CHAPTER 1

THE TWO WORLD VIEWS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

> Throughout the history of human knowledge, there have been two conceptions concerning the law of development of the universe, the metaphysical conception and the dialectical conception, which form two opposing world outlooks.
>
> Chairman Mao Zedong “On Contradiction” (1937)[1]

In the era from the confrontation with colonial rule in the 1950's and 1960's through the process of decolonisation, African scholars have resolved a number of issues. First, African history and society became a legitimate field of enquiry. Second, they have emphasized the need to counter the racist, colonialist orientation that predominated within the little that had been previously written. Third, they have given primacy to interpretations by Africans themselves. A similar and even more determined effort to overturn racist interpretations of history was made by African descendants in the New World, notably in the USA. This work is at the basis for the proliferation of Black Studies programs and is responsible for the demand that, as far as black people are concerned, white people are historically disqualified from interpreting black folks to black folks. Consequently, the terms "African perspective", and/or “black perspective” have emerged from both the continent and the Diaspora.

The concept of an "African perspective" is much broader than those of "African history," "African society," and African culture.” An African scholar naturally designates activity by Africans as his primary field of study, but it does not take very long to discover that he/she is obligated to arrive at his/her own interpretation of human societies outside of Africa. At the University of the West Indies, Ibadan, Dar es Salaam, for example, the normal demands of teaching led rapidly to the decision that local staff should not merely master local affairs but

should replace Europeans presenting and interpreting Europe to Africa and initiate the study of Asia, so as to provide our own people with a global perspective.

It was not so long ago that 'we' in text-books designed for Africans meant "we the British" or "we, the French." Conversely, “they” referred to Africans, which posed a crisis of identity, even when “they the Africans” are not referred to as savages or natives. This point hardly needs discussion with regard to studies of Africa itself, where the battle for an African identity has already been fought and won in principle. But, looking at the outside world is necessary to underscore the new realization that Africans are “we”, and that we have to interpret the totality of human existence.

At the simplest level, an African account of, say, Australia or Switzerland written for Africans would demonstrate the characteristics of relating the foreign and unknown phenomenon to what is familiar in Africa. That is a very normal procedure. When the Dutch went to Benin in the 17th century, they exclaimed that Benin city was comparable to the best that Holland had to offer. Similarly, all Europeans compare Shaka to Napoleon, Dahomey to Sparta, and so on. Of course, for the present generation of educated Africans, a European parallel comes to mind more quickly than an African one. Nevertheless, the time will probably come when African teachers will make 17th century European feudalism more readily comprehensible to African students by pointing to similarities and contrasts in 14th century Ethiopia.

In initiating a study of the world at large, the African scholar or student can exercise choice – something that was impossible under colonialism. The colonised African did not merely study Europe, he concentrated heavily, sometimes exclusively on the “mother country.” The opening of the options allows for the establishment of priorities of relevance. In any event, the history of Europe or of a given European country from the 15th century to the present has had to

give way to courses on African history. Therefore, what remains outside of African consciousness has to be rigorously studied.

There is no need to justify the selection; understanding the Soviet Union is a priority that is self-evident. Some awareness of the Soviet Union has seeped into the African consciousness, occasionally through direct tutoring among the educated, and more usually by inference and occasional references in different contacts. Both the books and the indirect references come from the coloniser to the colonised. The coloniser had national and ideological conflicts with the Soviet Union. Indeed, they were self-declared enemies. Therefore, 'A' was interpreting his enemy 'B' to a third party 'C', which happens to be comprised of Africans. In the best of circumstances, such a procedure would be questionable, unless Africans had already agreed that our interests and basic outlooks coincided with those of Europe. As it is, we know for a fact how prejudiced and distorted Europe's view of Africa has been. We know that European capitalism and imperialism continue to have our exploitation as their main objective. There is, therefore, every reason to be suspicious of the Western European (and American) view of the Soviet Revolution, and there is every reason to seek an African view.

In society there are a variety of options within systems. To understand a system requires that we analyze both of its national expressions and the social forces that shape the environment. The lives of Africans over the last five centuries have been affected to varying degrees by forces originating in Europe. Increasingly, Africa became enmeshed in the web of relations that constitute international capitalism--imperialism.[2] The Russian Revolution was the first decisive break-away from international capitalism, affecting thereby the subsequentcourse of events around the world, including Africa.

To a certain extent, this enquiry has as a premise that there is such a thing as "an African

perspective," and hopefully it will be demonstrated that the literature on the Russian Revolution bears out such an assumption. However, it is also possible to test the limits of the assumption by penetrating more deeply into the process of consciousness, the process by which individuals in society come to rationalize their social relations and external environment. Hence, it is necessary to introduce at a very early stage the concept of the two world-views--idealism and materialism--representing fundamentally opposed aspects of consciousness.

There is an area of potential conflict which arises by trying to reconcile an African view with the two world views. It can be argued that aspects of ideology coming from Europe are irrelevant to the African perspective or the black world-view. Conversely, it can and has been said that a world-view is either idealist or materialist and the label 'African' conveys no meaning and probably mystifies. That issue can only be resolved in the forces of discussion, and it is my intention to try and avoid pre-judgment. However, the very title of this study should indicate to the reader that whatever uniqueness one may attach to any given African view, it does not dispense with the necessity to recognize (1) the superiority of materialism over idealism, (2) that materialist views are partial and do not take African perspectives into account.

A Preliminary Categorisation of Writers on the Russian Revolution

Every piece of scholarship is implicitly and explicitly a review of previous work on a given subject. But, from time to time, it is also illuminating to direct attention specifically to the nature of existing studies on a particular theme. Historians often resort to this approach, as part of a tradition of assessing the scope and limitations of their own discipline. When this is done, the problem that immediately arises is one of categorisation. In to what slot can this or that writer be fitted as a basis for further discussion? Not surprisingly, for the historian the answer is

often to make use of a chronological scale. Assuming that the discussion concerns a set of events which took place at least a century or two ago, then it is a relatively simple matter to follow changing patterns of interpretation - starting with contemporaries of the events and moving towards the present. However, when the events are close to the present, a more synchronic approach is unavoidable. This is the situation with regards to the Russian Revolution.

The contrast implied above can be best seen by comparing writings on the Russian Revolution with those on the French Revolution. The mass of material produced by French historians on the central event in their national history falls fairly neatly into chronological eras. In the 19th century, it is possible to distinguish the Restoration from the rest of what was essentially a Republican era. The purposes and pre-occupations of historians under the monarchy were quite different from those writers of a later date, even though liberal and conservative tendencies could be discerned in both periods. By the turn of the 20th century, the nature of the debate among French historians on the French Revolution changed under the impact of Socialist perceptions, which had been developing during the 19th century. After the First World War, the debate became more and more a clear-cut confrontation between Socialists and non-Socialists.[3] This latter is the only framework that is meaningful as far as the Russian Revolution is concerned.

A chronological categorisation to a great extent obscures the emergence of fundamental ideological differences in the interpretations of major historical events. The English Civil War of the 17th century, which often competes for the title of Revolution, is a case in point. It is entirely justifiable to distinguish between the predominantly "religious," "constitutional," and "economic" interpretations that have arisen at various times since the 17th century among historians reconstructing the English Civil War. In doing so, however, one or two Marxist

views are brought in on the fringe as exhibits of how wide and exotic historical interpretations can be.[4] But Marxist conclusions start from such different premises that they constitute a camp apart from all other interpretations, which share much more in common. From a Marxist viewpoint, in effect, there are only two-world views that enter the picture. In the case of the historiography of the French Revolution, in spite of the more recent evolution, there is still confusion as to the order of difference between several interpretations. That is to say, it is still fashionable to list the "Liberal" Thiers, the "Conservative" Taine, the "Social Democrat" Jaures and Marx himself (or the "Marxist" Soboul) as though the difference of degree and kind are more or less constant as one takes each of these writers in turn.[5] That is the equivalent of a taxonomy which presumed the same order of difference between sheep-dog, wolf, cat and lion!

The Russian Revolution, which broke out in 1917, is virtually a contemporary event. The sorts of changes that took place in the manner in which this event has been presented over time are not yet very significant. Any overview of the literature on the topic must use compartments based on differences of approach among historians and other social scientists viewed virtually as a single generation of writers. This compartmentalization can be done on a purely subjective basis, as evidenced by James Billington's article, "Six views on the Russian Revolution," in which he is solely concerned with subjective attitudes such as nostalgia, regret and notions of glory.[6] However, the division reflecting the social reality of the contemporary world is that between Marxist and Bourgeois views. When this is overlooked, it suggests an extreme case of mental confusion, since the Russian Revolution itself did more than any other historical event to bring about ideological polarization on a world scale between the two world-views of the socialist and capitalist systems.

Before the Russian Revolution, the world at large shared the "metaphysical conception"

of which Chairman Mao Zedong speaks in the opening epigraph. In Europe, the metaphysical conception took the form of bourgeois idealism, which had largely superseded the more overtly metaphysical views that had dominated Europe's perception of man and nature during the feudal epoch. Outside of Europe, metaphysical views with a highly religious and anti-scientific content predominated. In such a context, the materialist conception was partially and inadequately grasped. Nevertheless, in the form clarified by Marx and Engels, the materialist world-view was accepted by a number of *individuals* in the latter part of the 19th century. With the rise of the Soviet Union, Marxism was to acquire a *class base* and the support of a state power. Later, other states were to follow this lead through revolution.

The rise of states governed by Marxism sharpened the contradictions between Socialist and bourgeois ideologies, producing an ideological war for the possession of the whole world. The writing of history has been a facet of, and a weapon in, that war, and historians interpreting the Russian Revolution itself have been active combatants. In analyzing the alignment of different historians, it is easier to start with the Marxist camp, which is the more readily recognizable because it is self-declared. Foremost in that camp are the Soviet historians. To the outside world, and especially to the non-specialist, the names of individual Soviet scholars of the Revolution are not well-known. Their works in foreign languages were almost invariably joint productions under the aegis of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Soviet Academy of Sciences. However, it does not in the least defeat our purpose to recognize the collective personality which Soviet writers have assumed. Any history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, any text on the Russian Revolution, any biography of Lenin or Stalin produced at any time in the Soviet Union can be fairly regarded as the official Soviet view at that particular time, rather than a purely personal and perhaps eccentric expression by a single writer.[7] It is

only reasonable that Soviet historians should receive priority in a study of the historiography of the Russian Revolution, because they are interpreting national history. They have been closest to the most relevant source materials, and they are trying to make sense of a reality that they themselves have experienced and are still experiencing.

Outside of the Soviet Union, a number of Marxists have also produced conclusions substantially in accord with those in vogue in the Soviet Union. Most supporting interpretations were written not by professional scholars but people who had ideological affinities with those who had first-hand knowledge of the Revolution. One of the most famous contemporary accounts was that of John Reed, whose memoir *Ten Days that Shook the World* received the imprimatur of Lenin himself.[8] The publication by the American labour unionist, William Z. Foster was also in the same vein; and it was written after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1922.[9] However, in the Western world, much of the early enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution died out within a short time. That seems to be one of the key reasons why few major scholarly Marxist studies have been carried out in the West on the Russian Revolution from an entirely sympathetic viewpoint. A well-know example is Christopher Hill's biography of Lenin, written as long ago as 1947.[10] Since then, a number of articles and monographs by the English Marxian economist, Maurice Dobb, have had a virtual monopoly of the role of the pro-Soviet interpretations in the Anglophone world.[11] Most Western Marxist interpretations of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet regime range from mild criticism to bitter denunciation. This started at the period contemporaneous with the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, as part of the debate among European Marxists concerning tactics, strategy and the fundamentals of Marxism. Inside of Russia, the Mensheviks provided the major dissident Marxist force. Their later writings constitute a self-declared Marxist interpretation that is often diametrically opposed to the equally

self-declared Marxist position of officially-endorsed Soviet historians. One acceptable piece of Menshevik historical writing is that of Raphael Abramovitch, prominent figure in the Menshevik hierarchy in the period before 1917.[12] Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, two of the most prominent Marxists on the European scene at the time of the 1917 Revolution, took issue with the Bolsheviks. Their disagreements are in fact part of the history of that period, but they must be considered within the context of Marxist scholars commenting on the Russian Revolution. In the first place, one of the crucial issues of the historigraphy is that concerning the application of Marxism as theory to the programme of revolution and reconstruction in Russia. Both Kautsky and Luxemburg have a contribution to make in that respect. Secondly, their works have been re-published and integrated into subsequent debate on the nature of the Russian Revolution.[13]

With regard to Leon Trotsky, there is a similar situation of contemporary debate leading directly to subsequent historical controversy. Trotsky began writing historical and polemical accounts before his departure from the Soviet Union. That part of his work written at that time and even subsequently which dealt with the period before 1924 does bear a considerable resemblance to the official Soviet versions.[14] But, of course, when Trotsky writes of the period when he was Stalin' s foremost antagonist, the gap between his interpretation and that of Soviet historians is virtually unbridgeable. Trotsky was not just a participant at the center of the Russian Revolution but he was a historian in his own right. He was also the founder of the Fourth International and attracted a considerable intellectual following.[15] The work of the 'Trotskyites', both in the form of pamphlets and full-length historical interpretations constitutes a body of literature that is distinctive, and has to be dealt with separately in a study such as this.

Apart from Trotsky and Trotskyites, many other Marxists fell out with the government and Party of the Soviet Union. There has been a common thread uniting the published work of a

larger number of defectors from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as ex-members of the Communist Parties in the West. Their shared disillusionment is well brought out in the oft-cited compilation, *The God That Failed*.[16] In some instances, these ex-members of Communist parties have become apostates ideologically, but in other instances they claim to continue to make their criticism of the Russian Revolution from a committed initially Marxist standpoint. This is to group them with all others who sufficient reason profess to share the materialist world outlook; and the scant attention which will actually be paid to that particular approach in this study is due solely to the fact that most of their literature relates to the period following upon the second great war started by the capitalist powers, while the limit of the Russian Revolution is here taken to be the eve of that war.

To the extent that doubt may be cast upon the Marxist authenticity of any one of the writers or groups referred to above, their categorisation remains provisional at this stage. There are many Popes in the Marxist world who ordain and excommunicate this or that person or organisation as true or false Marxists. Hopefully, that attitude will be avoided in this study, but it may be that in the final analysis a self-professed Marxist interpretation of the Russian Revolution might appear to have ignored all the principles of analysis based on the materialist/ dialectical mode of perception. With regard to bourgeois interpretations, there is no such likelihood of having to deny the claims of self-declared supporters of capitalism. On the contrary, their *modus operandi* is such that they seldom declare their initial position in unequivocal therefore one of the first tasks in weighing up the terms; and non-Marxist scholarship is to bring to the fore its idealist subjective bourgeois premises.

It is quite justifiable to treat the bourgeois writers as falling into a residual category of non-Marxists. All writers who do not claim to be Marxist, or at least some form of Socialist,

are solidly in the bourgeois camp. One reason that they are very coy in declaring themselves as such is that the word 'bourgeois' carries powerful condemnatory overtones, which they would not readily accept. A second reason is that bourgeois scholarship always pretends to hold a monopoly of truth and reason; and most bourgeois writers fall over themselves to stress that they approach issues open-mindedly and dispassionately. According to that line of argument, the Marxist has pre-judged issues, has a closed mind and is partisan. It would therefore be unwise for the bourgeois scholar to expose his own set of assumptions, thereby revealing that he and the Marxist are following the same pattern of arguing from established premises – but that the premises are different and the very methodology of analysis is different. Such an exposure and revelation would force one to reconsider the relative premises and methodologies; and it is clear that the bourgeois scholar is afraid of just that.

In a situation in which bourgeois scholars have a monopoly, their differing conclusions are considered as the complete sample of reasoned enquiry into that particular subject, with a Marxist view occasionally thrown in to illustrate that men are sometimes bereft of reason. For all practical purposes, the historiography of the Russian Revolution in a standard Western institution means the several opinions expressed by orthodox Western scholars on the subject. A useful illustration of that fact is seen in the selections produced in the series, "Problems in European History." That series ostensibly sets out to demonstrate significant interpretations on various subjects, and it includes three volumes relevant to the Russian Revolution.[17] In none of them is there any serious presentation of the Soviet view - a view that is significant if for no reason other than the fact that it is the common understanding of Soviet citizens and millions of other residents in Socialist countries. In none of the said volumes is there any balancing in terms of space of the various Marxist views alongside of various bourgeois positions.

The Bourgeois Overview

The bourgeois view has the following characteristics: 1) claims to be concerned with humanity rather than a given class; 2) high level of subjectivism; 3) refuses to recognise contradictions, except at a superficial level. As an example of the first, one can take the work of the English historian, Hugh Seton-Watson of Oxford, one of the leading English historians of Russia and Communist Europe. Seton-Watson is solidly in the bourgeois camp—he begins by referring skeptically to communism as "a theory which professes to explain philosophy, religion, history, economics and society." He then goes on to say bluntly that "Communism is a science of conspiracy, a technique of wrecking and subversion."[18] While decrying the Bolsheviks for crushing democracy, he constantly makes statements such as the "simple and guileless workers and peasants," the "politically ignorant and gullible masses," the "simple peasants."[19] However much he might pretend to be speaking in the name of democracy, he gives himself away by those terms in two ways. He indirectly admits of the fundamental class gulf between his class and the working class; and he shows that at bottom he has little regards for the workers and peasants and their political capacities.

It should be noted that within revolutionary historiography, the conservative historians always expose themselves by their contemptuous attitude to the common people. Burke, Barruel, Taine and to some extent Tocqueville writing on the French Revolution can be found constantly referring to the 'mob' and the 'rabble.' They claim that these people have no right or capacity to rule, and merely give way to blind passions. There are other historians who are even less discreet than Seton-Watson in hiding their bourgeois snobbery towards the workers and peasants.

An extreme example is Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*. By the very title, he lays claim to be speaking on behalf of the people at large. But he makes little attempt to hide the utter contempt which he felt towards the workers and peasants. Walking starts with the Revolution of 1905. Why did the workers and peasants follow radical slogans? "It would be a mistake to conclude that the workers understood the significance of the slogans they heard."[20] Another question that immediately poses itself: how then does one explain the Revolution if not as a *conscious* ideological move forward as Marxists say? To that Walkin would reply that, "At the base of the Revolution of 1905 was the emergence of a primitive, elemental and anarchistic force."[21] This same force re-emerged in 1917, according to this historian, because the administrative machinery broke down. Again, using Walkin's own words, one can see his innate class snobbery. "With the disappearance of administrative machinery in March 1917 full sway was given to the anarchistic and irresponsible tendencies of the primitive Russian workers."[22] What Soviet writers call the mobilisation of workers under the Bolsheviks after March, Walkin refers to it as a mob of violence and anarchy. "The still primitive masses, who degenerated into mobs seeking to gratify what they understood as their rights, without regard for their obligations to the law, the general interest or the rights of others."[23]

Of the two, Seton-Watson is the more important figure and the more dangerous. His language is not as vicious, and it is easier to be misled by his implied assumption that one need not seek out class alignments, because it is sufficient to speak vaguely of democracy.

Another bourgeois approach that can be quite effective is the subjectivist one, which does not start by examining reality as it exists but rather puts forward for the reader a set of evocative images which come from his own mind - words such as dictatorship, terror, and even communist

are used to convey the required impressions. This carries history into the realm of narcotic drugs - such historians really taking one on a trip.

A good example of this type of writing comes from R.N. Carew Hunt, widely believed to be a British intelligence agent, who parades as a scholar and authority on the Soviet Union. His best-known work is a dictionary of *A Guide to Communist Jargon*.[24] Marxist writers have inevitably had to find new terms to describe society in the way it is seen by the members of oppressed classes. The language lacks the urbanity and refinement which the bourgeoisie developed as an expression of its own disassociation from sweat and cow dung. But of course, in their supercilious manner, the bourgeois scholars like Hunt see nothing in Soviet and other Marxist writings except 'jargon.' The subjectivist approach of Carew Hunt and many other bourgeois scholars often reflects itself in their pre-occupation with individuals rather than with broad social forces. An extreme example of this is found in the book on Stalin by the American historian, Francis Randall. Everything that happened in the Soviet Union between 1925 and 1953 was personally attributable to Stalin, as far as Randall is concerned.[25] It should be noted in passing that Soviet and other Marxist writers are not always exempt from subjectivism and from traits such as concentration on personalities rather than social forces. But the vice is far more widespread among bourgeois writers because their ideological preparation does not equip them to deal with objective reality.

Bourgeois historians can be led into absurd positions, through their failure to perceive the deep-rooted contradictions in human society. An example of this absurdity is seen in the work of Bernard Pares, notably his *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy*.[26] He calls it a "study of the evidence," but the evidence of whom or what? His evidence comprises memoirs of the Russian ruling class. He admits that the Empress Alexandra's letters were his chief source. His object is

an intimate knowledge of the internal workings of the government. This is not even good bourgeois history—it is feudal in its sole pre-occupation with what kings and queens did.

When Tsar Nicholas agreed to have an audience with Prince Bergius Trubetskoy in 1905, Pares comments "the emperor at last found himself in intimate contact with men who were really representative of the public."[27] That is to say, his idea of the 'public' does not extend beyond the tiny circle of aristocrats and bureaucrats who participated in Tsarist politics. Pares' class prejudices lead him to be exclusively concerned with an inconsequential section of the whole picture. He sees that area of court life as the most fundamental aspect of the whole picture. He sees that area of court life as the most fundamental aspect of the whole, and he concludes that the revolutions came not at all from below but from above. In his view the revolution of February 1917 did not spring from the sort of fundamental contradictions about which Soviet historians write, but rather it occurred because the ruling class of the Tsar and his advisers fell asleep and never woke up. This is an elitist notion which seeks to deny the working class any role in history. It is a notion fundamentally opposed to a socialist conception of the dignity of the working class.

To understand the hegemony of the bourgeois view of history, particularly of interpretations of the Russian Revolution, we need to interrogate the University institutions that are responsible for the vast majority of research and publications in the field. From a Marxist materialist standpoint, the University is an important element of the superstructure. If the production relations in the society are capitalist, then the superstructure of belief and action is also capitalist, and the university would obviously serve the interests of the capitalist or bourgeois class. Even from a non-Marxist standpoint, the above contention is invariably upheld directly or indirectly. It is well understood at all levels of English society that the upper strata of the ruling class receives its education at certain universities and before that the exclusive public

schools. In the United States, there are perhaps more illusions that the universities are meant to serve the pursuit of truth, justice, aesthetics and the like; but studies devoted to the subject invariably come up with different conclusions. G. William Domhoff , in his book *Who Rules America?*, explicitly states that his starting point is not Marxist, but he is in no doubt concerning the role of America's leading universities as tools of the big capitalists. Domhoff writes as follows: "Control of America' s leading universities by members of the American business aristocracy is more direct than with any other institution which they control. . . . These mechanisms give the upper class control of the broad framework, the long-run goals, and the general atmosphere of the university."[28]

The long-run control of the big bourgeoisie is not compatible with a limited degree of freedom in day-to-day affairs, which allows for some deviation within the universities. Therefore, it is not impossible for a materialist world-view to come from a writer within a western and bourgeois institution. Besides, progressive non-Marxists views can also challenge the standard bourgeois approaches. However, it is the rarity of such occurrences that must be stressed. There are several factors at work towards elimination of any rebel or non-conformist tendencies. At one level, there is direct action to remove those who step out of line. Those who are familiar with the politics of university appointments, tenure, promotions, etc., know it to be a ruthless business.[29] One tendency is that where there is a powerful pampered professor in a certain field, he surrounds himself with a chorus of sycophants, and the non-conformists are weeded out.

Above all, when any group of scholars work together closely in an institution, they tend to develop common approaches to problems. Indeed, this tendency links together universities in the national and international context, leading to the formation of broad schools of thought

within particular disciplines. As far as the Russian Revolution is concerned, a very potent influence has been exercised in this sense by Russian emigres who were given favored positions in academic institutions because of their familiarity with the language, their plausibility in terms of having lived most of their lives in Russia, and their compatible ideological outlook. These emigres were usually "White Russians," hostile to the Communist government of the Soviet Union and grateful to their capitalist hosts in the USA and other countries. They did not hesitate in declaring their bourgeois orientation.

The strong bourgeois emigre interpretation made itself felt directly through the widely circulated works of such scholars as Michael Karpovitch of Harvard, George Vernadsky of Yale, and Michael Florinsky of Columbia.[30] Besides, their influence was indirectly exercised through the generation of native American (white) scholars whom they trained on the Russian Revolution and other aspects of specialisation of Soviet Studies. The "Acknowledgement" page of numerous prominent American historians of the Russian Revolution invariably reads like a "Who's Who" of Russian emigre circles as far as the academic world is concerned.

In England, the London School of Economics was one institution where Soviet studies had a special bourgeois flavor under the guidance of Leonard Schapiro, a staunch anti-communist of central European background. Schapiro prefaces one of his works on the Soviet Union by stating that "I do not pretend to conceal my predilection for a society based on the established legal order."[31] Every society is based on an established legal order, so that either the learned professor was saying absolutely nothing or he had something else in mind. The fact is that such are the curious sophistries by which many bourgeois scholars admit to support of the established order of capitalist society.

From time to time, the bourgeois scholar does reveal his ideological prejudices in a frank

manner outside of the body of his study. An entertaining example of this type is to be found in Adam Ulam's preface to one of his books on the Soviet Union, entitled *The Unfinished Revolution*. He writes, "It is perhaps appropriate in view of one of the main themes of the book, that this study of socialism should have been assisted by Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and Carnegie, the names being those of the foundations which have been very generous."[32] One would have to search very hard in the history of capitalism to find another trio of capitalist exploiters bigger than Guggenheim, Rockefeller and Carnegie! Their "philanthropic" foundations sponsor academic research and publications to promote the bourgeois ideology and the capitalist system. It would be unfair to say that everyone who receives money from such capitalist foundations necessarily shares the values of the capitalists who give the money, but in the case of Adam Ulam, he himself is affirming that his purpose and conclusions with regard to his study of socialist Russia do justice to his capitalist sponsors.

Adam Ulam is a foremost American scholar on the Russian Revolution based at Harvard, where he is a professor of government at the Harvard Institute of Russian Research. That fact is also *prima facie* evidence of his bourgeois commitment and orthodoxy, because not only is Harvard a bastion of the ideological superstructure in the USA, but that particular Russian Centre has been exposed as a very active instrument of the American state.[33] In other words, some institutions are more compromised than others within the bourgeois camp, and studies emanating from such institutions are more compromised than others within the bourgeois camp, and studies emanating from such institutions are unmistakably of a certain ideological flavor as are studies emanating from a Soviet University under the aegis of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and/or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. One such institution, which is most relevant to a study of views on the Russian Revolution is the Hoover Institution for War and Peace at Stanford

University.

The Hoover Institution is notorious for its connections with the CIA, the Pentagon and the State Department. The kinds of projects for which they make funds available is the publication of accounts by Russians hostile to the Communist regime, or other Americans writing diatribes against Communism. In 1955, the Hoover Institution published Harold H. Fisher's *The Communist Revolution*. Fisher took the stand that "The Soviet-led Communist movement seeks the same ends by the same means and threatens our liberties and those of other free peoples."[34] The reader would need to ask whether he or she is included in Fisher's collective "our," and whether he or she wants to be included bearing in mind that the "free people" to whom he refers include the oppressed masses of Spain, Portugal, Greece and Latin America, plus (in 1955) all the colonized and exploited people of Africa and Asia and all the oppressed black people inside the USA!

If one were to single out a bourgeois writer whose studies on the Russian Revolution are least redolent of the above assumption that it is a Revolution which threatened "free people, " the most likely candidate would be E.H. Carr. Carr is a perceptive historian whose reflections on the writing and meaning of history are well-known.[35] The Russian Revolution has been his major field in a long academic career, and his multi-volume history of the Russian Revolution is worthy of consideration as one of the few texts that have already come to be considered 'classics' on this subject.[36] These volumes and other studies by this English historian display considerable sympathy for the Bolshevik Party that led the Russian Revolution and for the Russian people who reaped the fruits and sufferings of the Revolution. It is illuminating to notice what an orthodox bourgeois reactionary says of Carr. The above-mentioned Schapiro, in the preface to his own book *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy*, mentioned that, "Mr. E.H. Carr read the

manuscript at an early stage in its existence, and made a number of comments on points of detail which I was glad to adopt. I regret that I was not able to adopt some other suggestions, because our interpretation of the facts diverged too fundamentally."[37]

Soviet Overview

One expects to find certain basic Marxist features within the Soviet analysis, such as emphasis on contradictions, technology, class and ideology. The basis of the Marxist world outlook is the notion of dialectical materialism. It is a notion which first of all recognises that change and historical movement are dependent upon the contradictions within things and between things. Any form of logic other than dialectics assumes that when one has a given the object the object remains constant and discrete in itself. The dialectical notion stresses that every phenomenon is constantly transforming itself owing to its own internal contradictions and to contradictions between itself and other phenomena.

Thus, bourgeois logic expects to find a bourgeois class in existence at a particular point in time, and to see that same bourgeois class in existence one hundred years later. Marx stressed that the bourgeois class was evolving because of its own internal contradictions, because of contradictions between itself and other classes and because of the basic contradictions between man and nature.

According to the classic formulation of dialectics, one can always discern a pair of opposites in operation - thesis and antithesis, giving rise to synthesis, which in turn is merely a thesis in relation to another opposite. Hence the law of the unity of opposites. How can one have a proletariat without a bourgeoisie? And so long as one has them both one has a contradiction, just as there was previously a contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy.

The vital role of technology comes about because technology is required to solve the oldest and most persistent of all contradictions—that between man and nature. For Marx, it is within nature and the material conditions of existence that one must find the motive forces in history. There were others who believed in dialectics, but believed that all history flowed from ideas. This was the case with Marx's predecessor, Hegel. Marx, however, insisted on the primacy of matter over ideas, and having given priority to the material conditions of man's existence as the mainspring of history, he naturally gave similar high priority to man's tools or technology for achieving mastery of the material environment.

According to their way of earning a living, men in society fell into definite categories. In feudal times, those who earned their living through possession of land were the aristocratic class, while those who earned theirs by working on the nobles' lands were the serfs. Under capitalism, those who owned the factories (by them principal means production) were the bourgeois or capitalists; while those who sold their labour to exist were the workers or proletariat. Within society itself, this contradiction between classes was the most dynamic force, and it led to Revolution at certain junctures in history when the class in power was overcome by its challenger.

Ideas came after matter. The ideas in men's heads were the reflection of their material environment, their state of technology, their class position and the ideas which they inherited historically which too were ultimately traceable to material conditions. The sum total of ideas in mean's heads can be called 'ideology' of consciousness. Since men in society fell into classes their ideology of consciousness had the stamp of a particular class on it. There was feudal ideology, bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology, which is socialism.

When the Soviet historians look at the old regime in Russia, they first explained how the development of technology had produced and transformed classes. The bourgeoisie had been produced out of the peasantry and the aristocracy, the proletariat had been produced out of the peasantry. They explain how the presence of large factories affected the character of the proletariat and how the backwardness of agrarian technology affected the peasants.[38] They identify the principal class contradictions as being that between the bourgeoisie and the workers and that between the aristocracy and the peasants. In addition, they note the contradictions between the semi-feudal and semi-capitalist state and the mass of the people.[39] They see the contradiction between Great Russia and the colonial parts of the Russian empire.[40] They note the contradictions between Russian national interests and the interests of the Western capitalists.[41] *They explicitly commit themselves to the side of the workers and peasants.*

As far as ideology is concerned, one can gather directly or indirectly from Soviet presentations, that the bourgeois ideology was only partially represented in the Russian state structure. Bourgeois elements wanted to go further—to remove feudal traces and remold the state structure to bring it in line with the bourgeois democracy of western Europe. Besides, there was also the Marxist Socialist ideology, which attacked not only feudalism, but capitalism as well, and this ideology was carried forward by the Bolsheviks.

The Soviet view combines the above elements by saying that the various contradictions were sharpening during the late 19th century and led *inevitably* to the outbreak of Revolution in February/ March 1917. The bourgeoisie thereupon tried to that to take over state power through the Provisional Government. However, *guided by Marxist theory and the Bolshevik Party*, the workers and peasants overthrew the bourgeoisie in October 1917. Subsequently, the Bolshevik party spearheaded the peoples' struggle to build a socialist society.

Soviet historians would draw attention to two further factors which aided the workers and peasants in their seizure of state power both in February and October. The first was the contradictions between the capitalist/imperialist powers in the form of the world war, and the second was the contradiction between Great Russia and the colonies, leading to nationality struggles.[42]

If it was not already a common understanding, then it should now be clear from the brief preview that sharp differences can appear among scholars professing the same fundamental world- outlook. The debate within ideological camps or between them is sometimes about 'facts' or the validity of sources. But all serious studies on the writing of history concur in stressing what the historian brings to his sources: the prejudices and biases that reflect an individual's distinctive social group and particular historical epoch in which she/he lives. To categorize a view as either Marxist or bourgeois - materialist or idealist – is to identify its most important bias. Furthermore, the differences between the materialist and idealist modes of perception emerge more strongly in some kinds of discussions than in others. A discussion of the Russian Revolution is certainly one instance where the ideological biases are highly relevant, and most striking. Besides, to approach the debate with an ideological schema is to focus on the most important issue of our time, the confrontation between capitalism and socialism incorporating all the world-shaking problems of national liberation, racial emancipation, economic development and the liberation of man.

Notes

[1] From *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung: Volume 1* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1965), 311.

[2] Of course, Walter Rodney had explored the relationship of this experience and the impact of imperialism on the continent of Africa in his classic text, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1981, orig. 1972)

[3] See especially, Alfred Cobban, *Historians and the Causes of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958 rev., orig. 1946); Geoffrey Ellis, "The 'Marxist Interpretation of the French Revolution," *English Historical Review* 93 (April 1978), 353-76. Some of the more prominent Marxist interpretations of the French Revolution are Albert Soboul, *The Sans-culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793-1794*, trans. Remy Inglis Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, orig. 1964), _____, *The French Revolution 1787-1799*, trans. Alan Forrest and Colin Jones, (New York: Random House, 1975); Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution, 1789*, trans. by R.R. Palmer (New York: Vintage, 1947, orig. 1939, latest reprint edition Princeton University Press, 2015); _____, *The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793,* trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, orig. rev. ed. 1957); and Jean Jaures's classic eight volume, *Histoire Socialiste De la Revolution Francaise* (1901-1907) which has since been translated and drastically abridged in the one volume *A Socialist History of the French Revolution*, ed. and trans. Mitchell Abidor, (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

[4] See Christopher Hill, "Recent Interpretations of the Civil War," *History* 41 (1956), 67-87. Rodney highly regarded Hill's work (see Walter Rodney Papers, "notes on comparative revolutions," as well as his comments in this text on Hill's biography of Lenin). Other works by Hill on the English Civil War include, *The English Revolution* (London, 1955); "The English Civil War Interpreted by Marx and Engels," *Science and Society* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1948), 130-56.

[5] Of course, Rodney is writing from the vantage point of the late 1960s and 1970s, so he would not be privy to the latest historiography of the French Revolution. His characterizations are confirmed by his contemporaries, such as J. Cavanaugh, "The Present State of French Revolutionary Historiography: Alfred Cobban and Beyond," *French Historical Studies* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1972), 587-606; John Stewart Hall, *The French Revolution: Some Trends in Historical Writing* (Washington, D.C., 1967).

[6] James H. Billington, "Six Views of the Russian Revolution," *World Politics* 18, no. 3 (April 1966), 452-73.

[7] The works to which Rodney is referring include, for example, P.N. Sobolev, *The Great October Socialist Revolution* trans. By D. Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976); Joseph Stalin, *The October Revolution* (New York: International Pub., 1934); A. Bryusov, A. Sakharov, A.

Fadeyev, Y. Chermensky and G. Golikov, *Outline History of the USSR*, trans. by George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960); A. M. Pankratova, et. al. , *A History of the USSR* (Moscow: Foreign Language Pub.,1947). See also John L. H. Keep, "The Great October Revolution, " in *Windows on the Russian Past: Essays on Soviet Historiography Since Stalin*, edited by S. Baron and N. Heer, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976) for a more detailed overview of Soviet works on the Russian Revolution published before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Of course, as we discuss in the introduction, the historiography of the USSR underwent a veritable revolution with perestroika and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. The shift has been subject to a mountain of books and articles too numerous to list here. For a sampling, see for example, P. V. Volobuev and Kurt S. Schultz, "Perestroika and the October Revolution in Soviet Historiography," *Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (October 1992), 566-576; "Perestroika, History, and Historians: A Roundtable," *Journal of Modern History* 62, no. 4 (December 1990), 782-830; Steve Smith, "Writing the History of the Russian Revolution after the Fall of Communism," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 4 (1994), 563-578; Ronald Grigor Suny, "Revision and Retreat in the Historiography of 1917: Social History and Its Critics," *Russian Review* 53, no. 2 (April 1994), 165-182; 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.

[8] John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: New American Library, 1967, orig. 1919).

[9] William Z. Foster, *The Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Trade Union Educational League, 1922)

[10] Christopher Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971). Of course, since the 1970s and especially after the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of the archives, there have been a wide range of new scholarship on the Russian Revolution sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and, especially, to the other worker-based movements such as the Socialist Revolutionaries. See Alex Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), and *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York: Norton, 1976); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Steve A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories 1917-1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), as well as citations at the end of footnote #7.

[11] Maurice Dobb, *Russian Economic Development Since the Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1928) and *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1966, orig. 1948).

[12] Raphael Ambramovitch, *The Soviet Revolution, 1917-1939* (New York: International Universities Press, 1962).

[13] Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964, orig. 1919); Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Marxism or Leninism?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

[14] Some of Trotsky's essential pre-exile works include, *Our Political Tasks* (1904); *Results and Prospects* (1906); *1905* (1907); *The Bolsheviks and World Peace* [also published as *War and the International* (1914); *History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk* (1918); *The New Course* (1923). All of these writings and more are available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/#a1901

[15] In 1929, Stalin had Trotsky expelled from the Communist Party and subsequently exiled. 1934, he founded the Fourth International to counter Stalinism and what he called the 'degeneration of the workers' state." Trotsky never considered the Soviet Union and the Third International enemies of socialism or capitalist. In fact, he consistently called for the defense of the Soviet Union after the Fourth International was founded. See Leon Trotsky, "War and the Fourth International," (June 10, 1934), https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1934/06/warfi.htm; Trotsky, "Once Again: The USSR and Its Defense (November 1937)," https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/11/ussr.htm For more on Trotsky s life and the history of the Fourth International, see Isaac Deutscher's three-volume biography recently gathered into a single volume, *The Prophet: The Life of Leon Trotsky* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2015).

[16] Richard Crossman, ed., *The God That Failed* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Pub., 1950).

[17] The works to which Rodney refers are mainly collections edited by Arthur E. Adams: *Imperial Russia after 1861: Peaceful Modernization or Revolution?* (Boston: D.C. Heath Co., 1965); *The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Victory: Why and How?* (Boston: D .C. Heath Co. , 1960); *The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Victory: Causes and Processes* (Boston: D.C. Heath Co., 1960).

[18] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution: A Historical Analysis* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1953), p. vii.

[19] This is the case in all of his works. See *The Russian Empire, 1801-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952); in addition to *The Pattern of Communist Revolution*.

[20] Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Praeger Pub., 1962), p. 206.

[21] Ibid., p. 206.

[22] Ibid., p. 235.

[23] Ibid., p. 239.

[24] R.N. Carew Hunt, *A Guide to Communist Jargon* (New York: Macmillan, 1957). Another popular work by Hunt is *The Theory and Practice of Communism* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

[25] Francis B. Randall, *Stalin's Russia: An Historical Reconsideration* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 1-2, 6, 8, 9.

[26] Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy: A Study of the Evidence* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1930).

[27] Ibid, p. 82.

[28] G. William Domhoff , *Who Rules America?* (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. , 1967), p. 77.

[29] Professor Rodney is speaking here from his own experience. In February 1968, Rodney left a teaching position at the University College of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to take a similar position at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. Due to his political activities and perspective, he was banned from returning to Jamaica in October 1968. In 1974, after a six-year teaching stint at Dar es Salaam, he returned to his place of birth to head the history department at the University of Guyana. Unfortunately, his appointment was withdrawn as a result of intervention by Guyana's ruling regime. Edward A. Alpers and Pierre Michel Fontaine (eds.), *Walter Rodney: Revolutionary and Scholar – A Tribute* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1982), 187.

[30] Michael Karpovich, *Imperial Russia, 1801-1917* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932); George Vernadsky, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1931* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932); _____, *A History of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930); _____, *Lenin: Red Dictator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931); Michael Florinsky, *Russia: A History and Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1953); _____, *Russia: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

[31] Leonard Schapiro, *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State – First Phase, 1917-1922* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977, orig. 1955), p. xi.

[32] Adam B. Ulam, *The Unfinished Revolution: An Essay on the Sources of Influence of Marxism and Socialism* (New York: Random House, 1960), p. i.

[33] Even the bourgeois scholars readily admit this connection. Philip Mosely writes, "An important by-product of the development of Russian Soviet studies has been the strengthening of

the research function within government. This has been accomplished in large part by younger scholars who have gone from the area centers into government research posts; within government their reputation stands high and they have made valuable contributions to the background of policy, some also in the formulation and execution of policy. Government agencies have come to feel that they can benefit a great deal in meeting their responsibilities through sending selected officers to the major centers for advanced training in research, and they have done so on a substantial scale." Mosely, "The Growth of Russian Studies," in Harold H. Fisher (ed.), *American Research on Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 20. See also Robert F. Byrnes, "USA: Work at the Universities," in Walter Laqueur and L. Labedz, eds., *The State of Soviet Studies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

[34] Harold H. Fisher. *The Communist Revolution: An Outline of Strategy and Tactics* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. iii.

[35] See E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

[36] Carr's numerous works on Russian history include his massive 14 volume *A History of Soviet Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1950–1978); *The October Revolution Before and After* (New York: Knopf, 1969); *The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin, 1917–1929* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

[37] Schapiro, *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy*, p. xiv.

[38] *Outline History of the USSR* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 142-145; V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia, Collected Works*, vol. 3, pp. 228-235; 431-435; 496-507; A.M. Pankratova, et. al., *A History of the USSR* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), part II, pp. 231-34.

[39] Pankratova, et. al., *A History of the USSR*, part II, pp. 230-237; Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, pp. 191-93; 369-378.

[40] Pankratova, et. al., *A History of the USSR*, part II, pp. 240-243.

[41] *Outline History of the USSR*, pp. 155-167; Pankratova, et. al., *A History of the USSR*, part III, pp. 13-18; Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 22.

[42] This view is furthest developed in P.N. Sobolez, et al., *The Great October Socialist Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1977), pp. 19-56. See also, Pankratova, et. al., *A History of the USSR*, part III, pp. 199-154; N. Popov, *Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* part I, (Moscow: Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers, 1934), pp. 306-344.