Agents of Revolution

Lenin's organizational program and the persistence of Stalinism

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Although it is not usual to review books which have been in print, more or less, for seventy-five years - even on the occasion of that anniversary itself - Lenin's *What is to be Done?* may claim exemption from such studied disregard. In its mere two-hundred pages it lays the organizational foundation for the Leninist vanguard party which eventually seized state power in Russia and which has since served as the fundamental model for Marxist revolutionary movements in a number of countries in the course of the present century. True to its own voluntarist premises, it is a product of the intellect which has established the preconditions for transforming the relations of ownership and production in nations containing something like half the world's population, and which remains a basic element of the official Marxist culture which in some form or other dominates the mental life of those societies. It is a book for our age still, so long as Marxist revolution, Stalinist calcification and terror, even Eurocommunism, remain possibilities.

My present interest in the book, however, is not so much with the successes it presages and materially prepares, as with the more evident pathologies which its success has brought along with it. I am thinking in the first place of Stalinism, characterized in its prototypical Soviet Russian version by a regime of terror, forced property transfer on a massive scale (e.g. 1929 collectivization), a breakneck tempo of industrial capital accumulation, the utter degeneration of internal party democracy, and the cult of personality. This scenario has since emerged elsewhere, albeit in milder forms: China, North Korea, and most recently and spectacularly in Cambodia. And Stalinism as a disease of the party has plagued the third international everywhere since its inception and continues to be an issue in internal party strife around Eurocommunism.

Of course, a reasonable doubt may be entertained concerning the existence of any useful connection between *What is to be Done?* and Stalinism. Specifically, those who tend to see Stalinism as emerging out of the ecology of a communist revolution in a heavily agricultural and generally backward nation - for which a strong case can and has been made (1) - need have no recourse to programs and projections concerning party organization like *What is to be Done?* And the same, of course, holds

even more clearly for those few who are of the opinion that Stalinism is the result of the personal insanity or wickedness of the man Stalin.

Still, it seems to me premature to shut out all consideration of the mediating role of the vanguard party itself in the geneology of Stalinism. If, moreover, one accepts, as I do, that the organizational form of the Bolshevik party is a more or less straightforward adaptation of the program outlined in *What is to be Done?*, then an analysis of that program may be expected to shed some light on the *intentions* which went into the Leninist party and on the *problems* which it was to solve.

The Leninist vanguard party seems to me implicated in the broader question of Stalinism in two closely interrelated ways. First, if one holds to the view that Stalinism is the resultant of ecological factors like demography (especially the preponderance of the peasantry), the failure of the European revolutions, underdevelopment of the forces of production, and so on, then the model of the Leninist party can be invoked to explain how a socialist regime ever got established under such ridiculous conditions in the first place. For the Leninist party is a socialist party which is capable of seizing and maintaining state power at moments of deep crisis, *whatever the so-called "objective conditions"*. Implicit in the Leninist party, then, is the danger that communists come into power under conditions which are, by their own lights, quite the wrong ones. Leninism can achieve the political revolution without a reformation in consciousness and social relations, something which could scarcely be said of the other more scientific - if less effective - parties of the second international.

Secondly, the very centralist structure of the Leninist party and its claim to absolute leadership of the revolution paves the way for the emergence of the new socialist autocracy. It does this by its implicit devaluation of intellectual discourse in favor or organizational obedience and by providing a structure of authority which favors the aggrandizement of the center at the expense of the peripheries. These features allowed Stalin to transform the party into a personal *apparat* in a matter of a few years after Lenin's death. So in a kind of two step program, the Leninist party structure, after allowing for the seizure of power under clearly pre-socialist conditions, then opened the way for the *political form* of Stalinism, to wit, centralist voluntarism. The Leninist model first allows the infrastructure of Stalinism to come into being, posits the historical exigencies, as it were, *then* supplies the same organizational model for dealing with *those* exigencies as it supplied for the original opportunist seizure of power. In this view, the Bolshevik revolution itself might facetiously be seen as the first instance of Stalinism.

The method of the following "review" of *What is to be Done?* will be to treat it as a solution to three interrelated problems facing Marxism and the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party in

1902 - as indeed its subtitle already suggests. The first problem arises out of Marxism's failure to explicate a clear paradigm for the making of a proletarian revolution. This "grounding" in Marxism leads Lenin to the formulation of an explicitly voluntarist party, counterposing a fervent will to revolution to the scientific patience of a Plekhanov. This makes of the party a centralist, conscious, motor of social change - the pathological aspects of which return with a vengeance in the rising tide of Stalinism. The second problem emerges out of the specific demographic difficulties of the Russian revolutionary movement. Whereas the Narodism of the 1860's and 70's had seized upon the peasant as the agency of revolutionary transformation, Marxism had taught the social democrats that, with the transition to industrial capitalism, this honor had devolved upon the industrial proletariat. Lenin, adapting his party to struggle in what were effectively isolated urban enclaves - herewith merging some of the terrorist and conspiratorial forms of organization of the earlier Russian revolutionaries with classical Marxism, - established the basic parameters for the ultimate alienation of the peasantry from the revolution. There is no question that a party capable of winning the revolution in the cities, with only the half-hearted support of an infinitely more populous countryside, is implicated in the Stalinist tragedy of the forced collectivization of 1929. The third problem arises out of the strong preponderance of intellectuals in what ought, by all classical accounts, to have been a worker's party. Lenin's problem here is how a party not *of* workers can nonetheless be a party *for* the workers. His answer is the transformation of the "freedom of criticism" into party discipline, and therewith of liberal intellectuals into agents of revolution. What Lenin here seeks to eliminate only as a *class* characteristic *i.e.* by transforming certain class characteristics of intellectuals through collective discipline and pedagogy, we will see Stalin rather more ruthlessly eliminating by eliminating the bearers themselves. In this sense, the Leninist attitude toward intellectuals presages the Moscow purges of the thirties.

1.0 Organization of *What is to be Done?*

In the preface to its first edition, Lenin describes his original intent in writing *What is to be Done?* to consist in a treatment of three questions: 1. "The character and main content of our political agitation" 2. "Our organizational tasks" 3. "The plan for building, simultaneously and from various sides, a militant, All-Russian organisation". The treatment of these rather straightforward programmatic problems came to constitute chapters III, IV and V of the final version, in which he expounds on, respectively, the difference between Trade Union politics and Social Democratic politics, the amateurish methods of the Economists versus those of a professional organization of revolutionaries, and lastly, sets out the plan for an All-Russian revolutionary newspaper.

Even a rapid glance at the final version of *What is to be Done?* however, reveals that Lenin has prefaced his original plan with two additional chapters. On closer examination, in fact, these prove to be more than merely "clarifying" addenda but rather bear the deep significance of the book, dealing, as I will show, with the role of intellectuals and their theory as they relate to workers and their practice. Chapter I assumes the character of a critique of "freedom of criticism" and shows, in Lenin's words, "why such an 'innocent' and 'natural' slogan as 'freedom of criticism' should be for us a veritable war cry" (2). Its concern is to explicate the difference between *criticism* and *practical theoreticity*. Chapter II deals with the question of theory and practice directly, positing this tension as a contradiction between the consciousness of the vanguard and the spontaneity of the mass movement. The remaining portion of the book may be seen as concretizations of the more general arguments of chapters I and II; they are, as it were, implied in the general formulation, even as they serve to ramify it by showing its consequences at the level of institutionalization.

2.0 Two groundings of the organizational problem

What is to be Done? is Lenin's proposal for a solution to a fundamental crisis facing Russian Social Democracy at the turn of the century. It is at once a criticism of current party practice as well as the outline of a program to reconstruct the party and thereby to reconstruct the relation of revolutionary theory to revolutionary practice. The problematic of *What is to be Done?* arises out of severe lacunae in Marxist theory, namely the gloss of the problem of the unity of theory and practice and the consequent silence concerning the proper role of intellectuals in revolutions, and, specifically, the *form* of their relation to the "spontaneous" class struggle of the proletariat. Nonetheless, Lenin's problem is not *directly* with Marxist theory but rather with the manifest lack of effectiveness of the RSDLP, which he explicitly ascribes to its failure to bring scientific socialist theory to bear on the day to day class struggle of the workers.

Faced, as Marx was not, by a Marxist party composed largely of university trained intellectuals, Lenin *has* to deal somehow with the real presence of this unmentionable stratum (3). This stratum *is* the Russian revolutionary movement. Faced, moreover, with dysfunctions arising precisely from the fact that the party cadre are "bourgeois intellectuals" and thus given to too much talk, Lenin must acknowledge their importance *as* theorists, *as* organizers, *as* publicists and propagandists while denying their essence, namely, their grounding in the culture of critical discourse (4). He must retain theory, but abolish theoreticians as such - or, rather, transform them into technicians, *agents* of theory. As he says, "The thing we need is a military organization of agents" (5).

While saving Marxism for the revolution in this way, however, Lenin has to shatter its glib scientific surface, which identi-

fies the proletariat as the spontaneous and prime agent of revolution, given only the right objective conditions. Lenin is forced to an explicitly voluntarist position in which *not* the proletariat, but the vanguard organization of revolutionaries, *i.e.* disciplined and transformed intellectuals; is the prime mover. In order to solve the "burning questions" of *his* movement, Lenin is forced to open Marxism up at one of its most vulnerable points.

Lenin's problem, really, was that Marxism, aside from repressing the role of intellectuals, had no formula for a practical movement among an isolated and diminutive urban proletariat under conditions of severe autocratic repression. In his view, nonetheless, Marxism had the only *scientific* theory for the transition to socialism and was thus to be prized, defended, and (as conditions allowed) applied. In this respect, it certainly seemed much superior to the peasant socialism of the Narodniks of the 1860's and 70's. Marxism, seen as some science, identified forces and qualities and rendered the world susceptible to at least a measure of planned technological manipulation. It was precisely such a scientistic interpretation which would lead to the need for a tightly organized, hierarchical, conspiratiorial, network of agents carrying out a centrally organized and ratified plan of action.

The framework of such an organization, I want to suggest, was borrowed by Lenin from earlier phases of the Russian movement, even as he borrowed his science from the west. That he was thrown back on the Russian tradition arose from Marxism's failure to supply *any* guidelines for the form of the voluntarist activity quite directly suggested by the scientific form of the theory - which while it explicates the mechanisms of history's *spontaneous* unfolding, also necessarily formulates history as a process susceptible to *conscious* intervention. Marxism's self-identification *as* science involves it in both these moments; its basic ideological posture, however, grounded as it in *inevitablility*, coerces it to repress the possibility of conscious intervention inherent in it *as science*, and to pose itself as an empirical science alone, simply recording and theorizing the dialectical development of spontaneous class-struggle. Lenin's problem now is to recover this repressed demension and to give it a concrete form suitable to the conditions of the Russian struggle; all this while maintaining the myth of the proletariat as the spontaneous agent of revolution. These diverse requirements, theoretical and practical, lend *What is to be Done?* the aura of a spiritual potlatch, in which the spectre haunting Europe and the weasel gnawing at the roots of Tsarist autocracy render each to each their immortal wisdom and practical cunning respectively, so to make revolutionary monsters of them both. *What is to be Done?*, in consequence, is grounded significantly in two traditions.

2.1 The Marxist Grounding

In this grounding, *What is to be Done?* deals with the Marxist duality of theory and practice and, specifically, embodies, populates, provides with an historical protagonist, the two terms of the imputed unity. Lenin's formulation of the vanguard explicitly echoes Kautsky's observation on the essential independence of the movement of the workers on the one hand and that of the intellectuals on the other:

> (...) socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat but the *bourgeois intelligentsia*: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously (6). (Italics K.K.)

Part of the function of the vanguard is to achieve the unity of theory and practice *in practice, i.e.* to empower theory, to *arm* theory, to *insert* theory into the class struggle. It purports to to this by, on the one hand, opening the working class' concrete economic struggle to the theoretical leadership of the radical intelligentsia and, on the other hand, by abolishing the radical intelligentsia *as such* and replacing them by an organization of professional revolutionaries who may indifferently have been intellectuals, workers, peasants, or soldiers in their former lives. Paradoxically, then, only by squarely *recognizing* the indispensible revolutionary role of the bourgeois intelligentsia as carriers of revolutionary and social democratic theory - in the terms of what Lenin calls the "profoundly true and important words of Karl Kautsky" - can Lenin succeed in removing them from the scene again in practice. His vanguard party essentially suspends and de-mobilizes the culture of critical discourse essential to the intelligentsia while retaining their critical and symbolic *skills* in the service of the revolution. In other words, the vanguard organization requires that intellectuals invest their cultural capital in a practical project, the solution of a practical, *technological* task, *i.e.* producing revolution - this essentially converts the culture of critical discourse into *zweckrationales Handeln*, instrumental rational action. The party of intellectuals now becomes like a factory, or an army engaging in battle, responsive only to the moves of the enemy and some abstract theory of war and its spoils.

2.2 Grounding in the Russian Movement

Focusing on this grounding helps resist the decontextualization consequent on viewing *What is to be Done?* as a merely Marxist, merely theoretical, tract arguing an abstract theory of the vanguard. Lenin's involvement in and knowledge of the 19th century Russian populist movement was extensive; both the title of the present book and that of the All-Russian revolutionary newspaper he came to edit are direct references to that revolutionary past. Indeed, the Russian Marxist movement as a whole, chiefly through Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, and Deutsch, emerged quite directly out of the peasant socialist *Zemlya i Volya* organization of the 1860's and 70's. And Richard Pipes, among others, has argued that Lenin himself had deep connections to the explicitly terrorist and conspiratorial *Narodnaya Volya*, and not only, as is usually argued, through the complicity of his brother Alexander, hanged in 1887 in connection with a plot to assasinate Tsar Nicholas II (7). Though Lenin is at pains in the following citation to reject the association of his new vanguard with the terrorist *Narodnaya Volya*, his admiration for their organizational style is quite evident:

> (...) the magnificent organization that the revolutionaries had in the seventies, and that should serve us as a model, was not established by the *Narodnaya Volya*, but by the *Zemlya i Volya*, which split up into the *Chernyi Peredel* and the *Narodnaya Volya*. Consequently, to regard a militant revolutionary organization as something specifically *Narodnaya Volya* in character (*i.e.* as specifically terrorist - CD) is absurd both historically and logically; for *no* revolutionary trend, if it seriously thinks of struggle, can dispense with such an organization. The mistake the *Narodnaya Volya* committed was not in striving to enlist *all* the discontented in the organization and to direct this organisation to resolute struggle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was its great historical merit. The mistake was in relying on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary theory at all, and the *Narodnaya Volya* members either did not know how, or were unable, to link their movement inseperably with the class struggle in the developing capitalist society. Only a gross failure to understand Marxism, (or an "understanding" of it in the spirit of "Struveism") could prompt the opinion that the rise of a mass spontaneous working-class movement *relieves* us of the duty of creating as good an organization of revolutionaries as the *Zemlya i Volya* had, or, indeed, an incomparably better one. (8).

Considering that *Narodnaya Volya*, whose organizational voluntarism Lenin so admires, means literally the People's *will*, the following excoriation by Marx of Bakunin is ironical, to say the least:

> He (Bakunin) understands absolutely nothing about the social revolution, only its political phrases. Its economic conditions do not exist for him. As all hitherto existing economic forms, developed or undeveloped, involve the enslavement of the worker (Whether in the form of wage-labourer, peasant, etc.), he believes that a *radical revolution* is possible in all such forms alike. Still more! He wants the European

> social revolution, premised on the economic basis of capitalist production, to take place at the level of the Russian or Slavic agricultural and pastoral peoples, not to surpass this level (...). The *will*, and not the economic conditions, is the foundation of his social revolution. (Italics K.M.) (9).

Lenin's problem is that he quite agrees with Marx's criticism of *Narodist* theory and yet, he cannot agree with it on the level of organization. There is no doubt that Lenin is a scientific socialist; there is also no doubt that he supports at least Bakunin's "will" to revolution. Whereas in 1894 Lenin argues precisely the position which Marx outlines above, by 1902 he is obsessed with the problem of infusing consciousness and centralized will into a movement which has long ago adopted scientific *theory*. Lenin's solution is the coupling of Bakunin's Russian "will" with Marx's German "science"; and so synthesizing a theoretically informed vanguard capable of striking with unified revolutionary will when conditions are scientifically right; a vanguard which is *principly* opportunist.

But *What is to be Done?* is more than an abstract synthesis of revolutionary possibilities; it is a critique of a revolutionary party which has run into trouble, which has failed, through a whole succession of organizational forms, to bridge the gap between theory and practice and is now, so it seems to Lenin, abandoning both theory *and* the "will" to revolution by succumbing to Economism. And, from a broader perspective, it is not only Social Democracy itself, but Social Democracy as the legitimate heir of the entire Russian struggle against the autocracy, which has gotten into trouble. If poor theory resulted in the failure of the well-organized populist movement and the dark reaction which followed upon the assassination of Alexander II in 1881; now, it seems, poor organization based on a misapprehension of sound theory threatens a second defeat. So any solution for the RSDLP is for Lenin, we may assume, a solution for the *whole* Russian movement, a solution entailing the appropriation of Marxism into a Russian mold. Even within the limited perspective of the Russian movement, then, *What is to be Done?* takes on a synthesizing function. If the period of the *Narodniki* may be characterized as one of good organization and right attitudes (as Lenin is the first to admit) but of poor and misguided theory; and the period from the early 90's to 1903 as one of good theory but abysmal organization, then the program of *What is to be Done?* is a purely Russian synthesis, the final assimilation and "nationalization" of western scientific socialism.

This grounding is significant in that it exhibits the crucial mediation of Marxist theory by national culture (and most specifically national revolutionary culture) in any concrete Marxist revolutionary movement or, to speak in a scientistic idiom, in any *application* of Marxist theory. Marxism is in this sense an uninterpreted theory, consisting of a set of general relations among terms which have only a vague empirical referent outside of specific national contexts. Time and time again we

will see cultural mediations of this sort which exploit Marxism's metaphoricality, as well as its growing culture of previous mediations. The Leninist vanguard, formulated as a Marxist revolutionary organization capable of functioning in developing countries under conditions of severe repression, is the *first* major act of appropriation by "third world" Marxists. Its general form has itself become part of Marxist culture and has in turn become available for appropriation and nationalization by other specific movements. Mao has effected perhaps the most serious re-appropriation of the Leninist vanguard to suit the conditions of the Chinese struggle and has, in so doing, established the major paradigm for *agrarian* revolutionary vanguards. All such appropriations "fill in" Marxism and, as it were, interpret it for local conditions, thus contributing to a worldwide Marxist culture based on an increasingly ramified and manifold theoretical core. So, the dual grounding of *What is to be Done?* entails a solution which is not only specifically efficient (it restructures the RSDLP into a vanguard consciously poised to exploit targets of opportunity) but which is also of general worldwide significance (it is the first organizational paradigm for the Marxist unity of theory and practice under conditions of "underdevelopment").

3.0 Transforming the Intellectuals

While *What is to be Done?* appears a relatively straightforward program for party reorganization at the explicit level, it has metaphorical levels which are particularly interesting from the viewpoint of the transformation of the bourgeois intelligentsia into "professional revolutionaries". These metaphorical levels cryptically exhibit the party-as-a-factory and identify it with the closely related imagery of the science-technology-nature complex. I want to suggest that Lenin's metaphorical imagery here is something more than metaphor, that it also expresses a grasping for likeness and similitude which displays the grounding of his thought in the Marxist and scientific culture of the 19th century. The *object* of metaphorical comparision, in other words, may define its subject according to other of its properties than those specifically focalized in the comparison. In this way, more is exposed than may have been intended, or even imagined.

Lenin sees the essence of intellectualism as "freedom of criticism". What is this but the very core of the culture of critical discourse? That modality of discourse consistently rejects any proferred grounds and seeks new grounds beneath them; the ultimate lack of any *final* grounds other than the rules of the speech themselves leads Hegel to speak of a "bad infinity". But it is precisely by means of the "freedom of criticism" inherent in the culture of critical discourse that, as Kautsky is the first to admit, scientific socialism has arisen, the only true theory of historical development and the coming socialist revolution. So, with respect to scientific socialism, which is the *only acceptable* theory,

> (...) the much vaunted freedom of criticism does not imply substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from all integral and pondered theory; it implies eclecticism and lack of principle (10).

In practice, then, it is recognized by Lenin that in order to preserve "true Marxism" the process of theory *production* has got to be amended and replaced by *dissemination* of theory, the process of *criticism* by *application*. In other words, the task for Lenin is to fight the "bad infinity" inherent in the culture of critical discourse by forcefully, if must be, imposing a paradigm which will limit critical discourse to *technical* discourse. The latter always bounds the culture of critical discourse in a restricted language game; hence, talk stops and concerted activity can begin. Action begins where the culture of critical discourse leaves off. This is the motivation of the implicit critique of that speech culture entailed even in Marxism as well as empirical natural science.

3.1 Metaphors for a socialist revolution

The factory in Marxism is the concrete historical form of the organization of labor which readies the proletariat for revolution by imprinting it with a sense of disciplined collective production. The intellectuals, on the other hand, remain undisciplined individualists - to which effect Lenin very approvingly quotes Kautsky:

> Quite different is the case of the intellectual. He does not fight by means of power, but by argument. His weapons are his personal knowledge, his personal ability, his personal convictions. He can attain to any position at all only through his personal qualities. Hence the freest play for his individuality seems to him the prime condition for successful activity. It is only with difficulty that he submits to being a part subordinate to a whole, and then only from necessity, not from inclination. He recognizes the need of discipline only for the mass, not for the elect minds. And of course he counts himself among the latter...
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> Nietzsche's philosophy, with its cult of the superman, for whom the fulfilment of his own individuality is everything and any subordination of that individuality to a great social aim is vulgar and despicable, is the real philosophy of the intellectual; *and it renders him totally unfit to take part in the class struggle of the proletariat.* (11) (Italics CD).

Such characters must, of couse, themselves be put through a factory of the mind before they become of any use at all to the movement. They must be transformed into agents of theory, applying it in the social democratic movement as the factory worker unreflectively applies the latest technology concretely in production. Lenin explicitly chastizes the intellectuals for their failure to grasp the progressive aspects of the factory:

> For the factory, which seems only a bogey to some, represents the highest form of capitalist co-operation which has united and

> disciplined the proletariat, taught it to organize, and placed it at the head of all the other sections of the toiling and exploited population. And Marxism, the ideology of the proletariat trained by capitalism, has been and is teaching unstable intellectuals to distinguish between the factory as a means of exploitation (discipline based on fear of starvation) and the factory as a means of organization (discipline based on collective work united by the conditions of a technically highly developed form of production). The discipline and organization which come so hard to the bourgeois intellectual are very easily acquired by the proletariat just because of this factory "schooling". Mortal fear of this school and utter failure to understand its importance as an organizing factor are characteristic of the ways of thinking which reflect the petty-bourgeois mode of life and which give rise to the species of anarchism that the German Social-Democrats call *Edelanarchismus*, that is, the anarchism of the "noble" gentleman, or aristocratic anarchism, as I would call it. This aristocratic anarchism is particularly characteristic of the Russian nihilist. He thinks of the party organization as a monstrous "factory"; he regards the subordination of the part to the whole and of the minority to the majority as "serfdom" (...); division of labor under the direction of a center evokes from him a tragicomical outcry against transforming people into "cogs and wheels" (...). (12)

But of course these "ridiculous" attitudes only arise from a gross misinterpretation of the rational kernel of disciplined and organized production according to the latest scientific theories. But indeed, the party does become a factory and the intellectuals in it make the same historical transition from craftsmen who are masters of their trade to detail workers in a manufactury - efficient, streamlined, and absorbed into their fragmented technique:

> (The All-Russian party newspaper (...)) will point out which little wheels in the vast general mechanism a given study circle might repair or replace with better ones. A study circle that has not yet begun to work, but which is only just seeking activity could then start, not like a craftsman in an isolated little workshop unaware of the earlier development in "industry" or of the general level of production methods prevailing in industry, but as a participant in an extensive enterprise that *reflects* the whole general revolutionary attack on the autocracy. The more perfect the finish of each little wheel and the larger the number of detail workers engaged in the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less will be the disorder in the ranks consequent on inevitable police raids (13).

Somehow this ought to be taken as more than a metaphorical reference. If the intelligentsia, as is now admitted, is also a primary agent of revolutionary change, it must also be disciplined into the sense of collective, organized, and concerted action imprinted on the proletariat by virtue of their industrial *subjugation*; the intelligentsia must be de-individualized and its critical capacities restricted to the improvement of the collective enterprise.

A parallel metaphor which is less explicit in *What is to be Done?*

is the notion of scientific theory, derived technology, and a spontaneous nature which is to be controlled and guided. In this idiom, the great men of science have had their say, their theories have been confirmed, and it is time for their descendents to hang up their critical guns and get down to the practical transformation of nature by developing a scientifically informed technology. Nature, now equated with the class struggle of the proletariat, lacking consciousness and developing spontaneously according to immanent laws, must be controlled and manipulated to produce a desired result, namely social-democratic revolution. The engineer is the 19th century's answer to the unity of theory and practice, and Lenin is clearly speaking in this idiom when he announces that the theory of the engineer of revolution, to wit,

> (...) Marxism, gives a gigantic impetus to the initiative and energy of the social-democrat, opens up for him the widest perspectives and (if one may so express it) places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers "spontaneously" rising for the struggle (14).

Clearly, the intellectual *as such* has had his day and clouds the air with too much talk. To be relevant to the Social Democratic revolution from the perspective of 1902, such individuals have to be transformed:

> (...) the organization of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (for which reason I speak of the organization of *revolutionaries*, meaning revolutionary social democrats). In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organization, *all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals*, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both catagories, *must be effaced.* (Italics V.L.) (15)

So in the end, the intellectuals have reappeared only to disappear again in the final and most desperate sleight of hand; there is now "nobody here but us agents", united in purpose, disciplined and bent to a common task, distinguishable only with respect to their detail tasks in the production of the revolution.

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1. See for example the accounts of Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power, A Study of Collectivization.*
2. V.I. Lenin, *What is to be done?* (preface) in *Collected Works* vol. V: p. 350 (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1961).
3. For data on the education of early Politburo members see Harold D. Lasswell and Daniel Lerner *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements*, p. 119-121. See also my unpublished doctoraal thesis, *Revolutionary Intellectuals: A Paradigm.*
4. The use of the term "culture of critical discourse", which is borrowed from Alvin Gouldner (see *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*) is intended to supply a more sociologically acceptable formulation than such notions as "rationality", "*Diskurs*", "learned speech", etc. My

understanding of the concept tends toward an anthropological one, stressing the term "culture", and hence implying a set of practices and codes shared by members of a definable social group. This emphasis on shared practices serves to demystify to some extent the *Weltgeist*-like implications of viewing rationality as having an immanent dialectic or teleology of its own, apart from a network of social interests and intentions. Nonetheless, the core of the culture of critical discourse is a linguistic one, namely the requirement that speech be justifiable with respect to certain standards of proof and argumentation; this implies that all speech, as well as the standards by which it is judged, is at all times open to question. This reflexivity terminates only by intersubjective agreement and at that point constitutes the basis of paradigm formation. More peripherally, however, the culture of critical discourse involves the reading of books and their production, public discussion, the use of what Basil Bernstein calls a relatively elaborated speech code, the use of footnotes and the mechanics of scholarly investigation, libraries, and institutions for the production and reproduction of the culture such as schools and universities. As in any culture, members do not have to partake of all its dimensions at once or even diachronically but may become specialists - priests, visionaries, or technicians - enacting only portions of the culture and moving only within particular paradigms.

One would, however, hazard the assertion that the boundaries of the culture of critical discourse are transgressed when justification of speech and other activity is made on the basis of power differentials involving violence, in its broadest sense, or its threat. Grammar schools, sports teams, order and forbid bureaucracies such as the military or industrial corporations, despotic state forms, are all social figurations which are inimical to the emergence of a culture of critical discourse, in some cases actively so. This is not to say, of course, that they are necessarily pathological; indeed, it rather appears that any task orientation as such may necessarily involve some suppression of critical discourse. One needs firm grounds - at least unquestioned ones - for the successful accomplishment of purposive action. In general, references to the correctness or justifiability of a statement based on the social position of the speaker does not constitute a part of the culture of critical discourse, even though many of the other activities of the individual - such as being a professor at a university - may well do so.

While this formulation is not without its problems, it does begin to help us out of the morass we enter when we consider rational-critical speech apart from its institutionalization as the historically developed culture of a class. In particular, it begins to allow for a general theory of the intelligentsia, stressing their rootedness in a culture of critical discourse on the one hand and on the other their economic rootedness in institutional arrangements based increasingly on the transformation of their cultural capital into wage incomes. It also allows us, from instance to instance, to show the dialectic between these two poles - in which, for example, the capacity for critical refelxivity is traded off for the incomes attendant on the *application* of cultural capital to technical problems. Here too the "ontogeny recapitulates the phylogeny" as the career lines of individ-

ual members of the intelligentsia display the same development away from critical reflection to paradigmatic application as has been characteristic of the "new class" as a whole over the last 150 years.

5. *Ibid*, p. 515 (footnote).
6. Karl Kautsky in *Neue Zeit* XX, I:3 (1902-2) quoted in V.I. Lenin *What is to be Done?*; *Collected Works* vol. V, pp. 383-4.
7. Cf. Richard Pipes "The Origins of Bolshevism: The Intellectual Evolution of the Young Lenin" in R. Pipes (ed.) *Revolutionary Russia* (Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1968).
8. Lenin *op. cit.* p. 474-5.
9. Karl Marx "Conspectus of Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*" in D. Fernbach (ed.) *Karl Marx: The First International and After* (NYC, Random House, 1974), pp. 334-5.
10. Lenin, *op. cit.* p. 369.
11. V.I. Lenin "One Step Forward - Two Steps Back" in *Collected Works* vol. VII.
12. *Ibid*, p. 389-90.
13. V.I. Lenin "What is to be Done?" in *Collected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 506-7.
14. *Ibid*, p. 392.
15. *Ibid*, p. 452.