

# THE FIRST *PRAVDA* AND THE RUSSIAN MARXIST TRADITION

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## I

THE appearance of the first *Pravda*<sup>1</sup> is an episode of the Bolshevik party's history which has never received any systematic treatment either by Western or Soviet scholars. It is an aspect of the 1905 revolution which the party historians and memoirists have been for the most part very eager to forget, and since Western investigators have apparently been unaware of its existence they have allowed its consignment to oblivion to take place without comment. That this first *Pravda* to be connected with the Bolshevik party is not widely known is hardly surprising, because in this case the exclusion from the historical record took place long before the Bolshevik party came to power. For, following the 1905 revolution, *Pravda's* editor, A. A. Bogdanov, was subjected to the kind of campaign of silence which was a foretaste of those later applied to Trotsky and Stalin.

Nevertheless, the journal *Pravda* and the group of intellectuals associated with it occupy an important place in the history of Bolshevism. Indeed, it is true to say that without reference to this periodical Russian intellectual history would be incomplete and the evolution of Russian Marxism imperfectly understood. Although *Pravda* would certainly merit a more extended study both as a source and as a historical event in itself, the present paper is limited to a description of the circumstances which attended the appearance of the journal, the group of people who surrounded it, and an attempt to place it in its ideological context.

*Pravda*, like *Mir Bozhii* before it, had no definite party alignment, and no party initiative caused it to be produced. It was simply the product of vague revolutionary sentiments which were common in Russian society at the turn of the century, sentiments which, moreover transcended conventional class barriers, such that bourgeois and proletarian might find themselves in alliance. It was nevertheless conceived as a Marxist journal and was one which occupied a unique position in the Marxist camp. *Pravda* appeared at a time when the Legal Marxist

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda—ezhemesyachnyi zhurnal iskusstva, literatury, obshchestvennoi zhizni*. January 1904–February 1906.

journals *Novoe slovo*, *Nachalo* and *Zhizn'* had one after another been compelled to close down and when the Social Democrat leaders had been forced into emigration to carry on the work of propagating Marxism from there. *Pravda* consequently became for a time, on the very eve of the revolution, the chief Marxist journal produced in Russia.

The moving spirit behind the journal and its patron was a wealthy railway engineer, V. A. Kozhevnikov. In 1903 he submitted his application for permission to publish in Moscow a journal of art, literature and social life with the title of *Pravda*. This application was received favourably for, according to the police report, Kozhevnikov's reliability was beyond question. He was 'the son of a professor at Moscow university; he was a graduate of the Institute of Communications Engineering, and he was presently employed by the Moscow-Kazan' Railway Company. He was a member of the Russian Society of Dramatic Writers, was in possession of fixed property in Ruzsky uezd, and on the whole was a person of substantial means'. On these grounds it was held that Kozhevnikov might be trusted to extend his activities to the publishing field.<sup>2</sup>

Kozhevnikov was singularly successful in attracting contributors for his journal. The censor was able to note that the pages of the first issue were adorned with the names of the 'young littérateurs', writers, poets and dramatists already known to him from their work in liberal papers. These included Ivan Bunin, N. Teleshov, Stanislaw Przebyszewski, V. M. Mikheev, E. N. Chirikov. It was also announced that among future contributors there would be Leonid Andreev, Maxim Gorky and Skitalets (S. G. Petrov). It was indeed from this list of writers that the Moscow censor was able to deduce that *Pravda* was of a 'liberal-oppositionist' character.<sup>3</sup>

Kozhevnikov's success in attracting young and popular figures from the literary world was matched by his being able to secure some highly talented people to comment on current 'social life'. This team comprised A. A. Bogdanov, N. A. Rozhkov, M. N. Pokrovsky, I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov, P. P. Rumyantsev and M. G. Lunts, and they in fact became the editorial board of the journal. Although all these people later joined the Bolshevik party and wrote in *Pravda* as 'Marxists', most of them, at the time when the journal began, were still close to the liberals; Pokrovsky for one was still a member of the Union of Liberation. Indeed, when S. I. Mitskevich first made the acquaintance of Pokrovsky and Stepanov, it was at a meeting in the flat of V. A. Maklakov, the liberal lawyer, in December 1904.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this nucleus, other writers for

<sup>2</sup> V. Lebedev-Polyansky, 'Marksistskaya periodicheskaya pechat' 1896-1906 gg.', *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1926, vol. XVIII, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6. See also B. A. Byalik (ed.), *Russkaya literatura kontsa XIX-nachala XX v. 1901-1907* (M., 1971), pp. 408-9.

<sup>4</sup> S. I. Mitskevich, *Revolutsionnaya Moskva* (M., 1940), p. 321.

the journal were V. V. Vorovsky, V. M. Friche, A. V. Lunacharsky, M. S. Ol'minsky and A. Yu. Finn-Enotaevsky (later to become a Menshevik economist); Finn-Enotaevsky was looked upon with especial dread by the censor.

*Pravda* itself consisted of the literary part presided over by Ivan Bunin, the philosophical part managed by Bogdanov, and the 'survey' (*obozrenie*)—the province of Rumyantsev, Lunts and Finn-Enotaevsky. It was the first two of these sections which were the most important and which imparted to *Pravda* its specific character of a literary-philosophical journal. But what was most striking about *Pravda* was its artistic narrow elongated format and the variety and beauty of its typography. Its appearance well befitted the wealth and standing of its patron and would have graced the most tasteful drawing-room in Moscow, and therefore, whatever the intention of its editors, would have seemed defiled by the touch of rough proletarian hands.

The first issue of the new journal naturally aroused the interest of the censors, who looked upon its appearance with some apprehension, especially since some of the eminent contributors had already achieved some notoriety. It is rather curious to note, however, that the theoretical articles of the future luminaries of the Bolshevik party caused considerably less concern than the poems, short stories and plays of the literary figures. It was readily observed that writers such as Lunacharsky, Rozhkov and Bogdanov wrote nothing that was especially inflammatory, that the 'direction of the journal was "realistic" and "positivist" and that it was intended to struggle against incipient "idealism" on a purely philosophical and theoretical plane'.<sup>5</sup> The censor, who seemingly considered himself quite an authority on the subject and *au courant* with the appropriate jargon, wrote that such an approach had 'nothing in common with historical materialism and Marxism'. Although political themes were also touched upon in the first issue, the treatment of these, the censor judged, perhaps with something suggestive of a pang of regret, 'did not go beyond the clichés of our liberal newspapers and did not show anything new and interesting'.<sup>6</sup>

The fictional writers were quite a different matter and several of their contributions were disallowed, though the reasons for it were not invariably political. In April 1904, for example, the Moscow censor prohibited V. V. Brusyanin's short story *Na pole zhizni* in view of the fact that it was set in a hospital ward for syphilitic women and the characters were all prostitutes 'which enabled the author to embellish his story with cynical details relating to promiscuity of the streets and the life in brothels'.<sup>7</sup> Beside this kind of heady fare the dry treatises of Lunacharsky and Bogdanov were likely to pale into insignificance.

<sup>5</sup> Polyansky, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

The theoretical articles, however, have considerable historical interest because they mark the beginning of the empirio-criticist trend in Russian Marxism, and they go a long way towards explaining why the phenomenon took place.

## II

In order to trace the ideological ancestry of *Pravda* one must go back to the circumstances which attended the acceptance of Marxism in Russia. It is necessary in particular to question the tacit but quite unjustifiable assumption of many writers on the subject that Marxism was transmitted to Russia in exactly the same form as its creators had fashioned it. Merely to state this assumption is to cast doubt upon it. Yet since it has become customary to think of G. V. Plekhanov as the 'father of Russian Marxism', much of the illusion still remains. Since Marxism belongs to the Hegelian tradition and as Plekhanov patently belonged to the Hegelian school, one is led to the conclusion that Marxism in Russia in general was Hegelian—that it was indeed 'dialectical materialism'. Had this truly been the case, *Pravda* could never have existed. Conversely, of course, since Soviet writers strive to present as flattering a picture of Russian Marxism as possible, the reason for their silence on *Pravda* is not difficult to find.

On its appearance in Russia, Marxism was considered much less a system of philosophy than a set of economic doctrines. In 1908 V. V. Vorovsky wrote of early Russian Marxism:

It was emasculated. It was divested of all its sociological content—its very essence, leaving it as a mere economic doctrine, which was discussed, evaluated and accepted (or rejected) exclusively as a 'system of political economy', regardless of its connection with the entirety of its author's world outlook.<sup>8</sup>

There were in any case very few Russian Marxists who concerned themselves with philosophical questions, and of those only a minority belonged to the Hegelian school. Having mentioned Plekhanov, A. M. Debordin and L. Axelrod-Ortodox, one has practically exhausted their number. Although Plekhanov's eminence would suggest great influence, he seems to have exerted remarkably little on those of his contemporaries who interested themselves in questions of Marxist philosophy. Although Lenin may have claimed that Plekhanov's writings 'reared a whole generation of Russian Marxists', the fact remains that Plekhanov's concern with Hegelian dialectics is but poorly reflected in the literature of the period.

<sup>8</sup> P. Orlovsky (V. V. Vorovsky), *K istorii Marksizma v Rossii* (M., 1919), p. 8. This is a reprint of the 1908 edition.

Hegelianism in Russia was not the philosophical trend commonly associated with the radical intelligentsia. It was rather the doctrine of the opposing camp. In the hands of its leading proponent, Boris Chicherin, it had become an apologia for autocracy, extolling the state principle at the expense of popular representation. Democratic opinion was consequently more inclined to oppose Hegelianism than to adopt it.

The school of thought which harmonized most in Russia with democracy, social transformation and the scientific outlook was positivism. It was that philosophy in its several varieties which formed the prevailing intellectual climate during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Not only did the works of Comte, Mill, Spencer and Buckle enjoy great popularity, but positivism in Russia soon acquired an independent existence and went on to produce a remarkable variety of specifically Russian forms. The materialism of the 'men of the sixties', I. V. Pisarev, N. A. Dobrolyubov and N. G. Chernyshevsky, was deeply inspired by positivism, as indeed was the reaction against them formulated by P. L. Lavrov and N. K. Mikhailovsky. Positivism dominated the social sciences and was the chief influence in historical thought.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, the all-pervading influence of positivism is not at first apparent, owing to the great variety of forms in which it appeared, how it might be interpreted or indeed vulgarized. Sometimes a difference in emphasis might lead to opposing schools of thought. Lavrov, who took the 'anthropological principle' as his starting point, was capable of producing a radically different system from Chernyshevsky who spoke in the same terms. Whatever their views on man's essential nature might be, their presuppositions were undoubtedly positivistic.

That stream of positivism in Russia which emphasized the scientific approach was especially productive and when applied to the study of society or historical development could produce results which anticipated Marxist doctrines. Maxim Kovalevsky, for example, was able to show that European society had passed through certain common stages of historical development.<sup>10</sup> Lev Mechnikov produced in exile an influential book in which he elaborated a theory of oriental despotism and hydraulic society.<sup>11</sup> Peter Struve could write that he had learnt the Marxist economic interpretation of history not from *Capital*, but from Klyuchevsky's *Boyar Duma*.<sup>12</sup> In short, much of Marx's doctrines had already been pre-empted by the work of Russian positivist writers. The intellectual climate which made Marx's work so readily acceptable had to a large extent rendered it unnecessary.

<sup>9</sup> A. I. Vvedensky, 'Sud'by filosofii v Rossii', in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, kn. II (42), 1898, especially p. 349.

<sup>10</sup> An excellent account of Kovalevsky and other historians of the liberal positivist school is to be found in P. F. Laptin, *Obshchina v russkoi istoriografii* (Kiev, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> Leon Metchnikoff, *La civilisation et les grands fleuves historiques* (Paris, 1889).

<sup>12</sup> P. Struve, *Sotsial'naya i ekonomicheskaya istoriya Rossii* (Paris, 1952), p. 332.

Even after Marxism had become known in Russia, it by no means supplanted, but only supplemented positivism, with the result that it is typical to find Marx cited in works of the period alongside Mill or Darwin with whom he is sometimes compared.<sup>13</sup> Typical of early Russian Marxism was its tendency to eclecticism. Above all, Marxism seen in terms of previous positivist thought was held to be fatalistic and deterministic, and in this was seen its great virtue as a truly scientific doctrine. It is symptomatic of this state of affairs that even into Soviet times 'economic materialism' could serve as an acceptable synonym for Marxism.<sup>14</sup>

The debate with the Narodniks did little to improve matters; on the contrary, it only served to accentuate its economic determinist character and render it more inflexible. The topics at issue with the Narodniks, broadly speaking, concerned the role of the individual in history, the state and Russia's national peculiarities as regards the inevitability of capitalism. In the heat of the polemic the Russian Marxists took up positions which stressed the insignificance of the individual in history, the dependent role of the state on society and the inevitability of capitalism in Russia. These became to such an extent canons of Russian Marxist doctrine that, when Marx's own pronouncements on Russian development became known following the publication in 1886 of his letter to *Otechestvennye zapiski*, Finn-Enotaevsky for one was led to enquire whether or not Marx had been an agent of the Narodniks.<sup>15</sup>

Although the Social Democrats could, at least to their own satisfaction, deal with these various aspects of Narodnik doctrine, they were at a loss to combat its central point—the populist theory of epistemology. In his *Historical Letters* Lavrov placed human consciousness at the very centre of his system. Although, he conceded, there might lie outside this domain truths which consciousness could not comprehend, that was of little practical importance. Man could not help judging phenomena only as they related to mankind.

Outside man, according to Lavrov, the world was a meaningless chaos, 'nothing but simultaneous concatenations of facts, so minute and fractional that man could scarcely even approach them in all their particularity'.<sup>16</sup> The appearance of order in the world, the scientific

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, N. I. Sieber quoted in G. V. Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, vol. I, (London 1961), pp. 800-1, and P. Nikolaev, *Aktivnyi progress i ekonomicheskii materializm* (M., 1892).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the work by M. V. Nechkina, entitled *Russkaya istoriya v osveshchenii ekonomicheskogo materializma* (Kazan', 1922). The author indeed states that: 'Discussions on the theory of economic materialism are being carried on even today, not only concerning its various interpretations, but even its basic principles' (p. 26).

<sup>15</sup> *Russkie sovremenniki o K. Markse i F. Engel'se* (M., 1969), p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Lavrov, *Historical Letters* (trans. James P. Scanlon) (California, 1967), p. 104.

laws which seemed to determine nature, not only did not exist in nature itself, but had been imposed by man. Order and meaning were the products of the human mind. He claimed that 'the distinction between important and unimportant, the beneficial and the harmful, the good and the bad are distinctions which exist only *for man*; they are quite alien to nature and to things in themselves . . .'.<sup>17</sup> To Lavrov's mind, it was quite meaningless to speak of objective historical laws, of historical determinism, because each historical event, each fragment of the historical process was unique and unrepeatable, either in itself meaningless or subject to a whole variety of interpretations. They were also infinite in number. Any 'law' constructed out of these entities must therefore be a subjective interpretation imposed upon a subjective choice of events. Lavrov, however, saw nothing particularly deplorable in this, for it meant that man might construct his own laws and this he would do in accordance with those ideals which he wished to see realized, according to ethical, teleological criteria. Man could achieve whatever aims he chose simply by setting them and consciously striving towards them.

The Russian Marxists ridiculed this 'subjective sociology' and quite to their own detriment entrenched themselves in a position proclaiming the existence of objective laws independent of human consciousness, overlooking the fact that Lavrov's views had much in common with those which Marx propounded. Victor Chernov was thus able to taunt his Social Democratic opponents with quotations from the *Theses on Feuerbach* upholding the anthropomorphic, subjective principle.<sup>18</sup> Social Democracy could make no effective reply. The Narodnik inspired *Bol'shaya Entsiklopediya* in 1896, for example, could gleefully announce: 'Among the objections now being raised to economic materialism, chief attention is being paid to the question of the part played by consciousness with regard to the surrounding . . . social phenomena, i.e. to the internal psychic processes and the theory of perception . . .'.<sup>19</sup> The difficulty for Russian Marxism was that it had an elaborate theory of social and economic development, but it could not offer any convincing explanation why this theory should be true.

The problem would have been considerably alleviated had Russian Marxists had at their disposal some of Marx's earlier writings such as *Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844* and had they understood the importance of dialectics. This at least would have suggested the way in which the question should have been tackled. On the other hand, to

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>18</sup> V. M. Chernov, 'Ekonomicheskii materializm i kriticheskaya filosofiya', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, kn. IV(39), 1897, p. 631.

<sup>19</sup> *Bol'shaya Entsiklopediya*, vol. XII (M., 1896), pp. 720-1.

solve it by this means would have meant considerable modifications of position on a number of other associated topics and considerable concessions being made to the Narodniks. Only in 1912 did Lenin come to the realization that 'dialectics is the theory of knowledge (of Hegel and of Marxism) . . . .'<sup>20</sup>

Since Marxism was regarded as 'economic materialism', a deterministic and even fatalistic doctrine, it became clear that it was incapable of producing any cogent system of epistemology. The solution had to be found somewhere outside Marxism. This task fell to the Legal Marxists. Writing in 1894 Struve recognized that, although Marx and Engels had provided an excellent exposition of historical materialism, their theory still lacked a 'purely philosophical basis': what was required was a reappraisal with the support of critical philosophy of the German neo-Kantians.<sup>21</sup> By this means they were soon led to abandon materialism altogether and to join forces with the Russian idealists, P. I. Novogrodtssev, S. L. Frank, etc., and together in 1902 to publish a collection of articles under the title *Problemy idealizma*<sup>22</sup> attacking the materialist standpoint.

The prominence given to ethical and teleological questions by neo-Kantians such as Stammler and Rickert brought into sharp relief the fact that not only was 'economic materialism' lacking in a theory of epistemology but also that it was without a system of ethics. Moreover, one was confronted with the strange paradox that Marxism held up as the aim of human aspiration a moral socialist ideal embracing an ethic which was nowhere to be found in its theory of social development. There was no possible guarantee, indeed nothing to suggest that the impersonal movement of economic and political forces would eventually culminate in the realization of mankind's age-old strivings for justice, truth and freedom. The Narodniks in fact had long ago decided that these forces were leading in quite the opposite direction.

As Vorländer indicates, the adoption of neo-Kantianism by socialists was a general European phenomenon, and this for the same reason as in Russia, the apparent philosophical insufficiency of Marxism.<sup>23</sup> Therefore it was only natural that the German writers to whom Struve and the Legal Marxists turned for inspiration should confirm them in their belief that Marxism was simply 'economic materialism'. Everywhere they equated the terms scientific, natural-scientific, causal, genetic (*wissenschaftlich, naturwissenschaftlich, kausal, genetisch*) with the Marxist method, while going on to demonstrate its inapplicability to the sphere

<sup>20</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 29, p. 321.

<sup>21</sup> P. B. Struve, *Kriticheskie zametki k voprosu ob ekonomicheskom razviti Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1894), p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> P. I. Novogrodtssev (ed.), *Problemy idealizma* (M., 1902).

<sup>23</sup> This is borne out by the analysis of German Marxism given by Marek Waldenberg in his study *Wzlot i upadek Karola Kautsky'ego*, 2 vols. (Krakow, 1972).

of human ideals.<sup>24</sup> For the Legal Marxists the message was clear. Not only was Marxism without a system of ethics, but it was quite impossible to supply this 'scientific' doctrine with one. Moreover, if one were to retain one's ethics, Marxism must be abandoned. Whereas the lack of a theory of epistemology might be made good with a measure of critical philosophy, the problem of ethics was of quite a different order.

In 1900 Struve wrote:

The compulsive presence in every normal human consciousness of the moral problem is beyond doubt, and so is the impossibility of solving this problem empirically. Once we admit the impossibility of resolving the moral problem objectively (that is, empirically), we acknowledge at the same time the objective nature of ethics as a problem, and, accordingly, arrive at a metaphysical postulate of the moral world order independently of subjective consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

This point marked Struve's retreat from materialism and the beginning of his return via Lassalle and Fichte to religion. In a parallel passage Bulgakov trenchantly states the dilemma between science and ethics.

As a result of my polemic with Stammler (and with Struve on Stammler) I had to admit unquestionably that the very ideal of Marxism is presented not by science but by 'life'; it is therefore *extra*-scientific, or *non*-scientific. This conclusion is in essence quite destructive for 'scientific' socialism which prides itself precisely on the scientific nature of its ideal . . .<sup>26</sup>

It is a measure of the conviction with which Marxism was widely held to be a type of economic determinism that neither the Legal Marxists nor later their opponents thought to look for an ethic within the doctrine itself. The former explicitly and the latter implicitly rejected such a possibility.

The problem of overcoming the contradiction between Marxism's ideals and its methodology was tackled by the group which formed around *Pravda* in 1904. The means by which its members sought to achieve this was similar to that previously adopted by the Legal Marxists. They attempted to supplement Marxism with another philosophical system, but whereas the Legal Marxists had employed neo-Kantianism for this purpose the *Pravda* group favoured empirio-criticism,<sup>27</sup> 'the

<sup>24</sup> Karl Vorländer, 'Die neukantische Bewegung im Sozialismus', *Kantstudien*, vol. VII (Berlin, 1902), p. 63ff.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Richard Pipes, *Struve. Liberal on the Left. 1870-1905* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 296-7.

<sup>26</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, *Ot marksizma k idealizmu. Sbornik statei (1896-1903)* (St. Petersburg, 1903), p. XI. Similar statements by other Legal Marxists on the incompatibility of ethics and 'economic materialism' are cited in Vorländer, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-69.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Valentinov's statement that: 'The injection of empirio-criticism into Marxism

most consistent and pure form of positivism'.<sup>28</sup> By making this choice they were confident that they could avoid the metaphysical errors committed by the Legal Marxists, errors which they set out to expose.

The origins of this group go back as far as 1898 during Lunacharsky's exile in Kaluga with Bogdanov, Bazarov and Skvortsov-Stepanov. Lunacharsky records:

I think that there were few towns in Russia at that time where one could find such a group of Marxist forces. We had, moreover, a rather original bent. We were all deeply interested in the philosophical side of Marxism and we were anxious to strengthen its epistemological, ethical and aesthetical aspects, independently of Kantianism on the one hand, a tendency which had begun to become noticeable in Germany and in Russia as well (Berdyayev, Bulgakov) and without falling into the narrow French encyclopaedist orthodoxy on which Plekhanov was seeking to base Marxism.<sup>29</sup>

In 1901 the discussion was transferred to Vologda where it gained in intensity through the presence of Berdyayev and a number of his followers. It was there that the confrontation between the two schools of thought began.<sup>30</sup> The basic line of attack against the Legal Marxists was formulated in the collection of essays by Lunacharsky, Bogdanov, Bazarov and others, *Ocherki realisticheskogo mirovozzreniya*,<sup>31</sup> which eventually appeared in 1904.<sup>32</sup>

seemed to me a task of paramount importance. Empirio-criticism would give Marxism the epistemological foundation it lacked, and would permit the "elimination" . . . of its weak aspects, while even further consolidating its strong ones' (Nikolay Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin* (London, 1968), p. 226).

<sup>28</sup> A. V. Lunacharsky, *Vospominaniya i vpechatleniya* (M., 1968), p. 20. Bogdanov regarded empirio-criticism as: 'the modern form of positivism developed from the latest methods of natural science on the one hand and the most recent forms of philosophical criticism on the other' ('Ideal poznaniya', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, kn. II(67), 1903, p. 189).

<sup>29</sup> Lunacharsky, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> A. A. Bogdanov, 'Soobshchenie', in *Leninskii sbornik*, vol. XI, p. 333; Lunacharsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 29.

<sup>31</sup> *Ocherki realisticheskogo mirovozzreniya. Sbornik statei po filosofii, obshchestvennoi nauke i zhizni* (St. Petersburg, 1904). The contributors were: S. Suvorov, A. Lunacharsky, V. Bazarov, A. Bogdanov, A. Finn-Enotavsky, P. Maslov, P. Rumyantsev, N. Korsak (A. Bogdanov), V. Shulyatkov, B. Friche (*sic*).

<sup>32</sup> In his letter to Gorky of 25 February 1908 Lenin records: 'I well remember that in the summer of 1903 Plekhanov and I as editors of *Zarya* had discussions in Geneva with a delegate from the editors of *Ocherki realisticheskogo mirovozzreniya*. We agreed to contribute, I on the agrarian question, Plekhanov on philosophy in opposition to Mach. Plekhanov made his refutation of Mach a condition of his participation—a condition which their delegate was quite willing to accept' (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 47, pp. 141–2). In the event neither Lenin nor Plekhanov did contribute to the collection, and it was P. Maslov who wrote on the agrarian question. It is interesting that in this letter to Gorky describing his relations with Bogdanov—or for that matter anywhere else—Lenin makes no mention of *Pravda*. The reason for this omission would no doubt shed interesting light on the relationship between Bogdanov and Lenin.

On returning to Moscow in 1903 Bogdanov met N. A. Rozhkov,<sup>33</sup> the historian, who had recently embraced Marxism following a short sojourn in the Narodnik camp. It was very likely that even before making contact with Kozhevnikov they agreed upon a joint literary effort in defence of Marxism against the strictures contained in the symposium *Problemy idealizma*, for they each submitted an article to the same number of the philosophical journal *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*; Rozhkov's article was a review of the book,<sup>34</sup> while Bogdanov's contribution *Ideal poznaniya*<sup>35</sup> (later to be incorporated in the first volume of *Empiriomonizm*) while not mentioning the collection directly might well be construed as a reply to it. By placing *Pravda* at their disposal Kozhevnikov provided an excellent opportunity to broaden the campaign.

Bogdanov's own ideas, of course, go far beyond the immediate and practical needs of the polemic with the *Problemy idealizma* group, but if one wishes to explain the phenomenon of empirio-criticism in Russian Marxism as a movement then this certainly is its source. Seen in this light it can be readily understood why the philosophy of Mach and Avenarius was so useful to the opponents of *Problemy idealizma*. It not only supplied the necessary epistemological complement to 'economic materialism', but it was able to do so without reference to the absolute or the transcendental. Whereas Stammler and Rickert dealt in terms of immutable values, for Mach all was entirely relative, since what is 'true' is that which most simply and most economically sums up experience at any given moment, in a form convenient for the purpose to be attained. In the hands of the *Pravda* writers, empirio-criticism was a weapon with which they assailed the new-found metaphysics of the Legal Marxists. In doing so, however, they did not counterpose to it a metaphysical materialism, but argued from a strictly positivist point of view. Indeed, both they and their opponents spoke of positivism and Marxism as virtually synonymous.

Strictly speaking, therefore, the empirio-critics were not materialists, since materialism posits an ontological statement about existence as something which cannot be directly experienced, and thereby succumbs to metaphysics. This difficulty of reconciling materialism with positivism was indeed countenanced by the *Pravda* group. As one of its members wrote:

If anyone suggests that the connection of a scientific outlook with positivism undermines the recognition of matter as the ultimate

<sup>33</sup> N. A. Rozhkov, *O 1905 gode. Vospominaniya* (M., 1925), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> N. A. Rozhkov, 'Znachenie i sud'by noveishego idealizma v Rossii (po povodu knigi *Problemy idealizma*)', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, kn. II(67), 1903.

<sup>35</sup> A. A. Bogdanov, 'Ideal poznaniya (Empiriokrititsizm i empiriomonizm)', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, kn. II(67), 1903.

basis of the world, he is sadly mistaken—simply because a scientific outlook does not demand such a recognition. The ‘scientific outlook’ can be built not only on a materialist, but also on an energist, on an agnostic (or phenomenalist) or on various other bases. And not only can, but really is so built . . . Materialist metaphysics by its essence is not necessarily connected with ‘science’ or with ‘positivism’, the fact that it often is is due to a crude confusion . . .<sup>36</sup>

A materialist approach was apparently held less sacred than a scientific one—at least, one must add, on the purely philosophical plane. The empirio-criticism of the *Pravda* group operated on two distinct theoretical levels. Besides the philosophical one where, driven to a logical conclusion, materialism might be denied, there was another where it was vigorously affirmed. The passage quoted above clearly shows the escape route from one level to the other. Materialism, although not *necessarily* true, might be true. One had to put forward the hypothesis which best summed up available experience, and for Bogdanov and his associates that hypothesis turned out to be materialism, in fact—economic materialism. By this means one finds propounded by the same people the most sophisticated philosophical constructions on the one hand and the most crude form of economic determinism on the other—without any sign of mutual interpenetration. The works of Bogdanov and Pokrovsky provide the most vivid examples of the phenomenon: the man who wrote *Empiriomonism* was also the author of *A Course of Political Economy*; and after reading Pokrovsky’s article in *Pravda* on historical methodology one would not have expected him to assert that ‘all the phenomena in the world are connected by a mechanistic causal link’<sup>37</sup> comparatively soon afterwards. It is also clear that some of the political ideas of the *Pravda* group had little to do with its empirio-criticist philosophy, but sprang instead from the economic materialist conceptions which they intended that philosophy to supplement.

### III

The attack in *Pravda* on the *Problemy idealizma* group was conducted on two fronts—on one by articles attacking the group itself, and on the other by contributions criticizing the philosophers on whom the group based themselves, such as Stammler, Windelband and Rickert. Of the first group the most outstanding example is Lunacharsky’s extensive four-part article *Metamorphosis of a Thinker*, which is a

<sup>36</sup> Vl. Ivanovsky (pseud.?), ‘Chto takoe “positivizm” i “idealizm”’, *Pravda*, March 1904.

<sup>37</sup> M. N. Pokrovsky, *Ekonomicheskii materializm* (St. Petersburg, 1920), p. 11 (first edition, 1906).

detailed analysis and refutation of Bulgakov's idealism and his strictures on Marx. Reading this massive work, full of sarcasm and derision, leads one to conclude that the *Problemy idealizma* group's subsequent symposium *Vekhi* must have been, in part at least, in reply to *Pravda*, and one which was far from unprovoked. Writing in *Vekhi*, Berdyaev deplored the use to which Bogdanov and Lunacharsky had put the respectable doctrines of the empirio-critics.

There was a time when we wanted to utilize neo-Kantianism for the critical reformation of Marxism and for a new basis for socialism. Even the objective and scientific Struve erred by giving too sociological an interpretation to Riehl's theory: he gave to Riehl's epistemology an interpretation favourable to economic materialism . . . . Empirio-criticism suffered an incomparably greater deterioration in Russia than elsewhere. This most abstract and refined form of positivism based on the traditions of German criticism was taken over almost as a new philosophy of the proletariat which Messrs Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Co. saw fit to dispose of as their own property.<sup>38</sup>

Lunacharsky argued that Bulgakov had failed to understand that Marxism was 'practical positivism', a 'prognosis' advanced by one section of society, and that its ideals were not anything fixed and immutable, but something conditioned by social experience. He charged that Bulgakov and other pseudo-Marxist intellectuals had never been able to identify themselves with the interests of the working class and so they had been at the mercy of every Stammler, every Rickert, every Solov'ev who came along.<sup>39</sup> Yet, for all its erudition, Lunacharsky's article is diffuse and unsatisfying in its lack of coherent argument. Probably Lunacharsky himself was not entirely content with the substance of his refutation. Later he was to return to the paradox set by Bulgakov and on its basis he constructed his ideas on God-building. His very definition of religion contains in it Bulgakov's conundrum:

Religion is that kind of thinking about the world and the kind of world-feeling which psychologically resolves the contrast between the *laws of life* and the *laws of nature*.<sup>40</sup>

Both of the historians who contributed to *Pravda*, Rozhkov and Pokrovsky, found it a relatively simple matter to demonstrate, with reference to historical examples, that values and moral standards valid for all peoples at all times simply did not exist and that it was mistaken

<sup>38</sup> *Vekhi* (M., 1909), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> A. V. Lunacharsky, 'Metamorfoza odnogo myslitelya', *Pravda*, March 1904, p. 194.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in G. V. Plekhanov, *Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniya*, vol. III (M., 1957), p. 378 (emphasis added).

to speak of any transcendental ethic. The immediate task accomplished, both Rozhkov and Pokrovsky devoted the main portion of their contributions to the questions of historical methodology with which they were currently concerned. Pokrovsky's refutation of Rickert took the form of a lengthy disquisition on the purpose of history and the problem of historical knowledge. His conclusions were taken directly from Mach. Reality, Pokrovsky argued, consists of a chaos of primary sensations existing independently of the human will, though all combinations of these are subjective. Such combinations would include all laws of nature and, of course, historical conceptions. Their formation is conditioned according to the circumstances in which man finds himself, for his orientation in the world.

Man—and not only man, but every living creature which knows and moves—cannot live amidst chaos. He has to orientate himself, and this first and foremost in the support of life, in the struggle for existence. This orientation began long before the appearance of science and, in all probability, long before man acquired the characteristics which distinguished him from the beasts.

Above and below, right and left, day and night, winter and summer, sky and earth—this is all the incarnation of pristine, pre-scientific, perhaps pre-human orientation, attempts to find a footing in the chaos of primary sensations.

Can what is arrived at by this means perhaps be called a 'copy' of reality? Could there be a copy of chaos and what end would it serve?

There is only one way to overcome this chaos and that is—to *simplify* it.<sup>41</sup>

Different classes 'simplify' the chaos in different ways: they produce different outlooks, ideologies, political theories and schemes of history, all to meet the requirements of their own orientation in the chaos. In this way Pokrovsky was able to arrive at a remarkably satisfactory system by which the purpose of history, its relation to politics and the problem of knowledge fitted into a mutually complementary whole. And although Pokrovsky never emphasized the point, knowledge, according to Mach, is progressive historically, as newer and more efficient ways of generalizing experience are demanded and discovered.

This 'dialectical' relationship between subject and object, knowledge, history and the division of society into classes brings one very close to ideas outlined by Marx in his early writings. The question of how far the ideas of Marx and those of Mach coincide, Lenin's vehement

<sup>41</sup> M. N. Pokrovsky, "Idealizm" i "zakony istorii", *Pravda*, February 1904, p. 138.

denials notwithstanding, has to the present writer's knowledge never been systematically examined. It is nevertheless arguable that the Russian empirio-criticists came much nearer than most of their contemporaries to what is now understood to be a Marxist viewpoint.

Bogdanov's main contribution to *Pravda*, an article entitled *The Community of Man*, affords an excellent example of how close his version of empirio-criticism came to the early Marx, closer perhaps than even Bogdanov realized. In this article Bogdanov attempts to put the metaphysical searchings of Struve and the *Problemy idealizma* group into a historico-philosophical perspective. The basic argument is that the metaphysical approach to philosophy is a product of man's 'fragmentation' (*drobienie*). At the dawn of man's existence, when life was extremely simple, man shared all experience with his fellows in their primitive society, so that one person was barely differentiated from the rest; they acted and thought as a group, in harmony with each other and with the natural forces which surrounded them. The conception 'I' could not exist. But with the division of society into specialized groups and the accumulation of different experience by them, society lost its natural unity and individuality made its appearance. Then, Bogdanov argues:

Incarnating the fragmented, contradictory experience, the individualist consciousness necessarily fell prey to the 'accursed questions'. These are the hopeless, pointless questions to which 'the fool has awaited answers' for centuries. What am I?—he asks,—and what is this world? Where does it all come from? Why? Why is there so much evil in the world? etc. endlessly.

Look at these questions and you will see that they are the questions of a divided person. They are precisely the questions that the disjointed members of an organism would pose, if they could live and ask questions . . . .

The hopelessness of the questions springs from the fact that there are no answers which could or should be given them which would satisfy the individual consciousness. These are questions which express the torment of a fragmented life—and so long as it remains fragmented, there is no answer which can end the pain, because to pain there can be no answer. Here everything is useless: even when developing criticism shows that these questions are wrongly posed, that they have no sense, that they are based on false premises—even then the individual consciousness will not cease to ask them, because criticism has not the power to transform this consciousness *in reality*, has no power to make fragmented existence whole.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> A. A. Bogdanov, 'Sobiranie cheloveka', *ibid.*, April 1904, p. 167.

Advance in technology, social development and science, Bogdanov states, will eventually overcome these difficulties, but so long as society remains fragmented false consciousness will continue to exist. Bogdanov, however, ends on a hopeful note: '*Man has not yet arrived* but his silhouette is clearly visible on the horizon.'<sup>43</sup>

What one finds in Bogdanov's article, in simple language, free of Hegelian terminology, is an exposition of Marx's concept of alienation as set down in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* discovered two decades after Bogdanov wrote. By and large the choice of a word separates the two writers. Among Russian Marxists, moreover, Bogdanov stands virtually alone in seeing the problem of epistemology as a social and historical phenomenon, an aspect of the division of society into classes. Like Marx, where and when he treats of the question, Bogdanov regards perception as something *active*, as a positive force, a means by which reality is transformed as well as apprehended. The comparable views of the two thinkers, therefore, on alienation (or fragmentation) are probably no coincidence, but a symptom of the similarity, if not identity, of their premises.

Not all the contributors to *Pravda* approached the question of the Legal Marxists' conversion to idealism in the same way. The outstanding exception was V. V. Vorovsky, who saw the question less as a philosophical than a sociological one. He was also one of the few writers of the time to make use of the concept 'dialectics'. Moreover, the quotation from the short work he wrote in 1908 cited above shows that he was aware that Marxism in Russia was 'economic materialism', which means that he himself had been able to transcend it and come to some deeper understanding of what Marxism implied.

Vorovsky saw the revisionism of the Legal Marxists as a particular episode in the development of the Russian intelligentsia. The latter, he argued, had occupied an anomalous position in Russian society from the middle of the nineteenth century. From that time society had passed through a period of flux in which the older social groups had fallen into decay and new ones emerged together with the appearance of capitalist relations. Under these circumstances the intelligentsia was able to be a peculiar floating group in society and its members able to detach themselves from the classes they originated from and attach their allegiance to others of their choice. This phenomenon of 'splitting off' (*otshchepenstvo*), Vorovsky stated, was very characteristic of Russian history. Recently, however, with the further development of capitalist relations and the hardening of class lines, this tendency was beginning to come to an end, and the intelligentsia to express the interests of the class to which they properly belonged. Under these conditions the

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Legal Marxists had deserted the cause of the proletariat and had gone over to the bourgeoisie.<sup>44</sup>

Although Vorovsky was not concerned with epistemological questions, there is much in his article akin to Bogdanov's ideas on mental attitudes being socially and historically produced. His 'dialectical' approach in this case consists in refusing to speak of the intelligentsia as a fixed entity, but as one in its process of development. Yet viewed in the context of the other contributions to *Pravda*, Vorovsky's argument contains an element of ambiguity. He provides an excellent explanation of why it is that intellectuals should 'go to the people'. Indirectly, too, he also provides a sociological reason why some of the intelligentsia should think in terms of universal ethical standards—precisely because they are unattached to any class and do not express any definite class interests. They are thereby in a position to view things more from a human than from a class point of view. But though implicit, this line of reasoning is not followed by Vorovsky. Nor does he say what at the moment of 'splitting off' are the criteria by which the intellectual makes the choice which class he will serve. There are times, in short, at which Vorovsky comes dangerously near to 'universal human values', if only ones glimpsed during the realignment of class forces. He also makes large concessions to the idea that the intelligentsia is, or may be at some points in history, an autonomous entity in a class society. These are interesting admissions in a journal waging a systematic campaign against anything 'universal', 'non-class', or 'supra-class'. Vorovsky's difference in approach is to be explained by the fact that he was not concerned with purely philosophical questions.

Vorovsky's views on the intelligentsia are comparable with those expressed by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* Whereas Lenin stressed the necessity for ideological leadership by intellectuals in the workers' movement, Vorovsky was able to provide an explanation of why intellectuals should be available and willing to fulfil this task. In spite of the renegation of the Legal Marxists, Vorovsky was inclined to see the intelligentsia in a positive light. Bogdanov's views on the subject were in complete contrast. For him the intellectual was a person who belonged to no particular social class and, being confined to one particular professional specialization, was the supreme example of fragmentation, the furthest removed from the community of mankind and from the real world. He it was who had the very least to offer towards the realization of social goals.

In what is ostensibly a book review, but in essence a short article on the subject of the intelligentsia, Bogdanov wrote:

<sup>44</sup> Yu. Adamovich (V. V. Vorovsky), 'Predstavlyayet li intelligentsiya obshchestvennyi klass?', *ibid.*, May 1904.

This situation is most agonizing for those intermediate social groups which incorporate all the divergent tendencies of developing and decaying life forms, for that 'intelligentsia' which so far has made up the main body of audience for literature. It is here that the most acute realization of the 'monist necessity' is juxtaposed with complete absence of hope for bringing it about. 'Preoccupations with philosophy' flare up with great intensity, but on encountering insurmountable tasks they soon degenerate and take on monstrous forms. Being unable to find a unifying point of view on the basis of life itself, people start looking for it *outside life*. Some have their heads in the beyond, in the world of mysticism and metaphysics, others in the 'logical' world of empty formal abstractions. And, of course, all that goes there is lost to life.<sup>45</sup>

For the proletariat, on the other hand: '... contemporary development presents simpler, clearer and more transparent contradictions: the ways of solving them are indicated by life itself.'<sup>46</sup>

Bogdanov consequently did not share Lenin's confidence in the intelligentsia while refusing to recognize the limitations which Lenin saw in the proletarian consciousness. It was a view deeply antagonistic to Lenin's conception of the party principle. The philosophy of empiriomonism, in fact, struck at its very root. To Lenin it must have appeared that there was no philosophy so immediately political or so potentially dangerous. If the two men thought it necessary in 1904—after an exchange of their latest writings—to consign philosophy to a politically neutral zone,<sup>47</sup> it must have been because they were both keenly aware of its political relevance. As far as one can tell, however, disagreements on the role of the intelligentsia *vis-à-vis* the proletariat remained latent until the early 1920s, until the discussions on *Proletkult*.

#### IV

Towards the end of 1904 the *Pravda* group was beset with some internal difficulties. The political and philosophical wing of the editorial board became displeased with the policy of the literary section. Seemingly, Bunin was accepting articles of too 'pessimistic' a character, and a heated quarrel took place. Kozhevnikov sided with Bunin and because the censor had recently been severely critical of the 'Surveys' he insisted that Rumyantsev would have to leave. Bogdanov, Rozhkov,

<sup>45</sup> A. Bogdanov, 'Filosofskii koshmar', *ibid.*, June 1904, p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 47, pp. 141–2. Lenin gave Bogdanov *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*. What Bogdanov gave Lenin is not clear—'... odnu svoyu togdazhnyuyu filosofskuyu rabotu'. The first volume of *Empiriomonism* was published in 1904 but this consists of articles written earlier. What Bogdanov wrote 'at that time' were the *Pravda* articles.

Pokrovsky, etc. thereupon announced that they had joined the journal as a group and would leave as a group. After their departure Kozhevnikov invited the Mensheviks to take over the journal. During 1905 and 1906, therefore, *Pravda* was in Menshevik hands, though between them and Kozhevnikov discord also arose. Kozhevnikov then attempted to bring back the original editorial board, but by that time they were engaged in other pursuits and had to refuse.<sup>48</sup>

By 1905 the circle around *Pravda* had become extended to form a literary-lecturing group consisting of academics, authors, literary critics and various other intellectuals who at the outset of the revolution toured Moscow and the provinces giving lectures on political themes. Sometimes these meetings would take place in schools or the apartments of literary figures. At least one such meeting was held in the flat of V. A. Morozova, the wife of the great Moscow industrialist.<sup>49</sup> In the vertigo of 1905 *otshchepenstvo* would appear to have been the order of the day.

There are various opinions about the relationship of the literary-lecturing group to the Bolshevik Centre. 'Occasionally,' Rozhkov records, 'the meetings would be attended by the Bolshevik V. L. Shantser (Marat). Until the autumn of 1905 at least this group had no formal connection with the Bolshevik party, though . . . there was present a certain party spirit which found its incarnation in the person of V. L. Shantser. Towards the end of 1905 the group became finally attached to the Bolshevik party.'<sup>50</sup> According to Skvortsov-Stepanov, the group always included members of the RSDLP Moscow Committee or other Bolshevik organizations, such as V. L. Shantser, M. I. Vasil'ev-Yuzhin, S. I. Gusev, A. I. Rykov, V. A. Desnitsky, M. F. Vladimirsky, M. N. Lyadov, I. F. Dubrovinsky, R. S. Zemlyachka, L. L. Nikiforov, B. P. Pozern, etc. S. I. Mitskevich, writing in 1940, argues that the group was from the very outset Bolshevik inspired, but by that time it was probably obligatory that all initiatives in a revolutionary direction should come from the party.<sup>51</sup> The very strength of Mitskevich's insistence on this point is sufficient to convince the reader that there must be some truth in Rozhkov's statement. The evidence seems to suggest that the group was jealous of its autonomy and was reluctant to merge completely into the party structure.<sup>52</sup>

It is Skvortsov-Stepanov who supplies the most extensive list of the

<sup>48</sup> V. Polyansky, 'Marksistskaya periodicheskaya pechat' 1896-1906 gg.', *Krasnyi arkhiv*, vol. IX, 1925, p. 232.

<sup>49</sup> I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov, *Ot revolyutsii k revolyutsii* (M.-L., 1925), p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Rozhkov, *O 1905 gode* . . . , p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Mitskevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 328ff.

<sup>52</sup> Early political differences between the group and the party leadership are described in M. N. Pokrovsky, 'Literatorskaya gruppa MK v 1905 g.' in *Izvestiya*, 25 February 1925. They concerned mainly the line to be taken at the professional union conferences held during 1905.

group's members. The membership, he maintains, was ever changing, but the permanent nucleus consisted of P. G. Dauge, M. G. Lunts, V. Ya. Kanel', D. I. Kursky, N. L. Meshcheryakov, V. A. Obukh, M. A. Tagansky, K. N. Levin, S. I. Mitskevich. S. Ya. Tseitlin, V. M. Shulyatnikov, M. N. Pokrovsky, N. A. Rozhkov and himself.<sup>53</sup>

Stepanov adds that in 1906 in connection with the 'unification tendencies' there were times when the meetings of the group would be attended by the Mensheviks V. G. Groman and P. Nezhdanov-Cherevanin. Those occasions would invariably give rise to barren discussions since the views of the two factions diverged so sharply as to preclude any possibility of effective cooperation between them. In spite of the resolutions of the fourth congress of the RSDLP, the literary-lecturing group remained purely Bolshevik until its demise in 1908 when prison or exile overtook most of its members.<sup>54</sup>

Between 1905 and 1908 the group's activities included not only lecturing to mass audiences, but the publication of the two symposia of articles, *Tekushchii moment* and *Voprosy dnya* (both in 1905) and a succession of newspapers, *Bor'ba*, *Svetoch*, *Svobodnoe slovo*, *Voprosy dnya* and *Istina*. It would, however, be more correct to say that the group produced only one newspaper, which was forced to change its name because of the activities of the censor.<sup>55</sup>

Although, as Skvortsov-Stepanov states, the literary-lecturing group broke up in 1908 with the end of the revolution, it seems at least partly to have reassembled again in a rather different guise by the following year. For if one compares the membership of the literary-lecturing group with the *Vpered* group, one will find a large degree of coincidence, e.g. Bogdanov, Lyadov, Shantser, Desnitsky, Pokrovsky, Lunacharsky, etc. Of course, not all the people who had been in the first group appear in the second, or not all in the second had been in the first, but the degree of continuity is certainly significant, as are some of the exceptions.

## V

Lenin's disagreements with the *Vpered* group, his polemics against otzovism, ultimatism and the appearance of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are too well known to need repeating here. What has never been satisfactorily examined, however, is the connection between otzovism, i.e. the recalling of Bolshevik deputies from the Duma, and Machist philosophy. If Lenin thought that the two were connected,<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Skvortsov-Stepanov, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> These publications, though not *Pravda*, are described in I. Kuznetsov and A. Shumakov, *Bol'shevistskaya pechat' Moskvy* (M., 1968).

<sup>56</sup> By accepting at face value Lenin's denial to Gorky that otzovism and Machism were connected (Lenin to Gorky, 25 February 1908, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 47, pp. 141-5) and by following uncritically Lenin's chronology of his relations with

he never explained for what reason, and, as far as one can tell, no explanation emanated from the *Vpered* group itself. Leaving aside the problem of whether or not Lenin *believed* that otzovism and Machism were connected, the fact that the two things should be advocated by the same group of people must prompt the question: how were they connected, assuming, as is likely, that they were?

As was argued earlier, critical philosophy in the socialist movement was the characteristic product of 'economic materialism', which presupposed a deterministic notion of social development—something which for all his sophisticated philosophical constructions was not denied even by Bogdanov. In political terms this meant that the state, the bureaucracy and its constitutional machinery must be motivated by class interest, that it is a direct instrument of class oppression. Once this has been assumed, then the futility of constitutional representation of classes in opposition to the ruling one becomes apparent. The only possible political action is revolution. It is therefore entirely typical that otzovism was a militant left-wing 'deviation'. It is certainly true that the debate between Lenin and the *Vpered* group was not carried on explicitly in these terms, but one might say that it 'subsisted'. This was a fact confirmed retrospectively by Lenin writing in 1912. He reflected:

... the class character of the tsarist monarchy in no way militates against the vast independence and self-sufficiency of the tsarist authorities and of the bureaucracy from Nicholas II down to the last police officer. The same mistake of forgetting the autocracy and the monarchy, of reducing it *directly* to the 'pure' domination of the upper classes, was committed by the otzovists in 1908–1909 . . . .<sup>57</sup>

**It is of course entirely alien to the spirit of the determinist 'economic**

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Bogdanov which was obviously designed to support that denial, Joravsky comes to the conclusion that *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* had nothing to do with Lenin's political disagreements with Bogdanov which, he argues, emerged only after the book was begun (David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science 1917–1932* (London, 1961), pp. 31–42). Grille convincingly challenges this chronology and traces the origins of this work back to July 1907 (Dietrich Grille, *Lenins Rivale. Bogdanov und seine Philosophie* (Köln, 1966), p. 205ff.), i.e. to the time when the boycott issue was first raised. Since Lenin could find only one Machist, Bazarov, who was against the boycott (Lenin, vol. 47, pp. 144–5), it is difficult to believe that he really took this as evidence that politics and philosophy were *un-connected*! Lenin's letter to I. F. Dubrovinsky of 5 May 1909 (Lenin, vol. 47, pp. 179–80) also shows that after the publication of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* it was to be used in the *political* struggle against Bogdanov and his supporters. Lenin was extremely anxious that the book should be available in Paris before the Bolshevik Centre plenum met to discuss the boycott issue. Other letters to Dubrovinsky also demonstrate to what subterfuges Lenin was forced to resort in order to muster support against Bogdanov (Lenin, vol. 47, pp. 173–9). Therefore, they suggest the light in which one must read Lenin's letter to Gorky of 25 February 1908. Although both the origins of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and the use to which the book was eventually put were both associated with the boycott issue, tactical considerations prevented Lenin from making this explicit.

<sup>57</sup> Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 21, p. 32.

materialism' that anything should be independent or autonomous, that it should not be completely economically determined through the mediacy of social classes. The notion of non-class or supra-class was all the more abhorrent to the members of the *Pravda* group who had expended so much thought and effort campaigning against that very concept. If there can be a supra-class state organization then the door is left wide open for a supra-class ethic.

It is significant that Lenin does not cite any concrete examples of the particular heresy he mentions from writings by the *Vpered* group: quite possibly no such statements existed. What he does say is that the error 'is now being committed by some individual writers (for instance M. Aleksandrov), and also by N. R-kov who has gone over to the liquidators'.<sup>58</sup> Both Aleksandrov (i.e. M. S. Ol'minsky) and Rozhkov were contributors to *Pravda*. This means that two of the exceptions, people who were connected with *Pravda* and did not join the *Vpered* group, nevertheless made 'otzovist' errors.

The case of Ol'minsky is especially interesting. His book *The State, Bureaucracy and Absolutism in Russian History*,<sup>59</sup> which argued that the Russian autocracy expressed the class interests of the landowners, was not refuted by Lenin himself. This task was performed by another contributor to *Pravda*, V. V. Vorovsky, in a long critical article<sup>60</sup> published in 1912 and written at Lenin's suggestion.<sup>61</sup> Vorovsky was one more exception in that he did not become a *Vperedist*, but, as was noted earlier, among *Pravda* contributors too he was something of an exception. Indeed, one may see a distinct relationship between his admission of the possibility of a supra-class intelligentsia and his arguments in favour of a relatively autonomous state organization.

It would seem reasonable to conclude that in positing a connection between the philosophy and politics of the *Vpered* group, if only for reasons which were at the time unclear even to himself, Lenin was quite correct. What lay at the root of the otzovist 'error' was the deterministic 'economic materialism', but this 'error' he was unable to grasp precisely because he shared it to a large degree himself. Thus, instead of analysing the basic misconception of the group's outlook and demonstrating that Marxism was not a determinist doctrine, Lenin attacked only the symptom of that misconception, the phenomenon of critical philosophy. Nor was Lenin any better placed after the revolution to make a theoretical analysis of the thinking which underlay the *Proletkult*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> M. S. Aleksandrov (M. S. Ol'minsky), *Gosudarstvo, byurokratiya i absolyutizm v istorii Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1910).

<sup>60</sup> 'O prirode absolyutizma', *Prosveshchenie*, 1912, no. 3-4, February-March.

<sup>61</sup> N. L. Meshcheryakov, 'V. V. Vorovsky. Biograficheskii ocherk', in V. V. Vorovsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. I (M., 1933), p. XLIII.

movement, the last foray of a much diminished original *Pravda* group. For it is quite logical that a group which had rejected the idea of supra-class ethics and a supra-class state would also oppose the idea of supra-class culture. The idea found expression in the words of Bogdanov's disciple N. I. Bukharin when he stated:

I think personally that to 'take over' bourgeois culture as a whole, and not to destroy it is just as impossible as to 'take over' the bourgeois state. The same thing applies to 'culture' as to the state.<sup>62</sup>

Bogdanov's own idea of what *Proletkult* should be was more complex. It was an elaboration of the ideas he had first expressed in *Pravda* in his article *Sobiranie cheloveka*. He was convinced that the true socialist outlook lay in the collective spirit and the common sense of the industrial proletariat and that the current task was to give this expression and ensure its development.<sup>63</sup> In this way a new proletarian intelligentsia would be formed, vastly superior to the old one which belonged to a past era of an ailing and fragmented society.

Continuity between *Pravda* and *Proletkult* was maintained not only in terms of theory, but of methods as well; for in a real sense the embryo of the Proletarian University of the 1920s was already present in the *Pravda* group. Some at least of the writers in *Pravda*, such as Pokrovsky and Rozhkov, were deeply involved in the University Extension movement in Russia which had been founded by P. N. Milyukov and E. N. Orlova.<sup>64</sup> The movement which was intended to spread education among the population enjoyed great popularity with both students and teachers alike. Not surprisingly, therefore, one finds in *Pravda* articles devoted to the subject of University Extension and radical teaching methods.<sup>65</sup> The example which University Extension provided and the experience gained in teaching adult students was never forgotten by the members of the *Pravda* group. They found the atmosphere of equality which existed between students and teachers especially congenial and fully in harmony with their democratic sentiments. It was entirely natural that the chief activity of the *Vpered* group should be precisely the organization of party schools for workers at Capri and Bologna. The educational tasks of the 1920s, moreover, were tackled by the same group of people using the same well tried methods.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in M. Ya. Gefter (ed.), *Istoricheskaya nauka i nekotorye problemy sovremenosti* (M., 1969), p. 76.

<sup>63</sup> Grille, *op. cit.*, p. 180ff.

<sup>64</sup> A. A. Kizewetter, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii (Vospominaniya. 1881-1914)* (Prague, 1919), pp. 288-9; P. N. Milyukov, *Vospominaniya (1859-1917)*, vol. I (New York, 1955), p. 156.

<sup>65</sup> For example, F. Danilov, 'Rasprostranenie vysshego obrazovaniya v Soedinennykh Shtatakh Severnoi Ameriki', *Pravda*, January 1904; D-r Pashukanis, 'Gipnotizm v pedagogike', *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> A. V. Lunacharsky, *Vospominaniya . . .*, p. 176.

The formation of the small group of intellectuals and the appearance of their journal shortly before the 1905 revolution was not the isolated incident on the margins of history that it might at first appear. It was in reality a link in a chain of continuity in Russian thought stretching backwards into the nineteenth century and forward into the Soviet era. That nowadays—after several decades of research on Russia and countless studies on Soviet Marxism—*Pravda* still remains obscure is by no means a mark of its insignificance. It is rather symptomatic of the imbalance in historical scholarship which has created that illusion. Preoccupation of scholars with the ‘winning side’, with Leninism, has obscured what was the more general evolution of Marxism in Russia, of which *Pravda* is a typical document. When this evolution is traced through its various stages, the *necessity* of *Pravda* becomes apparent. To place *Pravda* in the historical record, therefore, does not simply require the addition of one more empirical fact to the existing store. It demands a reappraisal of the history of Russian Marxism in which Lenin rather than Bogdanov may be seen to be a deviation from the Russian Marxist tradition.

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