

THE RUSSIAN REVIEW



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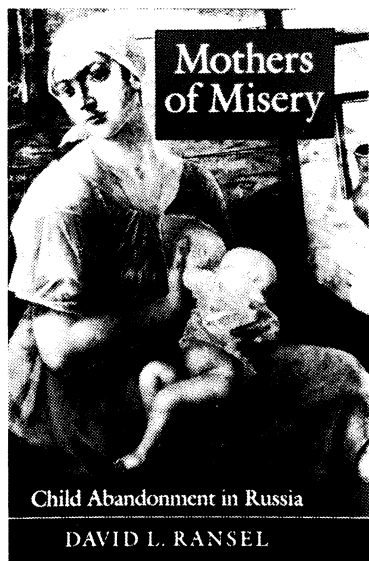
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Note to Contributors

All manuscripts, book reviews, letters to the editor and correspondence concerning submissions should be directed to the Editor in care of *The Russian Review*, 106 Dulles Hall, 230 West 17th Avenue, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210.

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Contributors to the Special Issue

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Andrzej Walicki, Professor of History at Notre Dame, is widely published in the field of Russian and Polish thought, most recently, *Stanislav Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of "Western Marxism."*

FROM THE EDITORS:

When was the last time, dear reader, that you were carried away by a simple, but compelling idea? Ours is an age of skepticism, of *déjà vu*, when we are more apt to fear the enthusiasts, the dreamers, the partisans of some unrealizable and perhaps dangerous utopia. We have seen too much and know too many examples of how easily such ideas can be manipulated to the advantage of philistines and despots. Currently we are witnessing daily the unraveling of the last great utopia of the age of ideas (and not only in Eastern Europe—today's *New York Times* lying at my elbow carries the headline, "CP's in the West Are Shaken and Squabbling"). Those who have recently made the round trip to the Soviet Union have been struck by the mood of caution among the intellectuals—the preference for simple practical solutions rather than grand projects, the desire to close the gap between "words" and "deeds." In American academia there is still a strong residue of the heady ideas of the sixties, but it is often sublimated in methodological complexities, and in the case of historians like myself, in that comfortable surrogate for ideology, "social history"; those older or younger or off the mainstream may have been subject to other ideas and some may even claim never to have imbibed, but in any event in the present skepticism and indifferentism prevail. A strong trace of guilt or doubt poisons our innermost thoughts, and we construct facades. This is no longer an age of belief.

Richard Stites in his remarkable book *Revolutionary Dreams* reminds us that the Russian experience was once made of much bolder stuff. Men and women had visions and dreamed dreams, and did not shy away from commitment. In fact in his extraordinary canvas of ideas, utopia becomes the central feature of the Russian past—visions that enthralled not only the intellectuals, but the men of power and the *narod* as well. The main thrust of his book, however, is that such dreams powered the grand sweep of the Revolution of 1917 and were in turn powered by it (what a contrast to the view on which many of us were weaned—that a handful of clever Bolsheviks used the thin cloak of ideology to "seize power"!); the Revolution in fact afforded the opportunity to celebrate and play out these fantasies. In Stites' rendering there is a good bit of innocent play and self-indulgent experimentation, clouded to some extent by aggressiveness and intolerance, but charming nevertheless because serious consequences seldom resulted. In marked contrast, Richard Wortman's review of Stites' book (January issue) characterizes such daydreaming as far less innocent, reminding us that its devotees are deadly serious about imposing on all of society their rational, harmonistic order which they perceive to be grounded in scientific Truth. Dissent and deviation have no place.

The broader lesson here, however, for all those who concern themselves with the past, is that ideas do have consequences, that they have a strong impetus toward realization, that they stir masses as well as intellects, that in twisted form they are apt to be crammed down our throats, and therefore we ignore or downplay them at our own peril. Social or political history without serious accounting of the compelling force of ideas (the Rights of Man and Citizen, the nation, the

class struggle, the anarchist commune, the Black Repartition, workers' control, Soviet power, the self-determination of peoples, the magic of the marketplace) is denatured history, history without the sauce. Therefore it behooves us occasionally to replenish our interest in the history of ideas and pay closer attention to those individuals who constructed archetypal models of the future, or who sensed the direction of history, or who artfully picked up on popular myths and coined them into the slogans that moved masses. It is perhaps indicative of our sloth that Lenin, about whom volumes have been written (his obsessions, his tactical adroitness, his "genius" for revolution), has seldom been taken seriously as a thinker (before Neil Harding, who? Althusser, Alfred Meyer, then who?). Perhaps he does not deserve a place in the Pantheon of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, but who can gainsay that he advanced serious ideas that informed his actions in *Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *State and Revolution*? (My own reading of Lenin is the reverse of the conventional, namely, that his ideas drew nourishment from popular myths and revolutionary praxis and are incomprehensible without them.) No matter, revisions and exceptions to Leninism have become commonplace among those who are still seekers. The rediscovery of Bukharin or Gramsci or perhaps even Chaijanov can be seen as latter day attempts to salvage something of what was once a grand vision. Whether we were once partakers of the faith or not, we should give close attention to those minds that in some way captured and fostered the inner vision of the movement that reached some sort of consummation in the first great socialist experiment.

It appears that scholarship has now matured on another such major figure whose oeuvre has hitherto been little known or poorly understood, namely, Alexander Bogdanov. We tend to know him as the author of the three hefty volumes on *Empiriomonism* which provoked Lenin into a philosophical counter-foray, or as the ineffectual leader of the Vperedist faction, or as the more effective guru of Proletkult. The gist of his thought we know largely from hostile commentaries or misinterpreted associations. A new and less distorted window was opened up with the publication of the English translation (1984) of his twin science fiction fantasies *Red Star* and *Engineer Menni*. This dazzling portrait of a socialist society on the planet Mars authenticates Bogdanov's credentials as the great apostle of the idea of cultural revolution, that a carefully nurtured collectivist ethic can so pervade the sum total of human labor and thought that scientific-technical miracles can easily be achieved without the constraints of authority or compulsion. But even in Bogdanov's rendering, as Loren Graham's commentaries to the edition so acutely bring out, a heavy price must be paid and a dangerous logic is revealed. Engineer Menni, in order to complete the Project of the Grand Canal in the most expeditious scientific manner, is obliged to route the Canal through the Rotten Bogs, where inevitably thousands of laborers perish from disease (Bogdanov-Netti, the socialist conscience, approves, though the General Federation of Labor does not). Generations later when socialist Mars is obliged to colonize Earth for its survival, the great scientist Sterni argues cogently (to some stellar Council) that the inferior population of Earth must be eliminated by death rays to ensure the preservation of the superior civilization of Mars (the earthling Bolshevik Leonid disapproves and murders Sterni). As

Dostoyevsky once argued in *The Devils* through his character Shigalev (and pursues further in the musings of Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*), ideas have an internal dialectic whereby the quest for absolute Freedom results inexorably in absolute Despotism, where for the happiness of one-tenth of mankind the other nine-tenths must be sacrificed (the same idea that once tormented Belinsky in a confession to Botkin). Ideas let loose in the stream of history unfold a logic of their own, concealed in the original inspiration (except in unconscious revelations, as the murder of Sterni), but inexorably grinding their way toward a parodic denouement, indifferent to human suffering along the way. The gods seem to mock humankind and its enthusiasms.

Which brings me to our special issue. The owl of Minerva flies better by night. Bogdanov no longer needs to be the remote, enigmatic figure he once was, as a considerable scholarly literature on his thought and work is already available and more is on the way. Different authors have taken different slices, revealing differing contours, but the time is ripe to explore the “inner dialectic” of his thought. The intellectual engagement offered below may superficially have the appearance of a free-for-all, but it is a tribute to a mind of many parts and a career of singular complexity. What were the guiding motifs of his ideas and where did they lead him through his long career? Why did they strike such a resonance with the enthusiasts for cultural revolution? Why was Lenin so unalterably opposed to this “other Bolshevism” that he twice felt obliged to crush Bogdanov politically? The articles and responses that follow help us find our way through this labyrinth to fresh insights based on the enormous new fund of knowledge these scholars have unearthed. Not only will we have a much deeper appreciation of Bogdanov, but of the broader currents of ideas that have shaped the events of our century.

The discussion, however, need not end with this issue. We have invited other Bogdanov scholars to add their observations and reflections in a future issue, and this can include letters from the readers that give us feedback on the success of the intellectual venture. If it works out the way we hope, we will try it again some time on some other issue where scholarship has reached a critical mass. Let us hear from you.

A. W.

We are happy to announce the appointment to our Editorial Board of Professor Tsuyoshi Hasegawa of Hokkaido University, Japan. Professor Hasegawa is known to many of you as the author of the monumental study of the Russian Revolution, *The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917*. More recently he has published in the area of strategic studies and Japanese-Soviet relations. Professor Hasegawa was recently the guest on The Ohio State University campus of the Mershon Center, the Slavic and Eastern European Center, and *The Russian Review*. The editorial staff discussed with Professor Hasegawa at length the need to generate greater awareness on the part of the American scholarly public of the rich scholarship on Russia in Japan and how our journal might contribute to that end. After surveying needs and possibilities we came to the very logical conclusion that the best way to secure participation was to have someone knowledgeable in both scholarly communities on our editorial board, and who could better serve that purpose than Professor Hasegawa? We heartily welcome Tsuyoshi Hasegawa to our midst and look forward to fruitful collaboration that will add a rich new vein to the fund of scholarly knowledge on Russia Past and Present.

A. W.
E. L.
T. R.

Alexander Bogdanov, Vpered, and the Role of the Intellectual in the Workers' Movement

JOHN ERIC MAROT

The defeat of the Revolution of 1905 and the ensuing reflux of the revolutionary workers' movement set the stage for a crisis in the Bolshevik leadership of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party about what to do politically to move forward again. In 1909, Alexander Bogdanov emerged as the chief spokesman of a dissident group of Bolsheviks. He and his partisans launched a campaign to shift the axis of the RSDLP's political activity.

For Bogdanov, the old tasks of building the Party, of agitation and propaganda in the mass movement, seemed more and more irrelevant with the decline and eventual disappearance of that movement. The new conditions persuaded Bogdanov to attempt to deploy a strategy to prepare workers to seize power by creating "an all-embracing proletarian culture, *hic et nunc*, within the framework of the existing society" by means of educating the working class in "proletarian universities" run by socialist intellectuals.¹ Bogdanov recognized no national limitations to his strategy. In his view, the politics of creating "proletarian culture" were valid not only for Russia but for all countries where the modern working class movement had come into existence.

In June 1909, a majority of Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, opposed Bogdanov's general cultural-pedagogical orientation, and disclaimed all responsibility for any future political action Bogdanov and his associates might undertake. Bogdanov left the Bolsheviks and launched a new organization, *Vpered* (Forward), in December 1909, to push his political views. Along with a number of Bolsheviks notably, A. V. Lunacharskii, M. N. Pokrovskii, G. A. Alexinskii, Stanislav Volski and M. N. Liadov, Bogdanov used *Vpered* to try to win the rest of the Bolsheviks and the RSDLP to the politics of "proletarian culture."

I shall argue that the failure of the 1905 Revolution led Bogdanov to reaffirm his established view that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, would not be able to develop an integral Social Democratic

The author thanks Robert Brenner, Steve Zipperstein, and John Hatch.

¹ Bogdanov, "Ne nado zatemiati," in *Ko vsem tovarishcham* (Paris, 1910), pp. 4–5.

worldview and would need the assistance of revolutionary intellectuals.² The political program of the Vperedists was designed to mobilize Party intellectuals to render such assistance to the workers. Vperedism, then, was premised on a strict interpretation of *What Is to Be Done?* regarding the tutelary role of the Party *intelligentsia* vis-à-vis the working class.

Lenin, however, interpreted the experience of the 1905 Revolution in a different way. He sharply revised his understanding of the relationship between the spontaneous workers' movement and the Party. As Lenin now saw it, the working class could formulate an independent ideology, as well as engage in revolutionary practice, in the process of its self-movement.

The split revealed that Bogdanov had to cease to be Lenin's political ally if he wished actually to try to implement the Vperedist program of "proletarian culture." The two men could no longer collaborate politically because Lenin and Bogdanov now conceptualized in politically exclusive ways the manner in which the working class would achieve revolutionary, Social Democratic consciousness.

Contemporary Historiography on Bogdanov and Vpered: A Critique

Broadly speaking, the validity of an interpretation rests at a very minimum on an accurate rendering of the facts. Despite the growth of an enormous literature on "non-Leninist" Bolsheviks, Alexander Bogdanov most prominently, there continues to exist widely different interpretations on the reasons for the split between Lenin and Bogdanov.³ None of the reasons advanced is fully convincing.

All extant versions allege that *one* reason for the split was the putative disagreement between Bogdanov and Lenin on what should be the attitude of the RSDLP toward the Duma and toward legal arenas of work more broadly. Some interpretations say it was *the* reason for the parting of ways. But, whether the Duma issue was the reason or a reason for the split, all accounts stress the opposing views of Lenin and Bogdanov around this issue. Bogdanov was an "otzovist" (*otzvat'*—to recall) who "opposed all Duma participation,"⁴ identifying with "left-wing Bolshevism, which favored boycotting the Duma."⁵ The Vperedists "disavowed

² According to Robert C. Williams, Bogdanov "recognized the need to impose consciousness upon the workers from the outside." *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics* (Bloomington, IN, 1986), p. 45. Robert V. Daniels agrees. Bogdanov was a prophet "in his own right" of Social Democratic doctrine on this issue. *The Conscience of the Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 14.

³ In *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy* (London, 1988) Zenovia Sochor lists an array of interpretations without seeking to ascertain which interpretation is best. See p. 7, n. 10.

⁴ Ralph C. Elwood, "Lenin and the Social Democratic Schools for Underground Party Workers, 1909–1911," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 81 (1966), p. 372.

⁵ Sochor, *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy*, p. 7.

the basic tactical line of the Party” in relation to the Duma by advocating the recall of the RSDLP’s Duma delegates.⁶ “The disagreement between Lenin and Bogdanov over the Duma reflected fundamentally different analyses of the changes taking place in Russia” and how to respond to these changes.⁷ The political bloc between Lenin and Bogdanov broke up over “tactical” issues around the Duma.⁸ According to these and other scholars, the Vperedists advocated a politics toward the Duma other than the one currently being pursued by the RSDLP. Since Lenin favored participation and attacked the Vperedist position on this question, historians have *inferred* that the Vperedists were opposed to such participation.

However, no historian has documented the demand for withdrawal from the Duma in the political platform of the Vperedists because it is not there.⁹ Indeed, a direct reading of Vperedist political literature for 1909 and 1910 reveals no demand to change the decisions of the Fifth Congress regarding RSDLP participation in the Duma. Though most interpreters have had an excellent reason for inadvertently giving a misleading account of the actual character of the political dispute opposing the Vperedists and Lenin—that is, Lenin’s attacks on the Vperedists—the Vperedists never actually officially called on the RSDLP to change its line on the Duma. This fact, in turn, calls into question the validity of all interpretations resting on the contrary assumption. The *raison d’être* of this essay, therefore, is to contribute to a fuller and deeper understanding of Bogdanov and of the Vperedist current. Below, I situate my view with respect to the contemporary historiography on the subject, offering an extensive critique and attempting to provide an alternative.

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Most interpretations fail to distinguish clearly between Vperedism on one hand and “boycottism,” “ultimatism,” and “otzovism” on the other.¹⁰

Boycottism, ultimatism, and otzovism were powerful *tactical* currents in the Bolshevik wing of the RSDLP. They developed in 1907, waxed strong in 1908, and began sharply to decline in 1909. All militants who belonged to or sympathized with these currents expressed strong reservations about the political utility of RSDLP participation in the legal labor movement in general and in the Duma in particular. Many among them campaigned actively to alter the RSDLP’s line by submitting reso-

⁶Neil Harding, *Lenin’s Political Thought* (London, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 274, 279.

⁷John Biggart, “‘Anti-Leninist Bolshevism’: The Forward Group of the RSDRP,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 23 (June 1981), p. 141.

⁸Bertram Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (New York, 1964), p. 502.

⁹*Sovremennoe polozhenie i zadachi partii: platforma vyrabotannaia gruppoi bolshevikov* (Paris 1909), pp. 1–32.

¹⁰For example, Robert V. Daniels speaks of the “Otzovist-Vperedist” tendency. *The Conscience of the Revolution*, p. 24.

lutions at local, regional, and national Party conferences calling on Party members to refrain from entering legal areas of work or, if already there, to withdraw from them. However, by 1910 these trends were virtually extinct. According to Victoria Bonnell, in the winter of 1909–1910 the Bolsheviks “returned to the legal labor movement” even though many were still “ambivalent and unenthusiastic about legal forms of activity.”¹¹ Here is a quick history of “left-Bolshevism” in the RSDLP to set the record straight and to establish the correct relationship between it and Vperedism.

In May 1907, the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP, after much debate, resolved to participate in elections to the Duma and to send representatives. The majority at the Congress consisted of the Bolsheviks and their allies. Bogdanov, the Bolshevik representative on the Central Committee of the RSDLP, voted for Lenin’s resolutions. Consequently, the line of the RSDLP on the Duma was the Bolshevik line elaborated by Lenin. Round one ended in victory for Lenin. His line was to remain the line of the RSDLP in the period under study. Attempts were made to change this line but these attempts failed.

Stolypin’s unexpected coup d’etat of June 1907 sowed confusion in the Party’s ranks. An emergency Conference was called in July 1907 in Kotka, Finland, to clarify matters. All tendencies were represented, the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, the Bund, the Poles, the Latvians. Bogdanov’s resolution called for boycott. *All* Bolsheviks *except* Lenin voted for it. In other words, Lenin voted with the Mensheviks, the Bund, the Poles, and the Latvians to defeat Bogdanov’s resolution. Then, the Menshevik resolution calling for participation was put to vote. *All* Bolsheviks voted with Lenin to defeat it. Finally, Lenin’s resolution, which, like the Menshevik, called for full participation in the elections to the Third Duma, but for politically different motivations, was put to a vote. *All* Bolsheviks voted *with* Lenin to pass it. The resolution simply reaffirmed the decisions of the Fifth Congress. Round two ended in victory for Lenin. His line remained the majority line. The “left-Bolsheviks,” including Bogdanov, rallied to him.¹²

Round three. When the Third Duma finally convened in November 1907 the number of Social Democratic deputies elected to it was drasti-

¹¹ Victoria Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers’ Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley, 1983), p. 349.

¹² *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i reshenniakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 230–31. It has been necessary to recall in such detail the Kotka Conference because the Conference is used by many scholars to prove that the “left-Bolsheviks” took control of the Bolshevik faction, isolating Lenin: Lenin is the “lone dissident” at Kotka (Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution*, p. 362). But rarely is the reader explicitly told that the left-Bolsheviks do, in the end, vote *unanimously* for Lenin’s motion. For example: “With comparative ease [Lenin] persuaded the cautious wing of his faction in rejecting the idea of boycott, while the Left stubbornly held out” (Daniels,

cally curtailed, owing to the restriction of suffrage, and unexpectedly fell below thirty, the minimum number required to submit bills. Moreover, most of those elected identified with the Menshevik wing of the Party. There was confusion among the Bolsheviks about what to do despite the resolutions of the recently held Kotka conference reaffirming the decisions of the Fifth Congress. Again, the sentiment was widespread among the Bolsheviks to recall the delegates or to issue an ultimatum (hence the "ultimatis" tendency) threatening the Menshevik-inclined Social Democratic parliamentarians to agree to act inside the Duma as little more than ventriloquists for the majority, Bolshevik, faction of the Party outside the Duma—or else be recalled. The columns of *Proletarii*, factional organ of the Bolsheviks, were opened to discuss differences. Bogdanov, it must be stressed, intervened to *disavow* otzovism and ultimatism and Lenin declared his "complete solidarity" with Bogdanov.¹³

The year-long debate was settled at the Fifth All-Russian Conference convened in December 1908. All tendencies were represented—Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Bundists, Poles, and Latvians. Two otzovists were present but placed no proposals of their own to a vote. In fact, the otzovists abandoned their otzovism and, along with the rest of the Bolsheviks, voted for Lenin's motions. Thus, for a second time, a duly constituted party body reaffirmed the decisions of the Fifth Congress. Lenin won round three.

To sum up: otzovism, ultimatism, boycottism never became the line of the majority within the RSDLP. True, a majority of Bolsheviks in July 1907—but only then—favored boycott. But they were unable to get their way and, in the end, supported Lenin in the vote that determined Party

Conscience of the Revolution, p. 19). The 'cautious wing' is a product of Daniels' imagination whereas the left-wing proved to be not stubborn at all.

John Biggart also fails to see the flexibility of the left so that he, too, has Bogdanov entering into "conflict" with Lenin once Bogdanov allegedly began to insist that Lenin adhere to the Duma policy "advocated by the Bolsheviks delegates" at Kotka (Biggart, "'Anti-Leninist Bolshevism': The Forward Group of the RSDRP," p. 140). There was no "conflict" here. As I have shown, Lenin always adhered to the Duma policy advocated by the Bolshevik delegates at Kotka because the Bolshevik delegates at Kotka advocated Lenin's policy toward the Duma, by unanimously voting for it. Lenin's line in the Party is the majority line. All the "non-Leninist" Bolsheviks had voted for Lenin's line, not just Bogdanov, as Service implies (Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life* (Bloomington, IN, 1985), vol. 1. p. 169).

¹³Bogdanov, "*Otzovisty i ultimatisy*," *Proletarii*, no. 31 (June 17, 1908). Avraham Yassour details Bogdanov's intervention in "Lenin and Bogdanov: Protagonists in the 'Bolshevik Center,'" *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 22 (1981), p. 7. Yassour correctly notes that Western and Soviet historiography have "ignored" this article because it directly contradicts the commonly held view that Bogdanov favored recalling the delegates. Kendall Bailes also refers to Bogdanov's intervention but unfortunately obscures its significance by relegating it to a footnote. See his "Philosophy and Politics in Russian Social Democracy: Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and the Crisis of Bolshevism, 1908–1909," Russian Institute Essay, Columbia University, 1966, p. 35.

policy. By 1909, only otzovist sentiments remained among rank-and-file Bolsheviks but no sharply defined tendency aggressively striving to alter the RSDLP's course.

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While all historians, without exception, portray Bogdanov as an inveterate otzovist, some say that the dispute over the Duma was merely symptomatic of a much broader and deeper antagonism between Lenin and Bogdanov in the sphere of *philosophy*.

Lenin and Bogdanov did indeed occupy fundamentally different philosophical positions. But the philosophical debate must be clearly *distinguished* from the political debate adjoining it and examined *separately* from the latter, so that the *relationship* between these parallel debates may be properly established. Unfortunately, historians and philosophers alike tend not to proceed this way and collapse one into the other. The result has been to mix up and mischaracterize both philosophical and political debates. Thus, Aileen Kelly makes a serious effort to validate and improve on several contemporaneous Menshevik accounts attempting to establish an organic connection between Bolshevism and assorted voluntarist philosophies of the Act, including empiriocriticism, and between Menshevism and assorted scientific and determinist philosophies, including materialism. The Russian empiriocritics, Bogdanov and Co., so Kelly argues, were pitting their "free will" against the determinism of their opponents, the "mechanical" materialists Plekhanov and Lenin.¹⁴

It is not possible here to do full justice to Kelly's very complex interpretation. Suffice it to say that to identify *Vpered's* advocacy of proletarian culture as "free will" in action and in particular to characterize all opposition to such a program as "determinism" seems rather arbitrary—in the absence of a reasoned argument favoring such an identification. More to the point, Kelly says disagreements in philosophy were in any case latent and needed an external stimulus to become active in the domain of politics. The indirect stimulus for the fight in philosophy in her view came from politics specifically, from Bogdanov's opposition to Lenin "on the issue of social-democrat participation in the Duma." But, since Bogdanov did not call for an end to the RSDLP's parliamentary activity, it could not possibly have served as such a stimulus.¹⁵

In David Joravsky's account, Lenin, unlike the Mensheviks, never made a serious effort to demonstrate an organic connection between "Machism" and a specific political deviation because there was none for

¹⁴Aileen Kelly, "Empiriocriticism: A Bolshevik Philosophy?" *Cahier du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 21 (January-March 1981), pp. 89-118. This is a subsidiary theme as well of Jutta Scherrer's "Culture prolétarienne et religion socialiste entre deux révolutions: les 'Bolcheviks de gauche,'" *Europa*, vol. 2 (Spring 1979), pp. 67-90.

¹⁵Kelly, "Empiriocriticism: A Bolshevik Philosophy?," p. 110.

Lenin—or the Mensheviks—to make. According to Joravsky, at stake in the dispute was Lenin's defense of the "standard Marxist sociology of knowledge" which correlates social theories with the "interests of various classes" not with political tendencies within various parties. And materialism, not empirio-criticism, was the philosophy of the working class.¹⁶

Joravsky is on the mark when he says that the philosophical debate was about epistemology even if Joravsky mistakenly attributes a class-reductionist and class-instrumentalist understanding of epistemology to Lenin. This position was actually held by Lenin's philosophical opponent, Bogdanov. In any case, Joravsky is right to add that neither Bogdanov nor Lenin looked upon their different epistemological positions as the reason to refuse to continue their political collaboration in 1909. Joravsky, however, adduces no cogent argument explaining the split because his primary purpose is to refute long-standing arguments seeking to link in a one-to-one manner political trends to schools of philosophy.

Broadly speaking, the unorthodox philosophical views of *Vpered's* chief spokesmen, Lunacharskii and Bogdanov especially, could not have led, by themselves, to the political split which in fact occurred. Bogdanov and Lenin had basic disagreements in philosophy which both acknowledged and which went back to 1904. Nevertheless, these differences in themselves had been no obstacle to Bogdanov pursuing, beginning in 1904, a common political strategy and political partnership with Lenin, nor did these differences in themselves have to become such an obstacle in 1909.

Nor did political divisions, in fact, coincide with philosophical divisions. The *Vperedists* were a heterogeneous lot. They disagreed among themselves on philosophy. Some were orthodox materialists, some "God-builders," some neo-Kantian "Machists." Many *Vperedists* who parted from Lenin politically in 1909 did not care for Bogdanov's empirio-monistic philosophy or for Lunacharskii's "religious atheism."¹⁷ The historian and *Vperedist* M. N. Pokrovskii was orthodox in philosophy and a thoroughly secular Marxist, as was M. N. Liadov, also a *Vperedist* and erstwhile close associate of Lenin's. Owing to this diversity of philosophical standpoints, the *Vperedists* did not make philosophy a political issue.

Lenin did not write *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1909) in order to bring to heel political opponents by enforcing philosophical or-

¹⁶David Joravsky, *Marxism and Natural Science* (London, 1961), p. 25. Kelly does not discuss Joravsky's dissenting interpretation.

¹⁷Bogdanov's major philosophical work was *Empiriomonizm* (St. Petersburg, 1904–1906) in three volumes. In the introduction to volume 3, written in 1906, Bogdanov attacked Plekhanov's materialist philosophy. Lunacharskii wrote *Religiia i sotsializm*. Volume 1 appeared in 1907 and volume 2 in 1911. Lunacharskii considered Marxism to be a secular religion.

thodoxy in the RSDLP as is traditionally argued. As Joravsky correctly states, in opposition to Kelly, the philosophical issues taken up by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* “transcended the factional politics of Russian Social Democracy.”¹⁸ Philosophical differences were no cover for factional difference, nor did political conflict necessarily lead to philosophical discord: Plekhanov and Lenin were political opponents, yet philosophical allies.

The Vperedists, then, did not launch their organization in 1909 for the purpose of changing the RSDLP’s line on the Duma or for enforcing, in their own organization or in the RSDLP as a whole, a particular line in philosophy.

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Nevertheless, the actual importance of the Duma in the 1909 political split still raises a problem. Lenin recognized that the Vperedists had not explicitly come out against the decision of the Fifth Congress to participate in the Duma. “Bogdanov and Co.,” Lenin fulminated, are “forever beating their breasts and protesting: we are not otzovists, we do not share the opinions of the otzovists at all!”¹⁹ Yet he relentlessly attacked Bogdanov because his strategy was, in his view, otzovist tactic theorized into a principled and complete “system of politics.”²⁰ According to Lenin, what otzovism and Vperedism had in common was an abstentionist politics. Still, if, as I have argued, the Vperedists really thought participation in the Duma a secondary matter, why did they not defer completely to Lenin on what was after all—to the Vperedists—merely a tactical question? Why did the Vperedists not willingly and wholeheartedly agree to Lenin’s demand not to “shield” otzovists so as to compel Lenin to shift the focus of the intra-Bolshevik debate to what was really near and dear to the Vperedists—the strategy and politics of “proletarian culture?”

The Vperedists did not do so because their leader, Bogdanov, was trying build on an already existing—though rapidly vanishing—current of dissent, otzovism, in the Bolshevik rank and file. He and his partisans were looking somehow to sustain the otzovists not because they agreed with their tactic per se but because their tactic was only an improper application of Vperedist strategy. As the otzovists, then, could still be won to a tactically correct application of the Vperedist line, Bogdanov refrained from directly attacking them. The Vperedists used Lenin’s refusal to tolerate otzovism as a legitimate, if tactically mistaken, shade of opinion in the Party to portray Lenin as undemocratic and willful. In this way the Vperedists sought indirectly to foster “anti-Leninist” currents

¹⁸Joravsky, *Marxism and Natural Science*, p. 39.

¹⁹Lenin, *Collected Works* (4th English edition), vol. 16, p. 39.

²⁰Ibid., vol. 15, p. 357.

tout court—hence their own—by appealing to the democratic sensibilities of the Bolshevik rank and file against Lenin’s “authoritarian” leadership of the RSDLP.

Bogdanov’s maneuver to undermine Lenin’s political authority and standing by first undermining his moral authority and standing among the Bolsheviks and largely failed for political, not moral, reasons. Owing to the nature of their political agenda—“proletarian culture”—the Vperedists could not logically make the issue of the Duma a strategic one. But, the few remaining otzovists, ultimatists, and boycottists in Russia were looking for people in the leadership abroad who would actively fight for their standpoint, not for leaders who would utilize that standpoint to fight for something else. Consequently, the rank and file found lukewarm sympathizers for their cause among the Vperedists, not politicians championing it. Inevitably, the Vperedists disappointed the Russian underground, and the Russian underground disappointed the Vperedists.

An Alternative to the Contemporary Historiography on Bogdanov and Vpered: The Argument of This Essay

In Russia, Vperedism offered a *strategic* alternative to both Bolshevism and Menshevism. Its purpose was to inculcate the socialist worldview in the working class “from the outside” via “proletarian universities” run by Party intellectuals. Vperedism eventually crystallized into a full-fledged faction, complete with an authoritative journal of its own, in December 1909. On secondary issues, such as the the RSDLP’s tactic toward the Duma, individual Vperedists held different political views. But, the political line advocated by *Vpered* as a group toward the Duma was not different from the one pursued by the RSDLP. Vperedism waxed strongest when its members organized experimental precursors of the “proletarian university” on the Isle of Capri from August to December 1909, and in Bologna from November 1910 to March 1911.²¹ Nevertheless, Vperedism remained at all times a minority current among the Bolsheviks and within the RSDLP as a whole.

Bogdanov first clearly stated what Bolsheviks should do to move forward at the Conference of the Extended Editorial Board of Proletarii called by Lenin in June 1909 in Paris to settle political accounts with Bogdanov once and for all.²² Bogdanov sowed the seeds of the future Vperedist political program at this Conference. His overall political per-

²¹For a detailed account of the pedagogical activities of the Vperedists see Jutta Scherrer, “Les écoles du Parti de Capri et de Bologne: la formation de l’intelligentsia du parti.” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 19 (July-September, 1978), pp. 259–84.

²²*Protokoly soveshchaniia rasshirenoi redaktsii “Proletarii”, Iiun’ 1909* (New York, 1982). Edited and introduced by Geoff Swain [a reprint of the 1934 Moscow edition].

spective was markedly pedagogical in character, ascribing to Social Democratic intellectuals a tutelary role in bringing socialist consciousness to the working class.

At the Conference Bogdanov circulated (or read) a "Statement to the Editorial Board of *Proletarii*." He noted that no "principled differences" existed between him and Lenin on what position to adopt toward the Duma. "Personal misunderstandings" alone were responsible for the minor "practical" differences that did exist. *Proletarii*, official organ of the Bolshevik faction within the RSDLP, was mistaken to raise issues of principle around the Duma when there were none.²³

The issue was not the Duma for Bogdanov but the "*practical work*" of "*widening and deepening of fully socialist propaganda*" (emphasis in the original) in the working class. The editors of *Proletarii* had ignored this question. They had paid virtually no attention to the intellectual formation of workers. They had not engaged in a thorough "theoretical and historical" working over of the people's armed struggle against the autocracy. The absence of such propaganda meant the absence of "conscious leaders" in workers' organizations. Only intellectuals could train workers to be conscious leaders. But the intelligentsia was leaving the Party. It was therefore especially critical for the RSDLP to make full use now of the few intellectuals remaining in its ranks. Once trained, these workers would take over from the intellectuals currently leading the RSDLP.²⁴

In this context, Bogdanov brought to the fore the Party School on the Isle of Capri being organized by him and other Bolsheviks. The school, Bogdanov stressed, was not a "trivial matter." Socialist propaganda was always necessary but during the revolution of 1905 the Bolsheviks had not engaged in such propaganda. Now, in the period of counterrevolution, it was the "task of the moment," a task far more important than participation in the Duma. There, in Party universities, intellectuals would help workers "systematize" their knowledge and so "allow" workers to play the leadership role in the Party "they ought to play" but were not now playing. "The question of a Party university is the question of the day."²⁵ The school would give intellectuals in the Party a critical role to play in the socialist education of workers.

The Paris Conference resolved that Bogdanov's political program had nothing in common with Bolshevism and disclaimed all responsibility for Bogdanov's future political actions. Bogdanov refused to accept this decision on the grounds that only a conference or congress of Bolsheviks could settle this question.²⁶ On that note, Bogdanov walked out.

²³Ibid., p. 144.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 145-46.

²⁵Ibid., p. 151.

²⁶Ibid., p. 77.

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At the Paris Conference Lenin had demanded of Bogdanov an “open statement” of his views “for the sake of an ideological struggle” which would “teach the Party a great deal.”²⁷ Bogdanov quickly met this demand. In July, one month after the Conference, Bogdanov and L. B. Krasin published a *Report* to fellow Bolsheviks.²⁸ It was the draft-platform of the yet-to-be-established *Vpered* group.

Bogdanov revealed in his *Report* the actual character of the by now consummated political split. Confirming Lenin’s contention that issues of principle were at stake, not personal misunderstandings, Bogdanov charged Lenin and his partisans with having fundamentally deviated from the “entire political line of Bolshevism,” namely, from “*revolutionary Marxism*” and the idea of the hegemonic role of the proletariat in the coming democratic revolution. The shift of hegemony to “bourgeois liberalism” after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution cleared the way for the triumph of reaction all along the line, and to the opening of the “Duma period” in the popular movement.²⁹ Lenin and his followers were needlessly prolonging the Duma period by giving an “overriding significance” to participation in the Duma.³⁰ Lenin’s parliamentarism “at any price,” said Bogdanov, naturally led to the reassertion of revolutionary Marxism. This was expressed in the rise of otzovist sentiment in the Party.

Bogdanov valued the revolutionary drive of the otzovists. The otzovists understood that participation in the Duma could never be “paramount and fundamental” for the RSDLP. Nevertheless, Bogdanov disagreed with the political tactic of the otzovists. Recalling the RSDLP’s Duma representatives, Bogdanov warned, was not feasible, would not bring favorable results and, above all, threatened the unity of the Party by driving Lenin and his partisans out should the otzovist line gain the upper hand and become the line of the Party.³¹

Though Bogdanov found Lenin’s position on the Duma “dubious” and “questionable”³² he did not call on the Bolshevik rank and file to organize a political struggle against Lenin around the Duma. For Bogdanov, the key was not withdrawal from the Duma but a proper assessment of the RSDLP’s necessary participation in it. Bogdanov only thought Lenin’s assessment of that participation was improper. Tactically, Bogdanov stood by Lenin on the Duma question.

Central to the *Vperedist* critique of the official leadership of the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁸ A. Bogdanov and L.B. Krasin, *Otchet tovarishcham bolshevikam ustranennykh chlenov rasshirennoi redaktsii Proletarii*, in *Protokoly rasshirennoi . . .*, pp. 240–50.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

Bolsheviks was the urgent need to develop and give wide scope to the cultural-pedagogical activity of the RSDLP. It was Bogdanov's entire political line on this matter, rather than the Duma, which, in Bogdanov's view, defined Bolshevism and from which Lenin and his partisans had fundamentally deviated. Since 80 percent of the document was devoted to developing this idea, Bogdanov thus underscored his belief that the role of the Duma in the revolutionary movement was peripheral and should not occupy undue attention in Party tactics.

Once again Bogdanov charged that *Proletarii* had ignored the question of socialist propaganda and those who conducted it. For the past sixteen months "not one book or brochure" disseminating such propaganda had been sponsored by *Proletarii*.³³ What had been produced was purely "revolutionary democratic," not socialist. Sadly, even in 1905 the Bolsheviks had put out only "revolutionary democratic" propaganda. As a result,

the socialist principles of class consciousness were not deeply and durably assimilated and the socialist *world view* was relatively little propagated . . . In the proletariat itself not enough was done to create a strong and influential nucleus of workers possessing a full and complete socialist education . . . Whether one likes it or not, systematic [socialist] propaganda, was neglected . . . The pamphlets distributed among the masses gave them no complete, class-based, worldview—merely scraps and pieces of it.³⁴

One of the most important tasks of the Party was, accordingly, the "broadening and deepening of socialist propaganda" (emphasis in the original). A small beginning had been made in the prerevolutionary period, in the 1890s, when the educational needs of a relatively narrow layer of workers had partially been met by "small circles" of Social Democratic activists conducting "elementary" propaganda. The Party had to renew the propagandistic traditions of early, pre-1905 Russian Social Democracy, only on a larger scale and in a more sophisticated way. Propaganda of a "much higher type," "more complete and encyclopaedic," designed to convey to an "influential nucleus of workers" an integral class-based worldview was now needed. To that end, "party schools of a new type have to be created to complete the Party education of the worker, to fill the inevitable gaps in his knowledge . . . and to prepare him to be a conscious leader in all forms of proletarian struggle."³⁵

It was vital to undertake at once this daunting task as the intelligentsia was fleeing the ranks of the Party in the current period of reaction. Everywhere responsible work was being transferred to the workers them-

³³Ibid., p. 248.

³⁴Ibid., p. 243.

³⁵Ibid., p. 244.

selves. But, in Bogdanov's view, the workers were not yet fully prepared to take over. They still lacked the education and "formal intellectual discipline" [*formal'noi distsiplina uma*] to shoulder successfully their weighty leadership responsibilities.³⁶

Such discipline of the intellect was acquired by "intellectuals" in high schools and universities. If "one or another comrade-worker" acquired it, then all would be well for he would not be "inferior to many intellectuals"; if he did not acquire it, then the worker had a much more difficult time coping with knowledge painstakingly acquired through reading and study. Without such discipline of the intellect the worker *was* inferior to the intellectual because the worker's knowledge, unlike that of the intellectual's, would not be "systematized" or "encased in an organized system."³⁷

Workers in the Party were fully aware that they lacked the "formal" discipline of the intellect possessed by intellectuals to "systematize" and "encase" their knowledge in an "organized system." And they were doing something about it, according to Bogdanov. Workers were "straining every nerve" on the "unaccustomed but necessary work" of systematization. Workers also knew whom to turn to for help in this absolutely necessary intellectual endeavor:

Party workers are energetically demanding of the *intellectuals remaining in the Party* serious literary and propaganda support, paying the keenest attention to, and interest in every attempt to create this support, such as founding Party schools (emphasis added).³⁸

The role of the Social-Democratic intellectual was, in Bogdanov's view, as clear as it was pivotal. He had to "complete the Party education of the worker" by filling "the inevitable gaps" in the worker's "knowledge." In imparting to the worker a "full and complete socialist education" the Social Democratic intellectual prepared the worker to be a "conscious leader in all forms of proletarian struggle." These were the "vital and immediate" tasks at hand for the intellectuals still left in the Party.³⁹ In 1909, Bogdanov regarded the school of Capri as the experimental precursor of the "proletarian universities" whose pedagogues would disseminate the "socialist principles of class consciousness" and inculcate the "socialist worldview" in the working class.⁴⁰

For Bogdanov, the pedagogical tasks of the RSDLP now, in 1909, had to come to the forefront if only to retain the Social Democratic intel-

³⁶Ibid., p. 244.

³⁷Ibid., p. 244.

³⁸Ibid., p. 244.

³⁹Ibid., p. 244.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 248.

lectual in the Party's ranks, the actual bearer of a "complete, class-based worldview" in the working class. Founding Party schools would give these intellectuals a role to play in the Party, indeed, a leadership role.

By 1909 it had become quite clear to Bogdanov that founding proletarian universities would not become the focus of the Bolsheviks' political activity nor of the RSDLP's: the Mensheviks, on the whole, were not interested in Bogdanov's political project—despite its "anti-Leninist" character. In response, intellectuals like Bogdanov fought to set Social Democrats on the politically correct course. But Lenin's leadership of the Party remained unbroken. As a result, many intellectuals left. This unleashed a vicious dynamic: the fewer intellectuals in the Party the lower the odds of turning the Party around; the lower the odds of turning the Party around, the harder for such intellectuals to remain in the Party. Bogdanov witnessed this dynamic, sought to reverse it, only to be swept up by it. By 1912 he belonged to no organized political group.⁴¹

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What underlay the Vperedists' political program as a whole was an *intellectualist* and *pedagogical* conception of politics and of political activity generally. Specifically, Bogdanov, the group's chief theoretician and inspirer, regarded the achievement of revolutionary socialist consciousness by the working class as, ultimately, the product of the pedagogical activity of Social Democratic intellectuals exercised on the working class "from the outside." The Vperedists' political program was about developing that activity inside 'proletarian universities.'

Bogdanov's focus on the central role of pedagogy and of the pedagogue to impart to workers a total worldview distinguished his approach to politics and marked him off from other Social Democratic thinkers. In this respect, he was the Peter Lavrov of Russian Marxism. Nevertheless, speaking more broadly, Bogdanov's views converged with all pre-1905 Social Democratic theorists in a critical respect: the notion that the spontaneous working class movement was too limited to foster socialist consciousness and that these limitations could be overcome by organizing a Party "from the outside" to bring this consciousness to workers. However much Bogdanov may have differed from other Social Democrats on *other* issues—issues about which he did *not* wage a fight within the Party—Bogdanov's views on *this* issue displayed an elective affinity to *all* pre-1905 "orthodox" Social Democrats. Bogdanov's initial adhesion to the Social Democratic movement, then, was conditioned—though by no

⁴¹Lenin wrote to Gorkii in February 1908: "The significance of the intellectuals in our Party is declining; news comes from all sides that the intelligentsia is *fleeing* the Party." *Collected Works*, vol. 34, p. 379. Lenin wrote about the flight of the intelligentsia in a spirit of *schadenfreude*. Bogdanov wrote about it in an entirely different spirit.

means determined—by a meeting of minds on the only issue that counted politically.

Broadly speaking, Social Democratic theorists throughout Europe, led by Karl Kautsky, held that the working class could never, on its own, break out of an essentially reformist, trade-unionist practice and a corresponding reformist, trade-unionist consciousness. Socialist consciousness, Kautsky wrote, was not a “necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle.” On the contrary, it had arisen only “on the basis of profound scientific knowledge” whose “vehicle” was the “*bourgeois intelligentsia*.”⁴² Thus, since the working class could not, by itself, attain revolutionary consciousness, intellectuals had to bring this in from outside the working class. Social Democratic theorists adhered, then, to the notion that socialist consciousness could be brought to the working class from without despite the nonsocialist, reformist character of its day-to-day practice. Specifically, the working class would have a reformist destiny if not for the intervention of revolutionary intellectuals. This view was given full expression in Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* published in 1902. But Lenin’s ideas were not *sui generis* in Russian Social Democracy, nor in European Social Democracy more generally. They were shared by leading Russian Social Democrats, Plekhanov, Martov, Akselrod, and Bogdanov as well as, again, most European Social Democrats.⁴³

Most Social Democratic leaders, then, agreed that there could be “no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement.”⁴⁴ Intellectuals would consequently play an indispensable role in preparing the working class ideologically for socialism, which was the Party’s mission. Lenin and Bogdanov saw eye to eye on this question. Despite differences of emphasis—notably Bogdanov’s focus on pedagogy—both men could therefore find a critical basis for unity in political struggles to build the Party. Indeed, they worked closely in the Bolshevik leadership through 1905 and beyond. Nevertheless, Lenin and Bogdanov responded differently to the

⁴²Cited by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902); *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 383.

⁴³For a statement and defense of this position see Neil Harding, *Lenin’s Political Thought*, vol. 1, ch. 1. While Social Democrats in Russia debated how to bring revolutionary consciousness to the mass of workers, in Germany, the left-wing of SPD struggled to prevent reformism from taking root in the *leadership* of the Social Democratic Party. In both cases, though from opposite angles, similar theories were elaborated. In particular, Rosa Luxemburg, spokesperson of the left-wing in German Social Democracy, argued that reformist tendencies within the SPD leadership could be stemmed from below by, in the words of historian Carl E. Schorske, “the infusion of the *sozialistischer Geist* into the proletariat” via purely “propagandistic and educational methods.” Schorske concludes that the problem of maintaining a revolutionary perspective in nonrevolutionary times was largely sustained by an “idealistic attitude” which clashed with Social Democracy’s “materialistic philosophy.” *German Social Democracy: 1905–1917* (Cambridge, MA, 1955), p. 23.

⁴⁴Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 384.

Revolution of 1905. It did not lead them to part but it did show the basis for parting.

The Revolution of 1905 deepened and fixed Bogdanov's established views on the need to bring the socialist worldview to workers from without. In *The Cultural Tasks of Our Times*, written in 1911, Bogdanov spelled out *post festum* the theoretical premises of the Vperedist political program by reaffirming a framework notion of *What Is to Be Done?*, viz., the pivotal, tutelary role intellectuals had to play in the formation of socialist consciousness in the working class.

To make a socialist revolution, Bogdanov explained, the working class needed all-round "social-scientific knowledge." The workers also required deep "natural-scientific knowledge" to organize production after the revolution. However, the "political and economic struggle" of the working class, by itself, created neither. It only fostered "specialized knowledge." Such knowledge was one-sided, restricted to "one sphere of society," and to one class, the working class. But the struggle for socialism was "extraordinarily complex," "many-sided," and its course did not depend on the "conditions of life" of the working class alone. The natural course of the workers' movement would not create a material, practical basis for workers to acquire a "unified scientific outlook," that is, an integral Social Democratic worldview.⁴⁵ The role of Social Democratic activists was to supplement the limited and limiting conditions of working class existence and movements and, through education, create an intellectual-ideal basis for workers to accept Social Democratic ideas. The pedagogical tasks of Social Democrats were therefore critical. These were the "cultural tasks of our times."

Bogdanov affirmed that he had come to this conclusion almost from the very beginning of his political activity. Specifically, it was the experience of running propaganda circles for workers in Tula, his hometown, in the late 1890s, that "largely determined the nature of all my subsequent scientific and philosophic work."⁴⁶ In 1919, he reaffirmed the determining character of his Tula experience and cited lengthy extracts from *The Cultural Tasks of Our Times*, written eight years earlier, describing that experience.⁴⁷ Bogdanov thereby established an unbroken continuity, stretching over a period of twenty years, in the direction and course of his scientific, philosophical, and political activity. Neither the Revolution of 1905 nor even the Revolution of 1917 would change Bogdanov's basic thinking about the tutelary role of the Social Democratic intelligentsia in the workers' movement.

⁴⁵ Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), pp. 54–55.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴⁷ Bogdanov, "Proletarskii Universitet," *Proletarskaia Kul'tura*, no. 5, 1919.

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The impact of the 1905 Revolution on Lenin led him, unlike Bogdanov, to reassess the potential of the working class to develop socialist consciousness. In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin had emphasized the duty of Social Democrats, organized in a Party, to bring “political knowledge” to workers, to teach workers what they did “not yet know” and could “never learn” from their “factory and ‘economic’ experience.”⁴⁸ But now, Lenin saw, “revolution” had expanded workers’ experience beyond what Social Democratic theorists had believed possible. Lenin transformed his political theory: revolution, and it alone, he now concluded, would “teach Social Democratism” to the masses of workers in Russia, and would, moreover, teach it with such “rapidity and thoroughness” as to appear “incredible” in nonrevolutionary periods. Indeed, 1905 “proved” that workers could “fight in a purely Social Democratic spirit.”⁴⁹ Astonishingly, at the height of the revolution Lenin actually declared workers to be “instinctively, spontaneously, Social Democratic.”⁵⁰ Specifically, Lenin vigorously opposed the hostile attitude and abstentionist approach of the Bolshevik majority, led by Bogdanov, toward the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.⁵¹ Lenin instead urged the Bolsheviks to participate fully in it, as well as in trade unions and factory committees, and in all other institutions created by workers to guide the course of their movement. Lenin also called on all Social Democrats to open wide the gates of the Party and let in as many workers as possible, on the assumption that they had been revolutionized, their consciousness transformed, through the experience of the revolution itself.⁵²

Although he never explicitly theorized this, Lenin had thus come to an understanding of working class radicalization as the result, ultimately, of its own revolutionary activity in its own interests and not as the product of the influence of revolutionary intellectuals “from the outside” upon the working class. In his mind the reality of revolution had shown that workers could transcend narrow trade union consciousness and achieve revolutionary, Social Democratic ideas because their own revolutionary

⁴⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 416–17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 32. See also Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought*, pp. 242–43.

⁵¹ For this pivotal episode showing Bogdanov’s and other Bolsheviks’ antipathy to the spontaneous workers’ movement and to institutions created by it, see Solomon Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905* (Chicago 1967), pp. 178–95. Lenin’s attitude toward the Soviet was not fully theorized by him at the time, and he attributed to that institution no historical significance beyond the immediate circumstances of its birth. Only in the summer of 1917, when events had lifted Lenin to a higher historical vantage point, was Lenin in a position to make the Soviet the institutional cornerstone of his theory of the workers’ state in *State and Revolution*.

⁵² Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905*, pp. 216–20; cf. Marcel Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin* (London, 1975), chap. 3, “Lenin in 1905.”

activity provided a practical-material, and not merely an intellectual-ideal, basis for those ideas. This was the lesson of the mass strikes and the Soviets. It was because Lenin had thus significantly distanced himself from the formulations of *What Is to Be Done?* that he opposed, on principle, the political program of *Vpered*.

In Lenin's view, the experience of the Revolution of 1905 had decisively undermined the pedagogical and intellectualist foundations of the *Vpered* program. The revolution had shown in practice that workers could achieve revolutionary, Social Democratic ideas on their own. For Bogdanov and his co-thinkers to seek to implement the *Vperedist* program meant, in Lenin's view, to assess improperly the experience of 1905 and to fail to develop a fuller, more comprehensive, revolutionary theory.

Lenin did not arrive at these conclusions in the course of direct and immediate polemic with Bogdanov or with the *Vperedists* generally for these conclusions long antedated the 1909 political dispute: they had become an ideological premise for Lenin and, as such, needed no explicit reaffirmation or development by him. Thus, in his reply to Bogdanov in September 1909, Lenin focussed on the *Vperedists'* stance on the Duma, virtually ignoring Bogdanov's propagandistic pedagogical views even though these were central to the *Vperedist* critique of Lenin's politics. Lenin did address Bogdanov's pedagogical politics, but only very briefly and elliptically, stating that a political appraisal of the "experience of the revolution" meant the "conversion of the experience already gained by the masses into ideological stock-in-trade for new historic action" and not so much a "theoretical summing up of experience in books and researches"⁵³ which is what, broadly speaking, Bogdanov had in mind. In Lenin's view, then, the political education of workers would still "not be obtained by books alone," nor even "so much from books" in a classroom setting, "as from the very progress of the revolution" on the factory floor and in the streets.⁵⁴ Lenin's conclusion was unequivocal: "Experience in the struggle enlightens more rapidly and more profoundly than years of propaganda."⁵⁵

In "The Attitude of the Workers' Party toward Religion," written in May 1909, Lenin linked the foregoing understanding of the relationship between activity and consciousness to Marxism's materialist philosophical principles. Lenin argued against those comrades who believed that education or "ideological preaching" primarily was the way to inculcate the Social Democratic worldview and to undermine religious beliefs

⁵³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 16, p. 36.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 287.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 351–52. The impact of the 1905 Russian Revolution on the left-wing of German Social Democracy pushed Rosa Luxemburg to likewise develop her political theory in a more fully "materialistic" direction. See Luxemburg's seminal 1906 essay, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions* (New York, 1971).

among workers and peasants. Such comrades explained the roots of religion in terms of the “ignorance of the people” so that the dissemination of “atheist views” and of the Social Democratic outlook generally became the “chief task.”⁵⁶ This was a superficial view in Lenin’s judgment because it explained the roots of religion “idealistically,” in terms of ignorance, but not “materialistically,” in terms of its social roots, specifically, of the “fear of the blind force of capital” which threatened to inflict and did inflict “‘sudden’, ‘unexpected’ ‘accidental’ ruin and destruction” in the life of the proletarian and of the small peasant proprietor. “Fear made the Gods.”⁵⁷

For Lenin, religious faith, that is, non-Social Democratic worldviews, ultimately would be undermined practically, not pedagogically, because the roots of such worldviews were ultimately material and practical, not merely intellectual and cognitive. For him, the combatting of religion had to be linked up to “concrete practice of the class movement which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion.” Only the “progress of the class struggle could convert Christian workers to Social Democracy and atheism”⁵⁸ for only the class struggle actually changed social relationships and, consequently, changed ideas about those relationships and one’s role in changing them. Only the experience of class conflict had a sufficiently powerful material and practical impact on the consciousness of its participants actually to change consciousness. Only in the course of that struggle would workers be won to Social Democracy because the Marxist, Social Democratic worldview made better sense of their struggle than any other worldview.

Whereas Bogdanov, then, gave a primacy to education in the transformation of working class consciousness, Lenin looked to the experience of class struggle. Bogdanov did not think that this struggle, by itself, would create the basis for workers to adopt a socialist outlook, thus, it needed to be supplemented by socialist schooling in proletarian universities. Lenin and Bogdanov likewise assessed the 1905 Revolution very differently though, again, neither drew the difference sharply in direct and immediate polemic.

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Bogdanov’s strong emphasis on propaganda was a hallmark of his activity from the beginning of his political career. It is doubtful that Lenin ever shared Bogdanov’s enthusiasm for the pedagogical element in politics. What was decisive in bringing them together was their common belief in the RSDLP’s tutelary role in relation to the working class, summed up in the view that workers through their own activity could not reach

⁵⁶Ibid., vol. 15, p. 405.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 406.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 405–406.

revolutionary consciousness, which had to be brought from the outside by revolutionary intellectuals. It is this which laid the basis for their political collaboration beginning in 1904.

The failure of the 1905 revolution had imposed great responsibilities on the Social Democratic intellectuals. Bogdanov was convinced that they now needed to raise workers to be not just politically educated revolutionaries, but fully rounded socialist men and women fit to run the new society before the overthrow of the old one. This lofty task was given pride of place in the *Vpered* platform:

The socialist consciousness of the working class must embrace its entire existence and not just the working class's direct economic and political struggle. . . . Against bourgeois culture, a new proletarian culture must be disseminated among the masses, a proletarian science developed . . . a proletarian philosophy worked out. Art must be oriented toward proletarian aspirations and experiences.⁵⁹

The function of the Social Democratic intellectual was essentially to free the worker's consciousness from the shackles of "bourgeois culture" and bourgeois ideology "within the framework of the existing society." In Bogdanov's view, then, the achievement of socialist consciousness by the worker occurred *despite* those practical/material conditions of everyday life which daily produced and reproduced "bourgeois culture," bourgeois science, bourgeois philosophy, and bourgeois art. "The defining feature of Bolshevism," he concluded, "is the creation of an all-embracing proletarian culture, *hic et nunc*, within the framework of the existing society."⁶⁰

With hindsight, Bogdanov's views on the relationship between politics and culture, in the broad sense of the term, were already somewhat at odds with Lenin's own conceptions expressed in *What Is to Be Done?* There, Lenin agreed with the viewpoint expressed by Bogdanov that it was certainly no advantage to bring workers up to the level of the Social Democratic intellectual in science, art, and philosophy. However, this task was not "easy" nor "pressingly necessary" for it belonged in the domain of "pedagogics" not "politics and organization." "Leave pedagogics to pedagogues and not to politicians and organizers!" Lenin cried.⁶¹

Nevertheless, what drew Bogdanov decisively to Bolshevism and to Lenin in 1904 was the pivotal notion of *What Is to Be Done?* that the mass of the working class could not reach revolutionary, socialist consciousness in the course of struggle because that struggle would never, on its own, challenge existing social relationships nor *a fortiori* challenge

⁵⁹ *Sovremennoe polozhenie i zadachi partii: platforma*, pp. 16–17.

⁶⁰ Bogdanov, "Ne nado zatemniat," in *Ko vsem tovarishcham*, pp. 4–5.

⁶¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 470–71.

the consciousness corresponding to those relationships. On this critical point Bogdanov agreed with Lenin. Bogdanov's belief in the missionary role of Social Democratic intellectuals to bring socialist consciousness to the workers via education dovetailed with Lenin's view that such consciousness would also arise as a result of the propaganda by Social Democrats acting "from outside" the workers' movement. The political alliance between Lenin and Bogdanov, then, was rooted in two complementary conceptions of how workers would become Social Democrats.

But, by 1909, Bogdanov's long-term political perspective clashed with Lenin's. Bogdanov still adhered to the intellectualist presuppositions of *What Is to Be Done?* regarding the formation of socialist consciousness in the working class. He reaffirmed them in *The Cultural Tasks of Our Times*. Lenin had meanwhile reconsidered and sharply revised those presuppositions because the workers had, in 1905, challenged existing social relationships and had therefore acted in a necessarily revolutionary, Social Democratic spirit—whether they had actually joined the RSDLP or not. It was that challenge that had made the year 1905 a year of Revolution.

The experience of the revolution of 1905 not only failed to bring Bogdanov to the same sort of rethinking as it did Lenin; it confirmed him in his established view. By 1909 they no longer shared a common paradigm. The result was fundamental conflict between the two men. The political split showed that the conflict was irreconcilable.

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Bogdanov and the *Vperedists* were unable to win over a majority of Bolsheviks or of Russian Social Democrats generally to their program of creating a proletarian culture via socialist schooling in Party universities. *Vpered* never secured a lasting political influence in the workers' movement in Russia. Throughout its short-lived existence, *Vpered* had a proportionately higher contingent of intellectuals in its ranks than any other tendency of the RSDLP as well as a proportionately higher number of adherents abroad.

Vpered did not long survive the departure of its chief inspirer and theoretician in 1911 and *de facto* collapsed in 1912. After leaving *Vpered* Bogdanov continued his scientific and philosophical investigations and began to write *Tectology: Universal Science of Organization* (Moscow, 1913–1922). Bogdanov's membership in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and in *Vpered* had been only one dimension of his broader conception of politics.

Meanwhile, working class movement again went on the offensive. The Bolsheviks, applying the lessons of 1905, bolstered that offensive by actively participating in the cooperative, trade union, and political movement of the workers. On the eve of World War I, the Bolsheviks had won

the political allegiance of the majority of the organized working class.⁶² In March of 1917 the Bolsheviks were to regain that allegiance and eventually lead the workers to seize power through their own class-based institutions, the Soviets.⁶³

Afterword

The view of Bogdanov presented here is so much at odds with the one given by most scholars of this “non-Leninist” Bolshevik that it requires a concluding, justificatory, comment.

Many scholars praise Bogdanov’s attitude toward the workers for being the “complete anti-thesis of the ideas put forward by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?*” because Bogdanov did not presume to “lead the workers in any direction” or “dictate” how they ought to think and act.⁶⁴ In *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy*, Zenovia Sochor highlights time and again her view that Bogdanov “glorified the workers and their innate aptitude for attaining knowledge, political consciousness and self-transformation” whereas Lenin did not, that Bogdanov “challenged” authority “in all guises” whereas Lenin was the authoritarian *par excellence*.⁶⁵

Pace Sochor and others, this view of Bogdanov renders his initial adhesion to Lenin a veritable mystery. True, Bogdanov had nothing but the loftiest praise for workers who met, or strove to meet, his rigorous theoretical specifications. But how many such workers were there? To this all-important question Sochor occasionally concedes that few workers and even fewer of their organizations met Bogdanov’s ideal. Indeed, according to Sochor, Bogdanov did not think “workers’ organizations in general” could “serve as adequate transitional forms for the construction of socialism” because all “trade unions, cooperatives, and Party organizations” functioned “according to the economic and cultural laws of cap-

⁶² See Leopold Haimson’s classic “The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1917,” *Slavic Review* (December 1964 and March 1965) and Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers’ Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914*, chap. 10, “The Radicalization of Labor.”

⁶³ For the role of the Bolshevik Party in the 1917 revolution, see Alexander Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (Bloomington, IN, 1968) and *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York, 1976); for the role of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets, see David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime: From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917* (London, 1983) and *Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power (July 1917–June 1918)* (London, 1984); for the role of the Bolsheviks in the factory committees, see S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917–1918* (Cambridge, 1983.) These works support my construction of Lenin’s revised Bolshevism after 1905.

⁶⁴ James D. White, “Bogdanov in Tula,” *Studies in Soviet Thought* 22 (February 1981) pp. 44, 48.

⁶⁵ Sochor, *Revolution and Culture*, p. 175.

italism.” They ended up “reflecting” existing capitalist culture rather than “fostering” socialist “attitudes and values.”⁶⁶ These and other isolated but telling passages in Sochor’s book point to the imperative need to distinguish between Bogdanov’s praise of imagined workers functioning in imagined institutions and Bogdanov’s skepticism toward real workers functioning in real organizations.

Sochor does not give this distinction the emphasis it deserves in her book. She should have accorded it more attention and study because for Bogdanov the distinction confirmed that actual workers, without the mediation of revolutionary intellectuals, would not transform their consciousness. Indeed, Bogdanov’s entire political sociology was premised on the opposition between the workers’ actual “false” consciousness and his ideal “authentic” proletarian being. The Vperedists wanted to overcome the bourgeois consciousness of the working class by *ideologically* overcoming bourgeois society from the outside, by engineering a socialist consciousness among workers outside bourgeois society, in isolation from it, behind its back, privately, via proletarian universities. However, the Revolution of 1917 showed Vperedist strategy—“Bogdanovism”—to be, in Sochor’s harsh but just words, a set of “ideas” lacking “genuine political clout.”⁶⁷

In 1917 workers once again engaged in mass strikes and built factory committees and Soviets to guide their movement. They did so on their own and without the tutelage of intellectuals, confirming Lenin’s views regarding the working class’ capacity to develop revolutionary consciousness and institutions—and allowing the Bolsheviks to intervene in every sphere of working class activity. On the other hand, the actual development of the revolution rendered Bogdanov’s political strategy irrelevant because inapplicable. As the intelligentsia showed no sign of playing a tutelary role in the workers’ movement, Bogdanov apprehended that movement and opposed the Soviet seizure of power in October 1917. In 1917, Revolution passed Bogdanov by and Bogdanov passed by the Revolution.

Bogdanov’s estrangement from the the organized working class movement in 1917 and beyond was exemplified in his attitude toward *Proletkult’*, a non-Party organization sponsored and led by the Bolsheviks. As *Proletkult’* grew to become a mass movement, actively connected to the social, political, and cultural realities of the immediate post-1917 period, it progressively ceased to meet Bogdanov’s theoretical specifications because it developed independently of intelligentsia tutelage. Insofar as *Proletkult’* did meet those theoretical specifications, it only

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 34.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 13.

encompassed a sect of doctrinaire intellectuals working in the editorial offices of *Proletarskaia Kul'tura*, a journal to which Bogdanov and his handful of followers contributed. Surveying the evolution of the *proletkult'* movement from very different vantage points, two Soviet historians, V. V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't* (Moscow 1974) and L. A. Pinnegina, *Sovietskii rabochii klass i khudozhestvennaia kul'tura* (Moscow, 1984), as well as an American scholar, Lynn Mally, *Blueprint for a New Culture: A Social History of the Proletkult* (UC Berkeley doctoral dissertation, 1985), have shown that the theory of "proletarian culture" originally developed by Bogdanov and his associates in 1909 was largely irrelevant to the revolutionary practice *des real existierenden* worker (and peasant), in 1917 and beyond.

Alexander Bogdanov and the Theory of a “New Class”

JOHN BIGGART

The theory that in certain circumstances state socialism could degenerate into a system in which power was exercised by a bureaucratic élite or by a new class has its origins in Mikhail Bakunin’s famous critique of Marx written during the years 1870–1873. In 1905 the theory acquired a new lease of life in the writings of Jan Waclaw Makhaisky.¹ In Western historiography the application of such theories to the development of socialism in the Soviet Union has usually been associated with the “Left Oppositions” of 1923 and, above all, with Leon Trotsky’s celebrated denunciation of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937).² As Ivan Szeleny and Bill Martin have written in their recent survey of “new class” theories, “most of the (Marxist) bureaucratic class theories could be traced back to the work of Leon Trotsky . . .”: for while “Trotsky himself was of course not a New Class theorist . . . the first comprehensive theories that described the Soviet Union as a society dominated by a bureaucratic class were developed by former Trotskyists.”³

In the Soviet Union during the 1920s Marxist theories of bureaucratic degeneration were by no means associated exclusively with the political thought of Trotsky. In October 1926 the leading theoretician of the Communist Party, Nikolai Bukharin, in an article devoted to the ques-

¹ See M. Bakounine. *L’Empire Knouto-Germanique et la Révolution Sociale (1870–1871)* (Leiden, 1981) and *Gosudarstvennost’ i Anarkhiia [1873]* (Leiden, 1967); and A. Vol’ski (Makhaisky), *Umstvennyi Rabochii* (Geneva, 1905) and *Bankrotstvo sotsializma XIX veka* (Geneve, 1905).

² See L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York, 1970). The most complete surveys of “new class” theory are: Marian Sawer, “Theories of the New Class from Bakunin to Kuron and Modzelewski: The Morphology of Permanent Protest,” in Marian Sawer (ed.), *Socialism and the New Class: Towards the Analysis of Structural Inequality within Socialist Societies*. Monograph no. 19 of Australasian Political Studies Association (Sidney, 1978); and Ivan Szelenyi and Bill Martin, “The Three Waves of New Class Theories,” *Theory and Society*, vol. 17 (1988), pp. 645–67. Neither work deals with Bogdanov.

³ See Szeleny and Martin, pp. 652–53. For an example of Trotskyist theory, see Christian Rakovsky’s letter of 6 August 1928 to Valentinov, published under the title “Power and the Russian Worker,” *The New International*, November 1934, pp. 105–109. For Rakovsky the principal cause of degeneration was functional and social differentiation within the working class. However, he admitted that “The bureaucracy of the Soviets and the party is a fact of a new order. It is not a question here of isolated cases but rather of a new social category to which a whole treatise ought to be devoted.”

tion of the feasibility of constructing socialism in one country, and in the context of polemics against the “United” Trotskyist and Zinovievite Oppositions, singled out Alexander Bogdanov and Vladimir Bazarov for their alleged contention that a precondition of the construction of socialism was the cultural maturation of the proletariat under capitalism.⁴ This “Bogdanov-Bazarov theory,” according to Bukharin, was “utterly wrong,” and its authors failed to understand the “difference in principle between proletarian and bourgeois revolutions”: the cultural maturation of the proletariat could only come about by means of its political dictatorship.⁵ In making these criticisms Bukharin was doing no more than repeating arguments which he had deployed once before during a debate on cultural revolution initiated by the Politbureau in 1922.⁶ However, in 1926 Bukharin, curiously for one who in his contribution to that debate had warned of similar dangers, added to his strictures against Bogdanov the accusation that he was the author of the theory of “bureaucratic degeneration (the technico-intellectual bureaucracy, the ‘organizing’ caste),” which was now propounded “by the combined opposition.”⁷

One must assume that if Bukharin in this article had wished to credit either Trotsky personally, the Trotskyist opposition, or the broader “United Opposition” with authorship of the theory of bureaucratic degeneration he would have done so, for elsewhere in his article he does not mince words in his denunciation of his opponents. However, Bukharin contented himself with the allegation that “on the question of the relation of the inherent forces of the Russian Revolution . . . the points of view . . . of the European Social Democrats, Bogdanov-Bazarov, the Russian Mensheviks, Trotsky and Kamenev-Zinoviev . . . in principle completely coincide.”⁸

⁴N. Bukharin, *Building Up Socialism* (London, 1926), pp. 5, 8, and 14–17. This is a translation of N. Bukharin, “O kharaktere nashei revoliutsii i o vozmozhnosti pobedonosnogo sotsialisticheskogo stroitel’sтва v SSSR,” *Bol’shevik*, no. 19/20 (October), 1926.

⁵Bukharin, *Building Up Socialism*, p. 18.

⁶On the origins of this debate see my article “Bukharin and the Origins of the ‘Proletarian Culture’ Debate,” *Soviet Studies* (1987), no. 2. On Bukharin’s theory of cultural revolution and his use of “new class” theory see my contribution “Bukharin and Bogdanov” in Anthony Kemp-Welch (ed.), *The Intellectual Legacy of N. I. Bukharin* (forthcoming).

⁷Bukharin, *Building Up Socialism*, pp. 32, and 47. Throughout, Bukharin quotes from Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma* (M., 1918; signed for printing November 1917) and Bazarov, *Na puti k sotsializmu* (Khar’kov, 1919; foreword dated 2 April 1919). In his pamphlet Bogdanov had warned of “the emergence of a new Arakcheev [who] . . . would appoint an official to every enterprise and subordinate the entire economy to the required number of departments.” Bazarov in his “Predposylki osushchestvleniya sotsializma,” written “two months before the February Revolution,” had judged the contemporary labor movement to be capable only of transforming state capitalism into a system oriented toward consumption. However, neither work introduces the idea of a “new class.” See Bogdanov, *Voprosy Sotsializma*, pp. 38 and 40 and *Na puti k sotsializmu*, pp. 21–22.

⁸Bukharin, *Building Up Socialism*, p. 43. Among the European Social Democrats, Bukharin berates in particular Karl Kautsky who in *Die Diktatur des Proletariat* (Vienna, 1918) had written

Amongst Western historians Ilmari Susiluoto, Robert C. Williams, and Zenovia Sochor have all recently drawn attention to the contribution of Alexander Bogdanov to early Marxist theory of a "new class." Susiluoto writes:

According to Bogdanov, the class division in society was determined by the "possession" of organizational experience. Capitalists were not the dominant class primarily because they owned the means of production, but because they organized and directed production. But when concepts like this were used it became possible to speak of a ruling and oppressing class even when socialism prevailed.⁹

Sochor cites Susiluoto approvingly that 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."¹⁰ According to Sochor, moreover, Bogdanov "feared the danger that the party and its members would reconstitute themselves as a new class."¹¹ Williams goes further and attributes to Bogdanov the view that "the radical, technical intelligentsia can effect a revolution better than either party orthodoxy or proletarian spontaneity," and that "the key to the proletarian future would be the ideology of the technical and scientific intelligentsia."¹²

As Sochor has reminded us, Soviet critics of Bogdanov as early as 1922 had begun to accuse him of unorthodoxy for deriving social classes from authority relations.¹³ It is not my purpose in this article to discuss how far, if at all, Bogdanov departed from "classical" Marxism by devel-

that "the state organization of production by a bureaucracy does not constitute socialism: and had characterized the Soviet régime as Bonapartist. In *Terrorism und Kommunismus* (Berlin, 1919) he had employed the categories "state capitalism," "new class of officials," and "new ruling class." On Kautsky's debates with Bauer, Adler, Dan, and Abramovich over the class character of the Soviet régime, see Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution 1880-1938* (London, 1979).

⁹Ilmari Susiluoto, *The Origins and Development of Systems Thinking in the Soviet Union* (Helsinki, 1982), p. 68. Susiluoto's paraphrase of Bogdanov is slightly misleading. Bogdanov considered social differentiation to arise out of changes in technical processes. Organizational functions were exercised by the ruling classes of all class-divided societies and capitalism was merely a special case in which the ruling class owned the means of production as capital. Moreover, under socialism as Bogdanov understood it it would *not* be possible to speak of "a ruling and oppressing class." See A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomorphism*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp. 85-89, 93, and 117.

¹⁰Susiluoto, p. 68, cited by Zenovia Sochor, *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy* (Ithaca and London, 1988), p. 68.

¹¹Sochor, p. 190.

¹²Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks, Lenin and His Critics, 1904-1914* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986), pp. 127 and 131.

¹³Sochor, p. 66. Sochor refers to the article of A. Udal'tsov, "K kritike teorii klassov A. A. Bogdanova," *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, no. 7-8, 1922. It is worth noting that this journal was the organ of the "Deborinite" school of Russian Marxism.

oping a functionalist theory of class formation though my own opinion is that his sociology (or “historical materialism”) complements rather than contradicts that of Marx.¹⁴ What I shall argue, however, is firstly, that Bogdanov did not at any time ascribe to the “radical technical intelligentsia” a leading role in the transition to socialism; secondly, that Bogdanov did entertain the theoretical possibility that the intelligentsia *could* metamorphose into a “ruling class”; and, thirdly, that whilst the idea of the Soviet intelligentsia as a provisionally ruling *group* can be discerned in Bogdanov’s writings, the theory of a Soviet new *class* was proclaimed publicly during the 1920s not by Bogdanov but by his disciples the “Bogdanovists.”¹⁵

Bogdanov and the “Intermediary Intelligentsia”

As early as 1906, in the third volume of his seminal work *Empiriomonizm*, Bogdanov had certainly admitted the possibility that “in certain conditions” the “ideologues” of society might themselves acquire the status of an “organizing class” which would rule over the masses.¹⁶ However, in other works published before 1917 he had asked whether under *capitalism* the intelligentsia might acquire such a status and his answer had been in the negative. At most, he acknowledged that in certain historical periods when relations between competing social classes were in a state of equilibrium the intelligentsia might assert itself as an independent social group, “above class,” and he cited the example of the liberal faction around *Le National* in France in the 1840s, that of the “Legal Populists” in Russia during the 1890s, and that of the “Liberationists” of the 1900s. For Bogdanov, as a rule, however:

The intermediary intelligentsia groups of society work ideologically not for themselves but for others and so they can in no way act as a determining force in pursuing the cultural tasks of our time.¹⁷

¹⁴For a concise version of Bogdanov’s sociology see the chapter “Istoricheskii monizm” in *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3.

¹⁵Bogdanov employs “group” and “class” as separate categories. Both forms of differentiation were brought about by technical change; however, whereas the typical relationship between groups was specialization, the typical relationship between classes was “domination-subordination.” Moreover, it was not the organizational function alone which indicated class formation but also the acquisition of a separate class ideology. See *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3, pp. 87–89 and 95.

¹⁶“Of course, in certain conditions, even the ideologues might turn into an ‘organizing class’, and in such circumstances they would no longer serve as the ideologues of the masses whom they dominated.” See *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3, pp. 87–89, 95.

¹⁷*Kul’turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (M., 1911), p. 27. Bogdanov refers to the group around the newspaper *Le National* founded in 1830 by the banker Charles Lafitte and Armand Carrel. Originally Orleanist, by 1831 it had become liberal-republican. See H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy* (London and New York, 1988).

Unlike Sorel or Makhaiski, Bogdanov was not impressed by the propensity of the intelligentsia to transform itself into a new class or to utilize the labor movement to that end.¹⁸ On the contrary, he considered that intellectuals in the modern age, by responding to an increased demand for mental labor (engineers, trained technicians, economists, accountants, and the like), by assuming, in other words, the organizational functions of capitalism, had become the organizational auxiliaries of the bourgeoisie. In so doing, they impeded the transition to socialism and helped to perpetuate the anachronistic values of authoritarianism and individualism.

At a time when cooperation is called for . . . the intellectual is found occupying the authoritarian position of leader and organizer—as an engineer in the factory, a physician in hospital, etc. Thus the intellectuals adopt the authoritarianism which is in any case preserved in the bourgeois world and in its culture, as an organizational supplement to their own fundamental anarchism.¹⁹

Socialist intellectuals, whom Bogdanov described as “white crows” (*belie voroni*), were considered by him to be a source of potential danger to the labor movement, in view of the damage which could be caused by their authoritarianism and individualism.²⁰ While denying that the RSDRP was an “intelligentsia-party” (*intelligentskaia*) in the sense of having a disproportionate number of intellectuals by social origin or profession in membership, Bogdanov nevertheless acknowledged that intellectuals exercised great influence within the Party by virtue of the strategic position which they occupied. In the aftermath of the revolution of 1905 he judged that the intelligentsia was having a disorganizing rather than an organizing effect upon the RSDRP. For example, he attributed the “constitutional illusions” of some Party members with regard to the Duma in 1907 to a shift in the balance of power between the proletariat and intelligentsia within the Party. The principal features of the mentality of the Party intelligentsia were these:

An inherent instability (*neustoichoivost'*) and lack of steadfastness (*nevyyderzhanost'*); an infirmity of principle and purpose which are characteristic of intermediary class formations and of the intelligentsia in particular and which reflect the complete subservience of their role in the process of social labor. The psyché of the intelligentsia is easily swayed in one direction or another; and when life shatters

¹⁸On the influence of Makhaisky and Sorel on Polish and Russian intelligentsia theory during the 1900s and for a comparison of the theories of Bogdanov and Brzozowski, see Andrzej Walicki, *Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of "Western Marxism"* (Oxford, 1989) and in particular chapter 5.

¹⁹“Kritika proletarskogo iskusstva” (1918) in *O proletarskoi kul'ture 1904–1924* (Leningrad and Moscow, 1925), p. 163.

²⁰“Sotsializm v nastoiashchem” (1911), in *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, p. 97.

their illusions they either succumb to depression (*Katzenjammer*), remorse and self-reproach or else they lash out wildly in a different direction.²¹

War Communism and State Capitalism

One cannot argue, therefore, that Bogdanov before the First World War discerned in the “actually existing” intelligentsia the embryo of a new ruling class or that he ascribed to this intelligentsia a leading role in the transition to socialism. At the same time, he was under no illusion as to the preparedness for leadership of the industrial working class, Russian or West European, and when his pessimistic diagnosis was confirmed by the outbreak of the World War he returned to his hypothesis of 1906 that “under certain conditions” some sections at least of the old intelligentsia might acquire an independent social role.²²

In 1916 Bogdanov published four major articles in the journal *Letopis'* in which he provided an analysis of the origins of the World War and of the dynamics of the war economies of the belligerent powers.²³ These articles were to serve as the basis of his interpretation of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and of his theory of “War Communism.” Briefly summarized, Bogdanov’s theory pointed to the central role of the armed forces in restructuring the economies of the Entente and Central powers. Essentially a “consumers’ commune” (*Potrebitel'naia kommuna*), the army in war-time spread the communism of consumption to the rest of society as the state gradually assumed control over the economy. Simultaneously, the spread of military authoritarianism into civil society led to the subjugation and “enservment” of the working masses and created the conditions for government dictatorship.²⁴

As the effects of “consumers’ communism” multiplied throughout the economy as a whole, the latter was transformed into a system of State

²¹ “Sotsialdemokraticeskaja vkhozhest’,” *Vestnik Zhizni*, no. 2 (February), 1907, p. 40. Bogdanov considered the behavior of the Mensheviks in 1905–1906 to be a typical case of intelligentsia vacillation. See also his characterization of the “petty-bourgeoisie” in *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3, pp. 98–99.

²² For Bogdanov’s views on the “backwardness” of the industrial working classes, Russian and West European, see his *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (M., 1911), p. 50; “Sotsializm, v nastoiashchem” (1911), “1918” (1918), and “O khudozhestvennom nasledstve” (1918) in *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, pp. 97, 100–103, and 144 respectively. See also his *Elementy proletarskoi kul'tury v razvitiu rabochego klassa* (Moscow, 1920), pp. 48, and 55–56. To Bukharin Bogdanov later wrote: “It is a tragedy that history has placed this unprecedentedly heavy, indeed unbearable burden upon the shoulders of the youngest of all the working classes, the Russian proletariat, and set it a task which by far exceeds its capabilities.” See “Otkrytoe pis'mo t. Bukharinu,” cited in Sergei G., “Nezavidnoe schast'e (Prorochestvo Plekhanova o Bogdanove),” *Sputnik Kommunist*, no. 24 (Moscow, 1923), pp. 180 and 184.

²³ “Mirovye krizisy, mirnye i voennye,” *Letopis'*, nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 1916.

²⁴ See *Uroki pervykh shagov revoliutsii* (Moscow, July 1917); and *Voprosy sotsializma* p. 75 *passim*.

Capitalism. In *Voprosy sotsializma*, signed for printing in November 1917, Bogdanov described State Capitalism as follows:

A system of adaptation of modern capitalism to two specific conditions of the epoch: consumption-led war communism and the destruction of the forces of production. Of the adaptations in question some coincide with the general line of development of capitalism, for example, the development of syndicates and trusts in the organization of enterprises; others fall outside of this general line and are even in contradiction with it: for example, the restriction of consumption, monopolization of some products by the state, state-bureaucratic regulation of distribution and production. When war communism, in peace-time, is reduced in scale and the destruction of productive forces ceases, we may assume that the first forms of adaptation will be preserved, and will evolve, whereas the second will become extinct, or will survive only to the extent that they are in conformity with class interests or the co-relation of class forces.²⁵

Thus, in 1917, Bogdanov tended to the view that the need of governments to coordinate economic demobilization would make for a conservation of the new system after the war. State Capitalism, consisting of the replacement in peace-time of the institutions of finance capital by institutions of state control (nationalization of the main branches of industry, of transport, and of land) was the economic régime that he expected to prevail in the West and in Russia.²⁶

Over a year earlier, Bogdanov, in a new edition of his *Tektologiia* (whose preface bore the date 16 September 1916) had speculated that the social formation which would preside over the new system might not necessarily be the bourgeoisie. In a chapter entitled "Contemporary Ideals" which had not appeared in previous editions of his work, he noted that at a time when the differentiation of the two major social classes, the bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat, was still incomplete, one could identify a number of intermediary groups (*promezhutochnie gruppировki*) one of which comprised the "greater part of the scientific-technical intelligentsia, though not its upper strata who have thrown in their lot with the bourgeoisie or the lower who are siding with the toiling proletariat." This group had now acquired an ideology of its own which envisaged

The planned organization of production and distribution under the management of economists, engineers, doctors, and lawyers, in short of the intelligentsia itself. This would entail, of course, the creation of privileged conditions for the intelligentsia, but also of materially satisfactory conditions for the working class. In this way the conditions making for class struggle would be abolished and a harmony of interests would be achieved.²⁷

²⁵ *Voprosy sotsializma*, p. 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 80 and 83–85.

²⁷ *Vseobshchaia Organizatsionnaia Nauka (Tektologiia)*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1917), p. 140.

The political form required for the realization of this ideal would in most cases be a “centralized republic” and the proponents of this system, for example, the majority of the French radical socialists, described their ideal as “state socialism.” However, for Bogdanov, “state socialism” could assume a number of forms:

There are many features of the old estate society which still exercise a powerful influence. In Europe the most typical are the Catholic priesthood and the backward stratum of the landlord class. These elements either cling to the old estate ideals or update them. In countries where a significant proportion of the bureaucratic intelligentsia is linked with the landowning estate, or identifies with it, one form which this modernized ideology adopts is that of “state socialism.” However, “bureaucratic socialism” would be a more correct designation, for a system in which production and distribution are organised by an hierarchy of officials headed by a moral-patriarchal monarchical power lies somewhere between the ideal of the technical intelligentsia and the feudal-estate ideal.²⁸

In 1916 Bogdanov may well have intended his readers to see in this paragraph an Aesopian reference to bureaucratic-socialist tendencies within the Tsarist régime.²⁹ What we must now ask is how far he understood the Soviet régime after 1917 to be either State Capitalist or State Socialist and how far he discerned in the development of the Soviet system the emergence of a new ruling group or class.

War Communism of the Laboring Classes

As late as 1921, in *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* Bogdanov considered it to be still an open question whether, following a return to peace-time conditions of production, State Capitalism would persist in Western and Eastern Europe and prove to be a higher and more durable form of capitalism.³⁰ In 1923, however, in new editions of both *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* and of *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (co-authored with Skvortsov-Stepanov) he noted that State Capitalism in the West had turned out to be a temporary, war-time phenomenon and that it had been dismantled. Accordingly, Bogdanov introduced into his theory an analytical distinction between “Military State Capitalism” (*Voennogosudarstvennyi kapitalizm*) and “State Capitalism.” In the West, even if “Military State Capitalism” had not given birth to a stable, peace-time régime of “State Capitalism,” such a system clearly appealed to advanced

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹For an empirical study which identifies precisely such attitudes within the Tsarist bureaucracy, see W. E. Mosse, “Bureaucracy and Nobility in Russia at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1981), pp. 605–28.

³⁰*Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (3rd ed.: Petersburg, 1921), p. 145.

elements of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois intelligentsia and its introduction at some time in the future remained a theoretical possibility.³¹

In Russia the effects of War Communism/Military State Capitalism had proven to be longer-lasting and in 1923 Bogdanov introduced a further new category to describe the socioeconomic system which had developed in Russia during the Revolution and Civil War. This system he described as "War Communism of the Laboring Classes" (*Voennyi kommunizm trudovykh klassov*). According to Bogdanov there were two instances in history, the siege of Paris in 1870–1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the bourgeoisie had proved to be incapable of introducing measures necessary to defend the institution of private property. On both these occasions the laboring classes had overthrown the bourgeois state and introduced a system of "War Communism." In Paris these measures had been taken by an alliance of the working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie; in Russia they had been taken by an alliance between the urban workers and a predominantly peasant army which had functioned temporarily as a social class in its own right. In both instances the leading role had been played by the proletariat. However, whereas the Paris Commune in the seventy-two days of its existence had been able to achieve little in the way of communization, the "Communist labor bloc" in Russia in 1917 had, through the system of Soviets, triumphed over the bourgeoisie and landowners and over the military and financial power of the West. Bogdanov now argued that what had arisen out of the system of Military State Capitalism in Russia during the period 1917–1921 was a new system which he described as "War Communism of the Laboring Classes." While functionally similar to Military State Capitalism, War Communism of the Laboring Classes differed from it by virtue of the fact that the owners of land and the owners of industrial and finance capital had been expropriated: in other words, the new system had a different class basis. However, just as Military State Capitalism had had to be abandoned in the West, so War Communism of the Laboring Classes, in view of its destructive economic effects, had had to be abandoned in Soviet Russia.³²

It is at this point that one searches in Bogdanov's writings for a characterization of the Soviet state under NEP. Was it to be understood as State Capitalist or State Socialist? However, for reasons which are not entirely clear, but which most probably had to do with the political sensitivity of the matter, Bogdanov chose never in any of his published works

³¹ See, for example, *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (9th ed.; Moscow/Petrograd, 1923), pp. 119–22.

³² *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (9th ed.), pp. 122–24; and *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (3rd ed., n. d. [1923]), pp. 263–69.

to apply either term to the NEP. During a debate which took place in the Socialist Academy of 14 September 1922, when it seemed that his own analysis might well bring clarity to a confused issue, Bogdanov took care to approach the question in an oblique way. Arguing that in his opinion War Communism had been a policy born, not out of Bolshevik ideology, but out of "military-revolutionary necessity" (he had once argued differently), Bogdanov gave Lenin credit for having attempted as early as 1918 to prepare the ground for the kind of State Capitalism which he had finally been able to introduce in 1921.³³ However, in contrasting State Capitalism in Lenin's sense of the term with Preobrazhensky's War Communism (in the debate Preobrazhensky, a proponent of War Communism, had argued that it had been a policy dictated by Marxism) Bogdanov was neither endorsing Lenin's policies as the most appropriate in the circumstances of 1921 nor acknowledging that a system of State Capitalism as he understood it had been inaugurated. By 1922 Bogdanov and Lenin were in fundamental disagreement over the social and economic dynamics of the NEP system and over the policies which were needed if it were to develop into socialism.³⁴ Accordingly, Bogdanov, in the 1923 edition of *Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*, in answering the question, "What economic forms were to replace War Communism?" went no further than to state that "the New Economic Policy seeks to strengthen the economy and develop production by methods which are closely related to the former capitalist methods." Did this mean that there had been a simple return to prewar capitalism? Bogdanov rejected such a notion, since as a rule, in economics there was never a complete return to the past.³⁵

Class Basis of the Soviet State

Bogdanov displayed a similar reticence when dealing with the question of a Soviet ruling class. In none of his writings published during or after 1917 does he ever refer to the Soviet régime as "a dictatorship of the proletariat." In 1918, in an article written before the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly but annotated shortly after, he had insisted: "The Bolsheviks are a workers'-soldiers' party; they are not a workers' party. They are made up of two class cohorts of different type and level of

³³"O 'Versal'skom stroitel'stve'" (session of Socialist Academy of Science of Sept. 14) in *Vestnik Sotsialisticheskoi Akademii*, no. 1, 1922, p. 149. In November 1917, by contrast, Bogdanov had written that while proclaiming the socialist revolution Lenin was in practice introducing war communism and described his policies as "utopian." See *Voprosy sotsializma*, p. 96.

³⁴It is, of course, possible that Lenin and Bogdanov were closer in their analyses of State Capitalism than they were in their policies for proceeding toward socialism. Oddly, Lenin's marginal notes on Bogdanov's "O 'Versal'skom stroitel'stve'" are extant but they have never been published. See A. G. Chernikh, *V. I. Lenin-istorik proletarskoi revoliutsii v Rossii* (1969), p. 279 citing TsPA IML, f. 2., op. 1, ed. khr. 23498.

³⁵*Nachal'nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (9th ed., p. 125.

culture." Invoking his "General Organizational Theory," he had pointed out that

If the whole consists of parts which possess different degrees of organization, then the whole will be determined by the lower level of organization . . . In the workers'-soldiers' party the most backward and politically least organized cohort are the soldiers. Therefore the workers will have to adapt to their level and outlook and methods.

This analysis implied that if War Communism as a system persisted, the ruling class in the Russia would be neither the proletariat nor the intelligentsia but the peasantry.³⁶

In this same article, far from characterizing the Russian revolution as a revolution of the ascendant intelligentsia, Bogdanov noted that the leveling policies which the Bolsheviks applied to "the toiling technical intelligentsia and in particular to two of its sub-groups, the bureaucracy and the officer corps," were in contradiction with authentic "workers' socialism":

According to the teaching of Marx, the value of labour power is that value which will satisfy the basic needs of the worker and restore his full labouring capacity. It is precisely for this reason that the wages of a skilled worker are higher than those of a manual labourer. By the same token it is evident that the wages of an even more skilled intellectual-organizer who is carrying out the much more complex and intensive labour of a responsible administrator, professor, senior engineer, scientific specialist or officer must be even higher. Otherwise the maximum labouring capacity will not be restored and the net result will be a loss far greater than, and sometimes immeasurably exceeding, the savings achieved in wages.³⁷

There are indications that during the remainder of 1918 and in early 1919 Bogdanov continued to be exercised by the question of the class basis of the Soviet régime. In late 1918 or early 1919 the publishing house "Kommunist" produced Part 4 of Volume 2 of the *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* which he coauthored with I. I. Skvortsov-Stepanov and the first volume of which had appeared in 1910. The preface to Part 4, which was written entirely by Bogdanov, is dated 1 September 1918, but an undated and unsigned foreword declares that "owing to disagreement between the authors of the Course" a chapter written by Bogdanov entitled "Contempo-

³⁶"Sud'by rabochei partii v ninishnei revoliutsii," *Novaia Zhizn'*, nos. 19 (26 January/8 February, 1918) and 20 (27 January/9 February, 1918), translated by J. Biggart as "Fortunes of the Workers' Party in the Present Revolution." *Sbornik* [Papers of the Tenth International Conference of the Study Group on the Russian Revolution, Exeter College, Oxford, January 1984] (Leeds, 1984), no. 10, pp. 100-109. On this point, see p. 104.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 107.

rary Prototypes of Collectivism,” in which he had provided an economic and class analysis of current developments, had been omitted.³⁸ One can only speculate as to the grounds for this disagreement, for the missing chapter did not appear in later editions of the work. We obtain some insight into Bogdanov’s thinking at this time, however, from a lecture which he delivered in the spring of 1919 to the Moscow Proletkult, when he speculated that the war and revolution in Russia might yet result in the subjugation of the proletariat to “some new social stratum” (*perekhodom ego pod vlast’ novogo obshchestvennogo sloia*);³⁹ and in the summer of 1919 he warned that the ideas of Alexei Gastev for the scientific organization of labor, if applied, would result in the emergence of a “social group of scientific engineers” (*ostanetsia sotsial’naia gruppy . . . uch-enogo inzhenerstva*).⁴⁰ The ascendancy of the intelligentsia as a social group (Bogdanov does not employ the term class) was therefore a possibility under War Communism. Did Bogdanov consider that this possibility had materialized under NEP?

In none of his works published after 1921 did Bogdanov directly address this question. Certainly, in 1922 the section “Contemporary Ideals” reappeared in a new edition of the *Tektologiia*.⁴¹ Here again, one would have thought, was an ideal opportunity for Bogdanov to indicate whether in his opinion War Communism of the Laboring Classes had given rise to a system of “bureaucratic socialism” and to a new or composite ruling group. Was the Soviet Union by 1922 administered by a “hierarchy of officials”? Did the Communist Party function as a “moral-patriarchal power”? Bogdanov’s text of 1916 remained unchanged in the edition of 1922. Had he passed up this opportunity to examine the Soviet régime as a case study in bureaucratic socialism? Or did he, in the political conditions of 1922, deem it prudent to allow his observations of 1916 to retain their Aesopian ambiguity? One year later, in the edition of 1923 of *Nachal’nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* Bogdanov again avoided the issue and went no further in identifying the class basis of the Soviet state than to concede that “the state pursues its New Economic Policy in the interests of the labouring classes.”⁴²

³⁸A. Bogdanov and I. Stepanov, *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii*, tom. 2, vypusk 4. *Obshchaia teoriia kapitalizma. Kollektivisticheskii stroi* (Moscow and Petrograd, n. d.; Preface, September, 1918).

³⁹*Elementy proletarskoi kul’tury v razvitii rabocheho klassa* (Moscow, 1920), p. 48.

⁴⁰“O tendentsiakh proletarskoi kul’tury (otvet Gastevu)”. *Proletarskaia Kul’tura*, no. 9/10 (June-July), 1919; also in *O proletarskoi kul’ture . . .*, especially p. 326.

⁴¹*Tektologiia, Vseobshchaia Organizatsionnaia Nauka* (Izdatel’stvo A. I. Grzhebin, Berlin, Petersburg, Moskva, 1922), p. 303. (It is noted that parts 1 and 2 are reworked and supplemented by a new part 3.)

⁴²*Nachal’nyi kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (9th ed.), p. 125.

"Bogdanovshchina"

Despite Bogdanov's reluctance explicitly to apply his theories of a "State Capitalism" to the Soviet case, his writings left ample scope for development by his disciples in that direction and it is to the works of the "Bogdanovists" that we must now turn for further insight into Bukharin's allegations of 1926.

As early as June 1918 Jan Waclaw Makhaiski had denounced the Bolshevik seizure of power as a counterrevolution of the petty-bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, and in the same year an anarcho-syndicalist critique had accused the Bolsheviks of replacing private capitalism by state capitalism and of instituting the rule of a "new class born largely from the womb of the intelligentsia."⁴³ The Bogdanovists whom we shall now identify were, therefore, not the first critics of the Soviet régime to employ the categories "State Capitalism" and "new class." However, during the Second All-Russian Congress of the Proletkults of 17–21 November 1921 similar ideas were expressed in a manifesto distributed by a caucus of Party members who explicitly invoked the authority of Bogdanov. The manifesto of these "Collectivists," *My-Kollektivisty!*, which is held in the Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, has never been published in full and its authors, who claimed to be former members of the Workers' Opposition, have never been identified.⁴⁴ No Soviet source has alleged that Bogdanov either drafted the manifesto or personally caused it to be produced. However, from excerpts which have been published we know that it comprised nine paragraphs, contained an exposition of Bogdanovist organization theory, and went on to derive from that theory a platform of opposition to the Leninist Party leadership. Rejecting the "religious (*sic*) Marxism of Lenin and Plekhanov, the Collectivists proclaimed themselves to be "Marxists of that school whose intellectual leader is Bogdanov" and as the political heirs of *Vpered*.⁴⁵ The October Revolution, they argued, was not a socialist revolution but one which represented the introduction into Russia of a worldwide system of State Capitalism. Going beyond any prediction which Bogdanov had ever committed to print, the Collectivists argued that the New Economic Policy marked the formation of a class-coalition

⁴³ See Makhaiski in *Raboचाia Revoliutsiia*, no. 1 (Moscow, June 1918) and M. Svergen, "Puti revoliutsii," *Vol'ni Golos Truda*, no. 4 (16 September), 1918, cited in M. Sawyer, *Socialism and the New Class*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ See L. N. Suvorov, "Iz istorii bor'by V. I. Lenina, partii bol'shevikov protiv Bogdanovskoi 'Organizatsionnoi nauki,'" *Nauchnie Doklady Vysshoi Shkoly (Filosofskie Nauki)*, no. 3, 1966, and V. V. Gorbunov, *Lenin i Proletkul't* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 173–75. Both authors give the location of the manifesto as TsPA IML, f. 17, op. 60, ed. khr. 43, l.d. 15.

⁴⁵ See N. Bukharin, "K S'ezdu Proletkul'ta," *Pravda*, 22 November 1921; and Suvorov, p. 87.

in which the proletariat and peasantry ruled in partnership with the “technical-bureaucratic intelligentsia.” In due course, however, State Capitalism would be presided over by the intelligentsia which in the twentieth century was transforming itself into an independent class.⁴⁶

At the instigation of Lenin, the Secretariat of the Party in November 1921 launched an enquiry into both the Proletkult and the origins of the platform of the Collectivists, and Bukharin, in an article in *Pravda* on 13 December 1921, accused Bogdanov of having inspired what he described as a latter-day form of Menshevik “Liquidationism.” In distinctly menacing tones Bukharin called for the “rooting out of the nest of Collectivists who have established themselves amongst us.”⁴⁷ By the time the report of the Secretariat reached the Politbureau on 16 February 1922, however, the need for any such “rooting out” had disappeared and the Collectivists had either dissolved or, as seems likely, had merged their activities with that of a kindred Party fraction, *Rabochaya Pravda*.

According to materials published in *Pravda* in December 1923, *Rabochaya Pravda* was formed in the spring of 1921 when its leadership adopted the name “Tsentral’naya Gruppa Rabochei Pravdy.” The first of two issues of the journal *Rabochaya Pravda* was published in September 1921.⁴⁸ In the principal programmatic statement of *Rabochaya Pravda*, which was in circulation by late 1922 and which was published in the Menshevik journal *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* in Berlin in 31 January 1923 there was no explicit acknowledgment of any association, intellectual or political, with Bogdanov, but the program contained a number of ideas which suggested Bogdanovist influence. Tracing the development of “military-state capitalism” to the war years, *Rabochaya Pravda* claimed that tendencies towards the centralization of economic management and the formation of trusts and syndicates had persisted during the period of economic reconstruction. In Russia neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat had proven capable of managing this process and so a “new bourgeoisie” had been formed which consisted of the more competent elements of the old bourgeoisie and of the ascendant technical intelligentsia.

Whereas for the Collectivists the “new class” had been the organizing intelligentsia, *Rabochaya Pravda* considered the intelligentsia to be only part of a “new bourgeoisie.” In its methods of work and ideology the new “technical organizing intelligentsia” (*tekhnicheskaiia organizator-*

⁴⁶Gorbunov, p. 173.

⁴⁷N. Bukharin, “Kollektivisticheskoe Likvidaterstvo,” *Pravda*, 13 December 1921.

⁴⁸See E. Iaroslavskii, “Chto-takoe Rabochaia Pravda?” *Pravda*, 19 December 1923; and “Postanovlenie TsKK po delu gruppy ‘Rabochaia Pravda’,” *Pravda*, 30 December 1923. For the group’s own account of its origins see “Vozzvanie gruppy ‘Rabochaia Pravda’,” *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (49), 31 January 1923, pp. 12–14. A partial translation is to be found in Robert V. Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism*, vol. 1 (New York, 1960), pp. 219–23.

skaia intelligentsiia) was thoroughly bourgeois and capable only of constructing a capitalist economy. The interests of this new composite class were antagonistic to those of the working class who "were leading a miserable existence at a time when the new bourgeoisie (responsible functionaries, plant directors, managers of trusts, chairmen of Soviet executive committees, etc.) and Nepmen were living in a luxurious style which brought to mind the life of the bourgeoisie of yesteryear."⁴⁹

For *Rabochaya Pravda*, the Communist Party had undergone a degeneration and had turned into a "ruling party of the organizers and managers of the governmental apparatus and economic life along capitalistic lines."⁵⁰ A second manifesto distributed on the eve of the Twelfth Party Congress of the Communist Party of 17–25 April 1923 produced a variation on this theme: it was now alleged that one part of the Party had turned into a "caste of organizers of state capitalism and of the capitalist state" while another part comprised "opportunistic elements from the upper strata of the proletariat." In any event, the Communist Party no longer bore the banner of the revolutionary proletariat and therefore the working class of Russia faced the task of organizing itself to deal with capitalist exploitation.⁵¹

Arrest of Bogdanov

As we have seen, *Rabochaya Pravda* professed no allegiance to the ideas of Bogdanov. However, the "neo-Bogdanovist" content of its program clearly convinced the Party authorities that Bogdanov must in some active sense be providing the group with leadership. As early as 4 January 1923 in an article in *Pravda* entitled "Menshevizm v Proletkul'tovskoi odezhdze," the head of the Press Section of the Agitprop Department of the Party Central Committee Ia. A. Iakovlev had not only stigmatized Bogdanov's views as being inherently oppositional, he had also, without mentioning *Rabochaya Pravda*, gone so far as to allege that they would inevitably give rise to the formation of a new political "group or party."⁵² In support of this contention, Iakovlev referred to a lecture which Bogdanov had delivered to a club of Moscow University in early December 1922 on the subject of proletarian culture and to the circulation by him somewhat earlier of a set of theses on the same subject. Claiming that Bogdanov's new form of organization of the labor movement around the Proletkult was merely an interim measure, Iakovlev warned his readers that while Bogdanov had magnanimously accepted the need for the NEP,

⁴⁹"Vozzvanie grupy 'Rabochaia Pravda'," *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (49), 31 January 1923, pp. 12–14.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹See "Obrashchenie grupy 'Rabochaia Pravda' k XII S'ezdu RKP," *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 19 (65), 18 October 1923, pp. 13–14.

⁵²Ia. Iakovlev, "Menshevizm v Proletkul'tovskoi odezhdze," *Pravda*, 4 January 1923.

he had done so because he considered that capitalism was necessary for the development of the Soviet economy. Bogdanov considered the NEP policy to be bourgeois; moreover, he held that the present historical epoch was one of the domination of a "new ruling class consisting of the "bourgeois intelligentsia-technical and bureaucratic."⁵³

Iakovlev's accusations provoked Bogdanov into a reply. In a letter to the editors of *Pravda* dated 4 January 1923 he denied having "summoned to any form of political action" and challenged the accuracy of Iakovlev's account of his lecture. It was not his view, he insisted, that economic progress could be achieved only through capitalism. Enigmatically, however, Bogdanov passed over in silence Iakovlev's attribution to him of a theory of a new ruling class.⁵⁴

Later in 1923 *Rabochaya Pravda* and *Rabochaya Gruppy* were to become the first intra-Party oppositions to be suppressed by the OGPU. Miasnikov of *Rabochaya Gruppy* had been arrested as early as May 1923 and by September there had been a wave of arrests of left opposition leaders, including leading members of *Rabochaya Pravda*.⁵⁵ On 1 October 1923 *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* reported that Bogdanov was amongst those who had been arrested and that he was being held in an internal prison of the OGPU.⁵⁶ Subsequent issues claimed that Bogdanov had insisted on being interrogated by Felix Dzerzhinsky, the head of the OGPU and his former comrade in the Central Committee elected by the Stockholm Congress of 1906. To Dzerzhinsky Bogdanov had stated that he shared many of the positions of *Rabochaya Pravda*, but that he had no formal association with it. On 3 November 1923 *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* reported that Bogdanov had been released.⁵⁷

In the report of September 1923 of an enquiry set up by the Communist Party Central Committee and Central Control Commission under

⁵³ Iakovlev uses here the expression employed in the manifesto of the Collectivists.

⁵⁴ Bogdanov, Letter to the editors, 4 January 1923, in *Pravda*, 12 January 1923.

⁵⁵ *Rabochaia Pravda* had been involved in the organization of strikes in industry in the summer of 1923 and this was probably the "anti-Soviet activity" mentioned in the indictment against them. See "Postanovlenie TsKK po delu gruppy 'Rabochaia Pravda'," *Pravda*, 30 December 1923. In the column "Po Rossii," *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 20 (66), 3 November 1923, pp. 13–14, it was reported that four hundred members of the Workers' Truth were arrested including heads of Party cells in factories, Rabfak students, and members of the Komsomol. However, Iaroslavskii poured scorn on these figures. See E. Iaroslavskii, "Chto-takoe Rabochaia Pravda?" *Pravda*, 19 December 1923.

⁵⁶ See the column "Po Rossii" in *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 17/18 (63/64) for 1 October 1923.

⁵⁷ "Po Rossii" in *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, no. 19 (65) for 18 October and no. 20 (66) for 3 November 1923. That Bogdanov had been arrested, that he had been accused of being a leader of *Rabochaia Pravda*, and that he had been interrogated by Dzerzhinsky was confirmed at the conference "A. A. Bogdanov (Malinovskii)-Revoliutsioner i Myslitel" convened by the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Moscow, 10–11 April 1989. Bogdanov had recorded his experience in "Piat' nedel' v GPU," a document now located in the archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

the chairmanship of Dzerzhinsky, the program of *Rabochaya Pravda* was alleged to have been virtually identical to that of the Collectivists. Bogdanov was not accused of being a leader or member of *Rabochaya Pravda*, but he was found guilty by association: "Behind the *Rabochaya Pravda* group there stood the figure of A. Bogdanov who long ago left the Party and who is known for his anti-Marxist and anti-Communist views." Having received the report, the Central Committee denounced *Bogdanovshchina* as a tendency openly hostile to the Communist Party.⁵⁸

In the Central Control Commission it was the Party Secretary Emeilian Iaroslavskii who had led the investigation of *Rabochaya Pravda* and on 19 December *Pravda* published an article by Iaroslavskii in which the Party delivered its considered judgment on this particular "deviation."⁵⁹ In their interpretation of the October Revolution, Iaroslavskii noted, the members of *Rabochaya Pravda* had been in virtual agreement with the Mensheviks: like the Mensheviks they considered that October had provided Russia with a golden opportunity of becoming an advanced capitalist country. However, whereas even the Mensheviks acknowledged that the bourgeoisie had been deprived of political rights in Russia, *Rabochaya Pravda* alleged that "the Soviet state at the present time represents the general-national interests of capital" and that a new bourgeoisie had arisen, consisting of the "organizing intelligentsia."⁶⁰ *Rabochaya Pravda* had presented itself, in other words, as the standard-bearer of Bogdanovism, a non-Marxist ideology which Iaroslavskii, repeating the allegation which had been made by Bukharin in his article against the Collectivists, described as an ideology conveniently situated between revolutionary Marxism and counterrevolutionary Menshevism. Despite their points of disagreement with the Mensheviks, *Rabochaya Pravda* was to be viewed as an agency (*agentura*) of the Mensheviks within the Communist Party: "The path from the Comintern to the Second International, from Lenin to Liber-Dan, proceeds by way of Bogdanovshchina."⁶¹ On 30 December *Pravda* published the resolution of the Central Control Commission in which *Rabochaya Pravda* was condemned as "both socially and ideologically an enemy . . . a Menshevik conspiracy," having as its objective the "disorganization of our Party." Seven of the leaders of the *Rabochaya*

⁵⁸L. N. Suvorov, "Iz istorii bor'by V. I. Lenin, partii bol'shevikov protiv Bogdanovskoi 'Organizatsionnoi Nauki'," *Nauchnye Doklady Vysshei Shkoly (Filosofskie Nauki)*, no. 3, 1966, pp. 87, 89–90 citing *Izvestia TsK RKP (b)*, no. 9–10, 1923. The resolution of the September Plenum of the Central Committee condemning *Rabochaia Pravda* and *Rabochaia Gruppya* for their "anti-Party and anti-Soviet" activity is cited from the archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (f. 17, op. 2, ed. khr. 103) in *Trinadtsaty S'ezd RKP (b) (mai 1924 goda). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow, 1963), p. 843, n. 128.

⁵⁹E. Iaroslavskii, "Chto-takoe Rabochaia Pravda?," *Pravda*, 19 December 1923.

⁶⁰Ibid. Iaroslavskii quotes from unspecified documentation of *Rabochaia Pravda*.

⁶¹Ibid.

Pravda collective and six other members were expelled from the Party. Bogdanov, though not accused of being a leader or member of the group, was identified as being its theoretical mentor (*opora*).⁶²

It is in this judgment of the Central Control Commission, with its echoes of Bukharin's earlier denunciation of Bogdanov, that we discover one possible explanation for Bukharin's later contention that Bogdanov was the originator of all left-opposition theories of "bureaucratic degeneration." In 1921 Bukharin had stigmatized Bogdanov's ideas as "Menshevik" and therefore as counterrevolutionary.⁶³ Two years later the Central Control Commission repeated the charge, adding the further allegation that Bogdanov considered the Soviet state to be controlled by a "new class." In 1926 Bukharin found it expedient, regardless of his inability to substantiate his case by reference to sources, to associate the United Opposition with a "Bogdanov-Bazarov" theory which had already been condemned by the Central Control Commission.⁶⁴

It may be, of course, that Bukharin had access to unpublished materials; and Bogdanov may have been more outspoken in public lectures and in private conversations than he considered it prudent to be in print. We do know that he had discussed these issues personally with Bukharin in 1921.⁶⁵ We may also ask whether the Collectivists, as self-proclaimed "Bogdanovists," would have departed very radically from what they considered to be Bogdanov's ideas. However, it is just as likely (and some of the writings we have examined permit this conclusion) that Bogdanov decided to reserve his judgment on the fortunes of the intelligentsia because he considered that the Soviet state, for the time being, rested upon a class coalition in which the intelligentsia had, at most, acquired an exceptional degree of power as a "ruling group." In his letter to Bukharin of late 1921/early 1922 Bogdanov had written that "the workers-peasants' government, in concluding peace, driving back the forces of reaction, and organizing siege communism [*osadnyi kommunizm*] had fulfilled a necessary task; but this was a task of all the people [*delo obshchenarodnoe*] rather than one of a pure class character." It is possible to discern in this statement the idea of the Soviet régime as a "people's state" in which the intelligentsia, in conditions of social equilibrium, played a prominent role, but as a differentiated social stratum rather than as a "new class."⁶⁶

⁶²"Postanovlenie TsKK po delu gruppy 'Rabochaia Pravda'," *Pravda*, 30 December 1923.

⁶³N. Bukharin, "Kollektivisticheskoe Likvidaterstvo," *Pravda*, 13 December 1921.

⁶⁴See note seven above.

⁶⁵In his "Otkrytoe pis'mo t. Bukharinu," written in reply to Bukharin's articles in *Pravda* of 22 November and 13 December 1921, Bogdanov claims that Bukharin may have misconstrued what passed between them in "private conversations." See Sergei G. "Nezavidnoe schast'e," pp. 181-82.

⁶⁶See "Otkrytoe pis'mo t. Bukharinu," cited in *ibid.*, p. 182.

On Intellectuals and the New Class

ZENOVIA A. SOCHOR

A. A. Bogdanov, as an original and important thinker, is beginning to get his long-overdue recognition. Both the Marot and Biggart articles are welcome contributions to the expanding scholarship on Bogdanov. Together, they highlight an important element in Bogdanov's thinking, namely, the role of intellectuals before and after the revolution. To the extent that these two articles overlap, however, Marot and Biggart offer different interpretations on the role of intellectuals. Although I am sympathetic to Marot's intellectual thrust of "asking the big question," I find myself in agreement with Biggart's more carefully constructed analysis.

Marot poses a fairly specific question to start: why was there a split between Lenin and Bogdanov? Although a variety of answers have been offered by historians, and most conclude that several reasons accumulated to precipitate a split, Marot remains unconvinced. He dissects the issue of *otzovism*, and concludes that this was not the reason for the split, hence raising doubts about "the validity of all interpretations" which heretofore included *otzovism*. In addition, Marot asserts (without fully investigating) that neither intra-Party differences, at the level of strategy or tactics, nor philosophical differences between Lenin and Bogdanov occasioned the split. Rather, Marot argues that "in 1909, Bogdanov's long-term political perspective clashed with Lenin's." They "no longer shared a common paradigm." Spelled out in more detail, Marot claims that Bogdanov still adhered to the "intellectualist presuppositions" of *What Is to Be Done?*, while Lenin had "meanwhile reconsidered and sharply revised those presuppositions."

At this point, it is my turn to "remain unconvinced." Lenin kicked Bogdanov out of the Party, forced a crisis within Bolshevism, lost some of the leading Party intellectuals, all because Bogdanov insisted on remaining true to Lenin's own ideas (former or not).

Nevertheless, I am less interested in arguing over the reasons for the split than in discussing the conflict over "long-term perspectives." Marot has raised a number of issues that cannot be passed over:

1. Did Lenin abandon (or even substantially revise) the main arguments contained in *What Is to Be Done?* In my opinion, he did not, but I

grant that the topic is, at the very least, debatable. It lies, however, outside the purview of this commentary.

2. A separate, if related, issue is how to interpret *What Is to Be Done?* Marot maintains that “the framework notion” is that workers through their own efforts cannot attain socialist consciousness; therefore, consciousness has to be raised “from outside” by intellectuals. I think this is indeed one of the key points; however, I am puzzled by the omission of other key points, in particular, why is there no mention of the “professional revolutionaries” and the “vanguard Party”? “What is to be done,” after all, is to organize a Party. The stress on leadership, organization, and control encompasses elements most closely identified with Leninism and serves as an obvious distinction between Bolshevism and other versions of socialism.

Once the role of the Party is included in “the framework notion” of *What Is to Be Done?*, it becomes very difficult to argue that Bogdanov maintained those notions while Lenin rejected them. The role of the vanguard Party, and the role of the leader in it, emerged as a point of dispute between Lenin and Bogdanov from the start, aggravated beyond repair by Lenin’s rough handling of Bogdanov during the split. Bogdanov’s criticism of Lenin’s concept of the Party was not only the result of the growing animosity between the two men (he argued against *liderstvo* even before he met Lenin), but also a part of his larger concerns about the working class and its ability to fulfill its historical mission.¹

If workers were to personify, as Marx envisaged, new attitudes, new values and relations typical of socialist society (and thus distinct from those of bourgeois society), how and when, asked Bogdanov, would the “new person” appear? Bogdanov believed that “proletarian culture” should be marked, among other things, by collectivism, not individualism, and by comradely, not authoritarian relations. What worried him was that few workers’ institutions, but especially the Party, consciously fostered collectivist, comradely relations while preparing for the revolutionary take-over. Decision making was largely hierarchical, with the leadership—a single leader—playing the key role; discipline and obedience were expected from the rank and file. When, then, asked Bogdanov, would new attitudes and new relations develop? They would not suddenly appear *deus ex machina* after the seizure of power. Long-standing habits of thought and behavior could persist despite significant structural changes.

This is precisely what was wrong with the “old conceptions of so-

¹For the Bogdanov-Lenin discussion, I draw on my book, where my points are more fully substantiated and developed. See Zenovia A. Sochor, *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

cialism,” argued Bogdanov, that is, “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.’”²

Bogdanov’s efforts were directed toward overcoming this gap, emphasizing preparatory and transitional steps that might be taken prior to the seizure of power. The Party by itself, or in combination with affiliated institutions (for example, Party schools) had to nurture the seeds of socialism as well as to seek power. “A conscious comradesly 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,” asserted Bogdanov.³

At the same time, despite Bogdanov’s reservations about worker organizations and their internal structure, this does not mean, as Marot suggests, that Bogdanov ignored their importance. Bogdanov, on the contrary, stated that worker organizations—especially trade unions—were a significant part of self-organization and self-transformation. With increasing industrialization and the intercession of trade unions, Bogdanov saw the grasp of individualism on workers beginning to loosen: “comradely ties” filter into the work arena as the “individual agreement . . . of the hired hand gives way to a collective one; the capitalist is forced to deal with professional trade unions.” As another encouraging sign, Bogdanov thought that competitiveness among workers for jobs was being replaced by the “class struggle of the proletarian collective.”⁴ Bogdanov expressed similar opinions in various earlier and later writings: “Comradely forms of cooperation originate at the workplace and develop further through class organizations—trade union, political and cooperative unions.” (One of the main indicators of “comradely cooperation” is that decisions are discussed and made collectively.)⁵

3. If for the sake of argument, we accept Marot’s contention that “the framework notion” of *What Is to Be Done?* refers to the role of intellectuals, rather than the vanguard Party, then an even more fundamental difference emerges between Lenin and Bogdanov. Rather than relying on intellectuals to bring consciousness to the workers “from outside,” Bogdanov advised caution and skepticism toward intellectuals, on one hand, while affirming his belief that workers were capable of conscious, independent activity, on the other hand.

Intellectuals who were genuinely sympathetic and supportive of the

²A. A. Malinovskii [Bogdanov], “Ideal i put’,” in *Voprosy sotsializma* (Moscow, 1918), p. 101.

³Maksimov [Bogdanov], “Sotsializm v nastoiashchem,” *Vpered*, no. 2 (February 1911), p. 68.

⁴A. Bogdanov, *Kul'turnye zadachi nashego vremeni* (Moscow, 1911), pp. 47–48.

⁵A. A. Malinovskii [Bogdanov], *Elementy proletarskoi kul'tury v razvitií rabocheho klassa* (Moscow, 1920), p. 43.

workers were as rare as “white crows.” However necessary and useful intellectuals were to the worker movement, it was important to recognize, insisted Bogdanov, that intellectuals brought along with them “cultural baggage”—habits and attitudes—which were different from, and potentially harmful to, proletarian self-development. Consequently, counseled Bogdanov, “the working class, in its difficult, grand struggle, should not place its trust in anyone but should verify everyone and everything with its own mind, its own general class consciousness, and depend on no one but its own mass strength.”⁶

One would be hard pressed to find such sentiments expressed in *What Is to Be Done?* By overlooking these sentiments (found in a number of Bogdanov’s writings), Marot runs the risk of misreading Bogdanov and the import of his ideas.

Bogdanov’s Party schools were founded as a partial solution to the problem of relying on intellectuals “from outside.” In direct contrast to Lenin, who dismissed “pedagogics” as irrelevant to the revolutionary struggle, Bogdanov introduced the notion of educating the most qualified of the workers to *assume* the role of the intellectuals. The Party schools would help create an intelligentsia *from within* the working class.

Bogdanov acknowledged that intellectuals “from outside” should be valued for their political and technical experience; nevertheless, he remained adamant that they could not fulfill the “cultural task” of developing new attitudes and outlooks. “The definitive role for this task should be assigned not to ‘enemies’ but to a new intelligentsia, emerging from within the proletariat itself but not leaving it behind, being completely imbued with its world of experiences.” Only a *new* intelligentsia could develop an internally consistent and “authentic class psychology.”⁷

In the short term, Bogdanov proposed Party schools for this task; over the long term, he advocated the establishment of proletarian universities and, borrowing from the French philosophers, a “New Encyclopedia.”

As I have tried to demonstrate in an earlier article, Bogdanov’s conceptualization of the role of intellectuals is closer to Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals” than to Lenin’s “Party intellectuals.”⁸ Both Bogdanov and Gramsci viewed the revolutionary struggle as one that included the struggle over “cultural hegemony” and over competing Weltanschauungs, in essence, a battle over ideas as well as over property and power. For this reason, relying on outside intellectuals to provide “cultural leadership” while limiting the “cultural task” of the workers to memorizing bits

⁶ Maksimov [Bogdanov], “Proletariat v bor’be za sotsializm,” *Vpered*, no. 1 (July 1910), p. 4.

⁷ *Kul’turnye zadachi*, p. 69.

⁸ Zenovia A. Sochor, “Was Bogdanov Russia’s Answer to Gramsci?”, *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 22 (1981), pp. 59–81.

and pieces of Marxism or to learning revolutionary strategy and tactics was woefully inadequate for Bogdanov, and indicated to him a fundamental lack of faith in the working class.

To Marot, Bogdanov's position leads to an idealizing of the worker. Although probably true, this is a criticism which might be applied to all Marxists, starting with Marx. Moreover, Bogdanov, unlike Lenin, had direct exposure to "real" workers in worker circles and wrote many of his books with those workers in mind. Bogdanov's response to Marot might be the following: "And if [proletarian culture] were beyond one's strength—the working class would have nothing to count on, except the transition from one enslavement to another—from under the yoke of capitalists to the yoke of engineers and the educated."⁹

In summary, I do agree with Marot that there were substantial differences between Lenin and Bogdanov. I fail to see the reason, however, for anchoring these differences in *What Is to Be Done?* Bogdanovism, taken as a whole, is a clear departure from the premises of *What Is to Be Done?*, rather than its continuation.

Bogdanov's concern about the all-too-prominent role of intellectuals during the revolutionary struggle is consistent with his concern about the potential for the emergence of a new class after the revolution. In his article, Biggart provides a useful historical overview of Bogdanov's references to, and discussion of, the intelligentsia within various contexts. Nevertheless, the question resurfaces: What are the actual grounds for attributing a theory of a new class to Bogdanov? Bukharin referred to the Bogdanov-Bazarov source; small political opposition groups, *My Kollektivisty* and *Rabochaia Pravda*, claimed Bogdanov as their source of inspiration; Bogdanov himself skirted the term. This seems to add up to rather slim evidence.

What I have done in my own work, which I offer as a complement to Biggart's article, is to examine Bogdanov's analysis of classes and to discern, in the process, what was "new." I believe Bogdanov did offer a theoretical foundation for a discussion of a "new class," one derived from his larger philosophical and organizational theories. His analysis of classes was meant to be an amendment to Marx's own analysis, which Bogdanov found to be incomplete and somewhat ambiguous. Precisely those amendments provide a bridge to concerns expressed by later Marxists and theoreticians, whether Milovan Djilas, James Burnham, or contemporary "critical Marxists."

At issue is how to understand classes. If the origin of classes is tied to market relations and private property, then it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to apply the notion of class to socialist societies. And yet, as

⁹"Ideal i put," p. 104.

critical Marxists have admitted, evidence exists of continued oppression and exploitation under state socialism; the working class has still been dominated by an elite which enjoys unequal access to power, status, and valued goods. For these reasons, contemporary theoreticians have looked to extra-economic factors to understand the rise of an unexpected "new class" under socialism. The propelling question has been: What went wrong with socialism?¹⁰

The point to be made is that Bogdanov, much earlier, was agitated by the question: What are the pitfalls of socialism? He, too, was forced to look at extra-economic factors and to grope toward a clearer understanding of the origins of classes. There was a remarkable amount of continuity in his concerns—it can be traced from *Iz psikhologii obshchestva* (1904) through the later edition of *Tektologiia* (1922): What promotes "authoritarian thinking"? Why do culture and ideology reinforce authoritarianism? Who are the organizers of society? How will technological progress—with its enhanced emphasis on organizational functions—affect the socialist ideal of comradely cooperation?

In 1913, in his discussion of classes, Bogdanov took care to point out that classes could not be differentiated according to "levels of wealth," but rather according to the "position of people in production." The different roles in production, in turn, lead to "divergent interests, aspirations, methods of organization, ways of thinking."¹¹

From this seemingly innocuous shift in emphasis, Bogdanov revealed a new and increasingly important role in production—the organizational one. He drew a distinction—which Marx did not—between ownership and control of the means of production. This distinction had enormous political and theoretical implications. It suggested that the elimination of private property would not necessarily eliminate exploitation and oppression; it raised doubts that public ownership of the means of production—a cornerstone of Marxist thinking—would automatically translate into a classless society.

Whether in earlier or later formulations, in works on philosophy or on political economy, Bogdanov identified "authority-subordination" as a key feature of classes. Those who were in positions of authority—the organizers—exerted control over the lives of the workers and commanded the work process in ways which were more direct and more intrusive than private ownership of the means of production would suggest.

¹⁰See, among others, David Lane, *The End of Social Inequality?* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), especially chapter 5.

¹¹A. Bogdanov, "Iz slovaria inostrannykh slov: Klass," *Pravda*, March 17, 1913. It is interesting that Bogdanov should call his discussion of "classes" a part of a "Dictionary of Foreign Words." Bogdanov wrote several entries in this "dictionary." One of the most complete discussions of Bogdanov's theory of classes may be found in his philosophical work on monism. See A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1906).

Moreover, with advancing capitalism and technological progress, organizational functions multiplied, leading to the development of a particular group of organizers—a stratum, according to Bogdanov, which displayed “special class tendencies.” On one hand, these organizers did not *own* the means of production; therefore, they were distinct from the capitalists. On the other hand, they *had a stake* in the system because they were well paid and enjoyed high-level positions. From the point of view of the workers, Bogdanov surmised, this development meant a dual subordination—not only to capitalists but also to engineers and organizers.¹²

Translated into modern parlance, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Bogdanov was forecasting the rise of managers. Admittedly, he was not consistent in the way he referred to this stratum: “intellectual-technical and administrative personnel,” “bourgeois intelligentsia,” “engineers,” or “managers” [direktora]. Nevertheless, Bogdanov was consistent in describing the function they performed—organization. It is also worth noting that the foundation of the “new stratum” was not simply a “monopoly of knowledge.” Bogdanov singled out the “technical intelligentsia” rather than “the educated” as a whole.

Given that organizational functions were not likely to disappear under socialism—if anything, they would *increase*—how did Bogdanov extend his analysis of the new stratum to socialism? It is fair to say, as does Biggart, that Bogdanov left a somewhat unclear record. His science fiction works, *Red Star* and *Engineer Menni*, which describe enormous engineering projects, invariably call attention to the importance of “engineers,” even as Bogdanov locates the decision-making center in a self-regulating “Bureau of Statistics” rather than a “Bureau of Engineers and Managers.” Also, his comments on engineers—whose authority was based on competence—were less condemning than those on Party leaders, whose authority was based, declared Bogdanov, on hero-worship, ideology, or personal ambitions. Certainly Bogdanov’s critics, throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, did not hesitate to blame Bogdanov for inventing a “cult of organizers” and for drawing on “organizational science” rather than on Marxism in treating the technical intelligentsia as a separate class.¹³

Bogdanov himself denied that he advocated a “cult of organizers,” as can be seen from the Bogdanov-Gastev exchange on the pages of *Proletkult*. (Gastev headed the Central Institute for Labor and was a leading

¹²A. Bogdanov and I. Stepanov, *Kurs politicheskoi ekonomii* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 15–16. Also see A. Bogdanov, *Vvedenie v politicheskuiu ekonomiiu* (New York, 1918), pp. 21–22.

¹³See, for example, A. Udal'tsov, “K kritike teorii klassov u A. A. Bogdanova,” *Pod znamenem Marksizma*, nos. 7–8 (July–August 1922), pp. 82–100; M. Z. Selektor, *Dialekticheskii materializm i teoriiia ravnovesiia* (Moscow, 1934).

Taylorist as well as a member of Proletkult.) Gastev's vision of collectivism, protested Bogdanov, would lead to a split between "the mass of mechanized robots" and the individualistic, talented "educated engineers who will take the initiative and assume the general leadership over the anonymous-spontaneous collective." Bogdanov argued that Gastev's view was flawed because it was not a collective he had in mind "but a crowd or even a herd." In contrast, Bogdanov depicted his view of a proletarian collective as follows:

The proletarian collective is distinguished and defined by a special organizational bond, known as comradely cooperation. This is the type of cooperation in which organizational and implementational roles are not divided but are interconnected within the general aggregate of workers, so that there is no imperious authority nor unreasoned subordination, but rather a general will which decides, with each person taking part in the fulfillment of the common task.¹⁴

While Bogdanov's preference for a "proletarian collective" was clearly and repeatedly stated, it may very well be that Bogdanov, in the Gastev rebuttal, was expressing his fears of what could happen, given the poor preparation of the workers and their frequently passive and submissive attitudes. Over the long run, Bogdanov banked on a combination of technological progress and cultural revitalization to *prevent* Gastev's scenario from occurring. As technology and automation developed, wrote Bogdanov, specialized mechanical tasks would be transferred to machines, thus allowing for an eventual merger of previously disparate roles—in particular, those of engineers (those who organized) versus those of ordinary workers (those who implemented). This merger would be further assisted by the requirements of advanced technology for an increasingly better educated and more skilled labor force. Bogdanov's ultimate vision, in other words, precluded a "rule by technocrats" envisaged and welcomed by others, such as Saint-Simon, with whom Bogdanov shared an intellectual kinship.

To round out and reinforce these spontaneous processes, Bogdanov advocated cultural transformation to revitalize the human being, from cowed and splintered (or "uni-dimensional") to a fully conscious and "integrated" being. Toward this end he proposed specific cultural institutions, such as Proletkult, to help transform the mentality of workers and to project new images of self-esteem and self-confidence. In his "laws of the new conscience," written in 1924, Bogdanov exhorted the workers to excise the "herd instinct," to reject "slavery and its complement, author-

¹⁴A. Bogdanov, "O tendentsiakh proletarskoi kul'ture: otvet Gastevu," *Proletarskaia kul'tura*, nos. 9–10 (June–July 1919), pp. 48–52.

itarianism, [which] consists of a blind submission to a higher individual or the demand for such submission.”¹⁵

The “laws of the new conscience” pointed to another dimension of “authority-subordination” which worried Bogdanov—that of political leaders versus their followers. Proletarian politics, he lamented in 1918, were still suffused with 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.”¹⁶

He repeatedly warned against popular images of heroes leading the masses because this automatically downgraded the abilities of the masses and reinstilled faith in the “exceptional individual” rather than in self-reliance. A political leader who combined his authority with ideology was even more dangerous because his words were treated as “truth” and he became more like a “deity.” For this reason, leadership within a collective should be based on “proven competence, not reduced to the worship of authority,” and required “repeated acknowledgement and verification” by members of the collective.¹⁷

Although Bogdanov did not forecast the rise of a new political elite (as later did the theoreticians of the “new class”), he did focus on the internal dynamics in the Party that tend to produce a “new authoritarianism.” During revolutionary epochs, wrote Bogdanov, organizations “in the form of hardly noticeable authoritarianism” were all too easily converted into “strict authoritarian discipline and firm rule.” Consequently, it was important to draw up rules of order which were sufficiently elastic to incorporate subsequent changes and needs. Extreme centralization should be eschewed in favor of a “vital intercourse and solidarity” between leaders and followers.¹⁸

Bogdanov’s early warnings may have found their echo in later discussions, including concerns voiced by Bukharin, of “internal decay” or “Party degeneration.” Certainly, the logic of Bogdanov’s argument was to draw attention to authority relations and their particular role in the formation of classes, quite apart from purely economic factors.

It is striking to note that Bogdanov did not assign any role to the Party in his scenarios for the future, nor did he mention the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in any of his works on the political economy. Proletkult designs for the transitional society also forecast a markedly reduced role

¹⁵ A. Bogdanov, “Zakony novoi sovesti,” in *O proletarskoi kul'ture, 1904–1924* (Leningrad and Moscow, 1925), pp. 334–35.

¹⁶ A. Bogdanov, “1918” in *O proletarskoi kul'ture*, p. 101.

¹⁷ “Zakony novoi sovesti,” p. 335.

¹⁸ A. Bogdanov, *Tektologiya: vseobshchaia organizatsionnaia nauka* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 337, 347, 376.

for the Party: trade unions would predominate in the economic sphere, Proletkult in the cultural sphere, and the Party in the political sphere.

While recognizing that Bogdanov offered only an embryonic theory of a new class, with many loose ends, I believe he should still be given his due along with other early theoreticians of a new class, whether Machajski or Trotsky. Biggart's article demonstrates that Bogdanov maintained a lively interest in changing class formations at the time of and subsequent to the revolution.

Soviet scholars today, under the aegis of *glasnost*, are taking a fresh look at Bogdanov and are rapidly discarding the "orthodox" view that Bogdanovism was heretical, utopian, or irrelevant.¹⁹ Instead, they are discovering in Bogdanovism a fertile source of ideas, covering a wide range of topics, which are still as provocative today as they were in Bogdanov's time.²⁰

¹⁹Two conferences devoted to an overview of Bogdanov's thought have taken place in the Soviet Union: one in Vologda (where Bogdanov was once in exile), December 1988, and another in Moscow, April 1989.

²⁰Marot, in contrast, believes that Bogdanovism proved to be politically impotent in 1917, and beyond. Oddly, Marot refers to me in drawing this conclusion. It should be apparent from my entire book, as well as in specific statements, that I find Bogdanovism to be an interesting, significant, and original alternative to Leninism. Nevertheless, my specific statement was that Bogdanovism represented the *force of ideas* (quite different from a *set of ideas*, as Marot quotes me), rather than any genuine political clout. As I go on to explain: "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)."

Alexander Bogdanov and the Problem of the Socialist Intelligentsia

ANDRZEJ S. WALICKI

The two articles on Bogdanov in the present issue of *The Russian Review* concentrate on the same general problem but approach it from different angles and lead to different conclusions.¹

The problem can be defined as the proper understanding of Bogdanov's position in the classical controversy about the intellectuals in the workers' movement. The first article, dealing with Bogdanov as the leader of the Vperedist faction of prerevolutionary bolshevism, presents him as yet another theorist of "the tutelary role of the social Democratic Intelligentsia in the workers' movement";² a theorist whose views on this subject were in fact more consistent and extreme than Lenin's, and could therefore be used by those members of the intelligentsia who wanted, consciously or unconsciously, to constitute themselves into "a new class." The second article, devoted to the postrevolutionary period, subscribes to a more widespread opinion—to the view of Bogdanov as a theorist of a distinctively proletarian culture. From this perspective Bogdanov's Marxism—defined by him as a philosophy of "collectivism" and finding expression in the practices of the Proletkult—appears to be a staunch defense of the autonomy of the workers' movement and a warning *against* the excessive ambitions of the "organizing intelligentsia." In other words, the two authors see Bogdanov as an important contributor to the theory of intelligentsia as a potential "new class" but greatly differ from each other in defining the nature of his contribution: the first regards him as a de facto supporter of the tendency to form such a class, while the second classified him as a theorist for whom the possibility of a new class rule was a threat to the workers' movement, a danger which should have been resisted and avoided.

To bring this difference into a sharp focus, we can say that the first interpretation sees Bogdanov as a friend of the "new class" while the

¹J. E. Marot, "Alexander Bogdanov, *Vpered*, and the Role of the Intellectual in the Workers' Movement," and J. Biggart, "Alexander Bogdanov and the Theory of a 'New Class,'" in this issue of *The Russian Review*, vol. 49 (July 1990). For the sake of convenience I shall not repeat the titles of these articles but refer only to the names of their authors.

²See Marot, p.256.

second treats him as its enemy. A “friendly” view of the “new class,” and of Marxism seen as a theory reflecting its material and ideal interests, was elaborated recently by the American sociologist Alvin W. Gouldner,³ a hostile view of it found its strongest expression in the ideas of Bogdanov’s contemporary, Jan Waclaw Machajski.⁴ Bogdanov’s “belief in the missionary role of Social Democratic intellectuals” (stressed by Marot)⁵ seems to confirm Gouldner’s thesis that commitment to Marxism implies a claim to a privileged status for intellectuals and theorists in the workers’ movement. On the other hand, the fact that the authors of the manifesto *My-Kollektivisty!*, as well as the editors of *Rabochaia Pravda*, presented themselves as the followers of Bogdanov provides an argument for the view that “Bogdanovism” could be seen as a philosophically sophisticated version of “Makhaevism.”⁶

In the opinion of the present writer none of these views renders justice to the complexity of Bogdanov’s philosophy—although both of them contain an element of truth.

First of all, it is impossible to endorse the following presentation of the mainstream Social Democratic thinking on the subject:

Broadly speaking, Social Democratic theorists throughout Europe, led by Kautsky, held that the working class could never, on its own, break out of an essentially reformist, trade-unionist consciousness. Socialist consciousness, Kautsky wrote, was not a “necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle.” On the contrary, it had arisen only “on the basis of profound scientific knowledge” whose “vehicle” was the “*bourgeois intelligentsia*.” Thus, since the working class could not, by itself, attain revolutionary consciousness, intellectuals had to bring this in from outside the working class. Social Democratic theorists fell back, then, on the notion that socialist consciousness could be brought to the working class from without *despite* the non-socialist, reformist character of its day to day practice. Specifically, the working class would have a reformist destiny if not for the intervention of revolutionary intellectuals. This view was given full expression in Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* published in 1902. But Lenin’s ideas were not *sui generis* in Russian Social Democracy, nor in European Social Democracy more generally.

³ See his two books: *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) and *Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals* (Oxford University Press, 1985). For a critique of Gouldner’s views see my article, “Low Marx,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 25, 1985, pp. 41–43.

⁴ See M. S. Shatz, *Jan Waclaw Machajski. A Radical Critic of the Russian Intelligentsia and Socialism* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).

⁵ See Marot, p. 261.

⁶ According to Professor Biggart, the collectivists rejected “the ‘religious’ (sic) Marxism of Lenin and Plekhanov.” This indicates their acquaintance with Machajski’s view of Marxism as a “new religion.” According to Machajski Marxism taught the workers to accept their lot for the sake of their salvation in the remote future. Marxist “laws of history” were, in this view, a sort of a secularized providence.

They were shared by leading Russian Social Democrats, Plekhanov, Martov, Akselrod, and Bogdanov as well as, again, all of European Social Democrats.⁷

This sweeping generalization, heavily influenced by Neil Harding's interpretation of Leninism,⁸ is, in fact, deeply misleading. Despite Lenin's attempt to support his position by quotations from Kautsky, it is not true that Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* was fully consistent with the Marxist "orthodoxy" of his time; it is rather irresponsible to claim that "Lenin's doctrine of the party as vanguard was based on the doctrine formulated by Kautsky."⁹ For Kautsky, as well as Plekhanov and other typical theorists of the Second International, adequate socialist consciousness meant consciousness based upon *scientific* theory of the *objective* laws of development (the Engelsian "understanding of necessity"); hence, the role of intellectuals was seen by them as teachers of "*scientific socialism*" which makes the workers aware of the need to avoid utopian ideas and premature actions. For Lenin, adequate proletarian consciousness meant *revolutionary* consciousness, concentrated on the *ultimate* goal of the movement and subordinated to a tight organizational discipline; hence, the best embodiment of socialist consciousness was in his view the vanguard of the movement, composed of professional revolutionaries, organized in a hierarchical authoritarian way, consciously modeled on the army.¹⁰ It is difficult to understand how this position could be seen as identical with Kautskian "orthodox Marxism." Marot is right when he claims that Lenin became fully aware of this difference only under the impact of the 1905 Revolution; he fails to see, however, that *from the very beginning* Lenin rejected the "objectivist" account of Marxism in the name of class struggle,¹¹ and that his *What Is to Be Done?* stressed the role of professional *revolutionaries*, not of professional *scholars*. The

⁷ See Marot, p. 255.

⁸ See Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1983), vol. 1, chaps. 6–7. According to Harding, Lenin's view of the party (as formulated in his *What Is to Be Done?*) was simply a "restatement of the principles of Russian Marxist orthodoxy" (p. 189), while his conception of the proletarian consciousness "was no more than a development of Kautsky's views in the Russian context" (p. 169).

⁹ The quoted sentence belongs to L. Kolakowski, which shows that Neil Harding's views lack originality. (See L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 2 vols. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978], vol. 2, p. 53. Hence Professor Marot is wrong in attributing the statement of this (erroneous) thesis to Harding (see Marot, n. 43).

¹⁰ Lenin said this explicitly: "Take the army of today. This organization is good because it is *flexible* and is able at the same time to give millions of people *a single will* . . . When, in the pursuit of a simple aim and animated by a single will, millions alter the forms of their communication and their behavior, change the place and the mode of their activities, change their tools and weapons in accordance with the changing conditions and the requirements of the struggle—this is genuine organization" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21, p. 253).

¹¹ See A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), pp. 442–45.

consequences of this should be evident. There is a marked contrast between professional revolutionaries, who aim above all at the seizure of political power, and socialist scholars, who try to attain a fully objective, scientific understanding of necessity; between the revolutionary vanguard, threatened by the spread of a trade-unionist mentality among the workers, and the Social Democratic elite of knowledge, guardians of the *scientific character* of socialism, whose main aim is to avoid the danger of revolutionary voluntarism through coordinating the current activities of the party with the scientific understanding of the objective conditions. The common element between these two positions was their rejection of relying on “spontaneity” or, to put it differently, their elevation of “professionalism.” Another common element was, undoubtedly, the tendency to subordinate the workers’ movement to its alleged historical mission; this explains the possibility of an alliance between Plekhanov and Lenin against the “economist” heresy, seen by both of them as the abandonment of the ultimate historical task of the industrial working class. Nonetheless, the contrast between Leninism and the “orthodox Marxism” of the Second International was quite striking. The “orthodox Marxists” interpreted Marxism in the spirit of positivistic scientism, emphasizing its *objective* side—objective knowledge, “objective factors,” objective laws of social development. Lenin set against this the spirit of “partyiness” (*partiinosť*) in science and much greater reliance on “subjective factors,” such as militant class consciousness, activism, discipline, and organization. Many Russian Marxists, or ex-Marxists (like N. Berdyaev), saw this as a return to the tradition of the populist “subjectivism.” From the international perspective it was evident that Lenin’s crowning achievement—his theory of the party—was a product of peculiarly Russian conditions, having little in common with the experiences of the German Social Democracy. Despite Lenin’s wish to pass for an “Orthodox” Marxist, his elevation of professional revolutionaries had virtually nothing in common with the elevation of bourgeois intellectuals providing the workers movement with a “profound scientific knowledge.” His genuine respect for the Marxist theory was combined with a praxis-oriented approach to theoretical questions: he always tried to find, or to elaborate, a theoretical *justification* for his practice but never allowed himself to be *guided* by purely theoretical, doctrinaire considerations.

To complete the picture, we should add that Lenin’s personal attitude to the intelligentsia was suspicious and contemptuous. The very term “intelligent” had for him a rather pejorative meaning.¹²

¹² Adam Ulam wrote about “Lenin’s pathological hatred of the intelligentsia” (A. B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), p. 213. This hatred found expression in Lenin’s letter to Gorky describing the intelligentsia as “lackeys of capital, who fancy themselves the nation’s brain”

Bogdanov's views on the role of intellectuals in the workers' movement were neither "Kautskian" nor "Leninist." They are explicable only in the context of his own "empiriomonist" philosophy and sociology of knowledge. And the main feature of this philosophy was a resolute rejection of the basic common premises of Kautskian "scientism" and Lenin's "vanguardism": the concept of the "objective truth" and the corresponding notion of an objectively existing world, independent from the knower.¹³ Hence he could subscribe neither to the "objectivist" interpretation of Marxism, nor to the Leninist belief in the cognitive privilege of the revolutionary minority.

For Bogdanov, the existing world—that is, the world *known to us*, as opposed to the metaphysical "things in themselves"—was a product of human collective praxis. The difference between the spiritual and the material, or "subjective" and "objective," world boiled down, in his view, to the difference between individually organized and socially organized experience. Therefore, he could not accept the Engelsian scientism and necessitarianism, typical of the Marxist "orthodoxy" of the Second International. Anticipating Georg Lukacs, he tried to explain this interpretation of Marxism as a historically conditioned illusion of collective consciousness, reflecting some characteristic features of the capitalist production. In other words, the notion of objective, irrevocable laws of social development was for him not a scientific explanation of the human world but, rather, something to be explained in historical and sociological terms.

In ancient and feudal societies, Bogdanov argued, thinking was based on authority; it was marked by a dualism of "spirit" and "matter," a result of the separation of the organizational function from the executive function, and by the manner of conceiving causality as an action (command) or authority; that is, conceiving the regularities as if they were external, transcendent to the universe.¹⁴ In a society of individualized commodity producers, the authoritarian kind of causality gives way to an "abstract causality," that is, to the notion of "necessity," combined with the phenomenon of "social fetishism."¹⁵ The concept of "necessity" involves considering the regularities in phenomena as immanent forces, impersonal and independent of human will. Fetishism in thinking mani-

but in fact "are not the brain but the shit" (Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 4th ed. [Moscow, 1941], vol. 44, p. 227).

¹³ For a more detailed presentation of Bogdanov's philosophy, see L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 2, pp. 232–45. Cf. also A. Walicki, *Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of "Western Marxism"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 65–67 and 133–40.

¹⁴ A. Bogdanov, *Nauka ob obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1914), p. 57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–106 and 124–25.

fects itself in the fact that relationships within the processes of cooperation appear to people as laws of an "objective course of things," and that the entire world of collective human experience comes to be perceived as alien to human beings, uncontrollable, ruled by abstract, impersonal forces. This was, of course, Bogdanov's way of dealing with the problems which we call today "alienation" and reification," and which were totally ignored in the Marxism of Kautsky, Plekhanov, and Lenin. Two decades before Lukacs, he came to see the objectivist and necessitarian account of Marxism as an ideological reflection of the alienation and reification of human relationships, produced by the capitalist development.

Bogdanov did not claim that capitalism had completely eliminated the "authoritarian causality." On the contrary: he saw it as a transitional system in which the authoritarian relationships prevail in the inner organization of each factory while "abstract necessity" rules in the sphere of global production and exchange.¹⁶ "Social fetishism" was for him an expression of the lack of human control over social and economic processes mobilized by the mass-scale production and exchange of commodities. He was careful to stress that the proletariat was a class within capitalist society and, therefore, that its ideology, in the first stages of its formation, was also tinged with fetishistic imagery. He hoped, however, that in its further development the proletarian worldview would liberate itself from fetishism, overcome individualism and dualism, and thus make possible "a monist organization of experience," which, in its turn, would eliminate in human beings the sense of their alienation in the universe and in society. "Abstract causality" will give way to a "causality of labor"—a projection of the general method employed in the technology of complex mechanical production. It will endow people with a higher, collectivistic consciousness and with an ability to transform the world in accordance with freely chosen, nonauthoritarian plans.¹⁷

The consequences of this imminent change will be truly miraculous.¹⁸ The distinction between the individually organized and the socially organized experience will wither away, human beings will liberate themselves from the narrow cages of individual selves and, on the other hand, the social world, and even the world of nature, will cease to be felt by them as an alien, reified, and hostile force. The disappearance of the separation of organizational functions from executive ones will create conditions for a conflictless close cooperation of all people, and thus for a perfect unity of society. Since all differentiation between individuals and

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 153 and 175.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 187–88.

¹⁸See Bogdanov's essay "Ideal poznaniia" in Bogdanov, *Empiriomonism*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Moscow, 1905), vol. 1, pp. 5–63.

groups will be abolished, there will be no room for a chaotic pluralism of conflicting ideals and values. All individual experiences will be harmonized in "a single society with a single ideology."¹⁹

This collectivist utopia contradicted the official view of the Second International that the society of the future would be organized like "one immense factory," that is (as was stressed by Engels), in an authoritarian way,²⁰ and that the realization of freedom would consist in the maximum shortening of the working day. On the other hand, however, it should be recalled that Bogdanov's ideal was deeply rooted in the tradition of Marxist communism. Marx's vision of Communism, as presented especially, though not exclusively, in his early writings, presupposed a harmonious combination of comprehensive rational planning with universal participatory democracy. The contradiction between these two principles was solved by Marx's belief that the liquidation of the blind and divisive forces of the market would liberate the universal species nature of man, thus eliminating the possible basis for conflicting interests. In this view, the "free individuals" of the future were to be free as specimens of the human species, not as individualized beings who pursue their own particular aims; they were to be liberated from reification and alienation, as well as from their own egoism, that is, from their alienation from their general human essence. Marx could sincerely believe that this would be "true freedom" because he was concerned with the freedom of man as a "species being." If freedom means "living according to one's own nature," then the definition of freedom is dependent, of course, on the definition of what constitutes our true nature, our true selves. There cannot be any doubt that for Marx the true self was identical with "communal essence." The same was true about Bogdanov. His ideal of the future triumph of collectivism was based in fact on a careful reconstruction of some semi-forgotten features of Marx's original vision of Communism as universal-human liberation.²¹

Now let us return to the problem of intellectuals in the workers' movement.

Bogdanov, we are told, "recognized the need to impose conscious-

¹⁹Cf. L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 2, p. 443. According to Kolakowski, these conclusions of Bogdanov "are not found in Marx himself" (ibid.). Elsewhere, however, Kolakowski came to the conclusion that "the dream of a perfectly unified human community," with all its totalitarian consequences, was inherent in the original Marxian thought. (See L. Kolakowski, "The Myth of Human Self-Identity," in *The Socialist Idea*, ed. by L. Kolakowski and Stuart Hampshire (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), pp. 18-35.

²⁰See Engels, "On Authority," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Progress Publishers (Moscow, 1977), vol. 2, pp. 376-79.

²¹For a detailed discussion of Marx's view of freedom, as well as his ideal of communism, see A. Walicki, "Karl Marx as a Philosopher of Freedom," *Critical Review. A Journal of Books and Ideas*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Fall, 1988), pp. 10-58.

ness upon the workers from outside through an intellectual elite.”²² In this respect, he represented, allegedly, the same position as all other Social Democrats—from Kautsky to Lenin. In fact, this might be true about Bogdanov’s practice but could not be justified by his theories. The very possibility of “imposing consciousness from outside through an intellectual elite” involves two assumptions: first, that it makes sense to talk about “objective truth”; second, that such truth is accessible only to those people who have a proper professional training. It should be clear that Bogdanov’s philosophy was a radical rejection of both these assumptions. For him, all knowledge derived from praxis: from productive praxis, that is, from people’s intercourse with nature and with themselves in the process of work, or from the rich experiences of the different forms of class struggle.²³ Thus he saw knowledge as always relative, class-bound, sociologically determined and praxis-oriented. In his view, there was nothing “objective” in the so-called “objective laws of development”; this favorite notion of the “necessitarian” Marxists was for him merely an expression of a state of collective consciousness, typical of the developed commodity production. Even more critical—devastatingly critical—was his view of Lenin’s philosophical defense of the notion of “absolute truth,” as set forth in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*.²⁴ Lenin’s use of this notion, Bogdanov argued, showed that his Marxism was deeply rooted in a precapitalist, authoritarian structure of thought, similar to the worldview of the clergy. This explained Lenin’s fanatical intolerance, his belief in the absolute “correctness” of his views and consequently, his arrogant claim that these views should be simply imposed on the masses. Despite his allegiance to Bolshevism, Bogdanov saw Lenin’s authoritarianism as a dangerous relic of the past. He compared it to a vampire which sucked the workers’ blood and prevented them from achieving independence and cultural maturity.²⁵

One of the main tasks of proletarian consciousness was seen by Bogdanov in the final abolition of the “authoritarian dualism of spirit and matter.” This amounted, of course, to the abolition of the intelligentsia as a separate stratum—exclusive owners of “intellectual capital,” or quasi-independent producers of ideas. Hence, he had to be opposed to all conceptions of the leading role of the intelligentsia in the workers’ move-

²²R. C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904–1914* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 45. Marot quotes this view at the very beginning of his article (see above).

²³“The truth,” Bogdanov wrote, “is an organizing form of experience, a guide leading us somewhere in our action and providing a point of support, a hold, in our struggle for life” (A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonism*, vol. 3, p. xiii).

²⁴See A. Bogdanov, “Vera i nauka,” in Bogdanov, *Padenie velikogo fetishizma* (Moscow, 1910), pp. 145–223.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 223.

ment. He believed that the working class would develop a new, regenerative consciousness—one which would liberate humankind from both personal (authoritarian) and impersonal (fetishistic) forms of enslavement. This profound belief in the workers' creativity, combined with a resolute rejection of Kautskian "scientism" and Lenin's "vanguardism," was a distinctive feature of Bogdanov's "collectivism." In this respect Bogdanov was closer to Sorelian syndicalism than to the "scientific Marxism" of his time (both in its "social democratic" and in its "Jacobin" version).

Nevertheless, there was also another side of the coin. Despite his emphasis on the purity and authenticity of proletarian consciousness, Bogdanov did not share Sorel's—let alone Machajski's—hostility towards the intelligentsia. He did not accuse the intelligentsia of consciously deceiving the workers and did not proclaim the need of eliminating them from the workers' movement. On the contrary: he readily acknowledged that the workers lacked "formal intellectual discipline"²⁶ and that the intellectuals could help them in expressing their class worldview without distorting its content. He was aware that the proletarian class rule should not be substituted by the rule of the technical intelligentsia but, nonetheless, saw the increasing role of the latter as a progressive phenomenon, paving the way for the proletarian victory. He interpreted empiriocriticism as a philosophical expression of the worldview of the technical intelligentsia and precisely because of this treated it as a good introduction to his own "empiriomonism."²⁷ Similarly, he was not horrified and scandalized by the hypothesis that the Soviet state might be ruled, in the transitional period, by "scientific engineers" rather than workers.²⁸ His emphasis on the role of adequate collective consciousness, that is, on cultural maturity, made him sensitive to the dangers of a premature seizure of power. He belonged to those socialists who correctly predicted that without raising workers' consciousness to an adequate level the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order would not bring the intended results. Therefore, he could reconcile himself with the rule of the technical, or the "organizing," intelligentsia, with relative ease: after all, it was much better, in his eyes, than the bourgeois rule. It was also better than popular anarchy. The workers' rule should be *a result* of their maturity, their actual hegemony in the sphere of material and cultural production.

At this juncture it is proper to discuss Professor Marot's remarks on Bogdanov's "pedagogical perspective." No doubt: Bogdanov did not be-

²⁶ Marot rightly stresses this in his article.

²⁷ A. Bogdanov, "Filosofia sovremennogo estestvoispytatela," in *Ocherki filosofii kollektivizma* (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp. 51–59.

²⁸ Cf. Biggart, p. 275.

lieve in a fully automatic development of class consciousness and, therefore, put emphasis on the need for pedagogical activity. We can agree that “in this respect, he was the Peter Lavrov of Russian Marxism.”²⁹ But this also means that he conceived pedagogy as a *maieutic* activity, as helping the workers to develop a cultural consciousness of their own, and not as “imposing consciousness from without.” The notion of a consciousness introduced from without was deeply alien to his philosophy, as sanctifying the authoritarian dualism. Maybe he represented a sort of “pedagogical authoritarianism” in his actual practice. But even so, it is difficult to understand how Lenin could be seen as a less authoritarian figure. Pedagogy is not necessarily authoritarian; only the most old-fashioned educators identify pedagogical activity with an “authoritarian tutelage.” Bogdanov’s antiauthoritarianism might not be consistent but Lenin’s authoritarianism, as expressed in his conception of the party and in his general interpretation of Marxism, was perfectly consistent, both in theory and in practice.

Despite his antiauthoritarian stand, Bogdanov was never an ally of the liberal-democratic currents within the workers’ movement. On the contrary, he deserves to be seen as a preacher of a truly totalitarian utopia—a utopia of an absolute unity of society, in which there will be no distinction between individual and collective experience. This is why the task of developing an adequate proletarian consciousness was tantamount in his view to the elaboration and deep internalization of a “total worldview” which would lay foundations for an absolute ideological unity of the society of the future. Marot is right that in stressing the need of systematic indoctrination Bogdanov went much further than Lenin.³⁰

Thus, we can define Bogdanov’s views as a sort of an “antiauthoritarian totalitarianism.” From the classical-liberal point of view, this is not a contradiction in terms. The concepts of “authoritarianism” and “totalitarianism” should be carefully distinguished. “Authoritarianism” is the opposite of the popular sovereignty, that is, of the *collective* self-determination, while “totalitarianism” is the opposite of liberal individualism, that is, of *individual* freedom, *individual* property, and inalienable rights of *individual* human beings.³¹ We are used to authoritarian forms

²⁹ See Marot, p. 254.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 259.

³¹ It follows from this that democracy is logically opposed to authoritarianism but not necessarily to totalitarianism. In his study on “Liberalism” F. A. Hayek clearly formulated this conclusion: “The difference between the two principles stands out most clearly if we consider their opposites: with democracy it is authoritarian government; with liberalism it is totalitarianism. Neither of the two systems necessarily excludes the opposite of the other: a democracy may well wield totalitarian powers, and it is at least conceivable that an authoritarian government might act on liberal principles” (F. A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* [London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978], p. 143).

of totalitarianism but it should be clear that a perfect totalitarianism would eliminate the need for an authoritarian government. Bogdanov's ideal of a perfect collectivism was unmistakably totalitarian since it left no room for individualistic freedom and aimed at the extinction of individualized consciousness as such. At the same time it *had* to be antiauthoritarian, because the very notion of authoritarianism assumes the difference between the rulers and the ruled, which was clearly incompatible with the ideal of an absolute social unity.

In his interpretation of Marxism, Bogdanov stressed the importance of the young Marx (especially his "Theses on Feuerbach"), consciously opposing his "philosophy of praxis" to the Engelsian codification of Marxist thought and, of course, to the positivistic Marxism of the Second International.³² In this respect it is legitimate to regard him as an important forerunner of Antonio Gramsci, the idol of the "Western Marxists." The similarity between their ideas is sometimes striking. Both of them interpreted Marxism as a philosophy of collective, historical praxis, that is, as a form of "historical subjectivism,"³³ incompatible with such traditional notions as "objective truth," "the objectively existing world," or "objective laws of history." Both proclaimed the need of an authentic self-activity of the workers, stressing at the same time that the working class must be educated, raised to the level of adequate consciousness, able to produce a culture of their own, and to become thereby a *hegemonic* class in society. Both rejected the Jacobin, as well as the social democratic, model of the party, emphasizing instead voluntary unanimity of the masses. Both saw the role of party intellectuals as "organic intellectuals" of the working class who should help the workers in elaborating and assimilating a comprehensive view of the world. Both saw the society of the future as a triumph of unlimited collectivism, doing away with all pluralisms and substituting the unanimous collective will for discordant individual wills.

It is important to note, especially in context of the present discussion, that Gramsci's emphasis on education was often seen as a sort of "pedagogical deviation." Thus, for instance, Luciano Pellicani accused him of propagating "the pedagogical dictatorship of the intellectuals over

³² As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the anti-Engelsian and anti-positivistic interpretation of Marxism, consciously opposed to the Marxist orthodoxy of the Second International, emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, that is, much earlier than Lukacs' *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (1923). Cf. A. Walicki, *Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Polish Beginnings of the "Western Marxism."* It should also be stressed that Brzozowski's ideas were not unknown in Bogdanov's philosophical circle. Cf. A. Walicki, "Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Russian 'Neo-Marxists,'" *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer, 1973), pp. 155–70. See Brzozowski's "Geschichtsmaterialismus also Kultur philosophie," *Neue Zeit*, 1907, no. 31, pp. 153–60 and his "Anti-Engels" (in Polish, 1910). Cf. Walicki, *Stanislaw Brzozowski and the Polish Beginning of the "Western Marxism"*, pp. 111–23 and 156–60.

³³ Cf. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 2, p. 440, and vol. 3, p. 238.

the workers,” with the aim of establishing a “total control over human life by the keepers of orthodoxy.”³⁴ Professor Marot has leveled the same accusations against Bogdanov, but failed to grasp Bogdanov’s originality. In his opinion, Bogdanov’s ideas on the role of intellectuals in the workers’ movement converged with the views of “all pre–1905 Social Democratic theorists.”³⁵ In fact, however, this is not true. He was one of the first radical critics of the Social Democratic account of Marxism, anticipating in many respects the ideas of Antonio Gramsci.

To sum up, as a theorist of the desirable role of the intelligentsia Bogdanov was neither a Leninist nor a classical Social Democrat. He rejected the very notion of “scientific socialism” as an objective body of knowledge which can be introduced from without into the workers’ movement. Hence, he could not see intellectuals as cognitively privileged and deserving to become a new ruling class. He stressed, however, the utmost importance of transforming the existing proletarian consciousness into a comprehensive, all-embracing worldview and *this*, in his view, had to be done with the help of professionally trained philosophers, social theorists, and historians. But this concession to the intellectuals had nothing in common with a desire to perpetuate their “tutelary role,” let alone their “pedagogical dictatorship” over the workers. On the contrary, the final aim of his collectivism was to abolish the “authoritarian dualism of the spirit and matter” and thus to put an end to the very existence of the intelligentsia as a separate stratum.

On the whole, Bogdanov was a complex, original, and *systematic* thinker. His views on different subjects were always connected with his general theoretical conceptions and, therefore, should be studied with a thorough knowledge of his major philosophical works. His interpretation of historical materialism as a philosophy of praxis belongs, certainly, to the best theoretical achievements of the Russian Marxism. His *political* relevance for the problems of contemporary communism is, however, mostly negative. His “collectivism” deserves to be known as an insightful reconstruction of the communist utopia and an unintended proof of its inherent totalitarianism. It embodies a system of values which had not withstood the test of time, as well as the test of human nature. Thus, it can help us to understand that the current *perestroika* is a burial of communism and not its renewal.

³⁴L. Pellicani, *Gramsci. An Alternative Communism?* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), p. 14.

³⁵See Marot, 254.

Red Queen or White Knight? The Ambivalences of Bogdanov

AILEEN M. KELLY

“Truth is not a simple copy of the facts, not a petty and exact representation of them: it is an instrument for gaining control over them.” The author of these words would have appreciated the reasons for the current interest in his ideas. As Lenin’s only serious rival for political and intellectual leadership before 1917, Bogdanov’s importance in the history of the Bolshevik party has never been in dispute; nevertheless, he was consigned to obscurity until, in an attempt to respond adequately to complex developments in contemporary Soviet politics, revisionist historians like Stephen Cohen began to question the totalitarian paradigm of orthodox sovietology. Questions of alternatives are being reopened, figures like Bogdanov and Bukharin reexamined, not as a wistful backward look along avenues closed by history, but as an analysis of the implications of choices that have contemporary programmatic significance. The current Soviet involvement in this discussion gives those of us devoted to the study of history’s failures a new and heady sense of being at the center of things, and imposes an unfamiliar responsibility: the question of whether such figures represented genuine alternatives is no longer academic (in the popular sense of irrelevant).

On this question recent scholarship on Bogdanov is sharply divided, as illustrated by the two most recent books on the subject. Zenovia Sochor, like Jutta Scherrer in her study of *Vpered’s* party schools,¹ sees the main significance of Bogdanovism in a “grassroots” challenge to the authoritarianism of the monolithic Leninist party, an attempt, highly relevant to current debates, to create a socialism with a human face. But Robert Williams sees a symbiotic relationship between Bogdanov’s collectivism and Lenin’s authoritarianism.² Surprisingly, there has been very little discussion between these two opposing points of view. Sochor notes that Williams’ study appeared too late for her to discuss, but she refers to my interpretation of the Lenin-Bogdanov dispute (radically different from

¹See *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, no. 3, 1978.

²Williams, Robert. *The Other Bolsheviks. Lenin and His Critics, 1904–14*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

her own) without attempting to engage with it. Clearly, there are significant conceptual differences between approaches to this dispute, which must be spelled out before any real discussion of the “Bogdanov alternative” can take place. Such clarification cannot be made in the spirit of polite nonengagement: thus, John Marot’s essay, with its swipes at most of the previous contributions to the question, is well timed, the more so in its provocative stance on the issue that is most relevant to current concern with “alternatives”: the relation between theory and political practice.

The extraordinary convolutions of Bogdanov’s relationship with Lenin have a *Through the Looking-glass* quality, with two Red Queens each insisting that words mean what they intend them to mean. To sum up: Bogdanov develops a voluntarist philosophy opposed to the orthodox Marxist materialism professed by Lenin and Plekhanov, but he joins the Bolshevik fraction because he believes that the political tactics which have caused Lenin’s split with the Mensheviks are consistent with his own philosophy. Lenin having pronounced philosophy an extraneous issue, they collaborate for five years despite disagreements over the tactics which had brought them together. But then Lenin expels Bogdanov from the Bolshevik fraction for reasons both of tactical and theoretical dissidence, after writing a book to show that philosophy is an instrument of the class war and that only materialism is consistent with the standpoint of the proletariat. Bogdanov now argues that Lenin’s treatment of him and his group demonstrates Lenin to be an orthodox Marxist in the mold of Plekhanov—but the Mensheviks continue to assert that Lenin’s revolutionary tactics are thoroughly Bogdanovist. In 1920 Lenin has Bogdanov’s Proletkult declared to be anti-Marxist, his attack on it being based on a view of the party’s role which in 1904 both Bogdanov and the Mensheviks had defined as contrary to orthodox Marxism.

In this tangle of contradictions there are two lines of consistency: Lenin’s political practice, based on unchanging concepts of power and organization; and Bogdanov’s philosophy, whose expression in the Proletkult movement springs from theories elaborated at the beginning of the century. The question on which analysts are most divided is whether (as Bogdanov believed before 1909) those theories were consistent with Leninist practice, or (as he proclaimed after his break with Lenin) they expressed an antiauthoritarian alternative to it. In the first case, why did their split take place at all? In the second, why did it not take place much sooner? Most commentators have believed that the answer to these questions lies in unraveling the tangle of philosophical theory and political tactics in the relationship of the two men.

Marot’s approach parts company with all these by focussing exclusively on what he holds to be the key principle of Bogdanov’s political

strategy: the tutelary role of the intellectual vis-à-vis the proletariat in bringing about a socialist transformation of consciousness. The paradox which he emphasizes—that Bogdanov admired only those innate aptitudes and spontaneous aspirations of the workers which corresponded to his theoretical specifications—is inherent in all cults of spontaneity which are rooted in philosophical abstraction, but it has been given little attention by those scholars who have interpreted the conflict between Lenin and the Proletkult as a genuine opposition between hierarchy and cooperation, a party elite and a worker-intelligentsia: a confrontation (as Sochor has put it) between Lenin's vanguard theory and the more truly Marxist idea of the liberation of the workers by the workers themselves. But Lenin's party and the Proletkult were united on one common belief: in the indispensability of the intelligentsia. In the first case, they assume conscious control over the spontaneous workers' movement; in the second, they offer themselves in the humble role of specialist advisors, to be "utilized," as Bogdanov liked to put it, in the process of the systematization of knowledge (as set out in Bogdanov's works on organizational science) that is the necessary preliminary to the creation of a proletarian culture. The intelligentsia are precluded by their class origins from creating the collectivist ethic of the future, but they alone can define it, and expose deviations from it, because it is they who invented the rules of the game.

In highlighting the resemblance between Lenin's and Bogdanov's views on the relation of the intelligentsia to the spontaneous working class movement, Marot has identified an area in need of conceptual definition. Before contributions to this subject can properly address each other's arguments, we need to agree on what Bogdanov and Lenin respectively meant by the concepts of spontaneity and consciousness.

But conceptual clarification is not a feature of Marot's polemic. He views past attempts (such as my own) to link the political relationship of the two with their philosophical beliefs as arbitrary exercises, inasmuch as they are not mindful of the facts. The facts in question are two: that in spite of their philosophical differences the pair collaborated for some years, and that Lenin subsequently separated his critique of Bogdanov's philosophy from his political disagreement with him. These facts suffice in Marot's view to prove that tactics and not theory caused the split. None of their well-known tactical disagreements was of itself a sufficient cause; but Lenin's renunciation of his "vanguard" theory would undoubtedly have been more than sufficient. Unfortunately, this startling claim is itself not over-mindful of the facts. It is true that in 1905 Lenin declared the working class to have arrived "spontaneously" at a social-democratic outlook, but even then was careful to note the importance of the party's efforts over the preceding decade in turning that spontaneity into con-

sciousness.³ His idea of admitting the workers into the party in large numbers was killed by the government reaction after 1905, and in 1907 (that is, two years before his break with Bogdanov), he reverted to his former concept of a party of professional revolutionaries who would keep the trade unions under strict ideological control lest they go in the wrong direction. This mistrust of spontaneity was fundamental to Lenin's concept of political hegemony—and the dominant factor in the crushing of the Proletkult: as Robert Tucker has pointed out in his essay in *Bolshevik Culture*,⁴ the Party resolution of 1920 on Proletkult was a restatement of the “vanguard” principle of *What Is to Be Done?*

It seems to me that Marot's unconvincing hypothesis is the result of an attempt to divorce tactics from theory no less artificial than the construction of a one-to-one relationship between them would be (I have seen no study that has been simplistic enough to attempt the latter). To find my own article quoted in this respect is puzzling: its principal argument was that the free-will/determinism debate among the Russian Marxists transcended factional positions; that it represented an instance of a conflict in the outlook of the Russian intelligentsia as a whole. More specifically, in the article in question, I argued that the split between Lenin and Bogdanov arose only indirectly over the philosophical questions of free will and determinism: its immediate cause was political tactics in the furtherance of what was always Lenin's primary concern: the political dominance of his fraction. Bogdanov's usefulness to him in 1904–1908 in this regard far outweighed their philosophical differences; but subsequently Bogdanov increasingly became a focus for opposition to Lenin's authority (even if he submitted on the *otzovist* issue, he remained, as Marot concedes, a source of moral support for this and other groupings who attacked Lenin's authoritarianism). Simultaneously, Lenin's standing in the social-democratic movement was undermined by Menshevik propaganda identifying him with Bogdanov's heresy. Hence the writing of *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*. Marot quotes Joravsky against my view that Lenin's philosophical differences with Bogdanov were connected with the political split. But Joravsky's argument is directed against a quite different target—those (mainly Soviet) scholars who claim that *Lenin* made such a connection in his work, by identifying Bogdanov's Machism with a specific political deviation. As Joravsky points out, Lenin was careful not to do so, for tactical reasons. In attacking Machism as a philosophical and not a political heresy he was separating the issue of political factions from philosophical deviation, thus depriving the Mensheviks of a weapon to use against him. Lenin was not very interested in ideas, but he recognized

³ Lenin, V. I. *O programme partii*.

⁴ Abbot Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, eds., *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

their tactical importance; hence the remarkable fact that he devoted nearly a year to the study of philosophy in preparation for writing his blast against Machism. His correspondence during that period leaves no doubt as to his anxiety about the political damage that the charge of heresy could do to him, and his concern to weigh this damage against the continued advantages of the alliance with Bogdanov—hence his instructions to his sister to tone down his criticism of Bogdanov as the work was prepared for the press. By February 1909 increasing political tension between him and the Bogdanovists had tipped the scales—the instructions were countermanded. Clearly, therefore, the philosophical issue was inextricably woven into the tactical considerations that forced the final break.

My disagreement with Marot is much deeper on the related issue of whether, as Lenin's opponents maintained, a plausible connection could be established between Bolshevik practice and empiriocritical theory. Curiously, his main argument against this is that Lenin himself appeared to discount linkages of this sort. Joravsky does not, as he implies, identify with Lenin's views: he merely summarizes them. In fact, Joravsky's analysis of the role of tactical considerations in Lenin's riposte to the Machists supports the Mensheviks' (and my own) view that such a connection existed. As I have argued elsewhere, the significance of Lenin's treatise lies not in its supremely uninteresting philosophical content, but in when Lenin wrote it and why. In 1905 he had blandly declared to Plekhanov that he could not see the relevance of Machism to the question of social revolution. Four years later, he devoted a book to demonstrating the contrary: there are two main "parties" in philosophy, corresponding to the fundamental divisions in society. Idealism serves the interests of the exploiters, materialism represents those of science and revolution. Political tactics dictated Lenin's sudden concern with philosophical orthodoxy; the same tactics dictated that he should continue until early 1909, to seek to preserve an alliance with a man whom he had now defined as an ideological agent of reaction. But this utilitarian attitude toward philosophical truth is itself an epistemological position: as Lenin was reminded by his opponents, the Bogdanovists believed that the criterion of the truth or falsity of a theory was its degree of usefulness to the party of progress in its fight for domination. The Mensheviks argued that Lenin's authoritarian tactics reflected the two fundamental characteristics of Bogdanov's philosophy: a subjective arbitrariness in defining truth, and a rigid dogmatism in enforcing any such definition when once made. Hence Deborin's claim: "the Machists are conscious Bolsheviks, who give meaning to the practice and tactics of the latter, and Bolshevik tacticians are unwitting Machists."

I believe that this is a useful insight into the unarticulated premises of Bolshevik practice; but I would not go so far as Marot in labeling it a Menshevik position, as I am even more reluctant than he to look for

simplistic one-to-one equations between theories and political groupings. Also, he exaggerates somewhat in defining the aim of my own analysis as the validation of their views. If Bogdanovist theory was consistent with aspects of Leninist practice, it was at odds with other aspects that were not in the Mensheviks' tactical interests to stress. The view that Lenin and Bogdanov shared a common platform in *What Is to Be Done?* needs much more qualification than Marot has given it. The difference in their interpretation of the relation of consciousness to spontaneity was not merely a matter of emphasis: it sprang from those lofty philosophical concepts which Marot would like to exclude from discussions of political tactics. Lenin genuinely believed in the (then) orthodox Marxist tenet of the primacy of social being over consciousness: he held that a "socialist consciousness" would be the result of the material transformation of productive relations, according to the historical timetable whose laws had been discovered by Marx—not the effect of the pedagogical efforts of the Bolshevik vanguard, whose role he saw as a tactical response to the problem on which Marx had left no guidance: the building of socialism in a backward country. The tutelary role of the vanguard before the revolution was merely to indoctrinate the working class with sufficient political awareness to ensure the seizure of power. On the moral and cultural profile of the new socialist who would emerge in the final phase of the revolution, Lenin had little to say. But in Bogdanov's philosophy, this new man must be the maker of the revolution. The demand of *What Is to Be Done?*—"give us an organisation of revolutionaries and we will overturn Russia!"—expressed for Bogdanov the revolt of human freedom against all unchanging laws (including those formulated by Marx), all "fetishes" which reflected the authoritarian relationships of the past. He identified Lenin's voluntarism with his own vision of revolution—a process initiated, not followed, by the systematic and total restructuring of consciousness according to an all-embracing system of knowledge and values whose principles he was to set down in his "organizational science." Not, I suggest, a "strict interpretation" of Lenin's theses.

In claiming that Lenin and Bogdanov saw eye to eye on the party's tutelary role as outlined in *What Is to Be Done?*, Marot is making the same mistake as Bogdanov himself, who in 1909 accused Lenin of deviating from a platform which they had never shared. As quoted by Marot, the vocabulary in which each formulated his concept of the party's tutelary role is very revealing. Lenin sees it as inculcating "political knowledge"; Bogdanov calls for a "thorough theoretical working-over" of the people's consciousness, a "full and complete" socialist education, aimed at constructing an "integral class-based world outlook" grounded in an "organized system of knowledge." To preserve the logic of his argument, Marot is forced to represent Lenin's materialist view of the transformation of consciousness through revolutionary struggle as somehow

the result of his experience of 1905. It was not: he had adhered to this orthodoxy, as laid down by Plekhanov, since becoming a Marxist. Neither Lenin nor Bogdanov ever deviated from their professed views on the relation of social being to consciousness. The conflict between them arose as the consequences of these (opposing) positions in terms of political tactics became increasingly apparent. Before 1917, Lenin saw Bogdanov's reversal of the orthodox order of priorities as distracting the party from its immediate goal of seizing power. After the revolution, the conceptual difference between their views of the party intelligentsia's role became much more sharply evident, when the Proletkult insisted that culture be freed from bourgeois influence, and from what Bogdanov saw as the illusion of the independent "I." Again with Marx's historical timetable (adapted to Russian circumstances) in mind, Lenin argued that the socialism of the as yet distant future could be built only on the assimilation of bourgeois culture in its widest sense—hence the relative freedom of the arts under NEP and the encouragement of bourgeois specialists in all spheres of culture. His final crushing of the Proletkult, whose fate was sealed by its demand for autonomy from the party, is an instance of that urge to dominate which Bogdanov had perceived to be the moving force of Bolshevism; but his complex relations with Bogdanov cannot be understood unless one takes account of the genuine ambivalence in his outlook between a crude, "Plekhanovist" determinism and a "Bogdanovist" activism. It is making no arbitrary connection between theory and practice to point out that in the early 1920s Lenin's materialism led to much more modest pretensions at ideological control than Bogdanov's voluntarism.

The view that Bogdanov was more Leninist than Lenin (on which Marot and I, for different reasons, seem to agree) will no doubt continue to be challenged as strongly as it has been in Sochor's recent book, which has emphasized Bogdanov's critique of authoritarianism on the Left, and his prescient fear that the fetishes denounced by Marx would survive the transformation of property relationships and give rise to a new managerial class. For some commentators, his collaboration with the Bolsheviks before 1909 would seem to have been redeemed by his subsequent fate as their victim, which has transformed his historical image from henchman to hero. He is seen as a gadfly, challenging bureaucratic orthodoxy with the disruptive force of his idealism. The Proletkult has been represented as a focus of opposition to political authoritarianism, and its destruction as the first triumph of the new orthodoxy against experimentation in literature and art. Bogdanov's most enthusiastic defenders admit that his ideas were utopian, but emphasize that they represented a strong moral force which ran counter to the dominant direction of the party.

Moral forces are unquantifiable, but links of inspiration and leadership between ideologists and political groups can be established with greater accuracy, and John Biggart's article, which finds insufficient

grounds for assuming such leadership on Bogdanov's part, seems to point to the need for a reassessment of Bogdanov's role as a source of antiauthoritarian opposition in the 1920s. His reluctance to be explicit in the application of his "new class" theory to Soviet conditions, or in his support for those who saw themselves as the political heirs of *Vpered*, can be partly explained by the considerable dangers involved in such support. Nevertheless, his ambivalent relationship with *Russkaia pravda* (general approval of its views but no formal association with it, as he put it to Dzerzhinskii) closely resembles his attitude to the otzovists before 1909, when the penalties for "formal association" with dissidents were of a much smaller magnitude. It repeats a pattern of uneasy compromise between rebellion and conformity, dictated by a philosophy which was based on two ultimately irreconcilable principles: antiauthoritarianism and collectivism. Bogdanov's theories liberated the personality from the tyranny of fetishes, only to enslave it to the fetish of the collective, demanding of it not just subordination to the collective will, but total agreement with it, in preparation for the happy day when the individual ego (which he described as a "temporary adaptation" to cope with social strife) would vanish altogether. As I have argued elsewhere, this combination of anti-individualism with a denial of the binding force of external norms and laws has clear totalitarian implications: once the concept of objective, binding laws (to which Lenin, at least some of the time, adhered) is removed, and the source of moral, aesthetic, and even scientific truth is lodged in the collective experience, there is no place for individual dissidence. After the revolution as before, Bogdanov's opposition to an authoritarian leader clashed with a belief in the necessity for the organizational unity and discipline of the socialist collective, leading him into self-contradiction at every step. Thus, before 1909, he called for dissident groups within the party to be allowed to express their ideas freely, but it was Bogdanov, not Lenin, who demanded a clearly defined Bolshevik (as opposed to Marxist) line in philosophy. He rejected all absolute and eternal truths, yet believed that mankind was moving towards a unitary vision of the world, in which all contradictions would be finally resolved. Writing on the Proletkult, he denounced the herd instinct, defended initiative, freedom of criticism and of artistic inspiration, but saw it as axiomatic that in a socialist society these qualities would never lead to conflict. As long as Lenin could be clearly distinguished from the "collective," his critique of authoritarianism had a target, but in the confusion of intraparty disputes his collectivism deprived him of that basic method of orientation common to most dissidents—individual conscience. If (as Biggart believes may be inferred) he provided a moral focus for dissent in the twenties, then the moral message was a very ambiguous one—and nowhere more so than in the ideology of the Proletkult. It is disturbing that Sochor's thoughtful study on Bogdanov seeks to resurrect a myth long since

laid to rest by E. J. Brown (in *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928–32*): namely, that the official theory of Soviet literature can be traced back to the defeat of free experimentation, in the form of the Proletkult, by bureaucratic diktat. As Brown pointed out, the simple class theory of art which became the cornerstone of socialist realism was first formulated by Bogdanov, in whose activist philosophy the primary function of aesthetic perception (as of all other forms of cognition) was to organize collective labor in the struggle for socialism. Hence, the experimentation of the Proletkult studios was intended, in theory if not always in practice, to take the form of a strictly disciplined exercise in the elaboration of a consistently proletarian outlook devoid of all “individualist” tendencies. The opposition of its theorists to party or government supervision was based mainly on the suspicion that the latter contained bourgeois elements which would infect the ideological purity of proletarian art. Lenin’s hostility to the exclusivist pretensions of the Proletkult was a major factor in its suppression, but one of its heirs—the On Guard movement—was to demand the support of a reluctant party in enforcing the hegemony of “proletarian” writers over their rivals. The natural symbiosis of proletarian literature and party power was achieved in the literary shockworkers and the writers’ brigades of the 1930s; but Stalin’s engineers of human souls can date their pedigree at least to 1920, when a Proletkult resolution emphasized that in the task of socialist construction “art can organize feelings in exactly the same way as ideological propaganda organizes thought.”

Clearly, in the 1920s Bogdanovism did not represent a libertarian alternative to the Bolshevik party. It shared a common goal—mass mobilization in the name of political power—with Lenin’s authoritarianism, and its implicit logic pointed the way to totalitarian despotism as the optimum means for securing that goal. Both before and after the revolution Lenin was prepared to tolerate dissenting ideas when they did not directly threaten the political hegemony of his party, to allow for “neutral areas” (as he had termed philosophy in his deal with Bogdanov). Bogdanov’s contribution was to deny that such areas could exist, to extend the concept of collective mobilization from a tactical method to the permanent condition of human existence, engulfing every sphere of public and private life, and to offer the services of the intelligentsia to oversee that mobilization in all fields of intellectual creativity. It has been persuasively argued that totalitarian despotism was a potential inherent in the dynamic of Lenin’s concept of power, that it only needed the demands of the “revolution from above” at the end of the twenties to develop that potential to its full extent. Nevertheless, it was due in no small degree to Bogdanov’s influence that the crushing of the Soviet intelligentsia was achieved with the ideological collusion of some of its most idealistic members.

It is equally true that Bogdanov had a genuine aversion to the au-

thoritarianism of intellectual elites, and showed considerable insight into the nature of future bureaucratic tyrannies. Hopefully, the present discussion, by departing from the "for or against" tradition of writing on Bogdanov, will help to focus attention on this fundamental contradiction, which I believe to be the most significant aspect of Bogdanov's ideas. An examination of its intellectual and emotional roots may shed light on issues of far more intrinsic and current importance than the question of whether Bogdanov was a hero or a villain.

Bogdanov's writings are a rich source on the nature of intellectual utopianism, but they can be exploited as such only when they are removed from the narrow context of intraparty disputes and set against the background of the ideals and aspirations of the Russian intelligentsia as a whole.

John Biggart has pointed to the fact that Bogdanov's critique of the "new class" was anticipated in Bakunin's attack on Marx half a century before. The comparison does not end there. Bakunin, like Bogdanov, combined a sweeping attack on authorities which fettered human self-expression with a call for the renunciation of the ego in the name of an abstract collective whole. Both linked their exaltation of this spontaneous collective force with authoritarian prescriptions on the path that spontaneity should take (reinforced, in Bakunin's case, with projects for a dictatorship which would ensure that it kept to the right path). The contradictions in Bakunin's thought conform to a recognizable pattern: from the middle of the last century, the cult of the omnipotent will, combined with an urge to identify with some transcendent, all-embracing whole, has provided much of the emotional impetus behind doctrines and movements through which intellectuals estranged from their societies have sought to satisfy both their desire to act and their need to belong. In spite of the scientific terminology in which they are clothed, the paradoxes of Bogdanov's thought follow a similar pattern. The fantasies of German Idealism were called on to solve a crisis of collective identity by a generation of "superfluous men" frustrated in all their aspirations by the despotism of Nicholas I. In a similar way, the fantasies of Bogdanov's "collective consciousness" and Lunacharsky's "godbuilding" can be seen as responses to another crisis of identity after 1905, when political reaction, combined with the growth of an independent mass movement and the "desertion" of many intellectuals into the ranks of the professions, seemed to deprive the intelligentsia of the moral leadership which it had traditionally seen as its social role. Bogdanov kept his distance from Lunacharsky's "religion of humanity" with its belief in the immortality of the collective and its deification of its "infinite vital force"; but there is a similar mystical tinge to his exaltation of the will (not for nothing were the Bogdanovists labeled "Nietzschian Marxists"), and his ecstatic visions of the individual's ultimate "fusion" with the whole, the abandon-

ment of the “illusion” of separate personality for the “reality” of collective existence. His belief (unsupported by empirical argument) that mankind was proceeding toward a unified cognition in which all the painful contradictions of being and consciousness would be resolved is a classic expression of the Idealist longing for the end of alienation.

The debate about whether Bogdanovism represents a genuine alternative to the other “isms” which have plagued Europe this century has no doubt still some way to run. I suggest that a more fruitful line of inquiry might be its wider significance as an instance of the manner in which alienated intellectuals seek (even if unconsciously) to utilize mass movements as means for their own self-realization. Bogdanov showed some awareness of this danger, and with the best of intentions, groped for a solution. He might have succeeded better had he not been part of the problem.