Elite Aspects in Selected Thinkers of Russian Communist Thought

Julianne E. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/2933

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.
MASTERS THESIS M-2992

SMITH, Julianne Elizabeth
ELITE ASPECTS IN SELECTED THINKERS OF RUSSIAN COMMUNIST THOUGHT.

Western Michigan University, M.A., 1971
Political Science, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS - LENIN</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS - KAUTSKY AND TROTSKY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV POST-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V CONCLUSION</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Among the various philosophies and ideas for the construction of a more perfect human society, few have had as much influence in contemporary times as that first formulated by the German philosopher, Karl Marx. His theory of "scientific socialism" explained mankind's past and predicted its future. Marx's basic theme was that man would rise from sorrow and slavery to enjoy total and complete happiness in a future society of equality, where each man would give of himself as he could and freely take whatever he desired. The transformation of this philosophy and blueprint for action—which had as its goal the total political, economic, and social equality of man—into an elite theory which stresses the idea that a society of equals is possible only if some are more equal than others, is the subject of this thesis.

The elite elements in Communist theory have found practical expression in the organization of Soviet society (since the Revolution of 1917) into a severe system of repression often described as a totalitarian dictatorship.¹ Unlike some who ascribe the excesses of

¹See, for example, the criterion set forth by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (New York, 1966), p. 22.
the Soviet regime to peculiarities of Russian history and national character,\(^1\) or to the trauma of complete revolution, it is the basic hypothesis of this thesis that there were elite elements present both in pre-revolutionary writings and in the organization of the Bolshevik movement itself, the central core of which has continued to this day with few modifications. Furthermore, the elitism found in Communist thought forms a general theory that is intended to apply to all states and all peoples. Despite the fact that pre-revolutionary Russia faced special conditions, i.e. autocracy, censorship, infant industrialization, the elite elements of Communist revolutionary theory are not meant to be applicable only to Russia.

In addition, the elitism found in Communist thought is justified on general principles, as well as some specific ones. Specific justifications usually refer to the Tzarist structure of government which necessitated secret revolutionary work. On the whole, however, the justifications given for elitism are based on general principles such as the view that the proletariat (no matter where) is incapable of assuming leadership without special help. This type of general justification is by far more numerous and gives additional support to the 

\(^1\)See, for example, Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1960).
thesis that Communist thought is general in intent, that is, Communist theory is meant to be a framework within which all nations and all peoples will inevitably find their own destinies worked out.

In summary, this thesis will investigate the theoretical foundations for elitism in the Soviet Union. The results of this research will, hopefully, show:

1. that the core of elitist elements present in Russian Communist theory were formulated in pre-revolutionary times,

2. that elitism in Russian Communist thought is a part of a general theory of society; it is not intended to be applicable only to Russia, and

3. that these elitist elements have continued, to this day, to be an important part of Communist theory, with only slight modifications.

Before we examine the actual works of Russian Communist thought, a discussion and definition of elitism is in order. The term "elite" came into prominence in social and political writings through the sociological theories of Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941). Pareto gave two definitions to elite. The first defined elite as a class of all those people who were most capable in all branches of human endeavor. However, Pareto does not concern himself with this definition but rather uses it as the beginning point for his second definition of elite. By dividing the class of elites, as defined in the first instance, into two groups, Pareto comes up with what is
really of interest to him—the governing elite. The governing elite are those people who, either directly or indirectly, play an important and considerable part in the processes of government. Thus Pareto divides all society into first, an elite and a non-elite, and then second, subdivides the elite into the governing elite and the non-governing elite. Every society, even those with a democratic political system, has its elites and non-elites, its rulers and its ruled.

Mosca was among the first to make a systematic distinction between the elite and the masses. His basic idea of society may be expressed thusly: In all societies two classes of people appear, a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The class of rulers is always a minority of the population. It performs all the political tasks and monopolizes political power. The second class, always a majority of the population, is controlled and directed by the first class. The minority rules over the majority by virtue of the fact that the minority is organized. Thus both Pareto and Mosca were concerned "with elites in the sense of groups of people who either exercised directly, or were in a position to influence very strongly the exercise of political power."

Later studies of elites have also been concerned, as

---

were Pareto and especially Mosca, with the problem of political power. H. D. Lasswell, in *The Comparative Study of Elites*, deals with the "political elite" which he defines as "the power holders of a body politic. The power holders include the leadership and the social formations from which leaders typically come, and to which accountability is maintained, during a given period."¹ Lasswell's definition differs from that of Pareto and Mosca by drawing a distinction between political elites and other elites who are less closely associated with the exercise of power. Another development in the theories of modern elitism is found in Raymond Aron's writings. Aron sees in modern societies not one elite, but a plurality of elites. He also examines the intellectual elite and their social influence "which does not ordinarily form part of the system of political power."²

All of these men were basically concerned with elitism in the sense of an observation and description of society. Now the idea that society should be ruled by an elite few is certainly not a new concept. In Western civilization Plato's *Republic*, for example, sees


² T. B. Bottomore, p. 13.
the ideal community as one which is guided by a superior few. Many religious creeds (Calvinism, Mormonism, etc.) have also developed a notion of elitism in their concept of the "elect of God." Elitism was also present in Eastern Civilization. Indian religious thought, as well as their social structure, was essentially elitist in nature.¹

As stated previously, the elitism found in Russian Communist thought is part of a general theory of society. Distinctions between general and specific elite theories are not usually made, perhaps because, upon reflection, it is obvious that some elite theories are general and that others are specific. However, it is important that such a distinction be made, for different qualities arise from a general theory than arise from a specific theory. To be even more precise, the elite theory of C. W. Mills, is specific, for it is based upon the workings of a single society (United States) at a particular time in history (1950's). His theory has the quality of being static, because it is so specifically limited in time and place. General elite theories, such as that of Mosca, have the quality of consistency, for they give information

¹The two basic written sources for Hindu elitism, which later degenerated into a rigid caste system, are the Bhagavadgita and the Rg-Veda.

that can be applied to all societies in all times. Russian Communist thought is also general; however, because its description of what is, is different from its description of what will inevitably be, an additional quality of dynamism is imparted. For Mosca, everything remains the same; some will always rule while others will always be ruled. For Russian Communist theory, those who rule now (the bourgeoisie) will not rule in the future, and the same will be true for all societies. Movement and change for all, in the sense of historical progress, is an integral part of Russian Communist thought.

Although elitism has been variously described, it is essentially "any view that assigns the capacity to govern to a specially selected group or type of individual."¹ The elitist elements present in the writings and works that will be discussed in this thesis are to be basically found within two concepts, the idea of the Party and the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat justifies the structuring of society in such a way that only the proletariat (a "specially selected group") or the worker (a "type of individual") can rule. The Party, however, leads the proletariat. It too is a special group and

¹Lee Cameron McDonald, Western Political Theory (New York, 1968), p. 447.
by virtue of its role as the "vanguard" or guiding light of the proletariat actually assumes the function of governing. And the Party itself is structured so that only a selected few within the organization rule by banning dissident opinion and enforcing the procedures of democratic centralization.

The theories of Russian Communism also present us with a view of a hierarchically arranged society. Hierarchical governing structures inevitably lead to elitism although we assign different names to them depending on how the special group or type of individual is selected. If one rules by virtue of birthright, we have an aristocracy; if one governs by his personality, we have a charismatic structure; if those entitled to rule are determined by race, we call the resultant structure racism. Likewise, although some call the Soviet Union a totalitarian dictatorship, it is in reality an elite society where, theoretically, proletarians and workers are elevated to, and the bourgeoisie excluded from, the power structure.
Of all the contributions that Lenin made to Marxist theory, two are of importance and interest in our discussion of elitist elements in Socialist-Communist theory. The first of these is Lenin's theory of the Party as the "vanguard of the proletariat," which guides the actions of the proletariat both before and after the revolution. The second major contribution is Lenin's version of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the administration of the Socialist state.

Lenin firmly believed in Marx and above all in the most basic Marxian principle that "if a working-class movement is not revolutionary, it is nothing." To this Lenin added the idea that the movement must not only be revolutionary, but that it must contain a revolutionary theory for "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." Lenin proceeds to develop this theory in one of the most important documents in Marxist-Leninist literature, What Is To Be Done, Burning Questions of Our Movement. It is in this book, written three years before the first revolutionary outbreak in

---


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Russia (1902), that Lenin develops his well-known theory of "consciousness." This theory enabled Lenin to substitute for the proletarian masses, whom Marx had viewed as the engine of social progress, a "small elite of professional revolutionaries, possessed of a superior theoretical insight and practical experience, who for this reason were well fitted to provide the leadership for the workers." Lenin, unlike Marx, did not believe that the workers would be able to develop class consciousness to the level of the class struggle by themselves. The consciousness will come to the worker from the outside, not from the inside. "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness." Since the workers are not able to develop their own independent ideology, they must choose either the bourgeoise ideology or the Socialist ideology, for mankind has not created a third alternative. Bourgeoise ideology will eventually win out for it is older in origin than Socialist (or Social-Democratic) ideology and hence more fully developed. In addition, bourgeoise ideology has immeasurably more opportunities for becoming widespread.


2 Lenin, "What Is To Be Done," P. 131.
For the Socialist ideology to win, it will take vigorous fighting in order to overcome the entrenchment of non-socialist ideology.

Lenin warns members of the Social-Democratic movement against falling into the trap of seeking economic objectives alone. Social-Democrats should lead the struggle of the working-class not only for better working conditions, but also for the abolition of the social system which imprisons the workers. In order to do this, the Social-Democrats must fight in the political arena and actively aid the political education of the working class, and not allow economic activity to become the major part of their concern.

It is here that Lenin gets to his next major point. From the two basic principles already developed, i.e. a working class movement must be revolutionary (Marx), and a revolutionary movement must have a revolutionary theory (Lenin), it follows that professional revolutionaries should lead the movement. This then gives rise to the question of the proper relationship between an organization of professional revolutionists and the simple labor movement.

The major error many Social-Democrats fall into is believing that the economic struggle of the workers is identical with the political struggle of the workers. Lenin makes it quite clear that these are two different
phenomena. The political struggle is far more complex and extensive than the economic struggle. For that reason it follows that the organization of the Social-Democrats must of necessity differ from the organization of the trade-unions. The difference in organization arises primarily from a difference in ultimate goals. Workers' organizations must, first of all, be trade-unions; secondly, they must be as wide in membership as possible, and finally they should be as public as conditions allow. On the other hand, the organization of revolutionaries must be composed first and foremost of people whose profession is that of revolution.

Lenin completely believes that the only way to secure the consolidation and development of a Social-Democratic trade-union movement is to have a small core of close-knit reliable, experienced workers, connected by rules of strict secrecy with the organization of revolutionists. These workers, then, with the wide support of the masses and without an elaborate set of rules will be able to perform all the functions of a trade-union organization, and perform them in the manner the Social-Democrats require.¹

Whether or not others call Lenin an anti-democrat makes no difference to him. He asserts, very strongly,

¹Ibid., p. 136.
that the organization of professional revolutionists is necessary because:

1) No movement can be durable without a stable organization of leaders to maintain continuity;

2) The more widely the masses are drawn into the struggle and form the basis of the movement, the more necessary is it to have such an organization and the more stable must it be;

3) The organization must consist chiefly of persons engaged in revolution as a profession;

4) In a country with a despotic government, the more we restrict the membership of this organization to persons who are engaged in revolution as a profession and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to catch the organization; and,

5) the wider will be the circle of men and women of the working class or of other classes of society able to join the movement and perform active work in it.¹

A close examination of these five points reveals three factors of crucial importance in our study. First, Lenin's insistence on "organization" as the core around which every thing else depends. Second, the emphasis upon a small group of leaders as a necessity for the stability and success of the working class movement is a direct result of Lenin's belief that the average worker must be led from the outside. This factor, the belief in a lack of spontaneous consciousness on the part of the worker cannot be emphasized too strongly, for it is the

¹Ibid., p. 136-137.
base upon which elitism, in the form of the Party, became incorporated into Communist theory. The third factor is the generality of the five points. Only the fourth point is specific, and then it refers to countries with despotic governments and not just to Russia alone. All the other points are general in nature and the assumption to be drawn, quite justifiably, is that Lenin intended this to be a model for all working class movements.

One might here raise the objection that Lenin in these five points is referring specifically to only revolutionary movements. In points three and four, Lenin does refer to revolution in the sense that the leaders must be professional revolutionaries. This would seem to strongly imply that he was speaking only of revolutionary movements. However, it must be noted that the other three points do not even mention the word "revolution" and nowhere does Lenin qualify the usage of organization or movement by the adjective revolutionary.

Lenin felt that a mass organization could never achieve that degree of secrecy that is necessary for a persistent and continuous struggle against the government. But the concentration of all secret functions into the hands of a small number of professional revolutionists does not mean that the revolutionists will do all the thinking for the masses. Rather, the masses
will take an active part in the movement and advance from their ranks an increasing number of professional revolutionists. "The centralization of the secret functions of the organization does not mean the concentration of all the functions of the movement."¹ The active participation of great numbers of workers in the dissemination of illegal literature, for example, will not decrease because a small group of professionals do the secret work.

The primary task facing the socialist movement is to train working-class revolutionists to the same level of party activity as the intellectual revolutionists have achieved. In so doing, care must be exercised to raise the worker to the level of revolutionists, while seeing to it that the revolutionists are not degraded to the level of the laboring masses. Promising workers must not be left to work eleven hour factory shifts. Instead, the Party should maintain him so that in due time he can go underground. Otherwise the worker will not be able to stay in the fight against the government.

Is it possible to reconcile a powerful and strictly secret organization, which of necessity is a centralized organization, with the demands of democracy? Lenin says it is not. Furthermore, not only is it not possible,

¹Ibid., p. 137.
but it is not desirable nor workable. Broad principles of democracy presupposes two conditions: first, full publicity and second, election to all functions. The first condition cannot possibly be met by an organization that bases its existence on secrecy. The principle of selection, taken for granted in politically free countries, is impossible to fulfill in an autocratic country. When a revolutionist must conceal his identity from other members, in order to safeguard the movement, how then can these other members judge his qualities for a certain party office. The simple answer is that they cannot.

"The only serious organization principle the active workers of our movement can accept is: strict secrecy, strict selection of members, and the training of professional revolutionists."1 If these qualities were possessed, the movement would have "democracy" and something else guaranteed to it: "Complete, comradely, mutual confidence among revolutionists."2

It was in State and Revolution (August-September 1917) that Lenin sets forth his ideas and theories as to the new order the proletarian revolution will bring about. It is also in this pamphlet that Lenin develops

---

1Ibid., p. 141.
2Ibid., p. 141.
his theory of the state and its role to its most mature expression.

Lenin follows the ideas of Marx as to the definition and purpose of the state. In short, the state is both the product and the manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism. The existence of the state, in turn, proves that class antagonism are irreconcilable. The state is the organ by which one class oppresses another class. Petty-bourgeoisie politicians see the establishment of order as the means to reconcile the classes, rather than the truth which is that the classes are irreconcilable. Since the state is the product of the irreconcilable character of class conflict, then the only way the oppressed class can be liberated is by violent revolution and the destruction of the machinery of state power.

Some capitalist societies have a more or less complete democracy in the form of a democratic republic. Lenin favors the democratic republic as the best form of the state for the proletariat under the conditions of capitalism. But, he warns, one must never forget that "wage-slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic."¹ A close look at this bourgeois democracy reveals that it is bound up

¹V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution (New York, 1943), p. 18.
in the narrower framework of capitalist exploitation and consequently, remains, a "democracy only for a minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich."¹ Lenin agrees with Engels that even universal suffrage is a tool of capitalist oppression. It is wrong to think that under the current conditions of the capitalist state universal suffrage will ever be able to express the will of the majority of the masses of workers.

Whatever is the form the bourgeoisie state takes, it remains in substance a Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie. In the transition from capitalism to communism there will also be a variety of political forms, but these will all in substance be a Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Lenin reiterates the fact that the state is a form of organization of force for the purpose of holding down some class. The class, therefore, that the proletariat will hold down is, quite naturally, the previous exploiting class, the bourgeoisie. It is here that Lenin gives his definition of what constitutes the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat is "the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class, for the purpose of crushing the

¹Ibid., p. 73.
oppressors."\(^1\) The proletarian dictatorship, besides bringing with it an expansion of democracy—democracy for the poor and not democracy for the rich—will also produce severe restrictions of liberty for the capitalists, the exploiters and the oppressors. These people must be crushed in order to liberate humanity from wage-slavery and they must be crushed by force and violence.

If the proletariat succeeds in destroying the bourgeoisie state, what will replace the shattered state machinery? For Lenin the answer is quite simple—the proletariat organized as the ruling class will take over the functions of the state. All officials will be controlled by the principle of election and recall at any time. Salaries of high officials will be equal to that of ordinary workers. These simple, self-evident democratic measures will ensure the harmony of the interests of the workers and peasants and, at the same time, serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism.

In this transition state, representative institutions will remain, but parliamentarism, as a special system creating a division of labor between the legislative and executive functions and granting a privileged

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 73.
position to its deputies, will no longer exist. Any democracy, even a proletarian one, is unimaginable without representative institutions. But, Lenin insists, "we can and must think of democracy without parliamentarism."¹

Leon Trotsky, noted Bolshevik revolutionary about whom more will be said later, also had bitter feelings towards parliamentary democracy. For Trotsky, the belief that people had self-government through the mechanism of a parliament was nothing more than a mere illusion. Under parliamentarism, only certain elements of the bourgeoisie had any real control or power; the vast majority of people remained just as enslaved and voiceless under parliamentary government as they had been before the franchise was given them.

To summarize the above points, we see that Lenin's elitist view of society is a result, first and foremost, of his belief that the workers will never attain more than trade-union consciousness on their own. It therefore follows that some one needs to lead the workers and this someone turns out to be professional revolutionaries, organized into a secret party, who act as the "vanguard of the proletariat." When the revolution has occurred and the bourgeoisie state is destroyed, the

¹Ibid., p. 41.
dictatorship of the proletariat (viewed as not the oppressed, but the advance-guard of the oppressed) will prevail and crush the remaining bourgeoisie influences in society. After this has been accomplished, the state (proletarian) will gradually die out and communism will become a living reality. The focal point of the above interpretation of history revolves around the word "organization" and it is to this topic we next address ourselves.

According to Lenin, the organization of the party (or vanguard of the proletariat) was of utmost importance. The primary purpose of the party was to make decisions and the organizational nature of the party had to meet three requirements. First, the decisions made must be correct ones; secondly, the decisions should be made in a democratic manner, and third, the decisions should be efficiently and speedily arrived at without arousing undue friction. The formula Lenin found has since become famous as the principle of democratic centralism. This principle implies "that the process of making and executing party decisions is to be a synthesis of democracy and organization, of freedom and order, of dissent and unanimity."¹ In actual practice this synthesis of opposites has led to the following rules:

1) election of all leading party bodies, from the lowest to the highest,

2) periodic reports of party bodies to their party organizations and to higher bodies,

3) strict party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority,

4) the decisions of higher bodies are obligatory for lower bodies.¹

Lenin had a great deal of respect for organization, for organization meant strength, and it meant rationality.

Other works by Lenin serve to mainly reiterate and reinforce, in the light of the actual historical events of the Bolshevik revolution, the theory set down in What Is To Be Done and State and Revolution. One interesting example is the pamphlet entitled "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder, written in 1920 when the Revolution, in the form of a civil war, was still going on. Lenin wrote this article with the object in mind of applying to Western Europe "whatever is of general application, general validity and generally binding force in the history and the present tactics of Bolshevism."² Lenin understood and realized that his theory, and the subsequent working out of the theory in the Russian revolution, had a significance that was

¹Frederick C. Barghoorn, Politics in the U.S.S.R. (Boston, 1966), pp. 21-22.

general, not specific. "Some fundamental features of our revolution have a significance which is not local, not peculiarly national, not Russian only, but international."¹ The term "international significance" is used by Lenin in its narrowest sense to mean "the international validity or the historical inevitability of a repetition on an international scale of what has happened here [Russia]."² Two features identified by Lenin as having international significance in the above sense are the concept of "Soviet power" as well as "the fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics."³ The term "Soviet power" refers to the idea of political power exercised through the agency of Workers' Councils. The phrase "Bolshevik theory" refers, of course, to Marxist-Leninist ideas, and "tactics" is the term used for the organization of the Party as well as the Bolshevik method of combining legal techniques (participation in Parliament) with illegal methods (sabotage) as a way of formenting revolution. Later on in the article Lenin again repeats this same point. "Experience has proved that on some very important questions of the proletarian revolution, all countries will inevitably

¹Ibid., p. 7.
²Ibid., p. 7.
³Ibid., p. 8.
have to go through what Russia has gone through."

"Left-Wing" Communism also provides further insights into the organization and workings of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin starts his discussion of the Party by affirming an earlier point: "The highest form of proletarian class organisation...is the revolutionary party of the proletariat." Lenin believes that the historical events of the revolution in Russia clearly show that absolute centralization and the strictest discipline of the proletariat is one of the most basic reasons for the victory over the bourgeoisie. Likewise, the strictest centralization and discipline are also required within the political party of the proletariat in order that "the organisational role of the proletariat (and that is its principal role) may be exercised correctly," that is, successfully.

Internally the Party of the Bolsheviks was organized along the lines alluded to in the previous discussion of democratic centralism. Lenin mentions the fact that the Bolsheviks would have been unable to maintain themselves in power for two and a half years "unless the strictest, truly iron discipline prevailed in our

1Ibid., p. 16.
2Ibid., p. 34.
3Ibid., p. 29.
The ban against factionalism was enforced. Lenin notes that in 1908 some "left" Bolsheviks were expelled from his Party for refusing to understand the necessity of participation in Parliament.²

Since discipline is such an important feature of a successful revolutionary party of the proletariat, how is this discipline maintained, tested and reinforced? Basically through three ways, Lenin replies. First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard (the Party) and by its devotion to the revolution. Second, by its ability to link itself with the broadest masses of the toilers—primarily with the proletariat but also with the non-proletarian toiling masses. Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard and of its political strategy and tactics, provided the masses have been convinced by their own experience that they are correct.³ These three conditions are necessary if discipline is to be maintained. However, these conditions cannot arise at the same time. They are created only through prolonged effort and hard won experience.⁴

---

¹Ibid., p. 9.
³Ibid., p. 10.
⁴Ibid., p. 11.
The third condition, mentioned above, poses a very interesting question. And that question revolves around the word "correct." How does the vanguard of the proletariat know whether or not its decision—in theory, strategy or tactics—is correct? And the Bolsheviks have an additional problem, for their decisions must be correct both in terms of a practical victory over the bourgeoisie and in the theoretical context of historical inevitability. Actually the difficulties encountered in trying to deduce a "correct" solution are analogous to the problem posed by the Social Contract, namely, how to find the "general will." Rousseau, as it will be recalled, considered the general will to be the "perfect expression of common interest."¹ In one of his more controversial statements Rousseau declared that the "general will is always right and tends always to the public advantage."² How does one find this general will? The general will is not necessarily the same as individual will or particular will. Nor can the general will always be found by seeking a consensus of opinion among people. Neither does the will of the majority indicate, always, the general will. And, to further obscure the knowing of the general will,

¹Lee Cameron McDonald, Western Political Theory (New York, 1968), p. 392.
Rousseau distinguished between the general will and the will of all, or the "sum of private wills."¹ Not only is the general will not always discovered through unanimity, but it is not even assured through unanimity. "The generality of the will depends less on the number of voters than on the common interest which unites them. It must be general in its object as well as its essence."² Rousseau does not give any test, save that of generality by which one can recognize or know the general will.

Lenin, in seeking to present guidelines by which the Party can know which actions are correct, tells us about as much as Rousseau did. While declaring the importance of correctness, "the significance of a party organisation and of party leaders worthy of the name lies precisely in the fact that they help...in the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, the necessary experience and...the necessary political instinct for the speedy and correct solution of intricate political problems,"³ Lenin offers very little beyond hindsight as a test for finding correct solutions. For example, he mentions that the boycott by the Bolsheviks of the Duma in 1905 was a correct action, but the boycott of 1906 was an incorrect action, in terms of what later

²Ibid., p. 29.
³Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, p. 51.
transpired. In other words, "looking back on this historical period,"¹ is Lenin's basic method of testing whether or not an action was correct. Unfortunately, this does not help one know—at the time the decision is to be made—if a decision is correct.

In a rather elaborate discussion of the tactics of compromise, Lenin again touches upon the subject of correctness. A political leader must know when a compromise is correct. But the guidelines Lenin offers the political leader are, to say the least, vague. For instance, note this example of clearcut directions:

"There are compromises and compromises. One must be able to analyse the situation and the concrete conditions of each compromise, or of each variety of compromise. One must learn to distinguish...."² Or, as Lenin later summarizes it, "The whole point lies in knowing how to apply these tactics...."³

One further item. Lenin expresses in "Left-Wing" Communism the same belief in the inabilities of the masses as he did in his earlier works. The vanguard is necessary, an elite is necessary, to lead the proletariat to victory. For the masses (and Lenin here is referring

¹Ibid., p. 21.
²Ibid., p. 22.
³Ibid., p. 56.
specifically to the masses of all countries) are, for the most part, now "slumbering, apathetic, hidebound, inert and dormant."

---

1 Ibid., p. 74.
PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS - KAUTSKY AND TROTSKY

Lenin did not formulate his theory of the necessity of elite leadership for the proletariat and the organization of this leadership without running into some stiff opposition from others in the Social-Democratic movement. His most formidable opponent was the German Social-Democrat leader, Karl Kautsky. Kautsky had known both Marx and Engels in his youth. When they died, Kautsky became the principal literary executor of these two giants of modern socialism. He was the virtual founder and for thirty-five years editor of Die Neue Zeit, the theoretical organ of German Social Democracy. Kautsky's writings, on a wide variety of subjects, were regarded everywhere as the classical statements of the socialist view. Even Lenin, up until August of 1914, filled his writings with the most respectful and even laudatory references to Kautsky.

Therefore, when Kautsky took it upon himself to openly criticize Lenin and the Bolshevik movement in 1918, it was from a position of acknowledged authority he wrote, and his opinion carried a great deal of weight in the Social-Democratic movement. Lenin replied to Kautsky's argument in an article entitled The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky. Kautsky, the
following summer, resumed his attack in Terrorism and Communism, to which Trotsky replied in a work of the same title. Not to be outdone, Kautsky continued his attack in 1921 in From Democracy to State-Slavery and in similar writings.

It was, however, in The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1918) that Kautsky first laid down his argument of opposition to Lenin's position. Kautsky understood the general nature (in the sense of a blueprint for all countries) of Lenin's theories and one of the main purposes of his book was to prevent expected revolutions in Germany and Austria from coming under communist influence. Kautsky wanted any new proletarian revolutions to be based on the principles of Social-Democracy, rather than to be based on the Bolshevik model. He wrote his book to state and clarify the distinctions between Social-Democratic theories and the theories of Lenin. In order to understand The Dictatorship of the Proletariat it is first necessary to understand that the dictatorship Kautsky attacks is not the same thing as we understand by the term modern totalitarianism. For Kautsky dictatorship was distinguished from democracy because it lacked universal suffrage and popular participation in politics. Other characteristics, of dictatorship were the suppression of open opposition, the outlawing of rival parties, and a reliance on military suppression which Kautsky believed would lead to civil
war or total political apathy.

Dictatorship, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, is one form of elitism. Whether the dictatorship is the rule of one man, or of a small group of men, an essentially elitist structure is present. Thus it should be kept in mind that when Kautsky argues against dictatorship, he is also, in a broader sense, arguing against elitism.

Kautsky was definitely opposed to elitism in the form of dictatorship; whether or not he was opposed to all forms of elitism is perhaps debatable although the evidence would seem to indicate that he was not an elitist. One thing is certain—Kautsky believed in socialism and in democracy. Democracy in its ideal form is incompatible with an elitist view of government. Socialism, with its emphasis on a more equitable distribution of national wealth would work towards the destruction of great discrepancies in wealth which is one source of elites. Thus, to believe in both democracy and socialism, which Kautsky does, lends added validity to the argument that he was a non-elitist.

Kautsky starts out his book by stating that:

"...Socialism without democracy is unthinkable. We understand by Modern Socialism not merely social organisation of production, but democratic organisation of society as well. Accordingly, Socialism is for us inseparably connected with democracy. No Socialism without democracy."

---

The reverse of this proposition, though, is not necessarily true, Kautsky argues, for democracy without socialism is quite possible, especially in small peasant communities. Kautsky then reiterates the idea that the proletariat will win only if it conquers political power, and democracy is an invaluable aid to the achievement of this goal.

Kautsky continues by listing the prerequisites for the establishment of Socialism. There must first of all be a "will to Socialism" on the part of the proletariat. The "will to Socialism" is created by great industry. It first appears among the masses when large scale industry is much developed. The will grows when both the workers engaged in the large industry discover that they "cannot share in the means of production unless they take on a social form,"¹ and when small scale production decreases to the point where small producers can no longer support themselves. Lenin, as will be recalled, believed that the "will to Socialism" or, to use Lenin's term, the workers' consciousness, would grow only as a result of outside leadership—large scale industry as such would be insufficient to increase the workers' will to Socialism.

Besides the "will to Socialism," Kautsky believes that large-scale industry and a numerical increase in

¹Ibid., p. 13.
the proletariat (and a corresponding decrease, compared to the proletarian increase, in the number of capitalists) are also necessary. These three factors are all created by advanced capitalism. Kautsky is here laying the groundwork for his later attack on Bolshevism. Russia, with her large peasant population and infant industrialization, was not, according to Marx's theory, ready for a socialist revolution. Lenin was vulnerable on this point and later wrote Imperialism in an attempt to justify a socialist revolution in backward Russia.

One more factor, besides those mentioned above, is necessary for the establishment of socialism. This factor is the "maturity of the proletariat." The proletariat must not only grasp political power, but it must also be in a position to make itself master of that power and to use it. Democracy is an excellent method of helping workers to gain the maturity they need, Kautsky felt. The proletarian class struggle presupposes democracy, if not pure democracy, at least enough democracy as is necessary to organize and uniformly enlighten the masses. The masses cannot attain maturity through secret methods. "Masses cannot be organized secretly, and, above all, a secret organization cannot be a democratic one. It always leads to the dictatorship

1Ibid., p. 15.
of a single man, or of a small knot of leaders."\(^1\) Kautsky recognizes, as Lenin did, that secret organizations are incompatible with democracy. But Kautsky goes one step further and sees in the type of organization Lenin set up, the seeds of elite dictatorial rule. And, although Kautsky concedes that secret organizations may be necessary in an autocracy, he nevertheless stresses the point that it will not promote self-government and independence which are essential for the maturity of the masses.

The term "dictatorship of the proletariat" takes on a much different meaning when used by Kautsky. Since Marx did not define this term, Kautsky does it for him, basing his reasoning on what Marx had said earlier. Kautsky argues first of all that Marx did not mean dictatorship in its literal sense. Since dictatorship refers to the sovereignty of a single person, bound by no laws, Marx could not have meant it literally because he linked the term to a class, "proletariat," not a single person. For Kautsky, the dictatorship of the proletariat refers to a political condition which must arise everywhere when the proletariat has conquered political power. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a form of government, as Lenin insists, for two

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 19.
reasons. First, one cannot speak of the dictatorship of a class, since a class can only rule, not govern, "for a class is a formless mass, while only an organization can govern."\(^1\) Second, to speak of a dictatorship in the literal sense, that is, the rule of a single person, organization or party, leads to the "dictatorship of one part of the proletariat over the other."\(^2\)

Kautsky sees no reason why the proletariat should resort to dictatorship at all. The proletariat will generally come to power only when it is in a great majority. For the proletariat to then give up democracy would be suicidal, for universal suffrage is the proletariat's greatest source of moral authority. If a proletarian party did come to power without majority support, it could not maintain itself in power without the use of centralized organization and military power. This is then likely to produce civil war.

The proletariat is able to rule by the use of democratic methods. Universal suffrage that is truly universal and free will put the bureaucrats, the military and all government officials under effective control of the masses. "The control of the government is the most important duty of Parliament."\(^3\) It cannot be replaced

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 31.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 46.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 26.
by any other institution. And the character of Parliament will be determined by the franchise. Universal suffrage will produce an effective Parliament that controls and shapes government in the interests of the working class.

Kautsky thus believes that a parliamentary form of government is both democratic and of use to the proletariat, even after the proletariat has gained complete power. He does not agree with Lenin and Trotsky who believed parliamentarism to be a method by which the proletariat was deluded into thinking they had (or shared) power when, in truth, the proletariat were still slaves. For them (Lenin and Trotsky) Parliament was a tool of the bourgeoisie only and as such of no permanent value or use to the proletariat.

In the latter part of his book, Kautsky strongly suggests that the Bolsheviks should have followed democratic procedures. He criticizes them for not accepting the constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage, for limiting the franchise to ill-defined categories of citizens, and for not allowing proletarian opposition groups to be a part of the Soviets. These statements served the dual function of warning other socialists of democratic orientation not to follow Lenin, and of attacking Lenin where he was most vulnerable. That is, since Lenin used Marxian symbols (Western
democratic symbols) he could be accused of having betrayed his own past. The attack Kautsky made could not go unanswered.

Lenin was the first to answer Kautsky's book. The temper of Lenin's reply can be judged from the title, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*, and from these examples: "a schoolmaster who has become as dry as dust," "tediously chews the cud," "Twaddle," "this windbag," "monstrous distortion," "Monstrous theoretical confusion," "sophistry," "subterfuge," "a lackey of the bourgeoisie," "absolute nonsense and an untruth," and "extreme stupidity or very clumsy trickery."^1

Not to be silenced, Kautsky continued his attack and this time Trotsky, one of the best known Bolshevik revolutionaries, replied in a book entitled *Terrorism and Communism*.^2 Trotsky based his defense of the Bolshevik movement on two basic questions. First, he concerned himself to the question of "the revolutionary seizure of power to establish and maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet form, the kind of party required for this purpose and the role it must

^1 All of these are taken from pp. 15-19, V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky* (New York, 1934).
^2 Also published under the titles The Defense of *Terrorism* and *Dictatorship Versus Democracy*.
play in achieving it."¹ The second question he addressed himself to was the methods to be used by a socialist revolution in order to realize socialism.

Trotsky starts his book by first attacking Kautsky's views on the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He accuses Kautsky of transforming the question of the conquest of a majority of votes by the Social-Democratic Party in some electoral campaign in the far future. Since universal suffrage is supposed to represent the will of all citizens, it follows that at sometime the Social-Democrats have the possibility of becoming the majority. However, Trotsky points out, this theoretical possibility has not as yet occurred and in the meantime the socialist minority must continue to submit to a bourgeoisie majority. And, if the socialist program is subordinated to the parliamentary mystery of majority and minority, in those countries which have formal democracy, there will never be a place for the revolutionary struggle. Thus, "this fetishism of the parliamentary majority represents a brutal repudiation, not only of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but of Marxism and of the revolution alto-

Trotsky furthers his argument against parliamentary democracy by quoting at length the Marxist Paul Lafargue who spoke of parliamentarism in an article in the Russian review, Sozialdemokrat in 1888, in the following terms.

As a system of government, parliamentarism is characterized by the people having the illusion that they control the forces of the country itself when, in actuality, the real power is concentrated into the hands of certain sections of the bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie first attained supremacy, it did not feel the necessity for making all the people believe in the illusion of self-government. Thus all the parliamentary European countries started with a limited franchise. Only gradually was the franchise extended to persons with lesser means until in some countries the right to vote became a universal privilege.

"In bourgeoisie society, the more considerable becomes the amount of social wealth, the smaller becomes the number of individuals by whom it is appropriated. The same takes place with power; in proportion as the mass of citizens who possess political rights increases, and the number of elected rulers increases, the actual power is concentrated and becomes the monopoly of a smaller and smaller group of individuals. Such is the secret of the majority."²

---


² From an article by Paul Lafargue, Sozialdemokrat (1888), as quoted by Leon Trotsky, Terrorism and Communism, p. 41.
For Trotsky, parliamentarianism was exposed by Marxism as the "passing mechanism of the bourgeoisie," and as such is subject only to "temporary utilization with the object of preparing the proletarian revolution."¹

Whoever aims at the end must not reject the means, Trotsky declares. The struggle of the workers must be carried on with such an intensity of degree as to actually guarantee the supremacy of the proletariat. If the socialist revolution requires a dictatorship—"the sole form in which the proletariat can achieve control of the state"²—then it follows that this dictatorship must be guaranteed at all costs. The only way to guarantee the dictatorship is to force the former ruling class, the bourgeoisie, into the realization that it is impossible to revolt against the proletarian dictatorship. This can only be done through terrorism, for the bourgeoisie cannot be shamed or convinced, but only terrorized or crushed.

Anyone who denies, in principle, the use of terrorism, or measures of suppression and intimidation towards a determined and armed counter-revolution, must also in all honesty deny all ideas of the political supremacy of the proletariat and its dictatorship. Thus, Trotsky declares, the man who denies the dictator-

¹Trotsky, Terrorism and Communism, p. 42.
²Ibid., p. 22.
ship of the proletariat denies the Socialist revolution and helps, therefore, to dig the grave of socialism.¹

Kautsky's path to the salvation of the proletariat is democracy. But what has democracy really brought to the worker, asks Trotsky. It has actually only brought one thing, an imperialist world war, which showed two things. One, democracy did not educate and bring the worker to a greater maturity of political preparation for accurately judging an event such as this war. Two, the bourgeoisie, which brought nations exhausted and bleeding to the edge of destruction, has displayed its "inability to bring them out of their terrible situation, and, thereby, its incompatibility with the future development of humanity."² The proletariat, having again been deceived by the bourgeoisie, is turning against them more and more. Violent revolution has become a necessity precisely because "the imminent requirements of history are helpless to find a road through the apparatus of parliamentary democracy."³ There is only one way for the proletariat to succeed, and that is to seize power.

Trotsky accuses Kautsky of talking about democracy

¹Ibid., p. 23.
²Ibid., p. 35.
³Ibid., p. 36.
as it ought to be, rather than as it really is. He (Kautsky) takes the principles of democracy and turns them from their historical meanings and, instead, presents them as sacred, unalterable things-in-themselves. The formal democracy Kautsky talks about is rooted in theories of natural law, not scientific socialism. Initially, the current ideas of natural law (or formal democracy) emerged from the Middle Ages as a protest against class privileges of feudal law. As a cry against feudalism, the demand for democracy had a progressive nature. But as time went on, the theory of formal democracy began to show its reactionary side—"the establishment of an ideal standard to control the real demands of the laboring masses and the revolutionary parties."¹

Trotsky draws a comparison of the theory of formal democracy to Christian spiritualism. Christianity proclaimed to the slave that his soul was the same as that of the slave-owner. Thus the equality of all men before the Heavenly tribunal was established. In reality, however, the slave remained a slave and now obedience for the slave became a religious duty. In the same way natural law, which developed the theory of formal democracy, says to the worker that all men are equal before

¹Ibid., p. 38.
the law regardless of origin, wealth or position. Each man has an equal right to determine the fate of the people. Originally, this doctrine aided the masses insofar as it was a condemnation of absolutism and aristocratic privileges. But the longer this theory continued, the more it showed its reactionary side, lulling the consciousness of the workers to sleep, legalizing poverty, slavery and degradation. For how could a worker revolt against slavery when everyone has an equal right in determining the fate of his nation?

Scientific socialism teaches the workers that this formal democracy is but a tool and instrument of the bourgeoisie, adapted to the task of ensuring their rule. The real goal of the Socialist party is to expose what this enslaving and stupefying doctrine of the bourgeoisie really is. The basic problem the party faces is to create the conditions for a real, economic, living reality for all mankind as members of a united human community. And it was for this reason that the "theoricians of the proletariat had to expose the metaphysics of democracy as a philosophic mask for political mystification." ¹

Trotsky was just as open in discussing the role

¹Ibid., p. 40.
of the Communist Party in the revolution as he was in discussing the use of terrorism. Before the revolution it was the trade-unions and the party that were the organizations concerned with the preparation for the revolution. When the revolution occurred the revolutionary masses found their most direct representation to be in the simple, yet comprehensive, organization of the Soviet. The Soviet embraces all workers of all professions at all stages of political consciousness. Thus the Soviet is objectively forced to formulate the general interests of the proletariat. According to the Manifesto, the Communist Party differs from other proletarian parties in that they have "no interest separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." ¹ Since in the all-embracing class organization of the Soviet the movement as a whole is found, it is only natural that the Communists should become the guiding party in the Soviets.

The Soviets are the weapon of the revolution itself. After the revolutionary victory, the Soviets become organs of power. The role of the party and the trade-unions is essentially altered, though not decreasing. Into the hands of the party general control is concentrated. It does not immediately administer, since its

structure is not adapted to that purpose. Rather it
has the final word in all fundamental questions. Further,
Trotsky states, in practice, on most questions, the final
word belongs to the Central Committee of the Party.
This results in an extreme economy of time and energy
and gives a guarantee of unity of action, asserts
Trotsky.

The exclusive role the Communist Party has, under
the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution,
is quite understandable, Trotsky feels. The immediate
goal of the revolution is the establishment of the
dictatorship of a class, the proletariat. The composi-
tion of this class is varied; members of it have
achieved different levels of consciousness and exhibit
heterogeneous moods. But a successful proletarian
dictatorship pre-supposes a unity of will, direction
and action. Only if one can find, within the proletariat
itself, the political supremacy of a party that has
both a clear program of action and internal discipline,
can the victory of the proletarian dictatorship be
assured.

Trotsky is aware of the fact that people like
Kautsky have accused the Bolsheviks of substituting
a dictatorship of the party for the proletarian
dictatorship. Trotsky answers this charge by asserting
that the dictatorship of the Soviets (the organizational
form of the proletarian dictatorship) became possible only because there was a dictatorship of the party. Actually, there is really no such thing as a substitution of the power of the party for the power of the proletariat since the Communist Party expresses "the fundamental interests of the working class."\(^1\) It is quite natural, Trotsky continues, that in this period of history which brings to the fore the interests of the working class, the Communist Party should have become the recognized representatives of the working class as a whole.

What guarantee, some people have asked Trotsky, do you have that the party expresses the interests of historical development, especially when you destroy other parties and consequently deprive yourselves of competition and the possibility of testing your line of action? This type of reasoning, says Trotsky, is a result of a liberal conception of the revolutionary course of events. The problem the Bolsheviks face is not to statistically measure at any given moment the grouping of tendencies, but rather to assure victory of their tendency, the tendency of revolutionary dictatorship. The internal friction that results from the processes of the revolutionary dictatorship

\(^1\)Trotsky, p. 111.
will provide, Trotsky believes, sufficient criterion for self-examination.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, Trotsky says, "signifies the immediate supremacy of the revolutionary guard, which relies upon the heavy masses, and, where necessary, obliges the backward tail to dress by the head."¹ This also applies to the trade-unions. The continued independence of the trade-unions in the period of the proletarian revolution is impossible. When the proletariat conquers power, the trade-unions acquire a compulsory nature; they must include, for example, all industrial workers. The party, however, as before, includes within its ranks only the most class-conscious and devoted people. Thus it follows that the Communist minority in the trade-unions should have a guiding role. This Communist minority, in turn, answers to the supremacy of the Communist Party which represents the political expression of the proletarian dictatorship.

Summary

Summarizing the pre-revolutionary writings of Lenin, Kautsky and Trotsky, we can see that the ideological foundations for elitism in Communist

¹Ibid., p. 110.
thought first found a relatively complete expression in the writings of Lenin. Not believing in the average worker's capacity to spontaneously develop "consciousness," Lenin felt it imperative that the worker must be led if the proletarian revolution was ever to succeed. Lenin was the one to formulate, within a Marxist framework, the requirements that any movement must have in order to be successful. Organization was the key to his plans, especially centralized organization of the proletarian leadership.

The leaders that Lenin envisioned as the "vanguard of the proletariat," were to be a small group of professional revolutionaries. This elite group, tightly organized by rules of secrecy and strict discipline, was to form the central core of the proletarian movement. It was only natural that after the revolution had occurred, the proletariat would still need leadership, and this same elite vanguard would continue to lead and guide the proletariat during the phase of building socialism. As a socialist and a democrat, Kautsky recognized the inherent dangers to democracy that this elite structure proposed by Lenin held, but for the most part his warnings went unheeded.

There is one more point to be noted with Lenin and this applies also to both Kautsky and Trotsky. Lenin
presents an idea of elite organization of both the proletarian movement and of a proletarian society that is both general and particular at the same time. Lenin takes pains to note, every so often, that his type of elitism is necessary because of the special conditions (autocracy) that were present in Russia. If you have a state where legal methods of petition are not allowed then, argues Lenin, you must use extra-legal or illegal procedures. Yet this reference to Russia's unique position among the Western nations is not emphasized and appears rather as an after thought of justification.

Kautsky reacts to Lenin's writings in the same way. His attack is both general and particular. Kautsky bases his main argument on the fact that democracy is an essential condition for Socialism to be realized. Lenin's plan for the revolution will lead to dictatorship (a form of elitism), for that is an inevitable outcome of the organization Lenin outlines. Kautsky recognizes that Lenin's ideas are, in reality, a general plan for revolution in all of Europe. Thus, Kautsky tackles Lenin on the grounds of the general argument and actually only mentions the special conditions in Russia but once. The one time he does refer to Russia is to concede that Russia is different from Western democracies, but, Kautsky argues, that is no reason why after the revolution democracy cannot be introduced.
Trotsky supports the basic position of Lenin. He more openly uses conditions in Russia as a justification for what has happened there, but he also more openly spells out that this is the method for all countries to take. A small core of elite leaders is needed to guide the worker both before and after the revolution. No one should criticize either the leaders or the takeover, for it is necessary and expedient. Terror and elite organization must be used for the revolution demands it. It is rather silly to try to justify or rationalize these methods, although Trotsky attempts to do both, for they had to be used.

Trotsky believes these methods are not only applicable to other countries, but are also inevitable. One should not make bones about that which is necessary, sums up Trotsky's argument. The democracy of which Kautsky refers to is a bourgeoisie trap and has no real place in the new revolutionary order. Only elite organization, coupled with terror, will establish socialism.
POST-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS

The elitist position inherent in Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings on the Party and on the dictatorship of the proletariat did not end with Lenin's demise. Both in theory and in actual practice, elitism has continued to this day in the Soviet Union. Every successor to Lenin has found it necessary to expand, modify and elaborate Lenin's basic elitist position. This continuation of elitism in Russian Communist thought has contributed to a stratified, hierarchical society that is elitist in form and totalitarian in method.

The first leader of Russia after Lenin's death was Joseph Stalin. Among the various factors that characterize the years of Stalin's rule, the following are some of the most significant: a monolithic Party rule that ultimately reflected the will of Stalin; rural collectivization and rapid industrialization; terroristic police and forced labor; a retreat to class inequalities in the social and economic spheres; re-emphasis on traditional family and educational institutions as well as Russian nationalism; and a shift from Marxist determinism to individual determinism.
"voluntarism" in the official ideology. Most of these characteristics of Stalinist Russia derive either from the Leninist heritage or from having a Marxist revolution in an economically underdeveloped country.

The most basic link, however, that connects Stalin to Lenin, both historically and for the purpose of this thesis, is the Party. Lenin, as shown earlier, had demanded full-time professional revolutionaries, centrally organized and strictly disciplined, to lead the fight against the bourgeoisie. Stalin achieved his prominence directly as a result of meeting these requirements. As General Secretary of the Party, Stalin was able to gain control of the Party membership. Since the Party was a monopolistic, monolithic, centralized dictatorship, whoever controlled the Party controlled the state. Once in power Stalin initiated and pushed programs such as those mentioned above as characteristic of his rule. Stalin was able to accomplish what he did only because Lenin had bequeathed to Russia an elitist Party organization.

Stalin's basic theoretical writings are contained in a work entitled *The Foundations of Leninism*. Originally presented as a series of lectures and published in 

---

Pravda in April-May 1924, the Foundations remain a comprehensive survey of the principal themes underlying the Stalin era. In these writings Stalin actually contributed little to the basic Leninist literature. Only in one area did Stalin set forth a new concept. Marxism, as will be recalled, is a deterministic theory. Man does what he does because of the objective forces (economic basis of society, arrangement of superstructure, etc.) that are operating in his society. But in a country run by an elite party that was concerned with the fulfillment of tremendous economic goals, it became necessary to stress rather the idea of individual effort and responsibility. Extenuating circumstances involving "objective conditions" could not be tolerated in a country bent on rapid industrialization. Hence Stalin made the doctrinal change from determinism to voluntarism.

In all other theoretical matters, however, The Foundations of Leninism consists of a re-hash of Lenin's basic ideas. At the beginning of his treatise, Stalin makes the point that Leninism is not peculiar to Russia, but is a general theory of all countries. Stalin stresses the fact that Leninism is not the application of Marxism to special Russian conditions. Stalin concludes: "Leninism is not merely a Russian, but an international phenomenon rooted in the whole of
international development.¹ Leninism is but Marxism brought up-to-date to fit the era of imperialism. And, to be even more precise, Stalin states that Leninism is: "the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution in general and the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular."²

Stalin re-iterates Lenin's proposition that without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement. Theory, which is the "experience of the working-class movement in all countries taken in its general aspect,"³ is of great significance, but only if it is connected to practice. Theory can give the revolutionary movement confidence, orientation and an understanding of the inner relation of events both now and in the near future. In addition, theory is of tremendous importance, for the role of the vanguard can be fulfilled only when guided by the most advanced theory.

Stalin, like Lenin, criticizes the idea of the spontaneity of the masses, calling this concept the

³Ibid., p. 223.
"ideology of trade unionism."¹ Stalin dislikes the theory of spontaneity, for it denies the role of the vanguard, hence the role of the party. It is opposed to the party marching at the head of the working masses, to the party raising the consciousness of the workers and to the party leading the movement. Although couched in other terms, Stalin is well aware of the fact that belief in an elite party is justified only if the masses cannot achieve consciousness on their own, only if they need help.

On the topic of the dictatorship of the proletariat Stalin theorizes in the same vein as Lenin did. For Stalin, the dictatorship of the proletariat is viewed as the rule of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie. The proletarian dictatorship is formed not on the basis of the old bourgeoisie order, but arises in the process of the breakdown of the bourgeoisie. Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat is "a revolutionary power based on the use of force against the bourgeoisie."²

Two conclusions arise form this definition of the proletarian dictatorship, Stalin believes. First, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be completely

¹Ibid., p. 224.
²Ibid., p. 241.
democratic. Democracy for all, for the rich as well as for the poor is not possible. Kautsky errors, Stalin continues, in arguing for universal equality and pure or perfect democracy. Such talk is merely a bourgeoisie disguise of the undisputable fact that "equality between exploited and exploiters is impossible."\(^1\) Capitalist democracy is democracy only for the upper classes, a democracy based on restricting the rights of exploited masses, the majority. Democracy under the rule of the dictatorship of the proletariat is proletarian democracy. That is, democracy for the vast masses of workers and peasants based on the restriction of the rights of the exploiting minority.

The second conclusion Stalin draws is that the dictatorship of the proletariat can never arise as a result of a peaceful development of bourgeoisie society, or bourgeoisie democracy. It can only arise as a result of forcibly smashing the bourgeoisie state machinery. Whereas Marx had originally conceded the possibility of a peaceful evolution from bourgeoisie to proletarian democracy for certain countries not on the European continent (America, Britain), this was before the advent of a developed militarism, bureaucracy and

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 242.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
imperialism. Under these new conditions, a peaceful evolution is no longer possible for any country. Stalin summarizes this point by stating: "the law of violent proletarian revolution, the law of smashing of the bourgeoisie state machine as a preliminary condition for such a revolution, is an inevitable law of the revolutionary movement in the imperialist countries of the world."¹

In the closing pages of The Foundations of Leninism Stalin devotes considerable time to a discussion of the role of the Party in both the initial revolutionary struggle and in the transition stage from capitalism to socialism. After first outlining the necessity for a new militant revolutionary party (open class collisions, imperialism) Stalin proceeds to analyze the specific features of this new party, this party of Leninism. The first feature he mentions is that the party is an advanced detachment of the working class. In order to be advanced, the Party must be armed with a revolutionary theory and must have a knowledge of the laws of the movement and of revolution. "The Party must stand at the head of the working class; it must see farther than the working class; it must lead the proletariat, and not drag at the tail of the spontaneous

¹Ibid., p. 244.
The Party is both the political leader of the working class and its General Staff in the revolutionary struggle.

The second specific feature of the Leninist Party is that the Party is an organized detachment of the working class. Organization is necessary if the Party is to be able to direct the masses under the difficult internal and external conditions that arise as a consequence of the revolutionary struggle. The Party is also an organized whole. That is, the Party is regarded as the sum total of all its organizations, and the Party member is viewed as a member of one of the organizations of the Party. However, the Party is not only the sum total of Party organizations, it is at the same time a single system of these organizations. The single system consists of a formal union into a single whole, higher and lower bodies, subordination of the minority to the will of the majority and practical decisions binding on all members. These conditions are essential if the Party is to be a single organized whole "capable of exercising systematic and organized leadership of the working-class struggle."¹

The Party is not the only organization of the work-

¹Ibid., p. 283.  
²Ibid., p. 286.
ing class, however, there are trade unions, co-operatives, cultural and educational groups, women's associations, etc. All these groups are necessary for the working class; for without them "it would be impossible to consolidate the class positions of the proletariat in the diverse spheres of struggle."¹ How, Stalin asks, can there be a single leadership exercised with such a profusion of groups? These groups should all work in the same direction for they serve one class, the proletariat. Who is to determine the general direction these groups should follow? Stalin answers that the only group capable of exercising central leadership is the Party of the proletariat. The Party possesses all the essential qualifications for central leadership because:

1) it serves as a rallying center for the best elements of the working class who are directly connected to non-Party organizations,

2) as a rallying point for the best elements of the working class, it is the best school for training leaders for the working class, and

3) as the best training school for leaders, the Party, by virtue of its experience and authority, is the only organization capable of centralizing the leadership of the proletarian struggle and thus transforming all non-Party working class organizations into a transmission belt linking the Party with the class.²

¹Ibid., p. 288.
²Ibid., p. 288.
The third feature of a Leninist Party is, then, that it is the highest form of class organization of the proletariat.

The fourth feature is that the Party is an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat. While it is true that the Party is the highest form of proletarian organization and that it is the principal guiding force within the working class, it does not follow from this, Stalin argues, that the Party can be regarded as an end in itself, as a self-sufficient force. In the hands of the proletariat the Party is an instrument for achieving the dictatorship, and once it has been achieved, the Party is then used to consolidate and expand the dictatorship. From this it follows that when classes disappear and the proletarian dictatorship withers away, "the Party will also wither away."¹

Lenin's ban on factionalism is carried over into Stalin's writings, for the fifth feature of a Leninist Party sees the Party as a unity of will, a unity incompatible with the existence of factions. The achieving and maintaining of the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a Party that is strong in its solidarity and discipline. Iron discipline is unattainable unless there is first a unity of will and a

¹Ibid., p. 290.
unity of action on the part of all members. This does not preclude, Stalin argues, the possibility of conflicts of opinion within the Party. Conflict of opinion and criticism is an essential must if the Party is to have true discipline. Blind obedience is of no real use to the Party, for only a conscious and voluntary submission will produce a truly iron discipline.

The sixth and final feature of the Leninist Party that Stalin mentions is closely allied with the fifth feature. As the existence of factionalism is not to be tolerated so also are "opportunist" elements not to be tolerated. The source of factionalism is opportunist elements, those petty-bourgeoisie members who seek to introduce into the Party a spirit of indecision, opportunism, demoralization and uncertainty. Trying to overcome these opportunist elements by means of an ideological struggle within the Party is a mistake, Stalin warns. They must be eliminated altogether from the Party. Hence the sixth feature, the Party is made strong by purging itself of opportunist elements.

From this brief summary of Stalin's *The Foundations of Leninism* we can see that in the main Stalin followed the elitist ideological lead of Lenin. The dictatorship of the proletariat is retained and the justification for it expanded. Stalin also enlarges the role of the Party, which remains for Stalin, as for Lenin, an
elite group that acts as a vanguard for the proletariat. Whereas the Party was important for the revolution, under Stalin it becomes even more indispensable after the revolution had occurred. Stalin retains the role of an elite Party, expands this role in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism and adds more justifications for the necessity of an elite guiding light for the masses.

Theoretically speaking one of the more important events that have happened since Stalin's death was the Twenty-second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in 1961. An examination of the documents of this Congress show what the current trends in theory are. Mostly, the writings form an unbroken line of thought from Lenin to the present with a few important exceptions such as the emphasis on peaceful co-existence and a new concept of the Party. The Congress took place during the reign of N. S. Khrushchev and it thus is safe to assign the documents quoted below to the authorship, or at least the approval, of Khrushchev.

The basic documents we will examine are the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev's Report on the Party Program given as a speech to the delegates of the Party Congress. The Party Program is a document which states the achievements of the Party
since the revolution, and lists the aims and goals the Party is to strive for in the future. The Program starts out by stating the historical inevitability of the transition from capitalism to socialism. The Communist Party is referred to as "the conscious exponent of the class movement of the proletariat," Lenin's idea of the "vanguard" couched in different terms. The Program re-states an earlier point made by both Lenin and Stalin that the dictatorship of the proletariat, along with the leadership of the Party, are essential, necessary conditions for both a successful revolution and the building of socialism. Furthermore, the document states, the experience of the U.S.S.R. has had proves that people can achieve socialism only as a result of a socialist revolution and a dictatorship of the proletariat. The fundamental principles of socialist revolution and socialist construction are principles "of universal significance." Lest there be any doubt, the same point is repeated later in the section on the World Systems of Socialism. After discussing other countries in the "socialist camp," the Program states that, confirmed by practice and recognized by


2 Ibid., p. 4.
all Marxist-Leninist parties, "the processes of the socialist revolution and of socialist construction are founded on a number of major objective laws applicable to all countries that enter on the path of socialism."¹

The dictatorship of the proletariat need not take an identical form with that of the Soviet Union. While the objective laws of socialist revolution are common to all countries, differences in tradition and national culture that have arisen in the course of history, will lead to a diversity of the forms by which the proletariat gains power. Thus, in some countries, there might be transitional stages in the development of the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and a variety of forms of political organization of the society building socialism. But, warns the Program, however the transition from capitalism to socialism is effected, it will occur only through revolution. Likewise, however varied are the forms of the people's state rule during the period of socialist building, it will still in essence be a dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship of the proletariat will be a dictatorship of the vast majority over the minority. It will be directed against the former exploiters. And it will

¹Ibid., p. 5.
represent genuine democracy, a democracy for the working people.

After discussing the inevitability of a transition from capitalism to communism and the universal objective laws of socialism and socialist construction that will apply to all countries, the Party Program goes on to relate the progress made by the Soviet Union towards its goal of full-scale communism. Communism can be achieved only by first overthrowing capitalism, then building socialism, and finally building communism. The dictatorship of the proletariat is an essential step towards the building of the socialist state.

Having eliminated the exploiting classes, the primary function of the dictatorship—suppressing the exploiter's resistance—has ceased. Instead the chief functions of a socialist state (economic, organizational, cultural and educational) have been comprehensively developed. The socialist state has entered a new period of development in which proletarian democracy is becoming a socialist democracy of the people as a whole.

The dictatorship of the proletariat has brought about the complete and final victory of socialism. Having accomplished its historical mission, the dictatorship is no longer essential to the tasks of internal development in the U.S.S.R. The Party Program declares the state, formerly a dictatorship of the proletariat,
to have turned into a state of the entire people, expressing the will and the interests of the people as a whole. During this new state of development, the working class will continue to have a leading role in the building of communism. But since the working class is the only class in history that does not seek to perpetuate its power, its function of leading society will end when communism is built and classes disappear.

"The Party proceeds from the principle that the dictatorship of the proletariat will cease to be necessary before the state withers away."\(^1\) The state, as a type of organization embracing the entire people, will survive until the total victory of communism. Expressing the will of all the people the state will be called upon to organize the creation of the material base of communism and the transformation of socialist relations into communist relations.

Khrushchev, in his *Report on the Party Program*, develops this point of the state of the entire people further. He calls the development from a dictatorship of the proletariat to a state of the entire people a "most important milestone in the evolution of socialist statehood into communist public self-government."\(^2\)

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 23.

Experience has proven, Khrushchev states, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is absolutely essential for the victory of socialism. Reactionary forces, landlords and capitalists, fiercely resist the establishment of socialism. The only regime capable of suppressing the exploiters and consolidating the gains of the revolution is the proletarian dictatorship.

The proletariat, Khrushchev continues, only uses coercion against capitalists and landlords, never against the working class. "This gives the proletarian regime its profoundly democratic nature." The working class guides all the other sections of the working people (for example the peasantry) and helps them to shift voluntarily to the socialist path. This guidance is a characteristic feature of the proletarian regime. It also makes the proletarian state fundamentally different from the bourgeoisie state which knows no other form of relationship than that of dominance and subservience.

Marx and Lenin, remarks Khrushchev, clearly stated that the dictatorship of the proletariat was a state form during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. Therefore, when socialism had been fully achieved in the Soviet Union, the conditions that had necessitated the proletarian dictatorship disappeared.

\[1^{\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 101.}\]
Since the working class is the only class in history that does not seek to perpetuate its rule, then when the conditions that gave rise to a dictatorship disappeared, the state evolves into an all-inclusive organization of working people. Throughout history the state has always been a means by which one class oppressed another. Now, Khrushchev concludes, for the first time a state has arisen that is not a tool of class suppression, but "the instrument of society as a whole, of all the people."\(^1\)

Why does the state remain when its main product, class antagonism, has disappeared, asks Khrushchev. The answer he gives is that society has not yet completed tasks that can only be solved with the help of the state. The state will continue to exist long after the first phase of communism has been achieved. Only when society has a completely matured self-government, only when the domestic functions of the state lose their political character, only when a developed communist society exists, and only when socialism has won and the gains been consolidated internationally, will the need for a state disappear and only then will the state wither away.

As a result of the victory of socialism, the Communist Party has become a vanguard of the Soviet

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 102.
people and, like the state, a party of the whole people. The new stage just entered, that of the full-scale building of communism, is characterized by a further "rise in the role and importance of the Communist Party as the leading and guiding force in Soviet society."\(^1\)

The Party ensures correct leadership and gives the work of communist construction an organized, planned and scientific character. Specifically, the increased role of the Party in this new stage of the development of Soviet society is determined by and a result of:

1) a higher level of political and organizational leadership necessitated by the growing and complex tasks of communist construction,

2) the enlistment of millions of working people in the administration of state affairs and production,

3) the further development of socialist democracy, and

4) the growing importance of the theory of scientific communism and the necessity of fighting to overcome survivals of the past in the minds of the people.\(^2\)

Throughout the writings of both Stalin and Khrushchev, we find the basic themes of Lenin continued and expanded. A steady emphasis is placed upon both the Party and upon the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, both of which contain an elitist core. Not

\(^1\) "The Party Program," p. 31.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 31.
all are happy about where this theoretical structure has led the Soviet Union in actuality. Like a modern day Kautsky, a Yugoslavian communist has spoken out against the societal elitist structure fostered by these Marxist-Leninist principles. As with Kautsky, the analysis of the then current situation (decade of the 1950's) given by Milovan Djilas in his book, The New Class, carried an important impact on both the Communist and non-Communist world, as Djilas was at one time the second highest ranking member in the Yugoslav Communist Party and a leading Communist theoretician. Djilas criticizes not so much the theoretical underpinnings of the Communist system as much as he does the elitist reality of the system.

Believing that industrialization, nationalization and collectivization in the U.S.S.R. would result in a classless society was the biggest error ever made, Djilas feels. Rather than a classless society what was in effect produced was a new class, a class previously unknown in history.

This new class, "the bureaucracy, or more accurately the political bureaucracy,"¹ shares with other classes some characteristics as well as having some unique ones.

In essence the origin of this class was similar to that of other classes, although some special features attended its birth. As with other classes, this class obtained its power and strength by following the revolutionary path. But whereas most other classes attained power after new economic patterns had taken shape in society, this class came to power not to complete a new economic order but to establish its own, and in the process, to gain power over society.

Since this new class had not been formed as a part of the economic and social order before it came to power, it could be created only through an organization of a special type. This organization was distinguished by a unity of belief and an iron discipline. Lenin was right, Djilas says, when he said that his party would be an exception in the course of history. However, Lenin did not suspect that his new party would be the beginning of a new class.

The initiators of this new class are found among those professional revolutionaries who made up the core of the Party before the Party had gained power. Djilas notes that even Trotsky mentioned the fact that the origin of the future Stalinist bureaucrat was to be found in the pre-revolutionary professional revolutionaries. What Trotsky did not detect was the start of a new class of exploiters and owners.
The new party formulated by Lenin is not identical to the new class. The party does, however, form the core and the base of the class. Djilas identifies the members of this new class as "those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold."\(^1\) As the class becomes stronger, the role of the Party decreases. The once live Party, full of initiative, is becoming transformed into a traditional oligarchy of the new class. The party might make the class, but the class grows and uses the party as a base. The class grows stronger while the party grows weaker, "this is the inescapable fate of every Communist party in power."\(^2\) (That the Party grows weaker, as Djilas here theorizes, is a much debatable fact in the light of the increasing role of the Party as attested to in the Party Statutes and Program of the Twenty-second Congress of the Russian Communist Party.)

The proof that there is a new, special class, lies in its ownership function and in its relation to other classes, Djilas states. As in other owning classes, the class to which an individual belongs is determined by material and other privileges that ownership brings him.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 39.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 40.
Since property, as Roman law defines it, constitutes the use, enjoyment and disposition of material goods, then the communist political bureaucracy is an ownership class for it uses, enjoys and disposes nationalized property. The ownership privileges of the new class and the membership in that class are basically the privileges of administration. "This privilege extends from state administration and the administration of economic enterprises to that of sports and humanitarian organizations."¹ General leadership of society is executed by the core and this position of leadership also carries privileges with it.

The development of the modern communist system and the appearance of the new class is obvious in the character and roles of those who inspired it, Djilas remarks. From Marx to Khrushchev, the leaders and their methods have been varied and changing. For instance, Marx never even thought of preventing others from stating their opinion; Lenin tolerated free discussion in his party; and Stalin not only abolished all types of intra-party discussions, but he went so far as to make the expression of ideology the sole right of the central forum, or himself. Marx never actually even created a party, whereas Lenin destroyed all

¹Ibid., p. 46.
parties except his own. Stalin, on the other hand, relegated the Bolshevik Party to second-rank. He changed the base of the party into the base of the new class and he made the party over into a privileged, impersonal and colorless group.

There are numerous other differences as well, says Djilas, such as the various views these men held about mankind. (Marx saw men as members of discernible classes; Lenin viewed men as sharing ideas; Stalin saw in men either obedient subjects or enemies.) These differences and the changes in the personalities of the top leaders are but a reflection of changes which had already occurred in the communist movement. Without realizing it, Lenin started the organization of the new class. He build his party along Bolshevik lines and developed theories of the party's unique leading role in the building of a new society. This is only one aspect of his work and it is an aspect which came from his actions rather than his wishes. It is also the one aspect which led the new class to idolize and revere him. In spite of this it is in Stalin that Djilas sees the real originator of the new class. As a great administrator and relentless dogmatician, Stalin created the new class by using barbaric methods in which even the class itself was not spared. Stalin was true leader of the new class as long as the class was
building up itself and attaining power.

After Lenin and Stalin came a type of leadership that was inevitable, mediocrity in the shape of collective leadership. Having finally attained power, the new class no longer needed revolutionaries or dogmatists and was satisfied with more simple personalities such as Khrushchev.

Djilas discerns three phases in the development of the new class. The first phase was Lenin's revolutionary communism which was replaced in the second phase by Stalin's dogmatic communism. The third phase is "collective leadership or a group of oligarchs."¹ These three phases are not exclusive either in substance or in ideas. Lenin was also a dogmatist just as Stalin was also a revolutionary. Collective leadership too will use dogmatism or revolutionary methods when it seems necessary.

Djilas continues to press home the point that the new class is really a new class with a special composition and special power. By any scientific definition of a class, including the Marxian one, Djilas concludes that in the Soviet Union, as well as the other socialist countries, a new class of owners and exploiters exists. The special characteristic of this new class is its

¹Ibid., p. 53.
collective leadership.

For Djilas the most essential aspect of modern day communism is not that a party of a certain type has taken shape, nor is it that a bureaucracy has arisen from monopolistic ownership. Rather it is the fact that a new class of owners and exploiters, whose "methods of rule fill some of the most shameful pages in history," has been created. This new class in now at the height of its power and wealth, but is without new ideas. It has nothing more to tell people. "The only thing that remains is for it to justify itself."
CONCLUSION

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, elitism has many definitions but it remains essentially "any view that assigns the capacity to govern to a specially selected group or type of individual." The hypothesis of this thesis has been that there are elitist elements present in pre-revolutionary Russian communist writings, that they have continued with few modifications to this day, and that the theories incorporating these elitist elements are intended to apply to all countries at all times. The elitist elements that we found in the writings reviewed in this work centered around two key concepts, the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In addition, the theories of Russian communist thought present us with a view of a hierarchical arranged society that has three distinct structures. As mentioned previously, hierarchical governing structures are elitist in their nature, and the hierarchical arrangement communist thought gives us is not an exception.

The first of the three hierarchical/elitist structures is the Party itself. Through such methods as democratic centralism, iron discipline and a ban on
factionalism, decisions effectively flow from the top down. Thus the top party leaders form the elite of the Party. They are a specially selected group; membership in this group depends on obedience to Party decisions, theoretical correctness and the ability to politically maneuver. At various times, a proletarian background was also a necessity. The second structure places the Party, as the vanguard and guiding light of the proletariat, over the proletariat. The proletariat, which is the "most advanced and best organized force,"¹ is placed over the peasantry. The entire Soviet Union is a vanguard for all socialist countries, which in turn are placed before the Third World and then finally the Free World. The third hierarchical structure is a more direct version of the second. In this system the Party of the Soviet Union is the vanguard for all other foreign communist parties. They, in turn, are the guiding light for all workers who are themselves placed before all other peoples of the world.

It will be noticed that at the apex of all these structures is the Russian Communist Party and its top leadership. The Party both in its internal arrangement and in its world position forms the primary core of elitism. Interconnected with the Party is the idea

of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletarian dictatorship serves to limit Party membership to a selected economic group, although members of the intelligensia who can subordinate their ideas are also tolerated. The dictatorship also helps justify elite rule. Since the proletarian dictatorship is essential for the transition from capitalism to socialism, and since the Party is the vanguard of the proletariat, it naturally follows that the Party should govern.

These two basic elitist elements in Russian Communist thought, the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat, initially found their most complete expression in the writings of Lenin. It was a good fifteen years before the Revolution of 1917, and even two years before the premature revolutionary outbreak in 1905, that Lenin first set down his principles concerning the Party in What Is To Be Done. Central to Lenin's conception of the Party is his theory of "consciousness," which, briefly stated, says that the workers will never attain the degree of consciousness necessary for the proletarian struggle on their own. Direction, education, leadership and guidance must be supplied the proletariat from an outside force. This force is the Party. Composed of a small group of professional revolutionaries, endowed with theoretical insight and practical experience superior to that of
the average worker, the Party is viewed as a "vanguard of the proletariat." Thus the first outline of an elitist structure is presented in pre-revolutionary writings.

Once Lenin establishes the necessity for an elite group of professional revolutionaries, he then proceeds to outline the relationship that should exist between these professionals and the masses. The five points describing this relationship provides one set of justifications for Lenin's Party elitism.¹

In the organization of the Party we can also find elitist elements. Centralization, iron discipline and strict secrecy ensure that the top leadership will be able to effectively rule the rank and file members. Thus the Party organization becomes an elitist structure.

Lenin's thoughts about the dictatorship of the proletariat and the role of the state found expression in his State and Revolution, a pre-revolutionary document written in August-September of 1917, one month before the revolution broke out. In brief summary, Lenin feels that a dictatorship of the proletariat, the "organization of the advance-guard of the oppressed as the ruling class, for the purpose of crushing the

¹See pp. 13-15 of this thesis for a detailed discussion of these five points.
oppressors,"¹ is an essential necessary governmental form for the transition from capitalism to socialism. Once the proletariat has seized power, the bourgeoisie and other reactionary forces will fight hard to regain their ruling class status. The only way to defeat this group is to have a proletarian dictatorship where the majority, for the first time in history, oppress the exploiting minority. But notice, it is not just the oppressed masses that rule. It is an "organization of the advance-guard of the oppressed." Thus, one more elitist element is presented. Not all oppressed people, but only the "advance-guard" of the proletariat is eligible to govern. And, of course, the guiding light of this proletariat is the Party.

There is also evidence from Lenin's writings that the organization of the Bolshevik Party before the revolution was of an elitist nature, one of the aspects of this paper's hypothesis. In Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism we find numerous evidence that the Bolshevik Party was organized along elitist lines. The top membership ruled by democratic centralism. Those who disagreed with the Party's policy were expelled (even as early as 1908).² Lenin also makes several

¹Lenin, State and Revolution, p. 73.
references to the "strictest centralization,"\(^1\) and "truly iron discipline,"\(^2\) that prevailed in his Party.

Trotsky follows and expands Lenin's ideas, including those relating to the elitist nature of the Party and the necessity for a proletarian dictatorship. Trotsky quite clearly states the elitist concept that the Party should be the leader and guide for the proletariat before the revolution and, furthermore, that the Party should have an exclusive leadership role after the revolution has succeeded. Trotsky also strongly believes in the dictatorship of the proletariat (elitism is inherent in this idea), "the sole form in which the proletariat can achieve control of the state.\(^3\)

The elitist elements of the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat have continued to this day, with only slight modifications, to be an important part of communist theory. The validity of this hypothesis is easily attested to by reviewing the writings of Stalin and Khrushchev. Stalin, in his *Foundations of Leninism*, attacks the theory of spontaneity and believes consciousness comes to the proletariat from outside, not from within. This belief leads quite

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 29.  
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 9.  
\(^3\)Trotsky, p. 42.
naturally to the elitist idea that only a select few are capable of leading the proletariat. Stalin continues the idea of a proletarian dictatorship as a necessary, essential condition for the transition from capitalism to socialism. He also continues and expands the idea of an elitist Party. The Party, as an instrument of the proletarian dictatorship is important not only for achieving the dictatorship, but becomes even more important in its role of consolidating and expanding the dictatorship once it has been achieved.\(^1\)

The Party is described by Stalin as an organized, advanced detachment of the working class, as the highest form of class organization, and as a unity of will incompatible with the existence of factions.

One cannot assume that this theoretical description of the Party by Stalin is an accurate assessment of the Party or its membership in reality. As George Schueller pointed out in "The Politburo," only ten of the twenty-seven people who were members of the Politburo between 1919 and 1951, had been industrial workers.\(^2\) While this casts doubts on Stalin's description of the Party as a "detachment of the working class," (since few

---

\(^1\)Stalin, p. 289.

Party leaders belonged to the working class), it does not destroy the validity of the argument that the Party is of an elitist nature. It only means that the composition of the elite differs from theoretical descriptions, not that there is no elite.

Khrushchev continues in much the same vein. Both the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat are essential for the victory of socialism. However, once socialism has been achieved, the dictatorship is transformed into a state of the entire people. This does not mean, though, an end to an elitist hierarchical society, for the proletariat is still the most advanced section of the working class, which includes the peasantry. The Party, like the state, with the victory of socialism becomes a Party of the Entire People. The role of the Party after the socialist victory does not end. Rather, it increases and expands and becomes an even more important factor in the new phase of building communism than it was in the past phase of achieving socialism.

Russian communist theories are not theories meant to apply only to Russia. A large amount of evidence has been presented in this thesis in favor of the validity of the hypothesis that these theories and the elitist elements they contain are of a general nature, not a
specific national nature. Kautsky recognized this fact, for one of his purposes in writing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was to warn other socialist parties not to follow the Bolshevik path. Lenin wrote "Left-Wing" Communism with the purpose in mind of discussing the international validity of the Russian revolutionary experience. Stalin stresses the fact that Leninism is an "international phenomenon," and Khrushchev emphasizes the "major objective laws" of socialism and the socialist revolution that are applicable to all countries. Taking into account all of the above, we can see the validity of the hypothesis that Russian communist theories are not intended only for the Soviet Union, but are for all countries.

Not only are elitist elements, then, to be found in Communist theories, but as Djilas (perhaps not the most original nor best critics, but certainly one of the most influential, coming as he did from within the communist movement) writes in The New Class, these elements have been manifested in the living reality of the Soviet Union. Elites are present in Russia. They form a new class, and the core and base of this class and its elitism is the Party of Lenin.

1Stalin, p. 209.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


---------. *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.* New York, 1934.

---------. *State and Revolution.* New York, 1943.

---------. *What Is To Be Done.* New York, 1929.


