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LENIN, BUKHARIN, AND THE MARXIAN CONCEPTS OF DIALECTICS AND IMPERIALISM: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS*

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Many writers have stressed the affinity between Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy (1915) and Lenin's Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916). On the other hand, Lenin alone made a serious study of Hegel's Science of Logic. This paper seeks to show the influence of Lenin's 1914-15 Hegel studies on his concept of imperialism. It does so by contrasting Lenin's book on imperialism with that of his Bolshevik colleague, Bukharin, who had not made an in-depth study of Hegel. This paper strives to address in this way contemporary debates concerning the relationship of dialectics to economics around diverse writers such as Dunayevskaya, Lukacs, Marcuse, and Gramsci. It argues that contemporary Marxist theory needs to ground itself in the work of Hegel as well as that of Marx.

The concept of Marxist dialectics and the theory of imperialism are two major topics of discussion in twentieth century Marxism and critical sociology. On both topics, the Russian Marxists V. I. Lenin and Nikolai Bukharin stand out as serious and important theoreticians. Especially on the theory of imperialism, the dominant tendency in recent discussion has been to stress the similarities between Lenin and Bukharin (Kiernan, 1974; Brewer, 1980; Mommsen, 1980).

At the same time, much recent scholarship has tended to stress Bukharin's originality and creativity as a thinker and to see him as a precursor of Eurocommunism, while downplaying Lenin's theoretical originality (Cohen, 1980, 1985; Haynes, 1985; Medvedev, 1980). Two massive recent studies of Lenin (Cliff, 1975-79; Harding, 1978-81) have downplayed the issue of dialectics, while stressing that Bukharin's theoretical writings were the more original ones. These studies stress that Bukharin's 1915-16 writings on imperialism and the state each preceded Lenin's writings on those subjects. But once the issue of dialectics is made more central to the discussion of Lenin and Bukharin as theorists, sharper differences begin to emerge, and Lenin's writings no longer seem to be following the lead of those by Bukharin. In fact, while Bukharin was finishing his 1915 study of imperialism, Lenin was still working on his study of Hegel's dialectic, a topic which Bukharin never delved into in any depth.

This article assumes both men to have been major and original Marxist theoreticians and key leaders of the revolution, in order to engage in a critical discussion of their theoretical importance for today.

LENIN ON DIALECTICS

Ever since Marx's death, the nature of the Marxian dialectic and its relationship to the Hegelian dialectic has been a topic of debate. Both Friedrich Engels and official Russian commentators have stressed the materialist and

^{*}Earlier versions of this paper were presented to a session on theories of imperialism at the Allied Social Sciences Association (Economics) annual meeting in New York in December 1985, and to a session on humanism and Marxism at the Midwest Sociological Society annual meeting in Chicago in April 1987, I would like to thank the late Raya Dunayevskaya, George Fischer, Janet Afary and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and criticisms,

scientific character of Marx's dialectic, where changing economic structures shape human history and society in a more or less automatic fashion. This view also holds that Marx broke sharply with Hegelian philosophy in the 1840s, after which he stood Hegel on his feet, transforming Hegel's idealist dialectic into dialectical materialism.

Western Marxists such as Georg Lukacs and Karl Korsch, the Frankfurt School, and the Marxist humanists have argued for a continuing strong affinity between the Marxian and the Hegelian concepts of dialectic. They view the Marxian dialectic more as a unity of materialism and idealism, where human consciousness and the individual shape history as much as they are shaped by it. These writers tend to view dialectical materialism as a vulgarization of Marxism by his heirs.

Lenin's concept of Marxist dialectics remains a controversial issue, given the ambivalent legacy he left and the more general arguments around Marxism since his death in 1924. On the one hand, his 1914–15 *Philosophical Notebooks* (Lenin, 1961, Vol. 38, hereafter Lenin, CW 38), which he never published, show a rich and creative probing into Hegelian idealism as a major source of the Marxian dialectic. On the other hand, Lenin's earlier writings on dialectics, such as the 1908 book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Lenin, CW 14), which he never publicly repudiated, argue for a crude reflection theory where the idea is determined by the material in a more or less mechanistic manner. This issue has been debated by many since Lenin's death.

Some writers who are quite critical of Lenin have downplayed the notion of a shift toward a fuller concept of dialectic in the *Philosophical Notebooks*. George Lichtheim (1965), Richard De George (1966), and especially Leszek Kolakowski (1978) do not see even the *Notebooks* as a terribly serious or original contribution to Marxist thought: Kolakowski, for example, writes that "these ideas are presented in very brief and general terms and are therefore not suited to over-precise analysis" (p. 463). Kolakowski concludes his discussion of Lenin's philosophical thought by referring to what he considers to be "Lenin's indolent and superficial approach and his contempt for all problems that could not be put to direct use in the struggle for power" (466).

Other writers, such as Louis Althusser (1971), David-Hillel Ruben (1977), Helena Sheehan (1985), as well as official Russian commentators, tend to downplay any shift in the Philosophical Notebooks from the earlier Letlin because they admire the positivistic and anti-Hegelian Marxism of the early Lenin. Sheehan writes, for example, that in the Philosophical Notebooks Lenin "still held to a realist theory of knowledge" and that "commentators who see some kind of radical 'epistemological break' here are quite wrong, whether their preference is for the later Lenin . . . or for the earlier Lenin" (140). According to the Russian academician B. M. Kedrov, those passages in Lenin's Notebooks which seem to reflect a new appreciation for the element of idealism in Marxism, such as "consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it" (Lenin, CW 38:212), in his view merely represent "a paraphrase" of Hegel. Kedrov strongly denies that the 1914-15 writings "are in fundamental contravention of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism," writing further that "Lenin categorically rejects and acidly ridicules the slightest slip by Hegel in the direction of ascribing to an idea, to a thought, to consciousness the ability to create the

world" (Kedrov, 1970:42). The French Communist philosopher Louis Althusser (1971) likewise sharply attacks the idea of a continuity between Lenin's concept of dialectic and Hegelian idealism. The problem with such views, however, is that they seem to be contradicted many times in the over 200 pages of Lenin's 1914—15 notes on Hegel.

Contrary to the above interpretations, a large group of writers, including Herbert Marcuse (1941), David Joravsky (1961), Henri Lefebvre (1967), Michel Löwy (1973), Lucien Goldmann (1976), and especially Raya Dunayevskaya (1973, 1982a, 1982b), have argued that Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks are a significant contribution to dialectical theory, representing a break in Lenin's thought and placing him closer to Hegelian and humanistic Marxism than is usually supposed. The French sociologist Goldmann saw Lenin as the originator of the Hegelianized Marxism that became popular beginning in the 1920s. Goldmann writes that "Hegelian categories are all recovered in Marxism . . . first by Lenin in the Philosophical Notebooks, secondly by Lukacs in History and Class Consciousness" (1923), and still later by Antonio Gramsci (pp. 112-113). To Goldmann, Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks show a break with his earlier views where "Lenin at the time he wrote Materialism and Empirio-Criticism" saw Marxism as "just as positivistic as academic science" (113). The discussion below builds upon these latter interpretations of Lenin, especially that of Dunavevskava.

Dunayevskaya (1982a, 1982b) has argued that V. I. Lenin's most original and creative theoretical contributions to Marxism rest not on his famous theory of the vanguard party to lead, but rather on three other areas of his theoretical work: (1) his contribution to dialectical philosophy in his 1914–15 *Philosophical Notebooks* on Hegel; (2) his theory of imperialism and its dialectical opposite, the national liberation movements; and (3) his theory of the state and revolution, including his concept of "proletarian democracy."

In August 1914 and immediately afterwards, in response to the outbreak of World War I and the breakup of the Second International, Lenin moved quickly in two seemingly contradictory directions: (1) he spent long weeks in the library in Bern, Switzerland, engaged in daily study of Hegel's Science of Logic, writing hundreds of pages of notes on that and other works by Hegel; and (2) as is more widely known, he moved toward a stance of "revolutionary defeatism" as the policy Marxists should in his view have adopted toward the governments of the various belligerent countries, and called for the establishment of a new international. In so doing, he partially broke with the concept of Marxism as a "vulgar materialism" which characterized the Second International, including his own earlier views. Let us turn directly to those Philosophical Notebooks of 1914—15.

Toward the end of his Hegel studies, Lenin wrote "two aphorisms" against the established Marxist philosophy of the time:

^{1.} Plekhanov criticizes Kantianism . . . more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectical-materialistic standpoint, *insofar* as he merely *rejects* their views from the threshold, but does not *correct* them (as Hegel corrected Kant). . .

Marxists criticized (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Buchner) than of Hegel. (CW 38:179: emphasis in the original)

In opposing both Georg Plekhanov and Ludwig Feuerbach, whose views he had supported in his 1908 book on Marxist philosophy, Lenin is also criticizing himself.

Lenin goes on to write another "aphorism," this time on Capital, again implicitly criticizing his own earlier work:

Aphorism: It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later, none of the Marxists understood Marx!! (CW 38:180)

This meant a new unity of materialism with idealism as seen in Lenin's seemingly idealistic statement a bit further on in the *Philosophical Notebooks*: "consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it" (212).

While Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* have become known, his continued preoccupation with Hegelian dialectics right through the revolution and until his death is less known. He attempted (unsuccessfully) to make "some corrections to the section on dialectics" (Lenin, CW 36:317) in his famous 1914 essay *Karl Marx*, submitted as an article for a Russian encyclopedia before he had gotten very far in his Hegel studies.

Lenin also referred increasingly to his opponents' failure to grasp "dialectics" in his post-1914 published critiques of Plekhanov as well as fellow revolutionary Marxist Rosa Luxemburg, and even in his own 1922 "Will," where he wrote his famous critique of Stalin, calling for him to be "removed" as party secretary. Less known was the milder critique of Trotsky as well as Bukharin in that same "Will." On Bukharin, Lenin wrote:

Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theorist of the Party: he may also be legitimately considered the favorite of the whole Party: but his theoretical views can only with the greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxian, for there is something scholastic in him. (He has never learned, and I think never fully understood, the dialectic.)¹

References to dialectics abound in Lenin's 1920 Trade-Union Debate as well. There, on the one hand, Trotsky and Bukharin were accused of thinking non-dialectically because they had proposed subordinating the trade unions to the state, while the Workers' Opposition (Alexandra Kollontai and A. G. Shliapnikov) had wanted, in Lenin's view, to subordinate the state to the unions, thus ignoring the peasantry.

In 1922, when Lenin addressed the new philosophical journal *Under the Banner of Marxism*, he had proposed connecting the concept of Hegelian subjectivity to the type of creative thought which, he argued, young Marxist intellectuals would need to grasp theoretically the new revolutionary subjects emerging, especially in the anti-colonial revolutions:

In order to attain this aim, the contributors to *Under the Banner of Marxism* must arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, i.e., the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works, and applied so successfully that now every day of the awakening to life and struggle of the new

classes in the East (Japan, China, India) . . . every day of awakening to life of new peoples and new classes serves as a fresh confirmation of Marxism. (Lenin, CW 33:234)

Both of these questions, Hegelian dialectics and national liberation movements, were major points of difference between Lenin and Bukharin.

At the same time, the philosophical differences over dialectics were left somewhat ambiguous by Lenin, who in the above speech also referred repeatedly to the more mechanistic Marxist concept of "militant materialism." Since he never published his *Philosophical Notebooks*, Lenin himself left an ambivalent legacy on dialectics, shifting back and forth in public between more Hegelian concepts and the traditional "scientific" and "materialist" vocabulary of post-Marx Marxism which he had inherited from Frederick Engels and Plekhanov. It is the latter type of Marxism which Bukharin never appeared to question.

BUKHARIN ON DIALECTICS

According to David Joravsky, Bukharin, in a 1923 article in *Pravda* (which he then edited) publicly attacked the journal *Under the Banner of Marxism*. *Under the Banner of Marxism* had been running reviews attacking Bukharin's book *Historical Materialism*: A System of Sociology ever since it appeared in 1921. Joravsky writes that, in his 1923 counter-attack in *Pravda*, "Bukharin announced his intention of having nothing more to do with *Under the Banner of Marxism*, which was the chief journal of Soviet Marxist philosophy" (1961:58). It is to Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* that we now turn.

Historical Materialism was considered to be a major official text of Russian Marxism until the 1930s, and even afterwards, many of its concepts were retained in official Russian Marxism, albeit not Bukharin's authorship. The book has also been considered a serious work by at least two major non-Marxist American sociologists, Pitirim Sorokin and Seymour Martin Lipset, themselves, like Bukharin, fairly uncritical admirers of technological progress. In a 1922 review Sorokin called Historical Materialism "far more literate, interesting and scientific" than other Bolshevik works (cited by Cohen, 1980:114).

Even greater praise was bestowed on this work by Lipset, who mentioned in a new preface to Robert Michels' classic book *Political Parties* that Bukharin's

(Historical Materialism) deserves more attention than it now receives. It represents the one sophisticated effort by a major Marxist to come to terms with the emerging body of sociological theory and research. Unfortunately, since Bukhariri was murdered by Stalin in 1936 as a "Fascist beast and traitor," the Communist movement lost all interest in his books. Though the American edition of this book was reprinted as late as 1934, socialists and others have been uninterested in a volume which had been a basic text of world Communism. (Lipset, 1962:27)

Lipset then quotes Bukharin's view in *Historical Materialism* that the emergence of a new ruling class in Soviet Russia

... will be retarded by two opposing tendencies; first by the growth of the productive forces; second, by the abolition of the educational monopoly. The increasing reproduction of technologists and of organizers in general, out of the working class itself, will undermine this possible new class alignment. (26–27)

Lipset uses the above passage from Bukharin to bolster his own view that Michels saw "only the restrictive side of bureaucracy" (Lipset, 1962:27).

On the other hand, unorthodox Marxist thinkers have tended to evaluate Historical Materialism far more negatively. Georg Lukacs published a fairly critical review of the book in 1925, writing that "instead of making a historical-

^{1.} I am here using the version of Lenin's will as cited by Trotsky's former secretary Raya Dunayevskaya (Dunayevskaya, 1982b:118–119), which is the version published by Trotsky in the 1930s. For a slightly different rendering in which Bukharin is not "the" but only "a valuable and major theorist" see the official Russian version, first published under Khrushchev (Lenin, CW 36:595).

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materialist critique of the natural sciences and their methods . . . he extends these methods to the study of society without hesitation, uncritically, unhistorically, and undialectically" (1973:59-60). If Lukacs is correct then the affinity between Bukharin and functionalist sociology is not so surprising, and functionalism should perhaps credit Bukharin as one of its founders, at least with respect to his major work of system theory, Historical Materialism.

A few years later, Antonio Gramsci wrote quite angrily in his Prison Notebooks both on Historical Materialism and on Bukharin's 1931 speech to a scientific conference in London:

It would appear from the contribution presented at the London Congress on the History of Science that he continues to maintain that the philosophy of praxis has always been split into two: a doctrine of history and politics, and a philosophy. . . . But if the question is framed in this way, one can no longer understand the importance and significance of the dialectic, which is relegated from its position as a doctrine of knowledge and the very marrow of historiography and the science of politics, to the level of a sub-species of formal logic and of elementary scholastics. (Gramsci, 1971:434-35)

Further, Gramsci writes:

The philosophy implicit in (Historical Materialism) could be called a positivistic Aristotelianism, an adaption of formal logic to the methods of physical and natural science. The historical dialectic is replaced by the law of causality and the search for regularity, normality and

The extremely sharp philosophical critique of Bukharin occupies over one hundred pages of the Prison Notebooks.

Bukharin's June 1931 speech entitled "Theory and Practice from the Standpoint of Dialectical Materialism" at the Second International Congress of the History of Science and Technology in London continued and deepened what many have termed his fetishization of science and technology. In London he arques:

But the plan of Socialist construction is not only a plan of economy: the process of the rationalization of life, beginning with the suppression of irrationality in the economic sphere. wins away from it one position after another: the principle of planning invades the sphere of "mental production," the sphere of theory. . . . (Bukharin, 1931:30, emphasis in original)

Everything is moving onward and upward, not only in science, but even in agriculture!

One can feel with one's hands how the development of Socialist agriculture pushes forward the development of genetics, biology generally, and so on. . . . Great practice requires great theory. The building of science in the U.S.S.R. is proceeding as the conscious construction of the scientific "superstructures": the plan of scientific works is determined in the first instance by the technical and economic development. (Bukharin, 1931:31)

In this speech, the great theoretician Bukharin seemed to give at least a partial theoretical defense of Stalin's policy of rapid industrialization, something which Bukharin's group had opposed in the 1920's.2

Historical Materialism was written years before Bukharin became first the theoretician for Stalin's faction, then Stalin's Right Opposition, and later Stalin's victim, in the purges of the 1930s. Lenin called Bukharin "the biggest theorist" of the Communist Party. In Historical Materialism in his section on "dialectical materialism," proudly calling himself a "determinist," Bukharin wrote as follows:

In our consideration of the question of the human will, the question whether it is free, or determined by certain causes, like everything else in the world, we arrived at the conclusion that we must adopt the point of view of determinism. (1925:53)

Here is Bukharin on Hegel and idealism:

But we have seen above that idealism involves an admission of the independence of ideas from the material, and of the dependence of these ideas on divine and mysterious springs. It is therefore obvious that the idealist point of view involves a downright mysticism, or other tomfoolery, in the social sciences, to their substitution by faith in the acts of God or in some other such conception. . . . Hegel, the greatest philosopher of idealism, defined the history of the world as a "rational, necessary evolution (Gang) of the world spirit." (Bukharin, 1925:59)

As Richard Day, the editor of Bukharin's writings on the state, puts it in his introduction: "In the Philosophical Notebooks Lenin had come much closer to appreciating the humanistic aspect of Marxism with the observation that 'man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world but creates it" (Day in Bukharin, 1982:xlv). In fact, it would be hard to find a more divergent view of Marxist dialectics to that of Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks than that found in Bukharin's Historical Materialism.

As we have seen, Bukharin's concept of dialectics stresses science, determinism, and materialism. Lenin's, at least after 1914, moves away from this view and toward a non-deterministic, multilinear conception which saw Hegel's dialectical idealism as the ground for a fully dialectical Marxist materialism.

While only some today would claim Bukharin's Historical Materialism to be a creative and original work offering much for contemporary Marxism, is it possible to separate Bukharin's mechanistic and vulgarized concept of dialectic from his Marxist economics where he made so many original contributions? Let us now turn to Lenin's and Bukharin's respective writings on imperialism and national liberation.

LENIN ON IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

Marxist writers such as Lenin and Bukharin viewed imperialism as a specific product of the capitalist epoch. They argued that the final partition of the globe by the colonial powers in the late nineteenth century was different in both form and substance from earlier non-capitalist imperialism, and even from the early colonialism of merchant capitalism. They saw the modern form of imperialism as a part of what they considered to be the monopoly stage of world capitalism. Before Lenin and Bukharin wrote on imperialism in 1915-16, it had been a major subject of debate for over a decade among leading German Marxists such as Rosa Luxemburg, Rudolf Hilferding, and Karl Kautsky.

Harding (1978-81) and many other writers have stressed the affinity between Lenin's 1916 study of imperialism and the one by Bukharin a year earlier. To be sure, the two Russian Bolshevik theorists of imperialism were closer to each others views than to those of any of the German interpretations mentioned

^{2.} This major 22-page speech is passed over in a single sentence in Cohen's massive study of Bukharin (Cohen, 1980:352); Cohen does not even include it in his bibliography, even though the speech was published in English in London in 1931 as part of the speeches by the Russian delegation to the congress on science and technology. Sheehan (1985) takes it p at some length, but offers a far more laudatory view of its contribution to Marxist theory than did Gramsci (1971).

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above. Nevertheless, I will argue below that there were important and usually overlooked differences between Bukharin and Lenin on imperialism. These differences emerge more clearly if one discusses the two Bolshevik theorists' analyses of national liberation movements alongside their study of imperialism proper.

In the period 1914–17, Lenin wrote Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism. He also filled up no less than 768 pages of what are now termed Notebooks on Imperialism (Lenin, CW 39), and wrote several hundred pages of articles on national self-determination and the war. In taking this material as a whole, I am following Lenin's own suggestion in the 1917 preface to the Russian edition of Imperialism.

Dunayevskaya has argued that there is in fact a profound difference between Lenin's study of imperialism and that of Bukharin:

Because Lenin had also introduced Bukharin's work, and took no issue with it, the impression created when the two disagreed sharply on the question of national self-determination during the same period, was that the point at issue was "only political." In truth, the methodology of the two works shows they were poles apart. Thus, as opposed to Bukharin's concept of capitalist growth in a straight line, or via a quantitative ratio, Lenin's own work holds on tightly to the dialectical principle, "transformation into opposite."

Dunayevskaya specifies the key point:

Lenin held that, just when capitalism had reached this high stage of "organization", monopoly (which extended itself into imperialism), is the time to see new, national revolutionary forces that would act as "bacilli" for proletarian revolutions as well. (1967:15–16; emphasis in original)

That Lenin wrote an introduction to Bukharin's book on imperialism has been claimed to mean that he agreed with that work. This claim is then used by writers such as Cohen and Harding to show that since Bukharin's book was written ahead of Lenin's, Bukharin led the way and Lenin followed. In fact, though, Lenin did at least once sharply criticize that work. This was done in a major speech on the question of self-determination of nations at the 1919 party congress. There Lenin and Bukharin once again disagreed sharply. Lenin stated on Bukharin's view of imperialism:

Comrade Bukharin's concreteness is a bookish description of finance capitalism. In reality we have heterogenous phenomena to deal with. . . . Nowhere in the world has monopoly capitalism existed in a whole series of branches without free competition, nor will it exist. . . . To maintain that there is such a thing as integral imperialism without the old capitalism is merely making the wish father to the thought. And if we had an altered capitalism, our task would have been a hundred thousand times easier. It would have resulted in a system in which everything would be subordinated to finance capital alone. (CW 29:168)

This critique of Bukharin's economics was followed immediately in Lenin's speech by an even sharper critique of Bukharin on national self-determination, as we shall see in a moment. But first a look at Lenin's *Imperialism*.

Lenin's Imperialism never refers explicitly to "dialectics." Therefore the question of its relationship to Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks lies not in specific references to dialectics but in the form of Lenin's study. Lenin begins with a discussion of the growth of monopoly during the heyday of imperialism. To Lenin this is not a smooth or evolutionary transition, but a sometimes violent transformation. He writes that "competition becomes transformed into monopoly" (CW 22:205) and stresses the forceful, even violent character of this

transformation. For Lenin, violent competition between monopolies, whole industries, and nation states increases rather than decreases at the same time that production becomes centralized into fewer and fewer hands.

The key to everything for Lenin is transition, the development of monopoly and imperialism, not from "outside" earlier capitalism but from within, from the dialectical process Hegel called "transformation into opposite." As Lenin puts it:

In other words, the old capitalism, the capitalism of free competition with its indispensable regulator, the Stock Exchange, is passing away. A new capitalism has come to take its place, bearing obvious features of something translent, a mixture of free competition and monopoly. (CW 22:219)

Far from peace between nation states being more likely under imperialism and monopoly, Lenin argues that the reverse is true, because the expanding empires, having virtually absorbed all the non-industrialized world, now have nowhere to turn but upon each other. Evidently World War I is the climax of such a conflict, in Lenin's view.

In the central chapter "Imperialism, as a Special Stage of Capitalism," Lenin sums up, emphasizing the heterogeneity of processes involved in the emergence of imperialism:

Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres... monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our eyes, creating large-scale industry and forcing out small industry. (CW 22:265; emphasis added)

The above brief passage is a crucial one, containing elements of a uniquely "Leninist" view. We can see its apparent close relationship to Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, and especially the category he singled out there from Hegel: transformation into opposite.

As Lenin had written to those Notebooks:

Dialectics is teaching which shows how Opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical—under what conditions they are identical, becoming transformed into one another.—why the human mind should grasp these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living conditional, mobile, becoming transformed into one another. En lisant Hegel (In reading Hegel). (CW 38:109; emphasis in original)

That Hegelian dialectic was in fact part of the ground of the whole study of imperialism. It is not merely a question of Lenin's use of apparently Hegelian language from his *Philosophical Notebooks* in his book on *Imperialism*.

Lenin's relation to Hegel is seen as well in the overall shape of his argument, where he employs Hegelian categories such as negation or "transformation into opposite" to discuss how imperialism and monopoly arose dialectically out of an earlier stage of capitalism. Imperialism and monopoly do not arise ab novo, nor do they arise gradually; for Lenin they arise as a simultaneous preservation, destruction, and transcendence of the old capitalism (in Hegel's German original, the concept is Aufhebung).

In this sense monopoly and imperialism arise dialectically from competitive, pre-imperialist capitalism. As in the Hegelian syllogism that Lenin wrote on in his

Philosophical Notebooks, monopoly involves the destruction of competitive capitalism, the apparent overcoming of some of its contradictions between individual capitalist entities inside a particular national economy. Yet the overcoming of one set of contradictions only sets the stage for another: the competition between entities within a single capitalist economy has now been displaced outward. Competition in the monopoly stage certainly includes a struggle between large firms in either the same or different industries in a given national economy. But it also takes the form in Lenin's schema of competition for empire and world markets between monopoly capitalist nation states, leading ultimately toward world war once the non-capitalist lands have been fully occupied. The war is fought in order to redivide the world economy among the imperialist powers.

But there was for Lenin a still bigger contradiction inside the new capitalism. Even more crucial to Lenin's concept of the dialectics of revolution in the era of imperialism than the transformation of capitalism into monopoly and of part of the working class into an "aristocracy of labor," was the at first little-noticed shift in his concept of the self-determination of nations. Earlier it had been a "principle" for a Bolshevik leader in an old empire ruling over Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, and Central and East Asian peoples.

For Lenin after 1914 it became a question of the dialectics of world revolution. The movements for national liberation were to Lenin nothing less than the "dialectical opposite" of the new capitalist stage marked by monopoly and imperialism. True, in Lenin's view, part of the Western proletariat had been "bribed" by the "crumbs" from imperialism, especially in Britain, and capitalism thus emerged all the stronger after 1900, at least temporarily. But it was equally true that the new stage contained its own "opposite": both the revolt from the "lower and deeper" layer of the working class inside the imperialist countries and the still newer revolutionary subject, the national liberation movements.

In 1916 Lenin made explicit reference to "dialectics" in one of his first formulations of the new concept of national liberation, here arguing against the point of view of Rosa Luxemburg, whose antiwar manifesto known as the *Junius Pamphlet* had held that nationalism was reactionary in the era of imperialism. Lenin contends:

The fallacy of this argument is obvious. That all dividing lines, both in nature and society are conventional and dynamic, and that every phenomenon might, under certain conditions, be transformed into its opposite, is of course, a basic proposition of Marxist dialectics. A national war might be transformed into an imperialist war and vice-versa. . . . Only a sophist can disregard the difference between an imperialist and a national war on the grounds that one might develop into the other. (CW 22:309)

Once again, we can see Lenin's explicit use of the terminology "transformation into opposite," which he developed and elaborated in his *Philosophical Notebooks*, here as the grounding for his point of view on national liberation. Also to be noted is his use of the word dialectics without a qualifying adjective such as "materialist," a usage somewhat unusual for the Marxism of his period. A bit further on in his argument with Luxemburg, Lenin again takes up the issue of dialectics, arguing that in taking her position against nationalism, Luxemburg "applies dialectics only halfway" (CW 22:316). Nor was Lenin dismissing Luxemburg's brilliant and ground-breaking Marxist critique of imperialist war in the

Junius Pamphlet. Rather, he was writing a sympathetic critique in which he was beginning to develop his own new position on national liberation.

In another 1916 article Lenin develops his concept of dialectics and national liberation further:

The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene. (CW 22:357)

In this case, the reference was to the Irish uprising of Easter 1916, which Lenin saw as a new type of contradiction developing inside one of the warring powers, Britain. It was a tremendous innovation for the Marxism of 1916 to place such national movements alongside the proletariat as revolutionary subjects, and this view was in sharp contrast to other commentators on Easter, 1916 such as Karl Radek and Leon Trotsky. Radek and Trotsky shared many of Lenin's views but not his analysis of Ireland.³

At this point he sharply polemicized against what he then termed Bukharin's "imperialist economism." In the process he also deepened his own view of national liberation:

While the proletariat of the advanced countries is overthrowing the bourgeoisie and repelling its attempts at counter-revolution, the undeveloped and oppressed nations do not just wait, do not cease to exist, do not disappear . . . there can be no doubt that they will all the more readily take advantage of the great crisis of the civil war in the advanced countries to rise in revolt. (Lenin, CW 23:60)

The clash with Bukharin on national liberation continued after 1917, especially at the 1919 party congress.

There, as discussed above, Lenin criticized Bukharin's concept of imperialism, but the real fireworks came on the national question:

"I want to recognize only the right of the working classes to self-determination," says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognize something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. That is ridiculous. . . . When Comrade Bukharin said "We can recognize this right in some cases," I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Bashkirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I heard that the Hottentots have laid claim to an autonomous republic, but we have Bashkirs, Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single one of the people living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire. (CW 29:171–172)

In his even sharper exchange with Bukharin's ally Pyatakov, Lenin stated:

Many over-enthusiastic comrades here went as far as to talk about subordinating all the national parties to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party . . . These are the kind of objections which induce me to say. "scratch some communists and you will find Great-Russian chauvinists". (CW 29:194; emphasis added)

Such were some of Lenin's continuing disagreements with Bukharin.

For the texts of Lenin, Radek, and Trotsky on Easter 1916 side by side, see Riddell (1984), pp. 372–379.

BUKHARIN ON IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

Bukharin's 1915 book *Imperialism and World Economy* preceded Lenin's book on imperialism by a year, and, it has been argued, Lenin "borrowed freely from it" (Cohen, 1980). Even if there were not the type of sharp differences on imperialism as on dialectics or the national question, the two concepts of imperialism were not necessarily as similar as it is often suggested. Bukharin spends the first half of his book meticulously tracing the development of monopoly capitalism on a world scale, but concludes that although capitalism was still organized around the nation state, "one must not overestimate the significance of international organizations" (1973:60). He also includes an incisive critique of those who view capitalist imperialism as essentially similar to previous empires.

The last section of his book explores the effect of what he terms "state capitalist imperialism" during World War I on the working class of Europe:

Imperialism has turned in its true face to the working class of Europe. Hitherto its barbarous, destructive, wasteful activities were almost entirely confined to the savages; now it thrusts itself upon Europe with all the horrifying power of a bloodthirsty elemental power let loose. . . . The war severs the last chain that binds the workers to the masters, their slavish submission to the imperialist state. The last limitation of the proletariat's philosophy is being overcome: its clinging to the narrowness of the national state, its patriotism. (167)

This is certainly a detailed economic study of imperialism by a writer with revolutionary convictions, but does it have a truly dialectical form?

To Bukharin, imperialism was a product of "extensive and intensive growth of world economy" (1967:28). Yet once it had evolved, seemingly without contradiction, it suddenly became a new "state capitalist imperialism," totally different from the old capitalism. As we have already seen in Lenin's 1919 critique, Bukharin's "integral imperialism" was not a "unity of opposites," to adopt Lenin's terminology from *Philosophical Notebooks*, between competitive and monopolistic features of capitalism. Rather, it was an "abstract universal" of "state capitalist imperialism," without much concept of contradictions emerging within this new stage. In 1919, Lenin accused Bukharin of constructing "an integral imperialism without the old capitalism" (Lenin, CW 29:168).

But the much bigger lack of differentiation within Bukharin's concept of imperialism was in his failure to connect it to the national question. As Bukharin wrote in 1915 in a statement also signed by Pyatakov and Bosh:

The imperialist epoch is an epoch of the absorption of small states by the large state units and of a constant reshuffling of the political map of the world toward a more uniform type of state. . . . It is therefore impossible to struggle against the enslavement of nations otherwise than by struggling against imperialism, ergo, by struggling against finance capital, ergo against capitalism in general. (Gankin and Fisher, 1940:219)

This "abstract universal" then leads Bukharin and his colleagues to their conclusion:

The slogan of "self-determination of nations" is first of all utopian (it cannot be realized within the limits of capitalism) and hamful as a slogan which disseminates illusions. In this respect it does not differ at all from the slogans of the courts of arbitration, of disarmament, etc., which presuppose the possibility of so-called "peaceful capitalism". (Gankin and Fisher, 1940:219)

It is not that they did not regard colonial revolts as well-intentioned, but they saw them as "illusory," as vestiges of pre-capitalist formations on their way out. In that sense, capitalist imperialism was perhaps even "progressive" in that it cleared the way for a world socialist system including the colonies. In such a political-economic framework, nationalism could only be reactionary and the task of socialism was to promote the "abstract universal" of internationalism, even to oppressed nationalities and nations.

As even Cohen, Bukharin's sympathetic biographer, concludes:

Bukharin's failure to see anti-imperialist nationalism as a revolutionary force was the most glaring defect in his original treatment of imperialism; he did not anticipate the historic development of the postwar period—the groundswell of national liberation movements. (Cohen, 1980:36)

But Cohen adds that "Bukharin's argument in *Imperialism and World Economy* was not incompatible" with a different view of national liberation movements, as shown by the fact that Bukharin "was later able to take them into account" (1980:35).

But is it true that Bukharin was able to change his view after 1917 to accord with that of Lenin and the objective situation which revealed national movements in Russia and the world? Lenin did not apparently think so, as shown by his attack on Bukharin once again at the 1919 congress. At that time Lenin also asked publicly that his 1916–17 articles against Bukharin's group, on "imperialist economism," be published. They were not published, at least not until 1929, when Stalin did so in order to use them for narrowly factional reasons against Bukharin.

Looking at Bukharin's post-1917 writings, it is hard to find more than occasional, almost obligatory mention of the national question, such as in *The ABC of Communism*, an explication of the Communist Party's revised 1919 program, co-authored with Evgeny Preobrazhensky. In their rather superficial view, in the section on "Communism and the Problem of Nationality":

If we are to eradicate the mistrust felt by the workers of oppressed nations for the workers of oppressor nations . . . the party must be ready to grant complete national self-determination. (Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, 1967:197)

While there is plenty of mention of various western European nationalities, there is no substantial reference to Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Nowhere are the oppressed and colonized nations and nationalities discussed as capable of national revolt alongside the European working class, thus adding something to the world revolution, as we have seen, Lenin has argued.

LENIN, BUKHARIN, AND THE DIALECTIC TODAY

The differences over national liberation between Lenin and Bukharin were part of a major public debate, unlike their differences over imperialism and dialectics, which were not broached publicly except in occasional almost cryptic statements by Lenin. But these differences over dialectics and imperialism show that the dispute over national liberation was apparently rooted in major theoretical and philosophical issues.

Taking their different concepts of dialectic as ground, the more one digs into Lenin's and Bukharin's writings on imperialism and the national question, the more divergent their theoretical work seems to be. Not until the 1950s and the rise of a whole new Third World would the themes raised by Lenin be taken up

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again and developed further. This is what makes these writings by Lenin especially relevant for our period. In taking the position that national liberation was a decisive dialectical opposite of imperialism. Lenin stood alone among the major Marxist theorists of his time.

Today, since the publication of Marx's 1844 Essays and his Grundrisse, as well as the transcription of his Ethnological Notebooks, the multilinear and Hegelian character of Marx's Marxism is better known than it was in Lenin's and Bukharin's time (Dunayevskaya, 1982c), although Bukharin did after 1928 presumably have access to Marx's 1844 Essays. Today national revolutions cover the globe, from South Africa to Central America, in opposition to various forms of imperialism and local ruling classes, and disclosing within those revolutions a still newer revolutionary subject—women's liberation (Dunayevskaya, 1985). Lenin moved in the direction of anticipating at least some of those trends, in part on the basis of his 1914–15 study of Hegel. Bukharin's theorizing seemed on the other hand to anticipate both Russian party ideology and mainstream American functionalist sociology of today, each of them making a fetish out of science and technology.

Still, Lenin's legacy is quite ambivalent in several ways: (1) In failing to publish his studies on dialectics, mechanical materialism was more easily able to continue as official Marxism after his death. (2) In failing to break with his own concept of the vanguard party to lead, Lenin played no small part in the eventual outcome of events in Russia in the 1930s. I have attempted here to unravel some of the differences between Lenin and Bukharin who, along with Trotsky, were the major theorists of Bolshevism, in order better to grasp some of the variety within post-Marx Marxism, and to shed light on some contemporary problems within Marxian and critical sociology.

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