

Peter Wadey

## The Russian Revolutionary Tradition: From *Narodnichestvo* to Marxism-Leninism

*Have hope, ardent young men!*

*Fly – wings are given to you:*

*For you the brilliant projects*

*And the heart's fiery dreams*

Evgeny Baratynsky (1800-44)

*Two Fates*

Upon the imposition of official Soviet ideology in the Stalin era and beyond, Russian history was subjected to its own highly prescriptive variant of 'socialist realism' as decreed within the wider cultural sphere (Weeks 1968:176). Thus, much of Russia's radical and revolutionary past was simply airbrushed from the annals of Soviet historiography or, more often, made to conform or contrast with the Party's carefully cultivated image of ideological omniscience, and its apotheosis of the Marx/Engels – Lenin/Stalin 'apostolic succession' (Alexandrov, et al. 1949:200; Szamuely 1974:288).

Orthodox Soviet historians and theoreticians were particularly sensitive to the heretical notion that the Bolsheviks, as the sole repository of revolutionary consciousness and acuity, were in any way indebted to the legacy of the Populist or *Narodnichestvo* movements of the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Central Committee of the CPSU(B) 1948:10-19). Many other historians, however, have attested to the underlying continuities of Russian Imperial and Soviet history (Chubarov 1999:213-17; Steele 1994:389), and to a corresponding correlation and symmetry between Bolshevism and the native revolutionary tradition (Szamuely 1974:369; Hosking 2001:2)

The main body of this essay follows the evolving trajectory of Russian Populist thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its manifestation within various *Narodnichestvo* social and political movements, and concludes with an analysis of the reception and adaptation of Marxism in Russia, and its aforementioned dialectic with the *Narodnichestvo* tradition in Lenin's revolutionary doctrine.

Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian insurrectionary tradition converged around the ever-present spectre of the *Pugachevshchina*, or mass peasant revolt (Clarkson 1962:283), and an unsavoury procession of palace coups instigated by the elite Regimental Guards and their dynastic patrons throughout much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Riasanovsky 1993:248). In neither case, however, did these episodic convulsions seek to seriously challenge the principle of autocracy or existing social relations (Szamuely 1974:72). In many ways, the debacle of the Decembrist rising in 1825 merely served to highlight the growing cleavage between a Russian cultured elite, with its veneer of European enlightenment and an emerging sense of Russian and Slavophile identity (Figs 2002:77-83), and the tradition-bound and subsistence-level *mir* of the vast majority of the Russian people, the peasantry. Nevertheless, despite its inchoate aims and direction, the rising signalled a growing sense of unease with the institution and conditions of serfdom and, in the wake of its suppression, gave rise to a corresponding rift between the reactionary regime of Nicholas I and educated Russian society (Hosking 2001:259-64). Henceforth, the mantle of insurrection was to be assumed by that most Russian of social phenomena, its intelligentsia.

The Russian intelligentsia of the 1840s have most often been portrayed as idealistic, even pious; animated by Hegelian and western utopian philosophical traditions (Gleason 1998:107), and a pervasive, if largely ineffectual, sense of guilt at the plight of their fellow Russians, the 'toiling masses' (Szamuely 1974:152). However, the abstract aestheticism of this earlier period, with its essentially liberal and paternalistic cast of mind, was to be supplanted by a new concern for the more immediate social and political realities of the day, and a growing receptivity to the ethic of socialism. (Riasanovsky 1993:366).

Thus, increasingly estranged from the mainstream of Russian nobility by their rejection of the 'Petrine service ethic' (Figs 2002:78), and equally isolated from the peasantry by virtue of their cultural eclecticism and education (Berlin 1994:194), the Russian radical intelligentsia came to form a distinctly self-aware and *déclassé* stratum within Russian society; defined less by any material or ancestral criteria than by that of 'consciousness' and a passion for 'philosophic totality' (Billington 1958:9), matched only by an implacable hostility to the Tsarist state system (Szamuely 1974:145-52).

In the absence of any openly political forum, the sphere of literary criticism came to play a central role in the formulation and dissemination of radical ideas (Riasanovsky 1993:365), as illustrated by Vissarion Belinsky's influential *Letter to Gogol* in 1847 (Belinsky 1948:162-66). From this intellectual and increasingly politicized milieu, with its intersecting strands of westernizing, Slavophile and socialist influence (Mirsky 1968:341), the exiled political thinker and polemicist Alexander Herzen (1812-70) was to proclaim a quintessentially Russian revolutionary doctrine. Herzen's revolutionary vision was predicated upon the theory that Russia could circumvent the evident evils of capitalist development and fashion its own socialistic future around the unique institutional fulcrum of the peasant village, or *obshchina*, with its 'timeless' fidelity to a communal way of life and egalitarian social relations (Szamuely 1974:202-04). The people, so long regarded with indifference or disdain, were to be transformed into an object of veneration; as the sole and virtuous guardians of Russia's unique, indeed eschatological, destiny. Thus *Narodnichestvo*, the 'worship of the people', was to form a sacramental article of faith for the radical intelligentsia (Chubarov 1999:88), whether the people liked it or not.

The Tsarist regimes' sanguine belief that land reform would serve to deliver Russia from 'dreamy theories of equality .... [and] the ensuing social revolution' (Lampbert 1965:22), was to prove illusory. Rather, the compromised emancipation edict of February 1861 was to provoke a final and irreconcilable rupture between a disillusioned intelligentsia and the government ; and was to infuse the erstwhile abstract and theoretical concept of *Narodnichestvo* with a new, and uncompromising, spirit of revolutionary verve. As a direct corollary to this, the post-emancipation period was to witness a corresponding rift, as immortalized in Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (Billington 1958:15), between an older generation of the intelligentsia, as represented by Herzen and his enduring faith in 'revolution from above' (Chubarov 1999:85), and a new, conspicuously younger, circle of revolutionary activists. These 'plebian sons' were to be distinguished from the previous generation of idealists by virtue of their changing social composition, with the *déclassé* noble element fusing with a newer indigent *raznochintsy* of diverse social rank; and by their iconoclastic and nihilist worldview which professed a strictly materialist and utilitarian conception of morality, and the exaltation of the revolutionary 'deed' (Chubarov 1999:89). 'The sons had devoured their [repentant] fathers' (Szamuely 1974:150).

This new revolutionary temper was perhaps best reflected in the the so-called 'manifesto campaign'. Beyond its fiery rhetoric, Mikhailov and Shelgunov's illegal proclamation *To the Young Generation* in September 1861 (Seton-Watson 1967:366), served to expound one of the key *Narodnichestvo* doctrines; namely, that the emancipation edict was to be violently opposed **not** because it failed to satisfy the peasants' interests, but rather, because it propelled Russia towards a capitalistic path of development (Szamuely 1974:229-30), thereby threatening to dismantle the communitarian basis of the *obshchina* upon which the Populist dream of a socialistic arcadia rested. It can be argued, however, that the publication of Pytor Zaichnevsky's prescient *Molodaya Rossiya*, or 'Young Russia', in May 1862 had an even more profound impact upon radical opinion (Lampbert 1965:125). By advocating the seizure of power by a subversive and highly-disciplined revolutionary elite, the establishment of unbridled and ruthless dictatorship, and the socialist transformation of Russian political, economic and social life, Zaichnevsky was to sow the seeds of a conspiratorial and characteristically Russian form of Jacobinism (Szamuely 1974:230-35) upon the fertile soil of the *Narodnichestvo*.

However, the most influential figure amongst the new generation of the radical intelligentsia was undoubtedly that of Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-89). Under his editorship the respected literary journal *Sovremnik*/The Contemporary provided an accessible forum for the spread of Populist ideas and, in the absence of any centralized revolutionary organization, served as a vital nexus for the disparate circles of aspiring young radicals which had emerged in the wake of the Alexandrian reforms (Lampbert 1965:241). Moreover, his celebrated novel *What is to be Done?*, published in 1863, with its portrayal of the Herculean 'new men' selflessly dedicating their lives to the clandestine revolutionary struggle, was to provide a conspiratorial template for a generation of new activists, and beyond (Chubarov 1999:90-92).

The conspiratorial principle was embraced in its most extreme form by Sergei Nechaev (1847-82), whose *Revolutionary Catechism* of 1868 might best be described as a eulogy to a 'cold passion for the revolutionary cause' (para:6). Having established his principles of revolutionary organization, Nechaev proceeded to set up an underground network of acolytes, with its centre in Moscow, with the aim of instigating a popular rising to coincide with the ninth anniversary of the emancipation

decree (Weeks 1968:49). However, as with the climatic stage direction to Musorgsky's opera *Boris Gudonov*, composed at this time, when exhorted to rebellion '*narod bezmolvstvet'*; 'the people remain[ed] silent' (Figs 2002:185). The *Nechaevshchina* was to founder amidst its own conspiratorial and internecine intrigue; only to exert a profound influence on later revolutionary generations (Chubarov 1999:95), whilst Nechaev was to take his place alongside Razin, Pugachev and the Decembrists in the pantheon of Russian 'revolutionary' martyrs (Figs and Kolonitskii 1999:74). In the immediate aftermath, however, it was to signal a temporary retreat from the Jacobin cult of conspiratorial politics, with its implicit amorality (Szamuely 1974:271), and a return to the social idealism of traditional Populism (Frank 2002:67).

The Nechaev episode served to highlight a residual, if poorly delineated, distinction between the minority movement of *Narodnichestvo* activists and the broader intelligentsia matrix which nurtured and supported it (Szamuely 1974:134-36); perhaps analogous with the fatal indulgence shown to the Bolsheviks by the intelligentsia during the summer of 1917 under the aegis of socialist camaraderie and the dictum that there were 'no enemies on the left' (Figs 1997:435). However, the ensuing period of reflection and 'revolutionary preparation', with its rejection of conspiratorial nihilism and the subsequent embrace of Pytor Lavrov's ethical imperative of *sublizit'sia s narodom*, or 'drawing near to the people' (Pomper 1972:147-48), did not entail any real repudiation of the anti-constitutionalist Populist creed, nor of its cherished insurrectionary aims. In the wake of the Nechaev debacle the *Narodnichestvo* movement were seeking new methods, not new doctrines. (Szamuely 1974:272-76).

The *Khozdeie v narod* or 'going to the people' movement in 1874 proved a resounding failure; indeed, a fiasco. (Chubarov 1999:95). The ardent hopes of the young radicals were to evaporate upon contact with a sullen peasantry at best indifferent, at worst openly contemptuous, towards their hapless endeavour to inculcate revolutionary consciousness through propaganda and agitation (Wortman 1967:180). Confronted with the enormous gulf which separated the *Narodnichestvo* from the *narod*; between their idyllic beliefs and a prosaic reality; the radical intelligentsia were in despair (Szamuely 1974:281). However, help was at hand. The subsequent trial in 1877 of those arrested for 'going to the people' three years earlier provided the revolutionaries with a welcome and timely propaganda coup (Frank 2002:251). By exposing the often cruel treatment of those detained, whilst calling attention to the dignified and defiant conduct of the defendants who used the courtroom as a rostrum for denouncing the injustices of the Tsarist system, the trial was to elicit widespread support for the accused (Wortman 1967:24-25). Thus, by instinctively resorting to reaction and repression an inept and myopic Tsarist bureaucracy merely served to galvanize the radical intelligentsia as it prepared for the latest phase of their revolutionary struggle.

Having been forced to concede that the peasantry were not, in themselves, a force for spontaneous social insurrection (Chubarov 1999:96), and convinced that all avenues for purely peaceful and propagandist agitation had proved futile, a new wave of radicalized activists embarked upon a campaign of political violence (Szamuely 1974:330). At the forefront of this campaign a new organization *Zemlya i Volya*, or 'Land and Liberty', sought to reassert the principle of a tightly-knit conspiratorial conclave committed to a strategy of 'disorganization' and terrorism (Moss 2002:230). Their high profile campaign of assassinations, however, should not attract attention from the historically more significant aspects of its ideological and organizational evolution (Szamuely 1974:343)

Whilst continuing to proclaim the Populist belief in the *narod* and the imperative of the 'social' revolution (Belfer 1978:301), and firmly rejecting the overtures of an embryonic liberal faction within the *Zemstvo* movement seeking to capitalize on the revolutionary turmoil in order to press for constitutional reforms (Seton-Watson 1967:427), *Zemlya I Volya* was nevertheless venturing upon a new political path. Thus, faced with the continuing inertia of the peasantry and the unlikely prospect of any immediate outbreak of insurrectionary activity from below, the concept of revolutionary coercion, that is of imposing a social revolution upon the people by means of a political seizure of power by an elitist, vanguard movement of the revolutionary intelligentsia, began to gain credibility and appeal amongst the *Zemlevoltsy* (Belfer 1978:299).

The emerging conflict between the social ethos of the *Narodnichestvo* and the urgent need to attain political power as a necessary means of forestalling the onset of capitalist relations and bourgeois constitutionalism (Szamuely 1974:348), was to lead to a schism within *Zemlya I Volya* in 1879 between the traditional 'villagists' who were to form *Chernyi Peredel*, or 'Black Repartition', committed to a propagandist and educative programme amongst the peasantry, and a *Narodnaya Volya*, or 'People's Will' movement who were to focus their energies on political terror (Belfer 1978:301).

With its rigid hierarchical structure based upon the principle of 'elective centralism', and its pursuit of revolutionary dictatorship in the name of the people, *Narodnaya Volya* reflected an increasingly virulent political strain within the Populist movement (Szamuely 1974:352-53). Upon their understanding that the Russian state continued to derive its moral and coercive authority from the institution of autocracy, the revolutionary strategy of the *Narodovoltsy*, that is of creating the conditions of demoralization and paralysis conducive to a *coup d'état*, was to crystallize around the primary objective of regicide (Moss 2002:230-31).

Following a number of unsuccessful attempts, Alexander II was eventually assassinated in March 1881. Most of the remaining members of *Narodnaya Volya* still at large were swiftly rounded up (Riasanovsky 1993:392), whilst the succession of Alexander III was to herald an era of counter-reform and repression (Seton-Watson 1967:496-70). Thus, at their very moment of triumph, the *Narodnaya Volya* campaign of terrorism is conventionally portrayed as a 'fundamental failure' (Hosking 2001:317). However, by effectively precluding the adoption of Loris-Melikov's proposed constitutional reforms (Riasanovsky 1993:384), and by extension the emergence of an intermediate and 'stakeholding' stratum of the more moderate intelligentsia, the *Narodovolsty* had, when measured by their own criteria, achieved much (Szamuely 1974:368). Moreover, the continuing cleft between the state and educated society was to provide succour to a future revolutionary vanguard who were not slow to draw the requisite lessons from the tumult of 1878-81; the legacy of a small cadre of professional revolutionaries lacking any real mass following or support (Chubarov 1999:98-99).

*Narodnaya Volya's* organizational and political methods represented a significant, albeit transitional, departure from orthodox Populist doctrine, and its messianic belief in the special and self-contained destiny of the Russian people (Chubarov 1999:100). Moreover, this process of ideological flux, alongside Russia's industrialization and its somewhat faltering steps toward modernization (Riasanovsky 1993:422-33), was to provide the critical context for a creative, and often paradoxical,

dialogue, or cross-fertilization, between the Russian Populist tradition and the encroaching influence of Marxism (McLellan 1979:66).

Many Populists would passionately subscribe to Marx's critique of capitalist accumulation and its inevitable corollary of human exploitation and alienation, and his denunciation of the capitalist 'superstructure' and its attendant bourgeois-constitutional liberties (Kolakowski 1978:318-19). Few, if any, concurred with a orthodox interpretation of Marx's theory of 'Historical Materialism', however, according to which Russia would be compelled to follow the Western European path of capitalist development as a necessary and progressive prelude to any transition to a socialist society (Harding 1966:19). Thus, influential Populist ideologues, including Pyotor Tkachev (1844-85) whose rudimentary embrace of economic materialism (Szamuely 1974:289), and his vision of a highly centralized vanguard party were to warrant his retrospective appellation as Russia's 'first Bolshevik' (Weeks 1968:176-77), remained wedded, in the eyes of their Marxist critics, to a 'subjectivist' or 'voluntarist' form of Russian particularism at variance with Marx's historical-objective, and therefore universal, schemata (Kolakowski 1978:325). This ideal-type dialectic between determinism and voluntarism, and between that of Russian particularism and universalism, were to emerge as salient themes throughout the course of Russia's unfolding revolutionary drama (Belfer 1978:303).

Many historians and Marxist scholars, however, have drawn attention to Marx's own singularly ambivalent attitude to Russian Populism (McLellan 1979:66; Wittfogel 1990:622). In correspondence with the prominent *Chernyi Peredel* activist Vera Zasulich in 1881 (Billington 1958:163), and in his preface to the Russian edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1882 (Chubarov 1999:107), Marx significantly revised his erstwhile derisory opinion of the *Narodnichestvo* and its attachment to the 'rural idiocy' of the village commune (Szamuely 1974:372), referring to the *obshchina* as a potentially regenerative and pivotal force in Russia's direct transition to a communistic course of development (Martin 1990:128-29). Paradoxically, therefore, by holding out the prospect of Russia ploughing its own non-capitalist furrow, Marx was to prove much less of a 'classical' Marxist than many of his followers (Kolakowski 1978:324), including his emerging clique of Russian admirers who were formulating their own orthodox Marxist critique of Populism in Geneva under the tutelage of Georgy Plekhanov (McLellan 1979:67).

For the exiled Plekhanov (1856-1918), who had aligned himself with *Chernyi Peredel* at the time of the *Zemlya i Volya* schism (Chubarov 1999:103), the Marxist synthesis of social and political revolution (Szamuely 1974:387), and its all-embracing and integrated worldview (Kolakowski 1978:329), offered an alluring and cogent way out of the impasse facing an ideologically fragmented revolutionary movement in the 1880s. For Plekhanov, 'Marxism [was] a complete theoretical system' (Plekhanov 1937 cited in McLellan 1979:67); and having unconditionally subscribed to its systematic and universalist tenets, Plekhanov was to frame his analysis of the Russian situation in strictly orthodox and immutable terms (Szamuely 1974:390). Thus, in laying the theoretical and strategic foundations of Russian Social Democracy, Plekhanov concluded that Russia must evolve along capitalistic lines as a prelude to its socialist transformation; indeed Plekhanov argued that since the emancipation of the serfs Russia had already embarked upon the path of capitalist social relations. Furthermore, in order to accelerate the process of capitalist development, presently hindered by the anachronism of autocracy, the socialist revolution must be preceded by a bourgeois-democratic revolution. A revolutionary intelligentsia, fully conversant with the Marxist historical dialectic, were to assume leadership of a Russian Social Democratic Party capable of guiding the

industrial working class in their immediate struggle to overthrow the sclerotic Tsarist system, thus helping to forge the dynamic conditions conducive to the eventual establishment of a dictatorship of a politically conscious and majoritarian proletariat (McLellan 1979:68; Kolakowski 1978:331-33).

In collaboration with a small coterie of fellow *émigrés*, Plekhanov formed the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in 1883, whose principle tasks were those of translating and disseminating Marxist literature, including Plekhanov's own theoretical works such as *Socialism and Political Struggle* (1883), and gaining new adherents to Marxism amongst the *Narodnichestvo* and a new generation of the radical intelligentsia (Chubarov 1999:103-04; Kolakowski 1978:322). One such recruit, of course, was Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov (1870-1924), soon to adopt the clandestine pseudonym of Lenin.

Lenin's innovatory application of orthodox Marxist doctrine in the cause of the revolutionary struggle remains a source of controversy and debate. In essence, did Lenin's attempt to apply Marx's theory to a rapidly evolving national and international political situation keep faith with the overarching tenor and principles of Marxism, or did Leninism constitute a revisionist ideology at variance with Marxist fundamentals? (Kolakowski 1978:381-384; Chubarov 1999:123) Moreover, to what extent, if any, did Marxism-Leninism draw from the legacy of the *Narodnichestvo* revolutionary tradition?

Lenin's clarion call for a 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' (Lenin 1960:541), represented a significant departure from orthodox Marxist doctrine, which viewed the peasantry as an essentially anachronistic and conservative stratum of Russian society whose political interests and instincts would rarely extend beyond the horizons of 'the *petit*-bourgeois ideal of [land] seizure and division' (Lenin 1960:315). For Lenin, however, the poorer *batraki* peasants, with their historical resentment of the landlord class, constituted a natural ally of the proletariat and a potentially revolutionary force. The task of the Social Democrats, as evinced by Lenin, was that of convincing the poorer peasantry that its economic interests could only be realized by aligning themselves with the Party's agrarian policy and its wider political programme (Frankel 1969:120; Plamenatz 1954:232-34; Harding 1977:216-18).

Lenin's proposed coalition between the proletariat and the peasantry, in contrast with the need for a conventional proletarian-bourgeoisie alignment as upheld by Plekhanov and the Mensheviks (Kolakowski 1978:351), certainly illustrated Lenin's resolve to accomplish a socialist revolution within a predominantly agrarian society, and a readiness to radically modify and adapt universalist Marxist strictures to the particular conditions and dictates of the Russian social and political environment (Chubarov 1999:125; Plamenatz 1954:233). Nevertheless, when considered within the wider context of Lenin's agrarian policy his understanding of the peasants' situation in Russia continued to bear the imprint of a broadly Marxist analysis, which served to clearly distinguish it from that propagated by the Socialist Revolutionaries and their *Narodnichestvo* predecessors. Lenin's strategy of nationalizing the landed estates was not designed to bring about the long-cherished social revolution, or *zemlya i volya*, of Populist lineage with its principle of egalitarian land-tenure; rather, it was intended to stimulate the capitalistic and modernizing development of 'feudal' Russian agriculture and its corollary of capitalist relations in the countryside, thus accentuating the process of class polarization and antagonism between the proletarianized wage-labourer and an emerging proprietary class of *Kulaks* (Harding 1977:217,255). The broad parameters of Lenin's agrarian policy, based on a Marxist

analysis of social forces (Frankel 1969:132), was to persevere beyond the 'libertarian' expedient of the *volost* and *obshchina* land redistribution of October 1917, and was to provide the essential blueprint for a collectivized peasantry within the Soviet Union.

Lenin's vision of the revolutionary party, as expounded in his seminal work *What is to be Done?*, proved no less controversial. Lenin's strident censure of the social-reformist and 'economist' trends within international and Russian social democracy, and his rejection of 'freedom of criticism' (Lenin 1960:210-16;128-42), were to assume a definite doctrinal character in his conspiratorial and highly-disciplined vanguard party led by a dedicated conclave of professional revolutionaries (Chubarov 1999:127). Designed to re-impose Marxist orthodoxy and to rectify the 'lag of the leaders behind the spontaneous upsurge of the masses' (Lenin 1960:211; McLellan 1979:86), Lenin's organizational credo has been criticized for being elitist and despotic, and of laying the foundations for a future totalitarian architecture (Kolokowski 1978:388-89).

To what extent Lenin's organizational paradigm deviated from the established Marxist concept of the vanguard party, is open to debate (Baliber 1990:159-60). However, Lenin's assertion that 'the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology' (Lenin 1960:157) would appear to traduce the cardinal Marxist presupposition that 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness' (Radar 1974:11). With greater certainty, Lenin's contention that the empirical proletariat was incapable of formulating its own strategic aims and interests beyond the transient economic sphere (Chubarov 1999:127-28), and his hegemonic concept of the Party replete with its 'omniscient and omnipresent Central Committee' (Luxemburg 1971 cited in McLellan 1979:47), served to legitimize the Party's monopolization of social and political life in the Soviet Union (Kolokowski 1978:391).

Lenin's highly-centralized organizational structure, later to become enshrined in the principle of 'democratic centralism' (McLellan 1979:89), bore a striking resemblance to the organizational statutes of *Narodnaya Volya*, with its provision for 'elective centralism', and to the prototypical conspiratorial ideal as propounded by Zaichnevsky, Chernyshevsky and Tkachev. Indeed, Lenin paid homage to the 'magnificent organization' of *Zemlya i Volya* and *Narodnaya Volya*, and to the 'grandeur' of Tkachev's conspiratorial terror in *What is to be Done?* (Lenin 1960:236;268).

However, the most radical and significant of Lenin's revisions to orthodox Marxist doctrine was his 'telescoping' of the bourgeois-democratic and proletarian-socialist revolutions. In the wake of the February revolution of 1917, which according to the classical tenets of Marx's historical schema would herald a prolonged period of capitalist development, the majority of the Bolsheviks aligned themselves with the Mensheviks in lending conditional support to the Provisional Government (McLellan 1979:93; Chubarov 1999:126). For Lenin, however, the instability engendered by the February upheavals, and the ensuing power vacuum, opened up the prospect for an uncompromising assault upon a timid and vacillating liberal polity. As outlined in his inflammatory 'April Theses', the Party was charged with the task of preparing for an insurrectionary seizure of power in the name of the Soviets, thus attempting to forge a direct and immediate transition to the socialist revolution (Kolokowski 1978:474-75).

By circumventing Marx's two-stage theory of revolution, thereby seizing control of the political-ideological 'superstructure' in order to transform its socio-economic 'foundation' (Plamenatz

1954:238), Lenin has been accused of harbouring a long-standing predilection for 'Jacobinism' and 'voluntarism' (McLellan 1979:910, thus mirroring the very same accusations levelled at the Populists by their Marxist critics. Certainly, Lenin's maximalist political demands, his virulent contempt for liberal-constitutionalism, and a propensity for conspiratorial intrigue, moral utilitarianism and cultural nihilism, bore many of the rudimentary hallmarks of the *raznochintsy* revolutionary ethos.

For Lenin, the realm of philosophical and theoretical ideas was to be ruthlessly plundered, and made serviceable to the cause of revolution, within a specifically Russian historical matrix and its prevailing social conditions and antagonisms. However, Lenin's 'subjective' grasp of Russian political realities should not infer that 'Leninism' can somehow be cast adrift from its Marxist moorings as construed by a 'purist' school of thought. Lenin's strategic and doctrinal imperatives continued to be informed by fundamental Marxist axioms (Chubarov 1999:133-34). It can be argued, moreover, that by eschewing any meaningful compromise with the bourgeois concepts of legality and liberty, Lenin adhered more rigorously to the precepts of historical materialism than Marx himself (Kolakowski 1978:383).

Marx bequeathed an often incomplete and ambiguous legacy, or 'theoretical lacunae', to his followers (Baliber 1990:156), thus Kolakowski's analogy with the patristic Christian era is surely a pertinent one (Kolakowski 1978:381). As noted earlier in relation to the putschist aims of *Narodnaya Volya*, Marx appeared to distance himself from the overly-formulaic and ossified 'Nicene Creed' of his more orthodox disciples. Are we, therefore, to evaluate Lenin's fidelity or otherwise to Marxism with reference to Marx the 'determinist' theoretician, or to Marx the insurrectionary 'Communard' as encapsulated in his earlier maxim that 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx and Engels 1968 cited in McLellan 1973:141). And it was Lenin's conflated and quixotic brand of Marxism, forged in the crucible of Russia's millenarian revolutionary tradition, which was destined to do exactly that in October 1917.

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