Walicki, *Polska, Rosja, marksizm*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1983), p. 122.

task (compared to the revolutionary act itself) will be to retain the achievements or reproduction of revolution. The nature of this stage, and the nation's survival of it, will depend on the events in developed countries, that is, on the global revolution. Let us repeat: the main premise of the Russian Revolution for Lenin lies in Russia being the weakest, yet at the same time a structural component, a link in the global capitalism, or, more precisely, of its imperialist stage; while the inimitable condition of the success of the Russian Revolution is the global revolution.

To conclude, let us turn our attention to a few questions connected with the Russian Revolution and its particularly interesting aspect, that is, the question of the immediate results, the possibility to retain its achievements or its reproduction, and of the obstacles and errors which appear at this stage.

Firstly, let us discuss a more general issue. Socialist Revolution – or the proletarian revolution of Marx – was founded on the great development of the forces of production, the economic wealth created by capitalism. Socialism becomes inevitable when the economic efficiency of capitalism 'overruns' the legal and political forms of the capitalist socio-political order, when society is actually 'smothered' by its own wealth, which is distributed within the social scale in such a way that an enormous part of such a society lives on the borderline of biological survival. This necessary capitalist foundation of socialism leads Marx to multiple statements on the nature and historical mission (revolutionary mission) of capitalism which may be read as its apology. Even in *The Communist Manifesto* we read: 'The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?'[74] We may find many similar passages in Marx's work.

This issue is developed in a very interesting way by the German Marxist thinker Karl Korsch, rather forgotten today, but spoken of in a single breath with Lukacs during the 1920s. In his best known text *Marxism and Philosophy*, Korsch constructs an analogy between the historical dependency between the bourgeoisie / proletariat and the philosophical dependency between Hegel and Marx. Just as there is no serious philosophy of Marx without Hegel, there may not be socialism (and the proletariat) without capitalism (and the bourgeoisie). Moreover, according to Korsch, just as Marxism is the continuation of the best and most intellectually mature aspects in Hegel (lost by the remaining 19th Century philosophy, the middle-class philosophy which treats Hegel as the dead end of

[74] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels, marxists.org (accessed: 12.07.2019), p. 17.

philosophy and seeks a way out under the slogan 'back to Kant'[75]), just so the proletariat is the continuator of the best aspects of the bourgeoisie, that is, of its revolutionary nature which turned out to be inconsistent, self-contradictory, transient. In Korsch's view, 'the bourgeoisie was unable to meet the challenge of its own revolutionary nature, of the social energy produced by its activity,' therefore the new subject – the proletariat - had to claim this historical energy. We may speak here 'of the constant revolutionary process, the continuation of which demands a change of the social subject,'[76] and within this process humanity overcomes the biological limitations and forms the universal historical subjects. The proletariat is the heir of the bourgeoisie in the same measure as Marx is the heir of Hegel. On the other hand, the 'heirship' relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and between Marx and Hegel grants historical reality and substantiality to the proletariat, while Marxism gains its foundation and 'scientific'[77] character, which is the opposite of subjectivism and utopianism; to both, it grants universality, which denies any kind of particularism. In all of this, the proletariat defends and protects the bourgeoisie's revolutionary nature (which, left to itself, degenerates into reaction and middle-class philistine banality), while Marx defends the scale and novelty of Hegel (who without him becomes merely an exhausted trend within European philosophy).

We may now repeat the formulation that the Russian Revolution is the continuation, the heir or even a completion of the French Revolution, but this time in the sense of the protection and development of the revolutionary ethos, in the sense of the continuation and salvation of a broader and unified revolutionary process. Though bourgeois revolution has been its component, now it finds itself in a volatile and ambiguous historical situation, that is, either a reactionary negation of its revolutionary nature, or a proletarian continuation of that nature.

All this means that the project of Socialist revolution in its Marxist version is part of the broader or even universal historical current, and relies on the civilizational achievements of the bourgeoisie, as well as on its revolutionary volatility, which pushes it into a counter-revolutionary position. In this perspective we may consider the issue of the Russian Revolution as Socialist, proletarian, Marxist revolution with a chance to play the role of the indispensable Russian trigger for the global revolution, but also remaining in inescapable dependency on the global completion of the proletarian revolution. This

[75] Karl Korsch, 'Marksizm i filozofia', trans. Aleksander Ochocki, in *Marksizm XX wieku, Antologia tekstów*, ed. Janusz Dobieszewski and Marek J. Siemek, vol. I, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1990), p. 13.

[76] Janusz Dobieszewski, 'O marksizmie Karla Korscha', *Studia Filozoficzne*, 6(223)/1984, p. 132, 134.

[77] In this context, Piotr Struve's statement may appear both significant and characteristic: 'Socialism owes its existence to capitalism not only in its historical, but also logical sense; without capitalism, it is a ghost without body and blood' [cited in Richard Pipes, *Piotr Struwe. Liberał na lewicy (1870-1905)*, trans. Sebastian Szymański, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2016), p. 62-63].

is how it was interpreted and counted upon by Lenin and Trotsky. The Russian national problem was completely relativized by them within the universal or international context, stripped of its autonomy and uniqueness. As Walicki writes, Lenin 'was willing to sacrifice Russia on the altar of the international revolution, to renounce its national tradition.'[78] The success or failure of the Russian Revolution was to be decided in a context broader than Russia itself; it must face the course of events in its historical environment and its most far-reaching influence (both through action and its absence) on specifically Russian problems.

Yet, there may not be any kind of guarantee. Lenin, it is true, and later the continuator of his theoretical and political concepts György Lukacs, announce in their theories of contemporary capitalism, that is, imperialism, that it is about to enter the stage of the 'historical totality of the world-crisis,'[79] the spectacular manifestation of which is the world war, and this makes the issue of 'the actuality of the proletarian revolution' much more urgent.[80] However, 'the transition from capitalism to socialism was characterised by frequent crises and reversions to earlier stages,'[81] to the flow and ebb of the wave of revolution. The working class movement failed in confrontation with the world war, and later it was not to support the Russian Revolution with revolutionary action, leaving it alone to face the unpredictable, chaotic, regressive obstacles and difficulties, which still does not change the objective measure of modernity which is the actuality of the revolution. As Lukacs writes, 'it is evident that the overall economic situation will sooner or later drive the proletariat to create a revolution on a global scale.'[82] Today, as Lukacs further explains, the Russian Revolution creates a premise of the future victory for the global proletariat and what matters now is for the proletariat 'to use all the means at its disposal to keep the power of the state in its own hands under all circumstances' and it 'must be able to manoeuvre freely.'[83] In addition, the not purely proletarian nature of the Russian Revolution, that is, significant participation in it of the members of other social strata, creates a threat: 'it is just as easy for them to deflect it in a counter-revolutionary direction.'[84] And this is what happened with the Russian Revolution after 1917: on the one hand, it went into an excess of revolutionary enthusiasm, on the other – in the direction of the ruthless counter-revolutionary regulations of the state. Thus, the Russian Revolution

78 Walicki, *Miejsce ekonomii w moim ujęciu intelektualnej historii Rosji*, p. 35.

79 Georg Lukács, 'Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organisation,' in *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), p. 307.

80 Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought*, trans. Nicholas Jacobs (London–New York: Verso, 2009).

81 Georg Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', in *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 279.

82 Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', p. 292.

83 Lukacs, 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg «Critique of the Russian Revolution»', p. 292.

84 Lukacs, 'Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organisation', p. 304.

was adapting to the non-event of the global revolution, and in the end this shaped itself into what Leszek Kołakowski describes as a certain significant change in emphasis: not the Russian Revolution in service of the global revolution, but global revolution in service of the Russian Revolution.[85]

One more phenomenon of the post-October period deserves our attention, especially since it combines the rigor of the revolutionary utopianism and the counter-revolutionary love of discipline. Lenin's theory diverges from Marx's, both as its later and Russia-specific incarnation, or as a version 'clearly different from Marxist.' Within the context of the issue that interests us, this second possibility is, perhaps, the more likely. The distinguished Polish scholar of Marxism cited above, separates the rational dialectics of Marx, still closely connected with Hegel, with its 'organic,' profound, or metaphysical approach which accounts for the impersonal or non-subjective aspects of the historical process (economic laws, crises, effects contradicting the intentions, unintentional 'surpluses' of human activities), from the common-sense dialectics of Lenin, in which the primary role is played by the 'physical,' phenomenal political element, through which the sphere of social life is taken over by the absolutely real, empirical social forces (social groups[86]). From Lenin's perspective, this enables us to view any event, tension, contradiction within social life as beneficial or harmful for a particular social group, as a situation which in its essence is devoid of any accidental, arbitrary quality, but instead plays a specific role, one subjective in its effects in the social process, and serving particular interests. The question 'who benefits by this' is quickly replaced by the question 'who is to blame' – interests are only the objective side of the subjective guilt.

This quite quickly and easily leads to the suffocating, heavy, sinister atmosphere of universal social suspicion,[87] even if originally it possesses only the somewhat seductive form of the obsessive subjectivization or personalization of social problems and dilemmas. As Lenin himself wrote, one must 'in any evaluation of the events, place oneself openly and straight-forwardly in the position of the particular social group,' which next leads to the conviction that 'it really does not matter whether a given idea is true, but rather, who benefits by it.'[88] In a long book dedicated to the socio-economical aspects of the revolutionary upheaval, surprisingly positive in relation to the Bolshevik revolt, Ludwik Krzywicki wrote that with regard to various situations in villages, ones rooted in deep and complex historical and economic causes, Soviet Russia applies exceptionally superficial evaluations, for instance interpreting these as the resistance of the kulaks, who are seen

85 Leszek Kołakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism. Its Raise, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. II *The Golden Age*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 467-473.

86 Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, p. 447-466; see also Aleksander M. Ochocki, *Dialektyka i historia. Człowiek i praca w twórczości Karola Marksa*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza 1971), p. 490-492.

87 Ochocki, *Dialektyka i historia. Człowiek i praca w twórczości Karola Marksa*, p. 88.

88 Pipes, *Piotr Struwe. Liberał na lewicy,* p. 131.

in direct opposition to the poor peasants[89] and their interests, demanding immediate (though not clearly defined in its meaning and goal) action; such action is understood as the proper, real and revolutionary comprehension of the problem. Something similar was pointed out by the authors of *De Profundis*: Izgoev writes that 'great, natural, and irrepressible mass phenomena' of socio-economic life are explained away 'as 'counter-revolutionary agitation' of the right S.R.'s and Mensheviks, or 'sabotage' by the Kadet bourgeoisie and intelligentsia.'[90] Somewhat later we read: 'the entire economic policy of the Russian socialists came down to the fact that ever newer and ever wider circles ofpeople appeared as bourgeois, petty bourgeois, and counter-revolutionaries.'[91] Thus, the insolvable problem is turned into an enemy who is to be vanquished. And this logic is as socially damaging, as it is shatterproof in the long run, and the example of Russia of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period demonstrated this only too well.

We might conclude by remarking that the lessons taught by the Russian Revolution in the end turned out to be quite informative and effective, which was demonstrated in the nature of the collapse of the USSR: non-revolutionary, peaceful, even appeased (perhaps, somewhat embarrassingly so), but at the same time raising hopes and expectations as to a reasonable future. The greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the Twentieth Century was in essence entirely bloodless.

Translated by Irena Księżopolska

89 *Rosja sowiecka pod względem* społecznym i gospodarczym, ed. L. Krzywicki, Warsaw 1922, p. 124.

90 Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism', p. 139.

91 Izgoev, 'Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism', p. 142.