Chapter Five

MARXISM AND COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONS

The Postulate of Universality

Classical Marxism projected the communist revolution as a universal phenomenon. The goal it foresaw for *Weltgeschichte* was a planetary communist society wherein man everywhere would realize his essential creative nature, having overcome by the socialization of private property the alienation endured in the course of history. Although the arenas of proletarian communist revolution would be national, the revolutionary movement would not and could not be confined to one or a few major nations but would overflow national boundaries owing to the emergence in the bourgeois period of large-scale machine industry and a world market linking all countries. Thus the *Communist Manifesto* spoke of the communist revolution as occurring

initially in "the leading civilized countries at least." In a first draft of the document, Engels had written that "the communist revolution will not be national only but will take place simultaneously in all civilized countries, i.e. at any rate in Britain, America, France, and Germany."[1] The communist revolution would be no less universal than its historical predecessor, the bourgeois revolution, for the world that the proletarians had to win was one that capitalism itself was fast transforming into a socioeconomic unit.

Not surprisingly, the theory of the world communist revolution underwent significant modification in the movement of thought from classical to communist Marxism. In 1915, Lenin laid down "uneven economic and political development" as an absolute law of capitalism and deduced from it that a communist revolution was possible first in several capitalist countries, or even in one. He added:

> The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organized its own socialist production, would stand up against the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, raising revolts in those countries against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states.[2]

In the wake of the Russian Revolution of February 1917, which overthrew the Tsar, Lenin's party attempted to enact this revoutionary scenario. After they took power in October, however, their efforts to raise revolts in other countries had little success, the revolutionary outbreaks in Hungary and Germany were abortive, and the venture in

1. "Grundsätze des Kommunismus," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1959), V, 374.
2. "The United States of Europe Slogan," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, I, 632.

revolutionary war in Poland in 1920 ended in failure. A Communist International was brought into existence under Russian auspices to promote communist revolutions in other countries, but these showed little sign of materializing.

Despite this fact, the Russian communist mind held tenaciously to the view that the Russian revolution was no mere national event but represented the beginning of a world revolution. "This first victory *is not yet the final* victory," declared Lenin in an address on the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution.

> We have made a start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not a matter of importance. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open and the path has been blazed.[3]

Even in his very last essay, written in March 1923 in the shadow of approaching death, Lenin optimistically maintained that "the whole world is now passing into a movement which must give rise to a world socialist revolution." Significantly, however, what now sustained his confidence in the final outcome was not the immediate prospect of a communist revolution in "the counterrevolutionary imperialist West" but developments in "the revolutionary and nationalist East." In the last analysis, he wrote, the upshot of the struggle would be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., accounted for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe:

> And it is precisely this majority that, during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be.

3. "The Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, II, 751.

> In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.[4]

The universalistic significance of the Russian Revolution remains a basic postulate of communist ideology at the present time. In the opening words of the new Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, adopted in October 1961: "The great October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new era in the history of mankind, the era of the downfall of capitalism and the establishment of communism." The communist revolutions in Asia and Europe following the Second World War are viewed as a continuation of a world revolutionary process initiated in Russia at the close of the First World War, and the process itself is depicted as one that is destined ultimately to embrace the entire world. The Soviet literature on the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution stressed this theme heavily and was replete with denunciation of Western scholars for refusing to acknowledge the "world-historical" character of the Russian revolution. Thus, the author of an editorial in the journal of party history dismissed as erroneous the opinion of the American historian Robert V. Daniels that "the Russian revolution was not a national instance of a presumed international trend toward proletarian revolution, but a distinctive national event" and that "with all its international trappings and designs, communism remains a specifically Russian movement, a product of Russian society, Russian ideas, the Russian revolution, and Russian power." The Soviet writer affirmed, in opposition to such a notion, "the indisputable fact that the experience of the first victorious socialist revolution has universal significance, that certain features of the October Revolution reflect basic regularities of social development inherent in our epoch."[5] And the

4. "Better Fewer, but Better," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, II, 854.

5. T. T. Timofeev, "Mezhdunarodnoe znachenie oktiabrskoi revoliutsii i sovremennaia ideologicheskaia bor'ba," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 6 (June, 1967), pp. 7, 9.

"Theses" of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee on the fiftieth anniversary stated simply: "The October Revolution marked the beginning of the transition from capitalism to socialism throughout the world."[6]

These contentions raise a series of important theoretical questions that are still in need of clarification and solution. Was the October Revolution the Russian expression of a revolutionary process that is not specifically Russian even though it occurred first in Russia and has been heavily influenced by this fact? Was it the national Russian form of a wider communist revolution going on in the world? If so, is the communist revolution to be seen in universalistic terms, as a developing *world* revolution? What generalizations can be drawn concerning the nature of this world revolution on the basis of the fourteen communist revolutions that have occurred? And finally, is it possible to construct a typology of communist revolutions, with special reference to the manner in which communism comes, or has come, to power? Recognizing that definitive treatment of these questions is beyond the scope of the present chapter, I should like nevertheless to outline some answers and reasons for offering them.

The Revolution of Underdevelopment

Although it originated in Russia and bears a host of Russian birthmarks and influences, communism is not accurately described as a "specifically Russian movement." The familiar analogy with the history of religions remains relevant. A religion that arises in one nation and reflects its spirit can nevertheless spread and take root elsewhere; and it

6. *Pravda*, June 25, 1967.

can do this even though it may initially spread through conquest and forcible conversion. So too with communism as an ideological movement professing "Marxism-Leninism" as its credo. Russia's communist revolution was the first and in some ways the precondition of others that were still to come; and its leaders have striven incessantly to play a hegemonic role in communist revolution wherever it occurs. The spread of communist revolution beyond Soviet borders in the wake of the Second World War was assisted and in numerous countries even engineered by the Soviet Union. Yet the non-Russian communist revolutions cannot be satisfactorily explained as a mere cover for Soviet imperialism or Russian expansion. Communist revolutions enlist indigenous forces in the societies concerned and tend to develop—even when initially imposed from without, as in Rumania—an internal dynamic of their own. There is thus some truth in the Soviet thesis that Russia's communist revolution was only the beginning of a larger process of revolutionary change taking place in the twentieth century, that it was no mere national Russian phenomenon. This does not, however, imply that the communist revolution is destined to become world-wide. In order to pass judgment on that question, it may be of use to inquire into the character of communist revolutions.

It has often been noted—and remains notable—that communist revolutions have not occurred on the model projected by classical Marxism. For Marx and Engels the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois society was something inherent in the very dynamics of capitalism as a mode of production based on wage labor and the drive to maximize profit. Their complex argument has been examined in an earlier chapter. Suffice it to say that capitalist economic development, in Marx's view, necessarily brings a proletarianization of the masses of factory workers and a progressive worsening of their living and working conditions. Marx

formulated it as the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation" that

> the accumulation of wealth at one pole of society involves a simultaneous accumulation of poverty, labor torment, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation, at the opposite pole—where dwells the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.[7]

At the postulated point in this process at which conditions become wholly intolerable, the masses of workers revolt and the communist revolution occurs with the seizure and socialization of private property. Thus, classical Marxism envisaged the communist revolution as a *revolution of capitalist breakdown* occurring in the most advanced stage of development of the capitalist system. This was the assumption underlying the expectation of Marx and Engels that communist revolutions would come first in the countries of Western Europe where capitalism was most highly developed.

History has diverged in two fundamental ways from their theory. First, capitalist societies, instead of suffering self-destruction in a proletarian upheaval, have gone through a process of self-modification that Marx would not have thought possible and for which his theory in any event made no provision. In violation of the "absolute general law of capitalist accumulation," the industrial worker has won improved conditions and has tended to grow more integrated into the society rather than more alienated from it. Capitalist economies have evolved into postcapitalist mixed economies with self-stabilizing tools of fiscal regulation and planning. Although significant communist movements still exist in some of these societies, Italy and France

7. *Capital*, p. 714.

in particular, what prospects they may have of coming to power do not derive from the dynamics of capitalist development. No communist revolution has taken place on the classical Marxist model, and no such revolution seems likely. Indeed, societies that have experienced thoroughgoing capitalist development appear to be among the least likely prospects for communist revolution.

If classical Marxism erred in projecting the communist revolution in a form in which it would not occur, it likewise erred in failing to foresee it in the form in which it *would* occur. The communist revolution has not come about as a revolution of capitalist breakdown; large-scale industrialization has been among its consequences rather than its causes. It does, however, show a certain general pattern. With but two exceptions (Czechoslovakia and East Germany), the typical habitat of communist revolution has been a country of precapitalist or at most semicapitalist economic formation, and one that has shown a tendency to stagnate in its further economic development and modernization. It has been a country heavily populated by peasants and dependent upon agriculture, although usually with at least a small industrial working class and some development of modern industrial economy; a socially and politically as well as economically backward country, with very sharp class divisions and political institutions of traditional authoritarian complexion. Finally, it has been a country with chronic social unrest and a radical intelligentsia ready to furnish the leadership of a mass-based revolutionary movement to overthrow the old order in the name of national renovation and development. Russia and China are both classic cases in all these respects.

The communist revolution—insofar as we can draw a generalization concerning its nature on the basis of these facts—is a *revolution of underdevelopment*, and this in two senses: (1) the revolution typically comes about in the set-

ting of underdevelopment as just described; and (2) it becomes, after the achievement of power by the communist movement, a long-term effort to overcome the country's underdevelopment, a revolution of modernization. The communist revolution is not the sole or necessary form of the revolution of underdevelopment. In some countries, particularly since the end of the Second World War, there have been attempts to carry through such a revolution under noncommunist nationalist leadership, which, however, usually borrows some aspects of communist experience and organizational technique. The most that communism might reasonably claim is to have been so far the most influential and in certain respects the most efficacious form of the revolution of underdevelopment. The notable disadvantage of communism lies in the peculiarly great difficulty that it experiences in coming to power. In the Arab Middle East, for example, the revolution of underdevelopment has proceeded—where it has proceeded at all—under nationalist rather than communist auspices, not because the nationalist political forces can carry it through most successfully but because no indigenous communist movement has been capable of competing with nationalist revolutionary groups in the contest for power.

The Role of War

A further general observation concerning communist revolution relates to international war as its background. If, in a flight of fantasy, we imagine the leading representatives of the capitalist countries coming together in secret conclave around the year 1910 to organize a long-range conspiracy for the prevention of communism, it is easy to see in retrospect what could have proved a simple but quite effective conspiratorial formula: no war. Without the two world

wars of our century, it is not at all certain that any communist movement anywhere would have come to power. The fabric of Russian government, economy, and society was so strained by the First World War that Bolshevism, under the inspired leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, was able to maneuver itself to power in the chaotic conditions that ensued with the deposition of the Tsar. It is notable that when news of the February revolution reached Lenin in Switzerland, he immediately saw it as a revolution engendered by the war; and in one of the last of his writings he still spoke of the Russian Revolution as "the revolution that broke out in connection with the first imperialist World War."[8] Moreover, if the initial communist revolution took place in Russia as a result of the First World War, communism came to Eastern and Central Europe, China, Korea, and Vietnam as a direct outgrowth of the Second World War. In some of these cases, Soviet occupation of neighboring lands at the war's end created conditions under which communist regimes could come to power. In other cases, the war so strained the fabric of some societies, most notably China's, that communist revolution could take place in the aftermath independently of Soviet help.

The organic connection between international war and the spread of communist revolution became an axiom of Soviet thought in the Stalin era. Should a new war come, Stalin declared in his report to the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, it would be a most dangerous war for the bourgeoisie: "And let not Messieurs the bourgeoisie blame us if some of the governments near and dear to them, which today rule happily 'by the grace of God,' are missing on the morrow of such a war."[9] Still earlier, in a speech delivered to a closed session of the party Central Committee on

8. "Our Revolution: Apropos of the Notes of N. Sukhanov," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, II, 837. For Lenin's reaction when the news of the first revolution reached him in Switzerland, see his "Letters from Afar," in *ibid.*, I, 751.

9. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow, 1955), XIII, 303.

January 19, 1925, Stalin had envisaged the policy that the Soviet Union should follow in event of a new European war. He observed that conditions were maturing for such a war and urged that everything be done to strengthen the Soviet army. Then he went on:

> "Our banner is still the banner of *peace*. But if war breaks out we shall not be able to sit with folded arms. We shall have to take action, but we shall be the last to do so. And we shall do so in order to throw the decisive weight in the scales, the weight that can turn the scales."[10]

In the latter part of the 1930's, Stalin attempted to make events unfold according to this plan by seeking an agreement with Hitler. He knew that the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939 would unleash war, but calculated that it would be a long-drawn-out war between the Axis states and the Western allies, a war in which the U.S.S.R. would remain free to "throw the decisive weight in the scales" at a time of its choosing. Stalin's error—an error made by many at the time—lay in overestimating the strength of France, whose swift defeat in 1940 laid Russia open to the invasion that duly followed.[11] But in spite of this terribly costly miscarriage of Stalin's plans, Russia emerged victorious, and communist revolutions took place in numerous countries in the aftermath. The link between international war and the spread of communism was thus still further strengthened in the Stalinist mind, and many Soviet pronouncements in Stalin's last years warned that a third world war would witness the final collapse of the capitalist system. Furthermore, Stalin insisted in his final work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*, published in 1952, that wars would remain inevitable, as Lenin had written, so long as "imperialism" continued to exist. "To eliminate the inevitability of war," he concluded, "it is necessary to abolish imperialism."[12]

10. *Ibid.*, VII, 14. This speech was first published when Volume VII of Stalin's works came out in Russian in 1947.

11. For an examination of the evidence in support of this interpretation of Stalin's diplomacy in the 1930's, see the Introduction to *The Great Purge Trial*, ed. R. Tucker and S. Cohen (New York: Grosset and Dunlap Universal Library, 1965).

The notion that world communist revolution can continue under peaceful international conditions is a post-Stalinist innovation in Soviet party doctrine. At the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, the Leninist-Stalinist thesis on the inseparability of imperialism and wars was finally revised; wars were declared to be avoidable calamities in the nuclear age; and the novel idea was put forward that international peace and coexistence might prove propitious for the further spread of communist revolution. "Socialist revolution is not necessarily connected with war," proclaimed the new Soviet Party Program in this connection. "Although both world wars, which were started by the imperialists, culminated in socialist revolutions, revolutions are quite feasible without war." This proposition was accompanied by the thesis—also promulgated at the Twentieth Party Congress—that a communist revolution can, and if possible should, take place by a peaceful parliamentary path. Under favorable conditions, asserted the Party Program, the working class can

> win a solid majority in parliament, transform it from a tool serving the class interests of the bourgeoisie into an instrument serving the working people, launch a broad mass struggle outside parliament, smash the resistance of the reactionary forces, and provide the necessary conditions for a peaceful socialist revolution.[13]

12. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), p. 30.

13. *Essential Works of Marxism*, ed. Arthur Mendel (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), p. 401.

In various Soviet statements during the Khrushchev era, the Hungarian revolution of 1918–1919 and the communist conquest of power in Czechoslovakia in February, 1948, were cited as historical examples of communist revolution without civil war; and underdeveloped countries with parliamentary institutions were described as the most likely contemporary proving-grounds for communist revolution by the peaceful path. Since the fall of Khrushchev, the doctrine of peaceful communist revolution has been de-emphasized in Soviet writings but not repudiated. It is noteworthy in this connection that the Central Committee's "Theses" for the fiftieth anniversary of the October revolution reaffirmed "the possibility of using, in the transition to socialism, diverse—peaceful and nonpeaceful—forms of struggle, depending on the concrete relationship of class forces in this or that country. . . ."[14]

The new Soviet doctrine on the possibility of peaceful communist revolution has proved highly controversial in the international communist movement and has been one of the central issues in the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute that began in the aftermath of the Twentieth Party Congress. The leader of the Chinese communist revolution, Mao Tse-tung, who had once written that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"[15] and continued to believe it, undertook to defend Leninist-Stalinist orthodoxy on the methods of communist revolution against Khrushchevite "revisionism." During the conference of world communist leaders in Moscow in November, 1957, he took a stand on this issue against the effort of the Soviet party leadership to secure adoption of the twentieth-congress line as the general line

14. *Pravda,* June 25, 1967. On the likelihood that the peaceful path would be more feasible in less developed countries than where "capitalism is still strong," see N. Khrushchev, "For New Victories of the World Communist Movement," *Pravda,* January 25, 1961.

15. Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of War and Strategy," in *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), II, 272.

of the world communist movement. In a then secret memorandum to the C.P.S.U. Central Committee outlining views on the question of peaceful transition, the Chinese delegation declared: "We must fully utilize the parliamentary form of struggle, but its role is limited." Using Lenin's line of argument in *The State and Revolution,* the Chinese memorandum stressed that a communist revolution necessitated the destruction of the old state machinery, for which purpose it would not be sufficient to gain a majority in parliament. Hence the communist movement should be prepared to use armed force against the class enemy at the critical juncture of the revolution where power changes hands. In not a single country was the possibility of peaceful transition of any practical significance, and it would not be advisable to place much emphasis upon this possibility in a document published for the guidance of communist parties.[16]

When the controversy came into the open in the early 1960's, the tone was more acrid. The concept of the parliamentary road was now denounced by the Chinese leadership as "parliamentary cretinism." Violent revolution was said to be "a universal law of proletarian revolution." History, argued the Chinese, offered no precedent for peaceful transition to communism. Soviet claims that the October Revolution was "the most bloodless of all revolutions" were totally contrary to historical facts and a mockery of the martyrs who shed their blood to create the world's first communist state. The Hungarian revolution of 1918–1919 was by no means a nonviolent affair or model of peaceful transition, although, as Lenin himself had pointed out, the young Hungarian Communist party had committed the

16. The Chinese memorandum was published in Peking in 1963 after the controversy had come into the open. The text appears in *The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the C.P.S.U. and Ourselves* (Peking, 1963), pp. 58–62.

fatal error of not being sufficiently decisive in the use of force at the critical moment. Nor was the "February event" of 1948 in Prague describable as a "peaceful" conquest of power. And contrary to the "tales of the Arabian nights" being spread by Khrushchev and his ilk, conditions were not now maturing for peaceful transitions to communism. To win a majority in parliament or enter a coalition government owing to electoral success would only be an invitation to the kind of repression that overtook the Chilean Communist party in 1946. Acceptance of the revisionist line against armed struggle had cost the Algerian Communist party a position in its country's political life, and it had led the Iraqi Communist party to disaster in the anticommunist coup in 1958. In sum, "to realize socialism through the 'parliamentary road' is utterly impossible and is mere deceptive talk."[17]

Granted its revolutionary assumptions, the Chinese position is a strong one, just as Lenin's was in his debate with the Social Democrats a half-century ago. If the political essence of a communist revolution is the creation of a one-party state ruled by communists, it is hard to see how it could take place by a peaceful parliamentary path. The previously dominant noncommunist political forces could hardly be expected to submit peacefully not merely to a temporary loss of power but to permanent exclusion from the possibility of regaining it by peaceful means. In order for nonviolent communist revolution to become a real possibility, it would be necessary to devise so insidious a technique of revolution by subversion that the forces being overthrown would hardly be aware of it before it was too late to resist. The fifty-year history of communist revolutions contains no instance that would exemplify such a pattern or point to its feasibility.

17. These quotations and paraphrases are taken from *The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchev's Revisionism* (Peking, 1964), which contains the fullest systematic presentation of the Maoist position on the issue of peaceful transition.

If peaceful parliamentary transition to communism is unlikely in the extreme, how are we to explain the Soviet espousal of the idea? It can be interpreted as a means by which a no longer radical and, indeed, postrevolutionary Soviet leadership tries to reconcile a continued *verbal* commitment to world communist revolution with a foreign policy whose real first objective is the peace and security of the Soviet Union.[18] Since the further spread of communist revolution would not, in this view, be a serious concern of the Soviet leadership, the unfeasibility of the peaceful parliamentary path would not stand in the way of its espousal in theory. Alternatively, it may be that some Soviet leaders are inclined to see peaceful transition to communism as a more than marginal possibility in historically unprecedented conditions presently taking shape in certain parts of the world, such as the Arab Middle East. They may envisage the revolution of underdevelopment as eventually coming into communist receivership in certain countries where nationalist forces have begun it and where Soviet political influence has been built up through economic and military assistance, diplomacy, and so on. Such a strategic conception may be implicit in a Soviet suggestion that "in present circumstances the question of the possibility of transition to socialism (i.e., to communism) *under conditions of a multiparty system* has topical significance for a number of countries."[19] The local communist party would, in other words, seek participation in a coalition government committed to

18. On this, see chapter 6 below.

19. P. N. Fedoseev, "Velikii rubezh v istorii chelovechestva," *Izvestia*, April 30, 1967, italics added. Fedoseev does not say or imply that the political regime of communist revolution would remain effectively "multiparty" following the transition. A facade of multipartyism could always, of course, be maintained, as it is now in some communist-ruled countries.

carrying through the revolution of underdevelopment; and once it had achieved a foothold in power, it would strive—with judicious Soviet assistance on the side, or with Soviet protection—to maneuver its way to dominance, thereby bringing the revolution from the stage of so-called national democracy to that of "people's democracy," i.e., to communism.

Such, in any event, is one construction that might reasonably be placed upon the Soviet writings in question. Whether the indicated tactics of revolution by political maneuver would have much chance of being applied successfully in practice is another matter. To form a reasoned opinion on this and related questions, it will be useful to examine the various paths that communist revolution has taken in the past.

The Russian Pattern

With respect to the manner of coming to power, the fourteen successful communist revolutions fall into three classes. Russia's communist revolution is in a class by itself. Those in Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam, and Cuba belong to a second class, that of revolution by armed struggle; and those in Mongolia, North Korea, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia fall into still a third class—the imposed revolution.

The October Revolution was a seizure of power by armed insurrection, carried out in the capital and other main centers at a time of grave national crisis when the government lacked effective control, conditions were chaotic, and masses of people were in a revolutionary mood. The taking of power came at the climax of a period of intensive political preparation during which the Bolsheviks endeavored to

stir up revolutionary sentiment with slogans like "land, peace, and bread"; to cultivate mass support in the soviets and the country at large; and to isolate their left-wing competitors, the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. The revolutionary *coup* was thus the culminating event in a political process that involved mass agitation and propaganda, maneuvering for position in the soviets, and organization of insurrection.

The relation of town and country, of worker and peasant in the Bolshevik Revolution calls for special attention. In his final written comment on the revolution, Lenin spoke of certain "peculiar features" that distinguished it from earlier revolutions in Western Europe and foreshadowed the pattern the revolution would take in "passing to the Oriental countries." One such feature was the fact that the revolution combined the "peasant war" with the working-class movement under the special emergency conditions created by the World War.[20] The "peasant war" was the upheaval in the countryside during which peasants seized and divided up the remaining landed estates. The encouragement of this action by the Bolsheviks was one of the decisive factors in their revolutionary success, and the agrarian upheaval itself was undoubtedly an essential element of the October Revolution. Yet the countryside was, at least initially, the "rear" of the revolution; the major cities, above all Petrograd and Moscow, were its "front." The revolutionary-minded industrial workers, although only a small minority of the Russian population, nevertheless constituted, along with elements of the armed forces, the spearhead of the Bolshevik movement's mass support, and the main urban centers were the strongholds of revolution. In this sense and to this extent, the October Revolution was "proletarian," as it claimed to be. Without the "peasant war" as its companion-piece,

20. "Our Revolution: Apropos of the Notes of N. Sukhanov," in Lenin, *Selected Works*, II, 838.

it would very probably not have survived in power. But without the working-class support that it received in the chief cities, it could hardly have taken place.

The events of 1917 represented, to a remarkable degree, the fulfillment of a vision of Russian revolution that Lenin had harbored since the turn of the century, when he wrote his seminal work, *What Is To Be Done?* There he contended that socialist revolution would require long preparation and leadership by an elite party consisting chiefly of professional revolutionaries who would inculcate revolutionary ideas in the popular mind by propaganda and agitation. The party was thus conceived as the veritable lever of future revolution. But Lenin did not envisage this revolution as a conspiratorial *coup d'état* to be carried out, as it were, behind the back of the people. The revolution itself, which would ensue after a series of prior revolutionary outbreaks alternating with periods of calm, would be a mass affair culminating in a national armed insurrection against the Tsarist regime. It would draw its motive force from large numbers of nonparty people—workers and others—who would engage in massive insurgency under the guidance and inspiration of the revolutionary party.

St. Petersburg's "Bloody Sunday" in January 1905 touched off a series of revolutionary outbreaks that did not subside until 1907. This revolution of 1905–1907 was perhaps the most spontaneous large-scale insurrectionary movement to be seen in the twentieth century before the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and it influenced Leninist revolutionary thought profoundly. First, it revealed that the peasantry—which Russian Marxists had previously tended to view as a politically inert force and a support for Tsarist despotism—actually possessed a far-reaching revolutionary potential. This in turn brought Lenin to his audacious conception that in a backward country like Russia, which had not yet experienced its "bourgeois revolution," it might be possible to create in the course of such a revolution

a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Here was a crucial component in the developing theory of communist revolution as a revolution of underdevelopment. Further, the 1905 revolution reinforced Lenin's assumption that the final assault upon the old order would come, if ever, at a time of mass revolutionary action and excitement. It confirmed him in the belief that he expressed years later by saying that "revolutions are made at moments of particular upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, by the class consciousness, will, passion, and imagination of tens of millions, spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes."[21]

In the years between the first and the second Russian revolutions, Lenin elaborated this belief into a theory of the "revolutionary situation." For a Marxist, he wrote in 1915, it is beyond doubt that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation, although such a situation can exist without necessarily giving rise to an actual revolution. There are three principal symptoms of a revolutionary situation. First, a crisis of the policy of the ruling class, creating a crack through which the discontent of the oppressed classes can burst. Next, an aggravation of the sufferings of the oppressed classes beyond the ordinary level. Third, a tendency of these oppressed classes, by virtue of the first two factors, to engage in mass revolutionary action. These views on revolution, added Lenin, "were confirmed particularly graphically for us Russians by the experience of 1905."[22] Never did he abandon them. Indeed, in *Left-Wing Com-*

21. "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," in *Selected Works*, II, 629. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin wrote that the Russian revolution of 1905–1907 was "undoubtedly a 'real people's' revolution, since the mass of the people, the majority, the 'lowest social ranks,' crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and put on the entire course of the revolution the impress of *their* demands, of *their* attempts to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed" (*Selected Works*, II, 167).

22. "Krakh II Internatsionala," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1961), XXVI, pp. 218–219.

munism he formulated it as the "fundamental law of revolution," which had been confirmed by all revolutions, including three Russian revolutions of the twentieth century, that "only when the *'lower classes' do not want* the old way, and when the 'upper classes' *cannot carry on in the old way*—only then can revolution triumph. This truth may be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters)." Such a crisis, he went on, is characterized by the fact that at least a majority of the class-conscious, politically active workers fully understand that revolution is necessary and that the ruling classes are going through a government crisis which draws even the most backward masses into politics, weakens the government, and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to overthrow it rapidly.[23]

It was just such a situation that Lenin saw emerging in the spring of 1917, in large part because of the Provisional Government's unwillingness to take Russia out of a war that had become a no longer tolerable burden for masses of the people. "Russia at present is seething," he wrote in early April, pointing out that "one of the chief symptoms of *every* real revolution is the unusually rapid, sudden and abrupt increase in the number of 'ordinary citizens' who begin to participate actively, independently and effectively in political life and in *the organization of the state.*"[24] This is what led him to espouse a maximalist revolutionary policy of no support for the Provisional Government in the "April Theses" that he put out immediately upon his return from Switzerland to Petrograd. The dominant trend of opinion in the Bolshevik leadership in Petrograd was initially resistant, but yielded to Lenin's forceful advocacy of the revo-

23. *Selected Works*, II, 218–219.
24. "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution: Draft of a Platform for the Proletarian Party," in *Selected Works*, II, 28.

lutionary slogan "All power to the soviets!" And the further unfolding of events showed the soundness of his perception that Russia was in the midst of a true revolutionary situation which, if properly taken advantage of by the Bolshevik party, could eventuate in a far more radical revolution than the one that had taken place in February.

In presenting the new doctrine of communist revolution by a peaceful parliamentary path, Khrushchev and others have pointed out that for a time in 1917 Lenin believed that the Russian Revolution might take place peacefully in the framework of an assumption of state power by the revolutionary soviets. It is true that in his pamphlet *On Slogans*, written in July, 1917, when the Bolsheviks were under severe harassment by the authorities, Lenin advocated abandonment of the slogan "All power to the soviets" on the ground that it was a slogan for "a peaceful development of the revolution," which had been possible at first but was so no longer.[25] But it is highly questionable whether Lenin ever seriously envisaged a revolutionary consummation without violence. Although revolution to his mind was essentially a process of *political* warfare against a form of society represented and upheld by the existing governmental regime, he appears to have taken it for granted that the final decisive battle—the actual taking of power—would involve armed violence. Not even in a time of crisis, he wrote in the above-mentioned article of 1915, would the old government "fall" without being "dropped."[26] In *The State and Revolution*, on which he worked in August and September of 1917 while in hiding, he corrected Marx's allowance for the possibility of a peaceful revolution in England and America by saying that conditions permitting such a development had changed in those countries since Marx's time; and he formulated it as a general principle that "the replacement of

25. *Selected Works*, II, p. 68.
26. "Krakh II Internatsionala," p. 219.

the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution."[27]

Lenin's preferred title for the violent consummation of revolution at the point where power changes hands was "armed insurrection." In "Marxism and Insurrection," one of his series of secret letters to the party Central Committee in September and October of 1917 urging a *coup* without further delay, he laid the theoretical groundwork. Marxism was distinguished from Blanquism, he argued, not in rejecting the insurrection as a means of revolution, but rather in its insistence that successful insurrection must rely not simply upon conspiracy nor simply upon a party but upon a whole class, and indeed upon the rising revolutionary spirit of the people. Further, insurrection must be launched at the crucial moment in the history of the growing revolution, when revolutionary ferment in the popular ranks is at its height and vacillations in the ranks of the enemies and half-hearted friends of the revolution are strongest. Such a crucial moment was now at hand, he went on. And shortly afterward, in another communication to the same effect, he quoted Marx on the principal rules of insurrection as an art: (1) Never play with insurrection, but see it through to the end; (2) concentrate a great superiority of forces at the decisive point at the decisive moment; (3) once the insurrection has started, act with the greatest determination and take the offensive; (4) try to take the enemy by surprise; and (5) strive for daily successes, even if small. The success of the Russian and world revolutions, Lenin concluded, will depend on two or three days of fighting.[28] So far as the Russian Revolution was concerned, events shortly afterwards proved him right.

27. *Selected Works*, II, 155.
28. "Advice of an Onlooker," in *Selected Works*, II, 133–134. "Marxism and Insurrection" appears in the same volume, pp. 120–124.

The Path of Armed Struggle

"The world-historic significance of the October Revolution," stated the Central Committee's "Theses" on its fiftieth anniversary, "lies in the fact that it pointed out the paths, uncovered the forms and methods of revolutionary transformation, which have acquired an international character."[29] This claim does not find support in the historical record. The October Revolution was the classic communist seizure of power, but it was destined to be a lonely classic, the only successful case of its type in the half-century of communist revolutions that it inaugurated. This, of course, is not to deny that communist revolutions outside Russia have in very many important ways profited from the Russian heritage, Leninist revolutionary theory in particular. Yet the paths taken by the communists of other countries in acquiring power have greatly diverged from that of the first communist revolution. Some of the serious setbacks of communism have occurred as a consequence of unsuccessful efforts to emulate the Russian pattern. And the other thirteen successful communist revolutions have in no instance replicated this pattern.

Among the reasons why the Russian pattern has not repeated itself in other countries, one merits particular attention. The fact is that a "revolutionary situation" in Lenin's sense is an exceedingly rare phenomenon in social history, especially in the highly complex "bourgeois" societies of the present age. Lenin saw revolution as an elemental movement involving millions, occurring at a time of "particular upsurge" when masses of aggrieved humanity were driven by unusually harsh adversity into an insurrectionary mood that

29. *Pravda*, June 25, 1967.

could find outlet in action owing to a partially incapacitating crisis at the top of society and government. Such times of revolutionary crisis have occurred in modern societies, as in Russia in 1905 and 1917, but only as a result of an unusual combination of circumstances inevitably involving an element of fortuity. Lenin himself recognized this when he wrote in *Left-Wing Communism* in 1920 that no amount of propaganda and agitation alone could win over the broad masses to a position of support for the revolutionary "vanguard." "For this the masses must have their own political experience," he went on. "Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions. . . ." The World War had provided this "political experience" in the immediate past, but what would do it in the coming period? Surveying the postwar scene, Lenin found social life in many countries "crammed full of inflammable material" needing only a spark to be kindled into revolutionary conflagration. Yet he admitted that no one could foretell "*what immediate cause* will most serve to rouse, kindle, and impel into the struggle the very wide masses who are at present dormant."[30] Subsequent history suggests that he may have overestimated the inflammability of the masses in modern society; they have not proved, on the whole, so susceptible to large-scale revolutionary excitement. Ironically, one of the very few true popular upheavals of the ensuing period occurred in communist-ruled Hungary in 1956, where all the elements of a revolutionary situation in Lenin's special threefold sense of the term were present.[31]

Although it did not produce revolutionary situations like the one that came about in Russia in 1917, the Second World War created new opportunities for communist revolution. It might be said to have produced a new *kind* of

30. "Left-Wing Communism," *op. cit.*, pp. 627, 630, 632.

31. This paragraph was written in July, 1967. In the light of subsequent social events in various countries, and most notably the upheaval of May–June, 1968, in France, I am now much less convinced of the relative non-inflammability of the masses in contemporary industrial society.

revolutionary situation characterized not by rebellious movements of urban masses but rather by the breakdown of indigenous established authority—particularly in rural areas —under conditions of enemy occupation. The Japanese invasion and occupation of large parts of China in the 1930's, and subsequently of much of Southeast Asia, and the German invasion and occupation of Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the early 1940's provided the setting. Under these conditions, it became possible for communist revolutionary movements to reconstitute themselves as *resistance movements* and to embark upon piecemeal takeovers of the countries by military means, particularly guerrilla warfare. The classic case is, of course, that of China, and Mao Tse-tung, who led Chinese communism to power, is the foremost theorist of communist revolution by armed struggle. With variations growing out of the peculiarities of their national settings, the war-born communist takeovers in Yugoslavia, Albania, and Vietnam also exemplify this pattern, and the Cuban case—although a special one in important respects —is closer to this category of communist revolution than to either of the other two.

A statement of Mao's in 1938 concerning the Chinese prospect forms the best starting point for a comparison of the Russian pattern and revolutions of the Chinese communist type:

> Basically the task of the communist party here is not to go through a long period of legal struggles before launching an insurrection or war, not to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but to take the other way round.[32]

A difference of relation between town and country, and therefore between worker and peasant, is involved. Instead of a "peasant war" as a companion-piece to the effort to take

32. Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of War and Strategy," in *Selected Works*, II, 267.

power in the chief urban centers, with workers as the revolutionary shock force, we have here a pattern of communist revolution in which the countryside becomes the principal revolutionary arena in the early stages, and in which peasants therefore are the main social base of the revolution. Only in Mao's third strategic stage of revolutionary war, when the guerrilla warfare predominating in the previous two stages of strategic defensive and strategic stalemate gives way to regular warfare in the strategic counteroffensive, do the large cities come into the center of the picture. Their capture is the "final objective of the revolution."[33]

In the earlier stages, the communist-led resistance movement seeks not simply to carry on warfare in the countryside in the manner of historical peasant wars of the roving-insurgents type, but to establish "revolutionary base areas" to function as the rear of the movement. This effort is obviously facilitated in the country concerned by the presence of extensive mountainous, forest, or jungle regions difficult of access by regular troops, and it is notable that all five of the successful communist revolutions of this type have occurred in countries that possess such regions. In the Chinese case, the communist forces established a base area at Yenan after the Long March and then, in the 1937–41 period, created large guerrilla bases in each of the provinces of north China. In Yugoslavia, Tito's partisan forces in the fall of 1941 established a base area in northwest Serbia which became known as the "Uzhice Republic." Later that year they retreated into the relatively primitive mountain areas of Bosnia. In Albania, the communist guerrillas under Enver Hoxha operated in the mountains that cover most of that small land.

In the October Revolution, the taking of power preceded the revolutionary transformation of the sociopolitical order

33. Mao Tse-tung, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," in *Selected Works*, II, 86. On the three strategic stages, see *Selected Works*, II, 275, 278.

in the country. In the type of communist revolution now under consideration, the revolutionary transformation takes place, or at any rate begins, in the protracted process of conquering power and becomes one of the most important means by which power is then extended. The sociopolitical revolution develops in the liberated base areas, where the communist movement seeks to build not only military strongholds but also enclaves of a new society and policy. Not only are new organs of public authority created, such as the "people's councils" that the Yugoslav communists set up in their base areas and the "democratic governments" that were formed in the north China guerrilla bases, but schools, newspapers, and other social institutions are established under communist auspices. Self-defense corps and "mass organizations" for peasants, youth, women, children, and other groups are founded as means of enlisting people into participation in public life under communist guidance. All this serves the needs of "political mobilization," which Mao described as the promotion of anti-Japanese resistance by telling the people about the political objectives of the war, viz., the ousting of the Japanese and the building of a new China.[34] Thus, military operations go hand in hand with a piecemeal process of nation-building. Guerrilla warfare creates a territory for political mobilization of the populace, which in turn augments the communist resistance forces and makes it possible to expand military operations into new areas. The results are most impressive in the Yugoslav and Chinese cases. By February 1945, Tito's partisan army consisted of fifty-four divisions numbering 800,000 troops. By the time of Japan's capitulation in 1945, one-fifth of the population of China was living in the communist-controlled revolutionary base areas. The official proclamation of the communist government in China on October 1, 1949, marked not the beginning of the communist revo-

34. Mao Tse-tung, "On the Protracted War," in *Selected Works*, II, 204–205.

lution there but the climax of one that had been in progress for upward of a decade.[35] The communist-Kuomintang civil war of 1947–49 was no more than a last act in the drama, the completion of a revolutionary takeover that had already been largely accomplished in the period of anti-Japanese resistance and its aftermath.

As is best shown in the Chinese case, communist resistance movements face a difficult problem with regard to agrarian policy in the revolutionary base areas. In December 1939, Mao declared that since the peasantry was the main force in the Chinese revolution, it must be given help in overthrowing the feudal landlord class. Distribution of the landlords' land among the peasants was one of the programmatic measures of the revolution in its ongoing "new-democratic" or presocialist phase. On the other hand, he likewise stipulated that private capitalist enterprises should be preserved and that "rich-peasant economy should not be eliminated."[36] The policy actually followed by the party during the period of the anti-Japanese war was a moderate one of reducing rents and interest owed by the peasants to the landlord. Radical measures of land redistribution were avoided for fear of alienating large elements of the very peasant population that the resistance movement looked to as its prime source of recruits and general support. As Chalmers Johnson has said, the economic policies of the communists during the Sino-Japanese war were designed to create maximum unity for national defense.[37]

35. Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 1.

36. Mao Tse-tung, "The Chinese Revolution" *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 96–97. See also his subsequent statement in "On New Democracy," in *Selected Works*, III, 122: "In the rural areas, rich-peasant economic activities will be tolerated." These statements presupposed a fourfold classification of the rural population into the landlord class, the rich peasants or rural bourgeoisie, the middle peasants, and the poor peasants *ibid.*, pp. 88, 92–93).

37. Johnson, p. 19.

Chinese communism, like the other communist movements that have come to power by the road of wartime resistance, built its mass following among the peasants (and other strata) primarily on the basis of an appeal to nationalism, the patriotic desire to liberate the country from the foreign invader. The political mobilization of the Chinese peasants after 1937 proceeded chiefly in terms of the anti-Japanese slogan of "national salvation." Similarly, the partisans appealed to the Yugoslav peasants with patriotic antifascist slogans mainly aimed against the Germans. In both instances, the communists took a more militant stance in the resistance than their rivals (the Kuomintang and Mihailovic's Chetniks), engaging in bold operations that provoked from the foreign occupiers harsh reprisals that in turn helped destroy the remaining fabric of the old society and made the peasants all the more amenable to patriotic mobilization. In wartime Albania, the communist guerrillas used patriotic antifascist slogans similar to those of the Yugoslav partisans. After the defeat of Japan, the Vietnam communists espoused Vietnamese nationalism against the French—and more recently have done so against the U.S. The Castro movement is exceptional among the guerrilla movements that have won power both in that its communist alignment came afterward and in that there was no foreign occupation against which to mobilize the population. There was, however, a history of American domination of the country, as well as an oppressive Cuban regime that could be identified with American influence. The political mobilization of the Cuban lower classes in the post-revolutionary period has relied heavily upon the slogan of Cuban national independence against "Yankee imperialism."

So far-reaching is communism's identification with nationalism in this pattern of revolution that an actual fusion has been hypothesized. Noting that both Chinese and Yugoslav communism were legitimized by the nationalistic cre-

dentials established by the communist parties during the resistance, Chalmers Johnson suggests that the resulting Chinese and Yugoslav governments are the "offspring of indigenous nationalism" and that in both cases the communist ideology "serves as the theoretical expression of these nationalisms."[38] Such an interpretation appears unnecessarily extreme and overlooks the alternative possibility that we have to do here with movements of authentic communist ideological affiliation which have identified themselves with national goals in the process of winning power and at the same time have retained a strong nationalist orientation. In this connection, it must be pointed out that in the Russian revolution we see a very different relationship of the communist movement to nationalism. Here communism came to power on an antiwar platform. Far from identifying itself with Russian national aims in time of war, the Bolshevik movement used the slogan of revolutionary internationalism. From the outbreak of war in 1914, Lenin advocated revolutionary defeatism, the transformation of the international "imperialist war" into a series of revolutionary civil wars inside the warring countries, his own included. "Defensism" became a Bolshevik term of opprobrium for Russian socialists who supported the national war effort. Only in the post-revolutionary period, and particularly under Stalin, did Russian communism take on a pronounced Russian nationalist orientation.

A final comparative observation has to do with the role of armed force in communist revolution. Where the main form of struggle is war and the main form of organization is the army, as in China, the notion of revolution by armed

38. *Ibid.*, p. 184. Elsewhere Johnson speaks of "the nationalistic basis of communism in the independent communist states" (*ibid.*, p. 179) and states that "communism and nationalism were fused in wartime China and Yugoslavia as a result of the identification of the CCP and YCP, respectively, with the resistance movements of the two countries . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 8).

struggle can easily become an obsession. Whoever wants to seize the political power of the state and to maintain it must have a strong army, declared Mao in 1938, and he went on: "Some people have ridiculed us as advocates of the 'omnipotence of war'; yes, we are, we are the advocates of the omnipotence of the revolutionary war, which is not bad at all, but is good and is Marxist." Observing further that everything in Yenan had been built up by means of the gun, he added:

> Anything can grow out of the barrel of the gun. . . . With the help of guns the Russian communists brought about socialism. We are to bring about a democratic republic. Experience in the class struggle of the era of imperialism teaches us that the working class and the toiling masses cannot defeat the armed bourgeois and landlords except by the power of the gun; in this sense we can even say that the whole world can be remolded only with the gun.[39]

It is difficult to picture Lenin recognizing this as an authentic voice of Marxism or agreeing with the implied view of the Russian communist revolution. As noted earlier, armed insurrection was a vital ingredient in the Leninist theory and practice of communist revolution. For Lenin, however, the revolutionary process was fundamentally political rather than military in nature. It was the politics of taking power in a society brought by an unusual combination of stresses to a state of turmoil and incipient breakdown. In harmony with his essentially political vision of the revolution, Lenin saw the armed insurrection itself as "a *special* form of the political struggle."[40] It was the *coup de grace* that the revolutionary movement would have to administer

39. Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of War and Strategy," in *Selected Works*, II, 272, 273.
40. "Advice of an Onlooker," in *Selected Works*, II, 133.

to the regime it sought to replace, an episode of planned violence at the conclusion of the political struggle. But what about the place of the civil war in the Russian Revolution? It is true that shortly after the Bolshevik seizure of power, Russia became the scene of a three-year bloody civil war in the course of which the revolution took to arms, created its Red Army under Trotsky, and defeated the forces that took the field against it. If the Russian Revolution is viewed as a social epoch, the civil war of 1918–1921 must be considered an integral part of it. However, the civil war, important as it was historically, was not an element in Lenin's *strategy* of revolution. It was forced upon the Bolshevik regime by the efforts of various forces in Russia, aided from abroad, to overthrow it. From a Leninist point of view, especially as shaped by the Russian experience, the need to wage a protracted armed struggle to preserve the power won by revolution is a contingency with which every communist movement must reckon. But such an armed struggle is not seen as either inevitable or desirable, and the gun barrel is not seen as the sole significant source of revolutionary power. To this limited extent, the post-Stalin Soviet theory of a peaceful path can authentically claim a Leninist ancestry.

The Imposed Revolution

In both patterns of communist revolution examined above, the revolution is basically an internal process in the country concerned. This is not to deny that the Soviet Union rendered significant assistance (along with some disservices) to the communist revolutions in countries like China and Yugoslavia. But the assistance was not decisive; at most it was supplementary, and the revolutions in question could have taken place without it. Like the Russian Revolution in its time, these revolutions fundamentally made their way on their own. In contrast, the communist regimes in Mongolia, North Korea, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia did not come to power in basically indigenous revolutions. These communist revolutions were imposed from outside. In all instances save the first, they were engineered by the Soviet Union under conditions of military occupation or domination arising out of the Soviet victory in the Second World War. One could, of course, add to the eight instances of communist revolution just noted the cases of the three Baltic countries, on which communist revolution was imposed in 1940 during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact. It is, perhaps, all the more important to mention these three instances, since the experience in the Baltic countries, as well as in the areas detached from Poland in 1939, was a forerunner of the process of imposed revolution as it developed after World War II throughout much of Eastern and Central Europe. For Stalin, the Baltic countries were proving-grounds of imposed communist revolution.

Although Marxism-Leninism has contemplated the revolutionary war across national boundaries as one possible form of just war (and the Soviet march into Poland in 1920 stands as an historical example of this form of action), the doctrine assumes that the country invaded would be in the throes of an internally generated revolution or "revolutionary situation" at the time. The forcible imposition of communist revolution upon a country from outside not only lacks sanction in Soviet ideology but has many times been explicitly disavowed as an aim. In Stalin's famous statement to Roy Howard in 1936, "The export of revolution is nonsense."[41] Yet, without ever admitting it, the Soviet

41. Quoted in *Pravda*, Mar. 5, 1936.

Union has practiced such "nonsense" on a large scale. Insofar as conditions in that primitive nomadic country permitted, communist revolution was engineered in Outer Mongolia following the military conquest of the area by the Soviet Union in the early 1920's. In 1939–1940, not long after Stalin's remark to Roy Howard, the communist system was forcibly installed in Soviet-occupied eastern Poland and the three Baltic states. And in the aftermath of the Second World War, Soviet satellite regimes of "people's democracy" were established in North Korea and in Eastern and Central Europe, wherever Soviet power predominated.

The devastation and dislocation of war did much to destroy or greatly weaken the prewar sociopolitical order in Eastern Europe. Although revolutionary situations in the Leninist sense did not exist at the war's end, it was widely accepted among the peoples and political parties that restoration of the *status quo ante* was out of the question and that social change was in order. Yet the communist movements in these countries had little chance of coming to power independently on the tide of change. It is true that communism had not been a negligible indigenous force in prewar Eastern Europe. Communist movements of varying strength had existed in spite of domestic repressions and the loss of many of their leaders in Stalin's purges of 1936–1938, and they carried on underground activities during the war. The Polish Communist party, which had been formally dissolved in 1938 at the height of the Soviet purges, was reconstituted in 1942 and played a part, although a relatively minor one, in the Polish resistance movement. In Czechoslovakia, where communism had shown real strength in the democratic pre-Munich period, underground communists were active in the Free Slovakia resistance movement in 1944. But nowhere in Eastern Europe (outside of Yugoslavia and Albania) did local communists achieve a politically commanding position

under war conditions. Only in Czechoslovakia, through a combination of favorable circumstances, did they emerge at the war's end in great strength. There the communists gained control of key posts, including the ministries of interior (police), agriculture, and information; and the communist leader Gottwald became premier after his party polled 38 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary elections of May 1946, the first held after the war. Significantly, however, Czechoslovakia, from which the Soviet army was withdrawn in December 1945, was at the beginning of 1948 the only country in the region not yet under total or near-total communist domination.

In Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and East Germany, where Moscow was in a controlling position because of the continued presence of its military forces, communist rule was imposed in a process that showed local variations but was everywhere the same in basic pattern. The communists sought to enlarge their popular support by taking charge of land reform or, as in Poland, by exploiting the large patronage opportunities inherent in the postwar resettlement of Poles in the western lands detached from Germany. Meanwhile, under Soviet direction and with Soviet assistance, they acquired strategic positions in the coalition governments initially formed, and drove for ascendancy. Uncooperative political forces, such as the peasant parties that enjoyed strong support in a number of those countries, were pressured, harassed, or simply terrorized in the process. Noncommunist leaders like Maniu in Rumania, Petkov in Bulgaria, and Mikolajczyk in Poland were imprisoned, executed, or hounded out of their countries. Social Democratic parties were deprived of their autonomy and eliminated as possible rivals through forced mergers with the communists in communist-controlled united worker parties. Public organizations were purged of leaders not amenable to communist direction. Gradually the coalition govern-

ments were transformed into pseudo-coalitions dominated by the communists, and then into opposition-free regimes on the Soviet model.[42] These communist revolutions from above were completed in all essentials by 1947–1948.

Although not occupied by Soviet forces, Czechoslovakia was ringed by lands that were, and thus it had no access to effective assistance from the noncommunist world. The Soviet military presence on the Czech frontiers, significantly activated at the time, formed the backdrop for the communist action of February 1948 in Prague. With the backing of Premier Gottwald, the communist Minister of Interior ignored an instruction from the majority of the cabinet that he stop packing the police with communists, whereupon ministers belonging to two of the government parties resigned in protest. In the ensuing cabinet crisis, the communists, acting by both constitutional and extraconstitutional means, sent armed detachments of workers into the streets and put pressure on President Eduard Benes, then an old and sick man, to form a new government of predominantly communist complexion. After Benes yielded on February 25, the communist takeover of all power in Czechoslovakia proceeded swiftly. As noted earlier, post-Stalin Soviet writings have cited this as an example of communist revolution by the peaceful parliamentary path. It is true that no civil war occurred. But the *coup de Prague*, which bears a certain resemblance to the pattern of "legal revolution" by which Hitler's National Socialist party took power in Germany in 1933, involved the ruthless application of political coercion and a scarcely veiled threat of armed violence. To call the Czech revolution "peaceful" would unduly stretch the meaning of that word, and references to its path as "parliamentary" should not obscure the

42. For a detailed, country-by-country description of the process, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1951), especially ch. 8.

fact that it led immediately to the suppression of parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia.

One other feature of the imposed communist revolution as it developed in Eastern Europe after the Second World War was the satellization of the communist regimes that arose. Stalin, then at the apogee of his dictatorship, demanded not only communist regimes but dependably subservient ones. Communist governments of relatively independent persuasion, pursuing their national paths of communist development, were no more acceptable to him, perhaps even less so, than noncommunist governments. Accordingly, the Soviet authorities made every effort from the very outset to guarantee Soviet control over the emerging communist regimes. Thus, Soviet advisers were installed in key positions in the police, the army, and other ministries of the governments, and the countries concerned were placed in relations of economic dependency upon the Soviet Union. To ensure cooperation of the local communist authorities in these and similar measures, political responsibility was entrusted as much as possible to thoroughly reliable communist cadres, typified by Matthias Rakosi and Walter Ulbricht, who had spent the war years in Moscow. Initially, however, these "Muscovites" shared positions of power with communist leaders who had worked in underground resistance movements in their own countries during the war, men like Gomulka in Poland, Kostov in Bulgaria, Rajk in Hungary, and Patrascanu in Rumania. Tendencies toward what later came to be called "national communism" were strong in the latter group. Although not at all anti-Soviet and no less serious and rigid in their communist ideological convictions than others in the movement, some communist leaders who had stayed in their countries were inclined—like Tito—to resent Soviet tutelage and dictation of their policies, to place a high priority upon the interests

of communism in their own national context, and to adapt the Soviet communist pattern in various particulars to local conditions.

In the new phase of the East European revolution signalized by the creation of the Cominform and by Moscow's anti-Tito declaration of June 1948, Soviet control over the newly established communist regimes was tightened. Stalin's move against Tito was probably intended not merely to provoke the overthrow of the Titoist leadership group in Yugoslavia but also to inaugurate a systematic campaign against national-communist tendencies in Eastern Europe. In the wake of the unexpected failure to force the change in Yugoslavia, the campaign developed into a general purge of "national communists" in other countries of the area. In Soviet-engineered purge trials, Kostov, Rajk, and others were condemned for alleged "nationalist deviationism." In a typical accusation, the Bulgarian communist leader George Dimitrov (a "Muscovite") attributed to Traicho Kostov the "shameful assumption" that Soviet interests might ever be opposed to Bulgarian interests. The purges of communists in 1948–1952 consolidated the position of the "Muscovites" in the East European regimes and generally underscored Soviet dominance in the area. Even the fact that communist revolution had been made possible by the presence of the Soviet army was openly acknowledged and emphasized. Thus, the preamble of the new Polish constitution adopted in 1952 stated: "The historic victory of the U.S.S.R. over fascism liberated Polish soil, *enabled the Polish working people to gain power*, and made possible the rebirth of Poland within new just frontiers."[43]

Satellization of the regimes created by the communist revolution in its Soviet-imposed version would not appear to have been something necessarily inherent in this pattern

43. *Ibid.*, p. 373. Italics added.

of revolution. But owing to a number of factors, chief among which was the personality of the man directing the process, Stalin, revolution could not be exported after the Second World War without the newly established political enterprises' being treated as Soviet property. Not only were communist regimes forcibly imposed upon countries where communism was not strong enough to come to power on its own; a whole system of measures was carried out to prevent these regimes from, so to speak, "nationalizing" themselves by developing policies that would reflect the special needs and circumstances of their countries. This went against the current of tendencies inevitably present within those regimes themselves irrespective of the political fortunes of this or that leader of national-communist leaning. It added to the stigma of foreign origin the onus of continued foreign dependency. Consequently, the post-Stalin relaxation of Soviet dictatorship at home and abroad has been accompanied by an independence movement of varying strength in countries where communism was imposed at the war's end. Even without the Yugoslav example to inspire it, this movement would undoubtedly have emerged when conditions made it possible. The results have so far been mixed. In spite of that, they suggest the hypothesis that communism in power, regardless of how it acquires power, has a tendency to turn into national communism.

The Future of Communist Revolution

A priori schemes of world history aside, the future of communist revolution is no more scientifically predictable in the present state of knowledge than is the future of any other major political phenomenon of our time. However, the comparative study of communism and communist revolu-

tions does suggest some tentative general conclusions that bear upon future prospects:

1. The fact that communist revolution has spread to about a third of the world in its first fifty years does not imply that it will spread, in time, to the remaining two-thirds. There is no good reason to believe that something that could be called a "world communist revolution" is in progress.

2. Neither, on the other hand, would it be justified to assume that no more communist revolutions will take place anywhere. Communist movements of varying strength and vigor exist in over eighty noncommunist countries. Depending upon internal and external circumstances, some may be or may become sufficiently strong to represent potential regimes of communist revolution. Yet in no instance, with the possible exception of South Vietnam, does this now appear an inevitable or overwhelmingly probable eventuality.

3. The communist revolution is likely to preserve its character as a revolution of underdevelopment. Any future communist revolutions will probably occur not in developed industrial countries with advanced social and political institutions, but, as in the past, in underdeveloped countries where economic progress is slow or stagnant, where society is divided into a privileged minority and a disadvantaged peasant majority, and where authoritarian government prevails. There is no law that the revolution of underdevelopment must take place under communist auspices. Noncommunist leadership of it is possible, particularly with encouragement from influential noncommunist powers. However, the prospects for such leadership (and such encouragement) remain highly uncertain.

4. So far as communism's path to power is concerned, none of the three historical variants considered above can be automatically ruled out as a future possibility. But for

various reasons, neither the path of Russia's October Revolution nor the pattern of imposed revolution appears very likely to furnish a model in the future. In underdeveloped countries, the communist road to power through armed struggle and identification with nationalism may prove the highroad. Nor should communism's discovery of new roads to power be excluded, although reasons have been cited here for not expecting the "peaceful parliamentary path" to be one of them. A possible future path, which may have been foreshadowed in the Castro revolution in Cuba, is that of "communism by conversion," where a movement of predominantly nationalist and leftist complexion takes power and subsequently opts for Marxism-Leninism and communist political affiliations.

5. Owing in part to the tendency of communist movements and regimes to acquire a nationalist coloration, communism in power, contrary to the founding ideological prophecies, has not proved a cohesive force internationally. The spread of communist revolution beyond Russia has led to growing polycentrism and to diverse intercommunist divisions and discords, of which the Sino-Soviet conflict has been the most serious. The disintegration of international communism is in some sense a symptom of crisis. But it should not be assumed that this development is in all respects detrimental to communist movements not yet in power. It may, on the contrary, be of assistance to some of them, by compelling them to rely more upon their own efforts and to chart their own paths, and by helping them to escape the onus of foreign inspiration and dependency. The future prospects of communist revolution are not necessarily negated by division in the communist world.