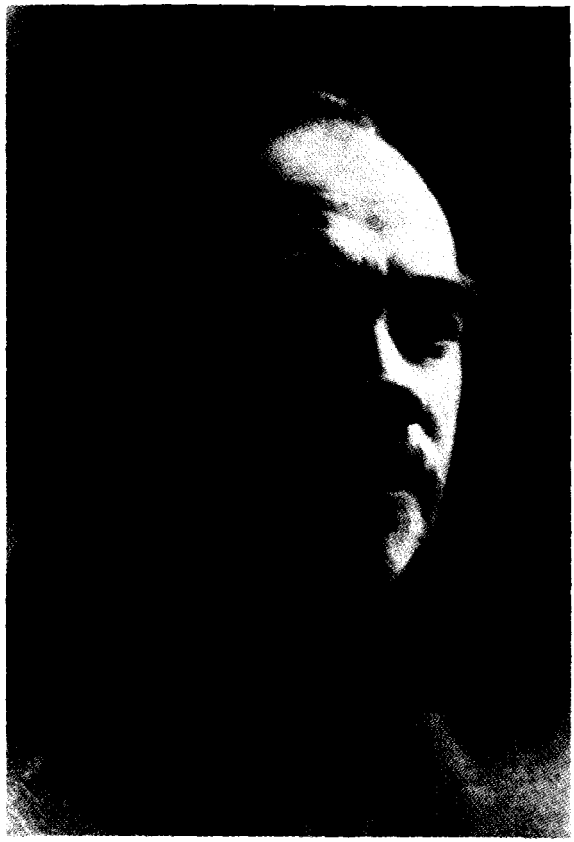

A. A. Bogdanov, 1873–1928

REVOLUTION AND CULTURE

The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy

ZENOVIA A. SOCHOR

Studies of the Harriman Institute

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To my parents,
Joseph and Maria Sochor

Studies of the Harriman Institute

Columbia University

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Preface

It has been many years since I first puzzled over who Bogdanov was. The study of revolutionary Russia has focused on Lenin to such an extent that the Leninist set of priorities and version of events have been accepted as commonplace. Consequently, most political figures have paled in comparison to Lenin. The more I delved into the primary sources, however, the more intrigued I became—and the more surprised that A. A. Bogdanov was so little known. Because there were few secondary sources to use as guidelines, I had to gauge just how original Bogdanov's ideas were and how important a role he played in the revolutionary period in Russia. Clearly, I decided, it was worth the time and effort to investigate Bogdanovism.

Only a few of Bogdanov's works have been translated into English. Hence I have translated almost all of the material quoted in the text. In transliterating, I have followed the Library of Congress system, except where a customary English usage exists already, as for such better-known names as Trotsky and Lunacharsky (rather than Trotskii and Lunacharskii).

I am grateful to many scholars for their assistance. Loren Graham was one of the first "Bogdanovites" I met; his advice and enthusiasm assured me that I was on the right track. Robert C. Tucker, in the course of conversations we had as colleagues at the Harriman Institute, offered suggestions that helped me recast my theoretical framework. Another Bogdanov enthusiast, the late Alexander Erlich, provided me with useful comments on the economic context of the political debates of the

1920s. I owe a special intellectual debt to Seweryn Bialer. First as mentor and later as colleague, he had the knack of asking the provocative question and cutting to the core of any matter with a perceptive comment.

I thank the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) for sponsoring my trip to the Soviet Union in 1985, which helped round out my research. Access to the Central State Archives of Literature and Art (TsGALI) was particularly useful for my chapter on Proletkult. I also acknowledge the assistance of S. R. Mikulinskii, director of the Institute of the History of Natural Sciences and Technology, and two members of his staff, V. K. Poltavets and T. I. Ul'iankina, for arranging a series of interviews for me. I especially enjoyed meeting and talking with A. A. Malinovskii, Bogdanov's son.

Clark University not only released me from my teaching duties so I could take advantage of the IREX grant but also provided me with a faculty development grant. I am grateful to John Blydenburgh, chair of the Government Department, for supporting my initiatives.

While writing the manuscript, I was fortunate to be at the Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union at Columbia University and the Russian Research Center at Harvard University. The last stages of writing took place at the RRC, and I thank Adam Ulam, the director, for providing a congenial atmosphere, and Mary Towle, the administrative officer, for finding me a quiet office space. Theresa Reynolds and Rene Baril, from the Word Processing Center at Clark University, produced, at record speed, a neatly typed copy from my scribbles on yellow pads, and I thank them heartily.

Finally, I am pleased to express my warmest thanks to my husband, David W. Parry, who graciously adjusted to life with A. A. Bogdanov. His patient and persistent support was most appreciated. My parents, Joseph and Maria Sochor, have sustained me over the years with their firm confidence and encouragement. It is with gratitude and affection that I dedicate this book to them.

ZENOVIA A. SOCHOR

Worcester, Massachusetts

Part I /

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

V. I. Lenin and A. A. Bogdanov playing chess at Maxim Gorky's villa, Capri, 1908. Gorky wears his hat tilted.

1 /

The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy

Revolution is more than a violent seizure of power accompanied by a mass uprising. It is a cataclysmic event propelled by ideological prescriptions for a more perfect society that brings about a host of changes in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. The most intriguing and most vexing questions usually arise in the aftermath of revolution: Can the leaders hold onto power without surrendering their revolutionary ideals? What happens when both economic development and utopia are placed on the political agenda? More basically, what does it mean for a Marxist regime to build socialism? How is it to be rendered in practice?

Among the problems facing revolutionary leaders, one of the most difficult is how to transform the attitudes, beliefs, and customs inherited from the old society that hinder the creation of a new society. Clearly, there is no automatic change when power is seized; the population at large may have altered its expectations but not its familiar habits in work and social behavior. Yet without cultural transformation, the building of socialism may remain an evasive goal. Even when the political opposition has been subdued and economic development has at least been launched, the cultural sphere is not easily changed. Revolution and culture are pitted against each other.

The significance of cultural factors in the process of revolutionary transformation has not gone unappreciated by analysts of the Soviet Union. Several scholars have emphasized the Russian cultural context—that is, Russia's deep-rooted traditions from the tsarist past and its general backwardness—as the major constraint to the achievement

of political goals. Robert Tucker, for example, conveys an image of "two Russias," an emerging Soviet culture versus the traditional culture.[1] Alfred Meyer depicts a struggle between the "incumbent culture" and a "counterculture."[2] Similarly, Roger Pethybridge discusses "the reverberation of certain Bolshevik political and social ideas against the sounding board of Soviet social realities."[3]

A comparison of the old and the new is certainly useful in providing insights into the tensions of the early period of the Soviet Union; however, it sidesteps the more fundamental analysis of the "new." Actually, there was no "new" society to be juxtaposed to the "old"; the new was only in the process of becoming. The dilemma, in fact, was how to devise a counterculture appropriate to the transition to socialism.[4] How successful were the revolutionary leaders in developing a strategy for cultural change? Were the proposals for cultural change as inventive as those for the seizure of power? Little attention has been paid to this dimension of the dynamics of revolution and culture and to the early, and definitive, choices made.[5]

This lack is particularly surprising when one discovers that cultural questions punctuated many of the political discussions before and after the Revolution. Within the Bolshevik camp, the notion of cultural revolution was hotly debated, with radically different interpretations being offered by the two main protagonists, V. I. Lenin and A. A. Bogdanov.

This book proposes to demonstrate that cultural change and politics were closely and persistently interwoven in the revolutionary period. The Lenin-Bogdanov dispute led to a split in Bolshevism, one that was never entirely repaired, and challenged any coupling of Leninism with Bolshevism. The debates among the Bolsheviks and the criticisms of Lenin's policies were all the more spirited because at stake was the formation of the political system, or, more specifically, the new political culture.

It is generally recognized that one of the important props of a political

1. Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971).

2. Alfred G. Meyer, "Communist Revolutions and Cultural Change," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 5 (Winter 1972): 345–70.

3. Roger Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism* (London, 1974), p. 7. Also see E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1971); vols. 1 and 2; David Lane, *Leninism: A Sociological Interpretation* (Cambridge, England, 1981); Theodore H. von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?* 2d ed. (New York, 1971).

4. Or, in Wallace's terms, how to effect a "transfer culture"—that is, "a system of operations which, if fully carried out, will transform the existing culture into the goal culture." See Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Culture and Personality* (New York, 1961), p. 148.

5. A recent book helps fill in the gap. See Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, eds., *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985). For an earlier work, see René Fülöp-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1965).

system is its political culture, defined as "a set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system."[6] In other words, political culture provides a framework of legitimacy for a regime, thus strengthening and stabilizing it. Understandably, then, for a new political system, one born in the upheaval of revolution, the development of a political culture is particularly urgent.

Recent studies have explored the significance of political culture in the political system, hoping to provide "greater insight into Communist politics."[7] Nevertheless, their focus tends to remain on the old versus the new—that is, on comparisons of the traditional (or real) versus the communist (or official) political culture. The questions that underlie these studies are Why, decades after the seizure of power, is there still a discrepancy between the old and the new? And how does the discrepancy affect the performance of the political system?

This book proposes to highlight the amorphous and controversial beginnings of the official political culture. It is important to recognize how difficult it was to define *communist culture* and to translate a handful of ideological assumptions into a broad political culture. Perhaps one of the consequences, albeit unintended, of the early policy decisions in the cultural sphere was precisely the gulf between the real and the official.

In investigating the schemes for relating culture to revolution, it is inconceivable to disregard the presence and impact of Bogdanov. Certainly puzzling is the neglect of such figures as Bogdanov, who appear vividly in the firsthand accounts of the revolutionary period but who fade in more contemporary descriptions. It may be that history slips all too easily into an uncluttered play about winners. Forgetting the "losers," however, means eliminating much of the drama and tension of their time. Up to now, it has required major efforts simply to wrench away the historiographical fixation on the "leading actors," Lenin and

6. Lucian W. Pye, "Political Culture," *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, 12: 218. Also see Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, N.J., 1965).

7. Archie Brown, ed., *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (Armonk, N.Y., 1984), p. 149. Other recent studies include Archie Brown and Jack Grey, eds., *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (New York, 1977); Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers* (Cambridge, England, 1981); Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York, 1979). Earlier contributions include Robert C. Tucker, "Culture, Political Culture and Communist Society," *Political Science Quarterly* 88 (June 1973): 173–90; Meyer, "Communist Revolutions and Cultural Change"; Frederick C. Barghoorn, "Soviet Russia: Orthodoxy and Adaptiveness," in Pye and Verba, *Political Culture and Development*.

Stalin, in order to include other Bolsheviks, such as Trotsky and Bukharin, in the reconstruction of the past.[8] It is almost impossible to understand the controversy, sometimes bitter, always animated, over the cultural dimension of the revolution without now casting a spotlight on Bogdanov.

A. A. Bogdanov (1873–1928)

Aleksander Aleksandrovich Malinovskii (Bogdanov), born in Tula, the son of a schoolteacher, was a man of many identities.[9] He was an economist, a philosopher, a physician (psychiatrist), a writer of science fiction novels, and a political activist. His formal training at the University of Khar'kov, completed in 1899, was in medicine. His informal, and increasingly intense, occupation was that of revolutionary. First a Populist and later a Marxist, Bogdanov was arrested for political activities in 1894 (and exiled to Tula), in 1899 (and exiled to Kaluga and Vologda), and in 1905 (and exiled abroad). He joined the Russian Social Democratic Workers' party (RSDRP) in 1899 and rose quickly in its ranks. While still in exile, in 1903, he sided with Lenin during the Bolshevik-Menshevik split. He was elected to the Bolshevik Center in 1904, when the original Bolshevik faction was founded, and to the Central Committee at party congresses in London (1905), Stockholm (1906), and again London (1907). He was the Bolshevik representative to the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies during the 1905 Revolution. He also served on the editorial boards of several Bolshevik newspapers, including *Vpered* (or *Proletarii*) and *Novaia Zhizn'* (which he founded).

Bogdanov's close working relationship with Lenin, established after their first meeting in Geneva, in 1904, was not to last. Lenin initially welcomed Bogdanov into the Bolshevik faction because the latter brought with him support, expertise, and important new members (e.g., Bazarov, Lunacharsky, and Skvortsov-Stepanov) at a time when Lenin was relatively isolated following his break with the Mensheviks. Bogdanov, in fact, was better rooted in Russia than Lenin, with considerable

8. See Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879–1921*, vol. 1 (New York, 1954); Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York, 1973).

9. For general biographical information, see A. A. Bogdanov, "Avtobiografiia," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Granat* (Moscow, 1924); entries under "Bogdanov" in *Filosofskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1960) and in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1927, 1950, and 1970). For a more extensive Soviet source, see A. A. Belova, *A. A. Bogdanov* (Moscow, 1974). A good overview in English is provided by Alexander Vucinich, *Social Thought in Tsarist Russia: The Quest for a General Science of Society, 1861–1917* (Chicago, 1976), chap. 8.

influence among workers and leftist intellectuals. Perhaps for this very reason, there was a rivalry in the offing from the start.

The differences between Bogdanov and Lenin began to emerge on both philosophical and political grounds. Bogdanov, although an avowed Marxist, insisted on an open-minded attitude toward new philosophical currents, claiming that some parts of Marxism, such as epistemology, were incomplete. He wrote *Empiriomonizm* (three volumes, 1904–06), employing the theories of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius, as part of an effort to fill in the gaps in Marxism. Lenin at first seemed unaware of the significance of Bogdanov's "revisionism" (despite Plekhanov's warnings) and then decided on a philosophical truce in order to maintain their political alliance.

By 1907, however, Bogdanov's independent streak had begun to show itself in politics as well, and this disdain of "party discipline," for Lenin, tipped the scales against his comrade-in-arms. Bogdanov argued that the Social Democrats should continue their radical activities rather than partake in "parliamentary politics" and the elections to the Third Duma. Although he abided by the party resolutions on this question, he did not feel constrained from criticizing the "collaborationist tendency" he saw forming around Plekhanov, Akselrod, and Lenin. As a result, Bogdanov became identified with left-wing Bolshevism, which favored boycotting (*otzovizm*) the Duma or issuing ultimatums (*ultimatizm*) to the deputies.

In short order, Lenin and Bogdanov began struggling over control of party funds (gained through robberies, or "expropriations"), the Bolshevik newspaper *Proletarii*, and the allegiance of the Bolshevik faction as a whole. Despite efforts on the part of Gorky to mediate between Lenin and Bogdanov, the friction escalated and broke out into the open. In 1909, Lenin published *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, a work noted more for its polemics than its philosophy, which publicly rebuked Bogdanov for his "distortion" of Marxism. In the same year, Lenin forced Bogdanov out of the Bolshevik Center. Lenin also began to side with Plekhanov to ensure that Bolshevism would be identified with orthodox Marxism rather than "revisionism."[10]

10. There are differing interpretations on the reasons for the split. Daniels draws attention to the political differences between Lenin and Bogdanov, in particular the issue of *ultimatizm* and *otzovizm*. Bogdanov and Aleksinskii were the leaders of the *ultimatisty*, with control of the St. Petersburg Bolshevik organization. Daniels notes that the *otzovist* movement "became a serious challenge to Lenin's position in the party." Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1969), p. 20. Joravsky, in contrast, underscores Lenin's attempts to prevent the identification of Bolshevism with philosophical revisionism. He indicates that a possible motive for purging Bogdanov was Lenin's desire to form a bloc with Plekhanov and his "Party Mensheviks." David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural*

The implications of Lenin's actions were important. By choosing to attack Bogdanov on philosophical grounds, Lenin implanted in Marxism the notion of philosophical heresy and ultimately created a link between a "correct" philosophy and politics. In essence, these actions paved the way for a party line in both philosophy and politics, with strict discipline required from the members and with Lenin in control.

Little wonder, then, that this turnabout in Bolshevik affairs prodded Bogdanov to criticize authoritarianism and to strike out on his own. A group of like-minded individuals, including Lunacharsky and Gorky, joined Bogdanov to form Vpered (Forward) as an alternative to Lenin's version of Bolshevism. They turned their attention to cultural education work, organizing, at Bogdanov's instigation, two party schools, one on Capri (1909) and the other in Bologna (1910–11). Bogdanov, unlike the others, never rejoined the Bolshevik party, although his extra-party status did not prevent him from founding, together with Lunacharsky, the organization Proletkult, which was very active during 1917–21 and attracted a membership of some 400,000. Not unexpectedly, Lenin greeted Proletkult with considerable hostility and mistrust (as he had previously reacted to the two party schools). Lenin's antagonism was further aroused when Bogdanov's name became linked to two small opposition groups, Rabochaia Pravda (Workers' Truth) and Rabochaia Gruppa (Workers' Group), even though Bogdanov denied any involvement in either of these groups.

Stymied in his cultural work and suspected of political activism, Bogdanov turned increasingly to scientific-medical work. He was a lively member of the Socialist Academy, where he gave lectures, and in 1926 he founded the first Institute of Blood Transfusion. He died in 1928 as a result of a failed experiment in blood transfusion, although the exact circumstances of his death remain somewhat unclear.

Science, 1917–32 (New York, 1961), pp. 24–44. Schapiro suggests yet another reason for the split. When the secret "expropriations" (associated with Bogdanov and Krasin) were revealed, they caused an uproar, and Lenin began to reconsider the advisability of remaining associated with Bogdanov and Krasin. Schapiro maintains that Lenin had sought to conceal the "real history of the dispute" behind "a smokescreen of philosophy." Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971), pp. 107, 110–13. Bailes believes instead that the expropriations played only a secondary role in the split; he emphasizes the philosophical dispute. Kendall Bailes, "Lenin and Bogdanov: The End of an Alliance," in *Columbia Essays in International Affairs*, ed. A. W. Cordier (New York, 1967), 2:108. Also see Karl G. Ballestrem, "Lenin and Bogdanov," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 9 (December 1969): 283–310; Avraham Yassour, "Lenin and Bogdanov: Protagonists in the 'Bolshevik Center,' " *Studies in Soviet Thought* 22 (February 1981): 1–32; John Biggart, " 'Anti-Leninist Bolshevism': The Forward Group of the RSDRP," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 23 (June 1981): 134–53; Aileen Kelly, "Empiriocriticism: A Bolshevik Philosophy?" *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 21 (January–March 1981): 89–118.

Bogdanov was an intriguing figure—original, creative, and controversial. There were traces in him of St. Simon, Comte, and Spencer, as well as Mach and Avenarius. His views on culture were subtle and modern, outdistancing the views of his peers and showing affinity to those of later thinkers, among them sociologists such as Durkheim and cultural anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz. His ideas affected the intellectual climate of his time and had a strong impact on a diverse group of people.

Why, then, is Bogdanov so little known? Existing works on him in the West are few and sketchy, and only recently has there been a spark of interest, with the appearance of several publications, including two of Bogdanov's books in English translation.[11] Several reasons can be offered for the belated rehabilitation of Bogdanov. Perhaps the most obvious is that Lenin stamped his identity irrevocably on the Bolshevik party and on the early stages of Soviet history; almost everyone else became secondary.

Another reason has to do with the complexity of Bogdanov's thought. Anyone trying to grasp what Bogdanovism is all about must know

11. Bogdanov is discussed in a variety of contexts, among them Bolshevik party history, philosophy, literature, and economics. Early references to Bogdanov, usually brief, include the following: Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–32* (New York, 1953); Daniels, *Conscience of the Revolution*; Julius F. Hecker, *Russian Sociology* (London, 1934); Loren R. Graham, *Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1971); Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism*; George L. Kline, " 'Nietzschean Marxism' in Russia," *Boston College Studies in Philosophy* 2 (1969): 166–83; Schapiro, *Communist Party*; Boris Souvarine, *Stalin* (New York, 1939); Nicholas Spulber, *Soviet Strategy for Economic Growth* (Bloomington, Ind., 1964); Adam Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks* (London, 1969); S. V. Utechin, "Philosophy and Society: Alexander Bogdanov," in *Revisionism*, ed. Leopold Labedz (New York, 1962), pp. 117–25; N. Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, trans. Paul Rosta and Brian Pearce (London, 1968); Gustav Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism* (New York, 1958); Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (New York, 1964); V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George L. Kline (New York, 1953). The most thorough of the early works is by Dietrich Grille, *Lenins Rivale: Bogdanov und Seine Philosophie* (Cologne, 1966). Another good, although unpublished, source is Kendall E. Bailes, "Philosophy and Politics in Russian Social Democracy: Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and the Crisis of Bolshevism, 1908–1909," Russian Institute Essay, Columbia University, (New York, 1966). More recent works include the following: K. M. Jensen, *Beyond Marx and Mach: Alexander Bogdanov's Philosophy of Living Experience* (Dordrecht, Holland, 1978); Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (London, 1978), 2: 432–45; Ilmari Susiluoto, *The Origins and Development of Systems Thinking in the Soviet Union* (Helsinki, 1982); Vucinich, *Social Thought*; Iegoshua Yakhot, *Podavlenie filosofii v SSSR (20–30 gody)* (New York, 1981). The two recent translations are A. Bogdanov, *Essays in Tektology, the General Science of Organization*, trans. and intro. George Gorelik (Seaside, Calif., 1980); Alexander Bogdanov, *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, ed. Loren R. Graham and Richard Stites and trans. Charles Rougle (Bloomington, Ind., 1984). One work appeared too late to be incorporated in this book: Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904–1914* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986).

something about philosophy, economics, sociology, and the natural sciences. To a certain degree, Bogdanov himself is at fault because of the obscure writing style he adopted in *Tektologiia* (which he considered his magnum opus), quite unlike the lucid style he employed in his works on economics and culture. In addition, there are really two Bogdanovs. One is the Bogdanov of positivism, of technology, and of systems thinking. The other is the Bogdanov of cultural liberation and of Proletkult. Those who are attracted to one rarely know, or are interested in, the other. Bogdanov's identification with positivism, which has been unduly emphasized, helps explain why "unorthodox Marxists" such as Karl Korsch, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci have been brought to light—but not Bogdanov. Finally, Western scholars of Proletkult have tended to study it purely as a literary movement, thereby robbing it of its political impact. Proletkult, in fact, should be viewed within the context of the first attempted cultural revolution, embodying Bogdanov's concepts and standing in sharp contrast to those of Lenin.

For rather different reasons, scholars in the Soviet Union have been wary about rehabilitating Bogdanov. To have been branded a heretic by Lenin still carries weight even today. And Bogdanov was never less than controversial. His ideas were hotly disputed throughout the 1920s; some considered him a brilliant innovator, and others castigated him as a revisionist. During the Stalinist period, Bogdanov acquired the status of an "unperson"; only occasional scathing references to him were made, although some of his science fiction novels enjoyed tremendous popularity during the First Five Year Plan.

Since the mid-1960s, Bogdanov's name has cropped up in two entirely different contexts. On the one hand, the Soviets, in their efforts to criticize the Chinese cultural revolution, conveniently discovered that they too had suffered from a similar form of "left-wing deviation"—called Bogdanovism.[12] On the other hand, the Soviets, somewhat uneasily, learned that some of Bogdanov's ideas corresponded to cybernetics, which they belatedly realized was an essential part of modern thought. The 1970 edition of *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* indicated the Soviet change in attitude by proclaiming Bogdanov "one of the pioneers of the systems approach in modern science" and concluding that his organizational theory "anticipated the ideas of cybernetics."[13] Despite this positive evaluation, the subject of Bogdanov continues to be treated circumspectly. A new spate of articles and books about him have ap-

12. See, for example, Iu. Frantsev, "Revoliutsiia i kultura," *Izvestiia*, 27 September 1966, pp. 2–3.

13. A. A. Malinovskii, Bogdanov's son, wrote this entry in the encyclopedia. Interview with Malinovskii, October 1984, Moscow. The fact that Malinovskii was invited to write the entry is a good indicator of the desire, at least in some circles, to rehabilitate Bogdanov.

peared; they are more judicious and learned in tone but critical of his ideas all the same.[14] It is politically unthinkable to say that Bogdanov was ahead of his time, thereby implying that Lenin may not have understood his ideas.[15] Considerations such as these have led at least one Western analyst to conclude that "Lenin's verdict has not lost its power."[16]

At the same time, because of enhanced Soviet interest in cultural revolutions in the late 1960s, there has been a corresponding shift in attention to, and evaluation of, Proletkult. The problem is how to rehabilitate Proletkult but not Bogdanov (earlier writers condemned both). In the mid-1970s, a solution seemed to emerge; the leaders (especially Bogdanov) were accused of having committed numerous errors, and the followers were absolved of blame. It must be recognized, urges one writer, that "Proletkult was above all a mass organization, uniting workers who wanted to create a new culture."[17] The artificiality of that solution, however, is slowly being acknowledged, and one of the leaders, Lunacharsky, has already been considerably exonerated.

Curiously, Western analysts have, to a large extent, replicated the general Soviet approach to Bogdanov—that is, they have rehabilitated the Bogdanov of systems thinking but not the one of cultural revolution. This book is an effort to correct the imbalance.[18] Without question,

14. A reasonably straightforward account appears in Belova, *A. A. Bogdanov*.

15. Soviet analysts display a particular sensitivity to the bombastic tone of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, where he criticizes Bogdanov's "newfangled ideas." A discussion, and defense, of Lenin's work is usually accompanied by a criticism of Bogdanov. For a recent example, see N. I. Bochkarev, "Filosofskoe obosnovanie V. I. Leninym teorii nauchnogo sotsializma v rabote 'Materializm i empirio-kritikizm,' " *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta*, ser. 7: Filosofiia, no. 3 (May–June 1981): 11–18. A somewhat more balanced account, providing the "sociopolitical context of Lenin's work," appears in A. I. Volodin, *Boi absoliutno neizbezhen* (Moscow, 1982). Interestingly, some blame is assigned to Plekhanov for employing a theoretical criticism of Bogdanov for "strictly factional objectives." This point is also made in a review of the Volodin book by I. Naletov, *Kommunist*, no. 2 (January 1983): 116–18.

16. Peter Scheibert, "Lenin, Bogdanov, and the Concept of Proletarian Culture," in *Lenin and Leninism*, ed. Bernard W. Eissenstat (Lexington, Mass., 1971), p. 54.

17. V. V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't* (Moscow, 1974), p. 5. Also see L. A. Pinegina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura, 1917–1932* (Moscow, 1984).

18. For my earlier effort, see Zenovia A. Sochor, "Modernization and Socialist Transformation: Leninist and Bogdanovite Alternatives of the Cultural Revolution" (diss., Columbia University, 1977). Several works have also appeared in Europe, especially in Germany. See Gabriele Gorzka, *A. Bogdanov und der russische Proletkult: Theorie und Praxis einer sozialistischen Kulturrevolution* (Frankfurt, 1980); K. Mänicke-Gyöngyösi, *Proletarische Wissenschaft und sozialistische Menschheitsreligion als Modelle proletarischer Kulture: Zur linksbolschewistischen Revolutionstheorie A. A. Bogdanovs und A. V. Lunacharskiis* (Berlin, 1982); Peter Gorsen and Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, *Proletkult: System einer proletarischen Kultur*, Dokumentation, vols. 1 and 2 (Stuttgart, 1974); Jutta

there is an appreciable amount of continuity in Bogdanov's work, and some of his propositions on revolution and culture were derived from his systems thinking. The linkage is less strange than it might appear at first glance, considering that sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, who base their theories on systems analysis, also end up stressing the role of values. Bogdanov's ideas, however, challenge the commonly held notion that systems thinking, or functionalism, invariably leads to political conservatism; on the contrary, Bogdanov drew radical implications for both politics and culture.

Leninism versus Bogdanovism

However fascinating Bogdanov's ideas, this book is not intended as a biography or an intellectual history. Bogdanov merits attention because he is indispensable in a comprehensive view of the formative period of the Soviet Union, especially of the choices available and the paths not taken. Bogdanov was, in some ways, the alternative to Lenin that Bukharin was to Stalin. To be sure, this claim may seem bold, but it is worth considering that Lenin reacted to Bogdanov with a vehemence and competitiveness that is difficult to explain. Examples are easy to find. As soon as Bogdanov established his party school, Lenin organized his own school outside Paris, at Longjumeau, in 1911. Lenin went to extraordinary lengths to prevent Bogdanov, once editor of *Proletarii*, from publishing in the party newspaper. He criticized Proletkult vigorously and relentlessly until it collapsed. He ordered another edition of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* to be published in response to Bogdanov's second edition of *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta*. Furthermore, some of the stellar members of the Bolshevik intelligentsia seemed to be attracted to and influenced by Bogdanov, including such favorites of Lenin's as Gorky and Bukharin. At least two of the more prominent people in the NOT (Nauchnaia Organizatsiia Truda—Scientific Organization of Labor) movement, A. Gastev and P. Kerzhentsev, were originally Proletkult members (and this movement received Lenin's hearty approval). Even Lenin's pet project, the mass electrification scheme run by the state commission GOELRO, was carried out by followers of Bogdanov, including the economists V. Bazarov and V. Groman.

There is no question that Bogdanov commanded a degree of respect and authority that belied the relatively modest positions he held. The eminent historian M. Pokrovskii considered Bogdanov "one of the very

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Scherrer, "Culture prolétarienne et religion socialiste entre deux révolutions: Les Bolcheviks de gauche," *Europa* 2 (Spring 1979): 67–90.

big, perhaps history will show, great teachers" of the time.[19] A. A. Malinovskii, Bogdanov's son, also surmises that Lenin's reactions to Bogdanov were due to Bogdanov's intellectual influence rather than his political ambitions.[20]

Scholars have not hesitated to label Bogdanov "Lenin's rival"[21] and Bogdanovism (*Bogdanovshchina*) the "second strongest ideology... among the former revolutionaries after 1917."[22] Articles from the 1920s frequently juxtaposed the "materialist-dialectic Lenin" with the "tektologist Bogdanov."[23] One author spoke of the dangers of Bogdanov's influence, arguing that "a decisive battle against Bogdanovism is... the most important task of Lenin's theory. Not without reason were the basic philosophical writings of Lenin himself dedicated towards this task."[24] Such critics saw in Bogdanovism a potential rallying point for "renegades"—that is, for those who were increasingly disenchanted with the policies Lenin was pursuing and the authoritarian shape that Bolshevism was assuming.

Although there was undoubtedly a good deal of hyperbole in the criticisms and evaluations of Bogdanov in the 1920s, Bogdanovism represented the force of ideas rather than any genuine political clout. To the extent that it was an alternative to Leninism, it was a theoretical rather than a political one. In other words, the issue here is not so much Bogdanov versus Lenin (rival political leaders) as Bogdanovism versus Leninism (alternative approaches to building socialism and fundamentally different conceptualizations of the relationship between revolution and culture).

The goal of this book is to shed light on Bogdanovism because it is a fertile source of ideas, not necessarily consistent or always convincing but certainly thought-provoking and innovative. Bogdanovism represents an effort to investigate the multiple dimensions, and pitfalls, of promoting Marxist revolutionary change. It is potent because of its commitment to utopia and critical stance toward facsimiles.

19. Eulogy by M. Pokrovskii, "A. A. Bogdanov (Malinovskii)," *Vestnik kommunisticheskoi akademii* (henceforth *VKA*), no. 26 (1928): v–x.

20. Interview, October 1984, Moscow. According to Malinovskii, several people, including Pokrovskii and, later, Stalin, urged Bogdanov to rejoin the party and assume a leadership role, but he refused. Susiluoto believes that Bukharin also attempted to recruit Bogdanov back into the party. See Susiluoto, *Origins and Development of Systems Thinking*.

21. Grille, *Lenins Rivale*.

22. S. V. Utechin, "Bolsheviks and Their Allies after 1917: The Ideological Pattern," *Soviet Studies* 10 (October 1958): 115.

23. See, for example, I. Vainshtein, "Tektologiia i taktika," *Pod znamenem marksizma* (henceforth *PZM*), nos. 6–7 (June–July 1924): 96.

24. N. Karev, "Tektologiia ili dialektika," *PZM*, nos. 4–5 (April–May 1926): 44.

Inevitably, to consider Bogdanovism in this fashion is to challenge some of the existing interpretations of Leninism. Experts on Lenin tend to conclude that Lenin did as well as he could given the undeveloped, almost primitive, sociopolitical reality he faced, described by one analyst as the "creeping and unconquered effects of social backwardness."[25] Leninism consequently appears to be the product of circumstance. In other words, it is not actually that Lenin's goals and methods were ill-conceived, paving the way for Stalinism, but that circumstances thwarted Lenin's attainment of a humane and idealistic version of socialism. The problem with this type of interpretation is that it avoids a critical scrutiny of Leninism. In fact, pushed to their extreme, some of the explanations smack of determinism, whether cultural or economic.[26] A further implication is that, had it not been for the general level of social backwardness, Lenin would have succeeded in achieving an authentic socialism. This approach avoids addressing the more fundamental problem of how to build socialism in the first place. Did Lenin ask the right questions, and were his answers adequate to the task?

A reexamination of Leninism has already been initiated, and, interestingly enough, a number of New Left authors stand out as the most exacting. Their inquiry stems from the question Where did the Soviet Union go wrong? Whereas it was once fashionable to blame the "cult of the individual" (i.e., Stalin), far more probing is done now, and Lenin no longer is placed on a pedestal. The "golden age under Lenin," claims one author, was little more than a myth, conveniently separating Lenin from the "days of sin under the evil genius, Stalin."[27] Rather than adopting a position of "revolution betrayed," asserts another analyst, perhaps it is time to undertake "an assessment of Bolshevism as a possible causal factor," because the "objective circumstances" themselves were "mediated (and in part constituted) by . . . the 'social problemmatic [*sic*]' of Bolshevism itself."[28]

Clearly, the last word on Leninism has not been said. The renewed controversy, or perhaps revisionism, suggests that the "rethinking of the Soviet experience," which Stephen Cohen, in his work on Bukharin, fostered as an alternative to Stalinism, is being pushed still further.[29]

25. Pethybridge, *Social Prelude*, p. 13.

26. See, for example, von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*

27. Jeffrey Herf, "Science and Class or Philosophy and Revolution: Perry Anderson on Western Marxism," *Socialist Revolution*, no. 35 (September–October 1977): 141.

28. Philip Corrigan, Harvie Ramsay, and Derek Sayer, *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory* (London, 1978), p. 26.

29. In addition to Cohen's *Bukharin*, see his *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (New York, 1985).

Precisely for these reasons, an awareness of Bogdanovism gains in significance. Without adopting a somewhat wistful "what if" approach, it is sufficient to recognize that the existence of Bogdanovism indicates that more than one option was available. Surely, Leninism is the result of choices made; it can be explained by its circumstances but was not determined by them. Bogdanovism, as a critique and alternative, helps clarify the choices and their implications.

Cultural Revolution

Although many issues separated Bogdanovism from Leninism, only those dealing with cultural revolution will be discussed fully here. Heady and heated debates between the two camps were instigated by the party schools before the revolution and by the Proletkult after. They held a common belief that changes in culture were so vast and critical as to warrant a cultural revolution, but they disagreed sharply over its contents.

Without a doubt, the concept cultural revolution is at once alluring and elusive. It fascinates because it seems to suggest the critical missing ingredient in revolution, the difference between a complete and a failed revolution, the sine qua non for the transition to socialism. Lenin projected this very thought when he declared, in 1923, that "the cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country."[30]

This idea has piqued the interest of Western analysts, especially because, notes Meyer, "cultural revolutions occur in various forms throughout the history of communist regimes; and altogether the concept of culture must be recognized as a central focus of comparative communist studies."[31] Tucker is also attracted to the notion of communism as a "culture-transforming movement," emphasizing that "every successful communist revolution has been attended by a sustained and strenuous effort of the newly established regime to transform the way of life of the population."[32] Similarly, Soviet analysts have little difficulty in asserting that the cultural revolution is a "general sociological law" of the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. Much less clear, and far more open to debate, is what this law means. Soviet writers remain divided not only over substantive questions such

30. V. I. Lenin, "On Cooperation," 6 January 1923, in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, one-vol. ed. (New York, 1971), p. 695.

31. Alfred G. Meyer, "Cultural Revolutions: The Uses of the Concept of Culture in the Comparative Study of Communist Systems," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 16 (Spring–Summer 1983): 6.

32. Tucker, "Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society," p. 185.

as what the essence of the cultural revolution is but also over seemingly straightforward questions such as when it occurred.[33]

There is little doubt that, up close, the concept of cultural revolution yields little of the obvious. Just what is a cultural revolution? How is it to be defined? A cultural revolution can be taken to mean a radical effort to transform values and attitudes, a slower but more thorough process of consciousness-raising, or a campaign to eliminate illiteracy. Should it in the first instance be considered a cultural or a political phenomenon? What priority should be assigned to it in comparison to other pressing needs, such as economic development?

Lenin and Bogdanov locked horns over these questions, implying that the issues were important as well as disputable. Invariably, there was an undertow of politics, perhaps because the personal rivalry between the two men was not completely erased but certainly because both claimed authorship of the new political culture.

A revolution, by definition, must change the political culture. New symbols, new political formulas, and new rules of the game must replace those that were delegitimized and discarded along with the former ruling class. How this new political culture is to come into being, however, is unclear. A simple adherence to Marxism does not provide a solution. Ideology, whether as a program of revolutionary action or a statement of beliefs, does not by itself provide norms of conduct, establish attitudes toward authority, or endow institutions with values. The question remaining is how to put theory into practice at the level of human interaction—that is, how to define a citizen within the new community. For Marxists, the transformation is all the more problematic because the ultimate goal is highly ambitious—not a dialectical synthesis of old and new but an entirely new communist culture and a new person. If the communist culture does not rise spontaneously in the wake of other revolutionary changes, it must be manufactured according to vague prescriptions of an ideal society with harmonious, selfless, and cooperative human relations. This vagueness left room for debate and myriad proposals.

Indeed, what seems to escape many authors is the degree of controversy surrounding Lenin's version of the cultural revolution. Those, for example, who argue that Lenin had the most straightforward of all approaches—that the cultural revolution should promote the acquisition of skills and knowledge—may be hard pressed to explain why this policy should be contested.

In rethinking Leninism, some authors find in it a distinct strain of

33. See, among others, M. P. Kim, ed., *Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia v SSSR, 1917–1965* (Moscow, 1967).

"economism," that is to say, an undue emphasis on economic factors and the development of productive forces to the detriment of social and cultural factors.[34] To one analyst, this aspect of Leninism distorts the notion of cultural revolution. In fact, he concludes that "Lenin's belief that the socialist revolution must be made with a human nature that cannot dispense with subordination demonstrates how distant from him were questions of cultural revolution."[35] Another analyst, in direct contrast, writes that one of Lenin's important contributions is the fact that Lenin "takes up the question [of culture] at all." In his last years of life, Lenin began seriously to reflect upon the shortcomings of the Soviet state and tried to "reorient himself," locating the solution to the problems "in culture and the cultural revolution."[36]

Questions being raised now about the first cultural revolution, whether for purposes of clarification or criticism, were already posed in the 1920s, especially by the Bogdanov camp. Bogdanov readily offered an alternative definition of the cultural revolution, thereby generating lively debate over goals and methods. Most significantly, Lenin was forced to take a position on such issues as proletarian culture, to which he had given little thought; in doing so, he outlined features that became permanent in the political system. It is not an overstatement to say that Leninism took its shape, at least in part, out of the struggle against Bogdanovism. Lenin responded to, argued against, and made some decisions because of Bogdanov's challenges.

Not only is Bogdanovism important for grasping the consequences of the decisions made during the first cultural revolution, but also it is essential for an understanding of the utopianism of the second one, part of Stalin's "revolution from above." According to Sheila Fitzpatrick, one of the experts on the Stalin period, the term *cultural revolution* had connotations during the first Five Year Plan that differed from earlier and later Soviet usages: "It described a political confrontation of 'proletarian' communists and the 'bourgeois' intelligentsia, in which the Communists sought to overthrow the cultural authorities inherited from the old regime. The aim of cultural revolution was to create a new 'proletarian intelligentsia.' The method of cultural revolution was 'class war' "[37] Fitzpatrick emphasizes the heady utopianism and militancy associated with the initiation of Stalin's cultural revolution, which

34. Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: First Period, 1917–1923*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York and London, 1976).

35. Carmen Sirianni, "Rereading Lenin," *Socialist Revolution* 5 (April 1975): 79.

36. Louis Menashe, "The Methodology of Leninology: Reply to Carmen Sirianni," *Socialist Revolution* 5 (April 1975): 98.

37. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution as Class War," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), p. 8.

evoked a movement from below to coincide with the revolution from above.

At the same time, Fitzpatrick's study raises a number of unanswered questions: What was the source of utopianism, which seems to have lain dormant but festering during the NEP (New Economic Policy) period? Stalin's revolution from above did not take place in a vacuum. Was it Bogdanov's ideas, albeit in bastardized form, that burst out under the banner of proletarian culture? What was the relationship, if any, between Lenin's and Stalin's cultural revolutions?

Finally, an appreciation of Bogdanov's role fits in well with the resurgence of interest in "other Marxists," those of the nonorthodox variety. For example, the self-named "critical Marxists" hope to "redirect the focus of Marxism from the infrastructure to the superstructure" in an effort to incorporate "the socio-cultural dimension neglected by the 'passive' and mechanical materialism of the Second International (e.g. Lenin, Engels, Kautsky, Plekhanov . . .)."[38] The following declaration is typical of this school of thought:

> As opposed to Orthodox Marxism, which holds that consciousness and social life will change more or less automatically as a result of changes in the mode of production, the New Left insists that fundamental changes in the individual's consciousness and way of life are not an outcome but a *prerequisite* of revolutionary social change. Cultural revolution and the critique-in-action of everyday life are therefore at the core of the revolutionary process from the outset.[39]

Bogdanov would have had little difficulty in sympathizing with those sentiments. In a telling passage, he characterized himself as "a nonparty socialist, a scientific and cultural worker."[40] He saw his Marxism as standing in direct contrast to the "theoretical conservatism" of Lenin and Plekhanov.[41] Indeed, some of Bogdanov's ideas are much closer to those of a Western Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who has been "rediscovered" within the last decade. Bogdanov and Gramsci perceived similar problems in the process of revolutionary change and offered comparable solutions.[42] The intriguing parallel between these two po-

38. Richard Weiner, *Cultural Marxism and Political Sociology* (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1981), p. 18.

39. Karl E. Klare, "The Critique of Everyday Life, the New Left, and the Unrecognizable Marxism," in *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin*, ed. Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare (New York, 1972), p. 16.

40. A. A. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii v nyneshnei revoliutsii," *Novaia zhizn'*, nos. 19–20 (26 and 27 January 1918).

41. A. A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), pp. 29–30.

42. For a fuller discussion, see Zenovia A. Sochor, "Was Bogdanov Russia's Answer to Gramsci?" *Studies in Soviet Thought* 22 (February 1981): 59–81.

litical thinkers challenges a commonly held assumption that there was a wide disparity between orthodox Marxism (largely identified with Soviet Marxism) and its more creative variant, Western Marxism.[43] Whatever the reasons for the Leninist, and eventually Stalinist, outcomes, they cannot be attributed to a lack of "Western" ideas or alternatives. Bogdanov introduced a stimulating diversity in early Bolshevism. Several scholars, beginning with Robert Daniels, have already recognized the distinct strands in Bolshevism, especially the strands that were more utopian than the Leninist one.[44] It may well be, as Alvin Gouldner suggests, that there are roots in Marx's own thought from which the "two Marxisms" grew and developed.[45] Decidedly, Bogdanov epitomizes the "other Bolshevism," a non-Leninist version of Marxism.

The differences between Leninism and Bogdanovism go beyond philosophical squabbles or exercises in the abstract; they contain significant political implications. The force of ideas paves the way for what Otto Kirchheimer calls "revolutionary breakthroughs," the possibility of surmounting "confining conditions." As the author explains, "The old data may still be present, though absorbed in a new context and thereby deprived of their confining nature."[46] In other words, it is the very capacity of conceptualizing a reality differently that may facilitate a breakthrough. Or, as another writer puts it, "To say that an ideology is revolutionary implies a redefinition of ends, means and the nature of reality."[47]

There is little question that Lenin and Bogdanov discerned a nuanced reality. Both looked at the same revolutionary scene in Russia but perceived dissimilar problems and potential. Lenin, with his Marxist perspective, saw class conflict and centers of power that others, to their detriment, neglected. Bogdanov, with his revised Marxism, saw elements of exploitation and alienation to which Lenin was blind. Through

43. Two books that draw a sharp contrast between orthodox Marxism and Western Marxism are Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, 1976); and Howard and Klare, *Unknown Dimension*.

44. See Daniels, *Conscience of the Revolution*; Robert C. Williams, "Collective Immortality: The Syndicalist Origins of Proletarian Culture, 1905–1910," and James C. McClelland, "Utopianism versus Revolutionary Heroism in Bolshevik Policy: The Proletarian Culture Debate," both in *Slavic Review* 39 (September 1980): 389–402 and 403–425; Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*.

45. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory* (New York, 1980).

46. Otto Kirchheimer, "Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthroughs," *American Political Science Review* 59 (December 1965): 967.

47. Erik Allardt, "Revolutionary Ideologies as Agents of Cultural and Structural Change," in *Social Science and the New Societies: Problems in Cross-Cultural Research and Theory Building*, ed. N. Hammond (East Lansing, Mich., 1973), p. 149.

an endless stream of publications, Bogdanov at least drew Lenin's attention to other dilemmas and other realities. If Lenin ignored or refuted them, that was a choice. Out of their dialogue, or, more accurately, debates, came two different attempts at revolutionary breakthroughs and cultural change. Ultimately, two visions of socialism emerged, this alternative vision being the threat and the appeal of Bogdanovism.

2 /

Cultural Prerequisites of Revolution

The issue of cultural change did not appear suddenly the day after the October Revolution. For a rather lengthy period beforehand, there were discussions and debates about capitalist schooling, political pedagogics, and the raising of class consciousness. That is, it was recognized that there were cultural prerequisites to revolution, but there was little agreement on what they were. To disentangle the positions adopted by Lenin and Bogdanov, it is useful to gain some theoretical perspective on the role of culture in political systems in general and in revolutions in particular.

Political Role of Culture: From Maintenance to Revolution

The most salient point to make about the political role of culture is its conservative character. Political culture provides the underpinnings of a political system, thereby contributing both to its legitimacy and stability.

Indeed, one of the key indicators of stability is the fit between the values that people hold and the institutions that surround them.[1] For a revolution to occur, this fit must be severed—and the severing does not happen easily. Once values and beliefs are fixed through a process of political socialization, they become highly resistant to change.[2] In-

1. See Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, N.J., 1963).
2. See Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, *Political Socialization* (Boston, 1969).

ertia seems to set in, and the population, no matter if dissatisfied or frustrated, is usually willing to give the existing government the benefit of the doubt.[3] According to one school of thought, there are "strong tendencies in the nature of man to support all established authorities."[4] Even analysts who are skeptical of these views, arguing that the reservoir of good will toward the government is manufactured rather than spontaneous (socialization as a kind of purposive brainwashing), nevertheless concede that the end result is the same—stability of the system.[5] Thus, whether political culture is transmitted in an innocuous and necessary fashion or is specifically manipulated in an interventionist and coercive fashion, the consensus is that the role of political culture is to contribute to the maintenance of the status quo.

Studies explicitly devoted to political change and revolution do not differ markedly in their analysis; that is, instability is frequently viewed as the flip side of stability. As long as political culture remains stable, so does the political system; a change in one, however, produces a change in the other. Although the causes of change in political culture are left vague, it is at least clear that such change is a prerequisite to revolution.[6] "The single, most generalized characteristic of the disequilibrated system," concludes Chalmers Johnson, "is that values no longer provide an acceptable symbolic definition and explanation of existence."[7] Under certain conditions, culture, which is usually a conservative and stabilizing factor, contributes to the onset of revolution.

Culture is composed of many parts that are never completely inte-

3. David Easton and Jack Dennis, "The Child's Acquisition of Regime Norms: Political Efficacy," *American Political Science Review* 61 (1967): 25–38.

4. Robert E. Lane, "The Legitimacy Bias: Conservative Man in Market and State," in *Legitimation of Regimes*, ed. Bogdan Denitch (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1979), p. 65.

5. See, for example, Carole Pateman, "The Civic Culture: A Philosophic Critique," in *Civic Culture Revisited*, ed. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba (Boston, 1980), pp. 57–102; Brian M. Barry, *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (London, 1970).

6. According to Huntington and Dominguez, "change in political culture arises out of an incongruence/instability between central values and structures." Samuel P. Huntington and Jorge I. Dominguez, "Political Development," in *Macropolitical Theory*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, Mass., 1975), 3: 29. This explanation suggests a circularity in the reasoning. Chalmers Johnson is aware of the problem, as can be seen from the following statement: "Systems analysts of revolution are all too often guilty of arguing that disequilibrium is a prerequisite for revolution but that a system is known to be disequilibrated only because a revolution has occurred." Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966), p. 120. It is difficult to get very far with the notion that change is simply the obverse of stability, with congruence or level of congruence between political culture and political structure being the main indicator. The explanatory and causal factors in the first instance may be entirely different from those in the second instance, just as the reasons for a marriage may be quite different from those for a divorce.

7. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, pp. 72–73.

grated; some of them are more susceptible than others to change. All societies have a diversity of cultural forms, and culture is usually in a state of flux, making it difficult to determine congruence between values and structures. Political culture, in particular, seems more mutable than culture as a whole; and once it starts floundering, it may actually provoke further, even revolutionary, change.[8]

Two aspects of cultural change are especially important in the revolutionary process: delegitimation and the emergence of an alternative ideology. Together, they constitute necessary, although not sufficient, prerequisites to revolution.

Delegitimation

Loss of legitimacy stems from a fundamental failure in the political leadership and a growing awareness (or consciousness) by the population of that failure. Over a period of time, political elites prove repeatedly to be unable or unwilling to meet new demands or solve festering problems.[9] Their failure tarnishes their once impregnable image and encourages the opposition at the same time. Eventually, political symbols and myths that once held sway lose their potency; values underpinning political authority and existing institutions appear less appropriate or relevant; the leadership is no longer able to depend on the compliance it previously commanded. While the political elites struggle to assert the normative code of old, the people grow more disillusioned and rebellious. Whatever values held the society together, whether shared or manipulated, fall apart, and the gap between elites and masses widens dramatically. Delegitimation means disintegration of the existing political culture.

Especially germane to this process is the reaction of or activity by the elite itself. Studies of the cohesion of liberal democracy, for example, point out that stability is not necessarily achieved when there is a widespread consensus; it occurs only when a substantial part of the elite accepts and supports the political culture.[10] This connection

8. Of course, political culture itself is a synthetic concept, with attitudes fluctuating far more readily than values or beliefs; and both attitudes and values are potentially at variance with behavior. There is a major disagreement among political scientists on whether or not political culture as a concept should include behavior as well as attitudes, beliefs, and values. See Robert C. Tucker, "Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society," *Political Science Quarterly* 88 (June 1973): 173–90; and, more recently, Archie Brown, ed., *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (Armonk, N.Y., 1985). A similar debate continues to agitate anthropologists. See Roger M. Keesing, "Theories of Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3 (1974): 73–98.

9. See Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium* (Baltimore, Md., 1978).

10. Michael Mann, "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 35 (June 1970): 432.

between stability and elite consensus suggests that a key aspect of a revolutionary situation is the breakdown of consensus within the elite itself, a questioning of legitimacy and ability to rule. Diffuse dissatisfaction gains coherence and focus when it is accompanied by the "desertion of the intellectuals."[11] One author concludes that "truly critical delegitimation of a regime begins with the moral, psychological defection of elites, whose very defection, or loss of a sense of legitimacy in their own domination, communicates to the masses the onset of a general crisis."[12]

Emergence of New Ideologies

Although delegitimation could conceivably lead to a number of scenarios, including anarchy, repression, political stalemate, and coups, it is more likely to result in a revolution if accompanied by the development of an alternative ideology. A link exists between delegitimation and new ideologies, although one does not automatically produce the other.

Ideologies usually arise during periods of disorientation. As Clifford Geertz contends, "It is when neither a society's most general cultural orientations nor its most down-to-earth, 'pragmatic' ones suffice any longer to provide an adequate image of political process that ideologies begin to become crucial as sources of sociopolitical meanings and attitudes." Accordingly, he considers the French Revolution to be, "at least up to its time, the greatest incubator of extremist ideologies... because the central organizing principle of political life, the divine right of kings, was destroyed." Ideologies, in other words, do not appear arbitrarily or at random; rather, they are a "response to strain."[13] They represent, in one analyst's words, "an attempt to close the gap between culture and structure."[14]

Specifically, political dimensions become manifest in another link between delegitimation and the emergence of new ideologies. The desertion of intellectuals involves not only criticism of existing political institutions, symbols, and values but also proposals for alternatives. "Men of words" pave the way for "men of action," as Eric Hoffer expresses it.[15] A prerequisite to revolution is, in fact, the presence of

11. See Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York, 1965).

12. Joseph Rothschild, "Political Legitimacy in Contemporary Europe," in Denitch, *Legitimation of Regimes*, p. 52.

13. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), p. 64.

14. Myron J. Aronoff, "Conceptualizing the Role of Culture in Political Change," paper delivered at the 1979 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 31–September 3, 1979, p. 10.

15. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York, 1951).

a counterelite that is willing to seize power and to construct new institutions on the basis of alternative symbols and values.

Ideologies, therefore, have potent political connotations. They are more than a response to a crisis or a stopgap measure; they are also a stimulus attempting to elicit commitment to political action. Revolutionary ideologies, in particular, encompass a program of action that designates goals and methods; they help forge cohesiveness among the counterelites and mobilize ever-larger segments of the population. Even more ambitiously, revolutionary ideologies attempt to generate a whole new set of attitudes, values, and beliefs—in other words, to develop a new political culture. Although an ideology is not equivalent to a counterculture, it is the first step in building and creating a culture.[16] One scholar, accordingly, defines ideologies as "incipient value structures."[17]

In sum, what may first appear as spontaneous and subsidiary elements of revolution become, through human mediation, ingredients of purposeful change. Efforts by the counterelites spring up to hasten the dissolution of political culture, to channel discontent in specific directions, and to stamp new values and images on minds. These elements of cultural change become more than prerequisites; they become a part of the definition of revolution itself.

With these thoughts in mind, we now turn to an examination of the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Bogdanov. All three agreed that there were cultural prerequisites to revolution that were associated largely with the concept of class consciousness, but they differed enormously on the interpretation of ideology and the relative emphasis on delegitimation versus the creation of a counterculture.

Marx and Lenin: Ideology and Delegitimation

To Marx, ideas were neither disembodied nor unbiased. Rather, they were tied to a specific class and represented the interests of that class. As he asserted:

> In every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling material power of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual power. The class having the means of material production has also control over the means of intellectual production.

16. Erik Allardt, "Revolutionary Ideologies as Agents of Cultural and Structural Change," in *Social Science and the New Societies: Problems in Cross-Cultural Research and Theory Building*, ed. N. Hammond (East Lansing, Mich., 1973), p. 149.

17. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, p. 83.

> The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas, hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one and therefore the ideas of its domination.[18]

In essence, it was not shared values but power that held together a society, and ideology was one of the instruments of power. Under capitalism, contended Marx, the worker is suppressed not only in political and economic terms but also in cultural terms. He loses "every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity."[19]

It was only during the course of revolution that the worker could overcome his "false consciousness" and self-estrangement. A revolution was necessary, claimed Marx, for the "alteration of men on a mass scale . . . not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."[20] Through political struggle, a true political consciousness arose; it was at once liberating and conducive to further political action. Although the development of class consciousness was largely a spontaneous process, workers' organizations could help. Workers initially "club together in order to keep up the rate of wages," but the significant by-product, Marx concluded, was the growth of class solidarity and mutual empathy. "The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate results, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers." Furthermore, intellectuals who deserted the regime gave an additional boost to the development of consciousness. "Educative elements," as Marx put it, from the declassed bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, "supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress."[21]

By and large, Marx's writings suggest a restrictive interpretation of ideology; that is, Marx saw ideology as essentially false consciousness, or a system of illusory beliefs that can be contrasted with true, or scientific, knowledge.[22] As the revolutionary momentum develops,

18. Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1972), pp. 136–37.

19. Karl Marx, "Capital," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 297.

20. Marx, "German Ideology," p. 157. Although there is an implicit psychological component to revolutionary struggle, Marx stressed that liberation was not simply mental or philosophical liberation. "People cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. 'Liberation' is a historical and not a mental act, and is brought about by historical conditions of development of industry, commerce, agriculture, the conditions of intercourse" (p. 133).

21. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Samuel H. Beer (New York, 1955), pp. 19–20.

22. See, among the many works on this topic, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Lit-*

workers succeed in throwing off their false consciousness; ideology, which only serves the interests of the ruling class, can no longer hoodwink people into submission. The main cultural prerequisite to revolution, therefore, is delegitimation.

Lenin, who also tied ideology to classes and conflict, suggested a more diversified use of the term: there could be a bourgeois or a socialist ideology without an automatic implication of falsehood or truth. Bourgeois ideology was "far older in origin" and "more fully developed" than its socialist counterpart.[23] As one analyst notes, if Lenin could speak "neutrally or even approvingly of 'socialist ideology'... [then] obviously 'ideology' here is not intended as 'false consciousness.' "[24]

Moreover, Lenin diverged from Marx insofar as he was not persuaded that the development of political consciousness would be largely a spontaneous process, the combined result of advanced capitalism and political struggle. Left to its own efforts, complained Lenin, the working class "is able to develop only trade-union consciousness." Spontaneity alone "overwhelms" consciousness and leads to arguments that "a kopeck added to the ruble was worth more than Socialism and politics." Consequently, he concluded, consciousness does not arise from within the working class but must be brought "from without."[25]

As a remedy, Lenin introduced a new element into the revolutionary process: professional revolutionaries. Composed of the most conscious workers and "bourgeois intellectuals," they would serve as the vanguard of the working class. In particular, they would provide shape and direction to the "spontaneous awakening of the masses." Henceforth, the party would be charged with safeguarding workers' interests; it would represent what Alfred Meyer calls the "institutionalization of class consciousness."[26] Surely, "Lenin's most distinctive innovation in revolutionary theory and practice," asserts E. H. Carr, "was the substitution of party for class as the motive force of revolution."[27] Georg Lukacs notes approvingly that "Lenin's concept of organization means ... *a double break with mechanical fatalism*; both with the concept of proletarian class consciousness as a mechanical product of its class

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erature (Oxford, England, 1977), esp. chap. 4; Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology* (Cambridge, England, 1977); Richard Lichtman, "Marx's Theory of Ideology," *Socialist Revolution* 5 (April 1975): 45–76; Gustav A. Wetter, "The Ambivalence of the Marxist Concept of Ideology," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 9 (September 1969): 77–183.

23. V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (1902; New York, 1929), pp. 41–42.

24. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 69. Also see Seliger, *Marxist Conception of Ideology*, p. 88.

25. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* pp. 32–33, 38, 32.

26. Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism* (New York, 1965), p. 33.

27. E. H. Carr, "A Historical Turning Point: Marx, Lenin, Stalin," in *Revolutionary Russia*, ed. Richard Pipes, (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 287.

situation, and with the idea that the revolution itself was only the mechanical working out of fatalistically explosive economic forces."[28]

Lenin, nevertheless, was in complete accord with Marx on the importance of delegitimation. Indeed, Lenin's preoccupation with revolution pervaded his understanding of ideology. If he discussed the development of class consciousness, it was not in the sense of a campaign to enhance the intellectual level of the workers, assist them in recognizing their own best interests, or understand more fully the goals of socialism. As Lenin protested, "What annoys me is that pedagogics are confused with questions of politics and organization." The role of the party was less to educate than it was to train and indoctrinate, thereby loosening the grip of false consciousness. "The very first and most imperative duty" of the party, insisted Lenin, was to raise the working-class revolutionists to the same level "*in regard to party activity* as intellectual revolutionists." Although he admitted that it was also important "to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects," he argued it was "not so easy and not so imperative." Rather, the objective should be to "assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organizer, propagandist, literature distributor."[29] This training would enable workers to undertake the main ideological task of the prerevolutionary period: hastening the loss of legitimacy of the existing political system. Trotsky's recollection of this period is of Lenin's "tense concentration on his goal"—that is, "concrete, direct, immediate work toward the practical aim of speeding the outbreak of the revolution and of securing its victory." Lenin was interested not in " 'general' literary-revolutionary work" but in building, in the shortest possible time, an ideological base and organizational framework for the revolution.[30]

Ideology, in this context, was entirely action-oriented. It was meant to elicit a commitment to revolutionary change. It provided a focus, identified enemies, and strengthened internal cohesion and discipline.[31] It had specific programmatic and strategic connotations. The following definition, provided by Mark Hagopian, would no doubt accord with Lenin's ideas: "A political ideology is a programmatic and rhetorical application of some grandiose philosophical system (a *Welt-*

28. Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*, trans. Nicholas Jacobs (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 31.

29. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* pp. 122–23.

30. Leon Trotsky, *Lenin: Notes for a Biographer*, trans. Tamara Deutscher, intro. Bertram D. Wolfe (New York, 1971), pp. 68–69.

31. For this role of ideology, see Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon* (New York, 1952).

anschauung), that arouses men to political action and may provide strategic guidance for that action."[32]

Whatever the differences between them, Lenin and Marx had in common an intensely political interpretation of ideology. Belief systems express the interests and points of view of a particular class; they involve manipulation and indoctrination; they must be dislodged for revolution to occur. As Geertz notes, the "interest theory" of ideology (that is, Marxism) "welded political speculation to political combat by pointing out that ideas are weapons and that an excellent way to institutionalize a particular view of reality—that of one's group, class or party—is to capture political power and enforce it." Such an interpretation, argues Geertz, places too much emphasis on ideology "as a higher form of cunning" and leads to a "neglect of its broader, less dramatic social functions." Consequently, he suggests an alternative view: ideology as a culture system. "Whatever else ideology may be—projections of unacknowledged fears, disguises of group solidarity—they are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience."[33]

Bogdanov: Ideology and Political Culture

Bogdanov grappled with a meaning of ideology that would go beyond the framework of class struggle and could not be reduced to class consciousness. He discerned a certain ambiguity in the Social Democratic platform on this question. Whereas class consciousness was accorded a "primary, basic significance in the life of the proletariat," ideology, claimed Bogdanov, was judged "somewhat derivative, secondary," because it was part of the superstructure. To deny the "leading function" of ideology in words, while recognizing it under class consciousness in practice, implied "an antinomy in our Marxism, indicating theoretical immaturity." Bogdanov argued that this ambivalence was due to the fact that the "place and function" of ideology in the "system of life" was insufficiently defined. Ideology was a broad category that included "speech, cognition, art, customs, law, rules of propriety, and morals." What these diverse forms had in common was their ability to "regulate and control all of the practical life of society." In other words, ideology had an "organizational function"; it was the "system of organizational forms of production . . . the organizational tools of social

32. Mark N. Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York, 1974), p. 263. Also see C. B. Macpherson, "Revolution and Ideology in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Revolution*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York, 1967), p. 140.

33. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 52–53, 64.

life." It was precisely this aspect of ideology, argued Bogdanov, that was insufficiently understood and appreciated. It was, however, a critical factor in the revolutionary struggle. Not until the proletariat grasped the nature of ideology as an organizational tool would the proletariat be able to master it.[34]

This argument is exactly the sort that sociologists such as Parsons and cultural anthropologists such as Geertz have made. To quote from Geertz: "Culture patterns—religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological—are 'programs'; they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes."[35] Indeed, Bogdanov resorted to similar biological metaphors, maintaining that ideology played a function parallel to that of a brain in an organism. As he expressed it, "To help develop consciousness in a given class means to develop the very foundations of its organization, to participate in the formation of that brain which should control that mighty body."[36]

The political conclusion that Bogdanov drew from his interpretation of ideology was that workers needed not only a heightened class consciousness but also a new political culture. He pinpointed a hiatus in Marxist thinking between the proletariat as revolutionary and as builder of a new society.

Marx had assumed that the proletariat would be fully capable of overthrowing capitalism and of constructing socialism. He devoted considerable attention to the first objective, that of overthrowing the old order, but simply assumed the proletariat's ability to undertake the second, the creation of a new order. Marx understood that during the revolutionary process the proletariat would have to change itself as well as the underlying structure of society, but he did not amplify this idea. The process of self-transformation was subsumed under revolutionary struggle; the proletariat would be fundamentally altered in the postrevolutionary period from what it was in the prerevolutionary period. As two critics point out, Marx "deliberately sidesteps the question of the nature of the revolutionizing practice which will turn a mere

34. A. A. Bodganov, "Programma kul'tury," in A. A. Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 54–56, 62–63.

35. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 62.

36. A. A. Bodganov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1914), p. 7. Bogdanov noted that ideologies could also play a disorganizing role when held by different groups or classes. Ideological struggle, however, was always directed at "disorganizing" the ideological unity of the opponent. Diminishing the contradiction between two opposing groups was thus an "organizational act" (p. 32).

fragment of a man into a fully developed individual."[37] Another analyst sees a "leap of faith" in Marx's pronouncements, since Marx "nowhere seeks to prove that the worker *is*, in fact, fitted for the role assigned to him."[38] It is this hiatus that most concerned Bogdanov.

Interestingly, neither Lenin nor Bogdanov had shared Marx's confidence in spontaneity as a way of engendering class consciousness. As Lenin stated, the spontaneous development of the labor movement leads to "its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology."[39] Bogdanov and Lenin, however, each offered a different remedy. Bogdanov's was the conscious cultivation of proletarian values and beliefs; Lenin's was the strengthening of vanguard influence. One of Bogdanov's colleagues in Proletkult comments that Bogdanov's early activities in workers' circles convinced him that "workers can independently engage in scientific and direct ideological creativity." This view formed the basis for Bogdanov's ideas on proletarian culture; it also "fundamentally contradicted Lenin's teaching on spontaneity and consciousness."[40]

To a large extent, Lenin focused on delegitimation and the seizure of power as the key aspects of revolution. He believed the vanguard, through intense ideological efforts, should promote "political exposures" and expand the arena of struggle from a particular grievance to the overthrow of the entire system by linking evidence of oppression with the necessity for revolution. He maintained that all the workers' energies had to be directed toward the political struggle and could not be dissipated in "pedagogics." It is at this point that Bogdanov and Lenin diverged sharply. Bogdanov argued that, along with political struggle, it was necessary to develop and systematize elements of the incipient culture—what he called "elements of socialism in the present." The different points of view emerge clearly in a comparison of the two men's reactions to the 1905 Revolution and World War I.

The 1905 Revolution, the dress rehearsal for the 1917 Revolution, alerted Lenin to the emerging revolutionary situation in Russia and, most importantly, drew attention to the political potential of the peasantry. Despite initial reservations, he began to think the peasants could serve as a useful ally for the proletariat. Similarly, when the revolutionary moment seemed to him to have ebbed, in 1907, he reversed his previous hostility to "legal work" and "foresaw a period of preparation

37. Paul M. Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, *On the Transition to Socialism*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971), p. 114.

38. R. N. Carew Hunt, *The Theory and Practice of Communism* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1963), p. 66.

39. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* p. 32.

40. S. Krivtsov, "Pamiati A. A. Bogdanova," *PZM*, no. 4 (1928): 180.

in which the Duma could play a useful part as a platform of propaganda."[41] In other words, if the revolution was not immediately forthcoming, at least the proletariat (members of the Social Democratic party) could participate in the government, even if only for the purpose of discrediting it. Thus, for Lenin, the 1905 Revolution and its aftermath signified the need for flexibility in tactics.

Bogdanov drew different conclusions as he reflected on the outcome of the 1905 Revolution.[42] He disagreed with Lenin's decision to participate in the Duma because it seemed to be giving in to the general mood of reaction. He preferred to identify himself with those who were dedicated to keeping alive the "revolutionary-militant tendency" within the RSDRP. Translated into political terms, this preference meant either boycotting the Duma (*otzovizm*) or demanding that the deputies conduct themselves in an uncompromisingly radical way (*ultimatizm*). Bogdanov was one of the leaders of the *ultimatisty*.[43]

It also seemed to Bogdanov that the failure of the Revolution testified to the fact that the proletariat was still ideologically immature. A successful political revolution, he concluded, had to be preceded by an ideological revolution, as had been the case with the French Revolution.

Moreover, Bogdanov feared that the alliance with the peasantry, although politically expedient, could undermine the integrity and cohesion of the proletariat. This political alliance was all the more reason to direct attention toward developing a "socialist world outlook"—a proletarian culture—in order to withstand the influence of the peasants.[44]

World War I was another instance of observing the proletariat under fire. The war engendered considerable confusion within the labor movement as far as the "objective interests" of the proletariat were concerned: was it in the interest of the proletariat to join the bourgeoisie in the defense of its country or to revolt against the bourgeoisie in the

41. Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971), p. 102.

42. For a discussion of Bogdanov's reactions to the 1905 Revolution, see S. V. Utechin, "Philosophy and Society: Alexander Bogdanov," in *Revisionism*, ed. Leopold Labedz, (New York, 1962), pp. 122–24.

43. The question of whether or not to participate created numerous splits among the Bolsheviks. Many of those who differed with Lenin eventually joined Bogdanov in forming Vpered (Forward), a faction of the Social Democratic party. See N. Voitinskii, "O gruppe 'Vpered' (1909–1917)," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 12 (1929): 59–119; *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1929), 13: 386–90; Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1969), pp. 23–26; Avraham Yassour, "Lenin and Bogdanov: Protagonists in the 'Bolshevik Center,' " *Studies in Soviet Thought* 22 (February 1981): 1–32.

44. A. A. Bogdanov [Maksimov'], "Proletariat v bor'be za sotsializm," *Vpered*, no. 1 (July 1910): 8.

struggle for an international proletarian revolution? This question split the labor movement, with the majority of the workers choosing the first course. Particularly disconcerting to the revolutionaries was the role of the more advanced workers, who also reneged on the international struggle. Why did the more educated, more "conscious" workers, defect to the bourgeoisie, acting against their own "objective interest"? wondered both Lenin and Bogdanov.

Lenin offered two explanations. First, he looked to the "economic roots of the phenomenon." He argued that the capitalists used their "super-profits" to bribe the labor leaders and "the upper stratum of the labor aristocracy." These "bourgeoisified workers" diverted the labor movement from its true course and served as the "principal social prop of the bourgeoisie."[45] Second, the bourgeoisie "deceived the workers" by not revealing the "predatory character of the war."[46] This flaw in the working class reinforced Lenin's belief that "professional revolutionaries" were critically important to the revolutionary cause because they could not be coopted by the bourgeoisie.

Bogdanov, in comparison, asked not only why the more advanced workers had defected but also why they should be susceptible to bourgeois influence in the first place. He took the workers' actions to be dramatic proof of the lack of "cultural independence" from the bourgeoisie. The strength of nationalism among workers, he argued, verified that the proletariat had not adequately developed its own "rules of the game"—its own proletarian culture—and was thus vulnerable to other modes of thinking and behaving.[47]

In addition, Bogdanov implied that the desertion of the workers to the bourgeoisie was at least partly the fault of the previous Bolshevik strategy, which was based on "compromise" (e.g., participation in parliament) rather than unremitting hostility to all forms of "legal work."[48] This strategy had a corrupting influence on the workers and laid down the basis for opportunism and cooperation with the bourgeoisie.[49]

The notions of vulnerability and need for "ideological independence," as indicated in both of these examples, were far more prevalent

45. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917; New York, 1939), pp. 13–14.

46. V. I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920; New York, 1940), p. 77.

47. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," pp. 51, 64.

48. Ibid., pp. 52, 66–67.

49. Although Lenin pointed to the victory of the October Revolution as a justification of his tactics, he admitted that in 1907–8 the Left Bolsheviks "on certain occasions and in certain places carried on more successful agitation than we did." Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism*, p. 86. For a further discussion, see Robert C. Williams, "Childhood Diseases: Lenin on 'Left' Bolshevism," *Sbornik*, no. 8 (January 1982): 38–48.

in Bogdanov's thinking than were considerations of strategy and tactics, more typical of Lenin's concerns. They also led Bogdanov to a much closer scrutiny, and some skepticism, of workers' organizations in general. He pointed out that trade unions, cooperatives, and party organizations, although important agents of "self-organization," nevertheless functioned according to the economic and cultural laws of capitalism. They were, as a result, permeated with "fetishisms" such as private property, individualism, and legal and moral norms; their activities were based on competition within the market and compromise within the political arena. The English and American trade unions, which Bogdanov cited as examples, understood their organizations to be collections of individuals, not collectivities. They reflected the existing culture rather than fostering new attitudes and values. Hence, concluded Bogdanov, even though they appeared to be advanced organizations under capitalism, they could not serve as adequate transitional forms for the construction of socialism.[50]

Similarly, he thought it was necessary but not sufficient to have a strong, well-disciplined, well-organized, "vanguard party." What was needed was "internal strength," harmonious ties, and solidarity within the working class, creating in embryonic form the comradely relations of the future socialist society: "A conscious comradely organization of the working class in the present and a socialist organization of all of society in the future—these are different moments of one and the same process, different degrees of one and the same phenomenon."[51]

Bogdanov expressed reservations about the party's "internal authoritarianism," even though he admitted it was probably a necessary attribute of revolutionary struggle.[52] Working class organizations exhibited "habits of passive submission" and "weakness of initiative" originally instilled by the capitalist production process; class struggle further reinforced "authoritarian discipline" and centralized decision-making.[53] Consequently, Bogdanov repeatedly urged the cultivation of "comradely relations" and of collectivism within the party because new attitudes and new authority relations would not arise deus ex machina after the revolution.

Bogdanov grasped that values were not free-floating but instead were tied to and shaped by specific structures. In order for attitudes and

50. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," pp. 52, 66, 71.

51. Bogdanov, "Sotsializm v nastoiashchem," in Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma*, p. 68.

52. Bogdanov consistently sided with Lenin on the question of party organization and discipline prior to 1905 and their eventual split. See J. L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford, England, 1963).

53. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, p. 182.

values to change, there has to be a corresponding change in structures.[54] Bogdanov, as a Marxist, certainly appreciated that there was a relationship between being and consciousness and between structures and values. To a certain degree, he was elaborating on and making explicit what was already implicit in Marxism; he was also proposing deliberate efforts to replace imperfect spontaneous developments.[55]

Within the context of the times, however, Lenin did not view Bogdanov's proposals as "friendly amendments" to Marxism. In particular, he did not take kindly to the aspersions on the RSDRP; he interpreted the call for "comradely relations" as a criticism of the internal relations of the party and, hence, of his leadership.[56] This criticism of Lenin was, no doubt, how Bogdanov meant it. His own experiences within the party, ending in his ouster, led him to be extremely wary of authoritarian impulses. Whatever the reasons for the split, it was clear that Lenin's tactics were untowardly harsh. As Pokrovskii remarked, Bogdanov was given only one choice: "either to submit or to depart."[57] Lenin's actions certainly disenchanted a number of the faithful, leading to the formation of the Vpered faction, which was united mostly by dissatisfaction with Lenin's "severe discipline" and "internal party relations."[58] Lunacharsky, too, wrote that he considered Lenin's actions utterly "uncomradely behavior of the majority toward the minority," especially as Lenin tried to destroy the Vpered group with "brutal bombardment" in the press.[59]

54. Interestingly, some recent discussions on political culture tend to corroborate Bogdanov's view. According to Pateman, political culture will not simply change in response to a change in socialization. Structures, whether national political ones or intermediate social ones (such as the workplace), also help shape culture. This impact of structures is particularly strong in reference to attitudes toward authority. Carole Pateman, "Political Culture, Political Structure and Political Change," *British Journal of Political Science* 1, pt. 3 (July 1971): 291–305.

55. According to Avineri, Marx's "persistent insistence on workers' association" was aimed at "closing the gap between being and consciousness" by developing "other-directedness and mutuality" among workers, thereby creating "the social texture of future human relations." Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Marx* (Cambridge, England, 1971), pp. 141–42.

56. V. I. Lenin, "The 'Platform' of the Adherents and Defenders of Otzovism," from "Notes of a Publicist," March 1910, in V. I. Lenin, *On Culture and Cultural Revolution* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 24–25. There were apparently explicit criticisms of the "regime of dictatorship" on the part of the *vperedisty*. See Voitinskii, "O gruppe 'Vpered,' " p. 96; Daniels, *Conscience of the Revolution*, pp. 23–24.

57. M. Pokrovskii, "A. A. Bogdanov" [eulogy], *VKA*, no. 26 (1928): viii.

58. Ibid.

59. A. V. Lunacharsky, foreword to S. Livshits, "Partiinaia shkola v Bolon'e (1910–1911)," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 3 (1926): 112–13. Lenin actively intervened to prevent Bogdanov's views from being aired in party publications after their split. See Lenin's letter to the editors of *Pravda*, May 1913, in V. I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1969), p. 295. Also see Lenin's response to "13 Left Bolsheviks" who wrote

It is not surprising, then, that Bogdanov's two party schools, one on Capri and the other in Bologna, should have been greeted with automatic suspicion by Lenin.[60] Bogdanov's attempts to establish the schools on an "interfactional" basis were rebuffed by Lenin, who did his best to disrupt the schools by encouraging a "Leninist group" within them and then organizing a party school of his own, outside Paris. Lenin unhesitatingly concluded that Bogdanov was attempting to establish a network of agents in Russia; he knew that Bogdanov enjoyed a good deal of popularity in Russian worker circles, many of which were dismayed by the split. Lenin's fears were further compounded by the list of guest lecturers, which included Kollontai, Trotsky, and other "renegades." Several of the invited lecturers, including Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Kautsky, declined for fear of exacerbating the internal party squabbles. Even though Lenin went to Capri, following strenuous efforts on the part of Gorky, Lenin and Bogdanov never reconciled.[61]

The party schools in and of themselves seemed harmless enough, especially considering that the Capri school consisted of thirteen worker-students and the Bologna school of twenty-one worker-students. The students were selected by local party committees and smuggled out of Russia. Most of the courses were politically unobjectionable, even useful, covering such topics as Russian history and literature, the labor movement, political economy, and agrarian problems. The party schools, however, did represent what Lunacharsky called "a struggle for influence" between Lenin and Bogdanov. Removed from the RSDRP, Bogdanov sought an alternative platform to air his views and disseminate his ideas.[62] Both the formation of the Vpered faction and the party schools suggested, at least in the early stages, that Bog-

to *Pravda* asking that Bogdanov be allowed to contribute (apparently they charged that Bogdanov was being prevented from contributing "on personal grounds, as being due to personal spite"). V. I. Lenin, "Concerning A. Bogdanov," 25 February 1914, in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70) 20: 121–24.

60. For a discussion of the schools, see Livshits, "Partiinaia shkola v Bolon'e," pp. 109–44; S. Livshits, "Kapriiskaia partiinaia shkola (1909)," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 6 (1924): 33–74; R. C. Elwood, "Lenin and the Social-Democratic Schools for Underground Party Workers, 1909–11," *Political Science Quarterly* 81 (1966): 370–91; Jutta Scherrer, "Les Ecoles du Parti de Capri et de Bologne: La Formation de l'Intelligentsia du Parti," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 19 (July–September 1978): 259–84.

61. Lenin went to Capri on condition that philosophy not be discussed. See N. Krupskaia, "Vospominaniia o Lenine," excerpted in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 621. In general, Gorky played a mediating role between Lenin and Bogdanov and made numerous, if unsuccessful, attempts to reconcile them. See Lenin's letters to Gorky in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 313–66.

62. Lunacharsky records a conversation with Bogdanov in which the latter comments that he would not have undertaken action against the party if it were not for Lenin's striving to destroy the opposition. Lunacharsky, foreword to Livshits, "Partiinaia shkola v Bolon'e," pp. 112–13.

danov maintained a politically active profile and a willingness to challenge Lenin's leadership. As events were to show, however, it was difficult to establish a power base outside of the party; by 1913, the Vpered faction had disintegrated, partly because of Lenin's pressure and partly because of internal dissension, with most of the members eventually rejoining the party.

All the same, it would be a mistake to see in Bogdanov's activities only a power struggle. There were genuine differences between Lenin and Bogdanov in philosophy, in politics, and in defining the main tasks of the prerevolutionary period. Indeed, the party schools organized by Bogdanov and the one organized by Lenin highlighted one of the main distinctions: the development of a workers' intelligentsia versus a party intelligentsia. The former, advocated by Bogdanov, meant training and educating workers to become "conscious socialists," capable of analyzing problems for themselves and disseminating their knowledge through the working class. The latter, advocated by Lenin, implied training party cadres, professional revolutionaries who would strengthen the resolve and discipline of the party.[63]

Bogdanov might be accused of being overly ambitious but certainly not elitist. As one of his colleagues commented, the idea behind the party schools was to develop "independent ideologues from within the proletariat itself."[64] In this effort, Bogdanov was close to the idea of "organic intellectuals" that the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, was to develop later. As Gramsci wrote: "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."[65] Gramsci, in contrast to Lenin, believed that the working class could foster intellectualism from within its own ranks; it would retain the characteristics of an internalized force rather than being superimposed from without.

Bogdanov provided similar counsel to the workers' movement. He regarded the bourgeois intellectuals who could truly reflect a working-class point of view as rare as "white crows." Although they rendered service to the proletariat, they also imparted potentially harmful habits of thought and work, such as their uneasiness with the comradely discipline and with the equality essential to workers' organizations.

63. This point is brought out by Scherrer, "Les Ecoles du Parti."

64. Krivtsov, "Pamiati A. A. Bogdanova," p. 183.

65. Antonio Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), p. 5.

Bogdanov therefore concluded that the working class should not place its trust in outside classes but should "verify everyone and everything in its own mind, with its general class-consciousness." Echoing Marx, he declared, "The liberation of the workers is a matter for the workers themselves."[66]

Struggle against Capitalism versus Struggle for Socialism

Against the background of the cultural prerequisites to revolution, it is clear that a genuine divergence existed in the approaches adopted by Lenin and Bogdanov. Lenin directed most of his energies to delegitimation, challenging the existing political values and symbols and encouraging desertion of the intellectuals. Whatever helped undermine and destabilize the existing political system was worth pursuing. This delegitimation, plus a readiness to assume power, was the chief task at hand, the critical prerequisite to revolution. Ideology, consequently, was interpreted as "a mask and a weapon," to use Geertz's expression, in the struggle against capitalism.

Bogdanov, in comparison, became ever more convinced that the development of a new ideology was not only the necessary complement to delegitimation but also a distinct goal in its own right. He believed that the adoption of a "correct" Marxist perspective by the vanguard, coupled with the agitation and propaganda of simple Marxist slogans for the rest, would not suffice. Moreover, even though he agreed that Marxism should form the core of the new ideology, it too was not enough. He proposed that ideology be translated into political culture, with the development of new modes of thinking and acting for the proletariat as a whole.

Bogdanov's ideas on proletarian culture were related to the larger question of the transition to socialism. Bogdanov focused not on the immediate objective, the seizure of power, but on the long-term objective, the transition to socialism. He argued that "according to the old concept," dating back to the 1850s, "socialism first conquers and then is implemented; up to its victory, it is not a reality, it does not exist, it is simply the 'ultimate goal.' "[67] The hiatus in Marxism was being replicated in the program of the Social Democrats: the "minimum" program directed its efforts at the existing political battles while the "maximum" program outlined the future tasks for the proletariat. There was no correspondence between the two. That is, the minimum program

66. Bogdanov, "Proletariat v bor'be za sotsializm," p. 4.
67. Bogdanov, "Ideal i put'," in Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma*, pp. 100–1.

was not directed at realizing the maximum program; a gap existed between the present proletariat-revolutionary and the future proletariat-master of society.[68]

To fill this gap, Bogdanov proposed a "program of culture." Class consciousness was not only the recognition by the proletariat of its historical mission but also the ability to fulfill it. Bogdanov argued that "the struggle for socialism is not by any means to be equated [*nesvoditsia*] with an exclusive war against capitalism." The former involved "the creation of new elements of socialism in the proletariat itself, in its internal relations, and in its conditions of everyday life: the development of a socialist proletarian culture."[69] Despite the optimism inherent in Marxism, the self-transformation of the proletariat involved a process that was neither spontaneous nor untroubled. Between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom lay "not a leap, but a difficult path."[70]

Bogdanov insisted that socialism was not simply "winning the battle"; nor was it simply a question of a "massive outburst of will"; it was also "a question of method."[71] Up to now, socialism had been considered "a revolution of property, a change in rulers of society—a matter of class interests and material force of the masses." Socialism should, however, be seen in a new light, said Bogdanov, as "a creative revolution of world culture, a change from spontaneous education and struggle of social forms to conscious creation—a matter of a new class logic, new methods of unifying forces, new methods of thinking."[72] For this reason, Bogdanov drew attention to cultural transformation, at least in its incipient stages during the prerevolutionary period, as a way of overcoming the gap between the "socialist ideal" and "class reality." Socialism would be genuine and possible only when the proletariat would be able to oppose the "old cultural world" with its own political force, its own economic plan, and its "new world of culture, with its new, higher methods."[73]

In essence, Bogdanov was doing more than expanding on the cultural prerequisites to revolution. He was also offering a different conceptualization of the revolutionary process itself. To him, ideology, or proletarian culture, was an elastic concept that spanned the period

68. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," p. 50.

69. Bogdanov, "Sotsializm v nastoiashchem," *Vpered*, no. 2 (February 1911): 68. This article was apparently highly controversial and caused dissension in the Vpered group. See Voitinskii, "O gruppe 'Vpered,' " p. 82.

70. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," p. 74.

71. Ibid., p. 72.

72. Bogdanov, "Ideal i put'," pp. 100–101.

73. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," p. 73.

before and after the seizure of power. Revolution was not a single dramatic act—the culminating point of economic contradictions and political conflict; it was a process involving multilayered transformation, including, in particular, "culture-building." Bogdanov believed Lenin was too preoccupied with a unidimensional view of the revolution and perhaps of socialism itself. Without those very pedagogics that Lenin dismissed, Bogdanov feared there might not be a socialism.

Within Lenin's framework, socialism proceeded in a series of stages, with specific tasks allocated to each stage. There was a clear demarcation point between capitalism and the transition to socialism, which consisted of the seizure of power.

In contrast, Bogdanov regarded socialism not as a series of stages but as a continuum. Interestingly, this view is another point of convergence between Bogdanov and Gramsci. Both believed the theater of battle was cultural as well as political; they focused on the preconditions for socialism as much as, if not more than, the preconditions for the seizure of power. Gramsci laid down cultural prerequisites to revolution that exceeded those of Lenin in comprehensiveness and ambition: "An historical act can only be performed by 'collective man,' and this presupposes the attainment of a 'cultural-social' unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common perception of the world."[74] Gramsci drew on Marx as his reference, as can be seen in the following paraphrase: "no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop."[75] (The inclusion of *sufficient* is noteworthy because it expands the definition of prerevolutionary tasks.)

For both Bogdanov and Gramsci, therefore, the transition to socialism was part of an ongoing revolutionary process, with its genesis in the "womb of capitalism" and its "signposts" the increase in worker activity, coupled with the extent and depth of self-transformation. The actual seizure of power was but one political moment in a lengthy process of revolutionary change. What counted, in particular, was the conscious cultivation of the embryonic elements of socialism prior to

74. Antonio Gramsci, "The Study of Philosophy," in Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 349.

75. Antonio Gramsci, "Modern Prince," in Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, p. 177. The corresponding section from Marx's statement is: "Mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since . . . it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solutions already exist or are at least in the process of formation." Karl Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 5.

the seizure of power. In Bogdanov's words, "Socialist development will be crowned with socialist revolution."[76]

Bogdanov struck a responsive chord among many of the Bolsheviks, and although he was hounded and the party schools disbanded, his ideas remained popular and potent. They were resuscitated and given new institutional form after the October Revolution, in the Proletkult.

But from what did he derive his ideas? How did he develop his critique of Marxism and his alternatives to Leninism? For answers, we will turn to a fuller examination of Bogdanovism in the next chapter.

76. Bogdanov, "Ideal i put'," pp. 102–3.

3 /

Bogdanovism

Bogdanov's brand of Marxism foresaw no difficulties in reconciling basic Marxian principles with the latest developments in the social and natural sciences. Indeed, if anything, Bogdanov claimed that Marxism had to incorporate new social theories in order to remain viable and relevant as a philosophy. He never believed Marx's ideas should be treated as sacrosanct; if there were gaps or deficiencies, they should be recognized and rectified.

In his effort to update Marx, Bogdanov shared the dissatisfaction experienced by many Marxists at the turn of the century. Some, the "legal Marxists," turned to Kant for inspiration and for the development of epistemology; Bogdanov turned to the "scientific philosophy" of Mach and Avenarius.[1] He was thoroughly convinced that science was the harbinger of the future and, as a physician, perhaps found the precision and rigor of physics, chemistry, and biology particularly congenial to his way of thinking. He first became intrigued by Oswald's energetics and Le Chatelier's law of equilibrium in thermodynamics because they seemed to offer broad explanatory principles applicable to both social and physical phenomena.[2] Similarly, he thought Darwin's

1. See, among others, Kendall Eugene Bailes, "Philosophy and Politics in Russian Social Democracy: Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, and the Crisis of Bolshevism, 1908–1909" (thesis, Russian Institute, Columbia University, 1966); Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism* (New York, 1958).

2. Easton traces the concept of equilibrium to thermodynamics and to the study of the human organism. These sources were also Bogdanov's. See David Easton, "Limits of

and Spencer's bio-organismic theories suggested general principles of social change, which could be viewed as a process of adaptation or of growth and differentiation.[3] But it was in Mach and Avenarius that he found the key to epistemology; he adopted their view of knowledge as deriving from experience involving the psychical and physical realms.[4] The psychical realm consists of an individual's sense data—individual perceptions and experiences; the physical realm comprises generalized experience—the collective wisdom of groups distilled over time from personal experiences. The former is necessarily subjective in nature; the latter is objective. What they have in common, according to Bogdanov, is their organizational dimension, one involving "individually organized experience" and the other "socially organized experience." By emphasizing the organizational link, Bogdanov thought he had hit upon a way of overcoming the duality of mind and matter. He also thought he had created a philosophical system that synthesized the best of Mach's and Avenarius's theories with the best of Marx's theories. Trotsky, for one, recorded a favorable reaction to this early attempt: "In philosophy, we had been much impressed by Bogdanov's book, which combined Marxism with the theory of knowledge put forth by Mach and Avenarius."[5]

These ideas, expressed in *Empiriomonizm* (1904–6) and *Filosofiia zhivoga opyta* (1913), paved the way for *Tektologiia* (1913–29), which Bogdanov considered his most important work.[6] Throughout, he looked to natural-science models for insights, aspired to developing an overarching theory of society and nature, and assumed he was supplementing Marxism.[7] For him, organization served as a guiding principle, or, as he himself explained, the "search into general regularities of all

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the Equilibrium Model in Social Research," in *Political Behavior*, ed. Heinz Eulau et al. (Glencoe, Ill., 1956), pp. 397–404.

3. For a discussion of the mechanistic and bio-organismic schools of thought, see Pitirim Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York, 1964).

4. For an expanded discussion, see John T. Blackmore, *Ernst Mach* (Berkeley, Calif., 1972); Robert S. Cohen, "Ernst Mach: Physics, Perception and the Philosophy of Science," *Synthèse* 18 (April 1968): 132–70; K. M. Jensen, *Beyond Marx and Mach: Aleksandr Bogdanov's Philosophy of Living Experience* (Dordrecht, Holland, 1978).

5. Trotsky made this comment in his first meeting with Lenin, referring to the discussions on philosophy that he had while in exile in Siberia. Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (1930; New York, 1970), p. 144.

6. A. A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1904–6); A. A. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta* (St. Petersbrug, 1913); A. A. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia: vseobshchaia organizatsionnaia nauka*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1922). Vol. 1 of *Tektologiia* was first published in 1913, vol. 2 in 1917, and all three volumes in 1922. A third edition of the three volumes was published in 1925–29.

7. For a discussion of the basic continuity in Bogdanov's views, see Alexander Vucinich, *Social Thought in Tsarist Russia: The Quest for a General Science of Society, 1861–1917* (Chicago, 1976), chap. 8.

kinds of organizational processes . . . became the central pursuit of my life."[8]

With this principle in mind, Bogdanov attempted to develop a universal science of organization ("tektology," the Greek word for "to construct") that would encompass "practical and theoretical methods, as well as the methods of conscious man and spontaneous nature." He contended that heretofore organization had been studied only in separate and specific areas—in reference to things, people, or ideas; what was needed was a science of organization that would include all three at a higher level of generality and abstraction. Admittedly, integrative world outlooks had previously been constructed by religion, philosophy, and science. Tektology, however, differed from philosophy, argued Bogdanov, in that it was an empirical science based on verifiable propositions. It also differed from science because it synthesized the knowledge and methodology of specialized disciplines; as such, Bogdanov claimed, it represented a "completion in the cycle of sciences."[9] All of Bogdanov's previous concerns converged in tektology, which, he maintained, combined the "abstract symbolism of mathematics with the experimental character of natural sciences" within a social-historical framework. Specifically, Bogdanov acknowledged Hegel, Marx, and Spencer as precursors to what he called "today's formulation of the question." And that question was, What was the most expedient way to organize some complex of elements, real or ideal? Bogdanov assumed there was a continuous process of organization-disorganization—indeed, that all human activities consisted of ordering, sorting, and organizing. The "task of tektology" was to systematize those activities. The systematizing could be achieved, Bogdanov thought, through inductive and deductive methods; the former would proceed from generalized description to statistics to abstract analysis and ultimately would establish "tektological laws"; the latter would allow for scientific forecasts to be made on the basis of those laws. As a result, Bogdanov argued, "spontaneous, accidental, anarchic, trial and error methods" could be eliminated in favor of planned organizational activity.[10]

To Bogdanov, tektology was an activist, not a contemplative, body of thought. He cited favorably Marx's stricture that the objective of philosophy was not to interpret the world but to change it. Hence, tektology was specifically concerned with the "practical mastery" of

8. A. A. Bogdanov, *Bor'ba za zhiznesposobnost'* (Moscow, 1927), p. 122.

9. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 65; 7–9, 21–23; 10, 96–97; 83. Bogdanov's predecessors, such as Comte, Spencer, and Ostwald, believed in a "hierarchy of sciences" and probably influenced his thinking. See Leslie White, *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization* (New York, 1949), pp. 113–14.

10. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 89, 64–65, 82–89.

the potentialities in existence. As one analyst explained, "In Marx's dialectic the concern is with 'development' whereas Bogdanov places primary emphasis on the 'creative modification of being'—the 'process of organization.' "[11]

Bogdanov started his study in 1913 and continued it until 1922. The advent of World War I convinced him that a universal science of organization was indispensable because war dramatized the large-scale tasks of organization-disorganization. Under conditions of war, he wrote, the severity of demands and the threat to existence make the "organizational function" imperative and at the same time "inevitably awaken and push forward tektological thinking." With the February Revolution in Russia and its potential for an enormous transformation of society, Bogdanov declared that "the time for tektology has come."[12]

Systems Thinking

Bogdanov began to develop what today would be called systems thinking; in it, the basic unit (called an "organized complex," an "organism," or a "system" by Bogdanov) is composed of interrelated elements, with the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.[13] Every part of a system serves as a supplement to other parts and in that sense is necessary "as an organ of the whole, bearing a special assignment" (*naznachenie*). The basic elements of a system consist of "activities" (*aktivnosti*), and the essence of an "organized complex" lies in joining or combining activities. Since elements are made up of activities and resistance to them (*soprotivleniia*), there are always shifting and relative degrees of organization-disorganization.[14]

Bogdanov distinguishes between two mechanisms—formative and regulatory—in the organizational process. The formative mechanism consists of joining elements to form a system ("conjugation") in which

11. V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George L. Kline (New York, 1953), 2: 743.

12. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 7, 12.

13. Bogdanov credits this idea to biological concepts. By way of comparison, Durkheim also considers society a reality sui generis. He states: "A whole is not identical with the sum of its parts. It is something new, and all its properties differ from those displayed by the parts of which it is composed." Quoted in Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, trans. Richard Howard and Helen Weaver (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), 2: 79.

14. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 67–71, 90. *Soprotivleniia* are "activities which are opposed to other activities" (p. 73). Activities may be combined in three ways: (1) organized—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; (2) disorganized—the whole is less than the sum of its parts; and (3) neutral. Mathematics deals only with neutral complexes; for this reason, Bogdanov considers mathematics "static" and tektology "dynamic."

they will be linked together by means of a common, or third, element ("ingression"). A "tektological boundary" between the system and its environment is formed where there is a "complete neutralization of activities" ("disingression"). Each system lies within an environment. As Bogdanov wrote, "For an organized complex the environment is the universe of external or 'hostile' activities, and a boundary, consequently, is characterized by the link [*tsep'*] of disingression with them."[15]

In terms of society, innumerable and various relations among members engender the "unity of social organization." The genesis of the social system (i.e., the creation of a whole out of separate members) evolves from collective labor efforts in the struggle against the environment (i.e., nature). Collective labor efforts (or "labor ingression") produce the earliest forms of speech (shouts and cries at work). Speech (*rech'*), as "the basic and primary form of ideology," in turn serves to coordinate or organize labor efforts toward general goals; this coordination is "ideological ingression." Herein lies the basis for social relations.[16]

If collective labor efforts and ideology provide examples of ingression, market relations illustrate disingression, because they are based on a struggle between buyers and sellers. Struggle implies, to Bogdanov, "activities, which are directed against each other and to one degree or another are mutually destructive; that is, disingression is at hand." Class struggle involves "enormous, multiplying disingressions."[17]

The regulatory mechanism in the organizational process includes maintenance ("conservative selection"—*podbor'*) or development ("progressive selection") of any given system in relationship to its environment through a "moving equilibrium."[18] Maintenance refers to minor changes or adjustments, whereas development refers to wider and more comprehensive change, including structural change. Development may proceed in several directions: it may involve increasing complexity and heterogeneity ("positive selection"), but it also may involve simplification and homogeneity ("negative selection"). Which-

15. Ibid., pp. 100–23. Bogdanov gives the following example of a tektological boundary: the battlefront of two exactly balanced armies. When their equilibrium disappears (one side takes the offensive), "conjugational processes" (combat) occur until a new equilibrium and a new line of battle are established.

16. Ibid., pp. 144–45.

17. Ibid., p. 250.

18. An example of conservative selection given by Bogdanov is "pedagogy," which guides the development of the future member of society. Examples of progressive selection are the theories of economic development and technological process. Ibid., pp. 164–66. Within the Parsonian framework, these examples are similar to socialization and adaptation, respectively.

ever it is, development is the result of a continuous process of adaptation to the environment, the increasing heterogeneity of the system being coupled with simultaneous ordering and coordination. The "law of the least" (*zakon naimen'shikh*) establishes the conditions for the maintenance or the destruction of the system; that is, the stability of the whole is defined by the least stable of its parts.[19]

In the process of development, a system can take on distinctive characteristics, which Bogdanov called "egression" and "degression." The first suggests that, despite a mutual dependence among parts of one whole, certain activities accumulate and become concentrated, thus exerting a greater influence; the result is a "centralist" system. Examples include the sun in the planetary system and the leader in a group of people. The second suggests that certain activities, although less complex, are indispensable because they fix and secure a system; the result is a "skeletal" system. If the brain is the egressive center of the human organism, then the skeleton is its degressive center. To Bogdanov, words occupy a similar position in the system of human communication. Symbols of various kinds (and words are the most typical), wrote Bogdanov, "fix, i.e., fasten, hold, and protect from decay the living plastic tissue of mental images, in an entirely analogous way to the skeleton which fixes the living, plastic tissue of the colloidal proteins of our body."[20]

Bogdanov considered the "law of degression" to have "tremendous practical and theoretical significance." He believed it showed that ideas, norms, and political institutions, all "degressive complexes for the stable organization of vital activities of society," have an in-built tendency toward rigidity, or ossification. They arise as a result of social-labor activities, but "in the process of development they [become] more *conservative* than their socio-labor base." Because they act as "a constraint and an obstacle to progress," they ultimately establish the conditions that make a "change of form" inevitable.[21]

Although internal changes are important for the evolution of a system, Bogdanov maintained, the real impetus for change comes from the environment, which affects both the internal structure of the system and the relationship between it and the environment. At the same time, each disturbance of the equilibrium creates pressure to establish a new equilibrium. Bogdanov's was an open system, with a moving or dynamic equilibrium and a "bi-regulator" (or, in modern terms, a cybernetic feedback) to provide for the maintenance of order. In Bogdanov's

19. Ibid., pp. 147–64, 176–78.

20. Ibid., pp. 328–43, 363. Bogdanov attributes some of his ideas on words and language to Ludwig Noire.

21. Ibid., p. 377.

words, "the bi-regulator is a system for which there is no need of an external regulator because the system regulates itself."[22]

Although Bogdanov envisaged most change as gradual, or evolutionary, he insisted that his tektological scheme allowed for fundamental change, or a "breakdown of equilibrium." According to Bogdanov, a crisis consists of a "change in the organizational form of a complex" that occurs when tektological boundaries dissolve. Two different types of crises may arise: boundaries between two complexes may rupture, with a new system emerging, or new boundaries and new complexes may be formed within a given system. According to Bogdanov, all crises in life and in nature, whether upheavals, revolutions, or catastrophes, can be subsumed under these two types. A revolution, for example, is a "breakdown of the social boundaries between different classes."[23]

In summary, the organizational process (or "tektological act") consists of three phases: formation, differentiation, and consolidation of a system (which is always relative).[24] Bogdanov sees a similarity between his "tektological act" and the Hegelian dialectic of thesis–antithesis–synthesis, but he argues that the latter is not completely universal. According to Bogdanov, the Hegelian scheme does not provide a definite rule "which expresses the contradiction of contiguous phases" and it does not give any means of foreseeing "how the negation of the form will end [*vo chto vyl'etsia*] in some new case." There is only the possibility of "formally contrasting the new phase with the previous one."[25]

Response to, or, more correctly, criticism of, Bogdanov's *Tektologiia* was not long in coming. Many of the earliest comments traced Bogdanov's "scholastic scheme" to his philosophical work, *Empiriomo-*

22. Ibid., pp. 211–19, 325. Gorelik draws the parallel between a bi-regulator and feedback. See his "Bogdanov's Tektology: Its Basic Concepts and Relevance to Modern Generalizing Sciences," *Human Systems Management* 2 (October 1981): 330. Also see Loren Graham, "Alexander Bogdanov," *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, supplementary vol. (New York, 1977).

23. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 133–34, 450–55.

24. The differentiation phase may lead to greater stability (through "supplementary correlations," such as the "division of functions") or to greater contradiction (such as the lack of proportion or increasing isolation between parts). "The strength of an organism consists in the precise coordination of its parts, in strict conformity with the separate and inter-connected functions." Ibid., pp. 248–51, 502–5.

25. Ibid., p. 512. Bogdanov's critique of the Hegelian scheme seems to belie Wetter's explanation of Bogdanov's concept of the dialectic: "While Engels, and still more Lenin, see the essence of dialectic in a contradiction inherent in the object or process itself, Bogdanov attempts to derive the whole essence of dialectic from an antagonism between distinct objects endowed with contrary forces." Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism*, p. 97. For a discussion of Bogdanov and philosophical mechanism, see David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and a Natural Science, 1917–32* (New York, 1961).

nizm, which had already been castigated by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* for containing Machist and idealist views. In his criticism, Lenin declared that Bogdanov was "not engaged in a Marxian inquiry at all; all he is doing is to reclothe results already obtained by the Marxian inquiry in a biological and energeticist terminology."[26] Nevskii also accused Bogdanov of clinging to his previous position, "to purest idealism," and at the same time of teaching "this curious science" full of "metaphysical nonsense" to workers under the guise that "dialectial materialism is unscientific and antiquated."[27]

Later evaluations of Bogdanov continued to stress his philosophical revisionism and mechanical interpretation of the dialectic. Narskii and Suvorov, for example, charged that *Tektologiia* was directed at the "undermining of dialectical materialism as a science of the most general laws of the development of nature, society, and human thought."[28] Because much of the criticism evokes the contemporary debate between Parsonian functionalism and Marxism, a brief review of the main points of contention may shed some light on the earlier, less understood controversy over Bogdanov.

Although equilibrium theory, general systems analysis, and structural functionalism vary in their focus and stress different dimensions, they all display a preoccupation with maintenance, or self-regulation.[29] Hence, what is being debated is whether society consists largely of order and integration (Parsons) or of conflict and coercion (Marx). At issue is whether functionalism is inherently conservative and incompatible with Marxism.[30] One theorist claims that "functionalism can

26. V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, 2d ed. (1920; New York, 1927), p. 340.

27. V. Nevskii, "Dialectical Materialism and the Philosophy of Dead Reaction," in app. to 2d ed. (1920) of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. In addition to the sources already cited, some of the other sources of early criticisms of Bogdanov's philosophical views are L. I. Aksel'rod, "Novaia raznovidnost' revizionizma," *Iskra*, 5 (November 1904): 2; N. Lenin and G. Plekhanov, *N. Lenin i G. Plekhanov protiv A. Bogdanova* (Moscow, 1923); M. Z. Selektor, *Dialekticheskii materializm i teoriia ravnovesiia* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1934); A. Shcheglov, *Bor'ba Lenina protiv Bogdanovskoi reviziii marksizma* (Moscow, 1937).

28. I. S. Narskii and L. N. Suvorov, *Pozitivism i mekhanisticheskaia reviziia marksizma* (Moscow, 1962), p. 40.

29. The differences may be a reflection of the varied disciplines from which they arose: equilibrium theory was derived from thermodynamics and later supplemented by economics; general systems theory arose from biology; structural functionalism was developed in anthropology. For a general discussion, see James Charlesworth, ed., *Contemporary Political Analysis* (New York, 1967); Eugene J. Meehan, *Contemporary Political Thought* (Homewood, Ill., 1967); Oran R. Young, *Systems of Political Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968).

30. Although there are many functional approaches, for the purpose of this analysis,

...be interpreted as a conscious alternative to Marxism."[31] Thus, in addition to being considered theoretically "mutually exclusive,"[32] the two models of society have also become involved in polemics and tied to either conservative or radical ideologies.[33]

It is not the notion of system that is at dispute; both Parsons and Marx viewed societies as systems composed of parts that mutually influence each other. As Dahrendorf remarks, "This is a point at which Marx and Parsons meet in a curious fashion: both of them freeze the flow of the historical process in the idea of a 'system.' "[34]

Where the two diverge is at the notion of relative equality of the parts of a system. Marxists underscore the dominating role of the economy, whereas functionalists tend to stress either the role of values[35] or an interdependence of parts. As Smelser observes: "Marx committed himself to a view of the subordination of other functionally significant structures to the dynamics of the economic systems; the functionalists assume that the relations among different structures are characterized by looser interaction, or a 'strain toward consistency' "[36]

Bogdanov, against this background, adopted a position closer to that of the functionalists. While continuing to emphasize technology and the economy, he drew far greater attention to ideology and values than Marx ever did. To Bogdanov, but not to his critics, this highlight on values was precisely the merit of a "tektological point of view"—that is, to elaborate those elements of a system that Marx had not sufficiently defined. In fact, if there is a unifying theme for some of the sociologists who followed Marx, it is the importance of values in the functioning of society. This focus on values was true of Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber as well as Parsons.[37]

Parson's version is assumed; it links functionalism with systems analysis. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York, 1951).

31. W. G. Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 121.

32. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, Calif., 1959), pp. 159–63.

33. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York, 1971); John Horton, "Order and Conflict Theories of Social Problems as Competing Ideologies," *American Journal of Sociology* 71 (May 1966): 701–13.

34. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 131.

35. Johnson, for example, argues that values are the "independent variable" in the Parsonian scheme. Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966), p. 20. Gouldner, in contrast, maintains that the Parsonian systems model was partly a response to the "single-factor model" associated with Marxism; hence, it emphasizes functional interdependence. Gouldner, *Coming Crisis*, pp. 229–30.

36. Neil J. Smelser, ed., *Karl Marx: On Society and Social Change* (Chicago, 1973), p. xix.

37. Parsons sees the emphasis on values as the main link among Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber. He traces his own intellectual lineage to these social theorists. See Talcott

Apart from the notion of system and the relative complementarity of its parts, the debate between functionalists and Marxists focuses on the question of equilibrium and change. Functionalists stress the processes that maintain stability, promote integration, and restore equilibrium when it is disturbed.[38] Consequently, change appears largely as evolutionary, gradual, and incremental; as such, it is analogous to growth (i.e., increasing complexity and differentiation) or is a response to malintegration or to extrasystemic stimulus.[39]

Marxists, although not rejecting the concept of equilibrium,[40] focus on destabilizing forces that disrupt equilibrium. Hence, in contrast to functionalists, they view change as discontinuous, qualitative (proceeding by "leaps"), and fundamental (structural). Rather than seeing differentiation-integration as the dynamic of change, with order as the predominant state, Marxist theory sees class conflict as prevalent and endemic to society, with structural transformation as its result. Change comes from contradictions inherent in the structures of the system. Dahrendorf notes:

> For Marx, society is not primarily a smoothly functioning order on the form of a social organism, a social system, or a static social fabric. Its dominant characteristic is, rather, the continuous change of not only its elements, but its very structural form. This change in turn bears witness to the presence of conflicts as an essential feature of every society. Conflicts are not random; they are a systematic product of the structure of society itself. According to this image, there is no order except in the regularity of change.[41]

Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York, 1937). For a review of Marxist theorists who emphasize the subjective element, see Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare, eds., *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin* (New York, 1972).

38. Important to these processes are input-output and feedback mechanisms. These mechanisms have been a particular focus of studies of the political system. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, 1965); Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston, 1966).

39. An indication that functionalism does not eliminate the possibilities for change can be seen in the various modernization theories constructed on a functionalist basis. See David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago, 1965); Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics*. Johnson analyzes revolutionary change within a structural-functional framework; see his *Revolutionary Change*.

40. Smelser explains this "unfamiliar view" of Marxism through the principles that make for equilibrium in the Marxian model: (1) need for consistency between the forces of production and the social relations of production, (2) facilitative relations between parts of the superstructure and the mode of production at early phases of development, and (3) softening of contradictions through certain superstructural forms (e.g., state, family, and religion). Smelser, *On Society and Social Change*, pp. xvii-xviii.

41. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 27. Dahrendorf's major criticism of structural functionalism is that it provides no tools for analyzing change generated by the structure itself. See especially p. 123. Johnson also points out that "the greatest weakness

Bogdanov's critics pounced on his concepts of equilibrium and change with particular relish. A 1920 reviewer claimed that within Bogdanov's scheme, revolutionary struggle and "qualitative leaps" no longer seemed necessary or inevitable.[42] Similarly, a 1960 critic argued that, to Bogdanov, "reconciliation, balance, and stability" were primary.[43]

Bogdanov himself seemed quite sensitive to these charges. His expansion of the first part of *Tektologiia* was designed to quell the argument that his scheme allows only for quantitative, not qualitative, changes. To be sure, in the text, Bogdanov writes that equilibrium is only a "particular case" of movement and change;[44] change is ubiquitous because there is a continuous tension between the elements of a system. Nevertheless, the impact of Bogdanov's theory is to emphasize stabilizing and restorative forces rather than those leading to rupture. The dynamics of change seem to consist largely of differentiation and integration. In fact, Bogdanov agreed that he held a concept of evolution but insisted it meant continuity, not gradualism.[45]

And yet, even Dahrendorf, who views functionalism and Marxism as "mutually exclusive," admits that for purposes of analysis, "society is Janus-headed."[46] Ossowski remarks that Marx's perception of society also varied according to whether he approached a given problem as the "sociologist" or as the "revolutionary."[47] Gouldner, too, notes that the functionalist and Marxist models are not as "discontinuous as they might seem." It is more a "substantive matter of the specific variable

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of value theory" is that it treats conflict as "deviancy"—as "imperfections in the structure"—rather than as generated by the structure of society itself. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, p. 33.

42. I. Vainshtein, "Organizatsionnyi opyt ili 'preodolenie filosofii'?" *VKA*, no. 12 (1925): 174–207.

43. L. N. Suvorov, *Bor'ba marksistsko-leninskoi filosofii v SSSR protiv burzhuaznoi ideologii revizionizma v perekhodnyi period ot kapitalizma k sotsializmu* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 29–30.

44. In his introduction to part 2, Bogdanov states that the laws of disorganization specifically deal with qualitative change and that part 3 will deal with systemic crises. Bagdanov, *Tektologiia*, introduction; p. 79.

45. A. A. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva* (St. Petersburg, 1904), p. 92. According to Hecker, Bogdanov's scheme involves combinations of existing elements, not creation of new ones. He claims this concept of change is due to Bogdanov's "mechanistic view of nature": "By conjunction of the 'elements of experience' the phenomena of nature are reduced to passive material deprived of its own immanent laws of movement, which are replaced by a scheme of external organization." Julius F. Hecker, *Russian Sociology* (London, 1934), p. 289.

46. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 159.

47. Stanislaw Ossowski, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness* (New York, 1963), p. 75.

preferred, rather than a matter of the formal explanatory model."[48] Merton and others maintain that functionalism involves "no intrinsic ideological commitment" and point to features common to both conceptual frameworks.[49] Some theorists even see enough points of convergence between functionalism and Marxism to attempt a synthesis of the two.[50]

Certainly, Bogdanov did not perceive any fundamental discrepancy between his systems thinking and Marxism. On the contrary, he believed that in the reorganization of society, the "organizational point of view" must complement the "class point of view." His contentions find an echo in one of the contemporary criticisms of Bolshevik "social engineering": "The Soviet leaders failed... to give adequate consideration to the inter-relatedness of the elements of the social system; that is, they failed to recognize the extent to which it was indeed a *system* such that basic changes in any major institution would have important implications for the functioning of other institutions and hence for the structure as a whole."[51]

Whatever the merits of the argument, it is clear that much of the early criticism of Bogdanov was based on a lack of understanding. Nevskii, asked by Lenin to provide a critique of Bogdanov's work, accused Bogdanov of using terminology that was obscure and difficult, filled with "all kinds of names" and "bare, abstract, meaningless notions."[52] Similarly, another analyst complained that one had to struggle through biological jargon just to arrive at another version of Spencer's evolutionary formula of growth, differentiation, and integration.[53] Even more harshly, another critic of the 1920s concluded that Bogdanov's concepts were "emasculated and empty" and "totally useless in explaining the special, particular laws which distinguish one given historical epoch ... from the others."[54]

48. Gouldner, *Coming Crisis*, pp. 229–30.

49. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill., 1957), pp. 37–42.

50. Pierre L. van den Berghe, "Dialectic and Functionalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis," *American Sociological Review* 28 (October 1963): 695–705. Johnson claims the model of the social system that he uses is a synthesis of the "coercion" and "value" theories of society. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, p. xii. Also see S. N. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies* (New York, 1978), p. 26.

51. Alex Inkeles, *Social Change in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 25.

52. Nevskii, "Dialectical Materialism."

53. S. Gonikman, "Teoriia obshchestva i teoriia klassov Bogdanova," *PZM*, no. 12 (1929): 40.

54. E. Khmel'nitskaia, "Chem vredna politicheskaia ekonomiia A. A. Bogdanova?" *Molodaia gvardiia*, no. 9 (1924): 194. Interestingly, Parsons was charged on similar grounds. According to their respective critics, both Bogdanov and Parsons indulge in

Not everyone, of course, took such a jaundiced view of Bogdanov's concepts. Bukharin, for example, was provoked into coming into Bogdanov's defense. As he said to Lenin, "It was possible to argue about [*Tektologiia*], but it is at least necessary to understand it. And Nevskii had not reached this minimum level."[55] One contemporary analyst also cautions that some of Bogdanov's earlier critics simply did not understand "the essence and tasks of tektology, due to the novelty of the subject." Therefore, the mistakes of Bogdanov should be considered alongside the mistakes of his critics.[56]

Although efforts to "rehabilitate" Bogdanov have been cautious and have themselves provoked criticism,[57] there is a growing consensus that Bogdanov's work was an early and original attempt to develop a "systems theory."[58] One commentator maintains that the concept of organization-disorganization, as a universal process of all types of matter in motion, still has been insufficiently studied, although some work in this direction had been initiated by Bogdanov.[59] Another analyst notes that a scientific theory of organization was both necessary and useful for the Soviet system and was made possible by advances in cybernetics and mathematical planning. He considers the first attempts to have been made by B. Slutskii, Bogdanov, F. W. Taylor, L. Von Bertalanffy, and T. Kotarbinski.[60]

"grand theory" that is highly abstract and replete with generalizations that are difficult to operationalize, both aim to construct a "universal model" that is "a-historical" (not related to historical periods), and both emphasize incremental change within the system rather than revolutionary change of it. Finally, change for both is externally induced rather than inherent in the structure. For a critique of Parsons, see Charlesworth, *Contemporary Political Analysis*; Meehan, *Contemporary Political Thought*; Merton, *Social Theory*. Also see C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London and New York, 1959).

55. "Obmen zapiskami mezhdu Leninym i Bukharinym po povodu stat'i V. Nevskogo 'Dialekticheskii materializm i filosofiia mertvoi reaktsii,' " *Leninskii Sbornik* 12 (1930): 384–85.

56. M. I. Setrov, "Ob obshchikh elementakh tektologii A. Bogdanova, kibernetiki i teorii sistem," *Uchenye zapiski kafedr obshchestvennykh nauk vuzov g. Leningrada*, ser. Filosofiia 8 (1967): 56.

57. Suvorov, *Bor'ba protiv ideologii revizionizma*; Narskii and Suvorov, *Pozitivizm*.

58. I. V. Blauberg, V. N. Sadovskii, and E. G. Iudin, eds., *Sistemnyi podkhod: Predposylki, problemy, trudnosti* (Moscow, 1969); I. V. Blauberg, V. N. Sadovskii, and E. G. Iudin, *Problemy metodologii sistemnogo issledovaniia* (Moscow, 1970); A. L. Takhtadzhian, "Tektologiia: Istoriia i problemy," *Sistemnie issledovaniia*, 1972, pp. 200–77.

59. I. R. Radzhabov, "Nekotorye voprosy teorii organizatsii i poniatie urovnei organizatsii v filosofii i biologii," *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta*, ser. Ekonomiia, filosofiia, pravo, no. 17(1966): 111–12. In addition, Radzhabov notes that an appraisal of Bogdanov's work is important not only for its historical interest but also because "his outlook now has a wide dissemination in bourgeois philosophy" in the form of positivism (p. 115).

60. L. A. Petrushenko, "Teoriia organizatsii—samostoiatel'naia oblast' znaniia," *Vo-*

A more thorough appraisal of Bogdanov's work has been done by Setrov, who sees it as a forerunner to general systems theory and to cybernetics, even if not an entirely successful one. In particular, he criticizes Bogdanov for not establishing any criteria of organization (*organizovannosti*), other than in relative terms, and for paying too little attention to the internal structure of the system.[61] Another critic considers Bogdanov a pioneer in the "systemic-structural approach" but remarks that Bogdanov never entirely freed himself from "energetism and biologism." Moreover, this critic argues that a systems approach must take into account "the class point of view" and "the concrete social content."[62]

Western commentators tend to be more impressed with Bogdanov's systems thinking. Susiluoto considers many of Bogdanov's concepts and ideas remarkably "modern," closely associated with what is now called general systems theory and cybernetics, preceding the works of Bertalanffy, W. Ross Ashby, and Norbert Wiener.[63] Gorelik goes even further in his positive assessment of Bogdanov, arguing that tektology is more than a prototype or variant of general systems theory or a special kind of cybernetics, because it "transcends both." "The main distinguishing feature," contends Gorelik, "is the fact that tektology has a more fully developed theory of organization than either general systems theory or cybernetics."[64] Vucinich concludes that Bogdanov's "real contribution lay in pointing out the necessity and feasibility of such a science [general systems theory] rather than in developing a system of useful scientific propositions." Nevertheless, he

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prosy filosofii, no. 2 (1966): 140–43. Apparently Kotarbinski himself considers Bogdanov's work underrated and insufficiently used in the sphere of general organizational theory. T. Kotarbinski, *Traktat o dobrei robocie* (Lodz, 1955), p. 17, as quoted in Setrov, "Ob obshchikh elementakh tektologii Bogdanova," p. 53.

61. Setrov, "Ob obshchikh elementakh tektologii Bogdanova." The author notes that Bogdanov's ideas approximate R. Ashby's in terms of cybernetics. Ultimately, Setrov concludes that Bogdanov's ideas are closer to systems theory than cybernetics, given that the latter is based on information and control—not a primary focus for Bogdanov. Setrov, however, claims that Bogdanov's "dynamic interaction" (or bi-regulator) was a forerunner to feedback: "The honor of the first application of this idea as a method of the new universal science undoubtedly belongs to A. Bogdanov" (p. 56). On this point, also see Gorelik, "Bogdanov's Tektology."

62. B. T. Ksenofontov, "V. I. Lenin i bor'ba s mekhanitsizmom v SSSR (1922–1925)," *Uchenye zapiski kafedr obshchestvennykh nauk vuzov g. Leningrada*, ser. Filosofiia 12 (1971): 175–86. Ksenofontov also argues that Bukharin was strongly influenced by Bogdanov, especially in the concepts of "selection" (adaptation to the environment) and "equilibrium," as well as in the attempt to "tektologize" dialectics.

63. Ilmari Susiluoto, *The Origins and Development of Systems Thinking in the Soviet Union* (Helsinki, 1982), pp. 41, 49.

64. George Gorelik, "Bogdanov's Tektology: Its Nature, Development and Influence," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 26 (July 1983): 43–44.

does not hesitate to add that Bogdanov was "one of the most original, productive and accomplished Russian social philosophers of his generation."[65]

Even those who criticized Bogdanov during the 1920s conceded that, despite all the controversy, he continued to attract a "large number of young enthusiasts."[66] One reviewer of *Tektologiia* even suggested that every "thinking Marxist" should read the book regardless of what position he took on Bogdanov.[67] Certainly Bogdanov himself hoped to serve as an inspiration to others in providing a new framework for approaching problems. Perhaps in a somewhat self-congratulatory fashion, he claimed that a number of scholars "definitely took the path of tektological research, applying its methods and most established conclusions to various current questions in practice and science," in particular to questions dealing with "state-economic planning, the programs and methods of pedagogy, the analysis of transitional economic forms, [and] social-psychological types."[68]

Political Economy

Bogdanov's own application of the tektological approach appears in his books on political economy (*Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii, Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki*, and *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*) and social consciousness (*Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*). Although still abstract rather than empirical, these books fall into a category that can be considered middle-range theory, in comparison to the grand theory of *Tektologiia*. They also indicate the extent to which Bogdanov's way of thinking was permeated with systems theory and how this tektological approach provided Bogdanov with new insights into the dynamics of society. While maintaining that he was amplifying Marxism, Bogdanov began to raise questions about Marx's assumptions on the ease of the transition to socialism. In the process, Bogdanov began to develop substantially different ideas about classes, ideology, and revolution. Interestingly, Bogdanov's ideas on political economy were considered relatively orthodox, and his first edition of *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki*, published in 1898, earned Lenin's praise as "by far the best" of the existing books on

65. Vucinich, *Social Thought*, p. 230.

66. "Review of *N. Lenin i G. Plekhanov protiv A. Bogdanova*, signed 'A materialist,' " *PZM*, nos. 8–9 (1923): 285.

67. Iu. Milonov, "Review of Bogdanov's *Tektologiia*," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 5 (1923): 218.

68. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 15.

economics.[69] And yet, from the start, Bogdanov inserted a number of changes, some subtle and some basic, in Marx's economic theories.

According to Bogdanov, a society, as a system, consists of an aggregate of people interrelated on a functional basis. Their common link is production relations, or, as Bogdanov put it, social-labor relations. Production itself, he maintained, should be distinguished in its technical, economic, and ideological dimensions.

Bogdanov's technical dimension involves man's struggle with nature (as a system to its external environment) and the methods employed in that struggle; "above all, it is characterized by the tools used in production."[70] Bogdanov considered the technical dimension primary because "it is the development of the technical means of production that defines economic relations in general."[71] The economic dimension, in comparison, refers to relations among people; hence, Bogdanov concluded, "political economy may quite correctly be termed the science of the basic structure of society."[72] Indeed, other relations in society depend on the production relations.[73] Finally, Bogdanov drew attention to the ideological dimension, which refers to the body of ideas, norms, and customs necessary to help organize production. He ascribed an important, even independent, role to ideology. As he stated, "Ideological forms... arise out of the technical conditions of production and economic relations. But having once risen they, like the instruments of organization, in their turn influence technique and economics, i.e., they assist or lay the path for the development of production."[74]

Although Bogdanov discussed each dimension of production separately, he saw a close link between them. In fact, he suggested a certain ordering in their interaction:

> Primary development is defined in that sphere where man is directly in contact with nature—in the sphere of technical relations of man with nature, in the sphere of productive forces. Production relations are formed on the basis of these technical relations of man with nature, and on the basis of both, ideas, norms, and ideology are formed. Consequently, the

69. For Lenin's review in 1898, see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70), 4:46–54.

70. A. A. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie v politicheskuiu ekonomiiu*, 2d ed. (New York, [1918]), p. 11. Later editions were published under the title *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*.

71. A. A. Bogdanov, *A Short Course of Economic Science*, trans. J. Fineberg (London, 1923), p. 5.

72. Ibid., p. 4.

73. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie*, pp. 7–8.

74. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 6.

primary factor is technique, which defines economics, and further, ideology. This is the law of development.[75]

This seemingly innocuous distinction ultimately drove Bogdanov to conclusions that varied considerably from orthodox Marxism and that provoked vehement protests from self-proclaimed defenders of Marxism. Reaction, however, was not immediate. Despite the fact that Bogdanov explicitly connected all of his works and that *Empiriomonizm* and *Tektologiia* raised a fury of opposition, his books on political economy were published and republished. *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki*, for example, went through fifteen editions and was still being published in 1924, when Bogdanov came under increasing criticism. Lenin was clearly irate after reading one of the later editions of *Kratkii kurs* in 1920, exclaiming that "there is not a single word here about the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'?!!? And the 'government publishers'!! should they be allowed to publish [it]?"[76] In a defiant spirit, the introduction to the sixth edition of *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (1923) claimed that Bogdanov was "one of the most important and at the same time one of the most original theoreticians of Marxism."[77] An English version of *Kratkii kurs*, published in 1923 in England, noted that the book "serves today as a textbook in hundreds, if not thousands, of Party schools and study circles now functioning in Soviet Russia, training the future administrators of the Workers' Republic."[78]

Only in the mid-1920s did the criticisms of Bogdanov's views on political economy coalesce. There was a glaring inconsistency, pointed out one critic, in debating Bogdanov's philosophical views at length while his books on political economy continued to be published "at government expense" and "recommended at Party schools and universities," even though his economic theory differed considerably from orthodox Marxism.[79] Some of the new-found arguments against Bogdanov repeated what had already been said in reference to *Tektologiia*—that his categories were abstract and "a-historical," that he was preoccupied with stability and order, and that within his framework of analysis the "phenomenon of equilibrium, the adaptation to the sur-

75. A. A. Bogdanov, "Organizatsionnye printsipy sotsial'noi tekhniki i ekonomiki," *Vestnik sotsialisticheskoi akademii* (henceforth *VSA*; later editions are *VKA*), no. 4 (1923): 272.

76. Quoted in E. B. Genkina, *Gosudarstvennaia deiatel'nost V. I. Lenina, 1921–23* (Moscow, 1969), p. 436.

77. A. A. Bogdanov, *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (Kharkov, 1923), p. v.

78. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, preface.

79. N. Petrov, "S 'ispravlennym' Marksom protiv kommunizma," *Bol'shevik*, nos. 5–6 (1924): 89.

rounding environment, conceals and pushes into the background the disharmony and disproportionality" typical of the basic anarchy of capitalist society.[80] Some critics attacked what they considered to be particularly "heretical" interpretations of basic Marxist concepts such as surplus value and productivity of labor.[81] Most, however, directed their attention to the distinctions Bogdanov made in analyzing production—that is, the technological, economic, and ideological dimensions and their interrelationships. His intention was to shed light on the fuzzier aspects of Marx's discussion of the mode of production; the result, according to critics, was to modify Marxism. By separating the technical from the economic "by an unbridgeable gulf," Bogdanov, claimed one analyst, had relegated economic relations to "purely psychological phenomena."[82] Even Bukharin got involved in the discussion, admitting, on the one hand, that Marxist literature did not give "an exact answer" to the question of how the materialism of production relations should be treated, but arguing, on the other hand, that Bogdanov clearly digressed from materialism and ended up "psychologizing" Marxism. In Bogdanov's scheme, he said, "even technology consists not of things but of the knowledge of people of how to work with the aid of particular tools of labor, their psychological training, so to speak."[83]

In fairness to Bogdanov, it is difficult to see how knowledge can be abstracted from technology without the latter being reduced to a simplistic nuts and bolts category. Bogdanov's understanding of technology suggested a deeper appreciation of the necessary interactions, and perhaps of the motive forces of the scientific-technological revolution. For example, Bogdanov did not need to offer an apology for his belief that technological progress was inextricably linked with an expansion of knowledge. As he noted, a rapid growth of scientific knowledge was at least partially due to the fact that "scientific investigation changed its methods under the influence of machine production. . . . In our times,

80. Khmel'nitskaia, "Chem vredna politicheskaia ekonomiia Bogdanova," p. 194.

81. Ibid. Also see I. Vainshtein, "Eklekticheskaia ekonomika i dialektika," *PZM*, no. 4 (1925): 166–83.

82. Khmel'nitskaia, "Chem vredna politicheskaia ekonomiia Bogdanova," p. 188.

83. N. I. Bukharin, "K postanovke problem teorii istoricheskogo materializma," *VSA*, no. 3 (1923): 8. Bukharin's answer is to consider people as "live machines" and production relations as the coordination of people in space and time. Bogdanov's rebuttal is in "Uchenie o refleksakh i zagadki pervobytnogo myshleniia," *VKA*, no. 10 (1925): 67–96. It is instructive to compare Marx and Engels on this point. Avineri claims that Engels had a "technological bent" that Marx did not. "Engels' view of the autonomy of technology vis-à-vis social relations is . . . quite characteristic of the technological bent of his thought. . . . Marx does not view technology as an objective, external force." Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 235–36.

discoveries and inventions are the direct outcome of large-scale production, the concentration of scientific forces and perfected means of knowledge."[84]

His insights into technology notwithstanding, Bogdanov was tackling a larger problem—one that was not open to easy solution: how to maintain a materialist interpretation while at the same time distinguishing between productive forces and production relations. This dilemma arose from Marx's assertion that social change emanated from the contradiction between productive forces and production relations. Marx had not elaborated his concepts of productive forces, means of production, and production relations in any detail; therefore, a considerable amount of literature has been devoted to understanding what Marx really meant. A contemporary critic poses the question: "What is a productive force if not at one and the same time also a social relation that includes people, their skill, and their knowledge?" The writer concludes that the distinction between productive forces and production relations is blurred and, with it, the power of Marx's explanation of change emanating from the "economic base."[85]

Precisely because some of Marx's ideas were confusing, Bogdanov attempted to clarify these definitions and relationships. He saw a difference between the means of production, which included tools and equipment, easily identified as "material," and technology, which was broader, including knowledge and skill as well as the "degree of perfection of the means and methods of labor."[86] In fact, he frequently

84. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 373.

85. Gordon Leff, *The Tyranny of Concepts* (London, 1969), p. 143. This issue is complex and still not completely resolved. Avineri, in comparison to Leff, maintains that "had Marx ever viewed productive forces as objective, economic 'facts' that do not need the mediation of human consciousness for their emergence and existence, then the problem would be serious indeed. But according to Marx, 'productive forces' are not objective facts external to human consciousness. They represent the organization of human consciousness and human activity." Avineri, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 76. See also A. Bernshtein, "Proizvoditel'nye sily, kak osnovnaia kategoriia marksovoi teorii istoricheskogo materializma," *VKA*, no. 21 (1927): 169–228; A. Efimov, "Proizvoditel'nye sily i dialektika ikh razvitiia," *VKA*, no. 21 (1927): 169–228, and no. 22 (1927): 145–85.

86. A. A. Bogdanov, *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki* (Moscow, 1906), p. 11. One of Bogdanov's contemporaries, the economist Tugan-Baranowsky, claimed that Marx meant by productive forces only the material factors involved in production. For this discussion, see M. M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), chap. 1. Bober rejects such a technological interpretation of Marxism, although he notes that some of Marx's own statements lend themselves to this interpretation, as, for example, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: "The windmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." As cited in Bober, *Marx's Interpretation of History*, p. 6.

avoided using the term *productive forces*, preferring instead to speak of technique and production relations.[87]

At the same time, Bogdanov was not altogether satisfied with Marx's conceptualization of production relations either, since it suggested an overlap between the base (the economy) and the superstructure (politics, law, and culture). The economy incorporates property relations, but, asked Bogdanov, what were property relations if not "legal relations of ownership?" Could property relations be part of the base as well as part of the superstructure?[88] Consequently, Bogdanov broke down the economic dimension, or production relations, into two types of interactions among people: cooperation and appropriation. In cooperation, people work together, or in concert. In appropriation, people work for one another (mutual exchange) or for others (exploitation and unequal exchange). Cooperation comes in various forms, including simple cooperation, subordination to authority, specialization, and comradely cooperation.[89]

Although Bogdanov asserted that cooperation, in its various forms, had to be studied in close conjunction with appropriation, he retained his earlier unease with the notion of property. To the extent that the private property of one person was the result of the labor of other people, Bogdanov reasoned, it could be considered part of production relations. However, private property also had a broader implication: it was a "social relation, the relation of society simultaneously to a given person and to given things."[90] What really counted, according to Bogdanov, was that "society acknowledges a given individual's exclusive right to some article and having acknowledged that right, defends it by various means, supporting it against all forms of infringement (e.g., through the police, courts, etc.)"[91] It is hardly surprising that this kind of interpretation should have evoked a reaction from staunch Marxists. Private property, in Bogdanov's eyes, implied some form of social consensus rather than an unyielding source of exploitation. It took on sociological tones rather than purely economic ones; it sounded almost

87. In an earlier study, Bogdanov stated that he preferred not to use the term *productive forces* because it contained two elements—the material means of production and the "psychological adaptations" of the producers. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 56.

88. Ibid., pp. 37, 72.

89. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie*, pp. 6–8, 19–27.

90. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 138.

91. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie*, pp. 25–26. Bogdanov's definition of *property* varied little over the years. As early as 1904, Bogdanov emphasized that the "essence" of property consists of "social recognition and support by the coercive force of social organization." Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 71.

more like Locke than Marx. The implication, charged Bogdanov's critics, was that struggle and conflict were eliminated from the analysis of society in favor of concepts such as harmony and disharmony. As one writer stated, "Divergent classes of society appear not as conflicting groups with irreconcilable contradictions of interests, but rather as different parts of one organism."[92]

Bogdanov's efforts to clarify the ideological dimension of production suffered a similar fate at the hands of critics. In discussing the relationship between technology and ideology, Bogdanov had, indeed, assigned more than a passive role to ideology, which he thought could restrict or facilitate change. He believed that certain innovations in technology, for example, might never see the light if the "ideological climate" were not favorable.[93] In response, his critics accused him of "dualistic eclectics," implying that "both the technical process and the ideological can play a decisive role in social development." Ideology, although not a source of change in Bogdanov's framework, nevertheless had a "veto power" over technological changes, accepting only those that would cause the least disharmony within the system.[94] To assign an organizational function to ideology, according to one critic, was to confuse the base and superstructure.[95]

Although Bogdanov certainly accorded a more prominent role to the superstructure than did Marx, his critics overstated their case. Marx did not relegate the superstructure to a purely passive role. Engels admitted that the emphasis in historical materialism had been on the economic base. He maintained, however, that it was wrong to assume that the ideological superstructure exerted no influence. This disregard for the superstructure was an "undialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregarding of interaction."[96]

Considering how harsh, and at times shrill, the criticism was, two questions can be posed. Was the criticism justified, or was it nit-picking on the part of Bogdanov's critics? And why the furor?

Bogdanov's Revisionism

The fact is that Bogdanov's seemingly pedantic points added up to a fundamental questioning of Marx's tenets. His discussion of private

92. Khmel'nitskaia, "Chem vredna politicheskaia ekonomiia Bogdanova," p. 195.
93. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, pp. 85, 81.
94. Gonikman, "Teoriia obshchestva," p. 60.
95. N. Karev, "O gruppe 'Rabochaia Pravda,' " *Bol'shevik*, nos. 7–8 (1924): 30.
96. F. Engels, "Letter to Franz Mehring," 14 July 1893, in *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1972), p. 650. Marx also indicated an "activist" role for the political superstructure in his discussion of "primitive capitalist accumulation." See his "Capital," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 311–18.

property, for example, illuminated its more elusive dimensions and suggested another perspective on the inner workings of society. Not everything was as cut-and-dried as Marx's understanding of exploitation, with enemies (i.e., large owners of private property) standing out in bas relief; cultural factors contributed to the perpetuation of a given system and complicated or sometimes muted the lines of exploitation. Bogdanov's views, however perceptive, implied that revolution might not be the panacea that Marx had forecasted. The doubts Bogdanov raised were particularly unwelcome during the NEP period, when the Bolsheviks believed their efforts at building socialism were under siege. It was no accident that much of the censure of Bogdanov was initiated at that time. His critics, accordingly, lashed out at Bogdanovism rather than submitting it to thoughtful analysis.

A closer look at some of Bogdanov's views on classes, ideology, and revolution may help clarify the depth of his "revisionism." It is worth pointing out that Bogdanov was often reacting against a "determinist Marxism," in much the same way that, later, West European Marxists were to do (and were also to be branded revisionists by Soviet analysts). An inquiring, and admittedly maverick, mind led Bogdanov to detect significant dimensions missing from Marx's analysis. Some of Bogdanov's ideas on human liberation and alienation, for example, were closer to the "early Marx," the one of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, which none of the Bolsheviks, including Bogdanov, had read at the time of the controversy between Bogdanov and his critics.[97]

Classes

Bogdanov's point of departure was that classes must be differentiated not according to levels of wealth but according to the "position of people in production."[98] With the growth of production and the division of labor, a distinct organizing function arises; in fact, noted Bogdanov, "organizing labor represents historically the earliest form of complex (skilled) labor."[99] Further technological progress fragments society into classes, based on relations of authority-subordination, and into social groups, based on relations of specialization.[100] It was the

97. White draws a comparison between Bogdanov's "Sobiranie cheloveka" and Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. He points out that Bogdanov's article, published in *Pravda*, April 1904, was written two decades before *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* was discovered. James D. White, "The First *Pravda* and the Russian Marxist Tradition," *Soviet Studies* 26 (April 1974): 195–96.

98. Bogdanov, *Pravda*, "Iz slovariia inostrannykh slov: Klass," 17 March 1913, pp. 1–2.

99. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 32.

100. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, pp. 85–87.

authority-subordination relationship that particularly interested Bogdanov. In the production process, he saw essentially two categories of people—those who organize and those who implement. This division by itself could create "the embryo of exploitation," wrote Bogdanov, depending on the types of relationships established by the organizer (especially the types of appropriations).[101] The rise of the organizers was not, however, simply a question of owning the means of production. Those who were directly involved with the technical process (the means of production) were merely the executors. Those who were in positions of authority, the organizers, controlled more than the means of production—they controlled other people. As Bogdanov pointed out, they allocated jobs and commanded the work process in its entirety.[102] Moreover, the higher levels of education associated with the organizers increased their authority and "separateness." Indeed, argued Bogdanov, the rise of organizers of production led to changes in the relations between these individuals and the group, creating what he termed a "psychological distinction" between them.[103]

These concepts, when applied to capitalist society, proved to be particularly perceptive. Bogdanov foresaw that the rapid development of technology and communication, as well as "the growing complexity of organizational functions," would create the demand for people directly engaged in organization.[104] A curious phenomenon arose as a result—the growth of what Bogdanov called a "bourgeois intelligentsia," which, quite distinct from the classical capitalists, exercised considerable control over the means of production but did not own them. This stratum, Bogdanov noted, displayed "special class tendencies" because of the organizational function it performed and the authority positions it occupied. Since the salaries of these "managers" (in modern parlance) were not exposed to the ordinary "norms of exploitation," the managers developed vested interests in capitalist profit, even though they were not capitalists themselves, in the usual sense of the term. Only a "systems point of view" could have helped him gain this insight, Bogdanov concluded. A class point of view was weak in recognizing some of the distinctions in rank within the bourgeois intelligentsia, whereas a systems point of view clarified the functional relationship of each particular stratum to production. The gradations of authority positions were especially important, contended Bogdanov; they helped explain, for

101. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 35. To Bogdanov, exploitation is directly linked with capital, which is defined as "means of production which have become means of exploitation owing to the fact they are private property" (p. 141).

102. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, p. 93.

103. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 38.

104. Ibid., pp. 372–74.

example, why the lower levels of "intellectual-technical personnel" showed more sympathy toward the proletarian class.[105] Furthermore, he added, the authority-subordination relationship was worth noting because, in a factory, workers were subordinate not only to capitalists, who had organizational power, but also to engineers and managers, who had derived power and expertise.[106]

Despite this type of subordination, however, Bogdanov maintained, class conflict was not quick to erupt because ideological forms, such as religion and custom, were used to bolster the authority of the organizers; these forms were to be seen for what they were—"instruments of organization," as Bogdanov labeled them.[107] The organizational function was also designed expressly to overcome the differentiation and fragmentation of society, and to promote integration. Only when technological progress outstripped the organizational function, and the latter no longer corresponded to the system of production, surmised Bogdanov, would class conflict ensue.[108]

There is little question that Bogdanov's analysis of class relations followed a path that departed from orthodox Marxism. His critics did not care that Bogdanov's analysis might be correct or even that it was carried out in the spirit of supplementing Marxism. They focused almost exclusively on the aspects that seemed to diverge most sharply from Marxism; in particular, they emphasized the prominence Bogdanov accorded the authority-subordination relations rather than the property relations of exploiter-exploited.

The rise of classes, wrote one analyst, was no longer the result of the division of labor and private property; instead, in Bogdanov's framework, it was the result of "the separation [*vydelenie*] of the custodians and carriers of ideology, knowledge and experience, [that is,] organizers, who on the strength of these factors, safeguard for themselves their position in production." This point of view, he insisted, was "contrary to the one we have gained from Marx."[109]

Another critic charged that the essence of class relations was concealed behind a "peaceful facade of 'progressive-organizational' activities of the social organizers who personify the organizational tendencies of the social whole." Exploitation, in Bogdanov's scheme, became "something secondary, appearing only because of the 'disorganization' of the organizers, because of the degeneration of the carriers

105. A. A. Bogdanov and I. Stepanov, *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (Moscow, 1919), p. 16.
106. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie*, pp. 21–22.
107. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 42.
108. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, pp. 128–30.
109. Karev, "O gruppe 'Rabochaia Pravda,' " p. 32.

of technical progress into parasites." Moreover, the critic maintained. Bogdanov had lost sight of the fact that the organizers of production were not always the organizers of society (e.g., feudal lords) and that the capitalists continued to exert power whatever the change in their organizational role. Even more disturbingly, Bogdanov's incessant talk about the organizational function suggested a "cult of organizers," social heroes who stood above and in contrast to the unorganized masses. One could be led to the conclusion, the writer complained, that "socialism is the ideology of the technical intelligentsia, not the proletariat."[110] Yet another critic argued that Marxism did not view the technical intelligentsia as a separate class; this notion was drawn from "organizational science."[111] Each of Bogdanov's critics hammered away at the point that class analysis could not be supplanted by tektological analysis; nor could sources of exploitation be explained by authority relations.

It must be admitted that the analysts were not altogether wrong in detecting "revisionism." In essence, Bogdanov raised a theoretical challenge to Marxism. He questioned the adequacy of explaining one class of phenomena, authority relations, by another class of phenomena, property relations.[112] In the orthodox Marxian scheme, the political realm was explained by the economic; consequently, the source of exploitation and alienation was to be found in the economic base. Once the economic base was changed under socialism, there were no other sources of exploitation and alienation.[113]

Bogdanov raised the question of an altogether different possibility—that exploitation and alienation could continue even if the base were transformed. In other words, change in the ownership of the means of production may be insufficient to secure a classless society and socialism. Authority relations could perpetuate classes, together with exploitation, even if property relations were altered. Explanations of certain political phenomena therefore had to be found within the same class of phenomena. Ultimately, the superstructure itself could continue to be a source of exploitation unless specific action were taken

110. A. Udal'tsov, "K kritike teorii klassov u A. A. Bogdanova," *PZM*, nos. 7–8 (1922): 89, 93, 95, 87–88.

111. Selektor, "Dialekticheskii materializm," p. 128.

112. For a discussion of the levels of analysis of Marxism, see Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (New York, 1968), pp. 48–53.

113. Ultimately, Marx maintained that not only property relations but also the division of labor would have to be eliminated in order to eradicate alienation. See Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971). Later Marxists attempted to reconcile this proposition with the requirements of an industrialized society by calling for a gradual elimination of differences between mental and manual labor—that is, by controlling the consequences of the division of labor.

to transform it. For this reason, Bogdanov emphasized the notion of the cultural revolution—namely, that direct and concrete efforts were necessary to transform the "old authoritarianism" embedded in the superstructure. Only then could socialism be assured.

Any number of analysts today substantiate Bogdanov's views, even if indirectly, by questioning the adequacy of Marx's analysis. Taylor, for example, argues that Marx had a "wildly unrealistic notion of the transition as a leap into untrammelled freedom," and seemed oblivious to how to overcome "the opacity, division, indirectness and cross-purpose of social life."[114] Nove, too, finds that "vulgar Marxism" lends itself to "an exaggerated and unreal view of the effect of the abolition of private ownership of the means of production on human psychology and on social relations."[115] An émigré Czech sociologist, Zdenek Strmiska, traces the problem to Marx's rather simplistic dialectical division of societies into class or classless ones. "There is no way of determining," maintains Strmiska, "which [socio-cultural elements of the old social system] should be eliminated, which retained, and developed, what is to be maintained in transformed shape."[116] This question, of course, is precisely the one Bagdanov posed in reference to Hegelian dialectics, and the one that earned him an outpouring of criticism.

What is particularly interesting in Bogdanov's "heretical interpretations" is the similarity between Bogdanov's ideas and those of later sociologists who found Marx's analysis instructive but deficient. Dahrendorf, for example, contends that class conflict in an industrial society is based on a distribution of power and authority that is different from Marx's notion of inequality. He arrives at this conclusion by focusing on the division between ownership and control that had not been foreseen by Marx.[117] And yet, it is precisely this division that gives rise to a "new middle class" (bureaucrats and white-collar workers) and constitutes one of the most important phenomena of modern-day capitalism—the managerial revolution.

Bogdanov's "organizers of production" were not unlike Dahrendorf's "new middle class." Whether or not Bogdanov's findings were due to his "tektological point of view," Bogdanov became aware that some-

114. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge, England, 1979), pp. 153–54.

115. Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (London and Boston, 1983), p. 62.

116. Zdenek Strmiska, "The Social System and Structural Contradictions in Societies of the Soviet Type," unpublished paper, cited in Nove, *Economics of Feasible Socialism*, pp. 63–64.

117. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*.

thing new was happening under advanced capitalism—something that could not be explained within Marx's "old categories": classes existed for reasons other than purely economic ones. Bogdanov recognized the importance of gradations of authority positions and was sensitive to the separation of ownership and control. According to one Western scholar, Bogdanov "became an early representative of the intellectual tradition in which such figures as Lev Trotsky, Karl Wittfogel, James Burnham and Milovan Djilas were later to gain distinction as theoreticians."[118] To Bogdanov's contemporaries, however, his ideas were too disturbing, for they raised questions about the accuracy of Marx's analysis of capitalism and even cast doubt on the very possibility of socialism. If the ownership of the means of production were transferred to the state but classes remained because of authority gradations, what chances, if any, were there for a genuinely classless society? Bogdanov intimated, even before 1917, a potential that Djilas analyzed as a reality in Yugoslavia—the emergence of a "new class" based on the discrepancy between ownership and control.[119]

Ideology

The concerns of Bogdanov's critics were not assuaged by his discussion of ideology. Once again, Bogdanov's starting point was simply to seek clarification of one of Marx's ideas; the result was considerably more than that.

Bogdanov, like the early anthropologists, understood culture in the broadest sense, as encompassing tools, means of cooperation, speech, knowledge, art, customs, laws, ethics, and so on—in other words, all the products, material and nonmaterial, of human labor.[120] Usually, however, he referred to culture in the "narrower sense," what he called "spiritual culture," which included world views, artistic creativity, aesthetics, and political relations. He used culture in this sense synonymously with ideology, which he defined as the social consciousness of people.[121] He believed that ideology merited study as the "science of ideas" just as much as did psychology as the "science of the soul" and biology as the "science of life."[122] In approaching this topic, Bog-

118. Susiluoto, *Origins and Development of Systems Thinking*, p. 68.

119. Milovan Djilas, *The New Class* (New York, 1957).

120. See, for example, E. B. Tyler, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871); Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952); Marvin Harris, *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (New York, 1979).

121. A. A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), p. 3.

122. A. A. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1914), p. 10. This attitude is typical of both anthropologists and sociologists. For a discussion, see White, *Science of Culture*, chap. 5.

danov acknowledged that Marx established "the base law of the development of ideas, laws, customs, politics, in general, of all social consciousness" by identifying the dependency of ideology on production relations.[123] Nevertheless, he argued, Marx "left unexplained the objective role of ideology in society, its indispensable social function." Only in the proposition that ideology served a particular class did Marx suggest a way of linking ideology to the notion of social organization as a whole.[124]

Bogdanov, with his systems perspective, believed it was crucial to recognize that "in an organized system, every part or feature complements other parts or features and in that sense is necessary as a unit of the whole, with a special designation." Marx had not posed the question of ideology in this general sense and to a certain extent "accepted uncritically old, prescientific formulas—e.g., he considered art a simple adornment of life, mathematical and natural sciences, as classless, higher scientific truths as absolute and not dependent on social relations." Only an organizational point of view, claimed Bogdanov, fixed the role of ideology in the life of society.[125]

Ideology was "a means of expressing and understanding the thoughts, feelings and will of the people." Through a process of communication, it served to coordinate actions among people and to eliminate contradictions among them. Consequently, ascertained Bogdanov, ideology performed an organizational function. This point, he hastened to add, was generally insufficiently appreciated. A person voicing an opinion was hardly aware of the organizational character of his action—no more than a bird was aware of its own singing. And yet, said Bogdanov, even a bird's song conveyed a message to other birds; it performed a function despite the lack of conscious purpose.[126] Similarly, he went on to explain, speech (*rech'*) was a "system of signs," a means of conveying experiences.[127] A thought was an "internal sentence."[128] Once expressed, it allowed for the "mutual adaptation of human activities" and entered into the realm of knowledge. "Knowledge was socialized experience and language was the means of its socialization."[129] The very origin of symbols of various kinds, in particular the word, noted Bogdanov, was social because it was associated with collective labor; in-

123. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, p. 5.
124. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 90.
125. Ibid., pp. 90–91.
126. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, pp. 30–31.
127. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 61.
128. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi*, p. 8.
129. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, pp. 61, 65. Bogdanov's ideas here clearly reflect the influence of Mach and Avenarius, who viewed knowledge as being derived from experience.

deed, the term *convey* referred to "a definite social connection: the connection of mutual understanding—i.e., psychic intercourse and transfer of all kinds of experiences among members of the social whole."[130]

For these reasons, culture in its many forms—whether speech, knowledge, customs, or art—had an internal structure, an implicit organizational function. In Bogdanov's words, "any product of 'spiritual' creativity—a scientific theory, a poetic work, a system of legal or moral norms—has its own 'architecture,' and represents a subdivided totality of parts, performing a variety of functions complementing each other."[131] Although this statement may appear highly abstract, Bogdanov insisted that it was not. The main idea he wanted to transmit was that culture played a real, practical role in society, an organizational role, and until this idea was understood, any analysis of society would remain incomplete. Rather than treat culture as an epiphenomenon, as implied in Marx's use of the term superstructure, Bogdanov suggested what in modern parlance might be called a "structuralist" conception of culture.[132] That is to say, for Bogdanov, culture formed a type of infrastructure in society, with its own definitive role. Bogdanov tried to encapsulate this idea when he wrote that "despite its entire seeming 'ideality' and intangibility, ideology serves as . . . [the] skeleton [of human relationships]."[133]

To reinforce his ideas, Bogdanov traced the role of ideology in relation to classes. Technological progress was always the starting point for Bogdanov, as it was for later anthropologists, such as Leslie White,[134] because it engendered the process of fragmenting society into classes and social groups. The division of labor, however, by itself represented merely the different parts of one whole. Only, insisted Bogdanov, when

130. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 363.

131. Ibid., p. 29.

132. For a discussion of structuralism and the various schools of thought in the study of culture, see Milton Singer, "Culture," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 3 (1968): 527–43; Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (January 1984): 126–66; Richard DeGeorge and Fernande DeGeorge, eds., *The Structuralists from Marx to Levi-Strauss* (Garden City, N.Y., 1972); Louis Schneider and Charles Bonjean, eds., *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, England, 1973); David Kaplan and Robert A. Manners, *Culture Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972).

133. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 490.

134. See White, *Science of Culture*, chap. 13. White based his analysis on energetics and specifically referred to Ostwald as his source of influence. A recent Soviet analysis (and criticism) draws a parallel between White and Bogdanov. See L. D. Shirokorad, "Problema sootnosheniia tekhniki i ekonomiki v 'Ekonomicheskoi nauke' A. Bogdanova," *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta*, ser. Ekonomiia, filosofiia, i pravo, no. 11 (1982): 13–19.

an ideology developed, giving shape and distinctiveness to the different parts, was it possible to speak of classes. As he explained, "The basis of... social divisions lies in technological progress, in production, but their formative moment is ideology, or more accurately, ideologies." The result, the hallmark of a class society, was a "mutual lack of understanding among people."[135] Their life experiences, their organization, their aspirations, and their perceptions of the world all become different.[136]

This discriminative aspect of ideology of course, implied, as Bogdanov admitted, that ideology could play a disorganizing as well as an organizing role. But a society could be held together, he contended, even when there were classes and social groups hostile to one another, provided it shared a common language and a "sum of common concepts."[137] In a capitalist society, for example, a reigning ideology, the "culture of individualism," served as a common denominator for its members.[138] Workers accepted this ideology, not so much because of capitalist influence, surmised Bogdanov, but because of their own petty-bourgeois origins.[139]

With the further development of technology, however, the role of the worker in the system of production changes, and this change facilitates a breaking away from the stranglehold of ideology. Tentatively at first, the workers question separate elements of ideology, such as the concept of property. As class struggle ensues, the questioning becomes more generalized, encompassing all existing norms. Capitalists, in an effort to save themselves, wrote Bogdanov, adopt an increasingly reactionary ideology, combining nationalism, clericalism, and militarism.[140] The results, he thought, are fairly predictable, as the workers grow disenchanted and develop their own ideology. Their new norms of conduct have nothing to do with "bourgeois principles" of legality and justice; rather, they are based on comradely class solidarity and revolutionary needs. Eventually, Bogdanov believed, new cognitive forms would reflect the new relations, leading to integral harmonious development.[141]

As can be seen, Bogdanov added cultural criteria to Marx's economic ones in defining classes, further complicating the process of their formation and dissolution. Once again, a change in the ownership of the means of production was a necessary but far from sufficient step toward

135. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, p. 89.
136. Bogdanov, "Klass."
137. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 144.
138. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, p. 33.
139. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, p. 129.
140. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, pp. 174–75.
141. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, pp. 130–35.

a classless society. People would still be divided because of the layers of cultural, even psychological, differences among them.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Bogdanov's critics pronounced this focus on the role of ideology and culture "idealism," echoing the criticism Lenin had originally made in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. "Ideology acquires an independent meaning, as a motive force in social development," protested one analyst; this preoccupation with ideology was a "decided idealism."[142] Several writers accused Bogdanov of reversing the proposition "social being determines social consciousness."[143] Even a contemporary critic could not understand how social consciousness could be considered "an instrument of organization." Was this interpretation of social consciousness not confusing the role of productive forces? he objected.[144]

No less welcome was a further implication from Bogdanov's conceptualization. Unless the proletariat developed its own "cultural hegemony," it would remain something of a porous, certainly vulnerable class because it would be ruled by cultural mores and norms that were not truly its own. It would continue to be alienated, without even knowing why. Precisely because of this kind of reasoning, Bogdanov's cri de coeur became "cultural liberation." It was a central theme in his discussion of revolution.

Revolution

Despite his emphasis on equilibrium, Bogdanov insisted that it was a "moving equilibrium" and did not preclude either systemic crises or, more importantly, revolutions. Like Marx, Bogdanov believed that revolutions were the result of contradictions between the base and the superstructure, although he was more likely than Marx to write about the contradictions between "productive forces and ideological forms."

142. N. Karev, "Tektologiia ili dialektika," *PZM*, nos. 4–5 (April–May 1926): 40.

143. See N. Karev, "A. Bogdanov," *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* 6 (1930): 581; "Bogdanov," *Filosofskaia entsiklopediia* 1 (1960): 177; Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism*, p. 97. An earlier formulation by Bogdanov was frequently cited in this regard: "Social life is inseparable from consciousness. Social being and social consciousness in the exact meaning of these words are identical." This statement, however, was part of an argument against E. Trubetskoi, who accused historical materialists of limiting being to "material," or physical, existence. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 51. On this point, see also N. I. Bochkarev, *V. I. Lenin i burzhuaznaia sotsiologiia v Rossii* (Moscow, 1973), p. 107. In a later work, Bogdanov specifically claimed adherence to the "scientific-philosophical formula" that being determines consciousness as the "basic idea of the proletariat social-historical world outlook." A. A. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1920), pp. 5–6.

144. V. I. Klushin, "Antifilosofskie nigilisticheskie tendentsii i bor'ba s nimi v sovetskoi nauke nachala 20–x godov," *Uchenye zapiski kafedr obshchestvennykh nauk vuzov g. Leningrada*, ser. Filosofiia 12 (1971): 162.

Somewhat more than Marx, however, Bogdanov tended to stress that change was constant whereas revolutions were exceptional. His systems perspective persuaded him that there were various means of offsetting disequilibrating forces and maintaining a social system. "Even fairly significant differences between the elements of a whole," he wrote, "do not yet indicate the inevitability of contradictions"; various "organizational adaptations" came into play to overcome or suppress contradictions. It was only when the elements developed in opposite directions, one progressive and the other regressive, that contradictions did become insolvable and revolutions inevitable.[145]

Applied to classes, explained Bogdanov, this contradiction between progressive and regressive changes meant that a revolution would probably emerge not when the lower classes were the most suppressed but when they acquired knowledge, skill, and general effectiveness that surpassed that of the ruling elite. As he stated: "The growth of the [dominated classes] and the degeneration into parasitism of the [ruling classes] continuously changes the relationship; a moment arrives when both quantities are balanced. At that time, the social whole loses its stability; subsequently, the lower classes break through the barriers within which the upper classes had restrained them."[146] Whereas Marx was ambivalent on whether the working class was completely downtrodden under capitalism or had achieved some level of progress and preparedness, Bogdanov's view was clearly the latter and seems to accord with more contemporary thinking on revolution. Crane Brinton, for example, noted that "revolutionary movements seem to originate in the discontents of not unprosperous people who feel restraint, cramp, annoyance, rather than downright crushing oppression."[147]

This point was particularly important to Bogdanov because he believed that revolutions can lead to decline as well as to progress. The French Revolution, for example, had averted a backsliding because the bourgeoisie had developed in a progressive direction and was fully capable of assuming power, in contrast to the regressive feudal classes. Similarly, if the proletariat hoped to be ascendant, it had to learn all the "useful functions" in directing the system of production from the

145. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, pp. 90–91. For a discussion of Bogdanov's theory of revolution, see S. V. Utechin, "Philosophy and Society: Alexander Bogdanov," in *Revisionism*, ed. Leopold Labedz (New York, 1962), pp. 122–24.

146. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 454.

147. Crane Brinton, *Anatomy of Revolution* (New York, 1938), p. 286. Also see Robert C. North, "Toward a Pressure Theory of Revolution," in *Social Science and the New Societies: Problems in Cross-Cultural Research and Theory-Building*, ed. N. Hammond (East Lansing, Mich., 1973), pp. 198–99. North's ideas are particularly interesting in comparison to Bogdanov's because he constructs his theory of revolution on the basis of thermodynamics.

"parasitic class" before the moment of revolution. Without such a learning process, Bogdanov contended, the elimination of the parasitic class could lead to retrogression, with the "shattering of a higher culture and transition to a lower one."[148]

Bogdanov also seemed to think that society could go through a series of upheavals before a total transformation was achieved. "A revolutionary explosion, having achieved its maximum point, usually subsequently gives rise to contrary movements of social forces and begins to subside toward a certain 'organic equilibrium.' " England, Bogdanov thought, went through a series of "fading crises" in its transformation from feudal to bourgeois society.[149]

Nevertheless, Bogdanov subscribed to the classical Marxian notion that historical development was progressive, punctuated by distinct stages, with revolution occurring at the points of transition.[150] Bogdanov visualized the revolutionary process as being something like an avalanche: "A revolutionary explosion... breaks through the internal boundaries of its groupings, blending separated masses into a fighting avalanche."[151] In his earlier writings, he described the rise of "spontaneous thrusts which demolish everything which stands in the way of the developing life"[152] Later, he decided there were "turning points" in the course of revolution during which "the tempo changes, as well as the direction and relations of its constituent organizational and disorganizational processes." A catalyst, or trigger, he argued, may have "a noticeable and even a great influence on the progress of a crisis." During a period of high social tension—a revolutionary situation, for example—the news of isolated acts of violence, if rapidly spread among the masses by verbal or written means, "may serve as grounds [*posluzhit' povodom*] for an uprising."[153]

Although Bogdanov allocated an important role to ideology in revolution, it was, interestingly enough, not as a catalyst but as a constraint. He expressed dismay at the "startling tenacity" of ideological forms that had long since lost their meaning in the life of society.[154] As they become more and more of an obstacle to progress, their break-up and destruction become an organizational necessity. In the end, a revolution brings about a release from the constraining force of ideology, in the

148. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, pp. 90–91.
149. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 475.
150. He did not, however, follow a purely dialectical method of analysis. See, for example, Bogdanov, *Short Course*.
151. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 470.
152. A. A. Bogdanov, "Revoliutsiia i filosofiia," *Obrazovanie*, no. 2 (1906): 55.
153. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 498. 472.
154. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 86.

same way that "the snake must from time to time shed its skin."[155] Such upheavals, although not cyclical, would continue until "the great, final revolution occurs," thought Bogdanov, when a revolution of society would be accompanied by a revolution of philosophy. The former would involve structural change, eliminating the underlying reasons for contradictions and class struggle and replacing conflict with cooperation and planned development. The latter would involve ideological change, eradicating the dualism between experience and knowledge, body and mind, social being and consciousness, and leading to a monistic world view. The ultimate goal of revolution, according to Bogdanov, was "the harmonization of human experience."[156]

Although Bogdanov always retained his vision of an intergrated end state, he held some reservations about the simultaneity of the changes brought about by revolution. He returned repeatedly to the notion of the conservatism of ideology. He saw a kind of disjuncture between the base and superstructure that Marx did not. In fact, Bogdanov was much closer in tone to contemporary systems analysts, such as Chalmers Johnson, who describe revolution as the "dyssynchronization" of the division of labor and values.[157] Bogdanov, however, did not see the discrepancy between base and superstructure only as an indicator of impending revolution. Rather, he saw the problem in a deeper sense. "Ideological remnants" from previous periods could linger, Bogdanov suspected, even when the base had changed; this sort of "cultural lag" could frustrate revolutionary goals for revamping society. A complete transformation of the superstructure, and hence of society, could take place only when all the "intermediary links" between the base and the superstructure had disappeared. This process would be a prolonged one, he thought, because all forms of "adaptation" (man's coping with his environment), "having become useless, are not destroyed immediately but only gradually atrophy."[158]

Several interesting ideas arise from Bogdanov's analysis of revolution; they indicate how far apart Lenin and Bogdanov were in their thinking. To Lenin, a revolutionary situation existed when the ruling class could no longer rule as before, the suffering of the oppressed classes deepened, and the activity of the masses increased.[159] To Bog-

155. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 377.

156. Bogdanov, "Revoliutsiia i filosofiia," p. 56.

157. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*. Durkheim also saw revolution in similar terms; on Durkheim, see Aron, *Main Currents*.

158. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 77. Also see William F. Ogburn, "Cultural Lag as Theory," *Sociology and Social Research* 41 (January–February 1958): 167–74.

159. See G. S. Khokhliuk, *Leninskoe uchenie o revoliutsionnoi situatsii i sovremennost* (Moscow, 1971), p. 12.

danov, in contrast, a revolutionary situation came into being when a progressive, ascendant class eclipsed the repressive ruling class. He placed the stress, in other words, on greater capability rather than on Lenin's greater oppression. One implication of Bogdanov's argument is that revolution can be regressive unless the new class is fully prepared to take power. Another implication, which follows from the first, is that educational and cultural tasks should be considered paramount rather than subsidiary. If the proletariat were not fully equipped to take over the management of society from the bourgeoisie, the end result could be disastrous—a general decline and perhaps disintegration rather than the building of a new socialist society. Moreover, if there were a "cultural lag," as Bogdanov surmised there would be, then the problem would become even more acute. In short, Bogdanov sounded a warning that revolution did not automatically mean progress; nor could the success of revolution be limited to the seizure of power and economic change. Hence, Bogdanov's major proposal was that the cultural revolution was an indispensable feature of the transition to socialism. Without it, socialism would remain incomplete or outright impossible.

Bogdanov's ideas on ideology, classes, and revolution, when pulled together, were not simply separate modifications of Marxism but offered a substantially different conceptualization of society and social change. In the words of one Soviet analyst, Bogdanov "stood head and shoulders above all the other revisionists, because he attempted systematically to develop his revisionist points of view in philosophy and political economy, as well as in sociology."[160] In general, Bogdanov sought to combine the Marxian "conflict model" with his own emerging systems thinking. He was interested in what held together a society as well as what broke it up. He also felt a need to supplement a causal analysis with a functional one, as did Durkheim, for example.[161] This need is most obvious in his persistent questioning of the function ideology performed in a social system.

Although Bogdanov's search to understand the dynamics of social life led him to positions that resembled those of later anthropologists and sociologists more than those of Marx, he never rejected his Marxist well springs. One passage is particularly illuminating in this regard: "Ideas, norms, and institutions," he wrote, "bind the individual with the system of a collective; through them he submits to its united vital activities and its general tendencies." Surely, this description of society

160. Gonikman, "Teoriia obshchestva," p. 54.

161. For a discussion of Durkheim, see Aron, *Main Currents*; Elvin Hatch, *Theories of Man and Culture* (New York, 1973), chap. 4.

is close to Durkheim's "collective conscience." Yet, Bogdanov hastens to add that actual control emanates from the dominant elite, even though "contemporary thought believes that ideas, norms and institutions generally 'rule' over the life of society." As he explains, "If horses never saw the driver, they would have considered the reins to be a higher power controlling them"; so, too, the individual might mistake ideology, "a system of reins and harness," for the ruling class.[162] This metaphor highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of Bogdanov's analysis. By emphasizing the role of ideology, Bogdanov rectifies a deficiency in Marx; however, he leaves the impression that both ideology and power count, without a clear indication of which counts more and under what circumstances. That is, Bogdanov adds relevant factors but does not provide "weights."[163] His explanation represents a type of superimposing of systems thinking on Marx's class-conflict model rather than an actual integration of the two.

Nevertheless, even if not entirely successful, Bogdanov's efforts at developing a "grand theory" did provide him with significant insights. His analysis of classes and ideology was undoubtedly more perceptive than Marx's rather simplified version and led him to new ways of thinking about alienation and inequality. Certainly, he developed a theoretical perspective that gained him respect and proved to be at considerable variance with Lenin's own evolving theories. For these reasons, "Bogdanovshchina" presented itself as an alternative to Leninism in how to approach revolution, interpret ideology, and transform classes. This alternative will become particularly apparent in subsequent chapters, when theory is employed to interpret reality.

162. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, p. 381.

163. This analysis is typical of a functionalist point of view. The Parsonian model, for example, assigns equal weight to the parts of the system and its consequences, whereas the Marxist model "weights" consequences according to the distribution of power. According to Stinchcombe, this differentiation among parts of the system was Marx's "key observation," and it introduced "a fundamental modification of the mood of functional analysis." Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories*, p. 100. The author argues that "most of Marx's radical rhetoric consists in the assertion that social structures are preserved because they are functional for the enemies of the proletariat." For Stinchcombe's full discussion on "Marxian functionalism," see pp. 93–100.

Part II /

AFTER OCTOBER: WHICH WAY TO SOCIALISM?

4 /

War and Revolution

World War I had an electrifying effect on the Bolshevik revolutionaries. Suddenly, breaking with the doldrums of the post-1905 period, socialism seemed much closer at hand. Events unfolded as quickly as a train speeding past villages, requiring instant political reactions rather than lengthy analysis. Precisely these reactions, however, revealed deeply held assumptions formed over many years of debate and thought and displayed the extent to which Lenin and Bogdanov had taken separate roads.

Lenin, for example, drew the conclusion, in his April Theses of 1917, that the time was ripe for a socialist takeover in Russia. Bogdanov, in contrast, envisaged only a democratic revolution; he urged participation in the provisional government to exert pressure on it, and later, frustrated by the inactivity of the provisional government, he called for an immediate convening of the constituent assembly on the basis of a universal, equal, direct, and secret vote.[1] Lenin and Bogdanov, in other words, reversed the positions they had previously held, when Lenin had proposed participation in the Duma and Bogdanov had sided with the *ultimatisty*. Similarly, while Lenin proclaimed an unequivocal peace slogan and shortly thereafter signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Germans, Bogdanov, although agreeing that the "cursed war" should be ended quickly, argued against a separate peace treaty. He

1. See A. A. Bogdanov, *Uroki pervykh shagov revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1917); A. A. Bogdanov, *Zadachi rabochikh v revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1917). The latter was published in March, the former in July.

proposed, instead, to conduct the "struggle for peace through legal means."[2] Bogdanov also failed to share Lenin's enthusiasm for the war as the harbinger of revolutions in the capitalist countries, maintaining that even the German political order had not yet rotted to the core as had the tsarist order.[3] Moreover, he predicted that the war would probably result in a rearrangement rather than collapse of capitalist powers, with France, Germany, Russia, and even England "powerless and defenseless before the new giants," the United States and Japan.[4]

In general, Bogdanov broke with the assumption held not only by Lenin but also by Marx that war was the midwife to revolution. Both Marx and Engels looked expectantly to each of the wars of their time to speed up the revolutionary process. Engels, for example, maintained that "a disorganized army and a complete breakdown of discipline has been the condition as well as the result of every victorious revolution."[5] In like fashion, Lenin argued that war and revolution were inextricably linked: "As if there was ever a big revolution in history that was not connected with war!"[6] Echoing Clausewitz's sentiments, Lenin declared: "War is not only a continuation of politics but also the epitome of politics; this unprecedently difficult war... is political education. ... *Our war is a continuation of the politics of revolution,* the politics of overthrowing the exploiters, capitalists and landowners."[7]

Consequently, to Marx and to Lenin, war served a revolutionary function insofar as it helped disrupt and break down the old order, thereby facilitating the introduction of the new. To be sure, Bogdanov agreed that war hastened the seizure of power, but to him a "victorious revolution" did not stop there. A common thread in Bogdanov's concerns was what would happen "the morning after." Although Bogdanov later acknowledged the "historic inevitability of a seizure of power by the Bolsheviks" because they were the only "party of peace,"[8] he retained his skepticism about whether the consequences of the war were favorable to socialism.

2. Bogdanov, *Zadachi*, pp. 6–8.

3. Bogdanov, *Uroki*, p. 17.

4. Bogdanov, *Zadachi*, p. 8.

5. Letter to Marx of September 26, 1851, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1955), p. 72.

6. V. I. Lenin, "Report of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party at the Eighth Party Congress," 18 March 1919, in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70), 29:153.

7. V. I. Lenin, "Report of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars," 5 December 1919, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:224.

8. A. A. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii v nyneshnei revoliutsii," *Novaia zhizn'*, nos. 19–20 (26 and 27 January 1918); reprinted in *Sbornik*, no. 10 (1984): 100–109; trans. John Biggart.

A fundamental clash of views between Lenin and Bogdanov arose over the connection between war and revolution, particularly in two contexts: German "war state capitalism" and war communism in the Soviet Union. At issue was whether war provided a boost to revolution, by condensing the stages of advanced capitalism in Germany, on the one hand, and accelerating the revolutionary changes in Russia, on the other. Could either the German war economy or war communism be considered a shortcut to socialism? What were the long-term effects of the war?

German War State Capitalism

Marxist theory anticipates that all societies will go through stages of development that include capitalism, then a transitional period, and subsequently socialism. Lenin, too, subscribed to an inevitable and progressive sequence of development,[9] seizing on the German wartime economy as an example of the most advanced stage of capitalism. "The objective process of development is such," declared Lenin, "that it is *impossible* to advance from *monopolies* (and the war has magnified their number, role, and importance tenfold) without advancing towards socialism."[10]

During the war, state intervention in the economy increased enormously, with certain sectors falling directly under state control. To Lenin, this intervention meant the emergence of "state capitalism" on the world scene, its "most concrete example" to be found in Germany. Among the positive features he perceived were "large-scale capitalist engineering" and "planned state organization" of the German economy.[11] "State monopoly," claimed Lenin, "is a complete *material* preparation for socialism, the *threshold* of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism *there are no intermediate rungs*." In other words, the intervening variable between state capitalism and socialism was a political, not an economic, one. The development of capitalism had facilitated and simplified "the

9. Theorists following Marx expanded the sequence to include monopoly capitalism, imperialism, a transitional period, and ultimately socialism. The relevant theorists include R. Hilferding, *Das Finanzkapital* (Vienna, 1910); N. I. Bukharin, *Mirovoe khoziaistvo i imperializm* (Petrograd, 1918); and V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917; New York, 1939). For a discussion, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York, 1973), pp. 25–35.

10. V. I. Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," September 1917, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:358–59.

11. V. I. Lenin, " 'Left-wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," 5 May 1918, in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, one-vol. ed. (New York, 1971), p. 443.

adoption of measures of really democratic control," and "the whole question of control boils down to who controls whom."[12] Once a "revolutionary-democratic state" replaced the "Junker-capitalist state," it would be possible, Lenin believed, to take appropriate measures to ensure workers' interests and to provide for the transition to socialism.

Bogdanov, in contrast, was not convinced that German state capitalism was the most advanced form or that there was necessarily a "crisis of transformation from capitalism to socialism."[13] He argued that the "maximalists" and Lenin looked to the German model as a way of justifying their radical aspirations.[14] Workers' interests, however, could not be assured by "assembling [*sobrat' vokrug*] a multimillion political fist around a plan."[15]

Although Bogdanov also followed the general Marxist sequence of development in his *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki*,[16] he introduced a note of caution: the road to socialism could be sidetracked (even if only temporarily) by decline, degeneration, and stagnation. "The history of the ancient world," noted Bogdanov, "shows that human society may sometimes regress, decline, and even decay; the history of primitive man and also that of several isolated Eastern societies shows the possibility of a long period of stagnation. For this reason, from a strictly scientific point of view, the transition to new forms must be accepted conditionally."[17] From this point of departure, it was not surprising that he should stress the circumstances—war—propelling the development and adoption of the organizational forms in the German economy that Lenin so admired. State capitalism, to Bogdanov, was a particular response to the requirements of war rather than evidence of the highest stage of capitalist development. Not only in its origins but

12. Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe," pp. 358–59, 342.

13. A. A. Bogdanov, "Zavtra li?" in A. A. Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), p. 21. Bogdanov thought it unlikely that a socialist revolution would take place in Europe (or in Russia), because there was increasing class cooperation (through nationalism) rather than a sharpening of class conflict. If there were any revolutions, they would only eliminate some of the consequences of the war and some of the prewar backwardness; they would not be socialist. See A. A. Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm i gosudarstvennyi kapitalizm," in Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma*, pp. 87–90.

14. Bogdanov did not deny that state capitalism was possible in "backward Russia," but he believed it could not be considered "semisocialist" and would not be akin to the German model in which production forces were far more developed. Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm," p. 88.

15. Bogdanov, "Zavtra li?" p. 37.

16. Bogdanov's sequence differed somewhat in the period prior to capitalism; in particular, Bogdanov was not sure where to place "slavery" because it seemed to him "separate from the general process of development." Compare the 1906 edition with the 1924 edition of A. A. Bogdanov, *Kratkii kurs ekonomicheskoi nauki* (Moscow).

17. A. A. Bogdanov, *A Short Course of Economic Science*, trans. J. Fineburg (London, 1923), p. 378.

also in its mode of operation, "war state capitalism" was permeated by war and militarism.

In tracing the origins of war, Bogdanov made a number of perceptive, indeed prescient, remarks. He viewed war itself as a result of an explosive combination of the "struggle of monopolies" and the "competitive progress of armaments." The military industry, strongly encouraged by finance capital, provided a defense of the international markets and formed a "colossal supplementary market" in order to avert internal crisis. Heavy industry benefited by this turn of events, expanding its share in the economy, "and together with it, the influence of corresponding groups of capitalists in the politics of the governments," thereby accelerating the growth of militarism. This expansion of what might be called (in modern parlance) a military-industrial complex explained, from Bogdanov's point of view, why the latest crisis of capitalism took the form of war. "The contemporary army, a million-fold collective with its mass of technical means, plus the huge economic apparatus that serves its enterprises, represents an organization of fixed determination and fixed preparation." Its concentrated energy can be held back only by equally strong outside forces because it "cannot but help push for a display of action in the external environment." Consequently, reasoned Bogdanov, the nature of crises in capitalist systems had changed. Previously, such crises were peaceful, because they were largely the result of the overproduction of commodities. Now, however, the situation could be described only as "a system of armed peace." The world war was a "crisis of overproduction, not only of things but also of organized human forces—organized precisely in the form of militarism peculiar to that society."[18]

During the course of war, the government undertook specific measures to combat catastrophe, such as the rationing of consumption goods, labor conscription, state monopoly of certain products, and state regulation of the market (e.g., price controls and forced combinations of various branches of production into syndicates). All of these efforts, claimed Bogdanov, were "war communist" measures—a type of "siege communism," but not much more. As he remarked, "State capitalism is a system of adaptations of the latest capitalism to two special conditions of the epoch: war consumption communism and the process of destruction of the productive forces."[19]

18. A. Bogdanov and I. Stepanov, *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1924), pp. 240–46. Bogdanov drew on his organizational analysis to explain crises in capitalist systems. Both his concepts and his terminology reflect the "tektological point of view." See, in particular, the discussion of the tension between the "forces of linkage" (*sily sviazi*) and the "forces of pressure" (*sily davleniia*). Ibid., pp. 242–43.

19. Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm," pp. 81–83, 86.

In his view, the German planned economy was inextricably linked with war; it was war that forced the bourgeoisie to adopt "corrective communist measures," that determined the direction and scope of production, and that set the limits to systematic planning. The impetus for state capitalism was catastrophe, not a growth in productive forces. Thus, he saw the German wartime economy not as the culmination of capitalist development but as a set of temporary and expedient measures adopted in time of war.

Rather than offering a sequence of development proceeding from state capitalism to socialism, Bogdanov suggested a possible temporary enhancement of state capitalism (state intervention) immediately after the war in order to fortify the economy. Once stability was achieved, he believed, there would be a return to a form of monopoly capitalism, with syndicates and trusts once again playing a more predominant role than the state. Thus, he noted two potentially contradictory lines of development in the postwar period: the increase and reinforcement of the private sector and the increase in state intervention. He assumed the former line of development would reassert itself and the latter would gradual diminish, depending on class interests and relative class struggles. According to Bogdanov's reasoning, the German government, even at the height of state intervention, did not eliminate the underlying contradictions endemic to capitalism but merely repressed and forestalled them for the duration of the war. Once the war ended, Bogdanov predicted, social conflict would erupt anew, taking the form of class struggle, because the workers would especially resist any effort to extend "labor conscription." In addition, the unresolved economic problems of competition, unemployment, price fluctuations, and inadequate demand would also soon reappear.[20]

Even after the war, when Bogdanov conceded that the role of the state seemed more permanent than he had envisaged, he maintained that it was still "an open question" whether state capitalism was the highest form of capitalism.[21] Under no circumstances, he noted, should it be considered a "mongrel form of socialism."[22] Only a fully planned

20. Bogdanov, "Zavtra li?" pp. 40–42; Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm," pp. 81–86. The possibility of a resolution of underlying contradictions of capitalism was a point of contention between Bukharin and Lenin. Bukharin concluded that internal conflicts in state capitalism were largely eliminated by state regulation; Lenin maintained that internal conflicts continued and could be eliminated only by a socialist revolution. See Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, esp. pp. 28–36. For a comparison of Bukharin's and Bogdanov's views on this point, see E. Khmel'nitskaia, "Gosudarstvenno-monopolisticheskii kapitalizm (Germaniia, 1914–1918)," *VKA*, no. 24 (1927): 153–59.

21. A. A. Bogdanov, *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*, 6th ed. (Khar'kov, 1923), p. 112.

22. Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm," pp. 86–87.

economy, operating in accordance with the latest developments of "organizational sciences," could be called socialist. That is, to Bogdanov, a socialist economy meant progressive rationalization of the parts and organization of the whole and was not to be equated with political intervention or state control.[23] Ultimately, and in keeping with his systems thinking, he envisaged socialism as a "self-regulating system." A socialist society would encompass "one labor collective, which organizes production in a planned way on the basis of comradely cooperation and jointly owns all the means of production."[24] More as an act of faith, he also concluded that only the proletariat could create such an economy because the bourgeoisie was incapable of comprehending "the idea of the whole."[25]

War Communism

Bogdanov's convictions about war and its consequences held true in the context not only of the German economy but also of war communism in the Soviet Union. This viewpoint placed him at loggerheads with many of the Bolsheviks, especially the left communists, who predicted that the measures adopted during war communism would do more than respond to the immediate crisis; they would also help promote socialism. Lenin's own position, however, remained somewhat ambiguous. At the outset, he was reluctant to undertake large-scale nationalization and severely castigated the left communists on this point. Later, however, it seems that Lenin got caught up in the fervor of the left communists. Nove, for example, maintains that Lenin shared the "extreme views held by the vast majority of his Party comrades right through 1920."[26] Jasny, too, suggests that "when the chance offered itself, Lenin at once went all the way and tried to establish communism rather than

23. On this point, Bogdanov noted his disagreement with Hilferding. According to him, Hilferding overestimated the "linkages" under finance capitalism, which were extensive but did not necessarily mean increasing organization of the whole. Bogdanov maintained that Hilferding and his school confused the concepts of "planned organization" and "power." For this discussion, see A. A. Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo: Doklad i Preniia," *VSA*, no. 1 (1922): 110–11.

24. Bogdanov, *Nachal'nyi kurs*, p. 119.

25. Bogdanov provides as evidence the inability of the bourgeoisie to institute a plan for the postwar world at the Versailles Conference. Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo," pp. 147–49.

26. Nove gives the examples of relations to the peasants, abolition of money, repression of free trade, and "harboring illusions about leaps into communism." He also points out that Lenin offered varying interpretations of war communism. Alec Nove, "Lenin and NEP," in *Lenin and Leninism: State, Law and Society*, ed. Bernard W. Eissenstat (Lexington, Mass., 1971), pp. 155–62.

socialism."[27] Lenin himself seems to make this admission in his speech on the occasion of the Fourth Anniversary of the Revolution:

> We expected—or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration—to be able to organize the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary—state capitalism and socialism—in order to *prepare*—to prepare by many years of effort—for the transition to communism.[28]

Bogdanov, in contrast, doggedly maintained a critical attitude toward war communism, calling it a hodgepodge, a compilation of methods and organizational forms more akin to a primitive "siege communism." It was not ideology but catastrophe that was the defining element, he insisted. Drawing a parallel between the German wartime economy ("war state capitalism") and war communism, he raised doubts about whether either could lead directly to socialism.[29] The critical common factor was war; it determined the policies pursued and the organizational forms adopted.[30]

Thus, in both Germany and Russia, the economies were highly centralized, the state controlled and directed production, all resources were mobilized for the war effort, rationing and requisition prevailed, market operations were weakened or suspended, and money lost its value. Bogdanov emphasized the "internal dynamics" that led to ever-increasing state intervention in the operations of the market.[31] All the countries

27. Naum Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization* (Chicago, 1961), p. 37.

28. V. I. Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," 14 October 1921, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 651.

29. The economist Khmel'nitskaia also drew comparisons between German and Soviet developments, claiming that even a superficial study of the German wartime economy shows "striking analogies and parallels with the history of the Soviet economy in the epoch of 'war communism.' " E. Khmel'nitskaia, "Planovoe regulirovanie v voennom khoziastve Germanii (1914–1918)," *VKA*, no. 19 (1927): 156.

30. For the role of war in the postrevolutionary period, see Roger Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism* (London, 1974), esp. chap. 3. Also see William L. Blackwell, *The Industrialization of Russia* (New York, 1970), esp. chap. 3.

31. Although the state initiates only the regulation of the market (rationing, price controls), war demands and the difficulties of limited state intervention (e.g., the rise of speculation) push toward the regulation of production, resources, and the labor force. Bogdanov, "Voennyi kommunizm," pp. 78–79. Khmel'nitskaia also tends to stress "internal dynamics" rather than preconceived, deliberate policy decisions in her analysis of the German wartime economy. Khmel'nitskaia, "Planovoe regulirovanie," pp. 137–64.

at war, he contended, introduced "siege communism" to one degree or another in order to survive the catastrophic conditions of war.[32]

The important distinction between the Russian bourgeoisie and that of the more advanced European countries during World War I was that the latter was more effectual in introducing "communist correctives" while at the same time ensuring that the "principles of capitalism were not totally disrupted." Thus, the result in European countries was "state capitalism of the military German type." In Russia, the bourgeoisie proved too weak to introduce state intervention on the same scale. Since it was "practically and politically bankrupt," claimed Bogdanov, it was incapable of limiting the effects of war within the confines of capitalism. Thus, the result in Russia was a " 'Soviet' form of communism."[33]

The implication of Bogdanov's argument was that war communism in Russia was a consequence partly of World War I and partly of the civil war. He pointed out that Lenin and the others initially tried to proceed cautiously, but "military revolutionary necessity" determined the course of action followed. Hence, it was a question of expediency, not of choice or ideology.[34] Moreover, the actions of the European bourgeoisie, through war and blockade, exacerbated the need for war communist measures and reinforced the operating principles of war communism—destruction and militarism.[35]

This interpretation was anathema to the left communists, who saw war communism not as an "unintended consequence" of the world war but as a directed, planned transition to socialism. Most important, Preobrazhenskii noted, Bogdanov's view ignored the dictatorship of the proletariat and misinterpreted the relationship of war communism to the German war state capitalism:

> According to Bogdanov's scheme, it appears that our proletariat, substantively speaking, acquired power because our bourgeoisie was unable to carry out war communism, as did, let us say, the German bourgeoisie, and so, having shoved aside the bourgeoisie, the proletariat had to do it all by itself. . . . In fact, the situation was not like that. Our revolution took place not because we craved for what Rathenau had done, but above all because we wanted to disengage ourselves from the war. We had many

32. Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo," p. 120.

33. Ibid., p. 121.

34. Ibid., pp. 148–49. The importance of the first eight months after the October Revolution remains a disputed point. Some see war communism covering the entire period of 1917–21; others argue that there was an initial period of gradualism that was interrupted by the civil war and resumed under the NEP. For the range of these arguments, see E. G. Gimpel'son, *"Voennyi kommunizm": politika, praktika, ideologiia* (Moscow, 1973); E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, vol. 2 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1971).

35. Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo," p. 122.

contradictions to deal with—the pressing agrarian revolution and the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.[36]

Preobrazhenskii protested that war communism was tied not to the world war but to the civil war, "which changes the situation enormously." Clearly irritated, he tried to dismiss Bogdanov's analysis as "an abstraction that lacks historical concreteness." Nationalization, he pointed out, was initially undertaken in "very modest proportions," and only the civil war "made us undertake nationalization across the board"; consequently, war communism did not begin until the middle of 1918.[37] Miliutin took a different approach in his rebuttal to Bogdanov, emphasizing that nationalization of the means of production was one of the distinguishing features of war communism in Russia, thereby making it very different from war state capitalism, under which no more than "nationalization of rifles" took place.[38] Within Bogdanov's scheme, another critic charged, nationalization could be understood only in terms of "siege communism" rather than as a step toward socialism, in conformity with the policy of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[39] Bukharin also objected to the implication that war communism was but a Soviet version of German war state capitalism. Although conceding that there was a formal resemblance between measures taken by capitalist states during the war and those of the proletarian state, he argued that the "class character of the state" was the crucial variable and that the social content of the policies pursued was altogether different.[40]

These protests notwithstanding, there is little doubt that war communism proved to be disastrous for the economy. Under the combined effect of the civil war and foreign intervention, the overall volume of production fell to the point where the main concern became distribution of scarce commodities rather than production and growth. Food shortage, writes one economist, became "the dominant obsession of economic policy." Requisitioning and rationing under the centralized control of Narkomprod (Commissariat of Supplies) represented the "keystone of the system."[41] Coupled with this centralization was an

36. E. Preobrazhenskii, in Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo," p. 139. Bogdanov's lecture at the Communist Academy of Sciences was followed by a lively discussion with several participants.

37. Ibid., p. 138.

38. V. Miliutin, in Bogdanov, "Versal'skoe ustroitel'stvo," p. 146.

39. N. Petrov, "S 'ispravlennym' Marksom protiv kommunizma," *Bol'shevik*, nos. 5–6 (1924): 98–99.

40. N. I. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *ABC of Communism*, intro. E. H. Carr (Baltimore, Md., 1969), pp. 162–66.

41. Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development since 1917* (New York, 1968), pp. 103–4.

enormous expansion of the role of the state, through nationalization of even the small enterprises. This expansion posed its own problems, in terms of creating super-bureaucracies that were difficult to manage or control.

Although there was discussion of the need for a "single economic plan" that would bring some measure of order to the economy and define long-term economic policy, there was little agreement as to the type of plan and its parameters.[42] As early as December 1917, Vesenkha (Supreme Council of the National Economy) was specifically assigned the task of planning, but, asserts Carr, it quickly became involved in the "exacting and sometimes almost hopeless day-to-day task of organizing supplies for the Red Army in the Civil War."[43] During the period of war communism, claims Montias, there was no development strategy, "whether of a teleological or genetic character."[44] "Shock methods" were employed to overcome bottlenecks and shortages by diverting available resources to a particular industry. The general result, concludes Dobb, was that all the essential principles of economic planning, cost considerations, and efficient utilization of resources were negated.[45]

With the advent of the NEP, the heated defense of war communism as a way of effecting a direct transition to socialism came to a halt. Bukharin, once a left communist, began to swing to the right. He conceded that he had succumbed to "illusions" about war communism, viewing it "not as a military—i.e., as needed at a given stage of civil war—but as a universal, general, so to speak 'normal' form of economic policy of the victorious proletariat."[46] Although Lenin did not renounce the policies adopted under war communism, he too concluded that they were largely a product of military necessity. As he admitted, war communism was "not a harmonious economic system; it was not a measure called forth by economic conditions, but one largely dictated to us by war conditions."[47] He also added: "We must state quite defi-

42. Trotsky proposed overall coordination of economic development; Lenin emphasized specific and more immediately realizable projects. See Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, chap. 20.

43. Ibid., p. 365.

44. John Montias, "Types of Communist Economic Systems," in *Change in Communist Systems*, ed. Chalmers Johnson (Stanford, Calif., 1970), pp. 120–21.

45. Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*, p. 115. "Shock methods" may have set a precedent for the "unbalanced growth" that came to be typical of the later industrialization. For a discussion of the concept of unbalanced growth, see Albert Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development* (New Haven, Conn., 1958).

46. Bukharin, "O likvidatorstve nashikh dnei," *Bol'shevik*, no. 2 (1924): 4.

47. V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Substitution of a Tax in Kind for the Surplus-Grain Appropriation System," 15 March 1921, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32: 233–34.

nitely that in pursuing our policy, we may have made mistakes and gone to extremes in a number of cases. But in the wartime conditions then prevailing, the policy was in the main a correct one."[48] Even at the height of war communism, Lenin qualified his optimism by banking on an impending revolution in Europe. "It would," he wrote, "be a mistake to lose sight of the fact that after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, things in all probability will take a sharp turn, viz., Russia will soon after cease to be the model country and once again become a backward country (in the 'Soviet' and in the socialist sense)."[49] Hence, the outcome of war communism seemed to him contingent on further developments in the advanced European countries. Without some international assistance, the linkage between war communism and the transition to socialism would remain tenuous at best.

On the whole, the assessment of war communism remained contentious. Never fully resolved were such basic questions as: Was it a necessary stage in the transitional process? Was it only the product of military requirements, or did it also involve the beginnings of "socialist construction"? How significant was the role of ideology in its formation?

Bukharin maintained that "the revolutionary disintegration of industry" was a "historically inevitable stage."[50] Moreover, both the Fifth and Sixth Comintern Congresses debated the applicability and "inevitability" of war communism in other countries undergoing the transition to socialism.[51] Evidence of a continuing uncertainty of interpretation can be seen in the discussions on the "essence" and "inevitability" of war communism that persist even now.[52] At a minimum, it seems fair to conclude that although war communism may have been spurred by military needs, that spur did not preclude its being perceived by many enthusiasts, including Lenin, as the "revolutionary approach" to the transformation of society.[53] It seemed com-

48. Ibid.

49. V. I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920; New York, 1940), p. 7.

50. N. I. Bukharin, *Ekonomika perekhodnogo perioda* (Moscow, 1920), pp. 97–98.

51. For a discussion of this point, see Gimpel'son, *"Voennyi Kommunizm,"* pp. 254–58.

52. One of the more recent Soviet works is Gimpel'son, *"Voennyi Kommunizm."* Two detailed Western accounts are Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (London, 1969); Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*. For an emphasis on military exigency, see Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*. For an emphasis on ideology, see Paul Craig Roberts, "War Communism: A Re-Examination," *Slavic Review* 24, no. 2 (June 1970): 238–61.

53. V. I. Lenin, "The Importance of Gold Now and after the Complete Victory of Socialism," 5 November 1921, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, pp. 653–59.

bative and bold in comparison to the "Thermidorean reaction" of the NEP years that were to follow.

Long-Term Effects of War

Bogdanov remained steadfast in his support of the revolution but grew increasingly upset with the direction it seemed to be taking. He was particularly wary of the link between war and revolution and the changes it wrought. The actual effect of the war, pondered Bogdanov, was paradoxical in nature. In the short run, the war created "exceptional, unprecedented conditions" that helped bring about the revolution; in the long run, however, the war, by "significantly altering... the nature [of the class forces at work]," made more difficult the realization of the goals of revolution.[54]

Undoubtedly, a break-up of established social patterns was important for the onset of revolution. Soldiers, for example, demoralized by military defeat, shook off their blind submission to authority figures and became, as Bogdanov labeled them, "independent political agents." They flocked to the only party that promised immediate peace, the Bolshevik party. A "communist bloc" developed, consisting of soldiers, workers, and peasants. Although the avant-garde of the workers, thanks to their superior organization, remained leaders of the bloc, the indispensable presence of soldiers and peasants transformed the Bolshevik party. It became not a workers' party but a "workers-soldiers' party," in Bogdanov's opinion.[55]

A similarly contradictory effect occurred on the general institutional level. Although war did force governments to adopt progressive measures such as planning, it also greatly reinforced reactionary tendencies such as authoritarianism. The regulation of industry, wrote Bogdanov, was distinguished by its "authoritarian-bureaucratic forms" rather than by a "comradely organization of cooperation." Worker organizations were completely subordinated; "in fact, the laboring masses became enserfed by way of militarization." Even in leading democratic countries, because of the pressures of war, the political order was transformed into a "governing dictatorship." Much of this oppression, according to Bogdanov, flowed from the influence of the army, an inherently authoritarian institution, and the vast increase in its numbers. Indeed, the masses of soldiers constituted "a special type of class of the historical moment." Bogdanov surmised that the army, which normally constituted less than 1 percent of the population, swelled to 10

54. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii," p. 101.
55. Ibid., pp. 102–03.

to 15 percent of the population during the war. With this increase in numbers came a corresponding increase in the army's "influence, structural and cultural, on the whole life of society."[56]

Bogdanov saw the negative reverberations in a number of areas. To begin with, he discerned a dilution of the very definition of socialism. Both the years of reaction (post-1905) and the war had the effect, Bogdanov believed, of "lowering the general level of proletarian consciousness." Because the workers in Russia already suffered from "historic backwardness" and were far from severing their links with the countryside, the influx of soldiers and peasants only added to the deteriorating socialist orientation. Bogdanov saw a new ideology emerging, one that represented the fusion of revolutionary forces and that understood socialism "only in a petty bourgeois sense, as a socialism of repartition [*delezha*] and leveling [*poravnenie*]." Working-class socialism, he argued, consisted of "collectivism in production," whereas the "socialism of the soldiers' party" was reduced to a "communism of consumption."[57]

Moreover, there was, Bogdanov lamented, a resort to methods that had far more to do with soldiers' tactics than with socialist measures. The working class, as he understood it, interpreted its social and political task "in terms of labor and skill—that is, in terms of a planned and systematic endeavour based on practical organizational experience." Soldiers, in contrast, viewed their task "in terms of physical force, as a mechanical one." Their first commandment was "to destroy without hesitation the enemy's position"; therefore, the method of frontal attack was most often employed. Unfortunately, said Bogdanov, the revolutionary government in Russia was slow to realize that "the bayonet was not a creative instrument." Highly complex institutions, such as banks and courts, were taken by storm, with little forethought or knowledge on how to replace them; the results were predictably disastrous both for commerce and for justice. Military methods were also substituted for worker control, so that production concerns were pared down to "requisitions, ordering supplies from the quartermaster, verifying deliveries."[58]

Bogdanov believed that the policies toward "the toiling technical intelligentsia" were no less primitive, resulting in a predictable "flight of the intelligentsia." It was self-understood, he exclaimed, that the wages of a skilled worker, a responsible administrator, a professor, a senior engineer, a scientific specialist, and a military officer must be

56. Bogdanov, Kurs, pp. 264–65, 259.
57. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii," pp. 103–4.
58. Ibid., pp. 104–6.

higher; "this is the ABC of economics." Once again, he believed the reason for the misuse of resources was the dominant "psychology of the soldier," which focused on settling scores rather than on what would help build socialism.[59]

Bogdanov even argued for a more tolerant policy toward the peasants, criticizing forced requisitioning[60] on the ground that the twenty-million strong small proprietors of the peasant economy should not be treated as "a foreign state."[61] Warfare methods tended to obliterate the fact that the enemy of socialism was capital, not small enterprises. During the transitional period, he countered, the working class should gain control over "large-scale capitalist property not small-scale toilers' [*melkuiu trudovuiu*] property." He thought there was every reason to expect that the small proprietors (specifically peasants) would be attracted to the ever-growing socialist sector of the economy and gradually would "voluntarily fuse with socialist society."[62]

Finally, war, Bogdanov complained, had an undesirable long-term effect on attitudes and behavior, on culture as a whole. A soldier's mentality developed, confusing revolutionary militancy with outright militarism. Although Bogdanov recognized that the working class proceeded toward its goal through struggle, the authentic goal, he insisted, was "not destruction but a new organization of life." Many of the early versions of proletarian culture mistook zealotry for a more sober effort to interpret socialist ideals. As an example of an inappropriate theme, he cited the following verse: "In the name of our Tomorrow, / let us burn Raphael, / destroy museums, / trample on the flowers of art." Bogdanov repudiated the symbols because they were suffused with "the spirit of the soldier not the worker."[63] Too much of proletarian art was based on "personal hatred, gloating insults, lynch law, even sadistic delight in the theme of pulling out the intestines of the bourgeoisie." None of this invective, protested Bogdanov, should be identified with the ideology of the working class: "Its characteristic militant, but not crude-militarist, motives consist of an unyielding enmity toward capital, as a social force, rather than a petty malice against its individual representatives who are the inevitable product of their social environment." As the proletariat must struggle for its freedom and ideals, it

59. Ibid., pp. 107–8.

60. Bogdanov, *Kurs*, pp. 268–69.

61. A. A. Bogdanov, "Organizatsionnye printsipy edinogo khoziaistvennogo plana," *Vestnik truda*, nos. 4–5 (April–May 1921): 44.

62. Bogdanov, *Nachal'nyi kurs*, p. 121.

63. A. A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture: Sbornik statei 1904–1924* (Moscow, 1925), p. 173. The verse is an excerpt from V. Kirillov, "We" (*My*), although Bogdanov does not provide the citation.

must at the same time struggle against bestial instincts. Proletarian culture should not be defined by agitation and destruction; rather, it should be guided by the far nobler effort of creating "a new aristocracy of culture."[64]

In retrospect, many of Bogdanov's points were well taken. Whether in terms of the German model, war communism, or proletarian culture, war did not accelerate the speed of transition to socialism. There was a backtracking on almost all counts after the crisis receded. Germany shed its wartime measures and restored capitalism; the NEP replaced war communism; revolutionary enthusiasm gave way to "learning the ABC's" as a priority task.

Several writers today, in contrast to his Bolshevik peers, concur with Bogdanov's analysis of the negative impact of the war. Pethybridge, for example, concludes that there was a considerable amount of militarization of society: a resort to violence, a general brutalization of life, and strict social regimentation. He tones down his criticism somewhat by adding that despite the extension of military influences, "Bonapartism and even militarism as such were avoided." The army was put under control of the party, and the working class rather than the armed forces received an almost mythical glorification.[65] Nevertheless, as Lewin notes, "it cannot be emphasized too much that... the regime... had been shaped by the Civil War as much as by the doctrines of the Party." The strict centralism and absolutism were directly related to the effects of the civil war.[66] Even Trotsky, writing many years afterwards, with the wisdom of hindsight, concludes: "The demobilization of the Red Army of five million played no smaller role in the formation of the bureaucracy. The victorious commanders assumed leading posts in the local Soviets, in the economy, in education, and they persistently introduced everywhere that regime which had ensured success in the Civil War."[67] Of course, at the time that Bogdanov issued warnings about the negative effects of war and militarism, Trotsky was devising grandiose military schemes, such as the militarization of labor and the organization of production on military lines. V. Osinksii's protests at the Ninth Party Congress, in March 1920, against the "blind imitation of military models" were drowned in the chorus of support for Trotsky's program.[68]

The value of Bogdanov's criticism of militarism and war communism

64. Ibid., pp. 162–63.

65. Pethybridge, *Social Prelude*, p. 120.

66. Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1970), p. 12.

67. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, trans. Max Eastman (Garden City, N.Y., 1937), pp. 89–90.

68. V. Osinskii, *Deviatii s'ezd RKP: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1920), p. 100.

lies not so much in that he was proved correct but in that he was not easily seduced by what he called "a mongrel form of socialism." He refused to equate change, albeit dramatic, with progress toward socialism, fearing that this equation would not only misinterpret reality but also taint the ideal itself. Perhaps because he was on the periphery of the power holders, Bogdanov was not inclined to treat survival as if it were success.

In contrast to Lenin, Bogdanov displayed less of a penchant for shortcuts. He did not believe it was feasible to ignore or downplay economic and cultural factors in favor of a strong reliance on "politics in command." Although he did not necessarily regard NEP measures as socialist ones, he recognized, from the start, the limitations that economic backwardness imposed on the socialist experiment. In fact, many of Bogdanov's proposals, made in 1918, preceded Lenin's "retreat" to the NEP in 1921. Interestingly, there were also distinct lines of continuity from Bogdanov's ideas to the policies Bukharin was later to advocate.

A NEP-like course, as opposed to a war communist one, was also much more in keeping with Bogdanov's systems thinking. The concepts of equilibrium and bi-regulation suggest a preference for policies that would balance the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy and take stock of all the parts, economic and cultural as well as political, of the system as a whole. Indeed, Bogdanov's "law of the least"—the assumption that the stability of the whole is defined by the least stable of its parts—indicates that the weaker parts should be particularly heeded. The peasant sector, accordingly, required special attention because it had an in-built tendency to retard the movement toward socialism. Bogdanov's recommendation was for a "voluntary fusing" of peasants to the proletarian state rather than coercion. Not altogether surprisingly, Bogdanov's law of the least was singled out for reproof, in 1926, as "a bare-faced criticism of the dictatorship of the proletariat." It represented a "tailist conclusion," wrote one critic, totally at odds with the "Leninist dialectical teaching on the attitude of the proletarian party towards the peasantry."[69] Undoubtedly, the rebuke had a double edge to it because Bogdanov's prescriptions for the peasants bore a striking similarity to Bukharin's proposals; both stood in direct contrast to the policy of forced collectivization that was ultimately pursued.

Despite his criticisms and reservations, Bogdanov remained part of the "loyal opposition" to the extent that he assumed it was still possible to build socialism if more appropriate policies were followed. His "sober appraisal" of economic needs notwithstanding, he was persuaded that cultural work could continue apace. In this sphere, he

69. N. Karev, "Tektologiia ili dialektika," *PZM*, nos. 4–5 (April–May 1926): 43.

persisted as an optimist, even a utopian. If he criticized, at times severely, the Bolshevik "counterculture," it was because he hoped to stem the tide toward militarization and authoritarianism. Undaunted, he doubled his efforts to establish the foundations for a genuine proletarian culture.

Bogdanov believed, perhaps too fervently, that the best elements would yet assert themselves. He did not take it as a fait accompli that Bolshevism would become equated with Leninism—that is, with the elitist and disciplinarian traits he had castigated already before the revolution. In fact, he looked forward to a split: "Bolshevism will divide and the workers will form a workers' party . . . joined by those elements of the social-democratic intelligentsia whose ideals have remained intact."[70] Whether this stance meant that in 1918, when he made the prediction, he harbored political ambitions is difficult to tell. Clearly, his struggle was to excise the war communist and authoritarian influences, not to blend with them. In contrast, notes Fitzpatrick, if the civil war gave the new regime a baptism by fire, "it was a baptism the Bolsheviks and Lenin seemed to want."[71] The divergence between Leninism and Bogdanovism, appearing in shadow form before the revolution, took shape and grew bold in the decisions made after the revolution.

70. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii," p. 109.

71. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Civil War as a Formative Experience," in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), p. 74.

5 /

School of Capitalism

As late as 1921, four years after the seizure of power, Lenin evaluated the revolution as having "completed only its bourgeois-democratic work." The foundations of the "proletarian or socialist part" of the work had been laid, but the Soviet system was "still low in the scale of economics and culture."[1] Cultural backwardness continued to be the unyielding problem. "We... lack enough civilization to enable us to pass straight on to socialism," admitted Lenin, "although we do have the political prerequisite for it."[2]

Consequently, one of the crucial tasks during the NEP was the "cultural revolution": the development of skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary for further progress in industrialization and in the construction of socialism. As Lenin remarked, "Formerly we placed, and had to place, the main emphasis on the political struggle, on revolution, on winning political power, etc. Now the emphasis is changing and shifting to peaceful, organizational, 'cultural' work." Although the cultural revolution presented "immense difficulties," Lenin asserted that it "would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country."[3]

In other words, cultural change, whether values and attitudes or even

1. V. I. Lenin, "The Importance of Gold Now and after the Complete Victory of Socialism," 5 November 1921, in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, one-vol. ed. (New York, 1971), p. 655.

2. V. I. Lenin, "Better Fewer, but Better," 2 March 1923, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 711.

3. V. I. Lenin, "On Cooperation," 6 January 1923, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 695.

simple skills, was essential to building socialism; cultural backwardness (*nekul'turnost'*) was hampering the construction of the new order. But how to begin? Where to learn? In attempting to answer these questions, Lenin turned to the "school of capitalism." (Bogdanov did too, although in a different fashion, as we will see in the next chapter.) The starting point for socialism, after all, was capitalism. Herein lay one of the puzzling aspects of Marxist theory: although repressive, exploitative, and contradictory, capitalism was, at the same time, the necessary precondition to socialism. The question was how to decipher the good lessons from the bad in the "school of capitalism."

Capitalism as the Precondition to Socialism

Marx himself left something of an ambiguous legacy. Although he condemned capitalism, he also praised its dynamic aspects. Certainly, he assumed a sequence of development that proceeded from primitive-communal to slave, to feudal to capitalist and then to socialist society. This sequence meant that capitalism preceded, and paved the way for, socialism. The sequence was progressive (lower to higher stages), unilinear (all societies passed through these stages), and deterministic (stages could not be skipped and were governed by objective laws).

The capitalist stage of development, within Marx's framework, was specifically linked to industrialization. According to Tucker, "Marx understands modernization under the aspect of bourgeoisification only, and he takes the British case as generally illustrative of it."[4] All capitalist societies, Marx observed, had "certain essential features in common," based on the underlying industrialization process. They displayed, however, a "manifold diversity of form" because they were "more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the special historical development of each country, more or less developed."[5]

Marx's regard for capitalism was evident in his discussion of the "civilizing" role it played in the less developed societies, evoking somewhat surprising praise for British rule in India. "Bourgeois civilization," he believed, was indispensable for breaking up the "Oriental despotism" of rural life, which "restrained the human mind within the smallest compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving

4. Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York, 1970), p. 109. Tucker points out that one of the weaknesses in Marx's treatment of modernization is his failure to take into account diverse patterns of modernization indicating a "unilinear conception of the world-historical process."

5. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1972), p. 394.

it beneath traditional rules." Against this bleak picture, capitalism ushered in "the development of the productive power of man and the transformation of material production into a scientific domination of natural agencies."[6] Only in a few comments on Russia, written in his later years, did Marx seem to waver somewhat on the "historical necessity" of capitalism. According to one author, Marx entertained the possibility that Russia might advance to socialism through the development of the peasant commune (*mir*), thus bypassing the "fatal vicissitudes of a capitalist regime."[7]

All the same, in the Marxist sequence, capitalism first facilitates the development of productive forces and later hinders it. According to Marx, the social organization of society under capitalism prevents the full production potential from being realized. A conflict arises between production relations and productive forces and ultimately leads to the breakdown of capitalist society.

Socialist revolution, Marx indicated, would complete the process of economic development rather than initiate it; that is, he did not envisage a "socialist form of industrialization." The economic tasks assigned to the dictatorship of the proletariat were of an organizational rather than a developmental nature. They included the nationalization of the means of production, the transfer of economic power to the working class, and the equitable distribution of the means of consumption.[8]

Capitalism, in Marx's view, in addition to establishing the economic preconditions for socialism, produced the necessary cultural preconditions. A high level of economic development would be accompanied by an equally high level of competence. Marx held several assumptions in this regard, starting with a belief that the technological process itself would foster increasing and varied skills:

> Modern Industry . . . compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, for a variety of labors, ready to face

6. Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, ed. Shlomo Avineri (Garden City, N.Y., 1968), pp. 8, 13.

7. For an elaboration of this argument, see Maximilien Rubel, "The Relationship of Bolshevism to Marxism," in *Revolutionary Russia*, ed. Richard Pipes (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 302–32.

8. The measures suggested by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* were of a gradual nature and did not include the nationalization of industry. For a comparison between Marx's plan and Lenin's policies, see Shlomo Avineri, "Comment on Rubel," in Pipes, *Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 326–29.

> any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.[9]

The general improvement in the level of skills would receive a further boost because, argued Marx, "entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat." This transformation of the ruling class would benefit the working class by providing additional educated and trained forces.[10] Marx also contended that increasing mechanization of production processes and the centralization of industrial organization would facilitate the administration of modern industry. Technical advances had already created the potential for throwing overboard the "old system of division of labor," but "machinery is put to a wrong use" because of the "capitalist caricature of [the] social regulation of the labour-process."[11] Finally, in Marx's view, the appropriation of the means of production, through the revolutionary act, would at the same time allow the proletariat to regain its creative potential. As he said, "The appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves."[12] One analyst points out that "this is the basis on which Marx advances the thesis that the change of material circumstances brought about by revolutionary *praxis* coincides with 'change of self.' "[13]

Thus, the import of Marx's argument is that the proletariat would be both conscious and capable of organizing the new society in the aftermath of the socialist revolution. The essential function of the transitional period was not, writes Tucker, "to remold man by a long process of training into a new kind of being, but simply to liberate him to become for the first time himself, realizing the human potentialities that had always been suppressed during history."[14]

Lenin subscribed to many of Marx's assumptions. He too assessed capitalism in both a negative and a positive light. If capitalism debilitated and dehumanized the worker, it also disciplined and trained him. Moreover, Lenin agreed that the transformation in skills and attitudes was an integral aspect of the revolutionary changes essential to socialism. In Lenin's interpretation, however, the entire process became less spontaneous and self-transformative, as it had been in Marx's un-

9. Karl Marx, "Capital," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 301–2.
10. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Samuel H. Beer (New York, 1955), p. 20.
11. Marx, "Capital," pp. 296, 298.
12. Karl Marx, "The German Ideology: Part I," in Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 155.
13. Tucker, *Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, p. 31.
14. Ibid., p. 105.

derstanding, and more consciously induced. The party took on the critical role in eliciting workers' consciousness and then in developing workers' competence. Lenin, after all, was confronted by the problem of a small working class within a peasant society and, as a result, a discrepancy between class consciousness and technical competence. This possibility had not been envisaged by Marx.

In his early writings, Lenin followed Marx in perceiving progressive features in capitalism. Prior to the revolution, Lenin believed, along with Marx, that the industrialization process itself would promote the requisite skills and knowledge for building the new society. In *The Development of Capitalism*, written in 1898, Lenin repeatedly pointed to the beneficial cultural changes associated with industrialization,[15] which included the twin processes of "proletarianization" and "urbanization." The cities exposed the semiproletariat to the rational, progressive aspects of life, and the factories instilled discipline and work habits. Moreover, the movement away from cottage industries to factories decreased the personal dependence of the worker on the owner and changed the labor force from an autonomous and individual element to one that was interdependent and collective. The concentration of production units further increased the contacts among workers and introduced greater mobility in the population. According to Lenin, the data on factory workers in Russia "fully confirm the theory of *Capital*, that it is large-scale machine industry that brings about a complete and definite revolution in the conditions of life of the industrial population, separating it once and for all from agriculture and from the century-old traditions of patriarchical life connected with it."[16]

Upon coming to power, Lenin suddenly found his easy prescriptions less than helpful. Before him stretched a country that, outside of a few urban centers, had barely been touched by the "civilizing aspects" of capitalism.[17] How could socialism be built in such a country? Lenin found little guidance in Marx. The "positive" or "constructive" tasks

15. As had Struve before him: "Let us admit our lack of culture and undergo the capitalist schooling." P. B. Struve, *Kriticheskie zametki k voprosu ob ekonomicheskom razvitii Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1894), quoted in Solomon M. Schwarz, "Populism and Early Russian Marxism on Ways of Economic Development in Russia," in *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought*, ed. E. J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), p. 57. Schwarz notes that the positive aspects of capitalist development were brought to the forefront in the argument against the Populists.

16. V. I. Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70), 3:540.

17. It was not until the turn of the century that between one-third and two-thirds of the industrial workers became "hereditary proletarians." See Jerzy G. Gliksman, "The Russian Urban Worker: From Serf to Proletarian," in *The Transformation of Russian Society: Aspects of Social Change since 1861*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 314.

of the transitional period had not been elucidated by Marx, and Lenin certainly had no ready knowledge of how actually to build socialism.[18] Lenin's discontent in this connection is familiar: "It did not occur even to Marx to write a word on this subject; and he died without leaving a single precise statement or definite instruction on it. That is why we must overcome the difficulty entirely by ourselves."[19]

If Lenin could not turn to Marxist ideology for specific directions, he nevertheless drew several important conclusions. In terms of the sequence of development, he acted on the assumption that the route to socialism was through capitalism, albeit in modified form. Even after the revolution, he accepted the basic premise that Western industrialization was a legitimate model for Soviet Russia and insisted that "we must learn from the capitalists."[20]

Faced with the reality of Russia, Lenin posed the question of how capitalist a society must be in order for the transition to socialism to commence. On the international level, Lenin suggested that the uneven development of capitalism might itself facilitate a revolution.[21] On the domestic level, Russia also exhibited an "uneven development" of capitalism; it contained the most-advanced sectors of financial capitalism as well as feudal remnants.[22] Thus, Lenin concluded that the sequence of development could be altered insofar as the transition from one stage to another (capitalism to socialism) could be initiated without a complete transformation of the preceding stage. The governing considera-

18. For a discussion of the transitional period, see *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*, 2d rev. ed. (Moscow, 1963), chaps. 21 and 22; Paul M. Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, *On the Transition to Socialism* (New York, 1971); V. E. Kozlovskii, *Dialektika perekhoda ot kapitalizma k sotsializmu* (Moscow, 1972); A. G. Lashin, *Sotsialisticheskoe gosudarstvo v perekhodnyi period ot kapitalizma k sotsializmu* (Moscow, 1962).

19. Lenin, "Political Report of the Central Committee to the Eleventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)," 27 March 1922, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33: 278.

20. According to Marcuse, "Lenin retained the Marxian conclusion that the socialist revolution will be the result of the exploding contradictions in a *fully matured* capitalist country—and not even the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution made him abandon this conviction." Marcuse cites as evidence Lenin's hesitation to acknowledge the socialist character of the revolution and his belief that the Russian Revolution had to be "rescued" by the German Revolution. Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York, 1961), pp. 27–28.

21. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917; New York, 1939).

22. Lenin enumerates five elements within Russian society: (1) patriarchical farming, (2) small-commodity production, (3) private capitalism, (4) state capitalism, and (5) socialism. " 'Left-wing' Childishness and Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," 5 May 1918, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 440. Lenin made similar observations during the prerevolutionary period. See I. G. Gindin, "V. I. Lenin ob obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskoi strukture i politicheskom stroe kapitalisticheskoi Rossii," in *V. I. Lenin o sotsial'noi strukture i politicheskom stroe kapitalisticheskoi Rossii*, ed. L. M. Ivanov (Moscow, 1970), pp. 230–317.

tion was the presence of "advanced sectors" in the economy rather than the far more preponderant "patriarchical farming."[23]

In contrast to Marx, who had assumed a high level of economic development as a prerequisite for the transition to socialism, Lenin substituted a political prerequisite—namely, the "political maturity" of the working class.[24] Economic deficiencies could be offset by the presence of an industrial proletariat, a conscious, organized vanguard party, and indications of mass (peasant) support for revolution.

Consequently, the transitional period acquired the task of catching up with the Marxist sequence of development. Lenin viewed the transitional period as one during which the economic and cultural preconditions to socialism would be developed. He interpreted the dictatorship of the proletariat to mean the use of political power to effect socioeconomic transformation. The dictatorship of the proletariat would guide the direction of change and permit the borrowing from capitalists; it would ensure socialist ends and promote socialist transformation.[25]

At the time of the revolution, however, neither industrialization nor the development of competence was complete. Hence, Lenin concluded that one of the major tasks of the transitional period was to direct and accelerate the process of cultural change—in other words, to institute a cultural revolution. Lenin's program of cultural change included the democratization of knowledge, the adoption of capitalist work habits and methods, and the gradual transformation of peasant mentality.

Democratization of Knowledge

The first step in overcoming cultural backwardness was the democratization of culture—that is, the provision of general access to education, which previously had been restricted to the children of the

23. Lel'chuk points out that there was a greater degree of industrialization in pre-1917 Russia than is commonly assumed. Russian industrialization benefited from an energetic support "from above" (as opposed to the "classical" example of Europe) and was indicative of the new type of industrial development in countries of "late capitalism." V. S. Lel'chuk, "Problemy industrializatsii v dooktiabr'skikh trudakh V. I. Lenina," in *Stroitel'stvo sovetskogo gosudarstva*, ed. Iu. A. Poliakov (Moscow, 1972), pp. 81–96.

24. For a discussion of this point, see Alexander Erlich, " 'Eastern' Approaches to a Comparative Evaluation of Economic Systems," in *Comparison of Economic Systems*, ed. Alexander Eckstein (Berkeley, Calif., 1971), pp. 308–11.

25. For a discussion of Lenin's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, see Darrell P. Hammer, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in *Lenin and Leninism: State, Law and Society*, ed. Bernard Eissenstat (Lexington, Mass., 1971), pp. 25–42; E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1971), 1: 238–56; A. G. Lashin and V. S. Alexandrov, *Razvitie V. I. Leninym teorii nauchnogo kommunizma* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 156–93.

aristocratic and bourgeois elites.[26] According to Lenin, the October Revolution "opened wide the road to a cultural revolution on the grandest scale."[27] The task of the new Soviet government was "to ensure that the fruits of bourgeois science and technology, the fruits of thousands of years of the development of civilization, shall be enjoyed not by a handful of people for the purpose of distinguishing themselves and amassing wealth, but by literally all the working people."[28]

Lenin, in other words, was not rejecting the "fruits of bourgeois science and technology" despite their bourgeois label; he did not question their capitalist identification, only their monopoly by the elite. For this reason, Anweiler argues that the policies pursued by Lenin were essentially "a logical and radical continuation of the democratization process" started earlier, in conjunction with the modernization efforts since the 1890s.[29]

Democratization, under the new Soviet regime, was translated to mean priority for the previously deprived proletarian and peasant classes; in practical terms, it entailed a general drive to eliminate illiteracy. The 1897 census had revealed the dismaying statistic that only 21 percent of the population could read and write. In the twenty-five to forty age group, 22.4 percent of the peasants and 55.5 percent of the city dwellers were literate. Only 7 percent of all peasant women were literate.[30] The situation among the workers was somewhat better. In 1918, when the Bolsheviks came to power, 63 percent of the urban workers were literate, although there was considerable discrepancy among regions and industries.[31] The party instituted a crash program to eliminate illiteracy during the civil war period, and about 5 million illiterates were taught to read and write between October 1917 and the end of the civil war.[32] Nonetheless, in 1920, the literacy rate of the

26. Furmanov suggests that the first step in the democratization of culture was the "crushing of the domination of the bourgeoisie in the field of culture and the institutions that served it." F. L. Furmanov, "V. I. Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta*, ser. 8: Ekonomiia, filosofiia, no. 4 (July–August 1960): 38–39. Control over access to educational institutions, however, should be distinguished from predominance in the field of culture. "Bourgeois specialists" continued to play an important role under the new Soviet regime, at Lenin's insistence.

27. Lenin, as quoted by Clara Zetkin, "My Recollections of Lenin," in V. I. Lenin, *On Culture and Cultural Revolution* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 238–39.

28. V. I. Lenin, "The Achievements and Difficulties of the Soviet Government," March–April 1919, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29: 72.

29. Oscar Anweiler, "Educational Policy and Social Structure in the Soviet Union," in *Social Change in the Soviet Union*, ed. Boris Meissner and trans. D. P. Kommers (Notre Dame, Ind., 1972), pp. 176–78.

30. B. A. Kumanev, *Sotsializm i vsenarodnaia gramotnost': likvidatsiia massovoi negramatnosti v SSSR* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 11–12.

31. Ibid., p. 34.

32. Roger Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism* (London, 1974), p. 152.

entire population was only 32 percent, in comparison with the 23 percent of the 1897 census.[33]

The year 1923 found Lenin complaining that "we are still a very long way from attaining universal literacy, and that even compared with tsarist times (1897) our progress has been far too low."[34] Part of the reason was that the NEP, in comparison to the crash programs of war communism, was accompanied by a setback in "cultural-educational work" because of financial restrictions and a general relaxation of efforts. Krupskaia bemoaned the fact that, by 1922, 88 percent of the cultural-educational organizations under Glavpolitprosvet (Chief Committee for Political Education) had fallen into disuse.[35] This retreat, however, was only temporary; it was followed by a new round of activity. The society Doloi Negramotnost' (Down with Illiteracy) was founded at the end of 1923 and quickly expanded its field of operations to encompass, by the end of 1925, about twelve thousand "liquidation points."[36] By 1926, about 10 million illiterates had been educated since the Bolsheviks had come to power,[37] although the census of that year revealed that "one in two persons over eight was still illiterate."[38]

It should be remembered that the democratization of knowledge was viewed not simply as a value in itself but as an important adjunct to both economic and political objectives. The liquidation of illiteracy, for example, was specifically tied to general economic tasks. One of the economists of the time, Strumilin, claimed that even elementary literacy, acquired after one year of education, would increase the productivity of labor by about 30 percent.[39] There is no doubt that Lenin approached literacy in practical terms: "The ability to read and write must be made to serve the purpose of raising the cultural level; the peasants must be able to use the ability to read and write for the improvement of their farms and their state."[40]

Similarly, Lenin linked the educational effort to political objectives. Illiteracy, to him, meant more than simply the inability to read or write. As he put it: "An illiterate person stands outside politics; he must first

33. V. I. Lenin, "Pages from a Diary," 4 January 1923, in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 199.

34. Ibid., p. 200.

35. N. K. Krupskaia, "Kul'turnaia rabota v derevne," in N. K. Krupskaia, *O kul 'turno-prosvetitel'noi rabote: Izbrannye stat'i i rechi*, ed. L. S. Frid (Moscow, 1957), p. 46.

36. Andreeva claims that in 1924–25, 4 million illiterates were taught at these liquidation points (*likpunkty*). M. S. Andreeva, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi raboty v SSSR, 1917–1933* (Moscow, 1963), p. 48. The society itself claimed 7.5 million illiterates were taught during the "restoration period." Kumanev, *Sotsializm*, p. 162.

37. Ibid., pp. 163–78.

38. Pethybridge, *Social Prelude*, p. 155.

39. As quoted in G. G. Karpov, *Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii* (Leningrad, 1970), p. 170.

40. V. I. Lenin, "The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments," 17 October 1921, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:75.

learn his ABC. Without this there can be no politics."[41] Lenin specifically rejected the notion of "apolitical" or "nonpolitical" education, calling it "a piece of bourgeois hypocrisy." "Along the whole line of our educational work," he argued, "we have to abandon the old standpoint that education should be non-political; we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics."[42]

The tie between cultural and political campaigns was particularly manifest during the civil war. As one analyst points out, it was during that period that extramural (*vneshkol'naia*) education was first called "political-education work": "The new name underlined somehow, that cultural-educational work should be filled with political content, that communist education of the workers was now the main task of the cultural-educational organizations."[43] Krupskaia, who headed the political-education section (Glavpolitprosvet) of Narkompros (Commissariat of Enlightenment) and warned against "empty chatter" and "agitational distortion," nevertheless made the same connections: Political-educational organizations [*politprosvety*] from the very beginning put forward the position that even the liquidation of illiteracy should be closely tied with the propaganda of communist ideas."[44]

The reason for the "politicization of knowledge" was clear: to secure the support of the peasants during the civil war and to prevent them from being influenced by White propaganda. Consequently, cultural-educational organizations were charged with inculcating in the population the "most elementary ideas of revolution and socialism and the most urgent tasks in the defense of the achievements of the October Revolution."[45] Pethybridge notes that Soviet primers for adult illiterates, published during the civil war, merged the introduction to the alphabet "with the crudest exposition of Bolshevik political and socio-economic tenets."[46]

Cultural-educational organizations, such as workers' clubs, rural reading rooms (*izby-chital 'ni*), and libraries, increased from about sixteen thousand at the end of 1917 to about ninety-five thousand by 1920.[47] The press, radio, museums, libraries, and theaters carried on a

41. Ibid., p. 78.

42. V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the All-Russia Conference of Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd Education Departments," 3 November 1920, in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 152.

43. Andreeva, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, p. 19.

44. N. Krupskaia, "Politprosvet rabota v svete zavetov Lenina," *Kommunisticheskoe prosveshchenie*, no. 5 (1927), in Krupskaia, *O kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi rabote*, p. 95.

45. M. P. Kim, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 138–39.

46. Pethybridge, *Social Prelude*, p. 151.

47. Andreeva, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, p. 23. For the activities of Narkompros,

lively campaign both for the "defense of the October Revolution" and for learning the ABC's. To add to the atmosphere of a massive and urgent campaign, five "agit-trains" and one "agit-boat" toured the countryside, distributing leaflets and organizing meetings and speeches.[48]

Although agitation and propaganda continued to be important components of "legitimation" and acquisition of support, the NEP represented an abrupt change from the massive and simplistic campaign of war commuism. This change may have been due partly to the recognition that heavy-handed agitation was futile. To propagate "purely and strictly communist ideas" among the rural proletariat without the "material basis for communism" in the countryside would, according to Lenin, be harmful, "in fact... fatal."[49]

For this reason, Lenin recommended that "propaganda of the old type," which simply described communism, be discarded. In its place, he suggested a propaganda of the new type, which would be based "on the political experience of economic development." He projected modest, but attainable, goals:

> Our main policy must now be to develop the state economically, so as to gather in more poods of grain and mine more poods of coal, to decide how best to utilise these poods of grain and coal and preclude starvation—that is our policy. All our agitation and propaganda must be focused on this aim. There must be less fine talk, for you cannot satisfy the working people with fine words.[50]

Adoption of Capitalist Work Habits and Methods

To Lenin, the cultural revolution implied not only mass acquisition of rudimentary knowledge but also the elimination of attitudes, habits, and customs that were "uncultured" (*nekul'turnye*)—that is, the cultural traits of old Russia that were associated with apathy, slovenliness, and superstition. One of the foremost and most difficult problems facing

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see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge, England, 1970).

48. As a general estimate of the agitational propaganda work during this period of time, it may be worth keeping in mind that "every Bolshevik was expected to be a more or less full-time agitator and propagandist." In addition, agit-prop efforts were "fragmentary and diffuse" rather than centrally organized and controlled, as in later years. Alec Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 32.

49. Lenin, "Pages from a Diary," p. 204. Pethybridge maintains that in ending the policy of using the literacy campaign as a convenient instrument for quick indoctrination, Lenin was "reverting to his real preference for an intellectually respectable system of general education." Pethybridge, *Social Prelude*, p. 152.

50. Lenin, "Speech at Conference of Political Education Workers," pp. 162–63.

modernizing leaders is such a cultural transformation. It involves, as Lowenthal says:

> the promotion of a cultural revolution to make people work-minded and development-minded, to tap human reserves by the emancipation of women, to overcome the countless obstacles to disciplined rational effort resulting from traditional superstitution—in short, to achieve what reformation, counter-reformation, and enlightenment combined achieved over centuries in the West, and to do so in the atmosphere of a demoralising breakdown of tradition.[51]

None of this transformation would be easy to accomplish. One observer thought the Russians were plagued by a "phlegmatic fatalism," which was "unquestionably one of the most serious obstacles to the spread of the technico-mechanical spirit which the Bolsheviks [were] trying to make universal."[52] In Lenin's own estimate, the Russian was "a bad worker compared with people in advanced countries. It could not be otherwise under the tsarist regime and in view of the persistence of the hangover from serfdom. The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope is—to learn to work."[53] The existing labor force was semipeasant, semiproletarian. As Dewar points out, the majority of Russian workers had "no industrial tradition of long standing; many of them were seasonal workers, still tied to the land." Moreover, the economic situation under war communism had deteriorated to such an extent that "even skilled workers were leaving industry to try to make a living on the land or in artels."[54] There was considerable fluctation of the industrial labor force in the 1917–28 period, with a substantial decrease in 1920–21 (1.5 million, as compared to 3 million in 1917) and then an increase in 1924–25 (2.2 million), until, by 1928, the labor force stood at approximately the same strength as in 1917.[55] The increase of the labor force under the more favorable economic conditions of the NEP consisted, to a large degree, of peasants flocking into the towns and cities in search of jobs in industry.[56] This

51. Richard Lowenthal, "The Points of the Compass," in *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries*, ed. John H. Kautsky (New York, 1962), p. 340.

52. René Fülöp-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1965), p. 205.

53. V. I. Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," 13–26 April 1918, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 417.

54. Margaret Dewar, *Labour Policy in the USSR, 1917–1928* (London, 1956), p. 42.

55. Boris Meissner, "Social Change in Bolshevik Russia," in Meissner, *Social Change*, pp. 92–93.

56. In fact, such a large amount of people flooded into the cities that mass unemployment resulted and the government had to take measures to stop the migration. See A. Broderson, *The Soviet Worker* (New York, 1966), p. 59.

rapid influx of peasants, of course, complicated the effort to instill good work habits even further. Out of this mass of peasants, the Soviet regime hoped to form an educated and trained working class, removed from the peasant way of life and inculcated with the spirit of industrialism.[57]

For this task, literacy was obviously not enough; skills and motivation were not only more important but also more difficult to achieve. What Lenin seemed to have in mind in his call "learn to work" was similar to the work ethic associated with capitalist countries.[58] One Soviet analyst explains it this way:

> V. I. Lenin did not limit the development of the worker to an increase in the level of his general educational preparation. Speaking about the lifting of the cultural level of the masses, he . . . understood it also to mean production habit, knowing how to work, proficiency and intensity of labor—that is, all those components which comprise skill.[59]

But how could the work ethic, the "spirit of capitalism" as Weber called it, be developed in the Soviet Union? In England, points out Bendix, the "ethic of work performance" preceded industrialization by several generations and was a product of the "combined legacies of craftsmanship, the Puritan ethic, and the rising ideology of individual striving and success." Russia's legacy, in contrast, was one of autocratic rule where submission was the "principal role of conduct" rather than an "internalized work ethic." "Employers failed to appeal to the conscience or self-esteem of the workers; and the reliance on fear and coercion effectively precluded the development of an internalized ethic of work performance."[60]

Bendix suggests that the Soviet "functional equivalent" of the Protestant ethic was a product of an organized drive by a totalitarian party, externally imposed and subject to party supervision. In comparison to the gradual process in England, the development of a work ethic, mass

57. Prior to 1917, there were permanent cadres of industrial workers "who tended to form a separate social unit with the characteristics of a modern urban working class." This unit, however, was very small in relation to the total population and was distinguished by a "dual character, half-peasant and half-proletarian." Gliksman, "Russian Urban Worker," p. 317.

58. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958). Also see Wilbert E. Moore, "Motivational Aspects of Development," in *Social Change*, ed. Amitai Etzioni and Eva Etzioni (New York, 1964), pp. 291–99.

59. Karpov, *Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii*, p. 171.

60. Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (New York, 1963), pp. 205–6.

education, and industrialization was collapsed into one simultaneous process in the Soviet Union.[61]

The results, however, were not the same. Upon closer inspection, it appears that there are, in fact, two dimensions implicit in the "work ethic": one refers to an entrepreneurial drive or achievement motivation and the other to labor discipline and steady, methodical work habits. One requires initiative, risk-taking, and ambition; the other emphasizes conformity, steadfastness, and diligence.

In terms of the former, it can be argued that the party itself assumed the role of the entrepreneur. Although of utmost importance to the development of capitalism in the West, entrepreneurship had only slowly begun to develop in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Russia.[62] Given this background, it becomes somewhat less surprising that Lenin encouraged party members to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. He expressed precisely these pragmatic sentiments when he said that the "proletarian state must become a cautious, assiduous and shrewd 'businessman,' a punctilious *wholesale merchant,*" even though a merchant was "an economic type as remote from communism as heaven from earth."[63] At least one commentator seems to think that party members rose to the occasion; he concludes that the Communist party "fulfilled the traditional role of the entrepreneur, providing the ruthless energy, organizing ability and leadership without which rapid economic development would have been impossible."[64]

Lenin himself, however, was not convinced that party members had acquired the necessary work habits to govern well. He recognized that part of the problem was how to transform fervent revolutionaries into efficient administrators: "It is understandable that the Party which leads the revolutionary proletariat has not been able to acquire the experience and habits of large organizational undertakings embracing millions and tens of millions of citizens; the remoulding of the old, almost exclusively agitators' habits is a very lengthy process."[65]

Nevertheless, four years after the October Revolution, Lenin detected

61. Reinhard Bendix, "The Cultural and Political Setting of Economic Rationality in Western and Eastern Europe," in *State and Society*, ed. Reinhard Bendix (Boston, 1968), pp. 336–39.

62. See Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), chap. 3., on the gradual development of the entrepreneur in Russia, despite the contempt for entrepreneurial activity held by the nobility and gentry. He also notes the possibility of "substitutions" for the role of the entrepreneur.

63. V. I. Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," 14 October 1921, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 651.

64. Charles K. Wilber, *The Soviet Model and Underdeveloped Countries* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969), p. 17.

65. Lenin, "Immediate Tasks," p. 419.

little improvement. Addressing the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922, he declared, "We have not got the right men in the right places,... responsible Communists who acquitted themselves magnificently during the revolution have been given commercial and industrial functions about which they know nothing."[66] Although the functionaries who were left over from the tsarist regime and manned the administrative machine caused Lenin considerable concern, he was even more dismayed by the ineffectiveness of the Communist administrators: "If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed."[67]

The German apparatus, always a point of comparison for Lenin, suffered less from some of the evils of bureaucracy because it was administered by employees who had been properly schooled; it was an apparatus "which sucks people dry but compels them to work and not just wear out armchairs, as happens in our offices."[68] The lack of such schooling, charged Lenin, was leading to harmful results. The same people who had once been willing to lay down their lives for the communist cause either were confounded by bureaucratic procedures or were succumbing to the "trappings of power." Lenin particularly warned against communist conceit (*komchvanstvo*) and petty authority. He reminded party members: "Your principles are communist, your ideals are splendid... but can you get things done?"[69] Over and over, he chided communist administrators for lack of innovation and initiative: "In all spheres of social, economic and political relationships we are 'frightfully' revolutionary. But as regards precedence, the observance of the forms and rites of office management, our 'revolutionariness' often gives way to the mustiest routine."[70]

Lenin's frustration shows, at a minimum, that it is not easy to graft an entrepreneurial drive onto a society whose sociocultural foundation is entirely different from that of the "school of capitalism." It raises the question of whether it is possible to adopt the product of Protes-

66. Lenin, "Report to the Eleventh Congress," p. 304.

67. Ibid., p. 288. Lewin maintains that the administrative machine became "a real social support of the state; it carried out more or less efficiently the tasks assigned to it by the state and, in spite of everything, it was linked to the state by the fact that it contained at least some elements that were loyal to the new regime." M. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1970), p. 9.

68. V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Party Program," Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.), 19 March 1919, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:182.

69. Lenin, "Report to the Eleventh Congress," p. 273.

70. Lenin, "Better Fewer," p. 708.

tantism, entrepreneurship, while rejecting its underlying religious infrastructure. The work ethic in Europe became internalized and self-generating because it sprung from a deep-rooted, religious source, Protestantism. It is not clear from the evidence that Marxism, as a political religion, was able to serve the same function.[71] Revolutionary fervor and technocratic ideals may not survive beyond the immediate aftermath of revolution. Moreover, an attempt to borrow only some parts of the work ethic—for example, an enterprising spirit but not competitiveness—may produce distortions or failure. Lenin's call for discipline, in particular, seems to have missed the point: capitalism did not simply "compel people to work"; it also created an internal drive and conditions conducive to innovation. Entrepreneurs flourish because of the right conditions, not because of discipline campaigns. The Soviet version of the work ethic was not so much a functional equivalent as a substitute, with different repercussions at the level both of the worker and of the political system as a whole.

A similar search for substitutes and for learning from the school of capitalism appears in relation to the second dimension of the work ethic—labor discipline and work habits. As Marx had considered "bourgeois civilization" necessary to overcome "Oriental despotism," so Lenin looked to large-scale capitalism to combat the "semi-Asiatic ignorance" of Russian society.[72]

Lenin was both intrigued and repelled by the latest developments under capitalism. On the one hand, he argued that the purpose of the " 'scientific' system" of Taylorism was "to squeeze out of the worker three times more labor during a given working day."[73] On the other hand, he thought Taylorism represented "an enormous gain in labor

71. There is a continuing controversy among scholars over this point. Wilber, for example, offers the opposite argument: "Marxism was substituted for the Protestant ethic in motivating this new ruling class and in providing ideological cohesion for society." Wilber, *Soviet Model*, p. 17. Gerschenkron, in his discussion of the rise of the entrepreneurial value system, also credits Marxism in this connection on the ground that Marxism valued industrialization as opposed to the Narodnik position. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness*, chap. 3. Also see Timothy W. Luke, "The Proletarian Ethic and Soviet Industrialization," *American Political Science Review* 77, no. 3 (September 1983): 588–601. In comparison, Bendix does not refer specifically to Marxism as a source for the Russian "functional equivalent" of the Protestant ethic. Instead, he mentions "technocratic ideals" and "revolutionary fervor." Bendix, "Cultural and Political Setting."

72. Marx, however, did not analyze the attitudinal prerequisites to industrialization, as did Weber. Zeitlin argues that Weber's work should be viewed "not in opposition to Marx but as an effort to round out the latter's method." Irving M. Zeitlin, *Marxism: A Re-Examination* (New York, 1967), pp. 85–86.

73. V. I. Lenin, " 'Nauchnaia' sistema vyzhimaniia pota," 13 March 1913, in *Sochineniia*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1948), 18: 556–57.

productivity" and a "rational and efficient distribution of labor."[74] Even before the Revolution, Lenin suggested that what was wrong with Taylorism was that it was introduced solely for the profits of the capitalist and that it was "confined to each factory." "What about the distribution of labor in society as a whole?" he asked.[75] In other words, it was not really the inherent methods and principles of Taylorism that Lenin rejected, only their use for profit and exploitation, which limited the scope of efficiency under capitalism. "The Taylor system—without its initiators knowing or wishing it—is preparing the time when the proletariat will take over all social production and appoint its own workers' committees for the purpose of properly distributing and rationalizing all social labor."[76]

After the Revolution, Lenin espoused the use of the Taylor system "to our own ends," specifically in the task of learning how to work:

> The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analyzing mechanical motions during work, the eliminatiom of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field.[77]

Lenin was untroubled by the unorthodox marriage he was proposing between capitalism and socialism. On the contrary, he insisted that "the possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism."[78] Similarly, he stressed that a new socialist discipline "does not drop from the skies, nor is it born from pious wishes"; rather, "it grows out of the material conditions of large-scale capitalist production."[79] Even though those material conditions were not yet laid down, Lenin seemed to hope that Taylorist methods would serve as a "substitute" for an internalized work ethic. The Taylor system would organize the work process in such a way that rationality and efficiency could be achieved despite the poorly skilled labor force.

74. V. I. Lenin, "The Taylor System—Man's Enslavement by the Machine," 13 March 1914, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 20: 153.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 154.
77. Lenin, "Immediate Tasks," p. 417.
78. Ibid.
79. V. I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," 28 June 1919, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 485.

The NOT movement in Russia was a direct response to Lenin's suggestion that Taylorism could be adapted to Soviet ends. NOT was a general movement for the development of labor discipline and "scientific management"; it was organized in small groups in factories, in offices, and even inside the Red Army. It was a conscious attempt to solve problems of labor productivity and management. Lenin lent his support to two organizations specifically involved in the NOT movement. The Liga Vremia (League of Time) sought to instill elementary habits of factory life, such as coming to work on time, and the Tsentral'nyi Institut Truda (Central Institute of Labor) trained new recruits in the simple motions associated with the rhythm of machines and with the assembly line.[80]

To the degree that Lenin noted a difference in using capitalist methods under the dictatorship of the proletariat, it had to do with the elimination of the private ownership of the means of production. This elimination of capitalist ownership would bring about a change in attitude and would lay the groundwork for a new work ethic: "For the first time after a century of labor for others,... there is the possibility of *working for oneself*, and with the work based on all the achievements of the latest technology and culture."[81]

Lenin recognized that he was advocating the traits that were previously favored by the "exploiters"; however, he seems to have believed, and expected the workers to understand, that a dictatorship of the proletariat constituted the critical difference:

> Keep regular and honest accounts of money, manage economically, do not be lazy, do not steal, observe the strictest labor discipline—it is these slogans, justly scorned by the revolutionary proletáriat when the bourgeoisie used them to conceal its rule as an exploting class, that are now, since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, becoming the immediate and the principal slogans of the momemt.... The practical application of these slogans by the *Soviet* state, by *its* methods, on the basis of *its* laws, is a necessary and *sufficient* condition for the final victory of socialism.[82]

Within this framework, the question of alienation was not so much unimportant as irrelevant for Lenin. He did not direct his attention to the work process itself as a source of alienation. If the Russian worker held a negative attitude toward work or was unproductive, Lenin dismissed this attitude as a "hangover from serfdom" that would be erad-

80. For a fuller discussion, see Zenovia A. Sochor, "Soviet Taylorism Revisited," *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 2 (April 1981): 246–64.

81. V. I. Lenin, "Kak organizovat' sorevnovanie?" 24–27 December 1917, in V. I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1969), p. 399.

82. Lenin, "Immediate Tasks," p. 405.

icated through a process of education and industrialization. According to one Soviet analyst, one of the aims of the cultural revolution was to "transform the habits formed over a century of regarding labor from the point of view of someone who is oppressed" and to make each worker "a genuine master of production, responsible for discipline and productivity of labor."[83] Thus, the objectives of the cultural revolution were training and education, in accordance with industrialization requirements, rather than worker participation and control.

Although Lenin detected some hopeful signs of a "new social bond, a new social discipline" in the "Communist Saturdays" (*subbotniki*) of "voluntary" overtime labor without pay, he concluded that a new labor discipline could result only from a protracted process, rather than seeing it as objective to be implemented in the early stages of socialism. The initial struggle was against "conservatism, indiscipline, and petty-bourgeois egoism."[84]

In order to raise the productivity of labor, neither competition nor the use of compulsion was denied for the transitional period, "so that the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat," declared Lenin, "shall not be desecrated by the practice of a lily-livered proletarian government."[85] By April 1918, the first of a series of regulations and measures were issued to enforce discipline and increase productivity through the use of piece-rates, bonuses, and norms.[86] "Socialist competition" was also introduced as an acceptable version of "capitalist competition."[87]

For all intents and purposes, very little was omitted from the curriculum of the "school of capitalism." Quite clearly, for Lenin, expediency, rather than the more "esoteric" questions of ideological consistency, set the agenda.

Gradual Transformation of Peasant Mentality

Although Lenin found it difficult to introduce programs that would bring about the desired cultural changes among party members and workers, he could at least take for granted a certain degree of legitimacy of the regime in their eyes. This shared legitimacy, however, was not

83. Karpov, *Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii*, p. 180.

84. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," p. 478.

85. Lenin, "Immediate Tasks," p. 417.

86. E. H. Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2: 115. Carr notes that the left opposition strongly criticized these measures as threatening the "enslavement of the working class."

87. In practical terms, of course, the differences were minimal or nonexistent. See Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism* (New York, 1965), pp. 205–9, for a discussion of socialist competition.

the case among the peasants, who knew little about Marxism or communism and adopted a "wait and see" attitude toward the regime. Acutely conscious of the fact that the peasants constituted the vast "masses," Lenin sought to establish better relations between town and country.

If nothing else, it was certain that the peasants were crucial to the economic revival of the country. Consequently, the policy of forced grain requisition and of "class war" in the villages, typical of war communism, was abruptly dropped. Moreover, since the polarization between the rich and the poor peasants, which the Bolsheviks had tried to promote through Committees of the Poor, had not occurred,[88] a policy of reconciliation was adopted. Indeed, the peasant-worker alliance (*smychka*) became the cornerstone of the NEP. In practical terms, it translated into an economic alliance; that is, the concessions granted to the peasants were of an economic nature. In return for food for the cities, a tax in kind was substituted for forced requisitions, and the market was revived.

The difficulty with the policy toward the peasantry and the revival of the market was that the same conditions that spurred economic growth detracted from socialist gains. The conditions of commodity production, complained Lenin, "inevitably turn the peasant... into a huckster and profiteer." Commodity production constituted a "very sound, deep-rooted basis for capitalism, a basis on which capitalism persists or arises anew in a bitter struggle against communism."[89]

For this reason, the NEP proved to be a double-edged sword. Although it was a policy of *smychka*, it was also one of *kto kogo*, a struggle between the proletariat and the growing "capitalist elements."[90] As Lenin pointed out, even under the dictatorship of the proletariat:

> the peasants, like the petty bourgeoisie in general, occupy a half-way intermediate position... on the one hand, they are a fairly large (and in backward Russia, a vast) mass of working people, united by the common interest of all working people to emancipate themselves from the land-

88. See Teodor Shanin, "Socio-Economic Mobility and the Rural History of Russia, 1905–1930," *Soviet Studies* 23 (October 1971): 222–35; Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Country, Russia 1910–1925* (Oxford, 1971).

89. V. I. Lenin, "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 30 October 1919, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, pp. 499, 502. Kaufman distinguishes three main sectors under the NEP: state-owned industry, the simple commodity economy of the poor and middle peasantry, and the capitalist sector of the NEP bourgeoisie and rich peasantry. See Adam Kaufman, "The Origin of the Political Economy of Socialism," *Soviet Studies* 4 (January 1953): 243–72.

90. See S. P. Trapeznikov, *Leninizm i agrarno-krest'ianskii vopros* (Moscow, 1974), 1: esp. 463–68.

owner and the capitalist; on the other hand, they are disunited small proprietors, property-owners and traders. Such an economic position inevitably causes them to vacillate between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.[91]

In this context, the arena of struggle was the market. Lenin repeatedly called on party members to assume leadership in the market by "learning to trade." The task at hand was "to *revive* trade, petty proprietorship, capitalism while cautiously and gradually getting the upper hand over them."[92] The objective, over the long run, was to "control trade, direct it into definite channels, keep it within certain limits."[93]

Lenin understood that ultimately only industrialization and its concomitant changes would decrease the urban-rural gap and bring about a transformation in peasant mentality. Consequently, he proposed, as a first step, a policy of electrification. He thought electrification would serve as a "modernizing agent," as a partial substitute for urbanization; it would bring the city to the village, so to speak, and inject visible evidence of modern scientific progress. Dobb remarks that Lenin's "dream of electrification" was an essential part of spreading the industrial revolution to the countryside; it was a way "to transform the environment of the *muzhik* [Russian peasant], his habits and way of life and his psychology."[94]

Lenin was convinced of the beneficial social consequences of technology and the importance of electrification in remolding the attitudes of the small farmer. As he put it: "The only way to solve this problem of the small farmer—to improve, so to speak, his mentality—is through the material basis, technical equipment, the extensive use of tractors and other farm machinery and electrification on a mass scale. This would remake the small farmer fundamentally and with tremendous speed."[95]

It is worth remembering Lenin's familiar statement: "Communism is Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country. Otherwise the country will remain a small-peasant country." In other words, Lenin considered electrification valid for both technological and cultural transformation. Accordingly, he urged that every factory and every electric power station be converted into "a stronghold of enlightenment to

91. Lenin, "Economics and Politics," p. 504.
92. Lenin, "Importance of Gold," p. 654.
93. Ibid., p. 657.
94. Maurice Dobb, *Russian Economic Development since the Revolution* (London, 1929), p. 371.
95. V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Substitution of a Tax in Kind for the Surplus-Grain Appropriation System," 15 March 1921, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32: 217.

be used to make the masses electricity-conscious."[96] He encouraged all schools and study circles to adopt Stepanov's book on electrification as one of their basic textbooks and as an aid in overcoming cultural backwardness.[97]

If one way to change peasant thinking was to encircle the village in an industrial network, another was to promote direct contacts between workers and peasants. With this end in mind, Lenin proposed the creation of a number of associations (party, trade-union, and private) of factory workers that would devote themselves regularly "to assisting the villages in their cultural development."[98] "Patronage [*shefstvo*] societies" were organized for this purpose. As a reflection of the NEP mood in general, they became known as "societies of *smychka*." The Thirteenth Party Congress offered a boost to their work by heralding the slogan "face to the villages." By the end of 1925, according to one Soviet analyst, over a million members were enrolled in these societies.[99]

In practical terms, the activities of the patronage societies were translated largely into campaigns and drives of an agitational character. Material assistance consisted of small-scale activities, such as sending newspapers, pencils, and loudspeakers; organizing radio programs and film presentations; and collecting money for tractors. These societies also made efforts to help organize cooperatives and to establish village reading rooms.

The patronage society work, however, fell far short of the original objective of cementing relations between workers and peasants. Much of it was superficial and intermittent and amounted to little more than periodic excursions to the villages. Krupskaia, while defending the "serious work" that was being done, did not mince words in listing the shortcomings of the patronage societies: The patrons (*shefy*) arrive in a village, promise machines, and leave. They then send thirty bro-

96. V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Work of the Council of People's Commissars," 22 December 1920, Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31: 516–17.

97. See Lenin's introduction to I. Stepanov, *Elektrifikatsiia RSFSR* (Moscow, 1923).

98. Lenin, "Pages from a Diary," p. 688.

99. Andreeva, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, pp. 64, 66. The million members is probably an inflated figure. Harper notes that many of the members were "on paper" only. For example, an investigation of one factory revealed that of three hundred formal members, only one was an active patronage worker. Samuel N. Harper, *Civic Training in Soviet Russia* (Chicago, 1929), p. 194. Stelliferovskaia remarks that "excursions" to villages were popular with the workers, with about ten thousand workers participating. E. N. Stelliferovskaia, "Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota v derevne (1924–1925)," in *Ocherki po istorii sovestkoi nauki i kul'tury*, ed. A. V. Artsikhovskii (Moscow, 1968), p. 77.

chures, a choir leader, and a bottle of glue to paste on false beards at spectacles.[100]

In comparison, Krupskaia considered the village reading rooms *izby-chital'ni* a somewhat more substantial contribution to raising the cultural level of the peasants. The rooms were the center of whatever cultural-educational work actually took place in the villages; they included "Red Corners," libraries, illiteracy liquidation points, and reading circles. The larger reading rooms had their own permanent directors, the *izbachi*. The number of village reading rooms rose to 24,924 in 1925–26 from 11,357 in 1923–24.[101] Their uses were simple; the directors organized activities such as group reading sessions and lectures on topics ranging from basic sanitary-hygienic habits to the political struggle against the wealthier peasants (kulaks). Attempts were made to incorporate the "village intelligentsia"—teachers, medical personnel, and agronomists—in the activities of the reading rooms, although with mixed success. Perhaps the most enthusiastic participants were the Komsomol (Communist Youth League) members.[102] As a result of the "face to the villages" campaign, the number of rural Komsomol members increased from 300,000 in 1924 to 900,000 by the end of 1925.[103] By 1927, 85 percent of the *izbachi* were Komsomol members. At the March 1927 conference of directors, 154 of the 211 delegates were under twenty-seven years old.[104] Not surprisingly, however, city-bred Komsomol members were often greeted with hostility by the villagers; older members of the villages particularly resented the "rowdyism" of the youths and their "hooliganist" tactics in the antireligion campaign.

Although the patronage societies and village reading rooms were directed at raising the cultural level of the peasants, the pivotal point in attitudinal change was the cooperatives. They were intended to integrate the peasants into the socialist system and to wean them away from individualism and petty-bourgeois habits (*meshchanstvo*). Precisely for this reason, Lenin considered a cultural revolution the necessary complement to the cooperative system. The organization of

100. Krupskaia, "Kul'turnaia rabota v derevne," p. 51.

101. Stelliferovskaia, "Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota," p. 81.

102. Lenin himself urged the Komsomol to "go into the rural districts to abolish illiteracy." V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues," 2 October 1920, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 618.

103. Ralph Talcott Fisher, Jr., *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918–1954* (New York, 1951), p. 129.

104. S. G. Denisov, "Deiatel'nost' Komsomola po likvidatsii negramotnosti na sele (1921–1925)," in *Narodnye massy i stroitel'stvo sovetskoi kul'tury*, ed. V. P. Naumov et al. (Moscow, 1969), p. 61.

cooperatives, he said, "presupposes a standard of culture among the peasantry that cannot, in fact, be achieved without a cultural revolution." He placed a good deal of faith in this missing ingredient, as can be seen in the following remarks:

> Strictly speaking, there is "*only*" one thing we have left to do and that is to make our people so "enlightened" that they understand all the advantages of everybody participating in the work of the cooperatives, and organize this participation. "*Only*" that. There are now no other devices needed to advance to socialism. But to achieve this "only," there must be a veritable revolution—the entire people must go through a period of cultural development.[105]

In this context, Lenin broadened the concept of the cultural revolution beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge to encompass a change in attitudes and consciously directed participation. Thus, the cultural revolution implied both education and persuasion, with a steady stream of agitation and propaganda. Some combination of cultural revolution and a growing "material base," to Lenin's way of thinking, would lead to socialism. In 1923, his formula for socialism became the following: "Given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilized cooperators is the system of socialism."[106]

This formula was fully in keeping with Lenin's general predisposition toward first things first. As Marcuse points out, it was also in accord with Lenin's assumption that "socialism presupposes capitalism—or at least the achievement of capitalism, namely, a high degree of industrialization, a high productivity of labor, and a highly developed, skilled, and disciplined labor force."[107] In a largely peasant country, noted Lenin, "solid gangways to socialism" have to be built "by way of state capitalism."[108] No matter how daring and innovative the seizure of power was, the school of capitalism could not be bypassed.

Lenin's position logically led him to look upon Western capitalist countries, especially Germany and the United States, as his reference points. Although the Bolshevik leaders did not advocate direct emulation or unmitigated "Westernization," they expressed considerable admiration for Western skill and technology. Lenin repeatedly admonished the Russians to learn from the Germans and to adopt the latest efficiency methods from the Americans. According to Meyer, "the 'culture' Lenin had in mind when he preached the cultural revolution

105. Lenin, "On Cooperation," p. 692.
106. Ibid., p. 693.
107. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*, p. 28.
108. Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary," p. 651.

entailed technological skill, political maturity, and other aspects of Westernization."[109] Bukharin even suggested a synthesis of "Marxism plus Americanism." The budding socialist system required a "new psychological type," he contended, one that would "possess the fine characteristics of the old Russian intelligentsia in the sense of Marxist preparation, wideness of scope, and theoretical analysis of events, but with an American practical grasp."[110] Following this line of thought, one analyst claims that "Americanism, the advocacy and invocation of the American example and experience—primarily but not exclusively in the economic realm—came to supplement Marxism as an ideology of development and industrialization, both before and after 1917."[111]

To be sure, Lenin proposed a combination of "the victorious proletarian revolution with bourgeois culture, with bourgeois science and technology."[112] He hoped, however, to industrialize "without capitalism and without the capitalist spirit."[113] If state capitalism was instructive as a model, it nevertheless had to be kept "within certain bounds." Certainly, the task of the proletariat was "to subordinate and not be subordinated itself" by state capitalism. The key, according to Lenin, was that "when we say 'state' we mean ourselves, the proletariat, the vanguard of the working class."[114] He asserted that "for hundreds of years, states have been built according to the bourgeois model, and for the first time a non-bourgeois-form of state has been discovered."[115] Thus, Lenin's resolution of the inherent difficulties in assimilating bourgeois culture, adopting capitalist methods, and employing bourgeois specialists, without at the same time submitting to internal degeneration and bourgeois influences, lay in the role of the state and specifically the role of the party. The state would provide the necessary framework to contain and confine the undesired consequences of borrowing from the capitalists.

There is little doubt that Lenin represented mainstream Bolshevism

109. Alfred G. Meyer, "The Use of the Term Culture in the Soviet Union" (app. B), in Alfred Lewis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 216.

110. N. I. Bukharin, *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia i kul'tura* (St. Petersburg, 1923), p. 48.

111. Hans Rogger, "*Amerikanizm* and the Economic Development of Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (July 1981): 387–88. Also see Kendall E. Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917–1941," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (July 1981): 421–48.

112. Lenin, "Achievements and Difficulties," p. 74.

113. Lenin, "Speech at Conference of Political Education Workers," p. 163. For a discussion, see David Lane, "Leninism as an Ideology of Soviet Development," in *Sociology and Development*, ed. E. de Kadt and G. Williams (London, 1974), pp. 23–37.

114. Lenin, "Report to the Eleventh Congress," pp. 278–79.

115. Ibid., p. 301.

in his thinking. Trotsky, for example, declared that "Americanized Bolshevism will triumph and smash imperialist Americanism."[116] Stalin concluded, approvingly, that "the combination of Russian revolutionary sweeps and American efficiency is the essence of Leninism in party and state work."[117]

In contrast, Bogdanov and the Proletkult leaders, among others, expressed reservations about the school of capitalism. In particular, they rejected the assimilation of bourgeois culture under party control as the main feature of the cultural revolution during the transitional period. They proposed instead a direct transformation of the old bourgeois culture and active development of the new socialist culture as their prime objective. Although they conceded that the industrialization process was common to both capitalism and socialism, they repudiated an uncritical acceptance of the accompanying cultural attributes as inimical to the new social order. Bogdanov offered Proletkult as an alternative source of values, a "school of socialism," which would encourage specifically socialist traits rather than universal "modern" ones. Professionalism and specialization, for example, were eschewed in the work of the Proletkult studios. Indeed, Proletkult was dedicated to principles that seemed to contradict Lenin's favored work ethic in many ways. For this reason alone, it was born under a shadow.

116. L. D. Trotsky, "K voprosu o perspektivakh mirovogo razvitiia," *Izvestiia*, 5 August 1924, pp. 3–4, as cited in Rogger, "*Amerikanizm*," p. 385.

117. J. V. Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism* (Peking, 1970), p. 120.

6 /

School of Socialism: Proletkult

Interpreting the October Revolution as a magnificent opportunity to put theory into practice, Bogdanov and his followers quickly unfurled a program of cultural transformation. Reservations about the political dimensions of the revolution did not dampen the enthusiasm for developing proletarian culture on a grand scale. On the contrary, Bogdanov considered the sudden spurt of activities following on the heels of the October Revolution to be a vindication of his ideas. Already in 1909, he claimed, it was recognized that cultural goals would have to supplement political ones in the process of revolutionary change. And now, with the advent of the October Revolution, the "idea of an independent proletarian culture has acquired the character of an ultimatum, posed by history to our working class."[1]

The cultural revolution implied something new and unique to the proletariat, much more than "democratization." Although cultural backwardness was truly a problem, it could not define the cultural task in its entirety. As Bogdanov noted: "Indisputably, literacy is indispensable to the worker as a tool of intercourse and instruction, and the innocent popularization [of books and lessons] is also useful, but these are tasks that are hardly characteristic either of a given class or of our epoch. They were promoted by the very fact of transition from feudal to bourgeois society, and their first bearer was the bourgeoisie."[2]

1. A. A. Bogdanov, "Proletarskii Universitet" (1918), in A. A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture: Sbornik statei, 1904–24* (Leningrad and Moscow, 1925), p. 247.
2. A. A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), p. 55.

In other words, it was not enough to overcome the deficiencies of the past; it was crucial to start constructing the new society. Although it was possible to make use of bourgeois culture, it was also necessary to "create, juxtapose to it, and disseminate among the masses a new proletarian culture."[3] Bogdanov, in contrast to Lenin, identified two kinds of cultural backwardness: one in relation to capitalism and the other in relation to socialism. Hence, it was important not only to learn but also to learn to be a socialist. For the latter task, the school of capitalism could offer few guidelines; rather, a school of socialism would have to be built.

As part of his argument, Bogdanov drew a parallel to the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, which preceded it, urging the proletariat to fulfill the roles of Diderot and the French *encyclopédistes*. The French bourgeoisie, he contended, had encountered a wall of outgrown world views, blind faith, and submission to authority. In order to destroy this wall and "to introduce order into its constructive work," the bourgeoisie "created and adopted its new world outlook" based on its own philosophy and convictions. A similar task awaited the proletariat. Accordingly, Bogdanov proposed the creation of a Proletarian University, so that a new intelligentsia, emanating from the proletariat itself, would scrutinize the unstated premises in all spheres of knowledge and produce a Proletarian Encyclopedia that would reflect the new *Weltanschauung*.[4]

The hallmark of Bogdanov's efforts, however, was more immediate—a mass organization to enroll workers in a school of socialism that would actively nurture new values and attitudes. This organization, which became known as Proletkult (Proletarian Culture), came as close as possible to being a "live laboratory" for Bogdanov's ideas. As such, it was far beyond a literary organization, as it is usually treated by Western scholars.[5] Although Proletkult spawned large numbers of proletarian writers, poets, and playwrights, its propositions, debates and goals were

3. Bogdanov, "Proletarskii universitet," p. 245.

4. A. A. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta* (Moscow, 1920), p. 13.

5. See Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–1932* (New York, 1953); H. Borland, *Soviet Literary Theory and Practice during the First Five-Year Plan, 1928–32* (New York, 1950); Herman Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories, 1917–1934* (Berkeley, Calif., 1963); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge, England, 1970), esp. chap. 5; Max Hayward and Leopold Labedz, eds., *Literature and Revolution in Soviet Russia, 1917–1962* (Oxford, 1963); Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's* (Princeton, N.J., 1968); M. Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature* (New York, 1968). An exception to the rule is found in Gabriele Gorzka, *A. Bogdanov und der russische Proletkult: Theorie und Praxis einer sozialistischen Kulturrevolution* (Frankfurt, 1980).

hardly restricted to literary matters; on the contrary, it hoped to launch its own version of cultural revolution during the transition to socialism—a revolution that differed substantially from Lenin's.

Organizational Background

The genesis of Proletkult can be traced to the split between Lenin and Bogdanov in 1909, which spurred Bogdanov to turn his attention away from party activities to cultural-educational ones. The two party schools, in Capri and Bologna, as well as the Vpered faction, organized by Bogdanov and his adherents, proclaimed as their main theme the preparation of "proletarian leaders" and the development of a proletarian culture. After Vpered's disintegration, Lunacharsky organized a "circle of proletarian culture" in 1913 and, together with Lebedev-Polianskii, revived the *Vpered* journal in 1915. In October 1917 Lunacharsky and a number of former *vperedisty* called a conference of proletarian cultural-educational organizations in Petrograd. Bogdanov organized a similar conference in Moscow in February 1918.[6]

The First All-Russian Conference of Proletarian Cultural-Educational Organizations, held in Moscow September 15 to 20, 1918, marked the formal beginning of Proletkult with the adoption of a charter and the election of a Central Committee. P. I. Lebedev-Polianskii was elected chairman; F. I. Kalinin and A. I. Mashirov-Samobitnyk, vice-chairmen; and V. V Ignatov, secretary. Bogdanov was elected a member of the Central Committee as well as one of the editors of *Proletarskaia kul'tura*.[7] There were 330 delegates at the conference: 170 Bolsheviks and 54 "sympathizers," 65 unaffiliated delegates, and 41 delegates from various parties (Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, anarchists).[8] Most of the delegates were from factory committees, trade unions, and soviets, although writers' circles and other organizations were also represented.

Proletkult as an organization was divided into the following sections:

6. For Lunacharsky's role in Proletkult, see Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, pp. 89–109. For cultural-educational activities in Petrograd prior to the October Revolution, see V. V. Gorbunov, "Iz istorii kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi deiatel'nosti petrogradskikh bol'shevikov v period podgotovki Oktiabria," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 2 (1967): 25–35.

7. "Pervaia vserossiiskaia konferentsiia proletarskikh kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh organizatsii," *Proletarskaia kul'tura* (henceforth *PK*), no. 5 (November 1918): 30. Lebedev-Polianskii and Kalinin were both former *vperedisty*. Other members of the *Proletarskaia kul'tura* editorial board were Kalinin, Kerzhentsev, Lebedev-Polianskii, and Mashirov-Samobitnyk.

8. *Izvestiia VTsIK*, 26 September 1918, as quoted in V. V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't* (Moscow, 1974), p. 61.

arts (applied arts, theater, music), publications, instruction, science, youth, finance, and liaison with Narkompros. Local units of Proletkult, usually attached to factory enterprises, fed, in turn, into district, city, and regional Proletkults, with decisions being made by a council at each level. Above the district level, Proletkult was organized to correspond territorially with trade unions. Overall policy was to be decided by a national council, including representatives from Proletkult, the Bolshevik party, trade unions, workers' cooperatives, the Red Army, and socialist youth organizations.[9] Proletkult was conceived as an autonomous organization, although it was financed by Narkompros.[10]

From the very start of the conference, the resolutions adopted intimated points of friction that in the future would lead to a confrontation between party and Proletkult. Three resolutions were particularly provocative: (1) Cultural-educational work should be considered equal to economic and political work, and Proletkult should enjoy autonomy in its work; (2) all the best of past culture should remain, but it should be accepted critically and from a class point of view; (3) the proletariat should rely largely on its own forces, utilizing the assistance of the "revolutionary-socialist" intelligentsia.[11]

In essence, Proletkult laid claim to a large sphere of activity that would be independent of the party and, in its structure as well as its goals, it would in some ways run parallel to the party. Lenin was quick to sense this challenge, as was shown by his greetings to the conference, in which he urged support of the "rule of the vanguard" and suggested that Proletkult could serve a useful function by encouraging worker involvement in the government.[12] The contrast between the Proletkult resolutions and Lenin's response could not be more striking; already at the inception the lines were drawn.

Despite the iconoclastic views expressed by Proletkult theoreticians, the organization witnessed an enormous growth in size and in popularity. In 1918 there were 147 Proletkult organizations;[13] the number

9. "Pervaia vserossiiskaia konferentsiia," pp. 38–39; Tsentral'nyi komitet vserossiiskogo sovieta proletarskikh kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh organizatsii, Plan organizatsii Proletkul'ta, TsGALI (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva SSSR), f. 1230, op. 1, d. 138.

10. Proletkult was appropriated a subsidy of 9,285,700 rubles from Narkompros for the first half of 1918. In comparison, universities were allocated 16,605,700 rubles and extramural education as a whole was allocated 32,501,990 rubles. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 59.

11. "Pervaia vserossiiskaia konferentsiia," p. 31.

12. V. I. Lenin, "Pis'mo prezidiumu konferentsii proletarskikh kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh organizatsii," 17 September 1918, in V.I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1969), p. 430.

13. P. A. Bugaenko, *A. V. Lunacharskii i literaturnoe dvizhenie 20–x godov* (Saratov, 1967), p. 36.

had increased to 1,381 by the end of 1920.[14] The latter figure included 35 Proletkults at the provincial (*guberniia*) level, 247 at the district level, and 826 at the factory level. Combined, there were between 400,000 and 500,000 members involved in Proletkult by the end of 1920, with 80,000 actively working in various studios.[15]

In addition, a Proletarian University, with 450 students, was established on Proletkult initiative in Moscow in 1919.[16] The university was based on the model of the party schools in Capri and Bologna and in fact included a number of the same lecturers.[17] Bogdanov took particular pleasure in the founding of the university, declaring that it indicated "our efforts were not wasted," since the party schools had helped develop both the methods and goals of the new university. In it, the hierarchy of the past was to be replaced by "comradely cooperation" between professors and students, with a free exchange of opinions rather than authoritarianism on one side and passivity on the other. Moreover, courses were to be arranged in such a way that it would be possible to convey to adult students, within a concentrated period of time—up to two years—the most important principles of the social and natural sciences in order to help develop a class point of view. It was important, avowed Bogdanov, that the Proletarian University devise a mode of operations different from that of bourgeois universities, with new methods of instruction, new courses, and a new world outlook.[18] A co-worker explained that "proletarianization of higher schools"—that is, sending more workers to existing universities—should be considered a minimal objective, satisfactory for the transitional period but not for "communist construction."[19] The true goal, stressed Bogdanov,

14. V. A. Razumov, "Rabochii klass i kul'turnoe stoitel'stvo v pervye gody sovetskoi vlasti," in *Narodnye massy i stroitel'stvo sovetskoi kul'tury*, ed. V. P. Naumov et al. (Moscow, 1969), p. 14. Gorbunov provides the figure 300 as the total number of Proletkult organizations. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 123. The discrepancy may be due to the omission of Proletkult organizations at the factory level; the figure included only the larger organizations at the province and district levels.

15. "Vserossiiskii s'ezd Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 17–19 (August–December 1920): 74. In comparison, Komsomol membership in December 1919 was 101,000; it increased to 400,000 by October 1920. Ralph Talcott Fisher, Jr., *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918–1954* (New York, 1951), p. 409. Party membership was 350,000 in March 1919 and rose to 611,978 by March 1920. T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917–1967* (Princeton, N.J., Press, 1968), p. 52.

16. In 1920, the Proletarian University was merged with the Central School of Soviet and Party Work to become the Sverdlov Communist University—under the administrative control of Narkompros and the political control of the party. Proletkult involvement was thus eliminated. See Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, pp. 101–3.

17. E. N. Gorodetskii, "Bor'ba narodnykh mass v sozdanie sovetskoi kul'tury," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 4 (1954): 32.

18. Bogdanov, "Proletarskii universitet."

19. M. Smit, "Blizhaishie etapy proletarizatsii nauki," *PK*, nos. 17–19 (August–December 1920): 35.

was not just transmission of knowledge but transformation of self; the point was "to develop within the old society conscious and integral representatives of the new society."[20] On the basis of his experiences in worker circles as well as party schools, Bogdanov believed it was possible to build and expand socialism in this way.

Similar ideas and goals were applied to Proletkult as a whole. Cultural change meant change at many levels, not simply instruction in the ABCs, and included a variety of educational methods, not confined to the classroom setting. Proletkult, after all, was concerned largely with the arts, on the assumption that art played an important role in the assimilation of life experiences and in the engendering of human creativity. As Bogdanov wrote, "Art organizes social experience by means of live images not only in the sphere of knowledge but also in the sphere of feelings and aspirations."[21]

In general, Proletkult was identified with the network of studios. As an operating principle, studios were considered "not only schools but also places for searching for new ways. Studios break with the principle of authoritarianism and are built on the comradely basis of equality and collective creativity."[22] There were studios in drama, in literature, in music, in the applied arts (painting and sculpture), and in science. The literary-publishing studios were among the most active, with the studio members (*studiitsy*) themselves undertaking the publishing of many of the Proletkult journals. Between 1918 and 1923, as many as thirty-four Proletkult journals were published, although some were short-lived.[23] In the estimate of one of the Proletkult activists, Kerzhentsev, the most successful studios were the literature and theater ones, and the least successful were the science ones.[24]

As part of its basic orientation, Proletkult emphasized the importance of maintaining close ties with people at their places of work. The in-

20. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi*, p. 70.

21. Bogdanov, "Proletariat i iskusstvo," "Pervaia vserossiiskaia konferentsiia proletarskikh kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh organizatsii, *PK*, no. 5 (November 1918): 32.

22. P. M. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture* (Petersburg, 1921), p. 39.

23. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 125. The most significant journals were *Proletarskaia kul'tura*, *Griadushchee*, *Gorn*, and *Gudki*.

24. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, p. 43. Kerzhentsev remarks that the science studios demanded the greatest level of preparation of the participants, but appropriate instructors were not available. Science studios were part of the effort to popularize science and to "critically rework" past achievements; the main effort resided with the Proletarian University. According to Smit, the purpose of the science studios was to settle "a number of technical and economic problems" facing the proletariat and to cultivate a "conscious attitude toward the processes of labor, learning how to approach them from a comprehensive organizational point of view rather than only from [the point of view] of one's own shop." M. Smit, "Izucheniia trudovykh protsessov," *PK*, nos. 11–12 (December 1919): 47.

dustrial workers, as a whole, were treated as "the chosen people," acting as a source of inspiration and the principal participants in the creation of a new culture. For this reason, factory-level Proletkults and workers' clubs were regarded as influential centers for the "development of consciousness." A wide range of activities was assigned to them: to provide information on wages and rate-setting commissions, to display all decrees pertaining to workers, to acquaint the workers with courses available to them, to sponsor a series of lectures.[25] A 1922 report on club work listed the following topics of lectures given: historical materialism, class struggle in Russia and in world history, introduction to the history of culture, the history of art in relationship to social development, and science and the working class. Perhaps somewhat optimistically, the report claimed that the workers came to the clubs voluntarily and enthusiastically.[26]

In addition, clubs were to satisfy aesthetic needs. Art could be the most successful means of influencing the "formation of the psychology of man, freeing him from prejudices and in this way preparing the workers for further social struggle for the socialist ideal." The clubs were in fact called "live laboratories" for the development of a new life-style.[27]

Apparently, the trade unions resented the encroachment on what they considered to be their territory. They engaged in a debate with Proletkult on the "correct approach" to club work, insisting that workers' clubs should be places of relaxation rather than of education. Moreover, to the degree that educational work should be undertaken, its objective should be to raise the general cultural level. "Trade unions are not at all interested in transforming metalworkers, textile workers, construction workers, and others into actors, musicians, and other specialists in art."[28]

Despite repeated declarations that the prime objective of Proletkult was "revolutionary-creative" work, it seems that many local Proletkults interpreted this objective to mean education or agitation and propaganda. This interpretation was perhaps inevitable given the conditions

25. F. Kalinin, "Rabochii klub," *PK*, no. 2 (July 1918): 13–15.

26. Rabochii klub, 1922, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 148.

27. Kalinin, "Rabochii klub."

28. S. Levman, "Proletkul'ty i profsoiuzy," *Vestnik truda*, no. 1 (January 1924): 93–102. Levman indicates that Proletkult began to turn to club work in 1921, when it was already on the decline in other areas. Krupskaia frequently expressed displeasure with the shortcomings of club work. She maintained workers' clubs had an educational function rather than simply being "tea rooms." See N. Krupskaia, "Chem dolzhen byt' rabochii klub," *PK*, no. 4 (September 1918): 23–25; also see several of her reprinted articles on workers' clubs in N. K. Krupskaia, *O kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi rabote: Izbrannye stat'i i rechi*, ed. L. S. Frid (Moscow, 1957).

of the civil war and the pressing educational needs. It was also a result of the mushrooming of local Proletkults, which were difficult to control or to direct from the center.[29] Proletkult leaders continued to exhort local units not to remain "at the propaganda level"; rather, it was vital for the proletariat to engage in "self-activity," to try to "work out in life" the elements of proletarian culture.[30] This undertaking was, of course, far more complex and, without careful forethought and qualified personnel, difficult to implement. At the same time, Proletkult activity in "extramural education" was fairly widespread. The largest Proletkult organizations, in fact, "set up an administrative apparatus similar and in many respects parallel to the local Narkompros department."[31]

Given the broad definition of its tasks, it is not in the least surprising that Proletkult should venture into areas that overlapped or competed with those of the trade unions, Narkompros and, to some extent, the party. In time, this competition caused friction and an institutional tug-of-war, with Proletkult being cut down to size by the party. But what of the internal workings of Proletkult? What elements of proletarian culture did Proletkult leaders try to instill, and how did they go about their work?

Elements of Proletarian Culture

The transition to socialism by definition meant shedding certain attitudes and convictions and developing new ones. A culture was not something that appeared full-grown; it had to be tilled and cultivated. Bogdanov tried to suggest elements of proletarian culture that could be further expanded and elaborated. As a point of departure, he believed that a necessary element was an attachment to and appreciation of labor, because "the life of the working class is defined by its labor." Although it was true that the peasantry and the working intelligentsia were also "laboring classes," the former was submissive to the forces of nature and the latter was divorced from both nature and physical work. Only the proletariat, asserted Bogdanov, was capable of achieving mastery over nature and combining the "work of the head with that of the hands."[32]

29. See S. Krivtsov, "Khronika Proletkul'ta," *PK*, no. 1 (July 1918): 31–32; O. Rainin, "Rost Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 9–10 (June–July 1919): 30–35.

30. V. Polianskii, "Pod znamia 'Proletkul'ta,' " *PK*, no. 1 (July 1918): 3–6.

31. Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, p. 98. Fitzpatrick points out that although there was no department of extramural education in Proletkult, there were frequent suggestions that the big Proletkults were actively in competition with Narkompros departments in the field of extramural education.

32. A. A. Bogdanov, *Elementy proletarskoi kul'tury v razvitii rabochego klassa* (Moscow, 1920), pp. 39–40.

Another element of proletarian culture, closely related to the first, was collectivism. This element, too, Bogdanov believed, distinguished the proletariat from the peasantry and the intelligentsia. In thought and in daily life, workers were more likely to treat one another as comrades, "members of one integral toiling whole." Nevertheless, Bogdanov admitted that collectivism faced numerous impediments that had to be painstakingly excised, such as individualism, authoritarianism, competition, and nationalism. Positive steps in that direction were the increasing mobility between jobs and the expanding political struggle because they helped surmount the self-enclosed nature of professions and particular enterprises. To be well grounded, Bogdanov concluded, the development of comradeship must also extend to relations within the family and between generations.[33]

Still another important element of proletarian culture endorsed by Bogdanov was the "liberation from fetishisms"—distorted notions of reality—that dominated human beings, such as passive submission to authority (secular and religious), the illusions of the independent "I," and preoccupation with private property. All of these fetishisms restricted human development and served to support an authoritarian system of organization and its form of discipline. Bogdanov counseled that the new comradely discipline should be based on competence rather than power (competence being more limited and more "reciprocal") and on subordination to the leader only to the extent that the leader reflects the will of the collective.[34]

Bogdanov assumed that many of the fetishisms were related to the market, which separated humans and their product and disguised the essential interrelationships of individuals. Even private property, he explained, was not an inherent relationship between a person and an object but a relationship recognized by society. A complete transformation, therefore, could come about only as a complement to "economic liberation," when market forces no longer predominated.

Interestingly, Bogdanov suggested that the process of self-change might be easier in a country such as Russia, since neither the market nor cultural preconceptions were as firmly embedded as in highly industrialized countries. Although a less educated proletariat would have more to learn, it would have less to relearn.[35] In this connection, Bogdanov pointed out that even such advanced workers as those in England and the United States displayed a "distinctive backwardness at high

33. Ibid., pp. 42–50.

34. Ibid., pp. 52–72. For a description of a society where such relations have been put into practice, see Bogdanov's science fiction novel of life on Mars, *Krasnaia zvezda: utopiia* (Moscow, 1918).

35. Bogdanov, *Krasnaia zvezda*, p. 166.

levels of culture." That is, they were replete with "individualistic and religious illusions."[36] This argument implied that advanced capitalist societies would also have to undergo a cultural revolution during the transition to socialism.

A final element of proletarian culture that Bogdanov advocated was a "unity of methods," by which he meant a systematization of human experience, including norms, knowledge, and art. If the proletariat wished to distinguish itself from its "predecessor classes," it would have to traverse "different paths, act according to different methods, and relate to its surroundings from a different point of view." These points were all important aspects of the proletariat's "cultural or ideological struggle" leading to a new consciousness. The old paths and the old methods, Bogdanov cautioned, would "necessarily lead . . . to old goals." In their place, he recommended a "unity of organizational methods and organizational experience," not unlike his own search for a "universal organizational science," which would help the proletariat unite things, people, and ideas into one harmonious whole.[37]

Although general and rather sketchy, this list of elements of proletarian culture formulated by Bogdanov served at least to point Proletkult leaders in the right direction. It also gave a broad mandate to Proletkult; in one statement of goals, Proletkult leaders asserted that it was up to Proletkult to revolutionize (1) labor, by merging the artist and the worker; (2) life-styles, at home and at work; and (3) feelings, because "a revolutionary consciousness does not exclude conservatism of feeling."[38] Observing the work in the Proletkult studios, the leaders, it seems, tried to effect changes in attitudes and behavior that would contrast dramatically with the "now discredited bourgeois system" and pave the way for a socialist one. They tried especially hard to inculcate creativity, collectivism, and universalism.

Creativity

Proletkult leaders understood the bourgeois system to mean strict discipline and prompt repetition of tasks; the worker was required to implement rather than to invent. Creativity, however, was "an elementary need of every human."[39] Consequently, one of the basic tasks of Proletkult was "to awaken proletarian creativity in the scientific and artistic spheres." In comparison to educational institutions that famil-

36. A. A. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1914), pp. 184–85.

37. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, pp. 73–89.

38. "Kul'turno-prosvetitel'nye zadachi Proletkul'ta: Glavnye metody i formy raboty," TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 144, l. 180–87.

39. F. Kalinin, "Proletariat i tvorchestvo," *PK*, no. 1 (July 1918): 10.

iarized students with past achievements and laid the groundwork for creativity, Proletkult viewed itself as a center for generating "imaginative self-activity" and new achievements.[40]

As a first step, Proletkult theoreticians tried to debunk the mystery surrounding creativity, to show that it was neither a sphere reserved for the chosen few nor a matter of creating something out of nothing through inspiration. Creativity manifested itself "in the surmounting of contradictions that confront people in their practical lives" and "in the sphere of thought when there is a break in the connection of logical sequence."[41] To be creative meant to combine materials in a new way, ferreting out irrelevant elements and preserving suitable ones; it was the "highest, most complex aspect of labor."[42]

Capitalism already attested to the fact that creativity was not solely a product of leisure, fantasy, or individual seclusion, as was believed in the nineteenth century. This type of creativity was too slow and unpredictable for capitalism, said Kerzhentsev; hence, deadlines, organization, and planning were introduced. The best example of "collective creativity" under capitalism was the newspaper. It galvanized efforts and indicated that systematic, methodical work produced its own "inspiration."[43]

Creativity, all the same, was neither straightforward nor facile. Even scientific creativity, which seemed to consist of logical thinking under the control of consciousness, could not dispense with the subconscious entering into the stream of thought. Indeed, it was the synthesis of the two that produced "unexpected discoveries." The critical role of the subconscious led Proletkult leaders to stress the arts as a particularly important field of endeavor and to express doubts whether nonproletarian artists, even if sympathetic to the proletariat, could produce art, which genuinely reflected the proletarian psyche.[44]

Proletkult studios, through their emphasis on direct worker participation in the arts, hoped to develop aesthetic sensitivities, which were dulled at the workplace. Only this development would produce a fully integrated person. The workers were encouraged to stage their own plays, publish their own journals, write poetry and novels, and engage in painting and sculpture.

40. P. M. Kerzhentsev, "Proletkul't—organizatsiia proletarskoi samodeiatel'nosti," *PK*, no. 1 (July 1918): 7–8.

41. Kalinin, "Proletariat i tvorchestvo."

42. Bogdanov, "Puti proletarskogo tvorchestva," *PK*, nos. 15–16 (April–July 1920): 50.

43. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, pp. 46–49.

44. Kalinin, "Proletariat i tvorchestvo." According to Kalinin, simply being a worker also did not guarantee expression of proletarian sentiment; the workers were still imbued with the influence of the past, with semiproletarian attitudes.

The theater studios, for example, tried to design an environment that was supportive, nonpatronizing, and favorable for evoking creativity in all their members. The working principles included synthesizing the theatrical arts rather than perpetuating specialization; replacing hierarchical relations with comradely cooperation; decreeing the equality of all participants, from stage director to lighting technician; adopting universalism in place of functional specialization to the degree possible; and encouraging improvisation. Although individual creativity was not dismissed, there was considerable emphasis on "collective creativity." Active participation was stressed in every way, not only by those who staged a particular play but also by actors with the audiences.[45]

Even in studios meant to instruct, new methods were sought to involve the worker-students directly. Guidelines for teaching the history of technology, for example, included excursions and model-building as well as lectures and discussions. In the literature studios, guidelines for group leaders eschewed lectures in favor of "self-help" methods, with readings of original works followed by group discussions.[46] The underlying assumption, of course, was that workers were capable of their own interpretations, with only some gentle prodding from "sympathetic intellectuals."

Collectivism

Under capitalism, social relations reflected the operating principles of the market: individualism and competition. In comparison, the new society would be marked by "socialness, its spirit of collectivism," which would be "organically created out of the new labor relations."[47]

As analyzed by Bogdanov, collectivist tendencies emerged from the changes in the production process and crystallized during the class struggle. This collectivism was not, however, fully developed, because it involved only "an association of individuals" with a "democratic consciousness." It implied a "collegiality," a combination of forces, whereas true collectivism involved a merging of goals. Transforming a democratic consciousness into a collectivist one, wrote Bogdanov, did

45. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, pp. 54–57. Interestingly, the attempt to encourage audience participation surfaced anew in the "living theater" of the 1960s and 1970s.

46. Uchebnye plany i programmy zanatii nauchnogo, literaturnogo i teoreticheskogo studii mestnykh Proletkul'tov, June 1924, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 626, l. 40–43 and 29–34. A detailed description of the activities carried out in the studios may also be found in L. A. Pinegina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura, 1917–1932* (Moscow, 1984).

47. A. A. Bogdanov, *A Short Course of Economic Science*, trans. J. Fineburg (London, 1923), p. 386.

not mean "the submission of the minority to the majority, but its complete agreement with the majority."[48]

In other words, to Proletkult leaders, collectivism referred not simply to group activity but to the way people interrelated and identified with a group. Collectivism was founded on a "unity of spirit, kindred feelings, community of tasks, and mainly an interpenetrating thought about the higher interests of the whole."[49] At the same time, the consensual basis was strongly emphasized; collectivism was above all a change in authority relations and the opposite of authoritarianism. Bogdanov wrote, "Collective consideration, collective decision-making, and the collective implementation of that which was decided—this is comradely cooperation."[50]

Efforts were made to adopt collectivism as the operating principle in the work of studios. In the literature studios, for example, there were persistent attempts to involve individuals in collective work. Specifically, collectivism entailed group discussions of themes and subject matter, "comradely criticism" of one another's writing efforts, and, in its most extreme expression, "collective authorship" of books. Individual works were acceptable as the "bricks of communist culture" to the degree that they communicated the "will of the collective," the hopes and world outlook of the proletariat.[51] It was conceded that even writers of nonproletarian origin could produce "proletarian art," provided they were willing to partake in "collective life" and were imbued with the ideals of the proletariat, with its way of thinking and acting.[52]

The enthusiasm for all things collective lent itself to distortions and exaggerations. Many of the Proletkult writers submerged the "I" in the collective "we," fully convinced that this submersion was a step toward socialist culture. Bogdanov himself was not totally free of this proclivity to exaggerate the virtues of collectivism, although he denied that collectivism implied the negation of the individual. He distinguished between individualism and individuality, linking the former with capitalism and the latter with socialism. "Individuality" connoted personal experiences and capabilities; it implied independence "not in the defense of personal interests, but in initiative, criticism, originality." Bogdanov argued that collectivism assumed individual dif-

48. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, pp. 75–79. Bogdanov remarks that anarchists had succeeded in ridding themselves of authoritarianism but not of individualism.

49. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, p. 53.

50. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, p. 43.

51. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, pp. 50–51.

52. A. A. Bogdanov, *Iskusstvo i rabochii klass* (Moscow, 1918), p. 24. Bogdanov emphasized that these individuals were rare.

ferences, because "each individual complements the other in one whole."[53]

Universalism

Bogdanov asserted that the "splintering of humans," typical of bourgeois society, resulted from two fissures in the "working nature of a human being." The first involved the separation of mental and physical labor, which facilitated the rise of authoritarianism; the second referred to specialization, which generated individualism.[54] Under advanced automation, Bogdanov believed, these fissures could be healed, with organizers and executors (i.e., mental and physical labor) interacting in a more fluid definition of roles. Highly specialized machines would obviate the need for specialized humans, encouraging greater job mobility. Thus socialism would be marked by universalism rather than specialization.

Proletkult studios consciously eschewed formal distinctions among studio members in order to allow, for example, the playwright to become a critic or the actor to become a director. "Only through such universalism (which will be characteristic of the future society)," declared one Proletkult leader, "will there appear a conscious attitude toward creative work and that deepening without which collective creativity is unthinkable."[55]

If the studio members maintained universalism and equality in their internal relations, the question arose, might they themselves not become "specialists" vis-à-vis workers at large. Considerable controversy was aroused over the problem of "professionalism." Were the studios intended as centers of self-creativity and self-expression or as hothouses for the creation of new proletarian poets and writers? In other words, were the studios intended for amateurs or for the development of professionals? In addition, the controversy encompassed the use of "bourgeois specialists." If the aspiring writers and poets were to learn the techniques of their trade rather than relying totally on spontaneous effort, they would have to turn to bourgeois professionals to teach them.

Pletnev expressed anxiety that professionalism would cut off the studio members from the production process and would isolate them from the workers at large. He considered the "internal process of creativity" as important as the results. He argued that the development of proletarian culture was not simply "culture accumulation" (*kul'turtregerstvo*) but a "process of struggle with the remnants of bour-

53. A. A. Bogdanov, "Ideal vospitaniia," *PK*, no. 2 (July 1918): 15–18.
54. Bogdanov, *Iskusstvo*, pp. 16–18.
55. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, p. 55.

geois culture." Moreover, it was not sufficient to create "our own specialists"; it was also important to develop a "proletariat-artist with a purely class world outlook."[56] Kerzhentsev also warned that professionalism contained "serious negative aspects" because it often led to severance from one's class and a "transition to a category of Bohemian intellectuals, of a petty-bourgeois manner."[57]

Lunacharsky voiced the opposite point of view (which came to predominate). He argued that under the dictatorship of the proletariat all of life was imbued with "proletarian ideology"; therefore, "leaving the factory does not lead to a rupture with workers' ideology and psychology." Consequently, Proletkult should not hesitate to direct its efforts toward professionalism and specialization, especially since it was important to place "practical work at the center."[58] Similarly, the Central Committee of Proletkult concluded that practical work and mastery of technique were uppermost for studios; otherwise, the studio members would be dedicated to "discovering long-since discovered America."[59]

Taken as a whole, these cultural attributes were certainly no more than a rudimentary outline of a "proletarian culture." Yet they were significant to the degree that they represented Bogdanov's attempt to define the "new commitments" of the emerging social order. The point of departure was that market principles should no longer prescribe attitudes and behavior. As Lukacs remarked in an early work, "When economic life is organized in the direction of socialism, those elements which previously were accouterments at best now come to the fore: *the inner and outer life of man is dominated by human and no longer by economic motives and impulses.*" Moreover, "as civilization creates the means of the domination of nature, so through proletarian culture the means are created for the domination of society."[60]

56. V. Pletnev, "O professionalizme," *PK*, nos. 7–8 (April–May 1919): 31–37.

57. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, p. 59.

58. Lunacharsky, "O professionalizme," "Vserossiiskii s'ezd Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 17–19 (August–December 1920): 75, 80.

59. "Blizhaishchie zadachi Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 20–21 (January–June 1921): 30.

60. Georg Lukács, "The Old Culture and the New Culture," November 1920, reprinted in *Telos*, no. 5 (Spring 1970): 28. See also the foreword by Paul Breines, pp. 1–20. Lukács's attitude toward Bogdanov is not known. In this article, he expresses a number of ideas on culture that parallel those held by Bogdanov. Lukács diverges from Bogdanov, however, in implying that the laws of political economy would no longer be applicable to a socialist society. As he states, "Liberation from capitalism means liberation from the rule of the economy" (p. 22). In a later article, Lukács provides a trenchant critique of Bukharin, refuting in particular his "technological determinism." Although Bukharin exaggerated the role of technology (and in fact differed with Bogdanov on the interpretation of technology), some of Lukács's criticisms apply equally well to Bogdanov. See Georg

The unanswered question was whether such attempts were feasible without prior reorganization and full development of the economy. Proletkult specifically devoted itself to the aesthetic moments of social life; neither its activities nor its espoused attitudes were instrumental to industrialization. Herein lay its attraction but also its fundamental weakness. Workers were flattered and pleased to be involved in activities that were previously considered reserved for the talented few (regardless of the actual results). At the same time, the methods of operation and attitudes Proletkult hoped to inspire were isolated from and unrelated to the environment. The transformation of the production process, in terms of planning and increased automation, which Bogdanov himself considered essential for the development of a new culture, was far from being realized. Hence, authority relations remained unchanged except within the confines of Proletkult studios. Whether any significant change in attitudes could have been effected under those circumstances is difficult to ascertain. It may be that such elements of incongruity were themselves indicative of the state of transition and typical of in-between societies.

Neither the work of Proletkult nor the cultural attributes sponsored, however, seem commensurate with the opposition expressed by Lenin. Though perhaps irrelevant to the immediate problems of the civil war or of economic development, Proletkult's efforts were not detrimental to the solution of those problems. It is telling, for example, that the Proletkult studios flourished during the height of the civil war, when one might have expected a demand for total concentration on the war effort. Only at the close of the civil war, however, did Lenin undertake an unremitting campaign to isolate Bogdanov and to effect a merger of Proletkult with Narkompros. In order to gain insight into Lenin's stance, we must take a closer look at Proletkult's premises.

Underlying Premises: Ambitious and Defiant

Several of the fundamental tenets of Proletkult were not only at loggerheads with the party position but also seemed purposefully defiant of it. Four of these premises proved particularly irritating to Lenin: Proletkult's assertion of autonomy vis-à-vis the party; its apotheosis of the working class as the builders of socialism with a concomitant downgrading of the role of the intellectuals and the peasantry; its grandiose goal of submitting all of past culture to a "critical reworking"; and its

Lukács, "Technology and Social Relations" 1925, reprinted in *New Left Review*, no. 39 (September–October 1966): 25–34.

resolve to expand internationally. Both the ambition and the initial startling success of Proletkult gave it a political potency that inevitably evoked a response from the party.

Organizational Autonomy

Proletkult leaders sketched the transition to socialism as a battle on three related but distinct fronts: the political, the economic, and the cultural. Their concern, the cultural, was redeemed from a subsidiary position and elevated to "the same level as political and economic work." Following this reasoning, Proletkult should function in the cultural sphere as the party did in the political sphere and the trade unions in the economic.[61] Whereas the party acted as the "laboratory of the political line" for carrying out the political program of the state, Proletkult would act as a "laboratory for the realization of the revolutionary-cultural program of the proletariat."[62]

Indeed, the Proletkult position was still more audacious, intimating that Proletkult should be treated not just as the equal of the party but, in some ways, as its superior. The argument went as follows: The dictatorship of the proletariat, in the true sense of the term, did not yet exist. The party, of necessity, included a coalition with the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. By their very nature, these allies were "incapable of comprehending the new spiritual culture of the working class. In state organizations, they will always superimpose their petty-bourgeois imprint."[63] A slightly softer reproach was that because the party had not found the time to work out a "cultural program," it was up to Proletkult to help lay the foundations of a proletarian culture.[64] As Pletnev, the chairman of Proletkult, declared, it was the duty of Proletkult, as part of the "revolutionary army" to defend the interests of the new regime.[65]

Accordingly, one resolution proclaimed that Proletkult was "morally responsible" for exerting ideological influence on trade unions, "the organizations most kindred to Proletkult," because they were all too often under the influence of people who were ideologically hostile to

61. Lunacharsky, "Eshche o Proletkul'te i sovetskoi kul'turnoi rabote," *PK*, nos. 7–8 (April–May 1919): 1. It is all the more remarkable that Lunacharsky should espouse this position, given that he was commissar of Narkompros.

62. "K sozyvu vserossiiskoi kul'turno-prosvetitel'noi konferentsii rabochikh organizatsii," *PK*, no. 1 (July 1918): 27.

63. Polianskii, "Pod znamia 'Proletkul'ta,' " p. 6.

64. Deklaratsiia, priniataia Plenumom Vseros. Ts.K. Proletkul'ta, 19 December 1920, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 144, l. 160–63.

65. V. Pletnev, "Sovremennyi moment i zadachi Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 20–21 (January–June 1921): 39.

the working class.[66] It was not surprising, admitted Proletkult leaders, that under difficult economic conditions, cold and hunger and improvisation should bring about a general "vulgarization." They vehemently rejected such distortions as equating masses with collectivism or confusing the call to "revolutionize the labor and life-style of the working class" with "work faster."[67]

Pitfalls such as these were especially pronounced under the NEP, warned Pletnev, when petty-bourgeois habits threatened to grow rampant. All the more reason, he concluded, for Proletkult to play a prominent role: "If in the economic and political spheres, it is necessary to retreat somewhat from the line of direct communist construction, hence a lengthening of the transitional period, then in the sphere of constructing proletarian culture, and the ideology of communism, here it is exactly the opposite; there cannot and must not be a retreat. The revolution of culture is only beginning."[68]

Emphasis on the Industrial Proletariat

Proletkult leaders took it as a sine qua non that the new proletarian culture must embody the attitudes and behavior of the advanced industrial proletariat. Concentrated in large enterprises, the industrial proletariat exhibited "class features" in the sharpest and most defined way, "especially in the collectivism of labor and struggle."[69] The notions of class solidarity, the "feeling of 'we,' " arose naturally from the work process—for example, in the joint exertions involved in constructing a ship, a locomotive, or an airplane. Such undertakings affirmed the need for complementary labor efforts and demonstrated to the workers that each was indeed part of one whole. These feelings, claimed Proletkult ideologues, were "alien to the peasant, the bourgeois, and the intellectual," who were dominated by individualism. For this reason, "the task of constructing a proletarian culture can be resolved only by the forces of the proletariat itself."[70] The industrial

66. Rezoliutsiia o sootnosheniiakh mezhdu Proletkul'tom i profsoiuzakh, priniataia Plenumom Ts.K. Proletkul'ta, May 1921, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 141.

67. Organizatsionii i prakticheskii plan raboty Proletkul'ta, Plenum Ts.K. Proletkul'ta, 19 December 1920, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 144, l. 170.

68. Pletnev, "Sovremennyi moment."

69. "O mezhdunarodnom Proletkul'te," *PK*, nos. 15–16 (April–July 1920): 3–6. According to Malinovskii, this article was written by Bogdanov.

70. Pletnev, "Na ideologicheskom fronte," *Pravda*, 27 September 1922, reprinted with Lenin's notations in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 457–66. When Pletnev stated that the peasant could not understand the feeling of building a locomotive through joint labor efforts, Lenin wrote in the margin: "And the % [of peasants] building locomotives?" Lenin personally directed and discussed a rebuttal to Pletnev, written by Ia. Iakovlev, "O 'proletarskoi kul'ture' i Proletkul'te," *Pravda*, 24 and 25 October 1922, reprinted in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 598–612.

workers were also considered the most "purely proletarian" elements. They were less vulnerable to petty-bourgeois influences, especially because they maintained fewer links to the countryside than did the seasonal workers and the "semiproletariat."

Proletkult statements echoed, to a large extent, Bogdanov's exhortations for the workers to become masters of their own destiny rather than relying on outside help. Intellectuals, however important to the proletarian cause as a whole, were "completely inadequate for the cultural task that combines the entire life experiences of the working class."[71] Practically everything about the intellectuals' life-style and work was different from the workers', pointed out Bogdanov: the type of work they engaged in was individualistic; they held authoritative positions at their places of work; their salaries were far removed from the wages of the piece-rate system.[72] Bogdanov even questioned the relevance of their expertise: more often than not, intellectuals were specialists in "social questions"; their familiarity with the technical and natural sciences, let alone with the physical side of labor, was superficial; and they were rarely able to relate theory to practice.[73] The "educated technician," for example, "examines the work force from the outside, not from the inside . . . not close up." As a result, some of the important relations between the work force and the tools of labor "may and even must escape him."[74] Finally, the extreme specialization of knowledge that the "engineer-intellectual" acquires is bound to reflect itself in the way he organizes production—highly individualized, specialized units rather than collectivist ones.[75] For all these reasons, argued Bogdanov, the people of the future would not be the overspecialized, mostly metaphysical intellectuals but the industrial proletariat, whose organic relationship between life and work, at the very least, held out the potential for an equally organic, all-embracing world view.

If Proletkult attempted to place some distance between itself and intellectuals, it specifically rejected a cultural alliance with the peasantry. Proletarian culture was conceived of as an urbanized, industrial culture; at no point in time would socialist culture culminate in a blending of "proletarian culture" and "peasant culture." According to Proletkult theoreticians, the peasants neither had a complete culture nor represented a complete class; in both areas, they fell under bour-

71. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi*, p. 68.
72. Ibid., p. 26.
73. Ibid., p. 68.
74. Bogdanov, "Nauka i rabochii klass" (1918), in Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, p. 213.
75. Bogdanov, "Nauka i proletariat" (1913), in Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, p. 223.

geois or proletarian influence. Consequently, socialist culture would be constructed exclusively under the leadership of the vanguard of the proletariat, the industrial workers.[76] As one of the leaders of Proletkult pointed out, this policy was similar to that of the party, insofar as the party was also based on the vanguard of the proletariat.[77]

"Critical Reworking" of the Past Culture

Proletkult leaders contended that assimilating the best of past culture was a far cry from creating a new one. Designing a new proletarian culture was not a question of who controlled culture and its institutions. Rather, it was the following: What was the social context and content of culture? Whose premises, images, and conclusions did the culture reflect? In contemporary terms, the Proletkult position echoed concerns similar to those of the school of thought called "sociology of knowledge." In fact, Karl Mannheim, one of the school's leading theoreticians, credits Bogdanov with being one of its "forerunners."[78] The premise they held in common was that knowledge, art, and culture in general developed not in some abstract way but in relation to a specific society and its class formations. Can there be any doubt, asked Bogdanov, that the art and sculpture of Rome expressed the "national pride of the holders of world power"?[79]

Bogdanov envisaged two complementary tasks for the proletariat, "independent creativity" and "mastery of the cultural heritage." Although Proletkult is usually associated with the former task, Bogdanov considered mastery of heritage no less important or less difficult than creativity. To adopt an "anarchistic attitude" toward the past was a mistake because the proletariat could not expect to "create everything anew" on such a scale. Nevertheless, to gain "mastery," it was essential to submit past culture to a "critical reworking" (*kriticheskaia pererabotka*) to ensure a proletarian class point of view.[80]

Bogdanov focused on science as a particularly significant province for "critical reworking because of its predicted impact in highly de-

76. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, pp. 16–17.

77. Lebedev-Polianskii, "Ob'em i kharakter rabot Proletkul'ta," "Vserossiiskii s'ezd Proletkul'ta," *PK*, nos. 17–19 (August–December 1920): 76, 79. Polianskii complained that in practice this policy was not always carried out by the local Proletkults.

78. Mannheim cites one of Bogdanov's works in translation, *Entwicklungsformen der Gesellschaft und die Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1924). See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York, 1936), p. 331.

79. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi*, p. 17.

80. Bogdanov, "Nasha kritika: o khudozhestvennom nasledstve," *PK*, no. 2 (July 1918): 4–13.

veloped societies." Science, commonly believed to be "pure" knowledge, in fact served as a "tool in the organization of life in society." Bogdanov did not think it possible or desirable for the proletariat to create a "new science"; for the most part, the proletariat should undertake "a planned appropriation of the heritage of the old world." Through the Proletarian University and Proletarian Encyclopedia, however, he believed, the proletariat would gradually begin a systematic review of science from the "collective-labor point of view." Proletkult science studios would then assist in a mass dissemination of scientific knowledge in its reworked form.[81]

The "class character" of science was derived not so much from its defense of certain class interests as from its very nature—that is, its "origin, point of view, methods of work, and statements."[82] Bogdanov tried to convey something akin to what Kuhn today calls "scientific paradigms," meaning "the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques . . . shared by the members of a given [scientific] community."[83] More importantly, a paradigm will determine which problems will be chosen for investigation and is highly resistant to change. Only a crisis—that is, a malfunctioning of a paradigm—precipitates a "scientific revolution." "Led by a new paradigm," Kuhn remarks, "scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places" or "see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before."[84]

Bogdanov, although emphasizing class paradigms rather than those of a scientific community, ascribed rather similar functions to "reigning ideologies." Galileo's new astronomy as a "revolutionary science," observed Bogdanov, met resistance from the "views of the old world, with the scholarly clergy." And yet it was possible to effect dramatically altered perceptions. Did not Copernicus suggest looking at the planets from the point of view of the sun rather than of the earth? Similarly, continued Bogdanov, Marx changed the point of view: those who produced, not the producers, were "the center of life and development of society, the sun, upon which depend the fate and movements of people, groups, and classes." Copernicus in the natural sciences and Marx in the social sciences provided examples of what the proletariat can and

81. Bogdanov, "Nauka i proletariat," p. 226. Bogdanov understood science to include both social sciences and natural sciences. This position proved to be one of the most contentious adopted by Proletkult. See F. Kalinin, "Proletarskaia kul'tura i ee kritiki," *PK*, nos. 9–10 (June–July 1919): 2.

82. Bogdanov, "Nauka i proletariat," p. 222.

83. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962), p. 175.

84. Ibid., p. 111.

should do: develop a "new logic," shedding light on the old from a new class point of view.[85]

There was a further problem with the sciences that bothered Bogdanov—their fragmentation. Each sphere was subdivided and made increasingly more esoteric, more divorced from life, by the use of jargon. The extreme compartmentalization of knowledge, argued Bogdanov, reflected its social foundations. Specialization was sustained and expanded by the specialists themselves, who hoped to maintain their "privileged position," to impede access to the masses, and to lessen competition.[86] They zealously guarded their expertise, disappearing into their "studies and laboratories as once did the monks into their cells."[87] This compartmentalization was intrinsically pernicious because it tended to breed "extreme conservatism." Discoveries and "revolutions" in science invariably involved the "transgression of the boundaries of specialization."[88]

Bogdanov foresaw a trend toward increasing "monism" in science, with a "system of general methods, deductions, laws, guiding all its fields." Each field would continue to have its own methods and laws, but the exclusiveness of each field would be overcome and a common foundation would be established.[89] Thus, in critically reworking the past, the proletariat should strive for an integration and coordination of the sciences—a "common scientific language" and generalized methods.[90] Such a development would allow the proletariat to become a "true master of social life, without the guardianship of the guild intelligentsia."[91] Bogdanov, understandably, offered his own work on a "universal organizational science" as a step in the right direction.

Yet another compelling reason for the "critical reworking" of existing bodies of thought was the "chronic loss" of workers to the bourgeoisie. Was it not worrisome, asked Bogdanov, that workers who, "through exceptional energy and efforts," were able to achieve the "heights of contemporary scholarship" invariably either aligned themselves with the bourgeois intelligentsia or became "representatives of opportunism, class compromise"? This "chronic loss" would continue among the most advanced workers until it was recognized that the sphere of knowledge was not simply "truth in and of itself" but "a system of forms and

85. Bogdanov, "Nauka i rabochii klass," pp. 207–9.
86. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta*, p. 250.
87. Bogdanov, "Nauka i rabochii klass," p. 206.
88. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta*, p. 245. Bogdanov saw indications of the breaking down of barriers between such specializations as physics and chemistry and psychology and physiology.
89. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, p. 193.
90. Bogdanov, "Nauka i rabochii klass."
91. Bogdanov, *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta*, p. 250.

methods of organization of collective human efforts."[92] The objective, therefore, was to assimilate knowledge without being assimilated in turn—or, as expressed by Bogdanov, "heritage should not rule over the inheritor but should only be a tool in his hands."[93]

Internationalist Perspective

Proletkult firmly maintained that proletarian culture stood on class foundations, not on the national foundations of "past culture." Whereas the bourgeoisie "put in the forefront the basic element of their culture—nationalism," the working class "creates its gospel—socialism."[94] Because the political slogans and economic programs of the proletariat in diverse countries were becoming "identical down to the details," there was all the more reason to expect "complete agreement and friendly mutual assistance" in the work on the new international culture.[95] The fostering of a common language, such as English, would gradually cut across national boundaries.[96]

Although there was some dispute about whether there should be "national Proletkults" within the Soviet Union,[97] all Proletkult leaders seemed to agree on the essentially international character of socialism. Bogdanov on several occasions emphasized that "socialism cannot be realized in any separate country."[98]

Proletkult took concrete steps to extend the "cultural front" to the international level. At the Second Comintern Congress, Russian Proletkult leaders convened a meeting specifically to organize an "International Bureau of Proletkult." Elected to the Executive Committee were Lunacharsky (chairman), Polianskii, V. McLean (England), V. Herzog (Germany), R. Lefevre (France), N. Bombacci (Italy), and J. Humbert-Droz (Switzerland).[99] Their resolutions were strikingly Bogdanovite.

92. A. A. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," in A. A. Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), p. 65. This book was written prior to the October Revolution. Bogdanov expressed similar ideas in "Nauka i proletariat," pp. 225–26.

93. Bogdanov, *Iskusstvo*, p. 30.

94. V. Polianskii, "Natsionalizm i sotsializm," *PK*, no. 2 (July 1918): 1.

95. Kerzhentsev, *K novoi kul'ture*, p. 88.

96. Bogdanov rejected the use of Esperanto, considering it an "intellectual utopia" that ignored the prerequisite of the "practical unity of the life of mankind." Bogdanov posited a common international language as an eventual, not an immediate, goal. See Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, pp. 198–99.

97. O national'nykh Proletkul'takh, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 138. Those who argued against allowing Proletkult branches to organize along nationality lines emphasized the development of a common socialist culture; those who argued for it emphasized the importance of communicating with local people and of effective agitation propaganda. Interestingly, Bogdanov took the latter position and Lebedev-Polianskii the former.

98. Bogdanov, "Nauka i rabochii klass," p. 214.

99. Members of the International Bureau of Proletkult included, in addition to those

Literature and art, for example, were not "luxuries" but an essential part of the proletarian struggle. "Art can organize feelings in exactly the same way as ideological propaganda [organizes] thought; feelings determine will with no less force than ideas." Most importantly, the previous emphasis on political and economic struggles should now be replaced by a "new front," that of "revolutionary-creative culture."[100] Proletkult, needless to say, would thereby be further upgraded and the party would be whittled down in importance.

As can be seen from the review of Proletkult's underlying premises, the "Proletkult alternative" held implications beyond those of a "literary movement." It challenged party domination, touched on crucial questions of the relationship between the old and the new social order as well as between the proletariat and other classes, and remained irrevocably internationalist. It suggested that the transition to socialism could succeed only if it moved along three fronts—the political, the economic, and the cultural; and it rejected the idea of "stages" in development, with "practical" tasks assigned priority and "spiritual" tasks relegated to the future. The Proletkult alternative implied that the transition to socialism entailed above all a cultural revolution—a change in social relations and a change in self. It also implied that Proletkult, not the party, was the repository of "proletarian spirit." The Proletkult position is aptly summarized in the following declaration:

> In questions of culture, we are *immediate socialists*. We affirm that the proletariat must now, immediately, create for itself *socialist forms of thought, feeling, and daily life*, independent of the relations and combinations of political forces. And in that creation, *political* allies—the peasantry and the petty-bourgeois poor—cannot and should not control its work.[101]

Demise of an Organization and an Experiment

Various reasons are cited for Proletkult's drastic decline at the close of the civil war. Its membership, which had reached half a million, in three hundred Proletkults, by 1920, fell to about five thousand, in forty

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elected to the Executive Committee, the following: Quelch (England), Bartel (Germany), Tomann (Austria), Var-Van Overstraeten (Belgium), Bringolf (Switzerland), Reed (United States), and Langset (Norway). See *Izvestiia VTsIK*, 14 August 1920, as cited in Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 129.

100. "Brat'iam proletariiam vsekh stran," *PK*, nos. 17–19 (August–December 1920): 1–5.

101. "Ot redaktsii," *PK*. no. 3 (August 1918): 36.

to fifty Proletkults, by 1921.[102] One Soviet analyst, Gorbunov, argues that the collapse of Proletkult was not due to party directives, as Proletkult leaders charged, although he admits that some party organizations "incorrectly" interpreted the Central Committee letter, "On Proletkults," to mean "liquidation of Proletkult."[103] Rather, Gorbunov lists a number of "objective factors" that contributed to Proletkult's demise. With the growth and strengthening of the state apparatus, some of the functions originally performed by Proletkult, especially in the educational sphere, were taken over by the government. This action by the government was a means of overcoming "parallelism" and of unifying efforts by merging local Proletkults with organs of education, trade unions, and, occasionally, Komsomols. Gorbunov also mentions "subjective" reasons for the disintegration of Proletkult—those relating to the "sectarian and separatist mistakes" of the leadership.[104] Sheila Fitzpatrick offers another explanation: that "the influence and scope of Proletkult activity declined very sharply from the second half of 1921, but the main causes seem to have been economic. . . . Proletkult lost its subsidy from Narkompros early in 1922."[105] Organizational problems also plagued Proletkult. Precisely because it was a grass-roots movement, many local studios insisted on the "revolutionary-creative independence of the members of the studios."[106] Others, in contrast, complained that they were not receiving enough help or direction from central headquarters.[107] Pletnev reported, in February 1922, that during the previous year, 33 percent of the Presidium meetings of Proletkult were dedicated to organizational issues.[108]

It seems, however, that the most important reason for Proletkult's

102. Bugaenko, *Lunacharskii*, p. 36. Bugaenko lists thirty-seven Proletkult organizations in all, with fourteen at the *guberniia* level and ten at the district level. Gorbunov provides the slightly higher figure of fifty-four Proletkults in 1921. The number of Proletkult organizations decreased steadily, although the main organization was not formally dissolved until 1932. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 124.

103. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, p. 176.

104. Ibid., pp. 126–28. Gorbunov claims that Proletkult began to decline before the party directives were issued, although the available figures do not support his contention. For a further discussion of Proletkult's "sectarian mistakes," see Gorbunov, "Iz istorii bor'by Kommunisticheskoi partii s sektantstvom Proletkul'ta," in *Ocherki po istorii sovetskoi nauki i kul'tury*, ed. A. V. Artsikhovskii (Moscow, 1968), pp. 29–68.

105. Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Englightenment*, pp. 240–41. In Lenin, *O literature*, an explanatory footnote states that Proletkult's budget was cut because Proletkult did not succeed "in totally transforming its work under the conditions of the NEP" (p. 767).

106. Protokoly I Vseros. soveshchaniia teatral'nykh rabotknikov, July 1921, Doklad Ignotova, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 142.

107. Doklady rabotnikov mestnykh Proletkul'tov, October 1920, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 140.

108. Zhurnal zasidanii Plenumov Ts.K. Vseros. Proletkul'ta o rabote mestnykh Proletkul'tov, 1922, Doklad Pletneva, 2 February 1922, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 146.

sudden and dramatic decline was Lenin's opposition. Certainly, the Proletkult alternative stood in sharp contrast to the NEP instituted by Lenin, challenging both his policies and his leadership. At a time when Lenin emphasized union (*smychka*) with the peasants and the use of bourgeois specialists to build socialism, Proletkult advised a guarded relationship with both peasants and specialists. Rather than suggesting a vanguard role for intellectuals, Proletkult prescribed a technical, subsidiary role for them. Moreover, Proletkult's calls for "revolutionary creativity" and "critical reworking" of the past not only contradicted but also seemed bolder and more imaginative than Lenin's urging of Communist party members "to learn to trade," or simply "to learn." Also, whereas Proletkult continued to emphasize internationalism, the NEP was an implicit recognition that world revolution was not imminent and that the Soviet Union would have to rely on its own resources.[109] Most significantly, Proletkult's insistence on autonomy was decidedly out of step with the general tightening of political controls under the NEP, including the ban on factions.

Lenin's opposition to Proletkult, however, predated the introduction of the NEP; indeed, the turning point seems to have been in 1920. This opposition suggests that additional reasons must be taken into account, the most important being Bogdanov's own conspicuous role in Proletkult, which was clearly unacceptable to Lenin.

Lunacharsky, who was certainly in a position (as head of Narkompros) to know, remarked that Lenin regarded "in quite an unfriendly way the large role that A. A. Bogdanov played at that time in Proletkult."[110] He also noted that Lenin immediately recognized the political significance of Proletkult and its "Menshevik tendency." Lunacharsky commented that whereas this political aspect had never occurred to him, Lenin acted on this assumption and "politically crushed" Proletkultism (*proletkul'tstvo*).[111] Similarly, Volgin reported a meeting with Lenin during which the latter drew a sharp distinction between Proletkult and Bogdanov. Lenin considered Proletkult "not a bad thing" but protested "alien ideological influences." The reference, explained Volgin, "was obviously to Bogdanovshchina, which at the time per-

109. For a criticism of Bogdanov in terms of his refusal to acknowledge the possibility of "socialism in one country," see N. Petrov, "S 'ispravlennym' Marksom protiv kommunizma," *Bol'shevik*, nos. 5–6 (1924): 99.

110. A. V. Lunacharsky, "Lenin i iskusstvo: Vospominaniia," in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 671. Lunacharsky was Bogdanov's brother-in-law.

111. A. V. Lunacharsky, "Russkaia literatura posle oktiabria," in Lunacharsky, *Sobranie sochinenii: literaturovedenie, kritika, estetika*, 7: 658. Lunacharsky nevertheless maintained that Lenin sought not to "abolish" Proletkult but to eliminate its "harmful tendencies." See Lunacharsky, "Lenin i iskusstvo," p. 671.

meated the atmosphere of Proletkult quite strongly."[112] One Western observer, Joravsky, also concludes that "very likely the success of Proletkult was its undoing." In effect, argues Joravsky, "the prerevolutionary conflict over Bogdanov's school on Capri was now repeated on a much grander scale; at stake was the right to teach proletarian philosophy not to a handful of émigrés but to a mass audience in Russia."[113]

Proletkult's popularity and influence were driven home to Lenin in May 1919 at the All-Russian Congress on Extra-Mural Education, attended by eight hundred delegates. Both Lenin and Bogdanov gave speeches, the latter on Proletkult activities.[114] At the close of the conference, Lenin gave a second and unscheduled speech, in which he declared "merciless hostility... toward all intellectualist concoctions, toward all 'proletarian cultures.' "[115] One Soviet analyst suggests that Lenin was further incensed by the establishment of the International Bureau of Proletkult. Lenin first saw an article on it in *Izvestiia* on August 14, 1920. "The news was not insignificant," concludes the analyst.[116]

Although there had been criticisms of Proletkult from the very start,[117] it seems that the turning point in Lenin's attitude toward Proletkult, from grudging tolerance to outright opposition, did, in fact, come with the establishment of the International Bureau. On August 17, 1920, Lenin requested a report from Pokrovskii, the deputy commissar for education, on Proletkult's activities, on its leadership and "how it is appointed," and "on the position, role, and totality of work of Proletkult."[118] In September, one month before the First All-Russian Prolet-

112. F. Volgin, "U Il'icha," in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 712.

113. David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science, 1917–1932* (New York, 1961), p. 86.

114. Joravsky contrasts Lenin's jocular tone toward proletarian culture at the beginning of the conference with his hostile tone at the end of the conference. Ibid. Bogdanov's speech at the conference is cited in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 768.

115. V. I. Lenin, "Ob obmane naroda lozungami svobody i ravenstva," 19 May 1919, in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 434.

116. I. S. Smirnov, "Leninskaia kontseptsiia kul'turnoi revoliutsii i kritika Proletkul'ta," in *Istoricheskaia nauka i nekotorye problemy sovremennosti*, ed. M. Gefter (Moscow, 1969), p. 70.

117. See, for example, S. I. Mitskevich, "K voprosu o Proletkul'te," *Izvestiia VTsIK*, 22 March 1919; and the ensuing debate in *Izvestiia*, 30 March 1919; 13 April 1919; 6 May 1919; and *Pravda*, 15 April 1919. Mitskevich, who worked in Narkompros, proposed a merger between Proletkult and the extra-mural department of Narkompros. This exchange may have been related to the Congress on Extra-Mural Education of May 1919. An earlier exchange, along similar lines, took place in August 1918, prior to the First Proletkult Conference, in September. (The first Proletkult *Conference* took place 15–20 September 1918; the first Proletkult *Congress* took place 5–12 October 1920.)

118. Lenin to Pokrovskii and Pokrovskii's response, in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 439, 768–69. Pokrovskii stated that Proletkult was an autonomous organization, working under

kult Congress, Lenin had a second edition of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* published, with a critique of Bogdanov by Nevskii included in the appendix.[119]

On October 2, three days before the Proletkult Congress, Lenin addressed a Komsomol Congress, using the occasion to berate any attempt to "invent" a proletarian culture; he underscored the basic and urgent task facing Russia's youth: "to learn."[120] He also attempted, not altogether successfully, to recruit first Lunacharsky and then Bukharin to propose a subordination of Proletkult to Narkompros at the Proletkult Congress, which was convening October 5 to 12, 1920. Lunacharsky, in order not to "distress" the participants at the Congress, did exactly the opposite; that is, he supported "full autonomy" for Proletkult.[121] Outraged at this turn of events, Lenin, on October 8, drafted a resolution, "On Proletarian Culture," to be discussed at the upcoming Politburo meeting.[122] Bukharin raised objections to several parts of the draft resolution, especially to the suggestion that proletarian culture would mean simply the assimilation and refashioning of bourgeois culture. One of Lenin's points, consequently, was dropped from the final draft.[123] Despite his obvious lack of enthusiasm, Bukharin was prevailed upon to present the Politburo resolution to the Communist faction at the Congress. The resolution declared that Proletkult should enter Narkompros as a subordinate department and be guided by its directives.[124]

It seems that the Proletkult leaders resorted to delaying tactics in reference to the proposed merger and planned to appeal their case before the next party Congress (March 1921).[125] This move instigated

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the control of Narkompros. Lenin underlined the words *under the control* and wrote in the margin: "how to make real?"

119. Nevskii, according to Lenin, had ample opportunity "to convince himself that under the guise of 'proletarian culture' A. A. Bogdanov is imparting bourgeois and reactionary views." V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, 2d ed. (1920; New York, 1927), preface. Prior to this time, Bogdanov had published a second edition of *Filosofiia zhivogo opyta* (Moscow, 1920).

120. V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of Youth Leagues," 2 October 1920, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 607.

121. For Lunacharsky's account, see Lunacharsky, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7: 233–34, 655–58.

122. V. I. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, pp. 621–22. See also Smirnov, "Leninskaia kontseptsiia," pp. 76–80.

123. Bukharin memo to Lenin, as cited in V. V. Gorbunov, "Kritika Leninym teorii Proletkul'ta ob otnoshenii k kul'turnomu naslediiu," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 5 (1968): 91, and in Smirnov, "Leninskaia kontseptsiia," pp. 76–77.

124. "Vserossiiskii s'ezd Proletkul'ta," p. 83.

125. See the lengthy footnote on the First Proletkult Congress in Lunacharsky, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7: 657.

another discussion of the Proletkult merger at the plenum of the Central Committee on November 10, 1920.[126]

A definitive letter from the Central Committee, dealing specifically with Proletkult, was published in *Pravda* on December 1, 1920. The letter declared that the same anti-Marxist views that had occupied the minds of the " 'social-democratic' intelligentsia" during 1907–12 were now being introduced into the Proletkults. Hence it was imperative that the party exert control to eliminate the "intellectual elements" that had captured the leadership of Proletkult. As stated in the letter:

> Intellectual groups and groupings, under the guise of proletarian culture, thrust upon the leading workers their own semibourgeois philosophical "systems" and schemes....
>
> Under the guise of "proletarian culture" they represented to the workers bourgeois views in philosophy (Machism). And in the artistic sphere they implanted in the workers absurd, distorted tastes (futurism).[127]

Proletkult leaders vehemently refuted this characterization of their work, saying, "Philosophy is not our preoccupation—only the building of proletarian culture." And who were these anti-Marxist intellectual groups, they asked, if three-fourths of the delegates to the Congress were communists and twenty-nine out of thirty members of the Proletkult Central Committee were also members of the Communist party (the lone exception, of course, being Bogdanov)?[128] The arguments fell on deaf ears, at least as far as Lenin was concerned; and Proletkult, as a dynamic and thriving institution, was dismantled precipitously. The Proletkult chairman, Lebedev-Polianskii, resigned in protest and was replaced by Pletnev, who soon proved to be no less "heretical" than Bogdanov.

This detailed account has been given to indicate Lenin's initiative in the actions taken against Proletkult and to show that the "Proletkult matter" was considered sufficiently important to occupy the attention

126. For the relevant documents, see Lenin, *O literature*, p. 594. Proletkult work in scientific and political education was to be merged with the work of the provincial education departments and Narkompros but was to remain autonomous in the artistic field.

127. "O Proletkul'takh," reprinted in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 594–97.

128. "Neobkhodimoe ob'iasnenie," TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 51. The letter, signed by the Presidium of the Central Committee of Proletkult, also stated that there are "almost no philosophers amongst us, except for Bogdanov, who, twenty years ago, in his own work, defined Machism as a democratic, engineering-professional ideology, rather than a proletarian one." Although it was true that Lunacharsky had been a "god-builder" at one time, "that question has now been resolved," given that he is head of Narkompros, concluded the letter.

of the Central Committee on more than one occasion. The immediate result of Lenin's actions was Bogdanov's removal from a prominent leadership position.

Bogdanov, who had been reelected to the Central Committee of Proletkult at the Proletkult Congress in October, was subsequently excluded from the Central Committee at a December plenum of Proletkult. He was allowed to continue publishing his books and articles, but his role in Proletkult was curtailed. He turned increasingly to scientific work, particularly in gerontology and hematology. He also remained an active participant in the Communist Academy. As expressed by Joravsky, Bogdanov "had been kicked upstairs. He could speak to the intellectuals, but he had been denied a mass audience organized independently of the Communist Party."[129]

The fury over Proletkult, however, was not stilled; most of the Proletkult leaders expressed ideas that bore the distinct stamp of Bogdanovism. Numerous articles appeared in the press arguing for and against the Proletkult position. Lenin directly intervened at least once more, coaching Iakovlev to write an article, "On Proletarian Culture and the Proletkult," in *Pravda*, October 24 and 25, 1922, against Proletkult; the tone he recommended was so harsh that neither Bukharin nor Trotsky would endorse it. In fact, Bukharin tried to prevent the publication of Iakovlev's article.[130] Pletnev, as chairman of Proletkult, appealed to Trotsky for assistance against the "thunders of Vladimir Ilich," fearing that Lenin would "close down Proletkult altogether."[131] According to one Soviet analyst, a "kind of collusion against Lenin was formed by Bogdanov, Trotsky, and the Proletkult theoretician Pletnev." Although Bukharin and Trotsky did not come out openly against Lenin in the press, "their positions were known to Lenin as well as to Krupskaia and Iakovlev."[132] Of course, none of this resistance helped endear Pro-

129. Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism*, p. 87.

130. Bukharin wrote that he told Lenin (who "inspired" Iakovlev to write the article) that if Iakovlev persisted, he would be forced "to respond with very sharp words." N. Bukharin, "Proletariat i voprosy khudozhestvennoi politiki," *Krasnaia Nov'*, no. 4 (May 1925): 265. For a further discussion of Bukharin's views, see N. Bukharin, "K s'ezdu Proletkul'ta," *Pravda*, 22 November 1921, pp. 1–2; N. Bukharin, "Problema kul'tury v epokhu proletarskoi revoliutsii," *Izvestiia*, 15 October 1922, p. 3; N. Bukharin, *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia i kul'tura* (Petrograd, 1923); N. Bukharin, "Leninizm i problema kul'turnoi revoliutsii," *Pravda*, 27 January 1928, pp. 5–6.

131. See Leon Trotsky, "Class and Art," in Trotsky, *On Literature and Art*, ed. and intro. Paul N. Siegel (New York, 1970), p. 72. Trotsky apparently agreed to defend Proletkult "on certain grounds," although he said he was opposed to Bogdanov's "abstractions about the proletarian culture."

132. V. Novikov, "K istorii bor'by za sotsialisticheskuiu kul'turu (V. I. Lenin i diskussia o 'proletarskoi kul'ture' i Proletkul'te, 1922)," *Voprosy literatury*, no. 3 (March 1967): 27–48.

letkult to Lenin. It may very well have seemed to him that Proletkult, with Bogdanov hovering in the background, would precipitate a new political split, a new Vpered group, with some of the more important intellectual figures in the party aligned against him. The political implications of Proletkult and Bogdanovism, in other words, weighed heavily in Lenin's strong reactions, which otherwise seem disproportionate in reference to an essentially cultural institution.

Ironically, once Bogdanov was denied a leadership role, Proletkult, contrary to Lenin's expectations, became still more radical. If Bogdanov advised caution toward the "cultural heritage," the more widespread attitude, which quickly became identified with Proletkult, was simply to renounce and to reject the past.[133] A contemporary Soviet analyst notes that "spontaneous nihilism" was not a product of "individual intellectuals" but "quite a deep and wide social phenomenon."[134] It may have seemed far more "liberating" to throw overboard all the "old" and "bourgeois" classics rather than to learn them.[135] Perhaps succumbing to the popular mood, Proletkult became increasingly anti-intellectual and dogmatic. Although it ceased to exist as an autonomous institution, it created in its wake a number of smaller literary groups that totally rejected bourgeois culture as well as fellow travelers to the regime, and demanded that the party intervene in cultural affairs on their behalf.

Undeniably, Proletkult, on the whole, adopted a simplistic attitude toward "past culture" and underestimated the difficulties of "critically reworking" the past. In emphasizing the industrial proletariat, it left open the question of how the other classes were to be integrated into the new culture. Its central objective, the development of a proletarian culture, produced meager results and made it all the more dubious whether it was possible to "invent" a culture.

Nevertheless, Proletkult attempted to implement the "socialist ideal" and offered tentative suggestions of the new social relations and cultural attributes. At worst, the Proletkult effort might be called irrelevant or utopian. At best, Proletkult studios might be seen as oases of artistic diversion in an otherwise harsh industrialization process. With all its

133. Smirnov admits that after scanning all the basic documents of Proletkult, as well as the articles and speeches of its leaders, he was unable to find "one line rejecting the cultural values of previous epochs." Smirnov, "Leninskaia kontseptsiia," p. 68.

134. Gorbunov, "Kritika Leninym teorii Proletkul'ta," p. 84.

135. Lenin was to discover this radical trend for himself when he visited a commune for art students and learned that most of the students were fervently enthusiastic about Maiakovskii and futurism and adamantly opposed to "Eugene Onegin" and the "old regime heritage." See I. A. Armand, "Poezdka vo Vkhutemas," and S. Sen'kin, "Lenin v kommune Vkhutemas," reprinted in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 713–15 and pp. 716–21, respectively.

promise and its pitfalls, it was clearly one of the more interesting social experiments of the time.

Contemporary Soviet analysts, in fact, have come to appreciate some of its more innovative features. This appreciation was not always the case. After its demise, Proletkult was treated by historians as an "insidious, harmful and anti-Soviet organization."[136] During the late Stalinist period, it was criticized for introducing "Machism and bourgeois cosmopolitanism, extremely hostile to the development of a national form of culture of the international proletariat," and was dismissed as the organizational embodiment of "Bogdanovism" and "Bukharinism."[137] In the 1960s, there was a somewhat more evenhanded assessment, with a willingness to admit that Proletkult did some "useful work among workers, peasants and the Red Army."[138] In the 1970s, a much more differentiated approach was adopted, distinguishing between theory and practice, between different phases of activity, even between leaders (e.g., Lunacharsky versus Bogdanov).[139] A 1978 dissertation, for example, asserts that a "basic reevaluation" of Proletkult was taking place in historical scholarship. In examining the role of the party in the Leningrad branch of Proletkult, the author of the dissertation concludes that Proletkult worked under the direction of the party and with its support. "Proletkult was at the beginning of its activities the sole cultural-class militant organization of the proletariat, the first to carry out propaganda on class art and culture, thereby refuting the Menshevik-Trotskyite denial of the existence of proletarian culture."[140]

136. L. M. Zak et al., *Stroitel'stvo sotsializma v SSSR: istoriograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1971) p. 83.

137. A. A. Pukhov "Bor'ba Lenina i Stalina protiv teorii i praktiki Proletkul'ta i ee sovremennoe znachenie" (Library of the Institute of Scientific Information in the Social Sciences [INION], Moscow, 1950). Synopsis of dissertation, p. 1.

138. N. I. Demidov, "Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi partii protiv revizionistiskikh i vul'garuzatorskikh vzgliadov Proletkul'ta v voprosakh kul'tury (1917–1925)" (INION Library, Moscow, 1961), Synopsis of dissertation, pp. 6–7. Also see I. A. Aronchik, "Kritika V. I. Leninym teorii 'proletarskoi kul'tury' ('proletkul'tovshchiny') i sovremennost'" (INION Library, Moscow, 1963), Synopsis of dissertation; Z. B. Brazhnikova, "Kritika sotsiologicheskikh problem kul'tury i iskusstva v esteticheskoi teorii Proletkul'ta" (INION Library, Moscow, 1969), Synopsis of dissertation.

139. Gorbunov seems to be in the forefront of the "newer" interpretation; see his *Lenin i Proletkul't* and the synopsis of his dissertation, "Bor'ba Lenina s separatizmom i sektantstvom Proletkul'ta" (INION Library, Moscow, 1958). Also see L. M. Kirikova, "Problema kul'tury v sovetskoi obshchestvennoi mysly 20–kh godov" (Leningrad, 1971, in INION Library, Moscow), Synopsis of dissertation.

140. T. A. Khavina, "Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi partii za Proletkul't i rukovodsto ego deiatel'nost'iu, 1917–1932 (Leningrad, 1978, in INION Library, Moscow), Synopsis of dissertation, p. 11. Similarly, Pinegina examines the activities of local Proletkult studios (conveniently skirting most of Bogdanov's theories) and concludes with a positive assessment of Proletkult. See Pinegina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass.*

Clearly, Proletkult's place in history remains vulnerable to shifting political winds. The latest position is to give some credit to Bogdanov but to maintain a fairly sharp distinction between his ideas and the organization he helped found. Some Soviet analysts recognize that this distinction is anomalous and not really tenable, but a thoroughly unbiased history of Proletkult has yet to be written in the Soviet Union.[141]

141. This point came out fairly clearly in interviews between the author and several members of the Institute of History. One of the people interviewed suggested the following reading as the latest statement on Bogdanov and Proletkult: V. Akimov, *V bor'be za sotsialisticheskim realizmom* (Moscow, 1981), chap. 2.

Part III /

ORIGINS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

7 /

Lenin and Political Hegemony

For all the twists and turns of Lenin's views, one cardinal principle stood out: political hegemony was essential to the establishment of a new political order. No matter who the enemies of the regime, what the reversals in policy, how tremendous—even overwhelming—the scale of the tasks, socialism was possible as long as the party held on to power. Political hegemony—that is, institutionalization of the party and extension of its control over society—coupled with the development of values to provide legitimacy and stability to the regime, was, to Lenin, the key to an effective transition to socialism.

For this reason, Lenin's reaction to Bogdanov and to Proletkult was invariably a political one. The bone of contention was whose prerogative and whose obligation it was to shape the new attitudes and patterns of behavior. There were, as yet, no well-defined rules of the game and the process of institutionalization had just begun. By placing the concept of proletarian culture on the political agenda, Proletkult made it impossible to ignore the cultural dimension of revolution. Lenin, who may have heretofore paid little attention to the question of proletarian culture, was forced into clarifying his own position. Although the ostensible debate was over the merits of proletarian culture, the underlying dispute involved the foundations of political culture for the new regime. Lenin's gruff response to Proletkult, especially to its leader, Bogdanov, spelled out a party line on the "appropriate" proletarian culture and outlined, as a consequence, the political approach now identified as Leninism.

Toward a Definition of Political Culture

An intensely political belief informed Lenin's thinking on cultural questions. He heralded a cultural revolution but predicated it on the political prerequisite that the seizure of power was necessary to inaugurate the culture-building process. As he remarked, "If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way?"[1]

In emphasizing this sequence of events, which was at least a partial rationalization of what had actually transpired, Lenin rejected the comparison between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions that Bogdanov had made. Although the bourgeoisie had come to power "culturally prepared," fundamental cultural transformation for the proletariat could begin only after the seizure of power. Consequently, Lenin argued that the October Revolution entailed its own set of problems as well as opportunities. Trotsky agreed with Lenin, saying it was a mistake to draw a "formal analogy" between the two revolutions:

> Bourgeois culture existed already before the bourgeoisie had formally taken power. The bourgeoisie took power in order to perpetuate its rule. The proletariat in a bourgeois society is a propertyless and deprived class, so it cannot create a culture of its own. Only after taking power does it really become aware of its own frightful cultural backwardness.[2]

Bukharin also maintained that, as the "culturally oppressed class," the proletariat could not match the superiority the bourgeoisie had achieved under feudalism. He noted that although the proletariat created "brilliant allusions of the approaching culture," it was unable to prepare "for the organization of the entire society." The proletariat succeeds, in the first place, in preparing itself for the "destruction of the old world"; it then " 'transforms [its] nature' and ripens, as the organizer of society, only in the period of [its] dictatorship."[3]

1. V. I. Lenin, "Our Revolution," 17 January 1923, in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, one-vol. ed. (New York, 1971), p. 698.

2. Leon Trotsky, "Class and Art," in Leon Trotsky, *On Literature and Art*, ed. and intro. Paul N. Siegel (New York, 1970), p. 79.

3. N. Bukharin, "Burzhuaznaia revoliutsiia i revoliutsiia proletarskaia," *PZM*, nos. 7–8 (July–August 1922): 75. Bukharin argued that the bourgeois and feudal classes did not stand in the same relationship of economic exploitation as the proletariat and bourgeoisie. In addition, the proletariat could not develop its "administrative superstructure" as did the bourgeoisie because it did not have its own economic sphere (the city), as did the bourgeoisie under feudalism.

Bogdanov, who had drawn on the historical analogy in advocating the development of proletarian culture during the prerevolutionary period, was thus refuted not in terms of objectives but in terms of sequence. To quote from Lenin:

> Our opponents told us repeatedly that we were rash in undertaking to implant socialism in an insufficiently cultured country. But they were misled by our having started from the opposite end to that prescribed by theory (the theory of pedants of all kinds), because in our country the political and social revolution preceded the cultural revolution, that very cultural revolution which nevertheless now confronts us.[4]

Lenin, in other words, advocated concentrating first on the political goal (the seizure of power) and then on the cultural goal (a change in beliefs and attitudes). The two goals were closely related because Lenin anticipated that cultural change would help consolidate power and stabilize the regime.

Although Lenin's position may seem politically astute, it contains implications that remain debatable even today. The assertion that cultural transformation can begin only after the revolution reduces the alternatives available to the proletariat in societies where seizure of power still seems distant. It is precisely for this reason that contemporary European Marxists have instead been attracted to Gramscian concepts such as the "war of position," which suggests a protracted struggle during which time the proletariat develops the means to challenge the bourgeois superstructure.[5] Indeed, one commentator praises Gramsci's "renewal of Marxism" because it contains the most lucid confrontation of "the problem of organizing and sustaining a socialist movement in the conditions of advanced capitalism."[6] Even some Soviet writings diverge, albeit gently, from those of Lenin by suggesting that it is possible to promote a proletarian culture within the framework of capitalism.[7] In particular, such aspects as a "new proletarian morality," the beginnings of collectivism, "proletarian art," and various cultural-educational organizations are forecast, with the proletariat developing to the point where bourgeois society "is split into two hostile

4. V. I. Lenin, "On Cooperation," 6 January 1923, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 695.

5. Gramsci distinguished between a "war of maneuver" (a frontal attack on the state) and a "war of position" (a protracted struggle, a "state of reciprocal siege"). Antonio Gramsci, "State and Civil Society," in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), pp. 229–39.

6. John Merrington, "Theory and Practice in Gramsci's Marxism," *Socialist Register, 1968*, p. 169.

7. E. A. Baller, "Problema preemstvennosti i razvitie sotsialisticheskoi kul'tury," in *Kommunizm i kul'tura*, ed. A. N. Maslin (Moscow, 1966), p. 117.

nations, struggling against each other." All the same, Soviet analysts emphasize that radical change cannot occur within the confines of capitalism but must be based on the seizure of power; Lenin's political precondition is retained because it is considered a cardinal factor in avoiding the "opportunism" of reformists who consider it possible to "grow into socialism."[8]

Once power was acquired, Lenin believed, cultural revolution, in all its aspects, would be important to securing the political hegemony of the proletariat. The cultural revolution would retain this significance even if it were translated simply to mean the "democratization of knowledge." Lenin recognized, notes one analyst, that knowledge was "a form of power," without which the success of the Russian Revolution remained in doubt.[9] Lenin expressed the problem bluntly: "If the conquering nation is more cultured than the vanquished nation, the former imposes its culture upon the latter; but if the opposite is the case, the vanquished nation imposes its culture upon the conqueror."[10]

The acquisition of skills and knowledge, although essential, was not the sole objective of the cultural revolution; the necessary complement was the development of a political culture. Lenin certainly expected the inculcation of desired attitudes and values to go hand in hand with the building of socialism. This expectation is implied in his call for a cultural revolution that would produce "civilized cooperators" among the peasants; it is reproduced in his labeling of trade unions as "schools of communism." On numerous occasions, Lenin stated that "we must re-educate the masses," which automatically implied a twin purpose—enhancing their "thirst for education and knowledge of communism."[11]

One of the reasons, not unexpectedly, for the vehemence of Lenin's attack on Proletkult was the latter's appropriation of the term *prole-*

8. G. G. Karpov, *Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii* (Leningrad, 1970), p. 38. The seizure of power as a necessary prerequisite is repeated by numerous Soviet authors. According to Mezhuev, the "distinctive feature" of the October Revolution was that it was "not the result but the precondition for the creation of the material and cultural foundations of socialist society." V. M. Mezhuev, "Leninskaia teoriia sotsialisticheskoi kul'ture," *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 4 (1967): 13. Furmanov also considers the dictatorship of the proletariat to be the "political precondition" and "decisive tool" of the cultural revolution. G. L. Furmanov, "V. I. Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta*, ser. 8: Ekonomiia, Filosofiia, no. 4 (1960): 36–37.

9. Carmen Claudin-Urondo, *Lenin and the Cultural Revolution*, trans. Brian Pearce (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1977), p. 35.

10. V. I. Lenin, "Political Report of the Central Committee to the Eleventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)," 27 March 1922, in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70) 33: 288.

11. V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the All-Russia Conference of Political Education Workers of Guberniia and Uyezd Education Departments," 3 November 1920, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 629.

tarian culture and its claim to be the chief interpreter of the set of political symbols and attitudes consonant with socialism. Although it is not obvious that Lenin ever believed in a proletarian culture as such, especially with its class connotations, he did not hesitate to use the term in a polemical sense. Certainly, he appreciated the importance and impact of a new political culture; he also wanted to make sure it was stamped with his, not Proletkult's, and definitely not Bogdanov's, brand of politics. Thus the quarrel between Lenin and Bogdanov was not merely cultural in nature; it was more fundamental, and more vigorous, because it involved the formation of the new political culture itself. For this reason, Lenin felt compelled to draw up his own list of essential elements of proletarian culture, in direct rebuttal to Bogdanov's list (which had included labor, collectivism, liberation from fetishisms, and "unity of methods"). Lenin's 1920 draft resolution to the Central Committee, "On Proletarian Culture," contained what he considered underlying premises.

Class Struggle

Lenin agreed that a cultural front existed, but it was not, to him, a theoretical, aesthetic, or literary one. As he explained, "We must overcome resistance from the capitalists in all its forms, not only in the military and political spheres, but also ideological resistance, which is the most deep-seated and the strongest."[12] Consequently, the first premise in developing a proletarian culture, according to Lenin, was that all educational work—political education in general and art in particular—"should be embued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat for the successful achievement of the aims of its dictatorship, i.e., the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the abolition of classes, and the elimination of all forms of exploitation of man by man."[13] Class struggle, therefore, was highlighted as the hallmark of proletarian culture and as typical of the transitional period as a whole.

This interpretation came up again in Lenin's polemics with left-wing communists in Europe who had rejected parliamentary compromise out of fear of being infected by "bourgeois influences." Their fear, scoffed Lenin, was exaggerated, because the conquest of power would be followed by "these very same difficulties on a still larger, and infinitely larger scale." Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the "truly gigantic problems" would arise of "re-educating . . . millions of peasants and small proprietors, hundreds of thousands of office employees, of-

12. Ibid.

13. V. I. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture," 8 October 1920, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 621.

ficials and bourgeois intellectuals, of subordinating them all to the proletarian leadership, of vanquishing their bourgeois habits and traditions."[14]

Lenin's choice of words readily conveyed the impression of an ongoing battle for political allegiance and against cultural backwardness. The task of the proletariat, he argued, did not end with "overthrowing the tsar and driving out the landowners and capitalists;... the class struggle is continuing; it has merely changed its form." At every opportunity, Lenin drove home the same point. Communist morality, he declared in an address to communist youth, is subordinated to class struggle; it is "what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat in creating a new society of communists."[15]

Leading Role of the Party

If the defining feature of the transitional period was class struggle, with its obvious political dimensions, it logically followed that the dominant organ should be a political one, the party. Lenin made precisely this connection in describing the second premise of proletarian culture: "Hence, the proletariat, both through its vanguard—the Communist Party—and through the many types of proletarian organizations in general, should display the utmost activity and play the leading part in all the work of public education."[16]

At the same time, Lenin insisted that the main objective of cultural work during the transitional period was education rather than an "invention" of proletarian culture. It was "theoretically unsound and practically harmful... to draw a line dividing the field of work between Narkompros and Proletkult, or to seek 'autonomy' for Proletkult within Narkompros."[17] Not surprisingly, the founding of Glavpolitprosvet, on November 12, 1920, contained instructions to establish leadership over Proletkult and use its resources for political education work. In fact, Glavpolitprosvet replicated the organizational features of Proletkult, including the divisions of theater, applied arts, music, literature, and photo-cinema; a special "division of proletarian culture" was also added.[18] This replication had the intended consequence of asserting party control over Proletkult while rendering Proletkult redundant.

14. V. I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1902; New York, 1940), pp. 92–93.

15. V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues," 2 October 1920, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, pp. 614–15.

16. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture," p. 621.

17. Ibid.

18. TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 144, l. 173–74.

Marxist Ideology

A third premise was that all cultural work should be guided by Marxist ideology. The entire history of the revolutionary struggle, contended Lenin, "demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt" that the Marxist world outlook was "the only true expression of the interests, the viewpoint, and the culture of the revolutionary proletariat."[19] Consequently, proletarian culture could be based not on "one's own ideas, but [on] Marxism."[20]

A practical application of this premise was quick to follow. In the Politburo resolution of November 22, 1921, Communist party members engaged in the Proletkults were assigned the task of "cleansing the Proletkults of their petty-bourgeois, philistine contamination, of offering an ideological rebuff to all attempts to substitute for the materialist world outlook the surrogates of bourgeois-idealistic philosophy (Bogdanov, etc.)."[21] Hence, the philosophical dispute between Lenin and Bogdanov from the prerevolutionary period was resurrected and used as a cudgel against Proletkult.

Assimilation of Past Culture

One of the more vexing problems facing the new regime was what to do with past culture. "The problem of the cultural heritage touched upon the most essential aspects of life of the proletarian government," admits a Soviet analyst, who adds, "On the correct formulation and resolution depended the success of the building of socialism in our country."[22] Lenin was not oblivious to the problem. In all the classics of Marxism, he complained, there was not even one word or opinion indicating "the concrete practical difficulty which will arise to face the working class, upon seizing power, when it undertakes the task of transforming the totality accumulated by capitalism, the richest, historically inevitable, necessary for us, stock of culture and knowledge and technology—transform all that from weapons of capitalism to weapons of socialism."[23]

Lenin concluded that socialism could be built only by assimilating rather than rejecting the past. Accordingly, he maintained that proletarian culture was "the logical development of the store of knowledge

19. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture," p. 621.

20. V. I. Lenin, "Nabrosok rezoliutsii o proletarskoi kul'ture," 9 October 1920, in V. I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1969), p. 455.

21. Reprinted in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 597.

22. V. V. Gorbunov, "Kritika V. I. Leninym teorii Proletkul'ta ob otnoshenii k kul'turnomu naslediiu," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 5 (1968): 83–84.

23. V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the First Congress of Economic Councils," 26 May 1918, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27: 412.

mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalism, landowner and bureaucratic society."[24] In bolstering his argument, Lenin drew upon the example of Marx:

> Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture. Only further work on this basis and in this direction . . . can be recognized as the development of a genuine proletarian culture.[25]

This passage was the one that caused Bukharin to deviate from Lenin's position on proletarian culture. As he wrote in a memo to Lenin: "I personally think that 'to conquer' bourgeois culture, without destroying it, is as impossible as 'to conquer' bourgeois government. With 'culture' the same occurs as with the government. As an ideological system, it is adopted by the proletariat in a *different* arrangement of its constituent parts."[26] Interestingly, this particular passage by Lenin was dropped from the final resolution, even though the principle of assimilation remained firmly in place.

Lenin's Version of Proletarian Culture

Whatever disputes may have arisen over individual points, and there were many, it is plain that, combined, these four premises (that is, class struggle, leading role of the party, Marxist ideology, and assimilation of past culture) laid the foundations for the Bolshevik counterculture. They represented Lenin's testament on cultural questions, a sketch of at least the rudimentary elements of the new political culture.

It is striking how much continuity there was in Lenin's thought; indeed, as Tucker points out, the 1920 resolution on proletarian culture was already "prefigured in *What Is to Be Done?*"[27] In both, conflict and battle remained the order of the day; workers were accused of being too easily sidetracked by trade-union consciousness (pre-1917) or by anarchism and syndicalism (post-1917); only the party, as the repository

24. Lenin, "Tasks of the Youth Leagues," p. 610.

25. Lenin, "On Proletarian Culture," p. 622.

26. Bukharin offered a substitute version of Lenin's passage: "Marxism . . . did not by any means reject all the achievements of man's thought (including those of the bourgeoisie), but on the contrary, succeeded in utilizing, transforming, and ordering them into a new harmonious system." Bukharin to Lenin, quoted in Gorbunov, "Kritika Leninym teorii Proletkul'ta," p. 91.

27. Robert C. Tucker, "Lenin's Bolshevism as a Culture in the Making," in *Bolshevik Culture*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), p. 28.

of political consciousness and expertise, could be trusted to implement socialism successfully.

A good dose of combativeness was implied in Lenin's version of proletarian culture. It reflected Lenin's concerns for the relative fragility of the regime and a preoccupation with establishing political hegemony. To some, Lenin's position, although correct, undermined the very notion of proletarian culture. Trotsky, for example, convinced that he was following Lenin's strictures, concluded that it was impossible to have a proletarian culture at all during the transitional period. He envisaged the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "temporary and transient" period dedicated largely to the consolidation of power. This period was distinguished by fierce class struggles and was hence was not amenable to the development of culture, because, as he avowed, the objective of the revolution was a "culture which is above classes." That is, "the proletariat acquires power for the purpose of doing away forever with class struggle and to make way for human culture."[28]

Trotsky's argument, of course, hinged on the notion of a fairly short transition. Bukharin, in response, asserted that Trotsky had made a "theoretical mistake" in exaggerating the "rate of development of communist society, or expressed differently... the speed of the withering away of the proletarian dictatorship."[29]

Without a doubt, Lenin did not share Trotsky's optimism about a brief interim between capitalism and socialism. He softened, however, the image of an indefinite dictatorship of the proletariat by giving it another slant—that of tutelary dictatorship. The cultural goal, Lenin insisted, included both political and educational components. This point was important because it provided the party with an extensive assignment. As Meyer writes: "The Leninist party is... far more than a small elite of professional revolutionaries.... It is also an educational institution aiming to raise the working class to the level of conscious-

28. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, trans. Rose Strunsky (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1960), pp. 14, 186.

29. N. Bukharin, "Proletariat i voprosy khudozhestvennoi politiki," *Krasnaia nov'*, no. 4 (May 1925): 264. Lunacharsky also differed with Trotsky. Although he believed that a universal classless culture was the end goal, he did not think the culture was necessarily classless during the intermediary stages. Proletarian culture, according to Lunacharsky, was part of the long-term development of socialist culture and was characteristic of the dictatorship of the proletariat. See Lunacharsky, "Lev Davydovich Trotskii," in his *Kul'tura burzhuaznaia, perekhodnaia, i sotsialisticheskaia* (Moscow, 1924), pp. 159–62. This book is a compilation of Lunacharsky's articles. Although Lunacharsky did not deny that class struggle was the hallmark of proletarian culture, he insisted that the transitional period represented "a strictly delimited cultural, as well as, of course, economic and political period." Lunacharsky, "Kul'tura burzhuaznaia, perekhodnaia, i sotsialisticheskaia," in Lunacharsky, *Kul'tura burzhuaznaia*, p. 89.

ness."[30] This educational mission implied a redefinition not only of the role of the party but also of the transitional political system as a whole. As in some of today's Third World countries, genuine democracy was forestalled on the ground of economic and cultural backwardness.[31] A tutelary dictatorship is founded on a particular type of political culture—one that underscores a unity of goals between leaders and followers but a disparity between them in the ability to reach these goals. Whatever the effort to create a sense of community and common purpose, which Tucker considers "the central, sustaining myth of Soviet society," Lenin's political culture was both patronizing and authoritarian. It was more in keeping with "Leninism in the making" than with Marxist visions. As Tucker notes, "It was not classical Marxism but Lenin's Bolshevism that conceived the proletarian dictatorship as a state in which a political party would have the mission to 'lead the whole people to socialism' as their teacher, leader, and guide."[32]

Furthermore, to elevate the party to a position of tutor meant a corresponding belittling of the abilities of the workers themselves. This belittling was precisely Lenin's message when he affirmed: "They [the workers] would like to build a better apparatus for us, but they do not know how. They cannot build one. They have not yet developed the culture required for this; and it is culture that is required."[33]

Part of the problem with Proletkult, from Lenin's perspective, was that it refused to budge from its faith in the instincts and abilities of the workers. Such an attitude was deemed unrealistic. As Lenin put it, "We do not hold the utopian view that the working masses are ready for a socialist society."[34] In a similar vein, one critic charged that Proletkult had replaced "the actual, existing Russian worker" with a "fantasized model of a worker."[35] Of course, Lenin himself had declared, in *State and Revolution* (1917), that every cook and baker would participate in the running of government, because its operation would be no more complicated than that of a "giant post office." After the revolution, he backtracked. Even when legal restrictions imposed by the bourgeois government were lifted, he argued in 1919, there were additional obstacles to participation:

30. Alfred G. Meyer, *Communism*, 4th ed. (New York, 1984), pp. 41–42.

31. See Edward Shils, *Political Development in the New States* (The Hague, 1968). Shils uses the term *tutelary democracy*.

32. Tucker, "Lenin's Bolshevism," pp. 35, 31.

33. V. I. Lenin, "Better Fewer, but Better," 2 March 1923, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 701.

34. Lenin, "Speech at Conference of Political Education Workers," p. 624.

35. Ia. Iakovlev, "O 'proletarskoi kul'ture' i Proletku'te," *Pravda*, 24 and 25 October 1922, reprinted in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 603.

> Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law. The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced sections of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole.[36]

Although the difficulties of governing with a largely illiterate mass of people should by no means be minimized, Lenin's position was undoubtedly a rationalization of party dictatorship.[37] It left unanswered the question of how educated the masses must be in order to participate and whether education should be the main criterion. As one Western Marxist, Claudin-Urondo, observes, the "didactic dimension" of the enlightened vanguard "shuts the proletarian up in a sort of 'nursery-school' of history where, whichever way he turns, he is always the 'ignorant' pupil of some educator or other, whom it is hard to perceive he will ever cease to need." Claudin-Urondo contrasts this position to that of Marx, for whom "the self-emancipation of the proletariat is inseparable from its *self-education*, to which the contribution made by the correct knowledge of a possible 'teacher' is much less . . . than that which results from the mistakes, even the repeated mistakes, made by the 'pupil' "[38]

Instead of waiting for the "pupils" to learn, Lenin proposed the short-cut of harnessing bourgeois specialists to the task of building socialism. According to a Soviet commentator, "the idea of utilizing the cadres of the exploiting society was innovative and bold."[39] Lenin recognized that his solution contained "inherent contradictions" and that the experts were "bourgeois through and through, from head to foot, in their outlook and in their habits." The problem, nevertheless, was a practical one: "We have bourgeois experts and nothing else. . . . We

36. V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Party Program to the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)," 19 March 1919, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29: 183. Although Lenin held that the low cultural level of the masses led to dictatorship, he believed this problem to be a remedial one; the "cultural revolution" was partially directed toward this goal. Michels, in comparison, argues that the "perennial incompetence of the masses" inevitably leads to "oligarchy." Robert Michels, "The Iron Law of Oligarchy," in *Comparative Politics*, ed. Roy C. Macridis and Bernard E. Brown (Homewood, Ill., 1968), pp. 300–1.

37. Lenin's position, moreover, conformed to his concept of a "vanguard party" rather than a "mass participation party," long a point of dispute between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. When this debate came to a head, in 1903, Trotsky charged that Lenin's scheme of organization would mean that the party would "*substitute* itself for the working classes." Quoted in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879–1921* (New York, 1954), 1: 90.

38. Claudin-Urondo, *Lenin and the Cultural Revolution*, p. 73.

39. Karpov, *Lenin o kul'turnoi revoliutsii*, p. 35.

cannot wait twenty years until we have trained pure, communist experts." Socialism would be built with "the material that capitalism left us yesterday to be used today.... and not with people reared in hothouses."[40]

Interestingly, a by-product of the use of specialists was to enhance even more the role of the party. In addition to being a "political tutor," the party acquired a new function, that of "watchman." "We must not throw them [bourgeois specialists] out," said Lenin, "but break their resistance, watch them at every step, make no political concessions to them, which spineless people are inclined to do every minute."[41]

Perhaps in an effort to placate some of his critics, Lenin tried to explain that his was not a simple policy of cultural assimilation, albeit under the eye of the party. He, too, thought it was important to excise "remnants of the past," but by "remnants" he meant prebourgeois, landowning, and serf culture. The immediate task was to teach people "to spell their names and count,... to know that the earth is round, not flat, and that the world is not governed by witches and sorcerers and a 'heavenly father' but by natural laws."[42] In contrast to this state of affairs, bourgeois culture represented enormous progress. For those who were "dilating at too great length and too flippantly on 'proletarian culture,' " Lenin advised, "For a start, we should be satisfied with real bourgeois culture; for a start, we should be glad to dispense with the cruder types of pre-bourgeois culture, i.e., bureaucratic culture or serf culture, etc."[43]

In a sense, Lenin viewed the transitional period as the completion of the sequence of development posited by Marx, even if in modified form. The new, or modern, to Lenin was associated with bourgeois culture and the bourgeois period, as opposed to the "Asiatic gloom" that hung over the Soviet Union. It was necessary to assimilate bourgeois culture first and only then attempt to create socialist culture. Actually, Lenin rejected the notion of "creating" a culture. Rather, he believed that socialist culture would be the natural outgrowth of previous cultures: "Why turn our backs on what is truly beautiful, abandon it as the point of departure for further development solely because it is 'old'?"[44] Lenin preferred Pushkin to Maiakovskii and was taken aback when students dismissed the former because he was "bourgeois." He complained that the "most absurd ideas were hailed as something new,

40. V. I. Lenin, "The Achievements and Difficulties of the Soviet Government," 1919, in V. I. Lenin, *On Culture and Cultural Revolution* (Moscow, 1970), p. 70.
41. Ibid.
42. As cited in Clara Zetkin, "My Recollections of Lenin," in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 235.
43. Lenin, "Better Fewer," p. 700.
44. As cited in Zetkin, "My Recollections," pp. 232–33.

and the supernatural and incongruous were offered as purely proletarian art and proletarian culture."[45]

Lenin believed he was outlining a more solid cultural objective for the party, a broadly defined educational one, a sort of bootstrap operation. This objective was succinctly put in Lenin's rebuff to Proletkult: "RKP [the party] + Narkompros [the Ministry of Education] = Total sum of Proletkult."[46] In other words, education under party auspices was his pragmatic, long-run alternative to Proletkult's ambitious, perhaps wistful, cultural program.

If there was any "creating" to be done in the short run, it was, according to Lenin, in the realm of values, beliefs, and attitudes relevant to the political domain—that is, political culture. He specifically used the term *political culture* on at least one occasion. In trying to puzzle out what "links" could be established between the "need of the Communist Party's primacy" and the "half-million strong army of teachers," Lenin suggested political culture: "The purpose of political culture, of political instruction, is to train genuine Communists capable of stamping out falsehood and prejudices and helping the working masses to vanquish the old system and build up a state without capitalists, without exploiters, and without landowners." By consciously undertaking agitation-propaganda work, party members could whet the interest of these teachers, "overcome their old bourgeois prejudices, enlist them in the work we are doing, and make them realize the immensity of our work."[47] In other words, by developing an attractive and appealing political culture, it would be possible to establish a link between two seemingly irreconcilable elements: the party as communist tutor and the teaching of bourgeois culture.

To supplement this idea, Lenin attempted to portray a society combined in a "single will." He promoted communism, accordingly, as something tangible and concrete—not the "old and dried-out phrases" but "living reality," a reality that promised material improvement. This image of communism, he contended, provided a common denominator for leaders and followers. Even if a worker or peasant did not understand or did "not immediately believe" communist teachings, he would become convinced by the "practical work and activity" of the communist leaders. Communist society, explained Lenin, was the elimination of exploitation and the uniting of all the people in a single union. "All should work according to a single common plan, on common land,

45. V. I. Lenin, "Speech of Greeting at the First All-Russian Congress on Extra-Mural Education," 6 May 1919, in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 80.

46. Lenin, "Nabrosok rezoliutsii o proletarskoi kul'ture," p. 455.

47. Lenin, "Speech at Conference of Political Education Workers," pp. 627–28.

in common factories and in accordance with a common system."[48] Collectivism was important, but it meant something palpable: "mass heroism in plain, everyday work."[49]

In sum, Lenin was suggesting political images, symbols, and values that would legitimize and stabilize the regime—that is, a political culture fully congruent with political hegemony. Lunacharsky conveyed this idea well: "Lenin was interested in that particular culture which is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of a consummate socialist culture, for the stabilization of political gains and the successful building up of a socialist economy in our country."[50] It was a political culture that would mobilize and motivate people in the primary tasks of socialist construction, with economic development heading the list. It was also the perfect complement to Lenin's general understanding of cultural revolution, eliciting the conclusion, from at least one analyst, that Leninism was above all "an ideology of development."[51]

Lenin's formulation of the cultural dimension of revolution, however, left open the question of the relationship between the transitional period and socialism. "What Lenin did not explain," argues one author, "was how knowledge plus organization plus wealth would add up to a socialist culture differing in quality from preceding cultures."[52] The elimination of illiteracy and the acquisition of skills and knowledge were still within the confines of the "bourgeois democratic" revolution. When would the process of transformation that would create a new socialist person begin?

Soviet analysts have attempted to explain the hiatus by asserting that quantitative changes (in skills and knowledge) culminate in a "leap" to qualitative change (the new Soviet person).[53] That this answer is not totally satisfactory may be seen in the persisting discussions on whether the cultural revolution was limited to the transitional period or was still continuing in Russia.[54]

48. Lenin, "Tasks of the Youth Leagues," pp. 618, 614.

49. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," 28 June 1919, in Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 488.

50. A. V. Lunacharsky, "Lenin on Culture," *Pravda*, 21 January 1930, as cited in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 253.

51. David Lane, "Leninism as an Ideology of Soviet Development," in *Sociology and Development*, ed. E. de Kadt and G. Williams (London, 1974), pp. 23–37.

52. Frederic Lilge, "Lenin and the Politics of Education," *Slavic Review* 27 (June 1968): 244.

53. V. T. Ermakov, *Istoricheskii opyt kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1968), p. 34.

54. See M. Iovchuk, "Zavershaiushchii etap kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Kommunist*, no. 18 (December 1961): 42–53; V. A. Kumanev, "Nekotorye problemy izucheniia kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 12 (1967): 96–108; M. P. Kim, "Sushchnost' i istoricheskie etapy kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 6 (1960): 15–56; M. P. Kim, ed., *Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia v SSSR, 1917–1965* (Moscow, 1967); V. T. Ermakov, "O soderzhanii i khronologicheskikh ramkakh kul'turnoi revo-

Surely the queries raised by contemporary analysts, whether Western or Soviet, were of a similar nature to the misgivings expressed by Bogdanov and Proletkult. To the extent that Lenin and Bogdanov offered different definitions of *political culture*, they were at odds with each other. One definition involved the mythologizing of the party and its superior ability to lead the "working masses," with the party cast in the role of transmitter of knowledge and interpreter of Marxist dogma. The other glorified the workers and their innate aptitude for attaining knowledge, political consciousness, and self-transformation. Lenin emphasized collectivism of the entire society, a "mass heroism in practical, daily tasks"; Bogdanov stressed collectivism of the spirit and of human relations in general. Lenin's political culture was part and parcel of the "primitive accumulation of authority," a way of overcoming the anarchy of the revolution and of the civil war; it was aimed at restoring order and consolidating power. Bogdanov's political culture was directed at challenging authority in all guises; it attempted to undo the submissive habits of the past and elicit commitments, both normative and behavioral, that would facilitate the transition to socialism.

The debate between Lenin and Bogdanov, however, was not confined to the realm of ideas; it spilled over into the political realm as well. Bogdanov's ideas were grounded in a populist, grass-roots movement, thereby flying in the face of two of Lenin's basic tenets: the need for the vanguard party and the potentially harmful effects of spontaneity. Bogdanov's boasts of vindication, on the basis of Proletkult's instant success, were precisely what irritated Lenin.

Bogdanov's proletarian culture, his party schools, and the Vpered group, represented an effort, in Williams's words, to create a "Bolshevism without Lenin."[55] In the early days of the new regime, Bolshevism was only a roughcast; it was not yet synonymous with Leninism. In refuting Bogdanov, Lenin attempted to excise the alternative strands in Bolshevism and to leave his own imprint on it. This effort laid bare the contours of Leninism. Indeed, it is difficult to grasp some aspects of Leninism without reference to the Proletkult dispute.

Leninism-in-the-Making

A number of distinctive features of Leninism took shape during the course of the debates between Lenin and Bogdanov.[56] Lenin's estab-

liutsii v SSSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 10 (1966): 58–64; V. A. Ezhov, "Nekotorye cherty zavershaiushchego etapa kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR," *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta*, ser. Istoria iazyka i literatury, no. 14 (1964): 5–15.

55. Robert C. Williams, "Collective Immortality: The Syndicalist Origins of Proletarian Culture, 1905–1910," *Slavic Review* 39 (September 1980): 401.

56. For an elaboration of the main features of Leninism, see Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism* (New York, 1965).

lishment of Marxist ideology as the cornerstone of the new political culture, his rejection of any tampering with Marxism, and his insistence on a single source of interpretation of Marxism—the party—were undoubtedly related to the Proletkult controversy. Furthermore, Lenin's instant negative reaction to proletarian culture as a concept, when it first appeared on the scene, before the revolution, was due to its association with Bogdanov.

From the start, Lenin suspected that proletarian culture was simply a disguise in which to disseminate Bogdanov's own ideas. He declared that "in reality, all the phraseology about 'proletarian culture' is just a screen for the struggle against Marxism."[57] He regarded proletarian culture, or proletarian philosophy, as a "pseudonym for *Machism*, i.e., a defense of philosophical idealism under various garbs (empirio-criticism, empirio-monism, etc.)."[58]

These accusations, leveled at the Vpered faction, were brought up again in the Central Committee letter on Proletkult of December 1920. Although the letter did not mention Bogdanov by name, the message was clear: "Intellectual groups and cliques, under the guises of proletarian culture, thrust upon the advanced workers their semibourgeois philosophical 'systems' and inventions." The ideas that originated after the 1905 Revolution and "for several years (1907–1912) occupied the minds of the 'social democratic' intelligentsia" were now being grafted "in masked form" upon the Proletkults. The Central Committee letter indicted these ideas, in the harshest and most unequivocal language to date, as "anti-Marxist."[59] In this manner, the principle of ideological orthodoxy in cultural matters was established. Claudin-Urondo notes that the first seeds of "dogmatizing Marxism" were planted by Lenin in his response to Proletkult, thereby opening the gate to a "sacralization of the allegedly Marxist point of view . . . and to its corollary in practice, the mystique of monolithic unity."[60]

From this point on, the "class character" of culture was defined by its ideological content and its service to one or another class.[61] Krupskaia criticized Proletkult for not appreciating the main criterion of proletarian art—whether it was "penetrated by proletarian ideology," rather than whether its creator was proletarian by birth.[62] Consequently,

57. V. I. Lenin, " 'Platform' of Adherents and Defenders of Otzovism," 19 March 1910, in Lenin, *On Culture*, p. 26.

58. V. I. Lenin, "The Vpered Faction," 12 September 1910, in Lenin, *Collected Works*, 16: 268.

59. "O Proletkul'takh," 1 December 1920, in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 595.

60. Claudin-Urondo, *Lenin and the Cultural Revolution*, p. 27.

61. Ermakov, *Istoricheskii opyt*, p. 23.

62. N. Krupskaia, "Proletarskaia ideologiia i Proletkul't," *Pravda*, 8 October 1922.

the clash between bourgeois and proletarian cultures was transformed into an ideological struggle. This focus on ideology helped justify the assimilation of bourgeois culture, because only the noxious elements needed to be eradicated. For example, to Lenin, economics and philosophy were ideologically "infested," but science and technology were relatively "value-free."[63] Accentuating ideology also made the cultural task infinitely easier, amounting to what one analyst calls "the surgical approach to history."[64] Ideology formed the basis for evaluating the past; as one Soviet analyst wrote, Marxism was a "prism" through which it was necessary first to examine and then to admit capitalist culture.[65] Lenin himself explained that he rejected an "invention" of proletarian culture in favor of "a *development* of the best examples, traditions, results of the *existing* culture *from the point of view* of the world outlook of Marxism and the condition of life and struggle of the proletariat in the epoch of its dictatorship."[66]

Although Lenin did not equate the cultural revolution with an ideological one—that is, with the establishment of a Marxist point of view in all matters—his position lent itself to such an interpretation.[67] Pletnev, for example, in trying to refashion Proletkult to suit Lenin, stated that Proletkult was committed to ideological struggle, which consisted "not only in the acceptance of [Soviet] power, but also in the acceptance of communist ideology."[68] This version of Proletkult goals was at best a simplification and a vulgarization of Bogdanov's ideas;[69] it also set the stage for Stalin's cultural revolution. Moreover, Lenin's methods of dealing with his theoretical opponents, notes one scholar, had important consequences. It was Lenin who "imposed the idea . . . that Marxism was a comprehensive, absolutely true theoretical system or *Weltanschauung*, to which the members of the proletarian party should be unconditionally committed." Consistent with this tradition was "Stalin's dogmatization of all theoretical life in the Soviet Union, his

63. For this discussion, see Claudin-Urondo, *Lenin and the Cultural Revolution*, p. 27.

64. Lilge, "Lenin and the Politics of Education," p. 251.

65. I. Luppol, "Problema kul'tury v postanovke Lenina," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 7 (1925): 21.

66. Lenin, "Nabrosok rezoliutsii o proletarskoi kul'ture," p. 455. (Lenin's emphasis.)

67. This ideological conformity is how Joravsky describes the "cultural revolution" that took place in the natural sciences in the late 1920s. David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science, 1917–1932* (New York, 1961).

68. V. Pletnev, "Na ideologicheskom fronte," *Pravda*, 27 September 1922, reprinted in Lenin, *O Literature*, p. 464.

69. Yakhot, in comparison, argues that Bogdanov was "the first to use the notion of 'ideology' in a fixed sense and to understand it in the way that would become habitual with Lenin and the Soviets." I. Yakhot, "The Marxian Notion of 'Ideology,' " *Studies in Soviet Thought* 20 (July 1979): 45.

exposition of the philosophy of Marxism in the form of a catechism, the punishment of heretics or revisionists."[70]

Interestingly, in conjunction with the ideological issue, Lenin seems to have taken some steps that would ensure a coupling of Leninism with Bolshevism. It was not, however, complete conformity with Marxism that counted for Lenin, but the right to claim and judge conformity, especially when confronted by circumstances that Marx had not foreseen. Lenin's directions, for example, for the study and writing of the history of the October Revolution stressed the role of the vanguard party. Instead of the spontaneous role of the masses, vociferously proclaimed by Marx, Lenin explicitly linked the success of the Revolution to the initiative and organizational acumen of the Bolshevik party. As James White points out, "The October Revolution was . . . used by Lenin to give retrospective justification not only to his own ideas on party organization, but also to all the positions he had adopted on the issues which had arisen between 1903 and 1917." The ultimate result, concludes White, was "to create a Lenin-centered history of the Russian revolution and the Bolshevik Party."[71]

A Leninist interpretation of the Revolution was intended to counter left-wing tendencies, especially syndicalist ones, whether in the Soviet Union or abroad. By reemphasizing the need for leadership and organization, Lenin hoped to discourage the insistence on worker spontaneity typical of Proletkult and the Workers' Opposition. Particularly worrying to Lenin was, in fact, the potential link between Proletkult and such dissident groups as the Workers' Opposition. Proletkult posed a political challenge because it suggested a different interpretation of Marxism and signified the possibility of a "non-Leninist Bolshevism." One contemporary Soviet analyst affirms that questions concerning Proletkult were those of a "general political character."[72] Another even finds a "striking" similarity in views between the Workers' Opposition and Proletkult. "The declaration of the opposition," he wrote, "that it is the class-united, class-conscious and class-seasoned part of the industrial proletariat seems borrowed without any changes from the ideological arsenal of the leaders of Proletkult."[73] A Western scholar also makes a connection between Proletkult and the Workers' Opposition,

70. Karl G. Ballestrem, "Lenin and Bogdanov," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 9 (December 1969): 307. Also see Meyer, *Leninism*.

71. James D. White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretation of the Russian Revolution, 1918–24," *Soviet Studies* 37 (July 1985): 339–40.

72. V. Novikov, "K istorii bor'by za sotsialisticheskuiu kul'turu (V. I. Lenin i diskussia o 'proletarskoi kul'ture' i Proletkul'te, 1922)," *Voprosy literature*, no. 3 (March 1967): 32.

73. V. V. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't* (Moscow, 1974), p. 170.

adding that *Left-Wing Communism* was written for the resurgent left wing of the party as much as for the emerging foreign Communist parties.[74]

Direct ties between, or even a common intent of, Proletkult and the Workers' Opposition are difficult to substantiate. An anonymous pamphlet, *My Kollektivisty*, circulated at the November 1921 Proletkult Congress, made the connections explicit, even though Bogdanov never did. The "Collectivists" claimed adherence to Vpered, to Proletkult, and to the Worker's Opposition; even worse, as far as Lenin was concerned, they declared themselves to be followers of Bogdanov's philosophical views. Their criticism of party policies was trenchant; they held the party responsible for collusion with the technical-bureaucratic intelligentsia, for forming a political bloc with the peasants, and for a degeneration of the revolution, under the newly introduced NEP policy, into state capitalism.[75]

In a reply to Molotov, who had previously sent Lenin a copy of the pamphlet, Lenin demanded to know the names of those behind it, where it was distributed, and by whom it was distributed. Without waiting for a reply, Lenin labeled the pamphlet a "Platform of Bogdanovites."[76] Shortly after, Lenin sent a memo to the Politburo, saying he had read the pamphlet in its entirety and had concluded it was "absolutely useful and essential for us" to respond by printing two to three thousand brochures "with the most thorough criticism." The brochures should include comments about Bogdanov's political position in 1917 (when he had been against the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks). Lenin directed Bukharin to head the editorial committee and to return with a draft for the Politburo within two weeks. Perhaps mindful of the international goals of Proletkult, he added that the brochure "was also needed abroad."[77]

In 1922–23 yet another opposition group arose, Rabochaia Pravda (Workers' Truth), which proclaimed allegiance to Bogdanov's views. A Soviet analyst of the time called the group "syndicalist and utopian," full of anti-NEP phraseology and advocating "spontaneous economism of the workers." The writer maintained that the platform of Workers' Truth not only reflected Bogdanov's ideas but even used his words and

74. Robert C. Williams, "Childhood Diseases: Lenin on 'Left' Bolshevism," *Sbornik*, no. 8 (January 1982): 39.

75. TsPA IML, f. 17, op. 60, d. 43, l. 21–23, as cited in Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't*, pp. 172–74.

76. "V. M. Molotovu," in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 456. Lenin also asked whether the "Collectivists" were associated with the members of the Samarov party committee, whose position was close to that of the Workers' Opposition.

77. V. I. Lenin, "Chlenam Politbiuro TsK RKP(b)," in Lenin, *O literature*, pp. 456–57.

expressions.[78] In actual fact, Bogdanov disclaimed any relationship to Rabochaia Pravda, denying involvement in approving or supporting their platform, let alone being their leader. Nevertheless, according to an account by Souvarine, Bogdanov "was imprisoned after the 1923 strikes on the bare suspicion of connivance with the Workers' Truth."[79] Although he was soon released and allowed to continue his scientific work, his arrest must have served as a chilling lesson to any potential dissident. It also established a precedent that Lenin's successors were not hesitant to follow.

What is striking about Lenin's reactions to Bogdanov is his extreme sensitivity to an implied or potential political threat. In a speech to the press division of the Central Committee, on May 9, 1924, Lunacharsky confirmed this impression by avowing that Lenin "feared Bogdanovism, feared that in Proletkult there might appear various philosophical, scientific, and, ultimately, political deviations. He did not want the creation of a competing workers' organization side by side with the party."[80] Whether Proletkult truly represented such a competing organization and whether Bogdanov actually had such political ambitions are perhaps moot points since it was Lenin's perceptions that counted. His attitude was no doubt conditioned by the earlier (1908) split in Bolshevism, when Bogdanov came close to gaining ascendancy. The open sympathy for Proletkult by Lunacharsky and Bukharin, members of Lenin's Politburo; Bogdanov's widespread intellectual influence, without the benefit of an official political position; and the potential connections to political opposition groups were enough to provoke decisive action by Lenin. Bogdanov was clearly Lenin's intellectual rival; Lenin wanted to prevent him from becoming once again his political rival.

The struggle against Bogdanov revealed and contributed to the authoritarian aspects of Leninism. Lenin drew the net ever closer on permissible dissent, subduing criticism in the name of the party and extending party discipline over theoretical matters. His well-known scorn for democratic ("parliamentary") procedures appeared in an earlier battle with Bogdanov, when the latter recommended that all members of the party be ensured of "complete freedom for their revolutionary and philosophical thought." " 'Freedom of thought' (read: freedom of the press, speech and conscience)," Lenin countered, is what "we demand from the *state* (and not from a party).... The party

78. N. Karev, "O gruppe 'Rabochaia Pravda,' " *Bol'shevik*, nos. 7–8 (1924): 27–39. Also see Robert Vincent Daniels, *Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1969), pp. 159–61.

79. Boris Souvarine, *Stalin* (New York, 1939), p. 347.

80. Quoted in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 684.

of the proletariat is a free association instituted to *combat* the 'thoughts' (read: ideology) of the bourgeoisie, to defend and put into effect one definite world outlook, namely, Marxism." Full freedom, concluded Lenin, meant "freedom for the Machists."[81]

Although lively debate continued after the Revolution in the press, at party congresses, and in the Politburo (a substantial difference from the subsequent Stalinist period), Lenin established the party's right to set limits to "democracy" and converted, all too easily, opposition into heresy. These authoritarian steps were taken as part of the effort to gain the upper hand over challenges from political and intellectual sources, such as Bogdanovism. According to one author, the Bolshevik government "delegitimized politics within the citizenry," because it could not accept "a characterization of any political differences as genuine, i.e., an opinion which a person or group had a right to hold and negotiate over as an equal partner in the process of will-formation."[82] Indeed, Lenin himself said that politics could not be understood "in the old sense" but had to mean "a struggle between classes."[83] This definition in effect reduced the political realm considerably. Once classes disappeared, through a process of coercion, economic development, and reeducation, there would be no need for politics; administration would replace it. If Lenin understood democracy as being essence rather than procedures, then the party alone could define that essence. An equally enlightened vanguard, Proletkult, was prohibited from offering its version of democracy, political culture, or socialism.

Although the controversy over Proletkult and with Bogdanov was not the only one to display the authoritarian contours of Leninism, it did produce, or perhaps even evoke, some of its sharpest manifestations. Lenin's reactions signaled his preference for exclusivity, orthodoxy, and hegemony in the political domain. In the process, Lenin's set of priorities and his methods laid down the foundations of the Soviet political system.

81. Lenin, "Vpered Faction," p. 270. Bogdanov's argument is cited by Lenin in the same article.

82. A. J. Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), p. 77.

83. Lenin, "Speech at Conference of Political Education Workers," p. 162.

8 /

Bogdanov and Cultural Hegemony

On a surprisingly large number of questions, even cultural ones, Lenin and Bogdanov were in agreement. Bogdanov, like Lenin, advised caution in reference to the "cultural heritage," a respect for the "great masters," and a certain "cooperation of generations" that would allow the best of the past to become the foundation for the future.[1] The difference was one of emphasis. Both assumed a "critical assimilation" of the past was necessary, but Lenin placed the accent on assimilation whereas Bogdanov stressed criticism.

Similarly, Bogdanov exhibited some flexibility about the creation of proletarian culture. He left open the possibility that "point of view" rather than strictly class origins could be the chief criterion. If a poet, for example, became deeply immersed in the collective life of the proletariat, "really and sincerely [became] imbued with its aspirations, ideals, way of thinking... in short, [merged] with it in spirit," then he could potentially be considered a proletarian artist, wrote Bogdanov.[2] This position, nevertheless, contrasted with the more simplistic one offered by Krupskaia, in which ideology was singled out as the chief element to supplement or supplant class origins.[3]

Bogdanov even conceded the need to use bourgeois specialists and pay them unequal wages, higher than those of the workers, because

1. A. A. Bogdanov, "Kritika proletarskogo iskusstva," in A. A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture: Sbornik statei, 1904–1924* (Leningrad and Moscow, 1925), p. 173.
2. A. A. Bogdanov, "Chto takoe proletarskaia poeziia," in Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, 138.
3. N. Krupskaia, "Proletarskaia ideologiia i Proletkul't," *Pravda*, 8 October 1922.

this employment of bourgeois specialists was a predictable by-product of coming to power without adequate knowledge and experience on the part of the proletariat. As indicated earlier, Bogdanov suggested as early as 1918 a series of distinctly NEP-like measures in response to the economic backwardness of the new regime.

Despite Bogdanov's espousal of worker collectivism, prompting at least one analyst to label him a syndicalist, his position on workers' control is not entirely clear.[4] Bogdanov did not, for example, condone the type of workers' control that had sprung up during war communism, because of its parochialism and inbuilt competitiveness. Lenin's decree of 14 November 1917 on factory committees, reported Bogdanov, had the "unexpected consequence" of destroying the solidarity of the working class. Factory committees were drawn into "the sphere of competition," where every committee was compelled "to fight for the interests of its own enterprise, its own labor force, against those of other enterprises."[5] Bogdanov's attitude was typical of that of the left communists, who supported workers' control but not "anarcho-syndicalism."[6]

All of this is to say that Bogdanov represented not "mindless impracticality" or "hopeless idealism" but, potentially, a sound basis for alternatives to Lenin's policies. Under a different set of circumstances, or perhaps with different players, Bogdanov's ideas might have been coopted as complementary policies. The dichotomy of rigid centralization versus nihilism and anarchy was false. Bogdanov and the left communists suggested equally valid, albeit competing, premises, which Lenin consistently scorned or caricatured instead of discussing or accepting as "friendly amendments." Indeed, it was more often than not Lenin who drew the distinctions between himself and Bogdanov as

4. Williams calls Bogdanov a "syndicalist." See Robert C. Williams, "Collective Immortality: The Syndicalist Origins of Proletarian Culture, 1905–1910," *Slavic Review* 39 (September 1980): 389–402. Although Bogdanov certainly emphasized the possibility of independent worker activity, he made numerous negative comments about strikes and trade unions. He viewed anarcho-syndicalism as an example of individualism "from the left" and trade-unionism as individualism "from the right." See A. A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), p. 48. In his science fiction novels, Bogdanov depicted the future society as a centralized one, run by a centralized organization of labor, and did not draw attention to workers' control specifically. True, the sections dealing with workers in his *A Short Course of Economic Science* (London, 1923) discuss trade-union struggle and imply a spontaneous development of class consciousness; political parties are mentioned only in passing. This description, however, is not far from Marx's in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, ed. Samuel H. Beer (New York, 1955).

5. A. A. Bogdanov, "Sud'by rabochei partii v nyneshnei revoliutsii," *Novaia zhizn'*, nos. 19, 20 (26 and 27 January 1918), reprinted in *Sbornik*, no. 10 (1984): 106; trans. John Biggart.

6. For a discussion of the left communists' position, see Carmen Sirianni, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy: The Soviet Experience* (London, 1982), esp. chap. 2.

stark opposites. Bogdanovism as an alternative, however, is best understood in terms not of either/or but of "what else." From Bogdanov's perspective, Lenin's political hegemony alone was not the answer; the cultural revolution as an educational campaign under party auspices was fine but incomplete. Both were oriented toward building authority and overcoming backwardness but not automatically toward building socialism. The more Lenin insisted on his version of hegemony and cultural transformation as necessary and sufficient for the transition to socialism, the less likely was Bogdanov to find common ground with him.

Toward an Alternative Definition of Hegemony

To Bogdanov, an indispensable means to the socialist end was cultural hegemony. He viewed the development of a political culture less as an instrument for securing political legitimacy than as a process of establishing moral and intellectual leadership in the new society—that is, as a cultural rather than a political hegemony. Clearly, he did not subscribe to Lenin's assumption that the party, by definition, exuded such leadership.

There is a remarkable affinity on this point between Bogdanov and his Italian contemporary, Antonio Gramsci. Recent discussions of the concept *hegemony* are commonly based on Gramsci's definition: predominance over other classes "by virtue of... social and intellectual prestige and... supposedly superior function in the world of production."[7] Despite some Soviet efforts to link Gramsci's hegemony to Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat, the relationship is tenuous at best.[8] "In reality," ascertains one analyst, "Gramsci went far beyond Lenin in seeing hegemony as a political and cultural predominance of the working class and its party aimed at securing the 'spontaneous' adherence of other groups."[9] A Soviet commentator seems to admit as much, perhaps inadvertently, when he writes, "the peculiarity of the position of the working class after the October Revolution consisted in

7. John M. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford, Calif., 1967), p. 204. For a comparison of Bogdanov's and Gramsci's views, see Zenovia A. Sochor, "Was Bogdanov Russia's Answer to Gramsci?" *Studies in Soviet Thought* 22 (February 1981): 59–81.

8. See, for example, V. A. Trofimov, "Leninizm i problemy gegemonii proletariata i ego diktatury v trudakh A. Gramshi," in *Problemy rabochego dvizheniia*, ed. A. M. Rumiantsev (Moscow, 1968), pp. 183–90.

9. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci*, p. 205. Western scholars dispute whether or not a Leninist influence appears in Gramsci's concept of hegemony. See Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif., 1980), p. 172.

that, having become the predominant class politically, [the working class] was still far from representing the predominant force in the sphere of spiritual culture."[10]

To Gramsci, the basic problem of the revolution was not political insurrection but "how to make a hitherto subaltern class believe in itself as a potential ruling class and credible as such to other classes."[11] In order to achieve this objective, the working class had to develop as the nucleus of the new society, create a new *Weltanschauung*, and, even before the seizure of power, "establish its claim to be a ruling class in the political, cultural, and 'ethical' fields."[12] This conception of hegemony is far closer, in letter and in spirit, to Bogdanov's thinking than to Lenin's. Although not as developed a concept as Gramsci's hegemony, Bogdanov's prescription for proletarian culture certainly offered similar features. Bogdanov repeated, at every available opportunity, the need for the proletariat to believe in itself, not in seemingly unapproachable authorities, be they intellectuals or "absolute truth." In the Vpered platform, there was a specific call to achieve cultural hegemony alongside political hegemony because "politics forms an organic whole with the other aspects of ideological life of society"; the socialist ideal included both "political and cultural liberation."[13] Indeed, socialism would be possible only when the proletariat developed its own intellectual and moral awareness, which could be counterposed to the "old cultural world" and would provide a consensual basis for human interaction.

Furthermore, Bogdanov (like Gramsci) advocated the development of cultural hegemony prior to the seizure of power. The moment of crisis, wrote Bogdanov, does not create "new forms" but only liberates them. In no case can revolution (*Zusammenbruch*) be a moment of "direct creation of a new technology and a new ideology, but [it] must be ready in the productively developed class."[14] This reasoning underlay Bogdanov's founding of the party schools on Capri (1909) and in Bologna (1910–11). To those who argued that the proletariat was too oppressed and too burdened with physical work to take on the additional task of creating a "proletarian culture," Bogdanov retorted, "And if [proletarian culture] were beyond one's strength, the working class

10. M. P. Kim, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—organizator kul'turnoi revoliutsii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1965), p. 22.

11. E. J. Hobsbawm, "The Great Gramsci," *New York Review of Books*, 4 April 1974, p. 42.

12. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci*, pp. 204—5.

13. [A. A. Bogdanov], *Ko vsem tovarishchem* (Paris, n.d.), p. 5.

14. A. A. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva* (St. Petersburg, 1904), pp. 90–91.

would have nothing to count on, except the transition from one enslavement to another, [that is,] from under the yoke of capitalists to the yoke of engineers and the educated."[15]

Although the October Revolution was "premature" from Bogdanov's point of view, he accepted and supported it. He quickly rose to the occasion by unfurling Proletkult as the institution uniquely suited to developing cultural hegemony. Rather than adopting the "cultural apparatus of the bourgeoisie," as Lenin suggested, Proletkult hoped to become the new apparatus of the proletariat. At the very least, it could be important as a center for "consciousness-raising." At the Proletkult Congress in 1920, for example, one delegate questioned those who criticized Proletkult because a proletarian culture had not yet been created: "Who was even talking about proletarian culture a year ago? and now everyone talks about it."[16]

Bogdanov specifically rejected any connection between cultural hegemony and dogmatism or authoritarianism. Partly for this reason, he opposed Lenin's identification of class struggle as the distinguishing feature of proletarian culture. Militancy as such, he contended, was characteristic of various groups, be they the Narodnaia Volia (a terrorist group) or peasants struggling for land and freedom.[17] He considered the hatred and brutality, rampant in the aftermath of the October Revolution, a result of the "soldiery influence" of the civil war. In direct contrast, proletarian culture should be marked by progress, by positive aspects. As Bogdanov asserted, "Proletarian culture is basically defined not by struggle but by labor, not by destruction but by creativity." Although struggle was essential and, in fact, subsumed under the term *class*, it could not be regarded as a highlight of proletarian culture. Rather, "proletarian culture is the socialist ideal in its development."[18]

Moreover, cautioned Bogdanov, the "socialist ideal" could not simply be equated with Marxist ideology. On the contrary, Bogdanov

15. A. A. Bogdanov, "Ideal i put'," in A. A. Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), p. 104. Bogdanov seems to be addressing himself to the same problem as did Machajski. The latter predicted that the result of the socialist revolution would be the establishment of rule by administrators, managers, and engineers. The "capital" of the new ruling minority would be education. See Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, N.J., 1967), pp. 102–6.

16. TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 140.

17. A. A. Bogdanov, *Iskusstvo i rabochii klass* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 13–14. In reference to the character of proletarian poetry, Bogdanov wrote that it was defined by "the basic life conditions of the working class itself: its position in production, its type of organization, its historical mission" (p. 13).

18. A. A. Bogdonov, *Elementy proletarskoi kul'tury v razvitii rabochego klassa* (Moscow, 1920), pp. 90–91. Bogdanov did not consider the "socialist culture of the proletariat" the same as the "culture of socialist society"; there was a difference in degree, the former being "younger," less developed. See Bogdanov, "Ideal i put'," p. 103.

adopted a distinctly irreverent attitude toward the "Holy Scriptures of Marx and Engels."[19] Although he frequently expressed admiration for Marx's theories, he refused to accept Marxism as a body of prescribed thought. He rejected absolutism in favor of relativism. His ideal was neither the believer nor the atheist (who was a "believer inside out") but the "free thinker."[20] In this vein, Bogdanov considered Marxist ideology the starting, not the definitive, point in the development of proletarian culture. As he wrote: "Marx succeeded in establishing the foundation for the new social science and new historical philosophy. It is conceivable that all of science and all of philosophy will acquire a new appearance in the hands of the proletariat because different conditions in life engender different means of perceiving and understanding nature." Thus, it was important to avoid both "ideological haughtiness" and "ideological slavery." Proletarian culture should strive toward liberation from all "eternal truths" and create its own world outlook.[21]

Bogdanov thought it ironical that leaders of the working class, such as Plekhanov and Lenin, subscribed to Marxism as the embodiment of absolute and eternal truths when, at the same time, Marxism was a "teaching that radically denies all absolute and eternal truths."[22] In fact, even more critically, Bogdanov charged that Lenin's thinking had more to do with faith than with Marx's "scientific laws." Lenin based his arguments not on reason but on an appeal to higher authorities—a stance typical, said Bogdanov, of outmoded authoritarian and religious frames of mind.[23] Bogdanov suggested that the very notion of eternal truths was a "fetishism"; to him, all truth was historically and culturally conditioned—that is, relative. All too often, ideas, norms, and values were ossified in the form of dogma, becoming a " 'dead letter'—that is, symbols without content."[24] In this fashion, ideology bolstered "theoretical conservatism" and authoritarianism.

Bogdanov provided some interesting insights on the role of ideology in propping up the authority of leaders; once the role of a leader was "fixed in concepts and norms of the communal ideology," members of the community obeyed readily. Remarkably, "the ideological skeleton" remained even when the leader died: "There is a continued obedience

19. A. A. Bogdanov, "Programma kul'tury," in Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma*, p. 61.
20. Bogdanov, *Iskusstvo*, pp. 32–33.
21. A. A. Bogdanov [Maksimov'], "Sotsializm v nastoiashchem," *Vpered*, no. 2 (February 1911): 70.
22. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachy*, p. 30.
23. A. A. Bogdanov, *Vera i nauka* (Moscow, 1910), pp. 145–47.
24. A. A. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia: vseobshchaia organizatsionnaia nauka* (Berlin, 1922), p. 370.

to his legacies, and his will is cited by the successor." This chain of authority continued until "the most remote ancestor, whose legacies are still passed among the living generations, develops into a gigantic, superhuman authoritarian figure: into a deity."[25] Considering how Marx and Lenin are viewed in the Soviet Union today, Bogdanov's comments can be called prophetic.

The link between ideology and authority, with all its symbolic underpinnings, was particularly pronounced, observed Bogdanov, if a leader was also an ideologue. This link was often the case with a political party leader. The combination resulted in a potent form of authority, because people submitted voluntarily and blindly, believing that they followed the leader "not because he is an ideologue but because his teachings are the 'truth.' " Bogdanov discerned a relationship between leaders and followers that was subtle, somewhat more akin to Weber's notion of charisma than Marx's domination.[26] That is, Bogdanov recognized that there was a volitional element to submission on the part of the followers rather than simple coercion on the part of the leaders. The relationship between an ideologue and his followers was especially noteworthy because it contained distinct authoritarian overtones for the political system as a whole. As Bogdanov explained, "The more blind submission comes to the fore and the more the ideologue dominates the masses, the less he can influence their organizational work and the more inevitably their common life drifts into spontaneous conservatism." Religious sects, in particular, developed "strangely authoritarian components."[27]

Not unexpectedly, Bogdanov cast aside ideology as well as class struggle as defining characteristics of proletarian culture because both implied an authoritarian element that, to Bogdanov's way of thinking, should be entirely absent from the socialist ideal. He saved some of his sharpest barbs for the party, however, because it seemed to him so little interested in promoting a political culture that was decidedly different from the preceding one.

It happened all too often, charged Bogdanov, that during revolutionary epochs, organizations "in the form of hardly noticeable authoritarianism" were converted into "strict authoritarian discipline and firm rule." The problem must be confronted at the very outset, when "regulations or rules of order, official programs, and technical or tactical

25. Ibid., pp. 379–80. Also see Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

26. A. A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp. 99–100. For authority based on charisma, see Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. and intro. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1968).

27. Bogdanov, *Iz psikhologii obshchestva*, p. 129.

directives" were being worked out. It was then, he indicated, that "the question ought to be posited concerning the degree of their elasticity and the ease of changing them with subsequent growth and development of the organization." Unfortunately, immediate tasks and "firmness of forms" were typically given precedence over all other considerations. In the long run, warned Bogdanov, extreme centralization caused its own problems. If there is no "vital intercourse and solidarity" between leaders and followers, "the subordinates receive orders of superiors without understanding and trust; superiors are not able to take into account the abilities and, especially, the sentiments of their subordinates; as a result, there occur irreparable errors of leadership, sluggishness, and unreliability of execution, which lead to the inevitable catastrophe."[28]

Whether from the point of view of organizational effectiveness or of the "socialist ideal," authoritarianism, therefore, should give way to a new organizing principle: collectivism. Comradely cooperation did not come "ready-made," admitted Bogdanov, and much still had to be done; but any effort to develop it was a step in the right direction, because socialism was nothing else but "comradely organization of the whole life of society." It was especially important not to downgrade the reciprocal relations between leader and followers in favor of "the great person in history." Proletarian artists had a role to play here. If they depicted the "great world drama of our epoch as a risky game of chance, which a genius is leading masterfully against other political players," while at the same time casting the masses in the role of bystanders who "applaud and crown the winners," then they contributed to the formation of "pure authoritarianism."[29] Bogdanov deplored the fact that proletarian politics, as a whole, was still suffused largely with the spirit and methods of "bourgeois politicking." Even though comradely ties and comradely discipline were emerging, they were usually swamped by traits such as "petty egoism, careerism, competition of personal ambitions, hunger for power on the side of some, blind trust and unconscious submission on the side of others."[30]

For these reasons, Bogdanov was not reticent to suggest an organization such as Proletkult as an alternative to the existing political institutions. He was hardly wedded to the idea of the "leading role of the party." Quite the opposite; he proposed that the party be considered a means, not an end. In his words: "For the conscious political activist, the power of his party is one of his main ends or goals, but by no means

28. Bogdanov, *Tektologiia*, pp. 337, 376, 347.
29. Bogdanov, "Chto takoe proletarskaia poeziia," p. 137.
30. A. A. Bogdanov, "1918," in Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, pp. 101–2.

a final end. If need be, he can forget about the [subordinate] end for the sake of the [final end]."[31] Another way of putting it is that, to Bogdanov, loyalty to the proletariat and to socialism was not the same as reverence of the party.

Entirely in keeping with this line of thought, Bogdanov insisted that Proletkult represented a valid effort to create a nonauthoritarian workers' organization. By developing an alternative value structure, Proletkult could serve as a magnet for all those who remained convinced of the possibility of implementing the socialist ideal in the here and now. Hence, the "role models" Bogdanov endorsed were industrial workers, not party leaders. Proletkult communiqués proudly provided statistics of worker enrollment but ignored party membership as a relevant factor.[32]

Although there may have been a hint of vindictiveness in Bogdanov's stance—perhaps to be expected, given his treatment by "Lenin's party"—there is little doubt that Bogdanov had genuine qualms about the role of the party. His analysis of classes, which added authority gradations to Marx's economic factors, made him sensitive to sources of authoritarianism other than economic exploitation. He feared the danger that the party and its members would reconstitute themselves as a new class, despite the revolution and the avowed goal of a classless society. Hence, the achievement of socialism would become ever more remote.

Such concerns spurred Bogdanov to look for solutions in cultural hegemony and the larger process of cultural revolution. He was convinced that it was essential to have a revolution in attitudes toward authority and a transformation of authority relations themselves. Subordination was not simply an offshoot of economics and classes; it also had to do with unequal power positions sanctioned by ideology. What he hoped to promote, with Proletkult as a pilot venture, was a "highly developed mental equality" among members of the socialist community.[33]

At the same time, Bogdanov rejected the notion that a change in attitudes, a "mental liberation," could be achieved through some sort of agitation-propaganda campaign, no matter how strenuous the efforts. He believed that values and attitudes were closely linked to, and de-

31. A. A. Bogdanov, "Tsely i normy zhizni," in A. A. Bogdanov, *Novyi mir*, 3d ed. (Moscow, 1920), p. 71.

32. Ts. K. Proletkul'ta, Svodki o deiatel'nosti lit. studii mestnykh proletkul'tov, 1921, TsGALI, f. 1230, op. 1, d. 53. In fact, statistics were gathered only on social origins, not party membership, although Red Army participation was usually noted. Most local Proletkults reported 60 to 95 percent worker participation.

33. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 384.

pendent on, structures. His prerequisite to cultural change was, in fact, technological progress. A new "socialness," maintained Bogdanov, would be "organically created out of the new labor relations."[34]

Technology and Culture

Bogdanov, like all Marxists, assumed that capitalism facilitated the development of socialism. Bogdanov, unlike Lenin, however, focused on the structural changes occurring under capitalism and tried to investigate which accompanying cultural changes would be conducive to socialism. If Marx were right that the new develops within the womb of the old, why not try to identify the new features?

Consistent with this line of thinking, Bogdanov predicated cultural change on a prior transformation of the production process. He assumed that at least embryonic elements of "proletarian culture" would manifest themselves under conditions of technological advance, especially increasing automation. Because he was particularly interested in the hiatus between the proletariat as the "fragment of a man" under capitalism and the proletariat as builder and creator under socialism, he focused on changes occurring in the worker as a result of the production process.

Bogdanov had few kind words for the earliest form of proletariat, which was marked by "low productivity of labor, low efforts, and low level of needs," as well as by a complete lack of "internal discipline." Furthermore, this early proletariat was amoral and negative toward the surrounding culture, because bourgeois morality appeared irrelevant to its dire circumstances. Capitalism, consequently, performed a useful function in transforming "the initial vagrant proletariat into a factory or workshop proletariat," confessed Bogdanov.[35]

Already, in the first stages of industrialization, the worker was assigned a highly specialized task and exposed to a regime of strict discipline. Indeed, it was the "historical mission" of the period of manufacture "to create a machine out of a man."[36] This formative process, maintained Bogdanov, was both painful and necessary; it laid down the preconditions for industrial production. With increasing mechanization, workers gradually became less of an addition to the machine and more its master. They learned to regulate and control, and they developed initiative and judgment; the most specialized, boring, and detailed tasks, meanwhile, were transferred to the "iron slave."

34. Ibid., p. 386.

35. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, pp. 19, 26. Compare Bogdanov's discussion to Edward Banfield and L. F. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Glencoe, Ill., 1958).

36. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, p. 30.

Nevertheless, automation by itself could not produce a complete transformation of either the work situation or the worker. Bogdanov advanced several reasons for this shortcoming. First, he believed that under capitalism, automation was introduced only to the degree that it proved profitable to the capitalist. (The sole exception, according to Bogdanov, was the war industry, where cost considerations and profit played a secondary role; hence, the military alone employed the latest technology.)[37]

Second, Bogdanov perceived a considerable, and continuing, discrepancy between the occupation of an "ordinary worker" and that of an engineer: "The former [is] only technically conscious while the latter has a scientific character; the former requires . . . a general understanding of mechanics, disciplined attention, and intelligence; the latter a refined, precise, scientific-technical knowledge."[38] Only under full automation, thought Bogdanov, would the level of skill and knowledge of the "ordinary worker" be raised sufficiently to transcend the division between worker and engineer. The role of the engineer as a leader over a group of workers would remain, but it would no longer be qualitatively different from that of a worker. In fact, the content of all labor would become similar, involving mostly the regulation and control of highly specialized machines. The result, argued Bogdanov, would be a change in attitude toward work: "The worker who is at once organizer and executor . . . cannot but regard his labor positively—that is, . . . as an indispensable, natural, normal, and, to some extent, agreeable part of his existence."[39]

Third, Bogdanov assumed that the merging of the organizational and executive functions could be achieved once labor relations were based on collectivism rather than on authoritarianism. Under capitalism, workers formed a "comradely collective of executors," not of organizers; they did not participate in organizational decisions. This restriction, a serious one, could be removed only by a change "in the whole system of economic relations," thereby promoting full participation.[40]

In short, Bogdanov forecast a postcapitalist system that differed significantly from its predecessor. The division of labor would be transformed and would lose its significance; in its place, labor mobility would predominate. By this statement, Bogdanov meant not only that the place of work would be changed but that "the function of 'organizer'

37. A. A. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1914), p. 179.
38. Ibid., p. 180.
39. Bogdanov, *Elementy*, p. 38.
40. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, p. 181.

[would be interchanged] with that of 'executor' and *vice versa*."[41] This interchanging would allow for a narrowing of the gap between worker and manager, remove the psychological distinctions between them, and knit, from common experiences, a common culture. More importantly, avowed Bogdanov, the nature of authority relations would change; it would be based on competence rather than blind subordination to power.

Interestingly, a contemporary advocate of an alternative to the "actually existing socialism," Rudolf Bahro, follows a similar line of reasoning. He also uses as his point of departure a change in "the management structure of production." Under mature industrialism, writes Bahro, "the type of specialist who is concerned with ancillary functions in the management staff, e.g., with organization and data processing, is ever less distinguishable, sociologically and socio-psychologically, from the technician in the narrower sense." This analysis, of course, is a more modern, "computer-age" version of what Bogdanov predicted for the "postcapitalist stage." Starting with similar premises, Bahro also ends up with similar conclusions: that a cultural revolution is essential for social emancipation and that it should be carried out by an organization ("League of Communists") other than the party. This organization should embody "a higher moral-political authority than the [state] apparatus, by making possible and protecting the advance of integral modes of behaviour that foreshadow a new whole." Bahro goes so far as to recommend "dual supremacy" between the state and "a constructive but substantially transforming counterforce."[42] Needless to say, Bahro's League of Communists and Bogdanov's Proletkult bear a striking resemblance to each other.

Projecting still further into the future, Bogdanov drew a picture of a society heavily influenced by his systems thinking. A genuine socialist society was, to Bogdanov, a self-regulating and harmonious one. Although the organizational function in a system would remain, it would be substantially altered once it was founded on a "general all-embracing organization of labor." That is, the regulating mechanism would be not the "old authoritarian centralism" but "scientific centralism." Most of the functions would be performed by a "gigantic *statistical bureau* based on exact calculation for the purpose of distributing labor power and instruments of labor."[43]

Under the most ideal of circumstances, as in Bogdanov's utopian novels, people would move easily from one job to another. An Institute

41. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, pp. 381–82.

42. Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, trans. David Fernbach (London, 1981), pp. 174, 360–61.

43. Bogdanov, *Short Course*, p. 383.

of Statistics would publish figures of labor shortages in various industries to ensure an effective distribution of labor. By consulting the bulletins on the size of the shortage (or surplus), and by taking into account "his own inclination to change vocations," an individual would freely choose an occupation in the future society. (This utopian image is similar to Marx's own vision of socialism—the difference being that Marx talked of hunters and fishermen in a bucolic, rural setting, whereas Bogdanov depicted a highly industrialized, technological setting.) Rather exuberantly, Bogdanov concluded the new society would exhibit the following cultural attributes: first, "socialness"—that is, a spirit of collectivism; second, the replacement of fetishisms by a "reign of science"—that is, "the purity and clearness of knowledge and the emancipation of the mind from all the fruits of mysticism and metaphysics"; and third, gradual abolition of all standards of compulsion as well as of the state as an organization of class domination.[44]

Lenin did not allow his imagination to soar quite as high as Bogdanov's, but he shared with him a fervent belief in the virtues of science and technology. They both anticipated positive consequences from technological progress. For Lenin, it meant a spur to economic development; for Bogdanov, it implied an impetus for cultural development. Advanced technology would bring about a change in socio-labor relations, surmised Bogdanov; the change, in turn, would stimulate cultural transformation. Actually, Lenin had no quarrel with this sequence of events. The difference between Lenin and Bogdanov was that the latter typically emphasized the cultural dimension and the former dismissed it as not being immediately relevant. One Western scholar considers this dismissal to be a serious deficit on Lenin's part. By disregarding the "socio-cultural formation of the working class" in the production process, charges Sirianni, Lenin ended up with a view of the factory as "a place where *things* alone are produced, ignoring that relations between people are produced and reproduced there, and extend their influence beyond the factory gates." It is for this reason that Lenin could dismiss the arguments of the left communists as "unserious."[45]

The different reactions to one particular issue, Taylorism, illuminate Bogdanov's heightened awareness of the sociocultural dimension. Both Lenin and Bogdanov admired Taylorism as the "latest achievement"

44. Ibid., pp. 386–88. Bogdanov's views on the future society can be found in his science fiction novel *Krasnaia zvezda* (Moscow, 1918).

45. Sirianni, *Workers' Control*, pp. 260–61. For similar critiques of Lenin, see, among others, Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York, 1974); Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR: First Period, 1917–1923*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York and London, 1976); Philip Corrigan, Harrie Ramsay, and Derek Sayer, *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory* (London, 1978).

in capitalist organization and efficiency, despite their condemnation of its exploitative side. Bogdanov, however, had additional misgivings. Although Taylorism was based on the "correct idea" of studying scientifically the movements of workers in order to find the best means for carrying out a task, it was geared toward the outstanding rather than the average worker. This orientation meant selecting the very best people and training them to perform "gigantic tasks," while discarding the rest as loafers and idlers. But was this selection process really good for the system as a whole, queried Bogdanov? Who but a tiny percentage could keep up the designated pace? And would not a worker "sink into torpor fulfilling day after day, hour after hour, a fully mechanical job under a strict, uninterrupted, one could say penal, surveillance?" Moreover, it was a mistake to think, asserted Bogdanov, that this stupefaction of the worker harmed only the individual; in fact, it ran counter to machine production, which needed an "intelligent, quick-witted, and aware" work force. Taylorism could actually lower the productivity of labor because it required an additional level of personnel—the "chronometry-pacers" and supervisors.[46]

Bogdanov's careful scrutinizing of the production process, in fact, prompted him to try to associate Proletkult with factory cells. If ever there was going to be a change in attitudes, there had to be some counterpart to the factory atomsphere, "a socialism here and now," where creativity and initiative, rather than hierarchy and discipline, were emphasized.

Worker relations under the existing system of production included various forms of interaction, and it was important, stressed Bogdanov, to foster the attitudes and behavior patterns that were conducive to socialism. The attitudes (or "cultural principles," as Bogdanov called them) that typified worker relations were individualism, authoritarianism, and collectivism. The first referred to the workers' experiences in the labor market, where they were pitted against each other as competitors. The second described the workers' relationship to the boss and supervisors: subordination. The third depicted the workers' interactions with one another in the workplace. Here there was evidence of genuine equality, in Bogdanov's opinion, on the basis of common interests, rather than antagonism or subordination.[47]

Naturally enough, Bogdanov was prepared to argue that collectivism was the wave of the future. Individualism was beginning to fade out as class struggle and trade unions became more predominant in work-

46. A. A. Malinovskii [Bogdanov], *Mezhdu chelovekom i mashinoi (o sistemy teilora)* (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp. 1–16.

47. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachy*, pp. 45–51.

ers' lives. Authoritarianism still existed, Bogdanov admitted, as evidenced, for example, by the continuing strong religious feelings of workers. He took heart, however, in the decline in authoritarianism relative to earlier periods, when worker relations were usually those of master to apprentice. Moreover, sounding a still more optimistic note, Bogdanov contended that the workers, who had borne the brunt of subordination and exploitation, were struggling not simply to seize power but "to limit power, to change the very method of organization." They were directing their efforts "against authoritarianism, toward supplanting it with other social relations."[48] Because the workers were at a crossroads, with all three "cultural principles" operating—either receding or advancing—it was particularly important to encourage collectivism. Proletkult, Bogdanov believed, was aptly designed for just this task.

In his zeal to promote socialist values and attitudes, Bogdanov advocated a revised approach to education itself. If the "educational ideal" under capitalism was to prepare man for the fulfillment of functions assigned to him by society, Bogdanov proclaimed, a new ideal should exist under socialism: "to prepare man not only in the choice of his function in the system of cooperation . . . but also in the participation of defining the functions for other members of the collective." Too often education consisted of "inducting new individuals into a social organization," in much the same way as the army recruited, trained, disciplined, and distributed soldiers. A socialist society, however, should strive to eliminate such authoritarian features. Instead, there should be an "education of will" in order to develop initiative, criticism, and originality.[49] Ultimately, Bogdanov hoped, people would be guided in their behavior by an entirely different set of norms and values, or, as he put it, "laws of the new conscience."

Laws of the New Conscience

Bogdanov made some interesting comparisons of the role of norms under capitalism and under socialism. In the former case, norms were a way of "weakening and removing the contradictions" that resulted from market relations, individualism, and class strife. Without norms to organize and regulate social life, Bogdanov explained, society would disintegrate "as a cask [would] without hoops." Norms were external, oppressive, and dictated: You must do such and such and dare not do such and such. Consequently, norms served not only to stifle contra-

48. Ibid., p. 51.
49. A. A. Bogdanov, "Ideal vospitaniia," in Bogdanov, *Novyi mir*, pp. 127, 134.

dictions but also to restrict human development. "Everywhere man comes up against oppressive boundaries; everywhere he feels the power of external norms over him."[50]

Accordingly, for Bogdanov, socialism suggested a rejection of norms; it meant the liberation of the individual from coercive norms and abstract obligations. The "splintering of man" (*droblenie*), through authoritarianism and specialization, as well as the "one-sided development" of the individual, would be succeeded by the "integration of man" (*sobiranie*) and multifaceted development.[51] This change would be possible once the contradiction and spontaneity of societal development gave way to organization and planning. In the new society, without competition and class struggle, the "psychology of disconnectedness" (*raz'edinenie*) would be replaced by the recognition of the self as "an integral part of the great whole."[52] In other words, to Bogdanov, the hallmark of socialism and the true pinnacle of cultural change was the end of alienation.

At the same time, Bogdanov was not prepared to argue that norms would disappear altogether. Rather, he believed that "norms of oppression" would be superseded by those of "expediency."[53] These norms were similar to scientific-technical maxims; they indicated the best means for achieving a given goal. Their directive stated that if you want to accomplish something, you must act in such and such a way. To be sure, individuals were free to choose their own goals.[54] Although Bogdanov conceded that "transgressors" might still appear, they would no longer represent "hostile social forces" but would represent instead only "deviant, abnormal organisms . . . incapable of mastering the technical or scientific maxims."[55]

50. Bogdanov, "Tsely i normy," pp. 54, 46, 57.

51. A. A. Bogdanov, "Sobiranie cheloveka," in Bogdanov, *Novyi mir*, pp. 5–40.

52. Bogdanov, "Tseli i normy," p. 90. Kline maintains that Bogdanov exhibited a "doctrinal tension" between his support for the liberation of the individual and his fervent espousal of the collective. See George L. Kline, "Changing Attitudes toward the Individual," in *The Transformation of Russian Society: Aspects of Social Change since 1861*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 621–22.

53. Bogdanov, "Tseli i normy," p. 70. Bogdanov compared coercive norms to the "unconditional categorical imperative" and expediency norms to the "conditional, hypothetical imperative" (Kant's categories). He noted the appearance of norms of expediency in the field of technology and assumed they would gradually spread to human relations as well.

54. Ibid. Bogdanov thought that no limitations should be placed on choosing goals and that the various goals would not produce "irreconcilable conflict" because overall development would be organized and free of internal contradictions.

55. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii*, pp. 196–97. This formulation obviously does not recognize the "legitimacy" of dissent.

Bogdanov subscribed fully, in other words, to an image of a highly rationalistic society. He seemed unaware of the potential contradiction he posited between a humanistic "end to alienation" and his rather chilling indictment of "deviant organisms." Indeed, the very notion of one best way to act contained an authoritarian implication that Bogdanov had tried so hard to extricate from proletarian culture. When actually thinking about the workers he knew, rather than about some bloodless individuals from his scientific utopias, Bogdanov acted with a good deal more sensitivity.

In one of his last writings on proletarian culture, Bogdanov drew up a list of ten "laws of the new conscience." These laws did not represent commandments, he hastened to add, but were only "norms of expediency." They were a list of what the proletariat must do to develop a genuine proletarian culture and cultural hegemony. The list, paraphrased and abbreviated, follows:

1. There shall be no herd instinct.

A passive, submissive attitude has more to do with the petty-bourgeois fear of being different than with true collectivism. A faceless being brings nothing to a collective but mechanical force, thereby increasing its inertia. In rejecting the herd instinct, the collectivist coincides with the individualist; he differs, however, insofar as the individualist thinks only of "me and mine," whereas the collectivist attempts to elevate and perfect the collective and, in so doing, to maintain and develop his individuality together with the collective.

2. There shall be no slavery.

Slavery and its complement, authoritarianism, consist of a blind submission to a higher individual or in the demand for such submission. Although members of a collective should have confidence in their leaders, this confidence should be based on proven competence, not reduced to the worship of authority. Leadership requires repeated acknowledgment and verification; only in this way can it preserve the character of comradely relations, free of slave-authoritarian elements.

3. There shall be no subjectivism, of either a personal or a group nature.

Personal subjectivism is individualism; group subjectivism is clannishness, guild narrowmindedness, professionalism, patriotism, nationalism. All of these orientations lead to a waste of collective energy in anarchistic confrontations.

4. There shall be no Hottentotism.[56]

Essentially Hottentotism means "it is good if I steal; it is bad if someone steals from me." Although class struggle evokes double standards, the proletariat must eventually become the representative of mankind as a whole. To maintain the logic of the soldier is to lower the proletariat to the level of inimical classes, undermining the force of idealism.

5. There shall be no absolute norms.

Higher culture is marked by objective norms that can never be absolute because they are an expression of life; development, struggle, and creativity cannot be shackled to absolute formulas. To accept eternal truths is to adopt a path of conservatism and reaction.

6. There shall be no inertness.

Herd instinct, slavery, group restrictiveness—all inevitably have the propensity to halt movement. Any striving toward the new and the higher threatens established harmony and the authority at the center of that harmony. Movement forward cannot be attained along smooth tracks; creativity is not only joyful but also painful, as in birth. The proletariat must learn and relearn to create a new culture.

7. There shall be no violation of the purity of purpose.

Although the revolutionary proletariat, the conscious socialist, looks to the future, much of its soul remains rooted in the past. At times, the past contaminates large goals with petty motives—especially those of comfort and vengeance. These motives have a way of disguising themselves as idealistic goals, giving birth to a peculiar form of self-deception, where the lower presents itself as a manifestation of the higher.

8. There shall be all-mastery (*vseovladenie*)—the greatest goal.

The collective seeks to organize the world, to gain mastery over everything, to bind everything into a harmonious whole. Toward this end, it is necessary to master techniques from past labor as well as to seek new paths, new sources of energy.

9. There shall be all-understanding—the higher ideal of the new consciousness.

56. Bogdanov may have employed this term because of its common use in German politics at the time. In 1906–7, a decision by the Reichstag not to allocate funds to suppress an uprising by the Hottentots in a German colony in Africa was reversed when a new coalition, called the "Hottentot bloc," was formed. See *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopedia* (Moscow, 1930), 18: 542. I am grateful to Aleksandr M. Nekrich for drawing the reference to my attention.

A collective must be marked by mutual understanding among participants, a continuous deepening of unity of will, mind, and feelings. This understanding constitutes the soul of a collective, its common consciousness. Words such as respect, care, and love for fellow-workers can only partially express the binding elements.

10. There shall be pride of the collective—the supreme stimulus of will and thought of the worker.

In previous epochs, there was a pride of serving the higher will (authoritarianism) or truth and duty (individualism). In the development of the collective, everything that requires submission or worship is unmasked. Instead, the worker develops a consciousness of self as a living link of the great all-conquering whole.[57]

Clearly, Bogdanov had high hopes for collectivism. His "new laws" indicated what it would take for workers to achieve "moral and intellectual leadership"—that is, cultural hegemony. The more appealing the core values, Bogdanov believed, the more likely they were to attract converts and gradually spread throughout society. Cultural hegemony contained a charismatic and spontaneous quality; it differed, in kind and degree, from authoritarianism. The corresponding political cultural emphasized an "organic whole," united not by the will of a single leader but by a commonality of interests and collective decision-making.

At the same time, Bogdanov's list of "new laws" contained a pessimistic undertone, almost a Nietzschean fear of the "instincts of decline."[58] It reflected, no doubt, Bogdanov's dismay at some of the entrenched attitudes he found among workers and leaders alike. As a critical observer of the emerging Bolshevik system, he was troubled by the relatively easy imposition of authoritarianism. This concern served to convince him even more that cultural change was the crucial dimension of revolution, the sine qua non for socialism.

57. A. A. Bogdanov, "Zakony novoi sovesti," in Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, pp. 333–43.

58. For a discussion of some parallels in thought between Nietzsche and Bogdanov, see Zenovia A. Sochor, "A. A. Bogdanov: In Search of Cultural Liberation," in *Nietzsche in Russian Literature and Thought*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Princeton, N.J., 1986).

Part IV /

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM

A. A. Bogdanov and his son, Aleksandr (b. 1909)

9 /

From the First to the Second Cultural Revolution

Intense conflicts over ideas and approaches are not surprising in the context of a revolution dedicated to transforming the entire realm of thought and being. Because socialism was so comprehensive in its goals, yet so fuzzy in its details, it generated a host of interpretations. The important question, for a political movement, is whether the revolutionaries have reached some consensus prior to taking power. If not, they will dissipate energies in interpreting goals rather than in finding means to reach them. The conflict between Lenin and Bogdanov shows that, within the Bolshevik camp, this question was never fully resolved. The split, occurring before 1917, carried over into the postrevolutionary period.

This internal dissension was not necessarily the case among other revolutionaries. In China, Mao managed to eliminate his adversaries after the disastrous setback of 1934 and forged a cohesive group of followers during a lengthy period of encampment in Yenan. Similarly, in Cuba, Castro and his "fidelistas" experienced a common "baptism of fire" through many years of guerrilla warfare. In both of these cases, the revolutionary elite came to power far more united than the Russian one. In fact, what created revolutionary divisions in Cuba and China was the Soviet reference model rather than "indigenous" quarrels; moreover, the revolutionaries tended to argue over the means rather than the goals.

The Russian revolutionaries, in contrast, were scattered throughout Europe during most of the prerevolutionary period and were preoccupied with intellectual rather than military battles. This isolation took

its toll. Lenin was greeted with derision at the Finland Station when he finally returned to Russia and announced his April Theses. Kamenev and Zinoviev "betrayed" the date for the seizure of power because they disagreed with Lenin. Up to the last moment, in other words, the Bolsheviks were debating about whether or not to take power. The bigger question, what dream to dream, was barely addressed, let alone answered. The self-proclaimed bearers of ideology in its "pure" form, the *vperedisty*, closed ranks with the Bolsheviks because it was inconceivable that they should stand aside as the Revolution gained momentum. Their ideas, however, and the originator of many of their ideas, Bogdanov, did not blend in with mainstream Bolshevism. The challenge to Lenin's version of socialism arose in 1908 and was resuscitated with vigor after the Revolution. At the heart of the Lenin-Bogdanov dispute lay the questions of what should be the relationship between utopia and revolution and how best to decipher utopia. There were, after all, many elements of utopia in Marxism, ranging from economic abundance to human liberation.

Ideology versus Utopia

Utopia was important to Lenin prior to the Revolution because it served as a stimulus to action without exacting a political price. Workers, therefore, could be portrayed in an idealized, even romanticized, manner. After the Revolution, the same workers lost their luster when efficiency replaced rebelliousness as a mark of achievement. As one Leninist adherent of the 1920s stated, with no trace of remorse, "Some elements of 'fantasy' were indispensable in the initial period of the revolution,... but 'fantasy' was no longer necessary and [now was] harmful."[1] Similarly, Krupskaia suggested that Proletkult might still have a function to serve in the United States, Germany, and England—that is, in bourgeois states, where the slogan of "proletarian culture" was a militant slogan, important for the "battle of ideas." In the Soviet Union, however, under a proletarian government, proletarian culture no longer had this function, and had no reason to counterpose itself to proletarian ideology.[2]

Lenin made clear his preferences when he encouraged Alexei Gastev, a poet and engineer, to turn from Proletkult to NOT. Gastev promptly founded the Central Institute of Labor, where he dedicated himself to

1. Ia. Iakovlev, "O proletarskoi kul'ture i Proletkul'te," *Pravda*, 24 and 25 October 1922, reprinted in V. I. Lenin, *O literature i iskusstve* (Moscow, 1969), p. 603.
2. N. Krupskaia, "Proletarskaia ideologiia i Proletkul't," *Pravda*, 8 October 1922.

promoting Taylorism in the Soviet Union. Proletarian culture, to him, became virtually synonymous with production culture, or a work ethic. Surely utopia could not be more completely dethroned, as is evident from the following description of the cultural revolution, offered by Gastev:

> Labor—is your *strength*.
> Organization—is your *skill*.
> Regime—is your *will*.
> This then is the present *cultural aim*.
> And altogether it equals the *cultural revolution*[3]

Even if Gastev was somewhat extreme in his choice of words, his basic message was more to Lenin's liking than that of Proletkult. It was in this spirit that Lenin portrayed the correct approach to building socialism as "sober" and "businesslike," while dismissing his critics as "infantitle." "In Marx," Lenin declared, "there is no trace of utopianism, in the sense of inventing or imagining a 'new' society."[4] But once Lenin shelved his own utopianism, which was expressed in *State and Revolution*, it became less clear what the ultimate goal was. According to Lasky, "the vision foundered somewhere between an amorphous notion of the 'withering away of the state' and buzzing systems of nationwide electrification." Lenin shared with Marx what Lasky calls "the exchange of the visionary dream for the secret millennium," because neither had much to say about the shape of things to come.[5]

Bogdanov, as a result, found himself cast in the role of a gadfly, someone who refused to allow the millennium to remain secret or distant. Certainly, Lenin, with his fine-tuned political instincts, sensed that if Bogdanov could not be isolated, then Bogdanovism could represent a serious political threat. The basic values and policies of the Bolshevik regime were being challenged from within and could potentially create a split in the political elite. This challenge could mean a new round of "desertion of the intellectuals" or, at a minimum, a withholding of legitimacy from the regime. To the extent that Bogdanovism signaled an attempt to keep utopia alive, it was a disruptive and destablizing force.

Lenin, ever on the alert, moved quickly to quash utopia and to replace

3. A. K. Gastev, *Novaia kul'turnaia ustanovka* (Moscow, 1924), p. 95. Also see Zenovia A. Sochor, "Soviet Taylorism Revisited," *Soviet Studies* 33 (April 1981): 246–64.
4. V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917; New York, 1932), p. 42.
5. Melvin J. Lasky, *Utopia and Revolution* (Chicago, 1976), pp. 50, 43.

it with ideology.[6] That is, he expected the Marxist system of beliefs to prop up the dictatorship of the proletariat, as constituted, rather than undermining it. Representatives of a given order, writes Mannheim, "have always aimed to control those situationally transcendent ideas and interest which are not realizable within the bounds of the present order, and thereby to render them socially impotent."[7]

For just this reason, Lenin was far more sensitive to a challenge from the left, which could not be dismissed as easily as a challenge from the right. Valentinov, once in Lenin's orbit, notes with some surprise that Lenin's "most vicious blows" were directed at "Bolshevik heretics" such as Bogdanov, rather than at the Mensheviks.[8] A Soviet analyst, writing in 1926, expressed a similar idea when he said, "Bogdanovism is all the more dangerous the more it hides under the name of Marxism." Indeed, continued the writer, even though its social base was "narrow and weak," Bogdanovism was particularly dangerous because it could become a "convenient shield" for the critics of the dictatorship of the proletariat, "for all the current apostles of petty-bourgeois democracy—renegades from the ranks of Marxism."[9]

It is ironic that Bogdanov, the empiricist, the believer in science, not religion, should come to represent utopia, itself a declaration of faith and optimism. Certainly, he persisted in writing about utopia; moreover, his ideas, bold and decidedly futuristic in comparison to Lenin's rather old-fashioned ones, captured the imagination of the young, the radicals, and the intellectuals. Lenin simply could not fathom the enormous appeal of Bogdanov's utopian novels. Before the Revolution, for example, Lenin suggested to Bogdanov that he write, instead, "a really useful book" for workers that would describe "how the plunderers of capitalism robbed the earth, squandered all of its oil, iron, wood, and coal."[10]

Bogdanov, however, was less interested in depicting the world around him than in projecting a world as seemingly distant as Mars, "where reason and brotherhood rule." As Loren Graham points out, Bogdanov was driven by the desire to explain "why people disagree on so many topics" and "to show how, despite these disagreements,

6. The distinction between ideology and utopia is made by Mannheim. Ideology suggests support for the status quo; utopia implies a desire for change in the political order. See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York, 1936).

7. Ibid., p. 193.

8. N. Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, trans. Paul Rosta and Brian Pearce (London, 1968), p. 247.

9. N. Karev, "Tektologiia ili dialektika," *PZM*, nos. 4–5 (April–May 1926): 44, 42.

10. As recounted by Gorky. M. Gorky, "Iz predisloviia k knige V. Ia. Zazubrina, *Dva Mira*," in Lenin, *O literature*, p. 644.

understanding is possible."[11] Hence, his science fiction novels, *Red Star* and *Engineer Menni*, portrayed a society that transcended the conflict, inequality, and repression found on Earth. The future was a blending of the spirit of revolution with the promise and achievements of science. If, as Frank and Fritzie Manuel claim, "total technology is the ineradicable signature of the Marxist utopia,"[12] then Bogdanov drew and elaborated on this utopia. And yet, as Stites notes, "it was precisely this celebration of technocratic power, of the technical intelligentsia, and of self-correcting systems and moving equilibria based on science, and the corresponding downplaying of proletarian energy, party authority, and class struggle, that caused orthodox Bolsheviks to look askance at the author—a man who lived before his time."[13]

Curiously, Lenin and Bogdanov shared a vision of a future society based on technical rationality and collectivism. Lenin's "post office" and Bogdanov's "statistical bureau," in fact, were not far apart; both were rather mundane efforts to translate Marx's "withering away of the state" into comprehensible terms. Neither Lenin nor Bogdanov had a real appreciation of politics, in the sense of conflict over ends and means as a permanent feature of society, with various institutional arrangements to resolve, or at least contain, it. They subscribed, along with Marx, to the utopian belief that administration would replace politics. They were also hampered by their inability to distinguish vividly between a socialist society and a technocratic one inspired by general Taylorist concepts.

The real difference between the Lenin and Bogdanov alternatives lay not so much in images of the ultimate utopia as in approaches to "socialism in the present." To Lenin, socialism proceeded in stages and subsumed the achievements of capitalism.[14] In the first stage, building socialism simply meant overcoming deficiencies at both economic and cultural levels. The primary task of the dictatorship of the proletariat was to develop the material base; cultural revolution, therefore, had to be geared to the needs of economic development, as its essential complement. This meant, in the first instance, promoting literacy and dis-

11. Loren R. Graham, "Bogdanov's Inner Message," in Alexander Bodganov, *Red Star: The First Bolshevik Utopia*, ed. Loren R. Graham and Richard Stites and trans. Charles Rougle (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), p. 243.

12. Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 715.

13. Richard Stites, "Fantasy and Revolution: Alexander Bogdanov and the Origins of Bolshevik Science Fiction," in Bogdanov, *Red Star*, p. 12.

14. For Marx's "stages of socialism," see Shlomo Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Marx* (Cambridge, England, 1971). Also see the exchange between Avineri and Resnick on this question. David Resnick, "Crude Communism and Revolution" (with comments by Avineri), *American Political Science Review* 70 (December 1976): 1136–55.

cipline. It also meant cultivating political attitudes congruent with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Genuinely socialist attitudes and behavior, maintained Lenin, would appear only at a later stage. Once changes in the material base were exacted, those of the superstructure would follow accordingly. To a large extent, Lenin viewed cultural change in a residual manner, as a consequence of other changes he considered more germane to the transitional period. He left open the question of when and how the "new socialist person" would appear; utopia was firmly relegated to the future.

Bogdanov, in contrast, argued that what was utopian was at least partially a decision to be made rather than a label to be affixed. Something that remained an elusive goal was utopian; but if the correct means were devised to achieve that goal, it would lose its fairy-tale quality. There had to be a "maximum program" (an outline of goals) as well as a "minimum program" (intermediate steps to reach those goals). "The maximum program for an organization," wrote Bogdanov, "is a guiding star, which indicates the direction and does not allow going astray, becoming enamored of private goals and petty conveniences. The minimum program is a series of stages on the way to the maximum program."[15]

To Bogdanov, in other words, socialism proceeded on a continuum, with a close and self-conscious relationship between means and ends, rather than in separate stages. If development and socialist transformation were treated in an interdependent fashion, there would be much less danger of a divergence between means and ends. Bogdanov insisted that the cultural revolution had intrinisic value; it was not merely an instrumental component of economic development—it was an end in itself. The point of the transitional period was to foster incipient elements of socialism, or so-called utopian ones, in both the base and the superstructure. Revolutionary change, emphasized Bogdanov, and the implementation of utopia were part of one and the same process. His argument was typical of utopians, for whom, writes Nisbet, the vision of the future has a "strong effect upon the way the present [is] not merely thought about but actually perceived."[16]

At the very least, Bogdanov attempted to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with Lenin's interpretation of socialism. Lenin's alternative, undeniably, lent itself to the sort of distortions that merge socialism

15. A. A. Bogdanov, "Iz slovariia inostrannykh slov: Programma," *Pravda*, 24 February 1913, pp. 2–3.

16. Robert Nisbet, "The Function of the Vision of the Future in Radical Movements," in *Radicalism in the Contemporary Age*, vol. 2: *Radical Visions of the Future*, ed. Seweryn Bialer and Sophia Sluzar (Boulder, Colo., 1977), p. 22.

with "statism" or reinforce the "economist" tendency. Moreover, Lenin's definition of socialism verged toward the formal rather than the real. That is, socialism tended to be equated with the public ownership of the means of production plus rule by the Communist party. This definition did not address itself to social relations, either at the workplace or in the political arena.[17] Nor was it conducive to a theoretical scrutiny of the sources of alienation and exploitation that did not stem from the private ownership of the means of production.

Much of the contemporary criticism of Lenin, especially by the left, was already prefigured in Bogdanov's debates with Lenin. Although Bogdanov had little to say about economic development itself, it was implicit to his arguments that industrialization should not be given priority to the detriment of the cultural revolution. Less "abundance"—a moderate rate of development—would be acceptable if "cultural liberation" and a nonauthoritarian form of government were being achieved concurrently.

In contrast to Lenin, Bogdanov focused on changes in both property and authority relations as essential to socialism; together they would make possible new comradely relations as well as a genuinely classless society. It was too facile, argued Bogdanov, to consider socialism the negation of capitalism in terms of private ownership; alienation and even exploitation could continue unless there were an additional, and explicit, change in authority relations. Bogdanov in essence not only offered a more dynamic definition of socialism than Lenin but also drew attention to sources of alienation that Marx had not foreseen—namely, those of a political and cultural nature that perpetuated authority relations despite a change in the economic base. Precisely for these reasons, Bogdanov attempted to cast a wide net in social transformation, encompassing many dimensions of human interaction, whether in the form of a collectivist organization of labor, aesthetic creativity, or political behavior.

To be sure, Bogdanov's alternative was not without its own problems. He predicated many of his hopes for socialism on technological progress, which would alter both the work process and work relations, thus

17. Bettelheim notes Lenin's lack of attention to production relations. He writes that Lenin held "two different views" on the transformation of social relations: in one, class struggle is uppermost; in the other, productive forces are primary. Lenin used formulations "from which it could be concluded that, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, once private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, the transformation of social relations results from the development of the productive forces and not from the class struggle." Bettelheim concludes that this viewpoint, with an emphasis on productive forces rather than on production relations, suggests an economistic tendency. Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the U.S.S.R.: First Period, 1917–1923*; trans. Brian Pearce (New York and London, 1976), pp. 450–75, esp. 472–75.

paving the way for "cultural liberation." This position left Bogdanov open to the criticism of "technological determinism." Something of a crude technological bent was, in fact, apparent in his search for all-encompassing "organizational principles," leading him to declare, for example, that relations between humans and their tools were similar to those between humans.[18] In addition, he seemed little aware that a world of engineers, operating in a highly rationalistic style, could produce its own sources of alienation. Nevertheless, Bogdanov devoted his practical efforts to culture and aesthetics rather than to technology and the organization of labor. Indeed, he attempted to develop "proletarian culture" in a country that could boast only of minimal technological progress. Even according to his own scheme, he might be labeled utopian. It seems that Bogdanov assumed technological advance was essential to sustaining change in authority relations but not necessarily to initiating it.

Another problem in Bogdanov's scheme was the underrating of political power. Because he downgraded the significance of the seizure of power as a precondition to the transition to socialism, he exposed himself to charges of reformism. Although he did not deny that revolution was a means of change, it is certainly true that his systems thinking was much more in line with incremental change. He also tended to view political power as a resource, fully in keeping with the systems perspective, rather than as a potential means of domination. He was blind to some of the realities of political life and clearly no match for Lenin in political maneuvering.

The merit of Bogdanov's alternative lies not in a successful answer to the question of how to create utopia but in an alertness to the obstacles to utopia. In particular, Bogdanov attempted to find means to overcome these hurdles rather than denigrate utopia. Perhaps this attempt is the most that could be expected, from even the most zealous believer in socialism. In fact, if there is any "social usefulness" to utopian thinking, it may very well be, as Kolakowski argues, to "anticipate things that are impracticable now in order to make them practicable one day in the future."[19]

Bogdanov's concerns reflected the basic problems in Marxism that continue to plague the socialist world. Despite, or perhaps because of, the existence of several countries that call themselves socialist, there is an ongoing debate on what constitutes the essence of socialism. The two conceptions that seem to predominate among contemporary Marx-

18. A. A. Bogdanov, "Organizatsionnye printsipy sotsial'noi tekhniki i economiki," *VKA*, no. 4 (April–July 1923): 272–84.

19. Leszek Kolakowski, "Need of Utopia, Fear of Utopia," in Bialer and Sluzar, *Radicalism*, p. 4.

ists split along the same lines as did those of Lenin and Bogdanov, with one emphasizing public ownership and party control, and the other the end of human alienation. Bettelheim, for example, focuses on the class that holds power and the domination of producers over the means of production, whereas Sweezy sees cultural revolution as the indispensable ingredient of socialism.[20]

Especially relevant is Sweezy's distinction between the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism as "two halves" of the theory of the transition to socialism. Sweezy argues that Marx did not elaborate on the "second half" of the theory and that the Soviet model is "at best inconclusive." To quote Sweezy:

> While the Russian experience... throws little light on the positive side of the problem of constructing socialism, it does provide devastating proof of the impossibility of infusing seemingly socialist forms—such as nationalized means of production and comprehensive economic planning—with genuine socialist content unless the process goes hand-in-hand with the formation of socialist human beings.[21]

Arguments similar to Sweezy's were already being made during the 1920s in the Soviet Union, even before the October Revolution. In almost identical terms, Bogdanov insisted that the struggle for socialism could not be equated with the struggle against capitalism. He specifically devoted his efforts to developing the "second half"—the constructive aspects—of the transition to socialism.

Moreover, although Lenin and Bogdanov represented opposite ends in the debate on revolutionary transformation, their positions were not mutually exclusive. Each highlighted a different dimension of the requirements for the transition to socialism, with neither presenting a complete picture. Bogdanov offered only scattered suggestions on how to run the state and develop the economy; Lenin, meanwhile, gave a minimum, and belated, amount of attention to cultural change. What one exaggerated, the other underestimated. Interestingly, their concepts of the cultural revolution could, at least theoretically, have been perceived as complementary. It was Lenin's reaction to Bogdanovism as a potential political threat, rather than its inherent utopianism, that made this coexistence impossible. By banning factions, repudiating Proletkult, and curtailing Bogdanov, Lenin established ideological as well as political supremacy. He stripped political culture of any utopian content and replaced it with ideological orthodoxy.

20. Paul M. Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, *On the Transition to Socialism*, 2d ed. (New York, 1972).

21. Ibid., p. 118.

Instead of harnessing utopia to the tasks of revolution, perhaps thereby taming it, Lenin chose to ridicule it. One of the results was to create disillusionment and cynicism among party members. Another was to force utopia to go underground rather than causing its disappearance. It became a kind of radical subculture, fermenting slowly, until it exploded upon the scene during Stalin's "revolution from above."

From the First to the Second Cultural Revolution

In 1928 Stalin initiated a "class war on the cultural front" as an accompaniment to collectivization and industrialization. He called this war a "cultural revolution."[22] It involved militant and repressive policies against the bourgeois intelligentsia, spearheaded by the party, ostensibly to promote "proletarian interests." According to Fitzpatrick, its manifestations were "social discrimination, purging, repression of the old intelligentsia, advancement of proletarians, belligerence of Communist youths and Party activism in culture."[23] An abrupt reversal of policy followed in 1932.

What were the sources for this eruption of radicalism cum ruthlessness? Was there a discernible relationship between the first and second cultural revolutions? Surely, Stalin's "class war on the cultural front" did not appear deus ex machina. Can its lineage be traced to Leninism or to Bogdanovism, its main predecessors?

At first glance, Lenin's cultural revolution hardly seems to serve as precedent-setting. It was a vast literacy campaign, designed to create a work ethic for the proletariat and a readiness to join cooperatives for the peasantry; it was founded on assimilation of bourgeois culture and cooperation with bourgeois specialists. What did it have in common with specialist baiting (*spetseedstvo*), forced collectivization, and the takeover of important roles in industry, administration, and education by the working class?

In contrast, it was Proletkult that had talked ad nauseam about the promotion of the proletariat and had scorned both specialists and peas-

22. The discussion of Stalin's cultural revolution is based on studies by Sheila Fitzpatrick: "The Emergence of Glaviskusstvo: Class War on the Cultural Front, Moscow, 1928–29," *Soviet Studies* 23 (October 1971): 236–53; " 'Soft' Line on Culture and Its Enemies: Soviet Cultural Policy, 1922–1927," *Slavic Review* 33 (June 1974): 267–87; "Culture and Politics under Stalin: A Reappraisal," *Slavic Review* 35 (June 1976): 211–31; "Cultural Revolution as Class War," paper delivered at a conference on "The Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–32," Columbia University, New York, 22–23 November 1974; and the book that resulted from the conference, Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–31* (Bloomington, Ind., 1978).

23. Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution as Class War," p. 1.

ants. The parallels between the Proletkult position and Stalin's cultural revolution are striking. In particular, the emphasis on the class content of culture, a radical break with the past, and hostility toward the bourgeoisie, all typical of Proletkult, reverberated in Stalin's class war. The very idea that culture performs an organizational function, from which it can be concluded that "literature must serve as an instrument for mobilizing and educating the masses," is, argues Brown, derived from Bogdanov and Proletkult rather than from the classics of Marxism.[24] Biggart also believes that the cultural revolution of 1928 "borrowed more from the developmental theories of Bogdanov than those of Lenin."[25] Lecourt goes so far as to claim that Bogdanovist themes supplied "the springs of the Stalinist practice of ideological struggle," which became the "utopian counterpoint" to Stalin's "economistic line" of 1928–30, and "the repressive practices that accompanied it."[26]

All the same, however much Proletkult was identified with a militant policy in the cultural sphere, its position did not necessarily lead to "class war." As Bogdanov conceived it, the task of Proletkult was introspective (self-transformation) and constructive (development of proletarian culture). This conception logically implied class separateness or perhaps class divergence, but not class war. Bogdanov emphasized an orientation of internal development rather than of an external enemy; his utopia remained one of social harmony, superseding class hatred.

In fact, what irked Lenin about Proletkult was that it paid insufficient attention to class struggle. His own position left little room for doubt; he insisted class struggle was a vital component of proletarian culture. Some Soviet analysts actually consider Lenin's emphasis on political struggle ("who will best whom?" *kto kogo*) to be his specific contribution to the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[27]

Certainly the prominence accorded by Lenin to conflict and class enemies antedated, and facilitated, "class war on the cultural front." His preoccupation with class struggle may have left the way open for

24. Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–32* (New York, 1953), p. 10.

25. John Biggart, "Anti-Leninist Bolshevism: The *Forward* Group of the RSDRP," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 23 (June 1981): 151.

26. Dominique Lecourt, *Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko*, trans. Ben Brewster, (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1977), pp. 158, 143. Lecourt does concede, however, that Proletkult themes were "confiscated to serve an 'official' propaganda whose pragmatic aims were remote from the dreams of those well-meaning militants" (p. 159). In direct contrast, Ballestrem argues that "if the philosophical outlook of Bogdanov and his friends could have developed in the Soviet Union, it is highly probable that Soviet philosophy would have gone in the direction of empiricism and pragmatism, like the U.S." Karl G. Ballestrem, "Lenin and Bogdanov," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 9 (December 1969): 307.

27. See A. G. Lashin and V. S. Aleksandrov, *Razvitie V. I. Leninym teorii nauchnogo kommunizma* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 200–1.

Stalinism in yet another sense. By exaggerating political conflict, contends at least one critic, Lenin was blinded to other, equally important problems. In fact, writes Mandel, "the most serious immediate danger threatening Soviet society and the Soviet state at that time was the depoliticising and passivity of the proletariat."[28] Bogdanov tried to signal this danger, but to no avail.

Furthermore, by suppressing Proletkult, Lenin set a precedent for party control in cultural affairs, even though direct party intervention did not come until 1925. Admittedly, he may not have chosen this course, but his opinion was, rather uncharacteristically, ambivalent in this regard. The following statement attests to an almost contradictory position: "Every artist... has the right to create freely, to follow his ideal regardless of everything. But then, we are Communists, and ought not to stand idly by and give chaos free rein to develop. We should steer this process according to a worked-out plan and must shape its results."[29] Bogdanov of course looked askance at party control over culture.

Some of the ideas that emerged during Stalin's cultural revolution were the result of the hostility between Lenin and Bogdanov rather than inherent to either. For example, in an effort to save Proletkult and placate Lenin, some of Bogdanov's successors actively sought a closer party connection. Some literary groups attempted to gain ascendance in the cultural field by claiming the party blessing for themselves. One of these groups, October, an offshoot of Proletkult, pronounced complete loyalty to the party, advocated struggle on the ideological front, and supported a "strengthening of the Communist line."[30] All of these ringing declarations—party control, class struggle, ideological orthodoxy—were anathema to Bogdanov but became identified with the left wing in culture. This change in direction was partly a response to Lenin's harsh criticism of the original Proletkult and partly reflected a desire to stake out a revolutionary position within the more moderate NEP period.

Other groups took a different course of action. Some of the more utopian members of the Bolshevik intelligentsia left the party or even committed suicide. Members of Smithy (Kuznitsa), another offshoot of Proletkult, considered the NEP a "betrayal of communism" and disassociated themselves from the party. For them, utopia was reduced to a cult, clandestine and fanatical at the same time. A "communist coun-

28. Ernest Mandel, "Liebman and Leninism," *Socialist Register, 1975*, p. 111.

29. As cited in Clara Zetkin, "My Recollections of Lenin," in V. I. Lenin, *On Culture and Cultural Revolution* (Moscow, 1970), p. 232.

30. See Brown, *Proletarian Episode*, p. 14.

terculture," thwarted, hateful, and militant, juxtaposed itself to "bourgeois culture" and all fellow-travelers. The tension between the two was at times attenuated but not extinguished.[31]

The point is that Stalin tapped this resentment and frustration, unleashed its power, and directed it toward his own ends. As Fitzpatrick notes, Stalin's cultural revolution became potent because it combined initiative from above with militancy from below. It is revealing that Stalin's cultural revolution was initiated by a purge of "bourgeois specialists," specifically mining engineers at the Shakhty trial. Despite Lenin's policy toward the bourgeois specialists, the bourgeoisie as a whole continued to be perceived as the "class enemy"; the specialists were used but not acclaimed. The hostility to "NEPmen" (private entrepreneurs, broadly defined) and to the policy of conciliation was shared by many rank-and-file communists as well as by former Proletkultists and communist literary groups. Consequently, those who welcomed Stalin's change in direction believed that the revolutionary momentum had been restored. Komsomol members, for example, "treated cultural revolution as a replay of the October Revolution and Civil War, in which many of them had been too young to participate."[32]

And yet, this was hardly utopia restored. Stalin combined Leninism and Bogdanovism in ways that made both unrecognizable. Class struggle became outright warfare. Party control over culture was converted into an almost complete absorption of the cultural domain by the political. The cultural revolution was blended with an ideological revolution; adherence to a dogmatic form of Marxism, rather than to proletarian culture, was declared the litmus test of political loyalty.[33] Discipline and utopia were combined to create the new Hero of Labor.[34] Finally, proletarian culture was transformed (or perhaps transmuted) into socialist realism. The authoritarian and collectivist views of culture were thus somehow fused into one. Fallen by the wayside were Bogdanov's warnings that, to be meaningful, proletarian art must be "sin-

31. This tension was reflected in the battle between the journals *Na postu* (On Guard), which adopted a hard-line approach, and *Krasnaia nov'* (Red Virgin Soil), which adopted a more lenient one. See Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's* (Princeton, N.J., 1968). Also see Viacheslav Polonskii, "Literaturnoe dvizhenie revoliutsionnoi epokhy," *Pechat' i revoliutsiia*, no. 7 (October–November 1927): 25.

32. Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution*, p. 25.

33. For a discussion of this process, see David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science, 1917–1932* (New York, 1961). Also see Robert Sharlet, "Pashukanis and the Rise of Soviet Marxist Jurisprudence, 1924–30," *Soviet Union* 1, no. 2 (1974): 103–21.

34. See Robert C. Williams, "The Nationalization of Early Soviet Culture," *Russian History* 9, pts. 2–3 (1982): 157–72.

cere and truthful," rather than "buoyant and enthusiastic," tinted with "rose-colored glasses," amidst suffering and setbacks.[35]

Bogdanov's utopia had been tempered by rationality and informed by some subtlety; it even betrayed a lingering tone of pessimism.[36] Scorned and shoved aside by Lenin, however, utopia was distorted under Stalin into a fanatical, vengeful, and self-righteous movement. Little wonder, then, that some analysts express a "fear of utopia."[37] Ulam contends that once the "organic connection between socialism and utopia" was severed, the nature of socialism itself was altered giving rise, instead to "antiutopias," as depicted in literature by Zamiatin's *We* and Orwell's *1984*.[38] Some contemporary Marxists, rejecting the "narrow, impoverished dogma" that "official Marxism" has become, seek to revitalize it by "reinfusing utopianism into the Marxist tradition."[39]

To be sure, to call the class war on the cultural front a "cultural revolution," in either Lenin's or Bogdanov's understanding of the term, was a misnomer and an aberration. Although some aspects of Leninism and Bogdanovism constituted predisposing factors for Stalinism, these aspects were not predetermining. The Stalinist lineage was complex and included historical factors and personality as well as the immediately preceding era. Certainly, class war on the cultural front borrowed some of the ideas derived from Proletkult; it was, however, a specific policy pursued for a specific period of time, rather than a commitment to an underlying cultural policy. Its radicalism provided a means for discrediting right-wing deviation. Ultimately, it served to realign ideological premises with political needs and to establish the party as arbiter of ideological orthodoxy and definer of utopia. Moreover, it was no accident that Stalin's cultural revolution coincided with the First Five Year Plan; the revolution was part of a general mobilization of society, a class war on all fronts, under party guidance and bureaucratic control. Thus, although the cultural revolution denoted literacy and skills to Lenin and socialist self-change to Bogdanov, it was translated to mean "mobilization campaign" by Stalin. The dif-

35. A. A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul'ture: Sbornik statei, 1904–1924* (Leningrad and Moscow, 1925), pp. 167–68.

36. According to Graham, Bogdanov even introduced "elements of dystopia into his picture of socialism." See Graham's remarks in Bogdanov, *Red Star*, p. 242.

37. There is a considerable amount of debate in the literature about whether utopianism serves as a source of inspiration or as a source of despotism. See, among others, Kolakowski, "Need of Utopia, Fear of Utopia"; George Kateb, *Utopia and its Enemies* (New York, 1972); Frank Manuel, ed. *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (Boston, 1967).

38. Adam Ulam, *Ideologies and Illusions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 49–51.

39. David Gross, "Marxism and Utopia: Ernst Bloch," in *Towards a New Marxism*, ed. Bart Grahl and Paul Piccone (St. Louis, Mo., 1973), pp. 95–96.

ferences were significant. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that a diversity of definitions should be offered for Stalin's cultural revolution, ranging from thought control to upward mobility to class warfare to a temporary unleashing of visionaries. It was, in some ways, a combination of all these factors.

Indeed, several analysts of Stalin's cultural revolution have puzzled over the question of whether any genuine revolution had occurred.[40] Certainly it was not a revolution from below, in the sense of spontaneous worker and peasant action. Instead it resembled the second echelon "from above"—that is, the Komsomol or local party committees or communist intellectuals who acted "on behalf of the proletariat." And what did the proletariat want? No doubt the workers felt fortunate to be recruited and promoted into jobs and schools; no doubt they also resented the privileged bourgeois specialists, whether engineers or intellectuals. But did they share any of the utopian or visionary views associated with the cultural revolution? It seems that they were above all practical people, more likely to be inspired by Stalin's view of industrialization than by the ideas underlying proletarian culture or, for that matter, even socialism.[41] Here Stalin and the new technocratic elite coincided exactly; only the Old Bolsheviks and utopian intellectuals remained as potential detractors, and they were to be eliminated in the next round of purges.[42]

In essence, Stalin sought a new legitimacy grounded on a new political coalition. The engineers and technicians were far more amenable to Stalin's views than were the former communist intellectuals, who insisted on raising utopian issues. The cultural revolution, therefore, was closely intertwined with political considerations. The ultimate result on the cultural front was, in fact, an "embourgeoisement" quite far removed from the concept of a proletarian culture—not the development of new attitudes and values. The abrupt halt to the proletarianization of culture and the adoption of tried and true methods in terms of education, incentives, and status ranking in 1933 seem more indicative of Stalin's underlying cultural policy, which was pursued throughout the rest of his regime. Stalin saw cultural transformation as subordinate to, and virtually identical with, the needs of industrialization. Lenin's emphasis on development of the material base during the first stage of socialism was thus reinforced and implemented with vigor.

40. See the range of views in Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution*.

41. See Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values and Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge, England, 1976).

42. See Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–41* (Princeton, N.J., 1978).

The Bogdanov-Bukharin Connection

Although Stalin's cultural revolution was a plausible result of the tensions of the NEP, it was not an inevitable one. Nor did the unresolved clash of views on cultural revolution between Lenin and Bogdanov, the opposite ends on the spectrum, prefigure a Stalinist solution. Interestingly, it was Bukharin who appeared at the midpoint on the spectrum as he tried to steer a course somewhere between Lenin and Bogdanov.[43] He agreed with Lenin that Proletkult could not expect autonomy—freedom from party control. He upheld Bogdanov, however, in his views on cultural questions; and, as editor of *Pravda*, he frequently allowed articles to be printed in defense of Proletkult, much to Lenin's annoyance. Later, Bukharin aligned his ideas more closely with Lenin's concept of the cultural revolution, insofar as he stressed educating the peasants and instilling in them the virtues of the cooperatives. He retained, however, reservations about the theoretical implications of Lenin's concept. That is, Bukharin rejected the idea that the cultural revolution should simply assimilate bourgeois culture; he thought the revolution should also help create a new proletarian culture. In a rather equivocal fashion, Bukharin declared that he disagreed with Lenin's concept of the cultural revolution as a "theoretical formulation" but accepted its "practical conclusions."[44]

On the whole, Bukharin's thinking was closer to Bogdanovism than to Leninism.[45] Bukharin shared with Bogdanov an interest in systems thinking and an inclination to view social dynamics on the basis of the "law of equilibrium," leading him to be accused, along with Bogdanov, of not understanding dialectical materialism. In his autobiography, Bukharin himself admits that, for a time, he was "possessed of a certain heretical leaning toward the school of empirio-criticism and read everything that appeared on the subject in Russia."[46] To Lenin, it was par-

43. Cohen contends that Bukharin, rather than Stalin, was the logical successor to Lenin. Cohen leans heavily on Lenin's NEP policies in constructing his argument. See Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York, 1973).

44. N. I. Bukharin, "Proletariat i voprosy khudozhestvennoi politiki," *Krasnaia nov'*, no. 4 (May 1925): 263–72. Bukharin noted in this article that he disagreed with Lenin on two points: proletarian culture and state capitalism. See also articles by Bukharin cited above, chap. 6, footnote 130.

45. A comparison of Bukharin's views with those of Lenin and Bogdanov can be found in Ilmari Susiluoto, *The Origins and Development of Systems Thinking in the Soviet Union* (Helsinki, 1982), which draws parallels between Bukharin's *Theory of Historical Materialism* and Bogdanov's *Tektologiia*.

46. N. I. Bukharin, "Avtobiografiia," *Deiateli soiuza sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik i oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1925–28), 1:54.

ticularly dismaying that the man he called the "biggest theoretician" of Soviet Marxism should be attracted to Bogdanov's ideas. He objected strongly to Bukharin's "naive borrowing" of Bogdanov's "scholastic terminology," as can be seen in his review of Bukharin's *Economics of the Transitional Period*. It was impossible, protested Lenin, to treat the dialectical point of view as one of several equal points of view or to discuss a "social system" in abstract terms, without reference to classes and class struggle.[47] Quite predictably, these points were used and exaggerated by Bukharin's enemies in the political jostling following Lenin's death.[48] An article in *Pravda*, December 24, 1938, resurrected Lenin's "brilliant book," *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* as the cornerstone of Bolshevik theoretical education. It made a direct connection between philosophical and political revisionism, explaining that Bukharin, "a student of Bogdanov's in philosophy," and a "right-wing restorationist [of capitalism]," was a "Machist, and always maintained Machist views." Because he subscribed to the "anti-scientific and false 'theory of equilibrium,' " the article continued, Bukharin was led to advocate "equilibrium between the private-capitalist and socialist sectors of the Soviet national economy—in other words, recognition of small-scale production and refusal to accept the liquidation of the kulaks as a class. Comrade Stalin dealt a shattering blow to the 'theory of equilibrium' . . . in December 1929."[49]

It is, at the very least, intriguing that *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* should have been used as a battering ram against Bogdanov by Lenin and against Bukharin by Stalin. Lenin had first established the connection between philosophy and politics, arguing that divergence in one leads to divergence in the other. In an effort to discredit Bukharin's position during the show trials of 1938, Stalin re-created the danger of Machism and discovered in it the sources for Bukharin's politics. That the same philosophy should produce left-wing as well as right-wing political deviance went unnoticed. Any connection with Bogdanovism became a convenient stigma for Stalin to use in the succession struggle, because it carried with it Lenin's own verdict of ideological heresy. Indeed, points out Valentinov, Lenin's successors, "in their desire to slander Bogdanov's name and philosophy, have

47. V. I. Lenin, "Zamechaniia na knigu N. I. Bukharina, *Ekonomika perekhodnogo perioda*," in V.I. Lenin, *Leninskii sbornik*, vol. 11 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1929).

48. See, for example, M. Z. Selektor, *Dialekticheskii materializm i teoriia ravnovesiia* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1934); A. Shcheglov, *Bor'ba Lenina protiv Bogdanovskoi revizii marksizma* (Moscow, 1937).

49. A. Shcheglov, "Chto takoe makhism, empirio-krititsizm?" *Pravda*, 24 December 1938, p. 2.

seized not only on the theory of equilibrium but on the very word 'equilibrium' itself, seeing in it a symbol of anti-Soviet activity."[50] One of Bukharin's critics, arguing along these lines, declared, "The theory of equilibrium contradicted the very idea of the Five Year Plan."[51]

Even Bogdanov's "law of the least," a minor part of his systems thinking, was unearthed and used against Bukharin. Bogdanov's law, which emphasized backwardness as a brake to overly ambitious political or economic schemes, was likened to Bukharin's willingness to make concessions to the peasant sector.[52] Bogdanov had explained what was "not a customary view" in the following terms: if the leadership of a "political bloc," comprised of two unequal classes, tried to advance too fast, its cohesion would unravel, "just as, in a campaign, the unity of a military detachment would be severed... if the cavalry did not limit itself to the speed of the foot soldiers."[53] Neither Bogdanov nor Bukharin, of course, envisaged the cavalry turning on the foot soldiers themselves, as happened during collectivization.

To a certain extent, the critics were correct; there were indeed some parallels between Bogdanov and Bukharin. Both supported the NEP (unlike Stalin)—one reluctantly and the other more enthusiastically. Also, a moderate course in politics was consistent with, if not necessarily caused by, systems thinking. Certainly, a conception of a harmony of parts in a system stands in direct contrast to politics in command. The point, however, is that the connection to systems thinking was manipulated for purely political purposes. Bogdanov's influence on Bukharin was indirect, and the politics of the two men was a result of various considerations, by no means limited to the highly abstract tektological point of view.

The coincidence of views was strongest on cultural questions, an area where, contended Bukharin, Bogdanov said "not altogether bad things." During the transitional period, Bukharin believed a "toning down" of class struggle was necessary for developing "cultural hegemony," something that the proletariat had not yet achieved but that was of paramount importance if the proletariat were to "earn its historical right for social leadership."[54] Bukharin grasped that there was something beyond the political hegemony that Lenin prescribed and Stalin secured. He worried about a possible degeneration of the body politic and the rise of a

50. Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, p. 259.

51. Selektor, *Dialekticheskii materializm*, p. 258.

52. Ibid.

53. A. A. Bodganov, *Tektologiia: vseobshchaia organizatsionnaia nauka* (Berlin, 1922), p. 182. Karev also draws attention to the law of the least as an implicit criticism of the dictatorship of the proletariat. See Karev, "Tektologiia ili dialektika," p. 43.

54. Bukharin, "Proletariat i voprosy khudozhestvennoi politiki," pp. 264, 266 and 269.

"new class," composed of NEPmen, specialists, and, most distressingly, members of the party itself. Clearly Bukharin was confronting what Bogdanov had analyzed—namely, that the origins of a class could be linked to political-authority gradations as well as economic ones. Both Bogdanov and Bukharin looked to cultural transformation, especially the education of "proletarian cadres" and the development of a proletarian culture, as a means of prevention and perhaps of resuscitation.[55]

Bukharin's stance indicates that it was possible to combine features of both Leninism and Bogdanovism: from the former, the NEP and a fervent belief in the party; from the latter, cultural hegemony and a sensitivity to "political degeneration." Although Bukharin, like his mentors, was neither a liberal nor a democrat, Bukharinism, as Cohen argues, represents "a more liberal, humane variant of Russian Communism, with its native authoritarian traditions."[56]

The Bukharin alternative also casts doubt on the second cultural revolution as an outgrowth of either Lenin's or Bogdanov's ideas. Entirely different routes, especially with Bukharin as a potential bridge between Lenin and Bogdanov, can at least be conceived for the transition to socialism. To be sure, Lenin's own actions limited the range of alternatives. Proletkult as a social experiment and Bogdanov as an imaginative and original thinker were quashed under Lenin's directives. The willingness to explore and to tolerate diversity in search of the elusive goal of building socialism was thereby diminished in the process.

55. N. I. Bukharin, *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia i kul'tura* (St. Petersburg, 1923), pp. 43–44. Also see N. I. Bukharin, "Kul'turnye zadachi i bor'ba s biurokratizmom," *Revoliutsiia i kul'tura* no. 2 (5 December 1927): 5–12; N. I. Bukharin, *Politicheskoe zaveshchanie Lenina* (Moscow, 1929).

56. Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (New York, 1985), p. 91.

10 /

Revolution and Culture

Culture crisscrosses the path of revolution in contradictory ways. Initially, cultural change acts as a prerequisite to revolution; in the aftermath of the seizure of power, however, culture becomes an obstacle to the achievement of revolutionary goals. How can culture both accelerate and inhibit revolution?

In fact, the relationship between culture and revolution is only dimly understood. According to most studies, culture plays a distinctly conservative role. It tends to maintain a political system, providing the normative underpinnings for existing political institutions and arrangements. Although it does not eliminate incremental political change, it does forestall revolutionary change.

Even when a revolution occurs, cultural change does not automatically follow in its wake. Leaders who have devised programs for a new society, whether a fully developed or a communist one, have had to confront the problem of entrenched attitudes, values, and beliefs. This problem is as true for a Third World leader attempting to instill notions of discipline and loyalty to a nation as for a communist revolutionary hoping to create a "new person." Attitudes and values have an enduring quality and are relatively impervious to direct political engineering. "A sophisticated political movement," contends Almond, "ready to manipulate, penetrate, organize, indoctrinate and coerce and given an opportunity to do so for a generation or longer ends up as much or more transformed than transforming."[1] Both the 1968 events in Czecho-

1. Gabriel A. Almond, "Communism and Political Culture Theory," *Comparative Politics* 15 (January 1983): 137.

slovakia and the 1980–81 rise of Solidarity in Poland provide evidence, according to a number of authors, of the tenacity of the precommunist political culture, with its reservoir of democratic values and attitudes.[2] Thus culture, or, more accurately, the difficulty of instilling an appropriate political culture, is used to explain the limited realization of revolutionary goals. Culture, in other words, exhibits conservative and inhibiting characteristics.

Syncretism: Blending of Old and New

In trying to understand the puzzling relationship between culture and revolution, political analysts have been drawn to cultural anthropology for clues. Why and how does culture change? Cultural anthropologists provide a number of answers as to why culture changes, including, among others, innovation, adaptation to new environmental demands, modernization/urbanization, cultural borrowing, and contact with other societies.[3] Although there may be a profusion of explanations for cultural change (making it practically an intractable analytical problem), one message about how culture changes is clear: slowly. There is almost no such thing as total change. Perhaps because there are so many layers in culture, or perhaps because of human nature itself, the key words are *adaptation* and *evolution*. This statement does not mean that culture is somehow frozen. On the contrary, it is constantly changing, but the change is variegated, eclectic, and gradual; and involves a blending (sometimes contradictory) of old and new. Anyone, for example, examining the operation of a bureaucracy in a Third World country soon realizes that whatever the superficial resemblances, the underlying rational, ascriptive, impersonal features associated with a Weberian-type bureaucracy are almost entirely absent. They have been translated into the local idiom, which may mean that kinship, nepotism, and bribery coexist, without apology, alongside Western-style bureaucracy. A number of authors have commented on the "modernity of tradition"—that is, the ability of traditional cultural patterns to assert themselves and to incorporate contemporary events and innovations.[4] Rather than viewing change as a stark dichotomy between tradition and modernity, it may be far more accurate to consider the possibility of

2. See David W. Paul, *The Cultural Limits of Revolutionary Politics* (New York, 1979); H. Gordon Skilling, "Sixty-Eight in Historical Perspective," *International Journal* 33 (Autumn 1978): 678–701; David W. Paul and Maurice D. Simon, "Poland Today and Czechoslovakia 1968," *Problems of Communism* 30 (September–October 1981): 25–39.

3. See, for example, Louise Spindler, *Culture Change and Modernization* (New York, 1977).

4. See L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago, 1967); Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (April 1967): 292–346.

dual societies evolving within one country, symbolized by a "Rolls Royce or Volkswagen . . . parked next to an ox cart."[5]

Indeed, the most typical response to innovation (other than outright resistance) is probably acculturation, a process of adjustment and modification resulting from the contact with another culture. Anthropologists suggest the term *syncretism* to cannote "cultural interaction," which involves "blending, combining and reconciling" and which results ultimately in a "mutual modification of innovation and of host."[6] A typical example is the blending of pagan rites with Christianity.

Clearly, then, the conclusion that emerges from a look at the literature on cultural change is that culture changes slowly, usually in response to something new, such as technological innovation, or to something alien, such as an encounter with a different culture. Some element of disruption is invariably involved—in the customary pattern of behavior or in the norms and values governing behavior. The old methods do not work; the old assumptions do not explain. Consequently, a process of relative devaluation, modification, or reinterpretation ensues. Syncretism suggests that cultural change may involve various mutations, with new cultural elements supplementing, amalgamating with, or substituting for the old.[7] As one analyst puts it, "Culture moves rather like an octopus . . .—not all at once in a smoothly coordinated synergy of parts, a massive coaction of the whole, but by disjointed movements of this part, then that, and now the other which somehow cumulate to directional change."[8]

These general comments, offered by anthropologists, apply equally well to change in political culture. That is, political values, beliefs, and attitudes are likely to change gradually and with a considerable amount of blending of old and new. In addition, any specific effort to change political culture is most likely to succeed if it unites, as in cultural syncretism, the unrelated with the traditional. Huntington and Dominguez arrive at precisely this conclusion when they argue that syncretism is one of the fundamental patterns of response by Third World countries to colonialism and the Western model. Moreover, they assert that the "probability of acceptance of new political cultural forms is increased to the extent that innovations are susceptible to reinterpretation in the conceptual framework of the recipient group."[9]

5. Spindler, *Culture Change*, p. 59.

6. Henry G. Burger, "Syncretism, an Acculturative Accelerator," *Human Organization* 25 (Summer 1966): 105–14.

7. Ibid. Burger specifies the various types of change.

8. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), p. 408.

9. Samuel P. Huntington and Jorge I. Dominguez, "Political Development," in *Macro-*

And yet, surely, political culture may change in ways that are neither gradual nor syncretic. The new may prove to be incompatible with the old, as significant and expanding elements of incongruence appear. Grand political schemes may belie, at least momentarily, the relative inelasticity of culture.

Revolution and Culture

During the prerevolutionary period, a fundamental shift occurs in the values, attitudes, and beliefs of ever-widening circles. Political culture, once the pillar of stability, crumbles. As delegitimation accelerates, ruling elites and their supporting structures become irrelevant or displaced and the counterelites and masses converge on a common objective: crushing the remnants of the old. The seizure of power is accompanied by anarchy, both in politics and in culture. The counterelites either are helpless to intervene or help eradicate the symbols and institutions of the previous political culture. A period of "revolutionary vandalism" sets in, with statues toppled, palaces trampled, and vestiges of privilege and repression obliterated. As Meyer notes, the Communist parties that tried to curb popular anarchy failed in their bid to power. The most effective alternative was to "succumb, temporarily, to spontaneous and widespread anti-authoritarian sentiments, to allow them free rein, and even to voice them and incorporate them."[10] The Bolsheviks were clever enough to share in this mood as opposed to trying to control it.

Precisely these conditions are the most conducive to radical change. Large-scale disruption and an internally distorted culture, argues Wallace, may lead to "revitalization," defined as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture."[11] The potential for "culture-building," adds another analyst, is all the greater if there are "mass participation and revolutionary ideological activities among the masses."[12]

In other words, the advent of revolution, with its upheaval in structures and values, accompanied by an ideologically informed and purposeful leadership, establishes the most propitious circumstances for

political Theory, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, Mass., 1975), 3: 18.

10. Alfred Meyer, "Authority in Communist Political Systems," in *Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies*, ed. Lewis J. Edinger (New York, 1967), p. 87.

11. Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58 (April 1956): 265, 269.

12. Erik Allardt, "Revolutionary Ideologies as Agents of Cultural and Structural Change," in *Social Science and the New Societies: Problems in Cross-Cultural Research and Theory Building*, ed. N. Hammond (East Lansing, Mich., 1973), pp. 154, 156.

radical cultural change. The entire process is consistent with Deutsch's concept of social mobilization, which he defines as "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior."[13] Although Deutsch refers to the consequences of modernization, a similar set of conditions is triggered by revolution.

The question that arises, therefore, is why the revolutionary fervor cannot be applied successfully to culture-building efforts? Surely, at the height of revolution, there is a union between revolutionary elites and a significant portion of the population. Why can it not be sustained? At what point do the dynamics of revolution diverge from those of cultural transformation?

Cultural Conservatism/Political Radicalism

Although revolution perforce implies some cultural change, it does not necessarily promise wholesale change. The concepts of culture and political culture, although related, are nevertheless distinct, and change in one does not automatically produce change in the other. Of the two, political culture may change independently of and more rapidly than culture. Cultural anthropologists, once again, offer some interesting suggestions on the diversity of change.

Spindler, for example, states that individuals in a developing country sometimes "become modernized in political attitudes and remain traditional in agricultural attitudes."[14] Similarly, Geertz emphasizes the notion of "cultural discontinuity." Especially under conditions of rapid, disorienting change, individuals are "drawn to a double goal: to remain themselves and to keep pace, or more, with the twentieth century." This duality tends to produce a "tense conjunction of cultural conservatism and political radicalism."[15]

Transposed to the postrevolutionary period, this curious blend suggests a latent, and yet vital, source of tension. Although political scientists have focused on the dyssynchronization between values and structures before the revolution, they have paid little attention to this phenomenon after the revolution. All the same, it is entirely possible that new divisions and gaps may occur. New institutions may have been introduced, but have the values that legitimize them been absorbed? At a minimum, there is probably a lag between one and the

13. Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 55 (September 1961): 494.

14. Spindler, *Culture Change*, p. 59.

15. Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*, p. 320.

other. Even more likely, the new elites and the population at large may find that they have rather different interpretations of shared values. What brought them together during the seizure of power were values of the least common denominator type, a watered-down version of ideology, useful for mobilizing large numbers of people. As the new elites draw upon a more complex and more comprehensive set of beliefs to formulate the program of action after the revolution, a distancing between them and the rest of the people is fairly predictable.

Moreover, the ideology that brought the counterelites into power usually has a strong utopian component: an attempt to institute radical, complete change. For the new elites, especially the intellectuals, the question is how best to implement utopia, how to prevent its deradicalization. For the population at large, however, the answer to legitimacy may very well be the opposite: how to transform utopia into something more familiar, more acceptable. Radicalism is thus pitted against syncretism.

Undoubtedly, this problem is one of the major ones of the postrevolutionary period. The tension between cultural conservatism and political radicalism must be surmounted if the goals of the revolution are to be achieved. People oriented toward the market and private property, religious in their convictions, attached to their families, and highly status conscious or authoritarian in their dealings with others cannot but set cultural limits to socialist programs. However, if politics outstrips by far what the population can accept or absorb, there may be a danger of delegitimation. How the relationship between culture and politics is resolved, therefore, may have a substantial impact on the outcome of the revolution.

Here an important clue emerges on why communist revolutions generate an aftershock called cultural revolution. Faced with incongruence between cultural conservatism and political radicalism, leaders attempt to overcome it by initiating a cultural revolution. One Soviet analyst seems to be alluding to this very point when he explains that one of the basic features of the transitional period is the cultural revolution "to liquidate the gap between the social-political and the cultural level of development of the country."[16]

Ostensibly, for all Marxists, a cultural revolution is a critical component of the revolutionary process. All revolutions involve a change

16. V. V. Gorbunov, *Lenin i sotsialisticheskaia kul'tura* (Moscow, 1972), p. 128. Gorbunov concludes that the cultural revolution is a general sociological law of the transitional period from capitalism to socialism, applicable to both culturally backward and culturally advanced countries. For a development of this point, see A. I. Arnol'dov and V. S. Kalugin, "Sotsialisticheskaia kul'turnaia revoliutsiia—zakonomernost' razvitiia novogo mira," in *Kommunizm i kul'tura*, ed. A. N. Maslin (Moscow, 1966), pp. 78–109.

in the political culture, but only socialist revolutions aspire to a change in the culture as a whole. From the Marxist point of view, change cannot be confined to the political level because there is an intricate relationship among politics, economics, and culture (or, in Marxist terms, between the base and the superstructure).

A cultural revolution, therefore, may be prompted by radical, large-scale visions of a new society at the same time that a program of cultural change is pressed into service to resolve more immediate problems, such as legitimacy and cultural backwardness. It is up to the revolutionary leaders to determine how much weight to accord political radicalism versus cultural conservatism. Which will yield the most? Will culture be transformed or politics deradicalized? Perhaps because there was no one answer that was completely satisfactory, Lenin and Bogdanov (as well as Stalin) outlined entirely different countercultures and yet called them cultural revolutions in keeping with communist goals.

Cultural Revolution

Lenin's solution to the problem of a new dyssynchronization in the postrevolutionary period was adaptation to cultural conservatism. Lenin was keenly aware that in the attempt to institutionalize a new order, the distance between the new socialist elite and the masses, largely peasant, could increase enormously. For this reason, he believed it was particularly important to devise a political approach that would bind the people to the new regime. To Lenin, this binding could be achieved only through a blend of the old and the new. As he stated, in order for the revolution not to remain a "mere declaration," the political revolution "must be assimilated; we must help the masses of the people to understand it."[17] This position, of course, meant a certain deradicalization, or, expressed differently, an acceptance of the cultural limits of revolution.

The pylons of the bridge to the new society would consist of economic development and cultural revolution.[18] Lenin argued more than once that it was essential to begin with what was intelligible and familiar to the large mass of peasants, rather than with something remote and fantastic. Cultural revolution, hence, was designed to instill the ABC's

17. V. I. Lenin, "The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of Political Education Departments," 19 October 1921, in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1960–70), 33: 73.

18. Lenin did not perceive a dichotomy between development and utopia, as have some contemporary analysts. See, for example, Richard Lowenthal, "Development vs. Utopia in Communist Policy," in *Change in Communist Systems*, ed. Chalmers Johnson (Stanford, Calif., 1970), pp. 33–116.

of knowledge, as well as to develop a work ethic and discipline. It was a massive program of education and modernization, organized to pull the country into the twentieth century. Although new to Russia, the end-product was meant to be not a radical culture but a modern one. Cultural revolution, as conceived by Lenin, was also an extensive agitation-propaganda campaign to bring about a change in political culture—that is, an acceptance of the values and attitudes associated with the Communist party and Marxist ideology. Although seemingly new, the political culture actually involved a blending of old and new, particularly in terms of authoritarian traits. The symbols were different; the habits were long-standing.

Stalin, similarly, accepted a compromise between cultural conservatism and political radicalism. Although there was a spurt of radicalism during Stalin's revolution from above, it was largely in the service of economic development; utopians were used and then purged. Outward political compliance, together with economic discipline and effort, counted far more than the fostering of new socialist methods of interaction. Once again, the political culture incorporated, indeed expanded, the authoritarian past rather than transforming it. Even proletarianization, a key aspect of Stalin's cultural revolution, entailed upward mobility and the rejection of egalitarianism—a strange syncretism of socialism and capitalism.

Preoccupied with consolidating power, both Lenin and Stalin had little patience for experimental political cultures. The concerns of utopians such as Bogdanov were dismissed as meddlesome and irrelevant. To be sure, Lenin and Stalin were on safe ground in treating politics as the art of the possible. Also pragmatic was the stance that cultural change could best be brought about by a gradual process of blending the new with the old, as political analysts and cultural anthropologists affirm.

Nevertheless, there was some range of choices as to which elements of the old would be reinforced and which would be slowly changed. There is little evidence that Lenin sought to enroll the people in the "school of democracy" alongside the "school of capitalism." Stalin was even less inclined to do so, subordinating the population in a way that might have made the tsars feel "dizzy with success." A new layer of authoritarianism, backed by a dogmatic political religion, was superimposed upon the old.

At the same time, there was a tendency to proclaim loyalty to revolutionary ideals and to justify various policies on that basis, whether there was an authentic correspondence or not. This aspect of the cultural revolution lent itself to myth-making and a ritualization of radicalism. As Lev Kopelev states, "All the conventionally sacred

(revolutionary, internationalist, democratic, socialist, humanistic and so on) formulae... [have become] in essence... purely external ritual relics, 'vestiges,' like the form of address 'comrade' or the motto 'workers of the world unite.' "[19] The working class, glorified as the hero of the new society, was denied any genuine power. Collectivism became simple service to the state. Legitimacy was shifted from political to economic premises, as the promise of a new society was pared down to a promise for material benefits. There was indeed a syncretism between old and new because the new all too readily took on the features of the old; the new counterculture was authoritarian, paternalistic, and elitist.

Utopia, rather than being discarded, became enshrined in myths and rituals. This enshrinement led to the phenomenon that political scientists call "official political culture," defined by Archie Brown as "official norms, desiderata and political goals rather than societal values and beliefs."[20] Ideology and political culture were synthesized in such a way as to make them relatively indistinguishable. Underpinning both was the concept of *partiinost*, meaning that adherence to the party line established the validity of beliefs and actions. Little surprise, then, that the results should be alienation, cynicism, or disillusionment.

Today, at least one analyst, Oskar Gruenwald, sees evidence of rebellion against the "overpoliticized nature of the official culture of socialist realism." The new cultural mood of the 1960s and 1970s in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, continues Gruenwald, "seeks a revival of more liberal, open-ended, Western, non-dogmatic, democratic, and humanist values, both material and spiritual, which promise to enhance individual lives in the here and now."[21] This undertow of dissatisfaction at least indirectly serves as criticism of Lenin's and Stalin's solutions to the cultural problems in the aftermath of revolution. Their concepts of cultural revolution, in the final analysis, had little to do with culture-building in relation to socialism rather than to economic development and perhaps for this reason helped bring about a Thermidor.

Bogdanov's concept of cultural revolution, in contrast, was oriented toward revitalization—that is, a deliberate and conscious effort to take

19. Lev Kopelev, "A Lie Is Conquered Only by Truth," in *Samizdat Register I*, ed. Roy Medvedev (London, 1977), p. 237, as cited in Mary McAuley, "Political Culture and Communist Politics: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed Archie Brown, (Armonk, N.Y., 1984), p. 32.

20. Archie Brown, "Conclusions," in Brown, *Political Culture*, p. 177.

21. Oskar Gruenwald, "Comparing Socialist Cultures: A Meta-Framework," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 11 (Spring–Summer 1978): 94.

advantage of the historical moment when commonplace attitudes and behavior were disrupted and the expectations of something new were high. His idea of cultural change was essentially one of innovation and diffusion. He proposed creating the nucleus of the new culture, which would gradually expand and transform the rest of culture. Rejecting Lenin's notion of stages, he emphasized the continuity between means and ends, with at least fragments of the future society being encouraged in the here and now. He persisted in his belief in political radicalism and hoped eventually to overcome cultural conservatism.

Bogdanov's components of counterculture were derived from his vision of the future socialist society; they were genuinely "counter" in that they seemed to correspond little with the existing cultural patterns. Bogdanov thought he detected, in embryo form, some of the values and attitudes critical to the transition to socialism, including comradely cooperation, universalism, and creativity. He believed it was possible to foster these cultural attributes, not through a massive political socialization program or mobilization campaign but through closely coordinated structural and cultural change. Intermediate social structures, such as the workplace and Proletkult, were as important (if not more so) as national political structures. In a direct fashion, they would encourage different attitudes toward authority, toward other people, and ultimately toward self. The process of culture-building would at the same time solve the problem of legitimacy, because, for Bogdanov, they were one and the same. So long as the workers sensed that they were beginning to exert control over their lives, not simply taking directions anew, their faith in socialism would be confirmed, despite the shortcomings of the present regime or temporary economic setbacks. Bogdanov believed it was important to establish legitimacy among the working class, above all, and largely ignored the peasantry as the critical constituency.

Bogdanov's advocacy of a cultural revolution was a vital part of his general view of societal trends. In particular, cultural revolution was the necessary complement to technological progress; it did not stand apart from, or opposed to, technology. This position may seem to indicate a point of convergence between Lenin (as well as Stalin) and Bogdanov, but the distinctions were fundamental.

It is true that Bogdanov, no less enthusiastically than Lenin, subscribed to what modern thinkers have called a "technocratic model." In this model, as technology develops, it generates a highly rationalistic society with decisions based on instrumental values and little recognition of conflicting goals or values. The end result is that politics is reduced to administration at the expense of democracy. Rarely, if ever,

did Bogdanov directly address the problem of democracy—namely, such important issues as the formats for public discussion, consensus-formation, and conflict resolution.

However, although both Lenin and Stalin embraced the technocratic trend, Bogdanov discerned, albeit somewhat fuzzily, a potentially threatening fusion of technology with domination. How else can his constant concern for growing authoritarianism be interpreted? Much of his analysis focused on the elements that re-create a political elite and subordination, whether it be new (i.e., noneconomic) forms of power or a rigid value structure. Actually, there was a curious disjuncture in Bogdanov's thinking: his anticipation of a technocratic, rationalistic, self-regulating society versus his more immediate warnings of a new authoritarianism. He seemed to be groping for an understanding of some of the problems that have agitated such contemporary Marxists as Marcuse and Habermas. The growth of science and technology, which Bogdanov clearly viewed as the most potent force of the emerging era, would be brought under control by its incorporation into a new value system. This view at least implicitly resembles Habermas's solution of accepting technology as is while proposing to subdue its "negative consequences" through a new "institutional framework" of "symbolic interaction."[22] In addition, it was not some quirk of Bogdanov's that Proletkult should include science studios amidst those of the arts. Science, Bogdanov argued, was not value-free and should be submitted to a review from the proletarian point of view (however vague the latter may be). Similarly, he promoted the removal of barriers between scientists and the public to make science accessible to all, in a language that was comprehensible to laypeople, as opposed to an increasingly specialized, exclusive, monklike preserve for the experts. As fiercely as Marcuse, Bogdanov railed against fragmentation and unidimensionality and sought ways to "reintegrate" humans.[23]

However much he pinned his hope for socialism on technological advance, Bogdanov did not simply endorse cultural values based on a scientific-technological ethos. To be sure, his record on this score was somewhat ambivalent. He came precipitously close to subjecting values to "the logic of rationality" (the one scientifically best way to do things) in his norms of expediency. Furthermore, although he was "genuinely concerned to free the individual from the constraints of coercive norms and abstract obligations," points out one scholar, he proceeded "to dissolve the 'emancipated' individual in an impersonal social collec-

22. Jurgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston, 1970), p. 88.

23. See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964).

tive."[24] And yet, the bulk of his prescriptions for a proletarian culture were sensitive and humane. The cultural attributes he depicted differed from the usual ones derived from systems thinking. To one contemporary systems analyst, for example, a society is marked by a "solidarity of the collectivity," which he defines as "are you one of us or not?"[25] In that question, echoes resound of Lenin and Stalin but not of Bogdanov. The latter talked about mutual understanding and a common conscience as the soul of a collective (based more on faith, ironically, than on empirical findings). This notion of collectivism, a key element of the new political culture, implied altered authority relations and new rules of the game, appropriate to the transition to socialism. Certainly Bogdanov's "last word" on an alternative value structure, his "laws of the new conscience," emphasized consensual, internalized norms and were intended to enhance self-dignity rather than solidify submissiveness.

It would be unwarranted to conclude that Bogdanov formulated a prescription for socialism that spelled success. He left too many vague pronouncements; he bypassed the political realm; he failed to excise all traces of authoritarianism in his own thinking. To his credit, however, he accepted none of the ready-made or simplified formulas for socialism but attempted to pose the question anew. He remained true to his conviction that the key to socialism lay in the sphere of culture; indeed, unless socialism meant cultural liberation, it meant very little. Bogdanov, the free-thinker, remained sincere to, if troubled by, his Marxist beliefs.

No account of the time of revolution, when ideals were vibrant and social experimentation was the order of the day, would be complete without an appreciation of Bogdanovism. It was an imaginative effort to link culture to revolution and to transform cowed, lethargic people into self-confident, hopeful builders of socialism. There should have been little quarrel between Leninism and Bogdanovism on that score; these two approaches to culture-building were distinct but not incompatible. Proletkult sought to exist alongside, not to replace, factories and schools. The critical difference was that Lenin pigeonholed utopia whereas Bogdanov insisted on keeping it alive. The search today for socialism with a human face, with a concomitant rejection of the Soviet Union as a model of authentic socialism, indicates that Bogdanov posed a challenge that has not yet been met and suggested the sort of alternative to Leninism that continues to provoke thought and debate.

24. George L. Kline, "Changing Attitudes toward the Individual," in *The Transformation of Russian Society: Aspects of Social Change since 1861*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 621.

25. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York, 1964), p. 97.

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