

## **Introduction [Excerpt]:**

### **Walter Rodney on the Russian Revolution**

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During the academic year 1970-71, Walter Rodney, the renowned Marxist historian of Africa and the Caribbean, taught an advanced graduate course titled “Historians and Revolutions” at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, focusing entirely on the historiographies of the French and Russian Revolutions. This wasn’t your run-of-the-mill European historiography course. Rodney’s objectives were to introduce students to dialectical materialism as a methodology for interpreting the history of revolutionary movements, critique bourgeois histories and their liberal conceits of objectivity, and to draw political lessons for the Third World. Russia, having experienced the first successful socialist revolution in the world, figured prominently in the course.<sup>1</sup>

To prepare, he underwent a thorough review of Russian history in the year or more prior to the course, reading on the emancipation of the serfs, the rise of the Russian left intelligentsia, the 1905 Revolution, the February Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, Lenin’s New Economic Policy, Trotsky’s interpretation of history, and the rise of Stalinism and “socialism in one country.” He read voraciously and systematically, critically absorbing virtually everything available to him in the English language—from U.S. and British Cold War scholarship to translations of Soviet historiography. The result was a series of original lectures that revisited key economic and political developments, the challenges of socialist transformation in a “backwards” empire, the consolidation of state power, debates within Marxist circles over the character of Russia’s revolution, and the ideological bases of historical interpretation. Rather than simply re-narrate well-known events, Rodney took up the

more challenging task of interrogating the meaning, representation, and significance of the Russian Revolution as a world historical event whose reverberations profoundly shaped Marxist thought, Third World liberation movements, and theories of socialist transformation.

Probably before the course ended, Rodney had begun to turn these lectures into a book. In 1971, he wrote his friend Ewart Thomas, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan who was visiting Stanford University, that while he had been teaching courses on Cuba and China, “my main teaching field has been Russia. My publications obviously do not provide evidence of expertise in European History, but I really have done a great deal of work on the Russian Revolution. This year I was about to start a monograph covering the 1917 Revolution and the period up to World War 2 and I put it aside only because the African material had to be given higher priority.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, the “African material” turned out to be *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

He did start writing the book but was unable to complete it due to other constraints, including several years of travel and the intense political struggle in Guyana in the late 1970s. Walter’s wife Patricia Rodney notes that Walter always worked on many projects at the same time, advancing them whenever time allowed or opportunity arose. Many of the Russian lectures were typed out in essay form, and Rodney’s personal papers and writings, now located at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, contained a hand-written preface to what he called *Two World Views of the Russian Revolution: Reflections from Africa*. Preparation of these lectures overlapped, in fact, with the writing of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), and with other projects Rodney completed during the Tanzania (1969-1974) and Guyana (1974-1980) years.<sup>3</sup> *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (HEUA) not

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· See Editors’ Note for an explanation of the origins and construction of the book.

only argued for a socialist path of development as the only viable future for the continent, but adopted a favorable stance toward the Soviet Union. Rodney praised the Soviet's command economy as a bulwark against fascism, and hailed Lenin's work on imperialism as "prophetic" and the "most thorough and best-known analysis."<sup>4</sup> Partly because they were delivered as lectures, the intended book was crafted with a broad audience in mind, as was the case with HEUA. It is direct, witty, and occasionally biting, daringly original, honest, and brazenly willing to deploy an anticolonial perspective that resonated with politicized readers across the world. On the other hand, this is a very different sort of book, focused more on historiography than history, and the political stakes involved in the interpretation of revolution. Rodney charts a new direction for Black Studies and African Studies—one bold enough to examine the entire world. Thus, consistent with all of his work, this volume exhibits the same sort of truth-telling and rigorous intellectual commitment to solving rather than just studying pressing problems in the society and its social movements.

The lectures provided a fresh analysis of the Russian Revolution at the height of the Cold War. Rodney's "Two World Views" framing clarified 1) that bourgeois perspectives writ large are simply particular, biased perspectives among others; and that they are distinct from 2) Soviet perspectives, which are themselves worthy of engagement despite being dismissed by bourgeois scholarship. In the same way that Edward Said's *orientalism* analytic exposed the occidental and imperial/colonial nexus of modern thought, Rodney's framing and circumscription of Western thought *as bourgeois* named it as a located interpretive agent in the world, aligned with the interests of bourgeois capitalism. The two world views concept flushes out bourgeois thought, legitimizes/engages but therefore criticizes Soviet and other Marxist thought, and therefore implies a third view, Third World Marxism, non-alignment – what

Rodney refers to here as “an African perspective,” an explicitly global perspective from an African viewpoint.

During Rodney’s time at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was experimenting with a socialist ideology. The university attracted radical scholars – those who were looking for a different approach and place to solving Africa’s underdevelopment. In an era characterized by armed struggles for decolonization, the Non-Aligned Movement, socialist revolutions in the Third World, and a deepening of Sino-Soviet rifts, Rodney examined the Russian Revolution for inspiration and lessons for the continent and the Diaspora as it tried/tries to deal with the forces of colonial and capitalist history. Tanzania had become the base for several anti-colonial and liberation movements in exile and the models of Soviet and Chinese societies were common topics of discussion and debate. Professor Issa Shivji, one of Rodney’s former students, recalled the sectarian splits that emerged partly as a reaction to the split in international socialism, between China and the Soviet Union. “The Dar es Salaam campus followed very closely that debate of the Communist Party of China and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: the rising socialist imperialism. We had lots of discussions on that. But many of them were internal splits within our groups.”<sup>5</sup> Dar was a miniature global community and one could be in the same room with radical, bourgeois or reactionary intellectuals from many regions and countries including South Africa, East Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Vietnam, Britain, Canada and the US – as rich a cast of characters as the world knew at that time.<sup>6</sup>

Rodney was not interested in sectarian politics. Understanding the Russian Revolution and its consequences required deep study and reflection if it was to provide useful lessons for the Third World. As he explains in Chapter One, one of his objectives was to demonstrate the value of historical materialism for apprehending the processes of revolution and socialist

transformation. Rodney set out to defend both the achievements of the Russian Revolution and a Marxist interpretation of history from the distortions of bourgeois historians—namely, Western European and American scholars motivated by Cold War imperatives and neocolonial designs. On the other hand, writing in the afterglow of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution in 1917, Rodney surmised that the Masters of the Universe and their historians were suddenly on the defensive, if not running for their lives.

Standing in 2017, in the centennial year of the October Revolution and some three decades after the *collapse* of the Soviet Union, the idea that the global bourgeoisie was on the verge of defeat may come across as overly optimistic or a terrible miscalculation. However, this work needs to be examined in the context of the world as it existed at that time. In the late 1960s and early '70s, as Vijay Prashad discusses in the Afterword to this book, the political winds had shifted toward Marxism-Leninism, not only in the Third World but within social movements in the Global North. The question of a socialist path for Africa was hardly settled—in fact, it seemed to be the winning position given the direction of anti-colonial struggles in Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Angola, South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia, People's Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania. Unlike Russia's dominant international image, China's role as an international player was not so clear. Although the general public had yet to learn of the state oppression that accompanied the Cultural Revolution, few observers could miss the rise of *socialist* China as an economic power willing to invest in and engage with Africa. Like Rodney, much of the Third World Left believed the momentum of history was on their side.

Rodney was not clairvoyant, so he could not have predicted how the next half-century would turn out. And unlike our generation, he did not have access to the Soviet archives, or the deluge of new revisionist scholarship. Indeed, historians of Russia will immediately note that

recent research calls into question some of Rodney's assertions and begins to complicate a Manichean view of historians as either bourgeois or Marxist. So these lectures have to be read as an historical document produced in a particular conjuncture: before the defeat of socialism, before China's neoliberal turn, before the rollback of Third World socialist revolutions, and at the exact moment when the Global South's proposal for a New International Economic Order contested neoliberalism to shape the world's future and lost.<sup>7</sup> And yet, Rodney's insights into the historical dynamics of revolution, state power, peasant rebellion, war, and the dialectics of class and nationalism, are nonetheless profound and prescient.

[EXCISED HERE – BIO OF RODNEY]

### **Brief History of the Russian Revolution<sup>8</sup>**

We generally think of the Revolution as the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917, or date its origins to February 1917, when thousands of female textile-workers and housewives took to the streets of Petrograd to protest a serious bread shortage and to mark International Women's Day, setting in motion the events that led to the overthrow of the Tsar. Still others invoke the failed 1905 Revolution as a sort of rehearsal for October 1917. But the Russian Revolution was a long, protracted struggle whose origins can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It involved the overthrow of an imperial monarchy by peasants, workers, soldiers, left-wing intellectuals, and liberal forces; ushered in the modern world's first attempt to create a socialist state; and set in motion Marxist-inspired movements on a global scale that fundamentally shaped the ideas, ideologies, strategies, direction, and aesthetics of the Left in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The collapse of the Tsarist empire was rooted in a series of political and economic crises. In the decades following the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the state set out to rapidly modernize Russia's economy in order to compete militarily and economically with the major European powers. By 1913, Russia had become the fifth largest industrial power in the world. Consequently, like European and American workers at the turn of the century, the Russian working class was subject to extremely exploitative, dangerous, even fatal working conditions. Workplace injuries and deaths were commonplace; a ten-hour day, let alone an eight-hour day, was not.

Contrary to the pronouncements of Western Marxists, Russian workers were hardly "backward." Rather, they were among the most organized and militant in Europe. In 1905, the year of the first revolution, about 75% of the work force went out on strike or participated in some militant action. A large proportion of the unskilled workers were drawn directly from the countryside and turned to forms of resistance associated with peasants – looting, machine breaking, and physically removing or assaulting managers they disliked. The most disciplined of industrial workers gravitated to underground Marxist political organizations, especially since the Tsarist state banned formal trade unions. Indeed, the repressive nature of the Russian state largely determined the revolutionary character of the working class. As historian Orlando Figes writes, "Had they been able to develop their own legal trade unions, the workers might have gone down the path of moderate reform taken by the European labour movements."<sup>9</sup>

At the time of the Revolution, Russia was still largely a country of peasants—75% of its population worked in agriculture. Similar to the emancipation of enslaved people in the Western Hemisphere, the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 did not result in land reform or greater economic or political power. On the contrary, the newly "freed" peasants were forced to

buy land for more than its market value, enabling the old landed gentry to hold on to the best quality land. Railway expansion and market growth allowed peasants to supplement their meager income from farming with wage labor in mining, industry, or on larger farms, as well as through trade and handicrafts. By 1913, the Russian empire had become the world's leading grain exporter, although the average peasant continued to endure a life of extreme poverty and hardship.

Capitalist expansion coincided with Tsarist imperialist expansion and the consolidation of Russian settler colonialism. Beginning in the 1880s, the state launched a campaign to centralize its rule by creating a more uniform system of governance and introducing policies of “Russification.” Efforts to impose the Russian language and the Orthodox Church on the peoples of the western borderlands and the Baltic littoral—notably Ukraine and Poland, were met with resistance. Poles and Jews, in particular, were targets of the most discriminatory legislation. In the Volga–Urals region, where a pan-Muslim identity had emerged, Russification proceeded with less vigor. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, however, the Tsarist state had only recently consolidated its rule after a series of brutal military campaigns. Consistent with virtually every other modern European colonial project, Russian settlers were tasked with establishing viable economic outposts and “civilizing” the Muslims.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the costs of imperialist expansion and the unprecedented exploitation of labor and resources had begun to take its toll on the Tsarist state. The Russian capitalist class was politically weak, divided by region and industry (notably mining, metallurgy, and engineering), and almost completely dependent on the state to buy its products and provide subsidies in order to stay competitive. But the more immediate crisis facing the Tsarist state wasn't economic; it was political.



The first stirrings of the modern revolutionary movement begin in the mid-1870s, when a small group of radical intellectuals attempted to launch a Populist movement among the peasantry. Known as the Narodniks or the Narodniki, they saw in the peasant commune (the “mir”) collectivist and egalitarian values upon which to build a socialist society and challenge both Tsarist rule and industrial capitalism. Their initial efforts were met by swift state repression and skepticism among many peasants. In response to state violence, a segment of the Narodniks founded the People’s Will in 1879, an armed, underground movement that used terror to provoke popular insurgency in the countryside. The People’s Will did gain a militant following, but the anticipated revolt never materialized. Instead, more of its members were jailed, executed, or sent to Siberia. Some supporters of the People’s Will turned to Marxism, Georgii Plekhanov being among the first. A founder of the first Russian Marxist organization (the Emancipation of Labour Group) in 1883, Plekhanov abandoned the Narodnik vision of peasant revolution and argued that the penetration of capitalist relations in the countryside had strengthened the rural bourgeoisie at the expense of the poor peasantry. Exploitation had eroded the peasants’ collective social base and drove a significant portion of the agrarian poor into the cities and industrial centers, thus expanding the proletariat. The proletariat, Plekhanov concluded, was the only class capable of ushering in revolution. As a delegate to the founding of the Second International in Paris in 1889, he famously announced, “The task of our revolutionary intelligentsia therefore comes, in the opinion of the Russian Social-Democrats, to the following: they must adopt the views of modern scientific socialism, spread them among the workers, and, with the help of the workers, storm the stronghold of autocracy. The revolutionary movement in Russia can triumph only as the revolutionary movement of the workers.”<sup>10</sup>

An early follower of Plekhanov was a brilliant student at Kazan University named Vladimir Il'ich—after 1903 known as V. I. Lenin. In 1887, his brother, A. I. Ul'ianov, a member of the People's Will, was hanged for participating in an assassination plot against the Tsar. Vladimir reacted by intensifying his own political work, for which he was expelled from the university. He became a professional revolutionary, co-founding with Lulii Martov the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in St Petersburg, whose propaganda work among workers resulted in their arrest in 1897. Lenin and his wife, the dynamic revolutionary Nadezhda Krupskaya, were exiled to Siberia for three years. In fact, Lenin's exile kept him from attending the founding congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) in 1898. Nevertheless, within five years he would be at the center of the famous split that produced the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the party. In the meantime, Lenin devoted his time to researching and writing his first major work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, published in 1899. The book empirically proved Plekhanov's assertion that the penetration of capitalism in the countryside produced sharp class differentiation among the peasantry, although he came to a slightly different conclusion. For Lenin, the deepening exploitation of the rural poor made them potentially revolutionary allies of the industrial working class and put them in a unique position to help bring about a bourgeois democratic revolution. In 1899, most Marxists still held on to the idea that the bourgeois revolution must precede the socialist revolution.

The publication of Lenin's pamphlet *What is to Be Done?* (1902) took aim at the "economist" tendencies dominant among European Marxists and social democrats—notably figures such as Edouard Bernstein, leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Bernstein believed that as industrialization created the conditions for the expansion and

consolidation of working-class organization through trade unions and labor parties, socialist transformation was possible without dissolving the modern state system. The “dictatorship of the proletariat” Marx once predicted was now obsolete; Bernstein imagined socialist transformation through the spread of parliamentary democracy and the embrace of “liberalism.” Concluding (prematurely) that capitalism’s periodic crises were a thing of the past, he believed that working-class organizations were strong enough to control the economy through electoral means. Karl Kautsky, the SPD’s main theorist, dissented. He did not think capitalism could be reformed out of existence and that social revolution was necessary. Nevertheless, he concurred with Bernstein that the socialist revolution would come about through the inevitable growth of the socialist vote. Eventually the party would have an electoral majority and the legitimacy. The sole dissenting voice within the German SPD who anticipated Lenin’s main arguments in *What is to Be Done?* was Rosa Luxemburg, then only 28 years old. In 1900 she published the pamphlet, *Social Reform or Revolution*, which argued unequivocally that socialism cannot be voted into power, revolution is unavoidable, and that capitalism’s illusory stability was the result of imperialist expansion.<sup>11</sup> Lenin agreed with Luxemburg but went further, arguing that while workers are capable of achieving a “trade union consciousness,” a genuine revolution requires a qualitative leap, which for him meant creating a vanguard organization of professional revolutionaries fully conversant in Marxist theory and praxis. Lenin rejected the strategy of building alliances with liberals, insisting instead that the bourgeois-democratic revolution would be brought about by the proletariat in alliance with poor peasants.

*What is to Be Done?* caused a rift at the RSDLP’s Second Congress in 1903. A significant minority took issue with Lenin’s proposal for transforming the party into a highly disciplined, conspiratorial and restrictive organization, worrying that such a vanguard party

would become a substitute for the working class itself. And they regarded liberals as allies in the revolutionary movement. The minority or “Mensheviks” included some of Lenin’s closest collaborators, including Martov and, later, Plekhanov. Leon Trotsky, a leading social democrat who had been exiled to Siberia in 1900 and initially allied with Lenin, surprised many of his comrades by siding with the Mensheviks. The majority or the “Bolsheviks” supported Lenin’s position. Although the split would continue to be a feature of the Russian Marxism throughout the revolution, neither faction acted or voted entirely as distinct, unified entities. Many comrades, notably Trotsky, switched sides more than once. Over the course of the next decade and a half, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks experienced splits within their own ranks, moments of unity across the divide, periods of indecision and reversal, and many instances in which Bolsheviks and Mensheviks scrambled to catch up with the masses.

The RSDLP was certainly Russia’s largest proletarian party, but it was not the large political movement. That distinction belonged to the peasant-based Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR). Founded in 1902 by Viktor Chernov, the SR’s wedded populist ideology with Marxism, arguing for the unity of industrial workers and peasants to resist the advance of capitalism in the countryside by radically redistributing land to the tiller. Expropriating big landowners would not only create the conditions for rural socialism but would have the effect of arresting or at least retarding industrial capitalism. A political descendant of the People’s Will, the SR resuscitated terrorist tactics such as assassinations, and thus remained a small organization during its first few years. Indeed, the 1905 Revolution provided the boost both the SR’s and the RSDLP’s needed to become mass organizations and significant players in Russian politics.

The revolution was sparked by a peaceful workers' march on the Winter Palace on January 9, 1905.<sup>12</sup> Led by liberal priest Father G. A. Gapon, 150,000 workers sought to deliver a petition to Tsar Nicholas II demanding a number of social and political reforms. The protests began several weeks earlier when workers at the Putilov metallurgical and machine-building factory in St. Petersburg went on strike to protest the firing of fellow workers. The company's recalcitrance only escalated the conflict, drawing more workers from across the city as well as liberal groups such as the Union of Liberation, whose *raison d'être* had been to establish a constitutional monarchy. The petition included the right to vote, freedom of speech, the press, and association, freedom of conscience, separation of Church and state, equality before the law, freedom to form trade unions, the right to strike, an eight-hour working day, insurance benefits, and improved wages. They also demanded an end to the Russo-Japanese War, especially after Russia's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1904. It was the first time in modern history that an Asian nation had militarily defeated a "European" power. The war not only weakened the economy but generated a crisis of confidence in Tsarist rule. But Tsar Nicholas II was not fazed; the Imperial Guards fired on unarmed protesters, provoking what would be known as "Bloody Sunday." About 200 protesters were gunned down and some 800 wounded in the initial battle, and scores of others were injured or trampled to death in the ensuing melee. Bloody Sunday was the spark that set in motion a year of worker insurrections, general strikes, urban and agrarian unrest, and military mutinies which spread from St. Petersburg to Moscow, Warsaw, Vilna, Kovno, Baku, the Baltic region, and other parts of the empire. Altogether, about half of Russia's industrial working-class went out on strike in 1905, and in Poland the figure exceeds 90%.

Peasants organized rent strikes, cut trees and hay from the gentry's land, attacked estates, seized property, and even physically assaulted the big landowners and burned down their manors. During the first ten months of 1905, the army was deployed at least 2,700 times to put down peasant uprisings, though sometimes these counterinsurgency efforts were half-hearted since many of the soldiers had themselves been peasants and knew the grievances well. Entire units simply deserted, refused to carry out orders, or mutinied rather than suppress the peasants. Besides, military discipline had already begun to spiral out of control as Russian soldiers faced defeat by the better prepared and better equipped Japanese troops in Manchuria. Mutinies dogged the Russian navy; during the first half of 1905 mutinies occurred at Sevastopol, Vladivostok, and Kronstadt, with the most famous insurrection taking place aboard the battleship Potemkin. Indeed, the prospect of mutiny within the military as well as rebellion at home left the Tsar with no choice but to sue for peace.

Meanwhile, the Tsar and his acolytes responded with a policy of repression and limited reform. With Nicholas's blessings and backing, the Right formed the Union of the Russian People and paramilitary groups known as Black Hundreds that attacked revolutionaries and carried out pogroms against Jews.<sup>13</sup> The Tsar's attempts at piecemeal reform went nowhere. Ignoring calls for a constitutional monarchy, adult suffrage, and an independent legislature with sovereign rights, the Tsar was only willing to allow a *duma* (a legislative body) whose role would be purely consultative. Given the terms of the franchise, less than one percent of St. Petersburg's adult residents was qualified to vote. The RSDLP and SR called it a sham and chose to boycott the elections. Instead, they backed the workers who launched a general strike in September that proved to be something of a dress rehearsal for 1917. Initiated by the Moscow printers who struck for better pay and working conditions, they were soon followed by

railway workers affiliated with the Union of Unions, a liberal organization that had begun planning a general strike in order to win basic political reforms. By October 10<sup>th</sup>, a national strike was underway involving millions of workers and professionals. Coordinating the strike was a new organization, the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which was formed during the strike and directed by Leon Trotsky. (Soviet simply means 'council' in Russian.) The Soviet proved to be the only functioning democracy in St. Petersburg and a source of workers' power: it elected representatives, organized self-defense, distributed food and supplies, and served as the model for similar workers' councils in fifty other cities. Trotsky edited its newspaper, *Isvestia*, and was responsible for drafting its major resolutions.

Fearing the end of Tsarist rule, on 17 October Nicholas's advisers compelled him to sign a Manifesto drafted by Count Witte that would grant civil liberties and permit a legislative Duma elected on a wide franchise. In short, the Tsar acceded to a constitutional monarchy. While liberals rejoiced, workers and peasants saw very little in the Manifesto that addressed their grievances. The next day, the Soviet adopted a resolution stating: "The struggling revolutionary proletariat cannot lay down its arms until the political rights of the Russian people are put on a solid footing, until a democratic republic is established." At minimum, the Soviet insisted on the withdrawal of the military and police from the city, full amnesty to all political prisoners, lifting the state of emergency in Russia, and a Constituent Assembly on equal suffrage for all based on direct and secret ballot. Insurrections and mutinies continued throughout October through December. Social Democrats in St. Petersburg and Moscow armed the workers and prepared for class war. However, the rebellions were poorly organized and uncoordinated; neither the RSDLP nor the SRs were strong enough to lead a national movement, and sectarian squabbles did not help matters; nationalist and anti-Semitic sentiment sometimes

undercut class solidarity; the concessions in the Manifesto divided liberals from most of the working-class. Ultimately, the empire salvaged enough loyalty from the army to suppress the rebellion.

Liberals hoped the October Manifesto would usher in a new era of democracy in Russia. They were mistaken. The decade leading up to the First World War was instead characterized by political repression, militarization, and imperial expansion. Still reeling from Japan's victory over Russia, the Tsar and his elite backers commenced a massive military build-up that drained one-third of the country's national budget between 1909 and 1913. The colonization of Central Asia also intensified, especially in the Kazakh steppes where the building of the Orenburg to Tashkent railway enabled 1.5 million Russians to settle there between 1906 and 1912. Tashkent, Turkestan's largest city, was already a major hub for Russian settlers. But as the new wave of settlers turned to commercial cotton production, conflicts erupted between natives and settlers over land and water rights in the Fergana Valley. State policies of restricting non-Russian nationalism only exacerbated tensions. The Duma not only supported settlers in Central Asia but they in turn dispossessed nomadic herders from their customary grazing land. This further radicalized the Muslim population in Central Asia, though their grievances generally found expression in anti-colonialism and pan-Islamism rather than the language of class struggle.

Meanwhile, working-class unrest never ceased, intensifying on the eve of the war. In 1912, Russia was wracked by 2,032 strikes involving 725,491 workers. The following year, 2,404 strikes occurred involving 887,096 workers. And in the first half of 1914 alone, the country experienced an unprecedented 3,534 strikes with over 1.3 million workers participating.<sup>14</sup> The state responded to the strike wave with immediate force. In 1912, soldiers put down a miners' strike in Siberia, killing at least two hundred workers and sparking protests



across the empire reminiscent of “Bloody Sunday.” The spark that turned the strike wave into a workers’ insurrection occurred on July 3, 1914, after soldiers killed two workers on strike from the Putilov plant in St Petersburg. The workers called a general strike and swiftly erected barricades in the streets.

It was under the conditions of mass worker unrest, peasant rebellion, anti-colonial resistance, industrial expansion, growing income inequality, and political instability that Russia entered World War I. Russia, an ally of France and supporter of Serbian nationalism, considered Germany its main territorial threat. Having built the largest military force in Europe, if not the world, the Tsarist regime was anxious to go to war—especially since the declaration of war stoked the flames of Russian nationalism, temporarily dampening the fires of working-class revolt. Anti-German sentiment prevailed over proletarian internationalism. Even the capital city of St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd, or “Peter’s City,” removing all vestiges of German. And despite rhetorical claims that the European powers were defending their sovereignty, all parties were looking to expand their imperial holdings. Once the Ottoman Empire entered the war, in fact, the Tsarist regime had designs on the Bosphorus straits, Austrian-ruled Galicia, and a large portion of Anatolia.

The war turned out to be a disaster for Russia. It ultimately brought about the downfall of the Tsar and became the cauldron for the revolutions of 1917. Four months into the fighting, the Russian Army had ballooned to just over 6.5 million men, equipped with only 4,652,000 rifles. Poorly trained troops were sent into battle without adequate equipment, arms or ammunition, resulting in over two million casualties in 1915 alone. All told, some 14 million men were mobilized to fight and 67 million people in the western provinces came under enemy occupation. The mobilization of men and loss of territory resulted in a decline in agricultural

production, food shortages, and a deepening of rural unrest. The government financed the war by raising taxes, borrowing heavily from foreign banks, and increasing the amount of paper currency in circulation. Consequently, inflation wiped out hard fought wage increases, provoking a new strike wave beginning in 1916.

The February Revolution began most unexpectedly. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1917, thousands of female textile-workers and housewives took to the streets of Petrograd to protest the bread shortage and to mark International Women's Day. The following day, more than 200,000 workers went on strike and some 400,000 participated in demonstrations. They fought police and carried placards proclaiming 'Down with the War' and 'Down with the Tsarist Government'. Tsar Nicholas II, who was away at the war front, dispatched thousands of troops who had been waiting in Petrograd's barracks preparing to go to war, but by the fourth day of the uprising even the soldiers had mutinied and switched sides. Suddenly the world turned upside down; workers and soldiers intermingled, called each other comrade, brandished guns and red flags, and performed citizens' arrests of police and government officials. When the Tsar sent a trainload of troops to restore order to the city, they, too, joined the insurgents. Nicholas II had lost all authority. Even when he tried to return to the city he was blocked by a group of railway workers. His generals finally informed him that order could not be restored unless he agreed to abdicate.

Revolution had broken out, but where was the vanguard party? Initially, no political party had given leadership to the revolution—at least not at first. Many of the main leaders of the RSDLP were in exile. Lenin was in hiding in Zurich, Trotsky in New York City. There were Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries on the ground, circulating among the masses. Four days into the general strike, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers'

Deputies was formed, its executive committee comprised primarily of Mensheviks. Like the Soviet of 1905, it did much of the actual running of the city, meting out justice, organizing militias, producing and distributing a workers press, and creating a model for worker self-organization. Soviets popped up in factories, as well, where they set about dismantling ‘autocracy’ on the shop floor, driving out foremen, and implementing the practice of workers’ control. They demanded an eight-hour working day and wage increases to compensate for wartime inflation. Workers regarded the soviet as an organ of ‘revolutionary democracy’ comprised not only of workers and soldiers, but peasants, ethnic minorities, teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors—men and women. Soviets spread throughout the country; by October there were at least 1,429 soviets, 455 of which were peasant soviets.

Meanwhile, the overthrow of the Tsar paved the way for the old state-sanctioned дума to assume responsibility for the state. To become a legitimate democratic institution, however, it had to do away with property requirements for voting, eliminate rampant corruption, and represent the interests of all the people—not just the bourgeoisie and middle-class liberals. In February, under the new Prime Minister Georgii Lvov, leader of the liberal Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party, the дума was transformed into the Provisional government. Distrustful of the new government, the Petrograd Soviet refused to disband. Instead, they proposed a system of shared governance known as “dual power.” What it meant in practice, however, was not entirely clear. For many moderate socialist intellectuals who understood the character of the revolution as “bourgeois”—which is to say, to advance democracy and capitalist development in Russia rather than socialism—joining the Provisional government made sense. And within the Soviets there were socialists who feared that any attempt to assert their authority might provoke counter-revolution. Nevertheless, the dominant position on the

Left was to support the Provisional government in principle without *joining* it—the one exception being Alexander Kerensky, a popular leader of the February Revolution and vice-chair of the Petrograd Soviet. Bolshevik leaders Lev Kamenev and Josef Stalin, having returned from exile in Siberia just days after the start of the February Revolution, pledged conditional support for the Provisional Government, called for negotiations with the Mensheviks in order to reunify the RSDLP, and promoted “revolutionary defencism” in support of the war. Revolutionary defencism argued for continuing the war in order to defend the gains of the revolution from foreign powers. It was essentially patriotism dressed up in proletarian language.

Lenin returned from exile in April 1917 and promptly issued his April Theses criticizing the positions adopted by Kamenev and Stalin and pushing the Bolsheviks to the Left. He called on the party to abandon the Provisional government and transfer *all* power to the Soviets, for immediate withdrawal from the “imperialist war” (he dismissed revolutionary defencism as misguided), the nationalization of land and redistribution to the peasantry, abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy, Soviet control of production and distribution of goods as well as a central bank, the organization of peasants and soldiers (at the front), and the creation of a new Socialist International. In place of a parliamentary republic he called for a “republic of Soviets of Workers’, Agricultural Labourers’ and Peasants’ Deputies throughout the country.”<sup>15</sup> Concluding that the revolution had passed through its bourgeois stage and that socialism was on the horizon, Lenin had moved much closer to Trotsky’s position. When Lenin presented his theses to Social Democrats and to a Bolshevik committee, they were roundly rejected, although the newspaper Pravda did publish them. A few weeks later, however, delegates to the larger

Seventh Congress of the RSDLP adopted the theses as well as the slogan, “All Power to the Soviets.”

By July of 1917, disgruntled soldiers, sailors, and workers organized a series of militant demonstrations against the government, demanding an end to war and the transfer of power to the Soviets. The Bolshevik Central Committee believed a seizure of power was premature and tried to rein in the revolt. When this proved impossible, the Bolsheviks agreed to assume leadership. What began as a peaceful march ultimately erupted in a general strike and a contest for power. The inability of Prime Minister Lvov to address strikers’ demands led him and the entire Kadet Party to resign. The socialist Alexander Kerensky replaced Lvov, but this did not satisfy the rebels. Kerensky mercilessly crushed the revolt and vowed to destroy the Bolsheviks, whom he had accused of being German spies. Kerensky issued arrest warrants for Lenin and Trotsky, forcing them, once again, to go into hiding.

The Bolsheviks had become the target of attacks by the state, elements of the right as well as some on the Left, largely for their opposition to the Provisional government and unequivocal opposition to the war. The attacks didn’t stick because the war was genuinely unpopular. Desertions became commonplace, and reports of heroic Russian victories at the front proved apocryphal. Indeed, the Bolshevik slogan of “Peace, Land and Bread” earned them popular support among workers, peasants and war-weary soldiers. Their popularity also grew at the ballot box. In Petrograd, the Bolshevik vote in municipal and parliamentary elections rose from 20 percent in May, 33 percent in August, and 45 percent in November. In Moscow it rose from 11.5 percent in June to a whopping 51 percent in late September. During the first All-Russia Soviet Congress in June, Bolsheviks only made up 13 percent of the delegates; by the Second Congress in October, they dominated the proceedings with 53 percent

of the delegates and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, now allied with the Bolsheviks, making up another 21 percent.

Meanwhile, the Provisional government not only continued to throw its full support behind the war, but Alexander Kerensky took over as Minister of War and in turn appointed the right-wing General Lavr Kornilov as Supreme Commander of the Russian army in July 1917. Kornilov hated the Left and blamed the Petrograd Soviet for the breakdown in military discipline. In September, Kornilov attempted to crush the Petrograd Soviet and overthrow the Provisional Government, ironically forcing Kerensky to turn to the Bolsheviks for help. The Bolsheviks mobilized an army of workers and soldiers to defend the city, but they defeated Kornilov's forces without firing a single shot. Railway workers redirected trains carrying troops away from the city, and soviet delegates persuaded a Cossack battalion to retreat. Kornilov was arrested, but he would go on to play a leading role in the White Army assault on the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Ironically, the Bolsheviks had not become the kind of tightly knit, underground organization Lenin had proposed in *What is to be Done?* fourteen years earlier. While their numbers never matched that of the SRs, they had grown from 10,000 in March to over 400,000 in October. Having now essentially abandoned the slogan "All Power to the Soviets," Lenin convinced the party that the time was right to seize state power. Historians are sharply divided over whether the October Revolution was a coup or a mass uprising, but we do know that the party could not have succeeded without significant support from workers and soldiers, despite denunciations from Menshevik and SR leaders. The Red Guards—the Bolshevik-organized workers' militias—were decisive in securing state power. And since the Bolshevik-led Military Revolutionary Committee was part of the democratically-run Petrograd Soviet, it had

far more authority and legitimacy than the Provisional government—especially in the aftermath of Kornilov’s failed attack. Kerensky, after all, had appointed Kornilov in the first place. No wonder the vast majority of troops ignored Kerensky’s commands, forcing him to flee the city.

Once in power, the Bolsheviks moved swiftly to pull out of the war and implement its program. On 26 October, within hours of taking over the Winter Palace, Lenin issued statements promising massive land reform, democratization of the military, workers’ control over production, bread and other necessities to the cities, immediate peace negotiations on the basis of no annexations or indemnities, and the right of self-determination for national minorities. Lenin also promised to expose the secret treaties of the Allies as evidence of the war’s imperialist character and pledged “the unconditional and immediate annulment of everything contained in these secret treaties insofar as it is aimed, as is mostly the case, at securing advantages and privileges for the Russian landowners and capitalists.”<sup>16</sup> (A few weeks later, Trotsky would publish all of the treaties, correspondence, and diplomatic cables between the Allies.)

The Allies were unwilling to end the war. Peace proved costly. Lenin had no choice but to sign an armistice agreement with Germany in 1918 that forced Russia to cede the Baltic provinces and a large part of Belorussia and Ukraine, depriving Russia access to one-third of its agricultural land and railways, virtually all its oil, and three-quarters of its coal and iron deposits. The Bolsheviks tried to buttress the failing economy by nationalizing some industries and the banks, but since the money economy practically collapsed, the state ultimately began to provide free housing, clothing, food rations, and transportation. Production levels and wages fell to a fraction of what they were four years earlier. The Bolsheviks now had to reorganize industrial production and persuade peasants to provide the towns with food.

The Bolsheviks also had to contend with a series of crises. The new regime was immediately beset by war from multiple forces—the White Army (former Tsarists, right-wingers, and representatives of the *ancien regime*); foreign powers, including former Allies, concerned about a Russian-German alliance (France, England, the United States, Japan, etc.); Ukrainian and other nationalists and anti-colonial movements, hostile to Bolshevik rule. The Civil Wars lasted for at least three years. And as war broke out, the regime faced an internal crisis, partly of its own making. Prior to the October Revolution, the Provisional government was to be replaced by a Constituent Assembly and elections were scheduled for September, but faced with the Kornilov affair Kerensky put off the elections to November. Lenin preferred the soviet model of direct elections of workers by workers over parliamentary democracy, which he viewed as an instrument of bourgeois rule.<sup>17</sup>

But the Bolsheviks decided to proceed with elections knowing that they probably would not get a national majority. Of the over 48 million men and women who went to the polls, 19.1 million cast their votes for the SRs, the Bolsheviks won 10.9 million, the Kadets 2.2 million, the Mensheviks a mere 1.5 million, and the remaining 7 million votes went to non-Russian socialist parties (mostly in Ukraine). The SR tally makes sense since they represented the peasantry and Russia was still an overwhelmingly rural country. However, the Bolsheviks managed to gain the majority of workers and at least 42% of the soldiers' votes.<sup>18</sup> When the Constituent Assembly held its opening session on January 5, 1918, tensions were high. Even before delegates sat down, Red Guards fired on a group of demonstrators outside, killing 12 people. The Bolsheviks insisted that the Assembly recognize soviet power and its political program. When SR leader Viktor Chernov, the Assembly's elected chair, put forward his own agenda instead, the Bolshevik delegates walked out. The next day Lenin dissolved the Constituent



Assembly for good. His version of a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ based on the soviets prevailed—at least for now.

Although Trotsky is generally credited with arguing that the success of the Soviet Union depends on world revolution, in 1917 this was a common position among Marxists in Russia and across the Western world. Indeed, in his “Report on Peace” issued immediately after the seizure of power, Lenin made a direct appeal “to the class-conscious workers” of Great Britain, France, and Germany to join the revolution and resist the war, implying that the fate of the Russian Revolution depends on their “comprehensive, determined, and supremely vigorous action.” Lenin looked to the proletariat in the “advanced” countries “to help us to conclude peace successfully, and at the same time emancipate the labouring and exploited masses of our population from all forms of slavery and all forms of exploitation.”<sup>19</sup> A few months later, Lenin put it more succinctly: “without the German revolution we shall perish.”<sup>20</sup>

At the time, the Bolsheviks had reason to be optimistic. In 1917 alone, mutinies occurred in the French and British armies as well as the German navy; some 200,000 German metal workers struck against cuts in bread rations; fighting between workers and soldiers erupted in the Italian industrial city of Turin. In January 1918, a wave of strikes swept through Austria-Hungary and Germany, involving half a million metal workers in Vienna and Berlin. Opposition to the war was now widespread across the continent. In Germany, the Social Democratic Party (SPD)—supporters of the war since 1914—had expelled members of its own parliamentary party for anti-war activism, leading them to form a new party, the Independent Social Democrats. In January of 1919, huge demonstrations of workers and soldiers seized control of Bremen, Hamburg, Hanover, Cologne, Leipzig, Dresden, Munich, even Berlin—where armed demonstrators carrying red flags gathered to hear German revolutionary socialist

Karl Liebknecht proclaim a “socialist republic” and the “world revolution” from the balcony of the imperial palace. But the revolution was crushed with the help of the SPD. Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, co-founders of the Spartacus League and the German Communist Party, were assassinated in 1919.

The smashing of the German Revolution opened the door for the liberal, though short-lived, Weimar Republic, but it also set the stage for the rise of fascism. Still, the Russian Revolution did not perish—not exactly. The Revolution survived civil war, international isolation, and the near collapse of its economy, but only as a result of extraordinary measures. In 1918, the Bolsheviks introduced “War Communism,” emergency policies based on a centralized system of economic administration; the nationalization of industry; a state monopoly on grain and other agricultural commodities; and a “food dictatorship” whereby all surpluses above a fixed consumption norm would be subject to confiscation. They also reversed their commitment to worker’s control, integrated the factory committees into the more centralized apparatus of the trade unions, restored the hated practices of paying workers by piece-rate, and required the appointment of individuals (foremen, directors, managers) to oversee each enterprise, a policy that undercut workers’ self-management.

The regime’s ability to weather the crisis using coercion and militarization convinced many Bolshevik leaders that the draconian methods of War Communism could be deployed in the service of building socialism. Lenin, by contrast, grew skeptical of coercive measures, especially since popular uprisings, strikes, and work stoppages continued throughout the civil war, and they were not the result of counterrevolutionary conspiracies. Thus in 1921, he introduced his New Economic Policy (NEP), which relaxed state controls and allowed for limited free market activity. The policies were aimed at encouraging the peasantry to increase

production for the cities. By conceding to market forces, the Bolsheviks were forced to make major policy reversals, including denationalizing small-scale industry and services; establishing trusts to finance and market the products of large-scale industry; and granting of concessions to foreign investors. NEP succeeded in stimulating the Soviet economy, but at a price. Class differentiation and inequality sharpened in the countryside, a new class of capitalists emerged in the cities (NEP men, as they were derisively called), and persistent unemployment became a problem. Stalin's ascent to power and adoption of the First Five-Year Plan for industrialization in 1929 effectively marked the end of NEP.

Yet, even prior to the consolidation of Stalinism, both Lenin and Trotsky recognized that a creeping state bureaucracy had begun to eclipse the revolutionary vision of the soviet. During an inner party debate in the winter of 1920-21, Lenin warned: "Ours is a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions." In the end, what appeared to be a workers' state concealed a party-state bureaucracy headed by Stalin. The military bureaucracy improvised to weather the postrevolutionary storm and became permanent. The state, not the workers, effectively controlled the means of production. The questions that have dogged and divided Marxists from every ideological current are whether Stalinism was a distorted form of state socialism or bureaucratic state capitalism? Is socialism in one country possible, or will it die on the vine without the global overthrow of capitalism? Is the state inherently an instrument of repression and subjugation, and does human liberation require its dismantling? Or can it be harnessed to create the conditions for a just and economically secure life for all—that is to say, a genuine socialist society? Was Stalinism an aberration or a divergence from the Revolution's original vision and trajectory, or a logical manifestation of its history?

Finally, perhaps the most important legacy of the Russian Revolution is the creation of the Third International or the Communist International (Comintern). Given Rodney's stated task to glean the lessons of February and October for the incipient revolutionary movements in Africa and Asia, his silence on the significance of the Comintern is surprising since it is the one institution that directly influenced anti-colonial and national liberation movements throughout the Third World. Not to mention the fact that his friend and teacher, C. L. R. James, wrote one of the earliest book-length histories of the Third International.<sup>21</sup> But let us also bear in mind that Rodney never had the opportunity to finish the book, leaving us to speculate as to what he might have included or excised. The course from which this project developed, "Historians and Revolution," was designed to focus on the interpretation of the internal dynamics of revolution, so the absence of the Third International is perhaps understandable. However, it is hard to believe that Rodney never intended to include it. And to be fair, the deluge of new books commemorating the Revolution's centennial have had very little to say about the Third International, even as they acknowledge the Revolution's impact in Central Asia and other parts of the empire.<sup>22</sup>

The Third International, founded in March of 1919, played a pivotal role in promoting revolution and Communist parties not only throughout Europe and the United States, but around the world. Unlike the First International (The International Workingmen's Association, 1864 - 1872) and the Second International (The Socialist International, 1889 - 1916), the Third International included "colonial and semi-colonial" people in its ranks and helped to promote and coordinate anti-imperialist movements. Indeed, at the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920) Lenin submitted his famous "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions." While holding on to the idea that the colonies must first undergo a bourgeois

revolution before socialism, Lenin insisted that the “communist parties must give direct support to the revolutionary movements among the dependent nations and those without equal rights (e.g. Ireland, and among American Negroes), and in the colonies.”<sup>23</sup> During those early years of internationalism, colonial subjects were not just the object of revolutionary theory, they were its authors. Indian Communist leader M. N. Roy submitted his own theses sharply critical of Lenin's original draft. Roy argued that the bourgeoisie in the colonies was often reactionary and could not be counted on to lead a revolution, and while he agreed that proletarian revolution was out of the question, he did insist that a struggle of workers and peasants under the guidance of a disciplined Communist party would invariably take on a revolutionary character. Whereas Lenin was willing to support nearly all anti-colonial movements, Roy feared that the petty-bourgeois leadership of the respective nationalist movements “would compromise with Imperialism in return for some economic and political concessions to their class.”<sup>24</sup>

Prominent radicals from Africa, Asia, and Latin America spoke at subsequent meetings of the Comintern, some playing a role in drafting language on self-determination for Africans in South Africa and African Americans in the U.S. South. In 1926, it helped form the League Against Colonial Oppression, which combatted pro-imperialist sentiment in Germany and elsewhere, and in 1930 launched the International Trade Union Congress of Negro Workers, under the leadership of George Padmore (Malcolm Nurse). Moscow attracted many of the world's leading Third World revolutionaries who trained at the University of the Toilers of the East or simply visited at the behest of the Comintern—most notably, Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, China's Deng Xiaoping, George Padmore, I.T.A. Wallace Johnson from Sierra Leone, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, South African Communists Moses Kotane, Edwin Mofutsanyana, James and Alex LaGuma, and Albert Nzula, not to mention Black American Communists such as

Harry Haywood, Otto Huiswoud, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, William L. Patterson, and Mack Coad. Of course, not all of these figures found the Comintern or the Soviet Union inviting, supportive, safe, democratic spaces, and not long after its founding the Soviet came to dominate the Third International, even to the point of stifling dissent. Nevertheless, its absence in this book is worth considering as we turn to Rodney's own reflections on the Revolution and its significance.

### **Walter Rodney on the Russian Revolution**

The opening lectures frame the basic antagonism in historical interpretation (between “idealism and materialism”), identifies what is at stake in the study of the Russian Revolution and the political economy of the Soviet state, and presents what Rodney calls a “preliminary categorization of writers” on the Revolution. He then sweeps through the history of the Revolution, from 19<sup>th</sup> century resistance to the Tsar to the February and October Revolutions of 1917, taking several detours to compare how mainstream Cold War historians and Soviet and some independent Marxist scholars (e.g., Maurice Dobbs) interpret various events. The subsequent lectures examine the critical debates in Western Marxist circles over the capacity for, and nature of, socialist revolution in Russia; the contributions of Russia's “pre-Marxist” left prior to the 1905 Revolution; and the question that dogged Marx, Engels, and many late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian Marxists: whether a “backward” state (empire) like Tsarist Russia could make the leap to socialism without first establishing a strong bourgeois democratic state. For Rodney, this was never an issue of leaping from feudalism to socialism since the Russian economy was indisputably capitalist in the throes of rapid industrialization and “modernization.”

Rodney is particularly interested in the historiography of 1917. He asks whether the events between February and October were inevitable or the results of bad judgment,

unforeseen circumstances, and happenstance. Here he takes a more expansive view of the terrain covered in the preceding chapters, juxtaposing bourgeois and Soviet interpretations of events with Trotsky's historical analysis, notably his epic three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution*, which he called a "monumental work [of] history at the highest level of analysis." Rodney praises Trotsky for the way he stresses specific historical conditions rather than simply quoting Marx chapter and verse (something he admires in Lenin, as well). Although he criticizes Trotsky's later assessments of the devolution of the Soviet state, he takes from his dynamic notion of combined and uneven development an explanation for skipping over the vaunted "stages" of history as a way of promoting a socialist path for Africa.

Whereas the first five chapters focus on the path to the Bolshevik seizure of power, the second half of the book examines the consolidation of power, the tension between workers' democracy and dictatorship, and the efforts to build a socialist state. And it is precisely in his reflections on socialist transformation, democracy and the state that Rodney makes his most original contributions and links the Revolution more directly to post-colonial Africa.

First, the role of the peasantry in socialist revolution was an unavoidable issue for Rodney since this was the fundamental question for post-independence Africa, especially in Tanzania where Ujamaa entailed the creation of collective villages. Likewise, the "peasant question" had long been a central issue in Russian revolutionary politics. The Socialist Revolutionaries had rejected the Marxist view of the peasantry as petty-bourgeois, believing that the principles of collectivism inherent in the peasant commune made Russia peculiarly fitted for socialism. (Interestingly, Rodney almost never mentions the SRs, but does talk about the Narodnik view that the peasant commune can be the basis for socialism.) Instead, like most Marxists debating the peasant question, Rodney returned to Marx, whom he argued did not

consider peasants “a revolutionary force” because he believed they were disappearing. As Rodney explains in Chapter 6, according to Marx, “Peasants were becoming capitalists through their slow accumulation of capital and the improvement of techniques since the Middle Ages.” Most other peasants were dispossessed and became a proletariat. But Rodney also recognized Marx’s fundamental flaw: he had modeled his view of the peasantry entirely on England and France.

Lenin, he felt, had it right: based on his studies of 19<sup>th</sup> century agriculture in Russia, he envisaged an alliance of workers and peasants constituting the dictatorship of the proletariat; he recognized contradictions between the two classes, but they were not antagonistic since their basic interests were the same. Rodney recognized three phases in Lenin’s incorporation of the peasantry in the revolution: 1) land redistribution; 2) contribution to civil war, feeding the Red Army (War Communism); 3) New Economic Policy (NEP).

Of course, the fourth phase, for which Lenin bore no responsibility, was collectivization of agriculture. Without going into detail, Rodney generally accepts the characterization of Kulaks as a rural exploiting class and even suggested that Stalin’s directive to “liquidate the kulaks” was never intended to mean direct fatal acts of violence. Instead, Rodney suggested that the terror was largely organic, an opportunity for poor peasants to settle scores, to retaliate against hated landholders. He also accepted the argument that because the sale of surplus grain was needed to accumulate capital for industrialization, the fact that the kulaks controlled 20% of the marketable surplus of grain but chose to hoard or cut back production “was one reason why the kulaks had to be crushed and agriculture collectivised.”

At the same time, Rodney summarily rejected the use of force by a socialist state to impose socialist or collectivist policies. For him this was “a matter of principle.”



Revolutionary violence “*is the social violence that is necessary for the changeover of power from the hands of the bourgeoisie into the hands of the workers and the peasants. Once they have the power, a workers' government has to carry out the Revolution by transforming society, and that is not done through violence.*” Rodney not only critiques Soviet policies of collectivization, but takes Soviet historians to task (in the post-Stalin period) for *only* criticizing Stalin, the individual, rather than the Party and the state apparatus as a whole.

Thus, rather than dwell on Stalin or the Soviet Union, a central theme of his lectures is the treatment of peasants under *capitalism*. The question alone should cause anyone who regards Stalinist collectivization as especially more brutal than enclosure in Europe and colonialism to rethink the premise, especially given their attendant processes – dispossession, forced taxation, corvee labor, and outright genocide. And it makes sense since Rodney had been wrestling with the question of collectivization, especially in Tanzania at the time. He wrote a provocative essay that argued President Julius Nyerere’s concept of Ujamaa was not “African socialism” as he described it, but an expression of scientific socialism, in that it called for forms of collectivization that challenged (severed) the relationship with the bourgeoisie in the metropolises, challenged the formation of a Kulak class (African farmers who hired other rural Africans as wage laborers), and a local bourgeoisie (in the form of Indian merchants etc.) The parallel he drew with Russia was not of forced collectivization but a vision of direct peasant socialism promoted by the Narodniks—specifically, the idea that the *mir* (village communes) and *artel* (artisans' cooperatives), might lay the foundations for “a socialist society that was qualitatively different from that envisaged by their counterparts in industrialized Western Europe.” His point was that stages of development are not fixed; Africa, notably Tanzania, could leap over the capitalist stage and move directly to socialism through Ujamaa villages. He

did not advocate a return to communalism; instead, collective ownership and production in the countryside would benefit from the technological advances of industrial socialist and even capitalist countries. He tied Ujamaa to the international socialist movement.<sup>25</sup>

In Chapter 8, Rodney takes special interest in Russia's transition from Empire to Soviet Federalism. He begins by describing Russian imperialism as a form of settler colonialism. "As in all colonial states," he writes, "there was a legal distinction between the citizen (Russian) and the colonial subject. The Constitution of Tsarist Russia explicitly based discriminatory measures on the racial or national origin or religion of those affected. It was in some ways like the distinctions made under Portuguese and Belgian colonialism, and South African and Rhodesian apartheid." (p. ) He draws stark parallels with Western European imperialism as well as U.S. imperial expansion across the continent (Manifest Destiny). He expressed the problem succinctly in a particularly memorable line: "The British sent warships – the Russians sent the Cossacks." He describes economic exploitation and investments across the empire (grain production in European Russia and Siberia; cotton production and oil in Soviet Central Asia; railroads and ports in Far East, notably Trans-Siberian railway). And he briefly discusses cultural domination (the oppression and persecution of Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Yakuts, Afghans, etc.), making frequent comparisons with Africans under colonial domination. "If someone saw a school somewhere in Soviet Central Asia, one could be quite sure that it was for the children of the Russian settlers, and quite naturally it taught in Russian, which was unintelligible to the local people. Incidentally, this cultural superiority readily gave way to *racism*. Inherent superiority is a good excuse for suppression." (p. )

As rule under the Tsar took colonial form—from direct rule to settler colonialism; extractive industries such as mining and timber; one crop economies, etc.—resistance was less

proletarian and more anti-colonial (which is to say, they drew together labor as well as propertied classes, religious leaders, etc.). He writes: “Main conclusion that one could draw from all this is that for non-Russian peoples, the struggle against Tsarism was often indistinguishable from the struggle [against] Russia and Russian settlers in their country.” (p. )

Rodney saw Soviet Federalism as a *potential* model for decolonization, but ultimately a failed model since—in his view—Russian imperialism persisted. He surmised from a critical reading of Frederick C. Barghoorn’s, *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (1956) that the Soviets were promoting one kind of nationalism under Stalinism while denying the validity of nationalist sentiments in Central Asia. Specifically, he noted a shift in Soviet historiography, where initially, the revolts in Central Asia were characterized as two-fold: masses resisting Tsarist oppression, and indigenous ruling classes resisting imposition of colonial rule. This meant the Bolsheviks initially treated these revolts sympathetically, as national liberation movements. But in the 1930s, as the USSR stressed national unity and patriotism, any evidence of Russian domination over non-Russian peoples was simply erased, along with the history of anti-colonial resistance. Not that national minorities were erased; they, too, were celebrated in an early expression of multicultural pluralism, but the antagonisms were practically eliminated and replaced with another narrative: that *the native ruling classes were the most immediate source of oppression*, and the penetration of capitalism under the Tsar deepened those contradictions—creating the conditions for class unity between non-Russian and Russian toilers. As Rodney put it: “Soviet historians began to stress that along with the Tsarist soldiers and officials came Russian workers, scientists, doctors and teachers who played a great cultural and revolutionary role in the life of the peoples of Asia. By 1951, the Russian ‘annexation’ became a positive good.” (p. )

Finally, his last lectures are brief reflections on Stalinism, beginning with an assessment of Trotsky's critique of Stalin. Trotsky, after all, was Stalin's most visible adversary who was only silenced by an assassin at the behest of Stalin himself. Rodney addresses Trotsky's four main criticisms:

- (1) Stalin encouraged Socialism in one Country instead of international socialism.
- (2) The state did not wither away but became more oppressive and bureaucratic.
- (3) Social and economic inequalities were fostered under Stalinism.
- (4) There was an inadmissible element of force in building Socialism.

On the first point, Rodney disagrees, arguing that it was not Stalin's policy to promote socialism in one country but that he had no choice given the failure of socialist revolutions in Western European nations. Why? Imperialism undercut revolutions, propped up capitalism and a white working class. Rodney sharply criticizes Trotsky, saying that his own *History of the Russian Revolution* promoted Russia's rapid industrialization and transition to socialism, implying that Trotsky himself was open to building socialism in one country. "[O]ne can only conclude that Trotsky's stand is conditioned by bitterness through having been defeated in the struggle for power." (p. )

On the rise of the bureaucratic state, Rodney again absolves Stalin of responsibility and suggests that it was "a consequence of Russian backwardness" and was established when Lenin and Trotsky were leading the nascent state. On the other hand, he agrees that under Stalinism there were distortions and problems, and while he gives credit to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for exposing some of the crimes and Soviet historians for revising history to reflect this, he is not convinced. He finds it hypocritical on the part of Soviet historians to

claim that the USSR was on the right path, celebrate the Revolution's great achievements by 1938, but then place the responsibility for the regime's problems (bureaucratic state, persecutions, etc.) solely on Stalin. He says the whole of Soviet society, its leaders and the party were responsible for both the successes and its failures. And yet, he recognized that the Soviet Union in this period was undergoing a crisis of leadership as a result of a rapid loss of ideologically sophisticated revolutionaries and the population of sycophants who surrounded Stalin. However, Rodney never actually says that Stalin himself had opponents liquidated and brought in those who would become his lackeys.

In defense of Stalinist policies, Rodney makes some surprising assertions. For example, he suggested that the police state that emerged was necessary to protect the revolution: "The Soviet experience demonstrated the various ways in which counter-revolution could manifest itself in modern socialist society. It was not just the person who aimed at killing a party official who was dangerous, but also the economic saboteur, who tried to undermine economic administration by black market practices or by deliberately slowing down production. To root out such individuals required an extension of the secret police machinery." (p. ) Rodney stated that certain forces – Mensheviks, SR's, White Russians had support from capitalist powers and had to be crushed or risk derailing the revolution.

The final lectures acknowledge the post 1956 Soviet critique of Stalin, the cult of personality, his dismantling of autonomous worker and peasant organizations, the devolution of power from the Central Committee to his hands, and so forth. However, Rodney takes Soviet historians to task for holding on to the idea that the Party never strayed from the path toward socialist development. He insisted that this was impossible since Stalinism distorted socialist society, weakening its ideology and the political culture. Indeed, in the final section he echoes

C. L. R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee Boggs's *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950) when he suggests that the contemporary Soviet Union, especially following the invasion of Czechoslovakia and its treatment of China, "is behaving so much like a capitalist state."<sup>26</sup> (p. ) Although both Rodney and James take issue with Trotsky's critique of Stalin's theory that the Soviet Union is building "socialism in one country," their positions diverge sharply. Whereas Rodney treats Stalin's turn to socialism in one country as a pragmatic choice given the absence of world revolution, James insists that the very question is flawed. James: "Does anyone believe that Stalin or any of his people believe that what is in Russia is socialism? Only an utter fool can think so. What the debate was about was whether the state-property system would be maintained without a revolution sooner or later in the West."<sup>27</sup>

Or in the Soviet Union itself. Here Rodney breaks sharply with James. In the chapter on Stalinism, Rodney makes a case for directing the internal security apparatus against counterrevolution, which includes "the economic saboteur, who tried to undermine economic administration by black market practices or by deliberately slowing down production. To root out such individuals required an extension of the secret police machinery." (p. ) Given the external threat of counterrevolution from capitalist forces in Western countries, Rodney sees the security apparatus as flawed but necessary to defend the gains of Soviet socialism. James, by contrast, saw *worker slow-downs and sabotage as acts of worker self-activity, not crimes against the state*. After all, worker resistance to the Stalinist regimes, whether in Hungary or the Soviet Union, was resistance to state capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

C. L. R. James is present throughout this book, despite the absence of references or citations to his work. Again, this is perhaps a liability of an unfinished manuscript. James was not only one of Rodney's most important teachers and friends<sup>29</sup> but he possessed the most thorough knowledge of both the French and Russian revolutions of anyone else in Rodney's vast circle. Rodney's essay, "The African Revolution," published in *Urgent Tasks* explicitly credits James's "detailed knowledge of the Russian Revolution" for revealing the parallels between the problems confronting the postcolonial regimes of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, and those of Lenin and the Soviet state. "James isolated the two matters on which Lenin placed absolute priority in his last years," Rodney explained. "The first was the break-up of the old state machinery and the second was educational work among the peasants. Marxism-Leninism was not Nyerere's point of reference, but he decided upon these same two priorities for Tanzania after the experience gained from several years in office as head of state."<sup>30</sup> James and Rodney concurred that, after the Bolsheviks seized state power, Lenin was a democratizing force, promoting literacy campaigns, workers' control and participation in planning, peasant cooperatives, the emancipation of women, among other things. Lenin had become the model for the new wave of Third World revolutionary leadership.<sup>31</sup> But whereas James' image of Lenin sometimes clashed with the historical Lenin willing to deploy the coercive arm of the state to suppress popular councils, workers' and peasants' dissent, Rodney tended to be less utopian. Not that Rodney was particularly critical of Lenin, but he subtly parts company with James by hinting that the suppression of dissent precedes Stalin and, as we've seen, in some instances was justified.<sup>32</sup>

In the end, Rodney was impressed with the Soviet economy and its emphasis on growth, investment, rising incomes, its focus on heavy industry, and its ability to avoid periodic crises and depressions. While he had nothing to say about the consequences of rapid mass production, speed-ups, alienation caused by the division of labor and lack of workers control (the sorts of problems that occupied young Marx), he makes a case for the command economy's role in solving the problem of poverty and hunger. Pushing back against bourgeois historians, Rodney argued that the Soviet economy demonstrated a capacity to at least maintain a humane standard of living and improve aspects of the quality of life for the broad masses of people. This for him is the critical lesson for the colonized world: to resist bourgeois historians and economists who claim that Soviet planning slows growth, suppresses scientific developments, reduces worker productivity, and produces little more than immiseration for the masses.

To study the Russian Revolution, he insisted, is not to emulate it. There are lessons to be learned, and the principle of socialism must be defended, but African and Third World revolutionaries cannot slavishly adopt it as a model. Or as Rupert Lewis put it, "The most important aspect of Rodney's approach to the Russian Revolution was that its experience and lessons could not be mechanically applied to the African continent."<sup>33</sup> Third World revolutionaries needed Marxism, but Rodney wisely counseled that we need to be wary of either a "Marxist view through [a] distorted bourgeois lens" or the Soviet view despite being "very close because of the similarity of our present and past with their past in the period under study." He ends on a profoundly reflective note: "Assuming a view springing from some Socialist variant is not necessarily Marxist but anti-capitalist, assuming a view that is at least radical humanist – then the Soviet Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent construction of Socialism



emerges as a very positive historical experience from which we ourselves can derive a great deal as we move to confront similar problems.” (p. )

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A copy of Rodney’s syllabus, “Historians and Revolution,” is located in Box 9 of the Walter Rodney Papers, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. See also Seth M. Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964–1974* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), p. .

<sup>2</sup> Walter Rodney to Ewart Thomas, 1971, Box 4, Walter Rodney Papers; also quoted in Rupert Charles Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought* (Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998), 168.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Rodney interview, at her home in Atlanta, 7/26/17, by Jesse Benjamin. Asha T. Rodney, Rodney’s youngest child, also participated.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1974), 176. The first edition was published in 1972 by Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications in London, and Tanzania Publishing House in Dar es Salaam.

<sup>5</sup> Issa G. Shivji, “Remembering Walter Rodney,” *Monthly Review Press* 64, no. 7 (December 2012), <http://monthlyreview.org/2012/12/01/remembering-walter-rodney/>. On Rodney and the political culture of the University of Dar es Salaam, see Seth M. Markle, *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), chapter 3; Kiluba L. Nkulu, *Serving the Common Good: A Postcolonial African Perspective on Higher Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 91 – 115; Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, 124-166.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Rodney interview, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Here Vijay Prashad’s *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2013) is the best treatment of this historical conjuncture and the future possibilities had the Third World project succeeded in stopping neoliberalism in its tracks.

<sup>8</sup> The following synopsis is drawn from several recent syntheses of the Russian Revolution, notably S. A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890 – 1928* (New York and

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Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2017); China Mieville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2017); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, updated ed.); Aaron B. Retish, *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2004); Tamas Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin: An Intellectual Biography*, translated by Bálint Bethlenfalvy with Mario Fenyo (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2015); Robert J. Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000). On new developments in Russian Revolution historiography since the fall of the Soviet Union, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *Red Flag Unfurled: History, Historians, and the Russian Revolution* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2017); Michael Confino, "The New Russian Historiography, and the Old—Some Considerations," *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009), 7-33; Boris Kolonitskii and Yisrael Elliot Cohen, "Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution: *New Challenges to Old Paradigms?*" *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (Fall - Winter 2009), 34-59; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet History," *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (December 2007), 77-91.

<sup>9</sup> Figes, *Revolutionary Russia*, 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> Georgii Plekhanov, "Speech at the International Workers' Socialist Congress in Paris (14-21 July, 1889)," <https://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1889/07/speech.html>

<sup>11</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, *Social Reform or Revolution* (1900), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/>; see also Helen Rosa Luxemburg, *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg: Reform or Revolution and The Mass Strike*, ed. Helen Scott (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of consistency, all of the dates to which we refer are based on the Julian calendar. Until 1918, Russia continued to use the Julian calendar, which was about 13 days behind. Thus, the events of Bloody Sunday according to the Gregorian calendar would have been recorded as January 17. Likewise, the February Revolution of 1917 begins on 23 February according to the Julian calendar, but 8 March according to the Gregorian calendar (which, incidentally, is the official date of International Women's Day).

<sup>13</sup> Not all of the anti-Jewish pogroms were the result of the Black Hundreds or the Union of the Russian People. There is a long history of anti-Semitism in Russia, particularly in the Ukraine, where the worst incidence of anti-Jewish violence occurred in Odessa by unruly supporters of the Battleship Potemkin mutineers. However, during the 1905 Revolution Jews were often singled out as the source, and beneficiaries, of liberal reform. When the Tsar issued the October Manifesto in 1905 extending some constitutional rights to the populace, it also directed right-wing mobs to attack Jews in over 600 cities and towns. These mobs asserted that Jews were the source of the undermining of the true autocracy, but recent evidence reveals that these pogroms were a state strategy to suppress the Left. See Victoria Khiterer, "The October 1905 Pogroms

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and the Russian Authorities,” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 5 (2015), 788-803; George Gilbert, *The Radical Right in Imperial Russia* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> S. A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 76-77.

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution [a.k.a. The April Theses],” published in *Pravda* 26 (April 7, 1917), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm>

<sup>16</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Report on Peace,” (October 26, 1917), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26b.htm>

<sup>17</sup> In *The State and Revolution*, written between August and September of 1917, Lenin wrote, “the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the moneybags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.” V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch05.htm#s2>

<sup>18</sup> These figures come from S. A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 155.

<sup>19</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Report on Peace,” (October 26, 1917), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26b.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Victor Serge, “Year One of the Russian Revolution: VIII – Left Communism and Inner-Party Conflict,” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/serge/1930/year-one-ni/part08.html>

<sup>21</sup> C. L. R. James, *World Revolution, 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, orig. 1937)

<sup>22</sup> Of course, one obvious exception is Vijay Prashad, ed., *Communist Histories: Volume 1* (New Dehli: LeftWord Books, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> “Theses on the National and Colonial Question Adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern Congress,” in Jane Degras ed., *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents*, vol. I (London, 1956), p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> Manabendra Nath Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs* (Bombay, 1964), p. 378; see also John Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 14-15. A copy of Roy's theses is available in V.B. Karnik, *M.N. Roy: A Political Biography* (Bombay, 1978), pp. 107-110. For Lenin's views on

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Roy's supplementary theses, see "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, July 26, 1920," in *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions*, pp. 30-37. For his part, Rodney followed more closely Roy's position on this question throughout his life, and was a consistently sharp critic of the petty-bourgeoisie.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Rodney, "Tanzanian *Ujamaa* and Scientific Socialism," *African Review* 1, no. 4 (1972), 61-76.

<sup>26</sup> C. L. R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, written in collaboration with Raya Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1986, orig. 1950). *State Capitalism and World Revolution* represented the collective position of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, former Trotskyists who broke from the Workers Party whose principal members included the authors of this book. James and his colleagues broke with Trotsky over his analysis that the Soviet Union under Stalin had become a "degenerated workers' state." In response, the Johnson-Forest Tendency developed the theory of state capitalism to explain the character of the USSR. They write: "The Stalinists are not class-collaborationists, fools, cowards, idiots, men with 'supple spines,' but conscious clear-sighted aspirants for world-power. They are deadly enemies of private property capitalism. They aim to seize the power and take the place of the bourgeoisie. . . . But the Stalinists are not proletarian revolutionists. They aim to get power by help, direct or indirect, of the Red Army and the protection of Russia and the Russian state. . . . Theirs is a last desperate attempt under the guise of 'socialism' and 'planned economy' to reorganize the means of production without releasing the proletariat from wage-slavery. Historical viability they have none; for state-ownership multiplies every contradiction of capitalism.

<sup>27</sup> C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980, orig. written in 1950), 350; see also Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hills: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 281-282. When James wrote *World Revolution, 1917-1936*, his position was identical with Trotsky's. James conceded that the Third International's fall as a revolutionary force began "when Stalin, in defiance of all the teachings of Marx and Lenin, first produced his theory that it was possible to build Socialism in a single country, that country being Soviet Russia. The present policies have resulted from this first conscious concession to nationalism. The opponents of this theory said at the time that, if it was adopted, then it led straight to the liquidation of the Third International as a revolutionary force." (p. )

<sup>28</sup> See C.L.R. James, Grace Lee, and Pierre Chaulieu, *Facing Reality: The New Society – How to Look for It and How to Bring it Closer* (Detroit: Correspondence Publishing Co., 1958).

<sup>29</sup> Both Patricia Rodney and Richard Small confirmed in recent conversations that there was never a falling out between Rodney and James, and that they in fact remained close and trusted friends, whatever minor differences they had. Small indicated that Rodney, as a young scholar, may have been trying to further establish himself in his own right. We

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simply do not know what final touches Rodney planned to add to this book, had he been able to publish it himself.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Rodney, "The African Revolution" in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, ed. Paul Buhle, special issue of *Urgent Tasks* 12 (Summer 1981), 13.

<sup>31</sup> James proposed Lenin as the model for Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana. See C.L.R. James, "Lenin and the Problem," *The C.L.R. James Reader*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 331-346; Matthew Quest, "C.L.R. James, Direct Democracy, and National Liberation Struggles," (PhD diss., Brown University, 2008), 51-56

<sup>32</sup> For a thoughtful critique of James's selective reading of Lenin, see Quest, "C.L.R. James, Direct Democracy, and National Liberation Struggles," 51-55.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Thought*, 169.