

# BOLSHEVISM AND ITS PEDIGREE

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*This article is an attempt to analyze Bolshevism at the moment of its most decisive struggle. The analysis is not influenced by the fact that Germany and the USSR happen to be at war. It is rather a result of a study of Bolshevism extending over fifteen years. During this period the author's evaluation of Bolshevism, regardless of whatever the relations between Germany and the Soviet Union were at any given time, gradually developed toward increased skepticism of the Bolshevik experiment.*

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## THE VANTAGE POINT OF 1941

Bolshevism came into power as a result of the defeat of the Russian armies in 1914-1917. Will another defeat of the Russian armies in 1941 cause its downfall?

Should the answer be yes, tremendous problems will arise, much greater than those which are caused by the fall of the other countries during the present war. What form of state or society would take the place of Bolshevism in Russia? Who would be the owner of the vast industries developed during the last twelve years by the Soviet state? What would be the lot of some hundred million peasants who since 1929 have been forced to live and work in large, mechanized collectives, under conditions radically different from those in their old diminutive farms? What would happen to the Orthodox Church, to Islam, to the hundred and fifty national minorities within the Soviet borders, what to Central Asia and Siberia, to Russia's

foreign relations, what to several hundred thousands of Russian refugees scattered throughout the world?

It is too early to discuss these questions, although this magazine will be among the first to do that when the time arrives. But irrespective of the outcome of the struggle raging over the largest battlefield in history, one thing is certain: the character and the features of Bolshevism will be profoundly changed by the present crisis, the greatest which it had ever to face.

At this historic moment, at a turning-point in European and particularly in Russian history, we look back over the road which Bolshevism has traveled. From the vantage point of the summer of 1941, with the life and death struggle of Bolshevism against its greatest foe going on before our eyes, we can see this road more clearly than at any other previous time. Countless books and articles have been written about Bolshevism. But their great majority has been devoted too

exclusively to naive praise or emotional condemnation. In this article we are not concerned with moral evaluations. We take for granted the knowledge that Bolshevism has destroyed in twenty-four years millions of lives, and an immeasurable amount of human happiness, and also that it has built immense new industries and made vast experiments in the field of social relations.

### THE TWIN ROOTS OF BOLSHEVISM

In trying to understand and analyze the path of Bolshevism, and to discern in it more than meaningless zig-zags or the mystical workings of the law of dialectics, one cardinal fact will be stressed in these lines, a fact rarely recognized by the tens of thousands of admirers or enemies who have travelled through Russia during the past two decades—the fact that Bolshevism is the child of two totally different parents and that its history is an unending struggle between their opposing influences.

On its mother's side Bolshevism belongs to the well-known family "Emancipation." It has among its ancestors Rousseau, the men of the French Revolution, Karl Marx, Trotzky, and John Dewey. The terms and slogans most frequently heard in its mother's family were *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, Democracy, Liberalism, Human Rights, and particularly Emancipation, Emancipation of the Woman, Emancipation of the Child, Emancipation of the Laborer—Emancipation of Everybody.

Through its father Bolshevism is a member of the old family of "The State." Here its ancestors are such men as Ivan the Terrible, Machiavelli, Peter the Great, Tsar Nicolas the First, and Stalin. In the coat of arms of this family one will find the words: Authority, Power, Discipline, Force, Plan, and above all, The Interest of the State. Hence among its ancestors two diametrically opposed ideas and many nations and races are represented. A

study of the geneological tree reveals that the paternal family is predominantly Russian, the maternal one predominantly Western. If we add to this the fact that the child was considered an extreme, not to say abnormal case by both parents, we can easily realize how many contradictions and complications there must be in the path of its life.

### THE DOUBLE HERITAGE

At first the two divergent heritages were less perceptible. It is true that even before the revolution of 1917, while the Bolsheviks were still working "underground" as a small band of mutually acquainted conspirators, there was frequent friction within their ranks. But Lenin's authority was supreme, and Lenin managed with some success to combine the two forces in his person and in his policies. Perhaps he even believed that the Soviet (—council) structure represented a satisfactory compromise between initiative from the free man below and authority of the state from above, and of course he could not foresee what Stalin was some day going to do with the Soviet system. For a while the slogan "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" bridged the gap, for originally it meant a combination of freedom and force: the free proletariat was, through its dictatorship, to force the rest of the population into submission. But by now this slogan has completely lost its original meaning; today the whole of Russia is one huge proletariat living under a dictatorship.

Any number of examples could serve to show that on the whole the history of Bolshevism is the history of the struggle between its two heritages. Let me suggest education and wages, as two which seem to me particularly significant.

### THE "WITHERING AWAY" OF THE SCHOOL

During the first years after the revolution the Soviet Union, ideologically

speaking, passed through its liberal era. The strict, conservative Tsarist school-system was turned upside down and the most modern, liberal ideas in education were introduced, largely from America. Emancipation of the child, free development of the child's genius without adult interference, these were the aims. Examinations, school-books, and students' uniforms, customary under the Tsarist regime, were immediately abolished as being strait jackets for the child's mind and body. Education was offered free of charge, the schools were opened to the children of the masses. (For students in higher institutions the government even paid for room and board.) The teachers had practically no authority, for—leaders of Soviet education maintained—their clumsy and unproletarian hands could only harm the harmonious growth of the child.

Extravagant hopes were placed in the children. They formed their own councils, directing the affairs of the school, deciding how the school-hours should be spent or whether the teacher should be purged. School-classes were dissolved. The very word "class," because of its evil connotation with class in the economic and political sense, was replaced by the word "group" (*gruppa*) and the former class-method by the so-called laboratory-method. Science, Mathematics, Russian, History, these and all other topics were thrown out, as being too narrow, too artificial, too utterly divorced from real life. Simultaneously the pedagogical leaders jubilantly announced the imminent "withering away" of the school (and of the family, for that matter). Neither teachers nor parents were to hamper the glorious growth of the Soviet child.

#### EFFICIENCY VS. SELF-EXPRESSION

The first break came in 1921. Lenin proclaimed the "New Economic Policy." A number of the revolutionary principles of the first few years were abandoned in favor of a more realistic attitude. The sobering influence of the

NEP made itself immediately felt in all other fields, including the school. It was found that the children, although having a riotously good time, were learning very little that would make them useful members of the Soviet state and intelligent workers or engineers in its factories. There was more talk now of the duties of the individual than of his privileges, and one heard more often that Russia demanded efficient mechanics and typists than that she was in need of harmoniously developed young men and women.

"The Interest of the State" set forth its demands. The liberals had to yield. Unwilling to sacrifice the positions of the first revolutionary years, the educational leaders tried to meet the new conditions by closely linking school and factory. Thus they hoped to preserve the essentials of their liberal school-system while at the same time providing the State with the desired workers. But they were never quite happy about it. They felt humiliated that they had been forced to subject their beautiful educational theories to such a banal matter as the demands of the State, and they were only waiting for the opportunity to devote themselves again wholly to the withering away of the school and to the free development of the child.

#### SOLDIERS OF CULTURE

Their chance came during the early years of the first Five Year Plan which came into being in 1928. Education again acquired an entirely Utopian character. Many schools actually withered away, for hundreds of thousands of "soldiers of culture," mostly students, neglecting their school work entirely, were roaming the country, participating in "culture campaigns," teaching peasants how to read and write, and feeling like heroes of a new age. To be the principal of a school one had to be above all a loyal Communist and preferably a factory worker.

This heyday—so far the last—of the liberal Bolsheviks came to a close in

1931. When the excitement first caused by the Five Year Plan had died down and people began to take stock, they found a most distressing situation: an unbelievable amount of energy and enthusiasm had been spent, but what had been gained? To be sure, more peasants than ever before could read and write and the "soldiers of culture" were filled with extraordinary and valuable experiences, but where were the millions of qualified laborers, mechanics, foremen, engineers, scientists, physicians, accountants, managers, and hundreds of other professions which the rapidly growing Soviet economy needed in daily increasing numbers? Somewhere something was decidedly wrong.

### "WE NEED MORE CADRES!"

A new term began to assume ever greater importance: *cadres*. This French word was originally used for the professional core or skeleton organization in an army and was extended, in the terminology of the Bolsheviks, to the professional and trained core in any section of the economic or cultural life of the state. We need more *cadres*! So said the speakers, the newspapers, the radios, so said the people when talking among themselves. The pre-war *cadres* had been largely destroyed or forced to emigrate. Meanwhile a huge Soviet industry was growing in all parts of the Union. Where were the *cadres* to turn its wheels? By 1931 the lack of *cadres* had become the central problem of the USSR.

Indeed, asked the people, why do we not have sufficient *cadres* fourteen years after the victory of the revolution? Why are the graduates of the Soviet school incapable of fulfilling the tasks set before them? The answer, given with increasing vehemence, was: because our school is all wrong, because it has lived in a Utopian world of beautiful liberal dreams instead of in a world of harsh realities. A flood of decrees and laws began to appear. (The first was the party decree of September 5, 1931; a very important one was also

that of August 25, 1932.) They sharply criticized the existing school conditions, bitterly denounced the theory of the withering away of the school, demanded more work, less play, and the quickest possible turning out of reliable *cadres*.

### THE FOURTH TURN

Within two years the educational system of the Soviet Union was again completely changed. It is not meant ironically but as a statement of fact when we say that the Soviet school of today is much more similar to the school of the Tsars than to that of the first revolutionary years.

Today there are again examinations (and the scholarships paid are differentiated in accordance with the grades). The authority of teachers and principals is fully restored. The pupils' councils which used to decide on a teacher's suitability merely exist as a relic of the past. The laboratory-method has been abolished, classes have been restored, the word "class" is back in use instead of "group." Specific subjects are taught again, even such subjects as Ancient History. The textbook has returned to favor. In the very characteristic party decree of February 12, 1933, which flayed the "wrong line" of abandoning text-books, forty-five million copies of various text-books were ordered almost overnight, and most of the printing presses of Russia had to stop whatever else they were doing in order to get the text-books out by autumn.

### THE CROCODILE CRACKS A JOKE

Soon the ideas of the Soviet pedagogues of yesterday became today's object of ridicule. I remember a cartoon in the leading humorous Soviet magazine *The Crocodile* which poked fun at the pre-text-book conditions. In Moscow there are two rings of avenues around the city center. On the inner ring runs the streetcar-line "A" and on the outer the streetcar-line "B." The cartoon showed a teacher with a group

of children standing in the street and pointing at a streetcar. "This, children," the teacher said, "is the letter A, and now I will take you to the outer ring and there we will see what the letter B looks like."

#### "FOR COMMUNIST EDUCATION" TAKES A POLL

In the Soviet Union where the press is completely regimented it can change its tenor overnight. With the same ardor with which it had formerly extolled progressive education it now praised the opposite. For a long time, for instance, the absence of examinations in Soviet schools had been a source of pride and self-acclaim. Now the re-introduction of examinations was praised as a measure of wisdom and revolutionary significance. Children as well as parents came under the influence of this new interpretation and apparently accepted it without qualms. A Soviet newspaper, *Za Kommunisticheskoye Prosvestchenye* ("For Communist Education"), took polls with gratifying results. Among other inspiring things it solemnly discovered "that 8.7 percent of the parents would whip their children if they did not pass their exams."

Even the uniforms, it was decided, were to be re-introduced, and lately—this is more serious than all the other changes—free secondary and higher education were abolished. Now the use of these schools is again confined to those who can pay for them.

So we see that education under the Soviets has had four complete about-faces, two under the influence of "Emancipation" and two under that of "The State"—pet all four in the name of the very same Bolshevism. But lest one might think that this is a peculiarity of Soviet education only, let us give another example to show that Soviet life in general went from one extreme of its heritage to the other, the turning-points again being the years 1917, 1921, 1928, 1931. Let us take, for instance, wages.

#### EQUALITY

In the first period after the revolution there was among the millions of Russians a degree of equality in wages and standard of living which is unparalleled in modern history. Money had practically no value, what counted was the *payok*, the ration which was given according to the size of the family and not according to work performed. On the whole, Russia consisted only of two kinds of people, those who were dead, and those who barely made a living with their *payok*. Within each group there was equality. Equality, to be sure, on a very low level, but equality nevertheless.

#### CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION

The New Economic Policy introduced a rather timid differentiation of wages. The Bolsheviks found themselves in a dilemma. On one hand the State demanded greater production, on the other hand there was the Marxist tradition which made every device for speeding up work, such as piece-work, smack of capitalist exploitation. What could be done? It was a period when the State was on top: its demands had to be fulfilled. Gradually piece-rates were introduced in addition to wages on a time basis. A new wage-scale came into use which provided different wages for different jobs. The ratio between the lowest and highest wages was at first one to five, then one to eight, finally one to ten. In addition premiums were offered as a special inducement. But as wages and standards of living were slowly growing apart, the protests of those who considered this to be treason and a betrayal of the idea of equality, became louder. Particularly the Trade Unions demanded the return to time-wages with only small differences between the highest and lowest groups. And so again the direction was changed.

#### "WHY SHOULD WE WORK?"

One does not have to study psychology to know what will be the result if

an entire nation is paid more or less the same wages for any length of time. Obviously what happens is that nobody works. Those who are lazy by nature say, "Why should we work? We would not get more anyway." And the industrious ones will say, "Why should we work? The others don't and yet they get the same."

This attitude may have been all right as long as you looked at it from the point of view of the individual's liberty. But as soon as the requirements of the State were stressed, its demands for more coal and iron, for more tanks and guns, the picture changed completely. It was during the first Five Year Plan that this change took place. Increasingly the emphasis shifted from the individual to the State. And the State above everything else wanted more production. Evidently there was only one way to make people work harder: to pay them more for more work, to pay them less or not at all for less or no work.

#### "THE SIX CONDITIONS OF COMRADE STALIN"

On June 23, 1931, Stalin made a speech which I consider to be one of the most important documents of Bolshevik history. It soon became known as "The Six Conditions of Comrade Stalin." It was copied in millions of pamphlets and quoted in billions of newspapers. In essence this speech said, "Down with equalitarianism! (Not even the word equality was left, it had deteriorated in equalitarianism, *uravnilovka*.) Up with inequality, up with determined differentiation of wages! Only if we stimulate the individual worker by paying him higher wages for more work can we expect greater production."

Since this memorable speech things have developed very much in the direction demanded by Stalin. The wage differences have increased from year to year until today you can find people in Russia who earn a hundred rubles

a month and others who make a thousand, five thousand, ten thousand, and even more a month. If you work more you get paid more, for the State needs more of everything. The State needs more automobiles, more oil, more planes. The State needs.... the State needs... the State.... the State.... The emphasis has indeed completely shifted.

#### THE UBIQUITOUS FACE OF THE BUREAUCRAT

In the present period, which is the fourth lap in the course of Bolshevism, the State has won out completely over the individual. Nowhere in the world does the individual have less to say than in the present Soviet Union, where he stands as a helpless dwarf before that horrifying giant, the State, who holds in his hands the powers both of the employer and of the government. People who have not lived in the USSR do not realize what it means if state and employer are the same. In most other countries a man can, if he feels unfairly treated by his employer, go to a new employer or he can appeal to the State. But in the Soviet Union, wherever he goes, to factory A or to factory B, to the employer or to the State, he will find the same face: the face of the bureaucrat who represents THE STATE.

Some observers abroad sincerely believed that the new Soviet constitution with its many guarantees of human rights would change things. These people have been bitterly disillusioned. Under the new constitution more individuals than at any time before have been "liquidated" without due trial or any other regard for their human rights.

#### WORLD REVOLUTION

We have traced the two parental influences of Bolshevism and their mutual struggle because they help to solve many otherwise unintelligible contradictions and because they bring into focus nearly a quarter of a cen-

tury of Bolshevism which to many seems hopelessly confused.

But our task does not end here. For there is one more trend in Bolshevism which must be mentioned, a trend which it inherited from both its parents and which has remained the same no matter what influence happened to be the stronger at any given period. This is the desire for world domination.

### THE RUSSIAN EAGLE

Among its paternal ancestors all the great Russian rulers were in the first place "Collectors of the Russian Earth," as they were named by their chroniclers. The word "Russian" might as well be left out in this title, for the earth collected was mainly non-Russian when the collecting started. It includes almost five million square miles of Siberia, over one million square miles of Central Asia, not to mention the vast regions inhabited by Caucasian, Turkish, Finnish, and numerous other non-Russian and non-Slavic tribes conquered in the course of Russian history. To Peter the Great not even the Pacific was a barrier. It was he who inaugurated Russia's march into Alaska and California, and his successors dreamt of flying the Russian Eagle over India, the Persian Gulf, and the Aegean Sea.

Any history book with a map on the growth of Russia from the small principality of Moscow to its greatest size in the latter half of the nineteenth century will bear out my contention that conquest without regard for natural or national limits was the proud tradition of the Russian Tsars. One should not overlook the fact that the Russians were peculiarly well equipped for this expansion over Europe, Asia, and even parts of America. More than a thousand years of life on the borders of Europe and Asia, of wars with Asiatic tribes and of marriages with their daughters, have made Russia a Eurasian nation which speaks the language of the West as well as that of the East.

### THE COMMUNIST STAR

Even stronger and certainly more outspoken is the desire for world domination on the maternal side. Neither the men of the French Revolution nor the followers of Marx thought in terms of nations. They all believed that their star should shine for all men and that their program should be accepted by the world as a whole. Read the revolutionary French proclamations or the Communist Manifesto, or the books of the Comintern, and you will find it stated there with candor and vehemence.

It is this combination of national and international urges toward world domination which has caused world revolution to remain the one unchanged part of the Bolshevik plan. Wagescales, school programs, and many other things were radically altered several times during the history of Bolshevism. But no one has ever observed a change in the final aim: World Revolution. There have, of course, been differences of opinion as to the methods, but never as to the aim itself, the aim of a Soviet World, controlled from the "Capital of the World Proletariat," Moscow.

### THE STRANGE WAYS OF FOREIGN POLICY

Because of its close connection with the fixed aim of a world revolution, the foreign policy of the USSR has not followed the swings of the pendulum which have been described here and which can be found in all other spheres of Soviet life.

Take the last ten years of Soviet history for example. During the years 1931-1941 the inner-political development of the Soviet Union has remained essentially the same, yet the foreign policy has passed through many phases. First the Kremlin was on good terms with Germany, denouncing the injustices of Versailles and Geneva. Then it became a bitter enemy of Germany, defending the European *status quo*

and joining the League of Nations. Next it made its peace with Germany in order to use Germany's involvement in the present war for large gains of territory in Eastern Europe, and fought its war against Finland. And now again it stands on the side of Britain and America. Yet during this entire decade the USSR has remained the same dictatorship, as far removed from the ideals of her present allies as anything could ever be.

#### GERMANY AND THE USSR AT WAR

No one who has followed the political events of the last few years will doubt that everything was done by the opponents of Germany to bring the Soviet Union into their camp. In this they were successful. By the early summer of 1941 the German leaders were convinced that it had become only a question of time as to when Stalin would actively join the war against Germany. When on June 22 the German armies crossed the Soviet border their leaders did not underestimate the Red Army—better than anyone else in the world were they aware of its strength and weakness—but they were determined to strike the first blow in a struggle that had become unavoidable.

There was much rejoicing in the ranks of Germany's enemies when the Bolshevik armies took the field against Germany. Did they expect the Red troops to defeat the German legions? Hardly. Did they wish them at all to be victorious? I have not been in England since the war began, but I cannot imagine that even the fury and hatred

of modern war could cause the British to desire a Bolshevik victory over Germany, which would put the whole of Europe at the mercy of Stalin.

The American attitude has been very poignantly expressed in a recent issue of *Time* which speaks of "the emotional confusion of most U.S. citizens who looked upon a war in which they wished both sides would lose—but not too soon. It was a troubling experience for those who rejoiced when Nazis smacked into Russia, out of hatred of Communism—but who worried to see how hard they smacked; and for those who could see the logic of U.S. aid to Russia, since Russia was the weaker of two well-hated dictatorships—but gagged at the thought of a Russian victory."

This is a frank statement which characterizes a strange political situation. Since the joint Churchill-Roosevelt message to Stalin, England and the United States are practically allies of the USSR. Yet all the sane elements—certainly in America and probably in Great Britain—do not want the Bolsheviks to win, as they realize the terrific consequences of such a victory not only for continental Europe but also for themselves. They are hoping for a repetition of the events in the Great War, when Germany and Russia wore each other out and in the end both collapsed. But they are hoping with little confidence. They know that Germany has learned from the bitter experience of the last war and they fear that, as *Time* puts it, they might be helped out of their emotional confusion by a German victory over the USSR.