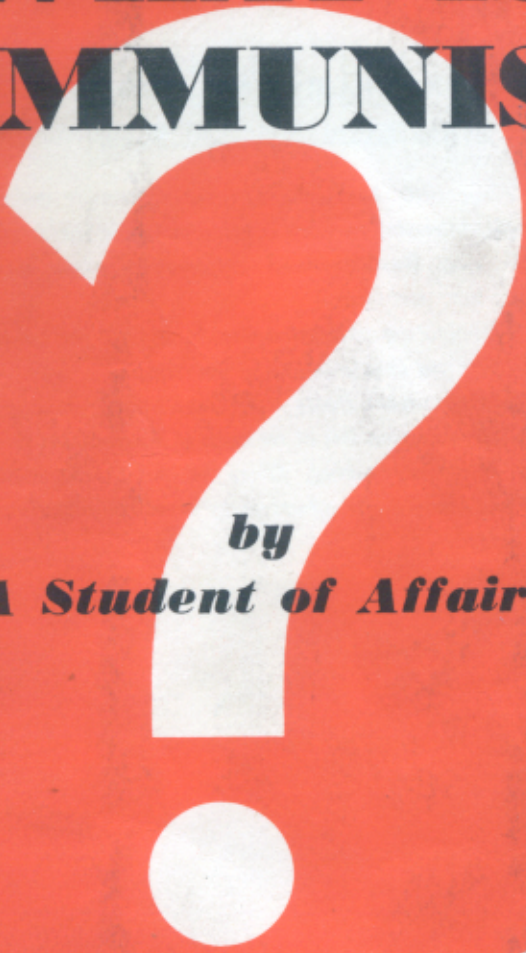
WHAT IS COMMUNISM



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WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

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BY

A STUDENT OF AFFAIRS

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions.—from the Communist Manifesto, 1848.

LONDON
THE BATCHWORTH PRESS

Published in 1951 *by*
Batchworth Press Ltd
54 *Bloomsbury Street, London, W*1

Printed in Great Britain by
James Upton Ltd
London and Birmingham

[I]

COMMUNISM BEFORE KARL MARX

COMMUNISM, both as a way of life and as a political ideal, existed long before Karl Marx was born. Marx himself never claimed to have invented Communism, though many people think he did.

In the dictionary, Communism is defined as 'a theory according to which all property should be vested in the community, and labour organised for the common benefit.' In other words, people should share the land and other possessions, instead of owning private property, and each man should work for the good of all, instead of for himself alone.

In this sense, a kind of Communism has been practised, probably for thousands of years past, by small groups of people. It has existed in some primitive societies, in some early Christian communities, and in the monasteries both of the Christian Churches and of other religions. In the last fifty years a form of Communism which is much more advanced than anything in Soviet Russia has existed in the Kibbutzim, the collective farm settlements which the Jews set up in Palestine.

As a theory and an ideal, Communism has been preached by a number of philosophers. The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, wanted a kind of Communism in his

ideal State; so did Thomas More, the English philosopher of the 16th century; so also did a number of European political writers in the years before Karl Marx was born.

Some of the people who practised or preached Communism, from Plato onwards, did so because they thought that to possess private property distracted a man from single-minded devotion to God or single-minded service to the community or the State. Some of the thinkers who were the forerunners of Marx looked on abolition of private property as the way to get real social and economic justice. The Jewish settlers in Palestine chose a Communistic way of life, partly out of idealism, and partly because they believed it to be the kind of organisation which could most quickly and effectively make the sandy desert become fertile.

Experience has shown that it is far easier to attempt real Communism in a very small community, with a very simple economic structure, formed by people devoted to some common ideal, than it ever could be in a large State with a complex modern economic structure. In fact Communism, in the original sense of the word, has never yet been realised in any modern State. Marx and his successors, Lenin and Stalin, have given the word a new meaning. But neither in its original meaning nor in its Marxist meaning does real Communism exist today in Soviet Russia. Most 'Communists' believe that it will some day. But that still remains to be seen.

[II]

THE COMMUNISM OF KARL MARX

KARL MARX took over the idea of Communism, which had a long history behind it, and used it as a name for his own particular creed. Communism has, however, not very much to do with the essential part of his creed. This was that throughout past history, every type of human society has been given its particular character by the *means of production* it used — its methods of agriculture or its methods of manufacturing goods — and by the economic relationship between the people using these *means of production* — the relationship between master and slave, or between feudal lord and serf, or between 'bourgeois' capitalist and 'proletarian' worker.

On this rather sweeping assumption, Marx built up his elaborate theory of 'historical materialism'. Then he went on to say that in every form of society since the early days of mankind, there has always been a struggle between the different social classes, and that society has only progressed from one stage to another through the revolution of one class against another. The modern age, he said, is the age of the revolution of the proletariat — the class of the industrial workers — against the capitalist class. After the revolution, he believed, there would at last be a 'class-

less' society, and then, he added, you would have Communism.

Marx himself was not one of the proletariat by origin ; and by temperament he seems to have been much more a prophet of revolution than a real practical revolutionary. He was born in 1818, and came from a middle class Jewish family living in Western Germany. When he was six, his whole family became Christian, joining the Protestant Church. Karl, whose father was a lawyer, had a good education and studied law, history and philosophy at leading German universities.

He was greatly influenced by the theories of the German philosopher, Hegel, who preached that each idea carried with it its own opposite, and that out of the conflict of this pair of opposites, a new and higher idea was born. Marx himself tried to apply this abstract theory to human society and so came to believe that human progress could come only out of conflict.

Marx might easily have become a professor of philosophy and spent his life peacefully working out philosophical theories. But since the rulers of Germany at that time were terrified of any kind of advanced political ideas, and since Marx's ideas were already advanced, a university career was barred to him. He was forced to turn to journalism, where he could write more freely.

When he was 25 he went to Paris, and wrote newspaper articles calling for a 'real and reckless fight against authority by the proletariat'. He also made friends with Engels, another young German, who thought the same way as he did. But the German authorities persuaded the French Government to expel Marx and his friends, and they went to Brussels. There they got in touch with a group of

workers who had Communistic ideas and called themselves 'the League of the Just', or a little later 'the League of the Communists'. It was for this League that at the end of 1847, when revolution was brewing in France and Germany, Marx and Engels wrote the famous *Communist Manifesto*.

A few months later, revolution broke out in France, and there were revolutionary stirrings in Germany. Marx went to Germany and wrote articles calling for armed resistance to the authorities. He was put on trial for high treason and acquitted, but was expelled from the country.

After a short time in Paris he went to London, where he lived for the rest of his life. Often he and his wife were very poor; three of their six children died very young. Marx became rather a sad and embittered man. He spent all his energies writing books and articles on his political, philosophical and economic ideas and trying to organise an international workers' movement. He died when he was 65, and was buried in a cemetery on a hill on the outskirts of London.

The two of Marx's many writings which are most remembered are the *Communist Manifesto*, written when he was 29, and his long book *Capital*, which was published when he was 49. The *Manifesto*, written when Marx still had hopes of an early and successful revolution, is at moments rather a stirring appeal for a proletarian uprising. Calling for international solidarity of the workers, it says: 'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.' And its climax is 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite'.

Phrases like these have naturally echoed for a long time in the ears of men who have wanted to put an end to social injustice. But for the most part, the *Manifesto* is far less rousing. It is written in an abstract and academic style, and a good deal of it is taken up with attacks on writers who had held Communistic or Socialistic theories before Marx. It is in these terms that it sets out Marx's own theory of 'historical materialism'and the class struggle. It then declares that after the proletariat has 'overthrown the bourgeois supremacy' and become the ruling class in the State, it must 'wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie,' and centralise all means of production in the hands of the State. It must abolish all property in land and all rights of inheritance. All must equally be obliged to work. 'Industrial armies, especially for agriculture', must be established. And after that, Marx says rather vaguely, there will be 'an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.

Reading the *Manifesto*, it is sometimes difficult not to feel that Marx, sincere as he obviously was, was really more concerned with the abstract idea of the proletariat rather than with the hardships and hopes of the individual workers; with the abstract idea of revolution rather than with creating a better life for human beings.

Some people think that this is one of Marx's weak points. Because he thought and wrote about abstractions, he came to believe everyone belonging to one social or economic class—particularly the proletariat—must have all the same fears, hates, hopes and interests. He also came to believe that within any one community of people there was a single determining motive: the desire to get hold of a bigger, or fairer, share of the community's possessions.

But since the development of modern psychology many people believe that human beings are much too many-sided and complicated to be explained so simply. A man is not just a typical member of this or that class, but something much more. And in any human society there are a number of other motives which are just as powerful as the economic motive. These people therefore believe today that Marx's theories are a good deal too narrow and rigid to explain past history or forecast the future of human society.

In his long and difficult book, *Capital*, Marx set out to expose the fundamental weaknesses and evils of the capitalist system. There is no doubt that he was filled with sincere indignation at those evils. The extremely quick growth of industries in Western Europe in the early 19th century had brought with it many social ills: terribly overcrowded living conditions, unhealthy working conditions in factories, and long hours of work not only for grown men and women but even for quite young children.

Marx, with his abstract theory of the class struggle, was immediately convinced that only revolution could bring a genuine cure of these ills. He did not foresee that real and lasting changes for the good would be brought about by other means — through the growth of powerful workers' organisations in the trade unions, through the awakening of the European people's sense of social justice, and through the realisation by the managers of industry that they needed the efficient and willing co-operation of the workers. He was, at bottom, extremely impatient of peaceful reforms or 'reformism', because he thought that they would delay the day of the revolution, which would overthrow the whole capitalist system.

This system, he thought, was fundamentally rotten because it was based on exploitation. To prove this, he worked out his economic theory of 'surplus value'. He said that when a 'capitalist' sold something manufactured in one of his undertakings, part of the money he obtained for it was 'surplus value' (or profit) over and above the money he paid to the worker who made it and the money he spent on machines and their upkeep.

Or, to put it from the worker's point of view: if a man worked a 12-hour day, then in the first six hours he might produce something which was worth, in money, what he received as his wage. But for the other six hours, he would be working, not to earn his wage, but just to put money into the pocket of the 'capitalist', who would then use it as fresh capital.

Many economists have picked holes in Marx's 'surplus value' theory. Today it is usually regarded as very much over-simplified and, like his political theories, leaves many important factors out of account. But still, it helped to make many people, in the late 19th century, wake up to the injustices of the existing capitalist system; and it helped the workers in their campaign for better wages, better hours of work, better living conditions, and a more honourable position in the community. And this help, much more than his revolutionary theory, may very well be Marx's real contribution to the cause of social and economic justice.

[III]

LENIN AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

MARX has had many followers. Many people, both inside and outside Europe, have called themselves 'Marxists' during the last 100 years. But there has been one great split among Marx's followers. A large number, especially in Western Europe, have come to believe that it may be possible to change the social and economic system without violence, and that there can be a peaceful and gradual sort of revolution. In the meantime, these Marxists, or 'Socialists', thought their immediate job was to bring about real improvements in the conditions of the workers.

But the other kind of Marxists thought differently. They despised and bitterly attacked the 'reformists' (or 'opportunists', as they called them). They insisted on the absolute necessity for revolution and declared that the 'capitalists' would never yield except to force.

The leader of the *most energetic* group of these revolutionary Marxists was Vladimir Lenin, who became the head of the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party.

Where Marx was the prophet of revolution, Lenin was the craftsman of revolution. He combined a brilliant brain with an essentially practical temperament. In subtle

and abstract phrases, he worked out the technique by which revolution was to be carried through. And, talking always in terms of the 'class struggle', he worked out the methods by which the revolutionaries were to keep themselves in power.

Lenin was born in 1870, on the great Volga river, in the heart of Russia. His mother had been a schoolmistress, and his father was a physics teacher who later became Director of Elementary Schools for his province. So Lenin, like Marx, came from the professional middle class, not from the proletariat. Lenin's elder brother became involved in a plot to kill the Russian Tsar, and was executed when he was only 19. So when Lenin was only a boy, he was drawn into revolutionary politics.

Lenin did well at school and went to Kazan University, where he got into trouble as ringleader in a student riot, and was expelled. Later he was an exceptionally clever law student at St. Petersburg (later Petrograd, now Leningrad). At the same time he was privately studying the works of Marx, and at the age of 23, he contacted a group of Marxist intellectuals in St. Petersburg.

The Russian Tsarist Government was then extremely reactionary, and terrified of any sort of social progress. When Lenin was 25 he was arrested, and after a year in prison was tried and exiled for three years in Siberia. When he was released he went abroad to write political works and to take part in the political activities of the left-wing Russian exiles. For a year he lived in London and studied in the British Museum, as Marx had done before him. Sometimes he would visit Marx's grave.

He spent a good deal of the 1914-1918 war in neutral Switzerland, writing violent attacks on those Socialists of

all countries who supported this 'imperialist' war. In 1917, a few weeks after the Russian February revolution, brought about by a popular uprising, the Germans allowed him to travel through Germany in a 'sealed train'. They no doubt believed (rightly) that his revolutionary work would finally put the Russian Army out of the war. Back in Russia, Lenin helped to prepare and organise a second 'revolution'— the Bolshevik seizure of power — which took place in November, 1917.

By this time he was undisputed leader of the Bolshevik Party, which quickly seized absolute power and became the ruler of Russia. But he was a quiet man, who did not seek the limelight and who went on living simply. The British writer and philosopher, Bertrand Russell, saw him in Moscow in 1920, and wrote:

'If one met him without knowing who he was, one would not guess that he is possessed of great power, or even that he is in any way eminent. I never met a person so destitute of self-importance. He looks at his visitors very closely, and screws up one eye, which seems to increase alarmingly the penetrating power of the other . . . He is dictatorial, calm, incapable of fear, extraordinarily devoid of self-seeking, an embodied theory.

'He resembles a professor in his desire to have the theory understood and in his fury with those who misunderstand or disagree . . . I got the impression that he despises a great many people and is an intellectual aristocrat.'

All this perhaps does not sound much like the picture of a practical man. But both in his writings and his acts, Lenin was much more concerned with practical results than ideals or ultimate aims. He was obsessed with the

problem of obtaining and retaining power and did not look far beyond it.

Before 1917 most of his writings, expanding Marx's ideas and adapting them for his own purposes, were aimed at knocking out some rival political group or party. In particular, they were directed against the Mensheviks, who, until a Party split in 1903, had formed, together with the Bolsheviks, the Russian Social Democratic Party, and against the Social Revolutionaries, the party of the Russian peasants — by far the great majority of the population of Russia. So through his writings, Lenin weakened the Bolsheviks' rivals, and prepared the way for their final destruction soon after his seizure of power.

Lenin's Plan for the Revolution

Apart from this political battle, Lenin's chief job, before seizing power, was to convince people that the proletarian revolution was not a far-away dream but something which must and could be brought about quickly. This was not at all easy. Marx had based his revolutionary theory on Western Europe, where industries were very much more highly developed than in Russia or Eastern Europe. Marx also believed that very soon, in the West, the industrial workers would be the majority of the population. So, at least until his later years, Marx looked on the 'proletarian' revolution as being just around the corner.

But by Lenin's day it was still not true that the industrial workers had an absolute majority in any country. Nor were the workers by any means solid for Socialism

or Communism. As for Russia and Eastern Europe, the industrial workers were still only a tiny minority, while the enormous majority of the people were peasants. Even among the industrial workers, only a few were beginning to be 'class conscious'— that is, ready to rise up against the capitalists. So the proletariat seemed to have very little chance of starting a successful revolution.

Lenin's answer, though he reached it through a great deal of abstract theorising on Marxist lines, was really extremely simple.

First, if you are in a weak position and have several enemies you must somehow or other ally yourself with one of your enemies, if possible the strongest, against the rest. When, through your temporary ally's help, you have defeated the rest, you will then be strong enough to turn on your ally and get rid of him.

This meant that the proletariat might temporarily ally itself with the 'bourgeoisie' against the Tsar or King or aristocracy. At a later stage, the proletariat must certainly ally itself with the great mass of the peasants against the bourgeoisie. Then, after the defeat of the bourgeoisie, the peasants could be put back in their place — a subordinate position under the proletarian dictatorship.

Next, if the proletariat is to be strong enough and clever enough to carry out these tactics, it must be directed and held together by a really solid and tough political party. In Russia, this was to be the Bolshevik Party. But the party must not try to enrol the whole proletariat, because in fact most of the proletariat are too 'backward' and 'politically ignorant'. (That, perhaps, is where Lenin's being an 'intellectual aristocrat' came in). So the party must be the vanguard of the proletariat, small, compact

very highly organised, and must impose absolute obedience and discipline on its members.

The party must keep in touch with the 'masses' of the proletariat, but it must never get lost in them; it must always be able to direct and control them from above. Only a party of this kind, Lenin thought, would be able to run the revolution and keep sole power after the revolution.

Finally, if the proletariat is still not strong enough to *start* the revolution, then the party must jump on to the back of whatever other party or movement may succeed in starting a revolution against the existing order. In this way the party can ride safely to power. Or, in Lenin's terms, by prolonging a 'bourgeois' revolution, it can turn it into a 'proletarian' revolution, and so set up a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In Russia, this meant that the Bolshevik Party should (as it did in 1917) jump on the back of the revolutionary movement against the corrupt and worn-out Tsarist régime. Outwardly, at first, it should seem to support that revolution; but underground it should work against the Liberal Government set up by the revolution and make every difficulty for them, until at last the moment came when the Bolsheviks could seize sole power for themselves.

That was Lenin's technique for Russia. In countries where there were oppressed nationalities, or in 'colonial territories', the method was to be much the same. The party was to jump on the back of the nationalist or 'national revolutionary' or 'anti-imperialist' movement, so as to ride to power. Then it could turn and destroy the leadership of the national revolution — whom it denounced as 'bourgeois'.

Lenin expounded his plan for the proletarian revolution at very great length and very elaborately. But anyone who has a look into his 'Collected Works' can see that these were its main points. And it was certainly — in Russia — an effective plan, even though to non-Bolsheviks it did seem to contain a good deal of the 'opportunism' which Leninists so bitterly attacked in their rivals.

But even with this plan to work on, it is still extremely doubtful whether the Bolshevik revolution could ever have been carried through if it had not been for the military disasters and economic sufferings which the first world war inflicted on Russia. In fact, no Communist revolution has yet been carried out, or even seriously attempted, except in countries which were suffering either from military defeat or the devastation and confusion caused by war. Communist writers have very often talked about 'revolutionary situations' existing here or there in the world. But it seems that it is only war that can really produce a 'revolutionary situation'.

Lenin and the Soviets

One side of the Bolshevik seizure of power was very typical of Lenin's tactics. That was his handling of the Soviets.

When he returned to Russia in the spring of 1917, he found that the popular revolution had already overthrown the Tsarist Government, and that a Liberal Provisional Government had been set up. So he decided that the Bolsheviks must pretend to support this new Government but at the same time must work to undermine and weaken

it by creating unrest and dissension. And he found just the right weapon ready to hand. Soviets, or councils of factory workers and soldiers, had already sprung up spontaneously in many parts of Russia. They had a good deal of power; and although in theory they backed the Provisional Government, they were really independent of it, and sometimes at loggerheads with it.

This was the sort of situation which the Lenin plan could well exploit. The Bolsheviks, though at first in a small minority in the Soviets, set out to capture control of them, so that they could use them against the Provisional Government. When the Bolshevik Party held a Congress in April 1917, therefore, Lenin proclaimed the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'. But when, on 3rd June, 1917, the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets met, only about one eighth of the delegates were Bolsheviks, and the congress decided definitely that the Soviets should support the Provisional Government.

This was a blow for Lenin's plan. At a fresh Bolshevik Party congress at the end of July, at a time when Lenin was in hiding from the authorities of the Provisional Government, Stalin ordered the withdrawal of the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'. The Bolsheviks seemed to be in retreat, and were anyhow bitterly *opposed to the Soviets*.

But circumstances came to the Bolsheviks' rescue. A fresh Russian offensive against the Germans — under the Provisional Government Russia was still at war with Germany — failed miserably. Bolshevik propaganda was successful in disorganising the Russian army. The economic situation became worse and worse and at last the Bolsheviks succeeded by one means or another, in getting a majority in the two most important Soviets, those of

Petrograd and Moscow. They revived the slogan of 'All power to the Soviets'. And although the Bolsheviks were still in a tiny minority in Russia as a whole, they were able, through the Soviets, to seize power in Petrograd and Moscow. This was the Bolshevik seizure of power, now celebrated as the 'October Revolution'.

After the 'revolution', the Bolsheviks used the Soviets to establish their authority through the rest of Russia, And, in fact, the Soviets became the outer form of the new Government and administration which the Bolsheviks set up. There was a vast pyramid, from the tiny Soviets of the villages or factories at the bottom, right up to the Supreme Soviet, which was in theory the supreme governing body of Russia.

But in practice, the Soviets soon ceased to be something genuine and spontaneous, as they had been at the start. All real power throughout the country was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. But they kept the Soviets in existence because they were a convenient and seemingly democratic way of running the country.

The twists and changes of the Bolsheviks' attitude towards the Soviets is an early example of what many people have come to regard as the cynical opportunism of Communist methods. Communists, of course, say that it is not opportunism, because anything that serves the ultimate aims of the proletarian revolution is not opportunist, but revolutionary. It is only what does *not* serve the ultimate aims of the revolution which is opportunist.

The only difficulty about this is: who, in any complicated situation, is to judge what does or does not serve the ultimate aims of the revolution? Under the present Russian system, it is the man who rules the party, accord-

ing to his views of the moment. And it is often difficult for his underlings to guess either what the ruler is going to say or why he says it. So, particularly under Stalin's rule, a good many of these underlings have found that, with the best will in the world, their guesses have been wrong. Then they find themselves bitterly condemned — even condemned to death — for 'opportunism' and worse crimes.

The Bolsheviks and the other Left-wing Parties

In 1917 Lenin, after using the Soviets to seize power for the Bolsheviks, did in a rather rough and ready way carry through the main points of Marx's programme. The chief industries, banks and means of communication were declared to be the property of the State. But Lenin had two other 'revolutionary' tasks. One — an easy one for him — was to get rid of the other left-wing parties, because he thought the Bolsheviks must have sole and absolute power. The other was more difficult — to win over the peasants, who formed the great mass of the Russian people, or at least to stop them from interfering with the Bolshevik 'revolution'.

There were two political parties which were dangerous rivals to the Bolsheviks. One was the Menshevik Party: at the moment of the October Revolution, the Mensheviks, who were moderate Socialists, still had a bigger number of supporters than the Bolsheviks. The other was the Social Revolutionaries' Party, which represented the peasants. Against each, the Bolsheviks used the same weapon. This was to split the enemy party into two sections, and then to draw one section into a 'temporary

alliance' with the Bolsheviks, and to attack and destroy the other section.

The Bolsheviks had already started this job even before the Revolution. The official *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)* says: 'Under the pressure of the revolutionary peasants, a Left-Wing formed within the Social Revolutionary Party which expressed its disapproval of the policy of compromise with the bourgeoisie. Among the Mensheviks, too, there appeared a group of 'Leftists' who gravitated towards the Bolsheviks'.

After the revolution, the Right-wing Social Revolutionaries were still strong, and when a Constituent Assembly, democratically elected just after the October Revolution, met in January, 1918, they had a majority. The Bolsheviks and the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries together were still in a minority. But Lenin got over this awkward fact very simply — by declaring the Constituent Assembly, 'unconstitutional' and dissolving it. The Right-wing Social Revolutionaries were, politically speaking, wiped out. A few months later, the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries also were accused by the Bolsheviks of plotting with the rich peasants and, as the official *Short History* puts it, 'were routed by the Soviet Government'.

The Bolsheviks got rid of the Mensheviks, too, by very much the same methods.

Since Lenin's day, these same methods have been used by the Communists in practically all their dealings with other Left-wing parties — that is, parties which represent the industrial workers or the peasants. Whenever the Communists have been weak, they have been ready to make 'temporary alliances' with other Left-wing parties;

but really they have always looked on them as their bitterest enemies. As soon as they felt strong enough, they have used these methods to kill off all other parties. The Communists used them throughout Eastern Europe from 1947 onwards.

Lenin and the Peasants

Lenin's really difficult job was to win over the peasants who, according to his theory, were to be at first the allies of the Proletariat, and later a subordinate 'class' under the proletarian dictatorship. His first step, at the moment of the October Revolution, was to keep the peasants from interfering by calling on them to seize the big estates of the landlords and to split up the land among themselves. By doing this, Lenin also stole the trump card of his political enemies, the Social Revolutionaries. Their policy had always been to split up the big estates, but they had hesitated to carry it out before they could do it in a constitutional way.

By this big step, Lenin succeeded in keeping the peasants busy dividing up the land in the early months of the revolution. They thus gave little trouble, even when anti-Bolshevik armies, with foreign help, tried to break up the new Bolshevik system of government.

But during the long drawn-out fighting between the Bolsheviks and the anti-Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks had to requisition grain from the peasants; and there was so much muddle and inefficiency in the factories which the State had taken over that few of the goods that the peasants needed were manufactured. The peasants became restive and began to turn against the Bolsheviks. Then in March, 1921 there was a mutiny among the

Bolshevik troops at the fortress of Kronstadt. The Bolshevik leaders were so alarmed that Lenin declared his 'New Economic Policy'.

This new policy was a retreat to a quite un-Communist system. The peasants, after paying taxes, were to be allowed to trade freely. Small-scale private industries were permitted, so as to get more goods manufactured to meet the needs of the peasants. The peasants were allowed to buy goods freely. In 1922 a law was passed giving certain rights to private enterprise. The new policy also allowed for concessions to foreign capital. 'Self-interest will develop production', Lenin wrote in October, 1921. That did not sound much like Communism.

Lenin's 'New Economic Policy' was, however, only intended to save the Bolshevik revolution from economic collapse and from the growing enmity of the peasants. Lenin always meant to go back to the Marxist way and to put the peasants back in their place — as he saw it. He hoped to turn the poorer peasants against the better-off peasants, and to 'persuade' the poorer peasants to give up the land they had so recently won by joining collective farms.

But the year after he had announced his 'New Economic Policy' Lenin had a stroke. He never really recovered and he died on 21st January, 1924.

So the Bolshevik Revolution lost its chief maker. Lenin's revolutionary theory laid down political tactics which were really not very different from the tactics and tricks used in the past by a number of other politicians. But, perhaps because he had worked them out in terms of Marx's 'class struggle,' they did, in Lenin's hands, have big results.

Nevertheless, Lenin seems usually to have been as ruthless with himself as he was with other people; and he would not have dreamed of claiming that, by the time he died, he had established anything like Communism in Russia. Nor would he have claimed to have made the life of the ordinary Russian either happy or secure.

He could, however, claim to have placed all power in Russia into the hands of a small group of people — the chiefs of the Bolshevik Party. He would have thought that this was the most important thing. For he seems to have considered the organisation of power more important than making people happy and secure.

[IV]

STALINISM

LENIN'S successor, Stalin, is a man of a very different quality. Before the October Revolution, he had not been one of the big thinkers or leaders of the Bolsheviks, and in the October Revolution itself he seems to have played only a small part.

After the revolution, he quietly built up a powerful position for himself behind the scenes. He worked himself into a key post inside the Bolshevik Party, and obtained control of the party's internal organisation; and he managed to place his own supporters in all the most

vital party posts. In addition he was skilful in getting rid of the more brilliant members of the party, who might be dangerous rivals, and particularly those who could be accused of deviating from the party's policy of the moment.

Even before Lenin's death, the party's top ranks had been torn by disputes over conflicting personal ambitions or conflicting ideas on policy. Lenin had often allowed a good deal of hard argument in the high councils of the party leaders, if not among the lower ranks of the party. Under Stalin's rule, this soon changed. If he decided that a prominent Bolshevik was becoming too important or too talkative, Stalin would arrange for him to be denounced for all sorts of errors or crimes. Soon there was an atmosphere of terror inside the party, as well as in the country in general.

As Stalin's rule went on, more and more leading Bolsheviks were arrested, accused of strange crimes, and imprisoned or executed. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Tukhachevsky and Bukharin, all of whom had been leading Bolsheviks, were executed after sensational trials.

Leon Trotsky, who had played a very big part in the October Revolution, was lucky to escape into exile. After long years during which he was most violently attacked by Stalin's propagandists, he was finally killed in Mexico during the last war, by an assassin who was almost certainly acting for Stalin's secret police.

It was because Stalin had already, before Lenin died, got control both of the internal party organisation and of the secret political police, that he managed to become Lenin's successor. But he was by no means the obviously right man for the post. Lenin, in spite of his dogmatism

and his cold-blooded abstractions, had had something supremely adventurous and experimental in his temperament. Stalin showed himself to be above all cautious, suspicious and reserved, with a great gift for hiding his real thoughts and aims.

Where Lenin used Marxist methods of argument to explain his aims with almost brutal frankness, Stalin seems more often to have used them as a smokescreen to mask his manoeuvres. It is easy to imagine Stalin, with his broad, rather grim smile, shaking with silent laughter at the way in which — so he believes — the 'popular masses' swallow the Marxist-Leninist catch-phrases which his propagandists feed to them so freely.

In one way, Stalin can be regarded as an extreme conservative. That is, the clue to the strange twists and turns of his policy seems to be his absolutely fixed determination to preserve his own power and so to preserve the Stalinist system of government, which is indeed a logical development of Marxist political theory and Lenin's political practice.

In 1925, Stalin laid down the ruling that Socialism could be built in one country. That meant that the fate of the Russian revolution was *not* necessarily tied up with the cause of world revolution, as the Bolsheviks had earlier believed. In practice, it meant that Stalin did not intend for the time being, to run any risks by backing revolutionary movements *outside* Russia, except only when a particular movement might be momentarily useful to the narrow short-term interests of Stalinist Russia. On the other hand he has always maintained that there can be no real security for Soviet Russia until Communism has spread over most of the world.

Stalin and the Peasants

At home, Stalin set himself the task of getting rid of any individuals, or groups or 'classes' who could possibly become a danger to his system of Government. The chief danger obviously came from the peasants. Lenin's 'New Economic Policy' had been successful in improving economic conditions. At the same time, it was building up a class of fairly prosperous peasants and small producers, who were likely to become independent-minded and to kick against the absolute rule of the Soviet system. Moreover, the 'New Economic Policy' had been planned as only a temporary deviation from the Communist Party's programme.

When Stalin came to power, the peasants were still important. In 1925, two-thirds of Russia's production — according to Soviet figures — still came from agriculture, and only one-third from industry. Stalin set out to change this position by building up as many new industries as possible as quickly as possible. By April, 1929 he was ready to announce his first Five-Year Plan. This was a 'colossal plan', as the official *Short History* calls it, for building up industry. The result of this plan was that by 1933, according to Soviet figures, 70 per cent or over two-thirds of the country's production came from industry. So the peasants were no longer the most important class, in economic terms, in Stalin's State.

The first Five-Year Plan made it possible for Stalin to launch a ruthless campaign against the 'kulaks', or better-off peasants, and to drive the rest of the peasants into collective farms. The more quickly new industries were built up, the more safely could the Communist

Party get rid of its chief 'class enemies' and put the peasants back into second place in the State.

The process of 'collectivisation' of agriculture, from 1929 to 1933, was a painful one. This is what the official *Short History* says about it:

> 'Solid collectivisation was not just a peaceful process . . . Solid collectivisation meant that all the land in a village area in which a collective farm was formed passed into the hands of the collective farm; but a considerable proportion of this land was held by the kulaks, and therefore the peasants would expropriate them, driving them from the land, dispossessing them of their cattle and machinery and demanding their arrest and eviction from the district by the Soviet authorities.
>
> 'Solid collectivisation therefore meant the elimination of the kulaks'.

But although this account tried to make out that there was a spontaneous movement by the poorer peasants against the 'kulaks' the *Short History* later admits that the 'distinguishing feature of this revolution' was that 'it was accomplished from above, on the initiative of the State'.

Indeed, collectivisation was pushed through by the party and the police. It led to widespread unrest and, particularly in the rich lands of the Ukraine, to bloodshed and famine in which millions died of hunger.

But Stalin had successfully 'eliminated' what he thought to be the main threat to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat; he had achieved his purpose. Or at least, he had succeeded for the time being. After the second world war, and even five years later, there were signs of discontent and 'deviation' in the collective farms. In 1950 a campaign was started to make the workers on the collective farms work in large gangs, or 'battalions', instead of in small teams. The idea seemed to be to stop them becoming too independent-minded and thinking as individuals.

It may be that the peasant problem is a problem that Stalin has not yet solved and never will solve.

The Party and the People in the Soviet State

In Stalin's Russia there is a strange system of government. The Bolshevik Party forms only a small minority of the people. It rules everything; but the people have no control whatever over it. At the same time the great majority of its members are ruled absolutely by a tiny group of men at the top of the party — Stalin and the 'Politburo' whom no one controls at all. This was not Marx's idea of the way proletarian dictatorship would work, but it is the logical development of putting Marx's theories into practice.

It has already been told how the Soviets, which at first had in their rather rough and ready way really represented the feelings of the workers, soldiers and peasants, lost any real power. Soon their only job was to applaud decisions which the Bolshevik Party had already made and help carry them out. In 1936 a new Soviet constitution was introduced. This declared that 'Soviet society consists of two friendly classes — the workers and peasants — class distinctions between the two still remaining.' This naturally meant that the peasants were regarded as second-class people.

However, the constitution did lay down a great many

excellent principles and 'freedoms', and said that in elections there was to be a universal and equal right to vote and that, for the first time since the October Revolution, the vote was to be secret.

This new constitution looked democratic enough. But in practice, there has been no sign that it has made life any more free or secure for the ordinary Russian. He can vote in elections. Such great pressure is in fact exerted on him that he *must* vote, whether he wants to or not. But he has no choice of candidates. All he has put before him is one candidate for each house of the Supreme Soviet, both previously selected by the Bolshevik Party. So he does not really 'vote' at all; and the Soviets thus 'elected' have no real power.

Inside every Soviet, as also inside every trade union, every factory, collective farm, youth organisation, sports organisation, or writers' or scientists' organisation, there is a party cell, consisting of three or more party members. Its job is to carry out the policy of the party inside the Soviet or the organisation, and make sure that it is executed. So the Soviet or the organisation does not make its own policy or its own decisions. It just has to carry out the party's policy and the party's decisions. And over the party and its decisions it has no control whatever. This system of control is laid down in the Soviet Constitution itself, in article 126.

The party has always remained a small group, and has become a sort of tiny ruling class or aristocracy. In 1930 the party had just under 2,000,000 members, including 'candidate members'. During the second world war, when Stalin had to make concessions, a good many fresh members were admitted, though many were later

'purged'. In 1950 the membership was about 6,000,000 out of the total population of nearly 200,000,000. So the new ruling class is formed by less than one-thirtieth of the people.

In some ways the party member has a better life than the other citizens of the Soviet Union. Other people are afraid of him, or in awe of him; he has a kind of social prestige and a number of social privileges. But at the same time his life is an uncomfortable one. For there is a whole scale of different ranks *inside* the party; and the party member at the bottom has to fear and obey blindly all those above him. If he makes a mistake he will be expelled and perhaps severely punished.

The party members near the top of the scale are in a much more dangerous position. Because they are important people and have big responsibilities, the party leaders may easily grow suspicious of them, particularly if they show any sort of independence. Or a scapegoat may be needed for the failure of some branch of the Soviet economic system. In either case, important party members easily find themselves arrested and tried as 'spies', 'wreckers', 'traitors' or 'agents of Fascist Powers'; they then have to be humiliated and heaped with abuse in court; they have to make fantastic 'confessions'; finally they are executed.

The big Moscow treason trials of 1937 showed what fantastic accusations could be brought against important Bolsheviks who until then had received nothing but praise. For instance, Yagoda, who had been head of the Soviet secret police, found himself suddenly accused of murdering the great Soviet writer, Gorki, by means of quicksilver fumes.

The ordinary Russian, who has not the privilege of belonging to the party, does not usually have the privilege of a trial if he comes under suspicion of thinking independently. Sometimes he just disappears, and his family never hears of him again. More often, he find himself, without trial, in one of the many labour camps, where he can be employed on forced labour for years without any chance of appeal or escape. These camps, and the conditions of work there, are formally laid down by Soviet law; no responsible Soviet spokesman has ever tried to deny their existence.

Four years after the end of the second world war, it was estimated that there were about 10 million men and women in Russian labour camps, or about one-twentieth of the people of Russia. They were employed, in extremely hard living conditions, working long hours for nominal wages, on the hardest type of labour — for instance, building canals or railways in the remoter parts of Russia, or constructing ports or mining in the bitter cold of the far north.

So the ordinary Russian can have no feeling of safety or ease. He may in fact be entirely loyal and obedient to the Soviet system. But because the secret political police is not really efficient, it thinks it much better to arrest too many people than too few. The ordinary Russian, however obedient, cannot sleep at night in peaceful certainty about tomorrow.

Stalin and the Proletariat

If any class in Russia has benefited from Communist Party rule, it is the factory workers. After all, there is, at least in theory, a dictatorship of the proletariat. But there

are many serious disadvantages for the industrial workers.

For one thing, in the Soviet State, the trade unions no longer look after the rights and interests of the workers and try to obtain better conditions. They have no right of bargaining with the factory management or with the State; and of course they cannot call strikes. Instead, as Stalin himself has said, they are 'transmission belts'. That is, they transmit the party's orders to the workers. As Stalin has also said, in each trade union group or factory, there is always a party member, working on the orders of some higher party body, to see that what the party wants is carried out.

Unless the party wants to get rid of a particular factory manager, the workers have no way of appealing against injustice or exploitation. And to the ordinary worker, exploitation by the Soviet State is not so very different in practice from 'capitalist' exploitation.

A worker may easily find himself directed, by strong moral pressure if not by official orders, from his home district to some remote part of Russia where the State is starting up new industries. If he should refuse to go, he will soon find himself in a labour camp.

Although on paper working hours for industrial workers may be better, many workers find themselves under strong pressure to work overtime, or to 'overfulfil the norm' — that is, to do more than the normal amount of work in a given time. And if he wants to get on in life, he will have to become a 'Stakhanovite' or a 'shock-worker'. That means, he must try to achieve almost superhuman feats of strength and endurance; the original Stakhanov, a miner, achieved a record by cutting seven times the normal amount of coal in a given time.

As for pay, the Soviet system, instead of levelling up wages and salaries, has done just the opposite. There is an enormous gap between the unskilled worker and the highly skilled worker or technician. Soviet figures in May 1948 showed that an unskilled worker received about 500 roubles a month, or a stoker as low as 280 roubles; but a highly-skilled miner received 6,000 roubles. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the unskilled worker, who could barely feed his family, suffered from a sense of social injustice.

At the other end of the social scale, writers, artists, musicians and scientists, together with the higher party officials, are extremely privileged. When there was food rationing, they had particularly large rations. A man of this class may have a flat to himself (which the ordinary Russian cannot hope for); he may have a bungalow in the country. He can afford an abundance of food and clothing.

At the same time, by no means all the writers and artists and scientists are really happy. Every form of art and science is under the control of the party, which always believes it knows best. And the party has very narrow and rigid views. It has declared that the theories of a second-rate biologist, Michurin, are perfectly right; any scientist who dares to criticise them is denounced and is likely to lose his job.

Under Lenin, Soviet art and drama were full of new ideas and experiments; under Stalin, all that has stopped. Every sort of art is supposed to follow what is called 'Socialist realism'; that is, it is to be a form of advertisement for the Soviet system. So a brilliant Soviet satirist, such as Zoshchenko, finds himself suddenly denounced

by the party, or a world-renowned composer, like Shostakovich, is strongly attacked. Modern abstract painting, which flourished in the early years of the Soviet State, is now banned.

Since every sort of art or science needs above all freedom if it is to develop, the Soviet system is slowly but surely stifling art and science.

But Marx said that the aim of the revolution was to create 'an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'

In the Soviet State, it seems that no one, neither worker, peasant, artist, scientist nor party member, can develop freely.

[V]

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM AND INTERNATIONAL STALINISM

FROM the beginning, Marx meant his revolutionary movement to be an international movement. That was why he wrote in the 'Manifesto' that 'the working men have no country.' He thought the revolution must take place in several countries if it were to succeed.

But by the time the First International, the 'International Working Men's Association', was formed in 1864, seventeen years after the *Manifesto* had been published, Marx's ideas had become much more mellow. As head of the General Council of the International, he

wanted it to be broad-minded enough to take in all sorts of groups within the workers' movement, not only those which were strictly 'Marxist' or strictly revolutionary. And so the First International was quite moderate in its aims, and tried chiefly to educate the workers to understand their own position and their own needs. But unfortunately disputes arose among the different groups, and in 1876 it was dissolved. Marx tried to carry on its work in other ways until he died seven years later.

The Second International, formed in 1889, was also broadminded, and tried to unite all parties and groups, both Marxist and non-Marxist, both revolutionary and 'reformist'. And, since the Socialist parties of Europe were gaining strength at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Second International became a powerful body with a good deal of influence even though it allowed plenty of free and forceful argument at its conferences.

But the Bolshevik (later called Communist) Party, under Lenin's leadership, became a disturbing influence. Lenin, though he might make what he called a 'temporary alliance' with some other group, spent most of his time bitterly attacking all those Socialists who thought differently from himself. In his work, *What is to be Done*, published just before the split among the Russian Social Democrats, he was already violently condemning 'freedom of criticism' as 'opportunism'. Naturally, he meant that 'freedom of criticism' was wrong for anyone but himself and his followers.

The first world war split the Second International, because most Socialists backed the war effort of their own particular country. Lenin was strongly against the war,

except in so far as it could be used to bring about the revolution. After seizing power in Russia in 1917, the Bolshevik (Communist) Party naturally broke with the Second International. Soon after this, Communist Parties sprang up in a number of European countries, formed from the pro-Communist wings of the Socialist Parties.

The Bolsheviks, fighting for their lives, and anxious for outside help, naturally wanted to link up with these new Communist Parties, in the hope that a wave of revolutions would break across war-ravaged Europe. So in 1919 the Communist International, or Comintern, often known as the Third International, was formed.

The Communists in those days were much more genuinely 'internationalists' than they have since become. At the same time, they had a very strong purely Russian interest in the Comintern. They felt the Comintern's first task was to help keep the Bolshevik revolutionaries in power in Russia. The cause of the revolution in other countries must come second to this. So they ordered revolutions in countries where they had no chance of succeeding, but only meant that the Communist Party would be more or less wiped out. This is what happened, for instance, in Bulgaria in September, 1923.

The Russian leaders were, perhaps unconsciously, arrogant and overbearing towards the Communist leaders of other countries. Although in Lenin's day there were some real arguments at Comintern meetings, in general non-Russian Communists were expected to accept the Russians' views as authoritative and to follow their decisions without much question. All the same, while Lenin was alive the non-Russian Communist Parties did manage to keep a certain amount of independence.

Under Stalin's rule the Comintern changed quickly and became just a machine for rubber-stamping the decisions of the Russian party leaders. Stalin also used it to strengthen his own position inside the Russian party against his rivals.

Ignazio Silone, the Italian Socialist who was once a Communist, has told how he went to Moscow as a representative of the Italian Communist Party to attend a Comintern meeting. He found that the Comintern had been asked by Stalin to pass a resolution strongly condemning a paper which Trotsky had written on China. Silone said he would like to read Trotsky's paper before signing the Comintern resolution. All the other members of the Comintern were surprised at this simple request. It turned out that no one except Stalin and the Russians had seen Trotsky's paper. Since Stalin did not want to show it to them, they were quite prepared to sign the resolution blindly. Silone refused and not long after ceased to be a Communist.

Under Stalin, the Russian party also interfered much more drastically in the internal affairs of the other Communist Parties. If one of the leaders of another party was suspected of taking too independent a line, or of putting his own party's interests before Russian interests, he would find himself somehow removed from office, or else he would be summoned to Moscow where he would have a long but closely-watched 'rest.'

The Russians also believed that they always knew much better what was good for another party than the leaders of that party did themselves. As the Russians were often surprisingly ignorant and prejudiced about conditions in the country concerned, Russian interference was often disastrous.

A non-Russian party would be ordered to go underground when its more intelligent leaders believed it ought to be fighting openly in Parliament; or it would be ordered to revolt when revolt was suicidal. These sudden and meaningless changes of policy, dictated by Moscow, created great confusion in the minds of the lower-rank party members. It happened more and more often that men of intelligence and initiative would leave the party or find themselves expelled from it, while the more stupid and blindly obedient members were left.

The Popular Front

In the 1930s, however, international Communism got a new lease of life. This it owed to quite outside circumstances. The economic crisis at the beginning of the '30s drove many disappointed and disillusioned young people into the arms either of the Nazis and Fascists or of the Communists. Then, the rise of Hitler in Germany drove many who feared or hated him, or who wanted to fight against him for the sake of their ideals, towards the Communists who seemed to be Hitler's chief enemies.

Finally, the Spanish Civil War sent many real democrats and Liberals and idealists to the Communists, who had adopted the cause of the Spanish Republic. So it was that a number of distinguished writers and public men in Europe declared their sympathy with Soviet Russia and the Communists.

Stalin thoroughly exploited all these opportunities. In 1935 the Comintern, which before had been told to treat the Socialists as its worst enemies, was ordered to adopt a new policy. This was the 'Popular Front' policy and it meant that everywhere the Communists were to take a

lead in forming wide alliances of all 'anti-Fascist' groups and parties and individuals. These alliances were to include Socialists and Liberals and all sorts of distinguished middle-class intellectuals; and they were to fight by propaganda and by political methods against Hitlerism and Fascism. The Communists themselves were told to keep in the background, but in reality they were to retain all the key posts for themselves and to pull all the strings.

This was all in accordance with Lenin's theory of 'temporary alliances'; but it had never been tried out before on so wide a scale. And it was remarkably successful at first. But after a time a good many of the non-Communists, who had joined the alliance in all good faith, came to realise that they were just puppets on strings that were being jerked by Communists; or they became disgusted when they saw the ruthlessness and dishonesty of Communist methods at first hand. Finally they came to see that the whole 'Popular Front' movement was only meant to serve the purposes of Stalin's foreign policy — a purely Russian policy.

So the movement began to break up. But many were not finally disillusioned until August, 1939. Then, just when the world was expecting Stalin to reach a definite agreement with the Western Powers, which might stop Hitler going to war, Stalin switched right round and concluded a pact with Nazi Germany. He thus gave Hitler the signal to go ahead and attack Poland; and within a few weeks Stalin's Russia joined with Hitler in splitting up Poland and seizing its territory.

This was a bad blow not only for many sympathisers of Stalin's Russia, but also for many Communists. (In 1950

the Czechoslovak Communist, Clementis, who had been Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, was bitterly denounced by his party bosses because in 1939 he had had doubts about this Stalin-Hitler pact). However, when Hitler attacked Russia in 1941 there was a great swing of feeling back in favour of Russia. This grew when the Russian Army and people put up such a tough and determined fight against Germany, and, at the cost of such heavy losses, won the victories which did so much to shorten the war.

In 1943, Stalin decided to make his Government more popular in the outer world by ordering the Comintern to dissolve itself. He wanted to give the impression that he was no longer interested in starting revolutions in other countries. As soon as the war was over, it became clear that this was only a polite gesture. The Russian party continued, wherever it could, to order the policies of other Communist Parties.

There were two other changes which Stalin made during the war to strengthen Russia's influence in the outer world, particularly in Eastern Europe.

One was to appeal to the other Slav peoples to join with the Russians as their blood brothers. (The Russians, the Poles, the Czechs and Slovaks, the Yugoslavs and the Bulgarians are all Slavs by racial origin or by language). This was a big change for the Bolsheviks. Before 1917, under the Russian Tsars, *attempts had been made* from time to time to spread Russia's influence among the smaller peoples of Eastern Europe by talking about 'Pan-Slavism', meaning the unity and superiority of the Slav race. But after the Revolution, the Bolsheviks had very firmly put a stop to all 'Pan-Slav' propaganda, because

their official theory was that all races were equal, and than anyhow 'racialism' was reactionary.

But in 1942 Stalin, who had already for several years past been reviving much of the old Russian nationalism, decided that there should be an All-Slav Congress in Moscow, where representatives of all the Slav peoples declared their devotion to the great Slav Russia. There were other congresses of the same kind later in the war; and Moscow propaganda talked a great deal about the unity of the Slavs.

Stalin's other change was in his attitude to the Russian Orthodox Church — an Eastern branch of the Christian Church. At the time of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks were bitterly opposed to religion and many churches were closed. They started a 'League of the Godless' to spread propaganda among the people about the supposed evils of religion. The 'League' even opened museums to prove their point. But since the Russian people, especially the peasants, are naturally religious, this campaign did not have a great success. During the war, when Russia was fighting with her back to the wall, Stalin suddenly decided that he would be friendly to the Orthodox Church again; and the Russians (though not party members) were once more allowed to flock to the churches.

There seems to have been three reasons why Stalin made this change. First, he thought it would make the Russians themselves fight better and work harder — an unwilling admission that Communism was not a strong enough motive. Next, he thought it would make the West believe that Soviet Russia was really quite a liberal and broad-minded State after all. And last, he

thought that through the Russian Orthodox Church he could strengthen Russia's influence over the peoples of Eastern Europe, many of whom also belonged to the orthodox branch of the Christian Church.

So both through his 'All-Slav' racial propaganda and through the Orthodox Church, Stalin was preparing for Soviet domination of eastern Europe.

International Communism after the War

The retreat of the German Armies in 1944 brought the Russian Army into six east European countries. This was Stalin's big chance to extend the Soviet Empire into Europe — into Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. It was an enormous chance, and Stalin did not miss it. He manufactured revolutions, on the general model laid down by Lenin, in all these countries.

The result was that all the East European revolutions — except the Yugoslav revolution — were strangely alike. The way was prepared, before the Red Army arrived, by anti-German resistance movements, or 'national liberation movements', in which the Communists played a greater or smaller (sometimes a very small) part. The other groups in the resistance movements were, roughly speaking, the patriotic middle class, the peasant parties, and the Socialists. In other words, the Communists made 'temporary alliances'.

When the Red Army arrived, these resistance movements seized power and a government was formed out of all the parties or groups which had joined in the movement. In most of the countries, the Communists were at the start very much in the minority; but because the

Red Army was there to back them, they obtained much more important positions in the governments than their numbers deserved.

Soon, following Lenin's pattern, the Communists set to work to get rid of their 'temporary allies' one by one. This they were able to do, not because they had become popular, but because they had got hold of the police and because the Russian Army remained in occupation of the country. The peasant parties, representing about three quarters of the population, were outlawed; their leaders were imprisoned, executed, or driven into exile. Tiny sections of the peasant parties, which had been frightened or bribed, were absorbed by the Communists. The same happened with the middle-class parties and the Socialists. Those Socialists who did not stand out were forced to merge with the Communist Party.

So by 1947, or at latest 1948, the Communists had complete control of the East European countries. The one big difference between all these East European revolutions and the Revolution in Russia was that the Russian revolution was a real revolution, though dominated by a small but energetic and ruthless minority inside Russia; but the East European revolutions were quite artificial and were imposed from outside by Soviet Russia. In none of the countries — except Yugoslavia — could the Communists have seized power if the Russian Army had not been in occupation.

This meant that the people in general had very little to do with the revolution. The mass of the peasants, in particular, were extremely suspicious of Soviet Russia and of their own Communists. Although they were kept quiet with parcels of land — as the Russian peasants had

been kept quiet by Lenin in 1917 — they still did not believe in the Communists. When the Communists, following the Soviet pattern, started driving the peasants into collective farms, the peasants believed their suspicions had been proved right.

And apart from their personal interests, the peasants, and most of the rest of the people, firmly believed that Stalin would soon swallow up the countries of Eastern Europe into the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics'. When, five years after the end of the war, they saw Russian troops still in occupation (except in Bulgaria), their fears grew all the stronger.

It made little difference whether their belief was right or wrong. Stalin, through the Russian Communist Party, dictated all the policies and actions of the East European Communist Parties, and through them, of the East European Governments. In September 1947, the Russian party invented a new kind of International, the Cominform, as one method of keeping all the other parties in line. In addition, Stalin sent Russian economic military 'advisers' to most of the East European countries, to reorganise their industrial development and their armies. So, in practice, if not in theory, all these countries were really, from 1948 onwards, part of the Soviet Empire, or at least colonies of it. They had lost the national independence for which their peoples had fought for centuries.

Any East European Communist who dared to put his own country's interests before Russia's interests was denounced as a 'national deviationist', and perhaps tried and executed. That was what happened to one of Hungary's leading Communists, Laszlo Rajk, and to one of

Bulgaria's leading Communists, Traicho Kostov. The Polish Communist, Gomulka, was lucky: he was only removed from his Government post and severely reproved. The Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Clementis, was yet another leading Communist who fell because of his 'nationalism'. It became clear that the only men whom Stalin would allow to rule Eastern Europe were men who could be trusted to say 'Yes' in advance to every order he might give.

Yugoslavia was the exception — the country that broke away from the Soviet Empire. The root of the trouble—for Stalin—was that the Yugoslav Communists, led by Tito, had carried out their own revolution during the war, with only a little help from the Russian Army. This made them from the start much too independent-minded to please Stalin.

It was in June, 1948, that the dispute between Stalin and Tito broke open. Tito was publicly denounced by Stalin's Cominform as a 'nationalist', and as 'anti-Soviet'. When Tito refused to make humble apologies, but went on his independent way, he was called more and more rude names by the Cominform. He became a 'class enemy', a 'Trotskyist', a 'counter-revolutionary' and a 'Fascist' and an 'agent of the Imperialist Powers'. Yet only a few months earlier he had been more highly praised than any other non-Russian Communist.

Stalin and the Colonial Question

The Bolsheviks very early took a particular interest in what they called the 'national and colonial question'. Stalin, who himself was not a Russian but a Georgian,

chose this subject as his speciality. In 1913, under Lenin's guidance, he wrote a book on the national question.

The Bolsheviks were interested in the problem for two reasons. First, they wanted to make up their minds how, when they came to power, they were going to deal with all the many non-Russian peoples who lived inside the borders of Tsarist Russia — the Finns, the Baltic peoples, the peoples of the Caucasus, the different Asiatic peoples, and others. Would the Bolsheviks be able to keep them inside Russia? Or would they have to apply the old Social Democratic principle of 'the right of self-determination of all nations forming a State', and let them go?

The second reason why the Bolsheviks were interested in the 'national and colonial question' was a wider one. They believed that one of the surest ways of bringing about the downfall of the capitalist system in Western Europe would be to start revolutions in the colonial territories outside Europe and cause them to break away from the mother countries. And since the Bolsheviks looked on the 'capitalists' of the West as their main enemies, they naturally looked on the peoples of the colonies as a powerful weapon to use against them. Throughout his writings, Stalin shows much more interest in this side of the 'colonial question' than he ever does in the welfare and progress of the 'colonial peoples'. That is, in fact, a subject he seldom mentions.

The Bolsheviks dealt with the non-Russian peoples of Russia in a way which, if it had been followed by others, they would have been the first to denounce as 'opportunist.' They proclaimed their principle to be 'the right of self-determination, including the right of secession'. This meant, in theory, that any of the non-Russian peoples

would have the right, if it wished, to break away from Russia. But then the Bolsheviks watered down this principle until it lost most of its meaning. Stalin said that in certain circumstances, it might be *bad* for a people to break away: it might mean a step backwards, in terms of the class struggle. In such a case, Stalin said, the Bolsheviks would have the duty of doing their utmost to *prevent* the break.

So when they seized power, everything was simple for the Bolsheviks. Among many of the peoples living near the borders of the Russian Empire, movements for national independence sprang up. But the Bolsheviks simply declared that these movements were led by 'bourgeois nationalists', not by the proletariat. Therefore, they said, it was their duty to stop them.

What happened in practice was that the Bolsheviks held on to every territory that their armies were strong enough to hold, and re-conquered every territory that their armies could conquer. Those territories which they were too weak militarily to hold, they renounced with a flourish of trumpets about 'self-determination'. So Bolshevik Russia lost Finland and the three small Baltic countries in the north-west; but in the Caucasus, the Ukraine and Asiatic Russia the Bolsheviks simple crushed the independence movements as soon as they were able.

After that, the Bolsheviks did at first make a real advance in their treatment of the non-Russian peoples. They allowed them, and even encouraged them, to use their own language, and to create their own written language where this did not then exist. The non-Russian peoples were allowed to use their own language in their schools, newspapers and theatres. All this meant that, so long as

they showed no signs of 'nationalism' or 'nationalist deviation'— that is, so long as they did not try to cling on to their national traditions or to show any sort of independence — the non-Russian peoples received some benefits from the Bolshevik revolution.

Economically, too, some of the more backward peoples benefited from the growth of industries throughout Russia; though these industries were run by Russians sent into the non-Russia areas from outside, not by the non-Russian peoples themselves.

On the other hand, the non-Russian peoples had lost, perhaps for ever, their chance of national independence, and even their right to organise themselves politically on a national basis. (Stalin's slogan was 'regional autonomy', *not* 'national autonomy'; he thought that any sort of 'national autonomy' would draw the workers and the bourgeoisie together on a national basis, and would therefore be dangerous). Even 'regional autonomy' under Stalin's rule, soon became meaningless: after all, it was really the Bolshevik Party which ruled every autonomous republic or region or area; and the party was so highly centralised that in practice the republics and regions and areas were all ruled directly from Moscow. They had no genuine autonomy or self-government.

The non-Russian peoples suffered in another way too. According to Bolshevik theory, there was to be equality between all races; the Bolshevik Party organisation in each region or area was to be manned by people belonging to that area. In practice, more and more Russians moved in to take the key posts in the party, and also in the local administration.

For instance, by 1927, 62 per cent, or nearly two-

thirds of the members of the party in the Tartar 'Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic' (the Tartars are a Moslem Asiatic people) were Russians, not Tartars. In Kazakhstan, in 1946, on an average only one-twentieth of the administrative posts in the chief ministries were held by Kazakhs.

It was not very surprising that during the second world war some of the non-Russian peoples were not at all eager to fight or work for Soviet Russia. And the Soviet Government was ruthless towards any people suspected of disloyalty. Some 'autonomous republics', for example the Crimean 'Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic', were deprived of their autonomy. Thousands of the people of the Crimean Republic were carried off to the far eastern parts of Russia. After losing their national traditions, and their hope of self-government, they lost their homes. Since the war, several non-Russian peoples have been deported from their homes — for instance, the Greeks of the Caucasus.

The Communists have not yet had a chance to show what they would do with 'colonial territories' outside Russia, if they ever managed to carry through 'revolutions' there. (Unless, that is, the countries of Eastern Europe which Moscow now controls are to be regarded as 'colonial territories'.)

At present, the Communist method in 'colonial territories' seems to be based on Lenin's theory of temporary alliances, on Stalin's Popular Front policy, and on the national liberation movements of Eastern Europe during the last war. That is, the Communists in the 'colonial territories' try to jump on to the back of some genuine national movement, formed of genuinely patriotic groups;

they try to seize control of it, to get rid of their 'temporary allies', and to run it in the interests of Soviet Russia, but still in the name of 'national liberation'. That, at least, has been the Stalinist method in Indo-China. In Malaya, the Communists have not been able to seize control of any genuine Malayan movement, so they have been forced back to plain terrorism.

On the basis of the past record of Soviet Russia, it is clear enough what would happen to any 'colonial territory' where the Communists seized power. They could always say that it was necessary to 'protect' the territory against 'bourgeois counter-revolutionaries' or against 'imperialistic Powers'. They might or might not consider it necessary to call in Russian troops as 'protectors'; they would certainly, as they did in Eastern Europe, call in Russian military, economic and political 'advisers', to tell the 'backward' people how to run their 'backward' country. And through their absolute obedience to the Kremlin, Moscow would exercise absolute control over the country itself.

POSTSCRIPT

Karl Marx, a 100 years ago, formulated his political theory of class warfare, to which he gave the older name of Communism, which had previously stood for a broad ideal of social and economic justice.

Lenin gave practical application to Marx's idea, formulating a technique for the seizure of political power by a minority party of well-disciplined supporters.

Stalin developed Lenin's technique of seizing and maintaining power to its logical conclusion — constructing a rigid system of domination by an extremely small group of politicians.

If 'Communism' is defined as a belief that it is desirable to aim at creating a classless society in which all citizens work for the benefit of the community and not for selfish ends, few enlightened people would disagree with it. But the methods for achieving this aim which are advocated and practised by those who call themselves Communists have led inexorably to Stalin's Russia.