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PHILOSOPHY

Georgi Plekhanov Selected Philosophical Works (Volume V)

Plekhanov's aesthetics - the essays that founded Marxist art criticism, including the demonstration that "art for art's sake" is not a timeless truth about beauty but a symptom of the artist's quarrel with his society.

Georgi Plekhanov

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

This is the volume in which Plekhanov earns the title the Soviet state gave him: the father of Marxist art criticism. The four earlier books in this Selected Philosophical Works collected the founding pamphlets of Russian Marxism, the two masterworks on the individual and on materialism, the writings on Russian social thought. Volume V is the aesthetics, and it is the richest of the five, because it is here that Plekhanov did something genuinely new and here that the stakes for the state reprinting him are highest. The book is a 1981 printing — "First printing 1981," in the translation of K. M. Cook and A. Fineberg, the copyright the Publishers' — of essays Plekhanov wrote between 1888 and the eve of the First World War, prepared, like its companions, by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. The primary texts are the real thing. The introductory essay in front of them, by V. Shcherbina, was finalised no earlier than 1974 (it cites the 1974 Volume I by page), and it is a document of the Brezhnev years doing a delicate job: presenting the man the Soviet Union had canonised as the founder of its aesthetics to a world in which those aesthetics had, for nearly half a century, meant the exact opposite of what he taught.

Start with what is founding, because it is considerable and because the credibility of everything that follows depends on saying so plainly. Before Plekhanov, Marxists had opinions about art; Plekhanov built a method. Its core is the claim that art is a social product — that tastes, schools and the very idea of beauty are rooted in the life of classes and change as that life changes — and he pressed it with a range of evidence, from the hunting songs of primitive peoples to the Cubist canvases of his own moment, that no one before him had assembled. His single most brilliant stroke is the treatment of "art for art's sake." The aesthetes of his day held that the doctrine of pure art, art answerable to nothing but itself, was a timeless truth about beauty. Plekhanov showed it was a symptom. "The belief in art for art's sake arises wherever the

artist is out of harmony with his social environment," he wrote in *Art and Social Life* (1912–13), the essay that closes this volume and crowns his work — and he traced the doctrine through Pushkin under Nicholas I, through Gautier and the French Parnassians, showing each time that the retreat into pure form was a class relationship in disguise, the artist's quarrel with a society he could neither approve nor change. The companion demonstration is the sociological reading of eighteenth-century French drama, in which he tracks the popular farce giving way to aristocratic tragedy, tragedy to bourgeois "tearful comedy," and comedy back to the antique heroic costume the Revolution needed — a whole literary history read off the movement of classes. He grounded it in a materialist first principle, that "work is older than art," and he insisted, against the aesthetes, that judgment need not therefore be arbitrary: the objective standard is the correspondence of form to content, of execution to design. "The more closely the execution corresponds to the design ... the more successful it is. There you have an objective criterion." A reader who wants to know why Plekhanov is called the founder of Marxist aesthetics should read these essays and will not need to be told.

The method reaches back to the origins. Plekhanov turned to the art of hunting peoples because there the connection with labour lies open — "Here life appears to us in its simplest form and yields up its secrets to us all the more easily" — and drew from it the sequence that everything else in the theory elaborates: work first, then the aesthetic sense that plays upon its materials, and, once societies divide, "the evolution of the fine arts is determined by the class struggle." What keeps this from collapsing into the crude economic determinism his imitators fell into is that Plekhanov applied it in both directions and without favour. He read the reactionary art of his own moment by the same rule as the revolutionary — noting that the bourgeoisie, as its position grew harder to defend, produced its own committed literature, the plays of de Curel and Bourget urging the class to close ranks against the

workers. "Bourgeois art is becoming militant," he observed, without alarm and without applause; a class under threat presses art into service exactly as a class on the rise does. The judgment he passed was never on the fact of engagement but on the truth of the outlook engaged: an art tied to a lie about the world could not, whatever the talent behind it, become true.

And yet the same volume contains, unmarked and unglossed, the warning that the state canonising him would spend the twentieth century ignoring. Plekhanov was not a propagandist of art. He held the classical view, inherited through Belinsky, that art and philosophy have the same content but different means: "The philosopher talks in syllogisms, the poet in images and pictures." The poet's law, Plekhanov quotes Belinsky approvingly, is "to think in images and pictures, but not in syllogisms and dilemmas"; the image "is not a means, but an end." An art that begins from a thesis and sets out to prove it has already stopped being art. Plekhanov watched the mechanism at work and named it. Of Ibsen, whose "revolt" he judged too vague to know its own aim, he wrote that "the vagueness of his preaching is bound to lead to insufficient distinctness in his images. The element of abstraction and schematism will invade his artistic works." That sentence — that preaching, when it outruns vision, breeds schematism — is as exact a diagnosis of what would later be decreed in Moscow under the name of Socialist Realism as anyone wrote before the fact.

There is a still sharper passage, and it is the one to hold in mind through the rest of this introduction. In *Art and Social Life* Plekhanov turns to the question of who, in society, favours the "utilitarian view of art" — the demand that art serve a purpose beyond itself. He notes that revolutionaries have often held it, but that they hold no monopoly: "political authority always prefers the utilitarian view of art, to the extent, of course, that it pays any attention to art at all ... it is to its interest to harness all ideologies to the service of the cause which it serves itself." And he adds the barb: "since political authority, although sometimes revolutionary, is most often conservative and even reactionary," it would be a mistake to imagine the utilitarian view belongs to the left. It "can just as well cohabit with a conservative, as with a revolutionary attitude of mind." This is Plekhanov, in a book *Progress* printed in Moscow in 1981, explaining that a state's demand that art serve the state is the oldest reflex of authority, and generally a reactionary one. No footnote attaches to it. As in the earlier volumes of this edition — where an 1883 pamphlet predicting rule by a "socialist caste" and a polemic convicting Plekhanov of the "opportunism" he had accused others of both

stand in the text without editorial comment — the book is more candid than the essay that frames it.

It is important to be exact about the objection, because it is easy to mistake. The quarrel is not with art that serves a cause. Plekhanov himself thought the "utilitarian view" natural and right for a rising revolutionary class, and the tradition that answers this volume has never held otherwise; its own founders wrote to change the world and expected art to help. The distinction Plekhanov draws, and the one the state effaced, is between a class whose artists freely find that their images and their convictions run together, and an authority that supplies the convictions and requires the images to match. The first is the condition of all great engaged art; the second is what he means when he says political authority "prefers" the utilitarian view — prefers it because it can enforce it. An art that serves because it is commanded to serve is the case his whole aesthetic rules out, since by his account the artist thinks in images that arise, as he says following Belinsky, unconsciously, and cannot be issued to order like a directive. To command the image is to abolish it.

The candour matters because of what the state did with Plekhanov's name. The one part of his aesthetics that Soviet doctrine seized on and built into a system is his theory of "false ideas": his argument that a reactionary idea at the base of a work damages it, that "when a false idea is made the basis of a literary work, it imparts to it inherent contradictions that inevitably detract from its aesthetic merit." Shcherbina's essay foregrounds exactly this, praising Plekhanov for championing "the ideological nature of art, its duty to bring progressive social ideals to the people." But Plekhanov's doctrine is a diagnosis, not a licence. He is describing why art withers when an artist is tied to a dying class and its illusions; his examples are the reactionary — Hamsun's hatred of the workers, Bourget's defence of capital — and his point is sociological, that "no talent can convert into truth" a class-lie about the world. To read that as a prescription — as a warrant for a committee to certify which ideas are "progressive" and require them of writers on pain of silence — is to convert Plekhanov's account of how art loses its truth into a machine for manufacturing the loss. That conversion is the history of Soviet literature, and it is the reason this volume has a double character its own introduction cannot acknowledge.

For the state that printed Plekhanov-on-images-not-syllogisms was the state of the writers' decrees. In August 1934 the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers wrote Socialist Realism into the statutes of a single compulsory Union; in 1946 and 1948 the Central Committee resolutions associated with

Andrei Zhdanov disciplined the poets, the composers and the journals by name. The doctrine did precisely what Plekhanov said political authority always tries to do — it harnessed art to the cause the authority served — and it produced precisely the schematism his Ibsen essay predicted preaching would produce. The companion volumes in this series document the machinery: Avner Zis's *Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics* (Progress, 1977), which cannot say where the doctrine came from and admits as much; Boris Suchkov's *A History of Realism* (Progress, 1973), in which the year 1934 does not occur; Kornely Zelinsky's memoir in *Soviet Literature: Problems and People* (Progress, 1970), which happens to record Stalin naming the method in Gorky's house in October 1932. Those books are the place to follow the decrees and the casualties. The point that belongs here, in the volume of the founder, is the reflexive one: the aesthetic establishment that ran that apparatus claimed Plekhanov as its ancestor — Zis's *Foundations* cites him among its authorities — and the ancestor it claimed had already told it, in the very pages it was reprinting, that what it was doing was the reflex of reactionary power. There is a further asymmetry worth recording, documented in the companion introduction to Volume I of this edition: while the aesthetics establishment enthroned Plekhanov as its founder, several of the same publisher's philosophy primers — Afanasyev, Krapivin, Frantsov — left his name out of their histories of Russian materialism entirely, crediting the revolutionary democrats he wrote his books about and passing over the man who wrote the books. The state kept him where it needed him and dropped him where it did not, and the aesthetics volume is where it needed him most and could afford him least.

How, then, does the 1981 apparatus handle its awkward father? With the same technique the earlier volumes used, adapted to the subject. Shcherbina's essay is scrupulous and often genuinely illuminating on the philosophy, and it does not lie. But it performs two containments. The first is to read the whole of later Soviet cultural policy backward into Plekhanov as if it were his natural issue. The changeability of taste that Plekhanov demonstrated becomes, in Shcherbina's hands, evidence for "the very close and constantly developing interconnections of the socialist art of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries" — the family of official cultures speaking as one. Plekhanov's 1912 contempt for Cubism ("Nonsense cubed," he wrote, and Shcherbina quotes it with relish) is enlisted as ammunition in a 1981 campaign against Western modernism and abstraction, "the aesthetics of modernism," as though a dead man's reaction to Gleizes and Metzinger settled the cultural politics of the Cold War. What drops out of this framing is that Plekhanov's attack on the

Decadents was an attack on an art he judged cut off from a rising class — and that the charge, turned on the state's own official art, would land: the "schematism" he feared is the recognised vice of the doctrine Shcherbina is defending.

The second containment is the volume's version of an operation this edition performs throughout: preserve the aesthetics by quarantining the politics. Because Volume V is criticism, the seam runs not through a biography but through a comparison. Plekhanov wrote finely on Tolstoy, and Shcherbina credits him — but marks the essays down against Lenin's, on the ground that "a comparison of them with Lenin's works on Tolstoy reveals their weak aspects most clearly," the weakness being Plekhanov's "Menshevik" outlook and his "disregard of the role of the peasantry." Wherever Plekhanov's judgment is found wanting — his coolness toward Gorky, his misreading of a Decadent novel as realism — the cause assigned is the same political fall the earlier volumes narrated, and the corrective is always Lenin. The reader is invited to admire the founder and to remember, at each limit, that the founder went wrong in politics and that the politics spoiled the criticism. It is a subtler containment than the flat silences of the reference volumes, and it should be credited for what it does not do: it does not excise. It names Plekhanov's real errors — the excessive weight he gave to biology in the sense of beauty, the law of imitation and contradiction he borrowed from Taine and raised too often into a general law of art, his verdict that Pushkin had dated for the modern reader — and dates them to specific texts. This is argument, not deletion, and set beside what the same publisher did to the historical record elsewhere in this catalogue it is a different order of editorial conduct. The trouble is not that the essay falsifies. It is that it can be scrupulous about every question except the one that matters most for a volume on artistic freedom: what the doctrine descended from this man became in the hands of the state that printed him.

That question the reply tradition answered, and answered from a direction that makes the convergence with Plekhanov exact rather than approximate. It is worth noticing first what Plekhanov and his sharpest Soviet-era critic agreed on. Shcherbina's essay repeatedly defends Plekhanov against the "vulgar sociologists of the Shulyatikov type," who reduced a work of art directly to the economics of its author's class and "ignored the difference between literature and publicistics." Trotsky, debating the proletarian-culture enthusiasts in May 1924, reached for the same target and the same authority Plekhanov used — the Italian Marxist Antonio Labriola — to ridicule the critic who would read Dante's poem "as though it were made of the cloth that Florentine merchants provided for

their customers," a method he identified by name as "that of the late Shulyatikov, who provided a caricature of Marxism." The founder of Soviet aesthetics and the founder of the Red Army, writing on the same question, rejected the same reduction of art to a class-syllogism. That is not a coincidence; it is the classical Marxist theory of art, which both men held and which the state that claimed both men's authority abandoned.

From that common ground Trotsky drew the conclusion Plekhanov's warning implied but, dying in 1918, never lived to make. In *Literature and Revolution* (1923) and in the 1924 debate he insisted that art "has its own laws of development, and above all because in artistic creation an enormous role is played by subconscious processes" — the same "unconscious" work of creation that Plekhanov, following Belinsky, made central to poetry in this very volume. Art that works through images and through processes below the reach of the will cannot be produced to order, and the attempt to order it destroys it. By 1938, watching the doctrine harden into the Writers' Union, Trotsky stated the principle at the pitch the moment required: "Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them" ("Art and Politics in Our Epoch," letter to *Partisan Review*, 18 June 1938; the companion volume on Zis develops this text and the machinery *The Revolution Betrayed* had already described). Set that beside Plekhanov's sentence about political authority harnessing all ideologies to its own cause, and the two halves of the tradition close on the same judgment from either side of the catastrophe: the one warning, in 1912, that the demand is the reflex of power; the other reporting, in 1938, what the demand had done.

So read the book, and read it for the best of Plekhanov, which is very good — the essay on art for art's sake, the reading of French drama, the analysis of the Decadents, the great final synthesis of Art and Social Life. This is a founder's work, and it founds something real. Then read Shcherbina's essay, but read it as the state's attempt to keep the father while breaking his rule. It claims Plekhanov as the ancestor of an aesthetics he would not have recognised, uses his diagnoses as a state's weapons, and marks down his criticism at exactly the points where Lenin is needed to correct the Menshevik — and it does all this in a book that prints, a few hundred pages later and without a word of comment, its author's flat statement that a government's demand for useful art is the oldest and most reactionary reflex of authority. The founder of Marxist art criticism warned against the thing his heirs would build in his name. The proof is bound between the same covers as the warning, and the introduction is the one part of the volume that

cannot afford to notice it.

HISTORY

History of the USSR, Part II

October to the Nazi invasion, by named Soviet historians including Ivnitsky, the leading archival scholar of dekulakisation - the settled post-Khrushchev account, and the volume where the record is most tested.

A. P. Nenarokov and others

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

Part One of this history stopped on 3 March 1917, so an introduction to it could only measure what de-Stalinisation had done to the pre-revolutionary record. This is the volume where the account falls due. Its Foreword states the span: "a survey of the history of the peoples of the Soviet Union over a period covering almost a quarter of a century—from the triumph of the October Socialist Revolution to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War." October, Brest-Litovsk, the Civil War, Kronstadt, Lenin's last writings, the Left Opposition, collectivisation, the famine years, 1937, the Nazi–Soviet Pact — every site of the classic falsification is inside this book's covers.

Like Part One it is signed. The Foreword assigns the chapters: Chapter I to A. P. Nenarokov; Chapter II to Yu. I. Korablev and A. P. Shurygin; Chapters III and IV to D. A. Kovalenko, heading the group; Chapter V, on culture, to V. A. Kumanev; "The section on the agricultural development during the 1930s was written by N. A. Ivnitsky"; the foreign-policy sections to A. O. Chubaryan and I. S. Kremer. The front matter reads "First printing 1977 Second printing 1981", the English made "from revised Russian edition", copyright 1977. What Progress sold in 1981 was a mid-Brezhnev text produced a year before the sixtieth anniversary of October — the settled, post-Khrushchev version, no longer arguing about Stalin and not intending to reopen the question. Ivnitsky was and remained the outstanding Soviet archival historian of dekulakisation, and it shows. Worth saying at the start, because the case against this book is not that it is stupid.

The committee with no chairman

Turn to Chapter One and follow the Revolutionary Military Committee. The book introduces it: "the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet formed a Revolutionary Military Committee (RMC)". The RMC then appoints commissars to the whole Petrograd garrison and to the key points of the

capital, readies the Red Guard, orders sailors up from Helsingfors, Kronstadt and Revel, broadcasts the proclamation deposing the Provisional Government, and hands power to the Second Congress of Soviets. It is the acting subject of the insurrection for a dozen pages. It has no chairman. Nobody chairs the Petrograd Soviet either. Search the volume for the word and you will find the chairman of the Lesnovsk District Duma (Kalinin), the chairman of the Archangel Soviet, the chairman of the Georgian Revolutionary Committee, the chairman of GOELRO. The chair of the body that made the revolution is a blank.

What fills the blank is the Short Course's device, retained but demoted. "At a closed session, the Central Committee created a Revolutionary Military Center for the direction of the uprising; it consisted of A. S. Bubnov, F. E. Dzerzhinsky, J. V. Stalin, Ya. M. Sverdlov and M. S. Uritsky. The Central Committee resolution specified that the Center was to enter the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet." That second sentence is the concession: in 1938 the five-man Centre had been "the leading core" of the RMC with "practical direction of the whole uprising", Stalin at its head. Here it is a subordinate body joining an existing one, and Stalin is fourth alphabetically in a list of five. The leadership is then given to Lenin, who "took into his own hands immediate leadership of the uprising that was beginning" on the night of 24 October — true, and also not an answer to the question of who ran the RMC for the preceding ten days.

Trotsky appears in Chapter One exactly once, in the list of the first Council of People's Commissars: "L. D. Trotsky, foreign affairs". He is not accused of anything. He is simply not there for the events preceding the cabinet he is listed in.

This is not a new discovery, and that is the point. When the post-Stalin History of the CPSU appeared, Ernest Mandel — writing as Ernest Germain — went through it in "Thirty Questions and Thirty Answers about the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", published in two installments in Fourth International, the English-language quarterly of the International Secretariat, nos. 10 and 11. He

quoted that history's sentence on the Centre — that it "should enter the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Soviet" — and observed that "the organ that was 'to lead' simply entered the already existing organism and did not modify either its work or its leading tasks". The formula Mandel dissected is reproduced here, in substance and nearly in wording, fifteen years later. Mandel also reprinted Stalin's own article in *Pravda* of 6 November 1917, crediting the practical organisation of the insurrection to the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky, and the RMC's effective work "above all and essentially to Comrade Trotsky". The 1977 authors were not short of evidence; they were short of permission.

Everything else about Trotsky is negotiable. From 1918 he is present, named, and given his offices. He "headed the Soviet delegation" at Brest-Litovsk and disobeyed Lenin's instructions: "Trotsky thus broke off negotiations, doing great damage to the Soviet Republic and putting it in mortal danger." At the Eighth Congress it is "The Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, L. Trotsky, who distorted the principles of Party leadership in the army". In the trade union controversy he advances "the harmful slogan of 'screw tightening'". These are political charges, several arguable on the merits and one — the January 1918 formula at Brest — a real misjudgement Trotsky himself never denied. There is no espionage, no wrecking, no Gestapo. The criminal law has been withdrawn here as it was in Part One.

The rule that survives is narrower and more precise: he may hold any office except the one he held in October. The book will call him Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. It will not call him chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. (Part One's sharpest finding — Trotsky absent from the Name Index while two tsarist police chiefs were in it — cannot be tested here; this volume's index was not captured in our scan.)

The Testament, restored and edited

The largest single gain over 1938 is in Chapter Three. The Short Course suppressed Lenin's last dictations entirely. Here the "Letter to the Congress" is named, discussed over several pages, and quoted — including the sentence that mattered: "That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead". The book then adds, in its own voice, "History was to show how perspicacious Lenin had been." A Soviet general history telling its readers that Lenin was right to try to remove Stalin is not nothing; readers who came to it in 1977 were not

being handed the 1938 book with the names changed.

But look at what is quoted and what is not. The book gives Lenin's criticisms of Trotsky ("excessive self-assurance"), his doubts about Zinoviev and Kamenev, his criticisms of Stalin. It gives none of the praise: not that Trotsky was "perhaps the most capable man in the present Central Committee", not that Bukharin was the party's most valuable theoretician. And it attributes to Lenin something Lenin did not write: "Lenin warned the Party of the possibility that Trotsky might manifest Menshevik relapses." Mandel had caught precisely this operation in the 1959 History, which he found quoted the Testament "in a singularly mutilated and falsified way", suppressing the praise, keeping the criticisms, and inventing a warning against "Trotsky's very dangerous relapses into Menshevism" of which, he wrote, "there is not one word in the entire Testament." The 1977 book reproduces the invention. And the Thirteenth Congress's decision to keep Stalin is explained by "Stalin's irreconcilable struggle against Trotskyism" — the Testament used as evidence for the man it asked the party to remove.

Kronstadt, the Opposition, the village

Kronstadt gets four sentences. "An example of the new tactic was the Kronstadt mutiny, which began on February 28, 1921", the mutineers "actively supported by the Russian and foreign bourgeoisie, Mensheviks and SRs", crushed on 18 March "by Red Army units under the command of M. N. Tukhachevsky." The Chronological Outline calls it the "Kronstadt White mutiny". Nobody in the book notices that the mutineers were sailors, or that Chapter One had credited an "8000-man detachment of sailors from Helsingfors, Kronstadt and Revel" with helping to take Petrograd forty months earlier. The Petropavlovsk resolution, with its demand for new soviet elections by secret ballot, is not mentioned; the casualties are not given. The 1921 crisis is otherwise treated seriously — peasant revolt in Tambov and Siberia named, the industrial workforce shown collapsing from 2,555,000 in 1913 to 1.4 million — which makes the handling of the one revolt raised in the soviets' own name the more pointed still.

The Left Opposition is never called that. It is the "Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc", the "new opposition", "Menshevism in its peculiarly Trotskyist formulation". Its arguments appear only as the book's summary of them, and its defeat is arithmetic: "only half percent of the members of the Party supported its line." What the book does do, and the Short Course did not, is print the roll of the expelled: at the Fifteenth

Congress, seventy-five oppositionists "including Kamenev, Pyatakov, Radek, Rakovsky, Safarov, Smilga, I. Smirnov and Lashevich". Christian Rakovsky, named there without comment, was a Bulgarian-Romanian socialist who had headed the Soviet government of Ukraine and served as ambassador in London and Paris; he capitulated in 1934, was a defendant in the last Moscow trial, and was shot in 1941. Not one of those endings is anywhere in this book.

Ivnitsky's section on the village is the most substantial thing in the volume and deserves to be read on its own terms. It gives the machinery of dekulakisation in detail — the three categories, the 3-to-5 per cent ceiling, the taxation designed so that "taxes absorbed not only the entire annual income but also a part of the farm's property" — and does not pretend the process was gentle: "the principal means of liquidating the kulaks (well-to-do peasants) as a class were forcible expropriation and dekulakization." Peasants, it concedes, were "forced to enter collective farms under the threat of being 'dispossessed as kulaks'". And it gives numbers: "In two years, around 600 thousand kulak farms were expropriated and more than 240 thousand kulak families deported." That is real work, and it is conservative — archival series published after 1990 put the deportations to "special settlements" in 1930–31 alone at over 380,000 families, some 1.8 million people, with heavy mortality in transit and on arrival. The frame remains: "The confiscation of kulak property... was a just measure", the Central Committee "exercised a maximum of caution", the deportees were being "reeducated".

Then comes the silence. The famine of 1932–33 does not appear. The volume's nearest approach is a subordinate clause about a fall in collective farm membership, caused by "difficulties of the reorganization period, difficulties caused in 1931 and 1932 by draught and crop failure in a number of areas of the RSFSR and the Ukraine, by the intrigues of the defeated but not yet cowed class enemy, the kulaks, and so on." The book that has just told you how many families were deported and what the tax schedules were will not tell you that millions starved in the same fields two years later. The historiography is genuinely divided on the numbers and sharply divided on intent — excess deaths across the USSR are usually placed between about five and seven million, concentrated in Ukraine, the Kuban and Kazakhstan, and the argument over whether the Ukrainian catastrophe is properly called a genocide is not settled. That there was a famine is not in dispute anywhere.

The generals who are named and the deaths that are not

The Terror occupies one paragraph, preceded by a justification: "given the desperate attacks on Soviet society by the imperialist states, it was necessary temporarily to impose some restrictions on democracy, these restrictions being removed as the Soviet state grew stronger". Then: "It was in these historically specific circumstances that the cult of Stalin's personality developed." Stalin "led the struggle against Trotskyites, Right opportunists, bourgeois nationalists"; "as time passed all the country's achievements were attributed to him"; he "came to believe in his own infallibility, began to abuse the Party's trust, to violate Leninist principles and norms of Party life and to tolerate illegality." And the verdict: "The cult of personality inflicted no little damage to the building of socialism. But it could not — and did not — alter the genuinely popular character of the Soviet order."

That is the whole of it. There are no Moscow Trials — the words do not occur. There is no Yezhov, no Yagoda, no NKVD, no Vyshinsky, no arrest, no execution, no camp, no number. Where the Short Course had at least reported the shootings, in the form of a boast, this volume has abolished the event and kept an adjectival trace of it in "illegality". Two pages earlier the same chapter narrates the elections of December 1937 in the Short Course's own register: of 94 million eligible, "91 million, or 96.8 percent, went to the polls", 98 per cent for the bloc, "Such unanimity among the masses was historically unprecedented."

The proof of what has been done is in the book's own lists. Chapter Two names the commanders the revolution produced — Blyukher, Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, Yakir — and the political workers Bubnov, Gamarnik, Kosior. Chapter Five names those who built Soviet military science: "Marshals of the Soviet Union M. N. Tukhachevsky, A. I. Yegorov, K. Ye. Voroshilov, B. M. Shaposhnikov and V. K. Blyukher, I. P. Uborevich, N. G. Kuznetsov, Ya. I. Alksnis". Of those men, Tukhachevsky, Yegorov, Blyukher, Uborevich, Yakir, Alksnis, Bubnov and Kosior were all shot between 1937 and 1939; Gamarnik killed himself as the arrests began. They are here, praised, restored to the record — that restoration was the substance of de-Stalinisation and it was real. They simply stop appearing, and the book never says why. "Strengthening the Country's Defenses" runs through aircraft plants, KV and T-34 output and mobilisation stocks, concedes candidly that "the technical modernization of the army and navy had not been completed by the summer of 1941", and does not mention that the army had lost most of its senior command four years

earlier. Part One's finding was that de-Stalinisation dropped the accusation and kept the erasure of the name. Part Two inverts it: the names come back and the deaths go out.

1939

The foreign-policy chapters, by Chubaryan and Kremer, are the most professional writing in the book and the most tendentious. The account of the collapse of the Anglo-French negotiations in August 1939 is detailed, documented from published British instructions, and substantially fair: the Western delegations were junior, the British unauthorised to sign, Poland's refusal of transit never pressed. The conclusion follows — "the Soviet Union, threatened with isolation, was compelled to accept the German proposal. On August 23, 1939, a Soviet-German non-aggression pact was signed." Of the secret protocol dividing Poland, the Baltic and Bessarabia into spheres there is nothing, as there could not be: the USSR denied its existence until 1989. The Baltic annexations of 1940 are a spontaneous rising — crowds in Riga, Tallinn, Kaunas and Vilnius, and "All three parliaments unanimously proclaimed Soviet power and called for entry into the USSR." On Finland the book states a plain untruth: "On November 30, 1939, the government of Finland officially declared war on the Soviet Union." The Red Army crossed the Finnish frontier that morning.

The reply was published while it was happening, and from inside the tradition rather than outside it. Trotsky's "Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events", written 25 April 1940 and printed in *Fourth International*, vol. I no. 2, June 1940, argues both halves at once: that the USSR remained a workers' state to be defended against imperialism, and that "Stalin's assault upon Finland was not of course solely an act in defense of the USSR", that Stalin invaded eastern Poland "with Hitler's permission", and that the war showed that "within gunshot of Leningrad, the cradle of the October revolution, the present regime of the USSR is incapable of exercising an attractive force." It is not a comfortable document, and it was written against comrades who were leaving over these events. It is the opposite of this book's method: it states the strategic case for the Soviet position and refuses to launder the acts.

What holds

Take the numbers. The output series, the plan data, the regional figures — Uzbek and Tajik industrial growth, the Kazakh workforce rising from 30,000 to 158,000 between 1929 and 1940 — come from the statistical apparatus and are

broadly what a modern economic historian works with, allowing for the known inflation of the early plan indices. Kumanev's chapter on culture is the best-argued part of the book, and its central material is not in dispute: the literacy campaign was one of the great social achievements of the century, and the baseline it started from is given without euphemism — illiteracy at 99.5 per cent among Tajiks, 99.4 among Kirghiz, 98.4 among Uzbeks, and the 1906 projection that universal male literacy was 180 years away. Chapter One draws on participant memoirs — Yakovleva on the Central Committee session of 10 October, Podvoisky on the Winter Palace — and cites John Reed by name. The 1921 famine, unlike the second, is described in full, with the relief committee, the international appeal, Nansen and the American aid. And in the science section M. N. Pokrovsky is called "The prominent Marxist historian" whose work founded Soviet historiography — Pokrovsky having been posthumously denounced in 1936 and his school destroyed. That restoration is genuine, and it is done quietly, without announcing that anything had ever been otherwise. Which is this book in one gesture: the correction made, the correction unacknowledged.

For the rest, the documents are in print and always were. Trotsky's *The Stalin School of Falsification* (English edition 1937) assembles the 1917 Central Committee minutes against exactly the version of October reproduced here; *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) supplies the account of the bureaucracy that explains why a book published in 1977 still could not name the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet; the Dewey Commission's *Not Guilty* (1938) demolished the trial evidence this volume no longer even mentions. Read alongside Mandel's "Thirty Questions", the continuity is the finding: two waves of de-Stalinisation, fifteen years apart, corrected the same passages in the same partial way and stopped at the same line. In 1988 the Supreme Court of the USSR quashed the verdicts of the Moscow trials and the party restored the membership of the men it had shot — seven years after this printing.

HISTORY

History of the USSR, Part I

Russia from the earliest times to February 1917, by named Leningrad specialists with Likhachov on culture - the post-Stalin history that replaced a text once authorised by a Central Committee commission.

D. P. Kallistov and others

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

The first thing to notice about this book is that it has authors, and that they are listed. The introduction ends with a paragraph assigning every chapter to a named scholar: Chapter 1 to D. P. Kallistov, Chapters 2 and 3 to I. I. Smirnov with A. I. Kopanov and N. A. Kazakova, Chapter 4 to N. Y. Nosov, Chapter 5 to A. G. Mankov and I. P. Shaskolsky, Chapters 6 and 7 to M. P. Vyatkin — "supplemented after his death by A. G. Mankov" — Chapter 8 to S. S. Volk, Chapter 9 to Sh. M. Levin, Chapters 10 and 11 to R. Sh. Ganelin. The sections on culture in Chapters 2 to 5 are credited to D. S. Likhachov. The book, we are told, "was prepared by the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of History, and its first edition appeared in Russian in 1963".

Set that beside the title page of the volume this series has already reprinted, the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course of 1938, which named no author and instead announced that it had been "EDITED BY A COMMISSION OF THE C.C. OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.)" and "AUTHORIZED" by the same body. Between those two title pages lies the whole of what de-Stalinisation did to Soviet history writing, and also the whole of what it did not do. A history is no longer a decision of a governing body. It is the work of academics, most of them Leningrad specialists, several of them serious in ways that survive translation. What they were permitted to write about, and what they were still required to leave out, is the subject of this introduction.

What the book actually covers

Fix the scope before making any claim. This is Part One of three, and it ends on 3 March 1917. The introduction says so: "This book aims to provide a brief outline of the history of the USSR from the earliest times right up to 1917. The history of the October Revolution, and the formation and development of the multinational Soviet socialist state are the theme of the

next book." Chapter Eleven closes with the abdication of the Grand Duke Mikhail and the words "A new period had begun in the history of the peoples of Russia." The Chronological Outline stops at "1917, March 2 — Abdication of Nicholas II. Provisional Government formed."

So the great sites of Stalinist falsification are not here, and cannot be found absent from a book that never promised them. There is no October insurrection in this volume, no Military Revolutionary Committee, no Brest-Litovsk, no Left Opposition, no collectivisation, no famine of 1932–33, no Moscow Trials, no Terror, no Pact. Lenin's Testament does not appear because 1922 does not appear. Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Tukhachevsky, Yezhov and Beria are all absent, and none of those absences is worth a word: a history ending in March 1917 owes the reader nothing about any of them. The trap in counting this way is worth showing once. Kirov appears in the book — but as the Putilov Works, "now the Kirov Works", and the man is not there at all; famine appears five times and every one is a famine of the sixteenth, seventeenth or nineteenth centuries; the single hit for collectivism is a Narodnik (Populist) programme of the 1870s. A count is only evidence when the author had the fact and a reason to use it. Judgement on all of that belongs to Part Two, and a reader who wants to know what the Brezhnev-era official narrative did with the 1930s must look there.

Fix the date, too, more carefully than the spine invites. The front matter reads: "First printing 1965 Second revised printing 1977 Third printing 1981", with the copyright given as Progress Publishers 1977. The Russian original appeared in 1963 — that is, at the height of the second de-Stalinisation, between the Twenty-Second Congress of 1961 and Khrushchev's fall. What Progress sold in 1981 was a Khrushchev-era textbook, revised once in the 1970s and reprinted unchanged under Brezhnev.

How light that revision was can be measured. The introduction claims the new edition "has been revised so as to incorporate the latest results of Soviet historical research", and across its hundred and fifty-seven thousand words the only dates later

than 1963 anywhere in the text are two. Both are archaeological, and both are 1969: a burial site found near the River Sungir with the remains of two boys and worked mammoth ivory, and the Scythian barrow of Gaimanova Mogila, "excavated in 1969 in the Zaporozhye Region". Somebody went back into Chapter One and added two digs. Nobody, so far as the text will show, went back into Chapters Nine to Eleven. That is the more interesting fact about the revision: not that it declined to put Stalin back, but that between 1963 and the second printing the party history seems not to have been reopened at all.

The three parts are worth setting side by side, because they are not one book. Part Two also carries 1981 on its spine — "First printing 1977 Second printing 1981" — and is a text of 1977. Part Three carries 1982, "First printing 1977 Second revised and enlarged edition 1982", and is genuinely a book of the early 1980s, carrying a section on the Twenty-Sixth Congress of February–March 1981. So a reader who buys the set in a London bookshop in 1981 and reads it through is crossing, without being told, from a Khrushchev-era manuscript to a mid-Brezhnev one and then to a late-Brezhnev one. The uniform jackets are the only thing uniform about them, and Part One is by eighteen years the oldest object in the box.

What de-Stalinisation changed

On the terrain the two books share — the party history of 1898 to 1917, told here across Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven — the changes are large and easy to state.

Stalin appears in this book once. He is the fifth of six names in a list of Bolsheviks working in the provinces during the Stolypin reaction: "in Baku—Meshadi Azizbekov, P. Japaridze, G. Orjonikidze, S. Spandaryan, J. Stalin and S. Shahumyan." The Name Index gives him a single page reference; Sverdlov gets three and Kalinin two. In the Short Course Stalin's pre-1917 career was the spine of the narrative; here he is one Baku organiser among six, and the Prague Conference of January 1912, which the Short Course had presented as the moment of his elevation to the Central Committee, is described in this book without mentioning him at all.

The criminal charges are gone. Trotsky is named three times, and in none of them is he a spy, a wrecker, an agent of a foreign power or a saboteur of the insurrection. He heads the Menshevik campaign after 1903 — "The Menshevik campaign against the Party was headed by Martov, Trotsky and Axelrod" — he leads "his group of Centrists, the supporters of

unprincipled reconciliation who declared themselves outside of all factions", and he forms the August bloc of 1912, which "tried to prevent the consolidation of the working class under the Bolshevik banner". These are political accusations. Two of them are substantially true as descriptions of Trotsky's conciliationism in the years of reaction, a position he himself later called a mistake, and Lenin's polemics against it are in print and can be read. Nothing here would require a court.

That is not a small thing, and it should be said plainly rather than sneered at. A generation of readers who had been taught that the organiser of the Red Army was a Gestapo agent were now handed a book in which he was merely wrong. Whole categories of lie had been withdrawn.

And in one place the new history does something the old one refused to do: it names office-holders it dislikes. Of the Petrograd Soviet of February 1917 the book states that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries "appointed the Menshevik N. Chkheidze chairman, and the Socialist-Revolutionary A. Kerensky and the Menshevik M. Skobelev deputy chairmen." The Short Course had narrated twenty pages of insurrection without once saying who chaired the Petrograd Soviet. This book says. It even concedes, of that Soviet, that its "influence was far more real and effective than that of the Duma Provisional Committee".

What survived it

Now the other half, and it is the half that matters, because the method that survives is the method that did the work.

Turn to the revolution of 1905. Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the book says, arose across Russia in the autumn and "became embryonic forms of popular state power". The Moscow Soviet is described at length and its Bolshevik leadership named. Of the St Petersburg Soviet, the first and by far the most important of them, the entire treatment is one sentence: "Matters were different in St. Petersburg, where the Soviet was in the hands of the Mensheviks."

Its chairman is not named. Nobody in it is named. The body that Lenin would later call the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government, that issued the Financial Manifesto, that was arrested en masse in December 1905 and tried in 1906, is disposed of by a statement about factional control. The St Petersburg Soviet's first chairman was the lawyer Georgy Khrustalev-Nosar; when he was arrested on 26 November 1905, the Soviet elected as chairman its deputy chairman, Trotsky, then twenty-six, who conducted its final

sessions and its defence in court. That is the technique of the Short Course exactly: describe the office, narrate its acts, never name the man. De-Stalinisation dropped the charge of treason and kept the vanishing.

The Name Index makes this explicit in a way the authors presumably did not intend. Trotsky is named three times in the body of the book and does not appear in the index at all. The sequence runs Trepov, D. P. — Trepov, F. F. — Trezzini, D. — Tropinin, V. A. — Trubetskoi. Two chiefs of the tsarist police are indexed; the man the same index would have had to call chairman of the Petrograd Soviet is not.

That could still be an accident of prominence, so test it on the hardest case. The book's first mention of Trotsky is the sentence "The Menshevik campaign against the Party was headed by Martov, Trotsky and Axelrod." Three names, one clause, one accusation, one page. The index carries "Martov, Y. O.—296, 297, 312" and "Axelrod, P. B.—260, 297". It does not carry Trotsky. The same holds for the three men the book does name at the head of the February Soviet: "Chkheidze, N. S.—355", "Kerensky, A. F.—355", "Skobelev, M. I.—355" are all there. Whoever compiled that index was applying a rule about which the historians had not been consulted — and it was a rule about one name, not about importance, since the rule spared everyone standing next to him in the sentence.

The same conservatism governs the shape of the story. Of the Prague Conference of January 1912 the book gives the expulsion straight — "The Conference purged the party of opportunists by declaring that the liquidators had placed themselves outside the party and had no right to use its name" — and then closes with a sentence that undoes it: "The Conference ended with the formal unification of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in a single Party." Prague is the moment the Bolsheviks constituted themselves as a separate party. A reader is told in consecutive sentences that the Mensheviks' organised wing was put out of the party and that the two factions were united in it, and is left to reconcile them unaided. Menshevism throughout is explained rather than argued with; it expresses "the inconsistency, wavering and half-heartedness typical of the petty bourgeoisie", and Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, "degenerated to the Menshevik position". The word degenerated is doing the work that treason used to do. The theory of permanent revolution — the subject of a large part of the polemic against Trotsky in the 1930s, and of Trotsky's own reading of 1905 — is not discussed, refuted or mentioned. February 1917 produces not dual power but a formula: "Two dictatorships were set up simultaneously in the country—the dictatorship of

the bourgeoisie and the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." The reader is left with Lenin's 1905 slogan intact on the eve of the April Theses that abandoned it, and no indication that anything was about to be abandoned.

It is worth being exact about the vocabulary, because the obvious complaint is the wrong one. This is not a shrill book. The word opportunism and its family occur six times in a hundred and fifty-seven thousand words, well below the average for Progress's list, and the accusation is usually attached to something a person is said to have done: the opportunists "tried to curtail the rights of the Central Committee as the leading body of the Party"; the Mensheviks at the Fourth Congress "foisted their opportunist point of view on the delegates" and "took the line of winding up the revolution". Those are claims about conduct, and a reader who thinks them false can go and look. The line about the petty bourgeoisie quoted above is of a different kind — it assigns an essence, and nothing could count against it. Both habits are in the book, and the honest description is that the first predominates.

What the book cannot do is turn the category round. In all six uses the Party is the agent putting opportunism down and never the thing accused of it; at Prague it is the Conference that "purged the party of opportunists". That is the test worth applying, and it is not a test about frequency or tone — our own tradition uses the word at much the same rate. The question is whether the charge is one the speaker could ever face. Here it is definitionally not, and that is a fact about the form of the argument rather than its volume.

The finding, then, is narrower than the slogan but harder: de-Stalinisation withdrew the criminal charges and left the structural silences standing. What was removed was the accusation. What was kept was the absence.

What is worth having

A reader told that all of this is worthless will be defenceless against it, and in this case would also be wrong, because most of the book is not about the party at all.

Roughly eight of the eleven chapters cover the period before 1861, and they are the work of specialists writing inside their competence. Likhachov, who wrote the culture sections of Chapters Two to Five, was the outstanding Russian medievalist of the century, a man arrested as a student in 1928 and imprisoned in the Solovki camp; his pages on the

chronicles, on Novgorod, on the icon and the seventeenth-century schism are the real thing compressed. Ganelin, who wrote the last two chapters, spent his career on the machinery of the late tsarist state and went on publishing after 1991. The economic and social material throughout is drawn from Soviet archival scholarship of a high standard: the population and urban growth figures for the sixteenth century, the accounting of Stolypin's land settlement (of some nine and a half million communal households, about two and a half million took title and roughly a million of those sold out), the strike statistics for 1912 to 1914, the emigration figures for 1900 to 1910.

Two passages deserve particular attention because of what they were permitted to say. The account of the oprichnina in Chapter Four is a straightforward description of a state terror: "Secret police, torture, mass executions, the destruction of estates and the plunder of the property of boyars in disgrace, and sometimes punitive expeditions against whole towns and even districts followed one after another." Under Stalin, Ivan IV had been an object of official rehabilitation, and Eisenstein was censured in 1946 for portraying the oprichniki as something like a Ku Klux Klan. Here the terror is named, the drowning of Novgorod described, and only a residue of the old apologia survives, in the sentence that follows: "One can only be amazed that such 'two-faced' behaviour was combined in Ivan the Terrible with great foresightedness and ability in governing the state."

The second is the treatment of the empire. Russia was "a prison of the peoples", and the book writes without evasion of "the colonial policy of tsarism", of the Central Asian revolt of 1916, of the police-organised anti-Jewish pogroms of 1905, of the Beylis frame-up, of the Lena goldfields massacre with its 270 dead and the Interior Minister's reply in the Duma: "That is how it was, and that's how it will be in the future!" This is the internationalist inheritance, not the Great Russian one, and after the late-Stalin years — when annexation had been recast as voluntary union and Shamil denounced in 1950 as an agent of British and Turkish imperialism — its restoration was a genuine gain. The residue is visible in the Shamil passage even so: the imam now leads an "anti-colonial movement", but his defeat is still attributed to his "reliance on help from the British". The verdict was softened; the frame was kept.

The reply

The answer to this kind of book was worked out on the first version of it. When the post-Stalin History of the CPSU appeared to replace the Short Course, Ernest Mandel —

writing as Ernest Germain — went through it question by question in "Thirty Questions and Thirty Answers about the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", published in two installments in Fourth International, the English-language quarterly of the International Secretariat, nos. 10 and 11. His conclusion about the reform is the one this volume confirms from a different direction: the new history "repeats on this subject — while attenuating them — the gross falsifications of the Short Course". On Lenin's Testament, which the Short Course had suppressed entirely, Mandel found that the 1959 History now quoted it, "but in a singularly mutilated and falsified way", printing the criticisms and omitting the praise. Restore the document, keep the use of it. It is the same operation performed here on the St Petersburg Soviet.

The general shape of the operation was described while this book was still new. In the autumn after the Russian first edition appeared, Dick Roberts took apart the rehabilitation of Marshal Tukhachevsky — announced by Khrushchev in two paragraphs of a closing speech to the Twenty-Second Congress — in "Purge and Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union", International Socialist Review vol. 25 no. 4 (Whole No. 169), Fall 1964. Rehabilitation on those terms, he wrote, offered "a striking measure of Moscow's half-hearted attempt, after more than twenty years, to bring the truth of Stalin's purges to light": a procedure that "can resolve thousands of cases in a trifling sentence at a Moscow party meeting" while the record stays shut. He turned then to the historian commissioned to carry the reform abroad — Louis Aragon, whose *A History of the USSR from Lenin to Khrushchev* was published in New York that same year, and who had been, in Roberts's phrase, "hand-picked by the Khrushchevites" for the task — and finished on a sentence that describes the book in your hands better than it described its own target: "There is not a little 'curious information' that their hand-picked historians must 'fail' to uncover." Roberts was writing about the 1930s, not about a textbook of early Rus. But the mechanism he had identified in 1964 is the one operating in the volume printed the year before: the sentence of acquittal, published; the evidence, not.

For the 1917 that this volume stops just short of, Trotsky's *The Stalin School of Falsification* (English edition 1937) assembled the Central Committee minutes and the suppressed documents themselves, and his 1905 is the participant's account of the Soviet whose chairman this book declines to name. Readers who want to see how long the silences outlived the accusations should look at the late 1980s, when the rehabilitations resumed: Mandel's assessment of the Soviet

moves to reverse the Moscow Trials verdicts appeared in International Viewpoint no. 128 (October 1987), and the United Secretariat of the Fourth International replied to Gorbachev's anniversary speech of 2 November 1987 — which had renewed the political charges against Trotsky while dropping the criminal ones — in "Gorbachev's speech: a new mystification of history", International Viewpoint no. 130 (November 1987). Seventy years after October, and twenty-four years after the first edition of the book you are holding, the argument was still about who was allowed to be named.

HISTORY Yakov Sverdlov

The Bolshevik head of state and chief organiser who died at thirty-three in 1919 - before every quarrel that became fatal - remembered by his widow, from the underground years and Siberian exile onward.

Klavdiia Sverdlova

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

The date on this book's spine is the least reliable thing about it. Progress Publishers issued Yakov Sverdlov in English in 1981, in Liv Tudge's translation, and a reader could be forgiven for taking it as an artefact of the late Brezhnev years. It is nothing of the kind. Its author, Klavdiya Timofeevna Sverdlova, died in 1960 — the book says so itself, in an editorial footnote on its first page of text — and the same footnote records that "Andrei Sverdlov, their son, recorded her memoirs and supervised their publication during her lifetime." So the memoir was composed and first published before 1960, which is to say in the 1950s, by a woman then in her seventies recalling a husband who had been dead for forty years.

The editorial apparatus is younger than the text it annotates. One footnote carries the Party's name-changes down to 1952; another gives Kerensky's dates as 1881–1970; a family footnote records deaths in 1964 and 1966. So the notes were revised at some point after 1970 and the English translation made for 1981. (Readers working from the electronic text should note that the two apparent "1981" citations in it are file-stamps left by the digitisers, not references in the book.) What we have, then, is a 1950s Russian memoir, lightly re-annotated in the 1970s, sold in the 1980s to English-language readers who were given no indication of any of this.

That gap of a quarter-century is not a bibliographical curiosity. A widow's memoir written under Stalin, or in the first uncertain years after him, is a different object from one written after the Twentieth Congress had done its work — and this book, revealingly, is neither one thing nor the other. It has been de-Stalinised on the surface and left Stalinist underneath, and watching how that was done is the most instructive thing a modern reader can take from it.

The man who could be commemorated

Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov was Chairman of the

All-Russian Central Executive Committee — the Soviet republic's head of state — and simultaneously the Bolshevik Party's chief organiser, the man who held the whereabouts, capacities and reliability of the entire cadre in his head. He died in March 1919, aged thirty-three, of an illness contracted on a speaking tour. He therefore died before the trade-union debate, before the ban on factions, before Lenin's illness, before the Testament, before the Left Opposition, before collectivisation, before the Trials. He took no side in any quarrel that later became fatal to take a side in.

This is why he is in print at all. Of the men who ran the Bolshevik Party in 1917, almost every one was later shot, exiled, murdered abroad or erased. Sverdlov's early death made him the rarest thing in the Soviet pantheon: a first-rank October leader who could be praised at full length without any need to explain what became of him. A whole city carried his name — the book's first sentence introduces Ekaterinburg as "the town in the Ural Mountains that is now Sverdlovsk" — and a Party university, and a square in the middle of Moscow. He was safe. The uncomfortable corollary is that the safety was the qualification, and a book built on a safe subject will be shaped by what the subject was safe from.

The judgement of Sverdlov's stature, incidentally, is not a Soviet monopoly. Trotsky, who worked alongside him daily through 1917 and 1918 and had every political reason by then to be ungenerous, was not. In "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin" (1932), under a section heading he gave as "Sverdlov and Stalin as Types of Organizers", he wrote: "Up to the spring of 1919 the chief organizer of the party had been Sverdlov. He did not have the name of General Secretary, a name which was then not yet invented, but he was that in reality." Of the source of his authority Trotsky said simply: "The basis of this authority of Sverdlov was loyalty." In his memorial essay of March 1925 he recorded the working method that made the man indispensable — "'Talk it over with Sverdlov,' Lenin would advise in many cases whenever someone turned to him with a particular problem" — and the standing joke that when Lenin telephoned to propose an emergency measure, the answer was usually "Already." The

American Trotskyist John G. Wright put the point at its sharpest in Fourth International in March 1949: "If one could speak of a 'third' in the Russian Revolution itself, in addition to Lenin and Trotsky, it was Sverdlov, and could not possibly be Stalin."

Sverdlova's estimate of her husband and Trotsky's are, on this narrow point, the same. Where they part is on everything the estimate was later used for.

What survived the thaw

The tell-tale of this book is not the presence of Stalin but the manner of it. He is named nine times in fifty-six thousand words, always flatly, never with an epithet. In the Narym chapter: "At about that time Stalin arrived in Narym and they met for the first time. It was a short-lived acquaintance, however, as Stalin escaped at the end of the month." In the Arctic Circle, at the settlement of Kureika, there are "several police guards and two exiles—Sverdlov and Stalin", and then not another word — no conversation, no shared work, nothing. Anyone who has read the surrounding literature knows that the two men shared quarters at Kureika and could not stand one another; the memoir simply declines the subject. This is the residue of an editing operation. The adjectives of the cult have been scraped off; the sentences beneath them have been left in place.

And the sentences beneath them still carry the old architecture. The clearest case is the account of 16 October 1917, where the book states that "a Military-Revolutionary Centre, comprising Sverdlov, Stalin, Bubnov, Uritsky and Dzerzhinsky, was elected to lead the rising, and head the Military-Revolutionary Committee."

That claim is the single most durable falsification in the Soviet history of October, and it had been publicly demolished half a century before this English edition appeared. In his "Letter to the Bureau of Party History", written in 1927 and printed in English in *The Stalin School of Falsification* (1937), Trotsky set out the case: Stalin, "with the help of the Yaroslavskys, is trying to construct a new history of the organization of the October insurrection, basing himself on the fact that the party created a 'practical center for the organizational leadership of the insurrection,' of which, if you please, Trotsky was not a member. Neither was Lenin a member of that committee. That fact alone demonstrates that the committee had only a subordinate organizational significance. It played no independent role whatever. The legend about this committee has been created today for the simple reason that Stalin was a

member of it." And then the detail that settles it: the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, which the "centre" is said to have headed, already had a chairman — Trotsky. "Superfluous, it would seem, for Trotsky to be introduced a second time into the staff of an organization of which he was already chairman! How hard it is, after all, to correct history after the event!"

The five-man body was real; it was minuted; it was a sub-committee of no independent life whatever, and it never met as such. Sverdlov's presence on it is a fact. What is fabricated is the phrase "to lead the rising" — the promotion of a drafting convenience into the general staff of the revolution. The purpose of the fabrication was never Sverdlov; it was to put Stalin at the centre of a picture from which Trotsky could then be cropped. Trotsky described the resulting canvases with some relish in 1938: "Sverdlov, Djerjinsky, Uritsky and Bubnov are represented in oils or in tempera, seated or standing around Stalin and following his words with rapt attention."

By 1981 that painting had been taken down in the USSR. The sentence it was painted from was still in print, in London and Moscow bookshops, over a dead woman's name.

The same layer shows in the treatment of everyone else. Trotsky appears nine times and never as a colleague — as a fence-sitter in 1910 ("Meanwhile Trotsky and his followers were sitting on the fence, recommending conciliation with the liquidationists— simply playing into their hands"), as a disease in 1913 (Sverdlov instructs the Turukhansk exiles on "the cancerous influence of liquidationism and Trotskyism"), and as an obstruction over Brest-Litovsk. Zinoviev is named exactly once, in a list: "alarmists, deserters and disorganisers arose within our own ranks— Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rykov, Nogin and Milyutin, to name a few". Bukharin appears only as a Left Communist wrecking the peace. These men were Sverdlov's daily working colleagues for eighteen months; he chaired the body several of them sat on; his Secretariat assigned them their work. A memoir that cannot say so is not remembering, it is reciting.

To be fair to the author, the Brest-Litovsk chapters are not simply invented. Trotsky did advance the "no peace, no war" formula; Bukharin's Left Communists did resist Lenin's line to the point of crisis; the Central Committee did divide bitterly, and Lenin's ultimatum quoted here — "These terms must be signed. If you don't sign them, you will sign the Soviet power's death warrant within three weeks" — is a real ultimatum from a real fight. What the book withholds is that this was a dispute

among revolutionaries about how to save a revolution, conducted in public, settled by vote, and followed by everyone concerned going back to work together. Rendered here as the manoeuvres of the unstable and the confused, it becomes the first chapter of a story whose last chapter is a firing squad — and that last chapter, in a book compiled in the 1950s, everyone concerned knew perfectly well.

The week that is missing

Now the silence. In July 1918 the Romanov family was shot in the cellar of the Ipatiev house in Ekaterinburg — the town that would be renamed after Sverdlov — on the night of 16–17 July. The killing was carried out by the Ural Regional Soviet. On 18 July the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee met, took note of the execution and endorsed it, and Sverdlov reported it to the Council of People's Commissars. He chaired that Presidium. Whether Moscow ordered the shooting in advance or ratified a decision taken locally under military pressure is genuinely contested among historians and turns on documents that have been read in more than one way; what is not contested is that the body Sverdlov chaired approved it and that Sverdlov announced it.

This book, which is about Sverdlov, which opens in Ekaterinburg, and which follows him week by week through the summer of 1918, does not mention it. Not to justify it, not to defend it, not to attribute it elsewhere. The words "Romanov" and "Ipatiev" do not occur. Nicholas II is named once, in a footnote, to date Stolypin's premiership.

The elision is precise enough to be visible. The narrative gives the Fifth Congress of Soviets in detail, day by day, through the Left SR rising of 6 July and the arrests of 8 July; it records that "On 10 July the Congress ratified the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic"; it then notes that "Lenin, Sverdlov, Lunacharsky, Petrovsky, Krylenko and other CC members and commissars gave reports about the Congress to mass meetings on 12 July, which was a Friday." From there it turns aside into a charming digression about which Friday evenings the leadership spent speaking in factories, and when it resumes a dated narrative it is mid-September. The single most consequential act of Sverdlov's chairmanship falls into that gap, and the gap is where the prose becomes anecdotal.

Something similar, though less absolute, happens with the Red Terror. The book gives a full and rather moving account of 30 August 1918 — Uritsky's assassination in Petrograd that morning, Sverdlov's refusal to cancel the evening meetings ("were we going to hide, let that bourgeois filth frighten us?"),

the telephone call to his wife in the country, the sleepless Kremlin the next morning. It records that he went to the Cheka offices "to see Kaplan, the would-be assassin", and assigned two men to begin questioning her. And it reproduces, in full and without comment, the appeal he issued that night over his own signature as Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee: the working class "will respond with merciless mass terror against all enemies of the revolution."

That sentence is the opening of the Red Terror, and the book prints it as a rallying cry. It does not print what followed — the decree of 5 September, the hostage-taking, the executions by category. The reader is shown the words and denied their consequences, which is a more sophisticated evasion than simple omission and, in its way, a more revealing one: the terror was not something the memoir was ashamed of, merely something it saw no reason to count.

None of this is Klavdiya Sverdlova's failure of nerve, or not only that. It is worth remembering who assembled this book. The footnote quoted at the outset says her son Andrei recorded the memoirs and supervised their publication. Andrei Sverdlov spent his career in the Soviet state security organs, and the memoir literature of the Terror — Anna Larina, Bukharin's widow, among others — records him as an interrogator of the families of the arrested. He is also the infant his mother carried into Tomsk prison in 1911 to be shown to his father, in one of the most affecting scenes in these pages. The book was shaped, in other words, by a man with a professional stake in what the 1950s were permitted to remember. Sverdlova's voice is audible throughout; it is not the only hand on the page.

What is genuinely here

Set all of that aside — and it can be set aside, because it is concentrated in the last two chapters — and what remains is a good book, and in places an unusually good one.

The first five chapters cover 1905 to 1917: the Urals underground, the Ekaterinburg and Perm committees, five and a half years of prison, six years of Siberian exile, an escape by boat down the Ob. Sverdlova was not a spectator to any of it. She was a member of the Ekaterinburg RSDLP committee, arrested in the spring of 1905 over an underground press, and her account of meeting "Comrade Andrei" — dodging through courtyards to shake a tail, walking arm in arm with a comrade to look like a courting couple — is first-hand social history of a kind that is scarce in English at any price. She followed him into exile, bore children there, and brought them into his cell.

Above all she kept his letters, and quotes them at length. From Maksimkin Yar, the settlement above Narym where he was the only exile, in October 1913: "Imagine a narrow room, three paces across and seven long, like a prison cell. One little window on one side, two on the other. A plank bed on the wall nearest the street, like a prison bunk, a trunk, a little table..." On the food: "It's like this—for four days we have been living on tea and boiled potatoes with beer." On what he did with his days: coaching his landlady to qualify as a teacher, running a fish trap, staging Chekhov's *The Bear* with villagers who had never seen a theatre, doctoring the settlement out of medical supplies sent for his own use — "I have doctored almost everyone here, or done them some other favour... and take nothing for it, which still bewilders them all." There is a small masterpiece of a scene in which the two guards raid the room, seize a sheaf of "mysterious signs and diagrams" as proof of sedition, and are told by their superior that the most terrible of the confiscated documents is a Pythagorean triangle.

And there is the exhaustion under it. "I did not sleep and felt very bad towards evening... Oh, it's all so dreadful! And I have no one here—even if I were to go under completely nobody would know for months..." What follows is the best thing in the book: the Bolshevik exiles across four settlements agree that this is a matter of life and death, and simply besiege the district police officer, week after week, each spending his single permitted audience on the same request — bring back Sverdlov. It worked. That is what the underground actually was, and no official history conveys it.

Sverdlova's own summary of the cost is unimprovable: "In 1917 he was 32, and had spent almost 12 years of his life in detention: five and a half years in prison and six in exile in the most remote and wretched corners of Siberia. He was arrested 14 times. Those are the statistics of his life."

The account of the Left SR rising of 6 July 1918 is also worth having, whatever one makes of its politics. The detail of how the Bolsheviks secured the Bolshoi Theatre — Left SR guards accepted but each shadowed by two or three Latvian riflemen, all doors locked but the orchestra-pit exit, credentials checked at the door by the CEC secretary — is circumstantial in a way that reads like testimony rather than construction. So does the chapter on Sverdlov's last weeks in Kharkov, arguing exhausted Ukrainian factions back into one party. The book then declines even to narrate his death: "He was never to leave Moscow again..." and the section ends. For that scene one has to go to Trotsky's 1925 essay, where Lenin telephones and says, in "that special muted voice which meant great strain": "He is gone."

Reading it now

Treat this as two books bound together. The first, running to the end of the Turukhansk chapter, is a participant's memoir of the Russian underground by a woman who lived it, and it is valuable precisely in proportion to how little it argues. The second, covering 1917 to 1919, is a 1950s official narrative wearing a widow's voice, and every load-bearing claim in it should be checked against something else.

The something else is not hard to find and was mostly written by people who knew the man. Trotsky's memorial essay of 13 March 1925, translated in *Fourth International* in November 1946, is the fullest portrait of Sverdlov as organiser that exists outside Soviet publishing. The section "Sverdlov and His Role" in *Lenin Before October* (1924) describes his method of chairing. "Sverdlov and Stalin as Types of Organizers", in "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin" (1932), is the direct comparison, and contains Lenin's warning, when Stalin was proposed for the post Sverdlov had held in fact if not in name, that "this cook will prepare only peppery dishes". For the Military-Revolutionary Centre, go to chapter four of *The Stalin School of Falsification*. Two things this series' readers should know it cannot supply from its own shelves: Trotsky's account of learning about the Romanovs' fate is in his *Diary in Exile*, which is not among the local texts consulted for this introduction, and no contemporaneous Left Opposition analysis of the September 1918 terror decree turned up in them either. Those gaps are stated here rather than papered over.

Sverdlova wrote about a young man she loved who worked himself to death at thirty-three, and about a life the two of them spent mostly apart, in cells and taiga settlements, waiting for post that came twice a year. There is no reason to doubt that she meant every word about him. The tragedy of the book is not that she lied; it is that by the time she was allowed to remember him in print, the terms on which he could be remembered had been set by people who had killed nearly everyone else in the story — and one of them was sitting at her elbow, taking down what she said.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Revolution in Laos: Practice and Prospects

The founding leader of revolutionary Laos on his own revolution - the long war, the eight lessons he drew from it, and the attempt to build socialism in one of the poorest countries ever to try.

Kaysone Phomvihane

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

Most of the volumes in this series are Soviet books about other people's revolutions: institute monographs, written in Moscow, explaining to a foreign readership what Marxism-Leninism teaches. This one is different. *Revolution in Laos: Practice and Prospects* is a primary document. Its author, Kaysone Phomvihane, was the founding General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and, from 2 December 1975, Prime Minister of the newly proclaimed People's Democratic Republic of Laos. The book gathers three of his reports — a historical narrative, "The Long Road to Victory"; a set of eight theoretical "Lessons to Be Drawn"; and a five-part statement on "building socialist Laos" — and presents them, through the Soviet political publishing house Politizdat, as the authoritative self-account of one of the smallest and poorest states ever to declare for socialism. It is not a book to be caught in falsifications about 1917 or the Moscow Trials, because it is not about them. It is a leader of a governing party explaining what his revolution did and where he intends to take it. That makes the questions to ask of it different, and in some ways sharper: not "does he distort the historical record," but "what does his own theory commit him to, what does his own account leave out, and can the categories he wields against his enemies ever be turned toward his own new state."

The date of the argument is 1979, not the 1981 of the spine. The English translation is copyright Progress 1981; the Russian original is Politizdat 1980; but the reports themselves must be read by the latest events they refer to, and those events are late. The third and most theoretical report cites the resolution of the LPRP's Fourth Central Committee Plenum of February 1977 and the national Party conference of January 1978, and then goes further: it hails "the achievements of the people of Kampuchea who, under the United Front for National Salvation, within a short period smashed the forces of the reactionary clique of Pol Pot-Ieng Sary and liberated the whole country" — that is, the Vietnamese invasion that installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea in January 1979

— and it "strongly condemn[s] the Chinese government for unleashing a war of aggression against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," the border war of February–March 1979. This is a book of 1979, finalised at the moment the Third Indochina War split the communist world, and it takes its side unambiguously. Politizdat's decision to give it export circulation the following year is itself a statement: with China lost to "Maoism" and Vietnam and Laos bound to Moscow, the Soviet Union was presenting the Lao revolution as a showcase — a peasant nation of perhaps three million people passing directly to socialism under Soviet and Vietnamese guidance, a living proof of the doctrine Soviet theory called the "non-capitalist path of development." The biographical facts above are drawn from the book's own author-note, which also records that Kaysone was born in Savannakhet in 1920, was educated in Hanoi at a lycée and the law faculty of the university there, and headed LPRP delegations to the 22nd, 24th and 25th Congresses of the CPSU. Where this introduction gives a title or a date for Kaysone, it comes from that note or from the reports themselves.

What is true, and it is a great deal

The liberation struggle this book narrates was real, protracted, and waged against overwhelming force, and any criticism that forgets this forfeits the right to be heard. Part One is a partisan account — every setback is another's treachery, every leader "wise" — but the spine of it is fact. The French did conquer Laos at the end of the nineteenth century and rule it as a fragment of an Indochina governed for the benefit of Paris; the Japanese did occupy it; a thirty-year armed struggle, from the declaration of independence on 12 October 1945 through the Geneva settlements of 1954 and 1962 to the seizure of power in 1975, did take place, and it was won by Lao fighters who began, in Kaysone's own honest phrase, "from scratch, relying on our own strength and potential," with "antiquated guns and handmade weapons." Above all, the American war on Laos was exactly the crime the book says it was. Kaysone is right that "on 17 May 1964, the US Air Force first bombed the liberated areas," right that Washington ran the country through

"thousands of their military advisors who actually exercised control over the activity of the Vientiane administration," right that under Nixon the enemy waged "an unprecedentedly barbaric and inhuman war of annihilation against large, densely populated areas of the liberated zone." A reader who came to this book knowing nothing of Laos would learn a true and terrible thing: that a small agrarian nation survived one of the most concentrated bombing campaigns in the history of warfare and emerged with its revolution intact. The aspiration that runs through Part Three — to lift a country of subsistence farmers, "extremely backward farming at the mercy of the elements," out of what Kaysone calls the "feudal and prefeudal forms of exploitation" — is a serious and honourable one. None of what follows is a denial of any of that.

The theory: two stages, and the ghost of permanent revolution

The organising idea of the book, and the point on which the anti-Stalinist tradition has the sharpest reply, is stated in the author-note before Kaysone has said a word: the Party, it explains, "successfully resolved the tasks of the national democratic stage of the revolution" and is now "laying the foundations of a socialist society bypassing the stage of capitalist development." The revolution comes in two stages. First a "national democratic revolution," completed on 2 December 1975 — the moment, as the Introduction puts it, of "the victorious consummation of the national democratic and the beginning of the socialist revolution in our country." Then a socialist revolution, reaching socialism without passing through capitalism. Kaysone traces the schema to the Party's own founding line and quotes the political programme of the LPRP's Second Congress of 1972 for its most exact formulation: "once the people's national democratic revolution has been brought about, the conditions are created on a countrywide scale for the direct transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development." The Second Congress, he says elsewhere, "defined its paramount task as follows: 'The conditions necessary for a direct transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development must be established.'"

This is not an idiosyncrasy of the Lao revolution. It is the central theoretical claim of the tradition this series exists to examine — the theory of stages, in its late Soviet colonial dress. The whole quarrel between Trotsky and his opponents, from 1905 onward, turned on precisely this: whether the revolution in a backward country must pass through a discrete "bourgeois-democratic" stage before the question of socialism

could be posed, or whether, as the theory of permanent revolution held, the democratic and socialist tasks interpenetrate and can be carried through only by the proletariat taking power. Trotsky put the colonial case in the second thesis of *The Permanent Revolution* (1930) in terms that read as though written against this book: "With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses." The point of the theory was not that stages could be legislated in advance but that they could not.

Kaysone's book is, in effect, the stages theory carried through to its administrative conclusion, and it even preserves the old formula Trotsky spent a lifetime contesting. During the national-democratic revolution, he writes, the organs of people's power "in effect, exercised the dictatorship of the workers and peasants under the leadership of the Party"; only "after this revolution was accomplished" did the state "get down to carrying out the historical tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat." The "dictatorship of the workers and peasants," succeeded at a later stage by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" — this is Lenin's pre-1917 slogan of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," the very formula whose transformation into an impassable barrier between stages Trotsky diagnosed as the theoretical root of the Stalinist policy in China and Spain. The difficulty is not verbal. In a country where, on Kaysone's own repeated admission, "the working class was weak" to the point of near-non-existence and "all our revolutionary organisations and forces consisted chiefly of peasants," a "dictatorship of the proletariat" is a dictatorship exercised in the name of a class that barely exists, by a party that identifies itself with that class by fiat. Permanent revolution was, among other things, the warning that this substitution — party for class, stage for struggle — does not dissolve the problem of who actually rules; it conceals it. That warning is the hinge of the reflexive question this book cannot answer, and we return to it below.

The reader should also see that "bypassing the capitalist stage of development" is not Lao coinage but Soviet doctrine, the export theory of "socialist orientation" applied from Aden to Angola. A sibling volume in this series, the Academy of Sciences' *USSR and Countries of Africa* (1980), builds its entire case on the same "non-capitalist road," the claim that petty-bourgeois or peasant states — its "socialist-oriented" regimes — could reach socialism without a capitalist stage

provided they took the Soviet Union for their guide and model. Kaysone reproduces the doctrine almost word for word when he writes of nations that, "having broken the fetters of colonial slavery, they are continuing their bitter struggle... to achieve social reform in non-capitalist development." The same theory answered by the same text: whether a state can be steered to socialism from above, by a vanguard standing in for an absent proletariat and a foreign power supplying the model, is the question permanent revolution posed, and this book presents the affirmative as settled fact.

The verdict of the event

A theory that makes a prediction can be tested against what followed, and this one now can be, in a way it could not when Progress sent the book abroad. Half of Kaysone's schema came true, and the half that did should be granted without grudging. The national-democratic stage was no fiction: independence from France was won, the monarchy and the feudal-comprador order it crowned were swept away, a country long carved into fiefs and split in two by war was unified under a single state, and the land was taken from the great proprietors and given to those who worked it. On the tasks it had already accomplished the book records real history; the framework named those immediate tasks correctly and the movement carried them out. That is what raises it above propaganda.

The other half — the "direct transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development" that the Second Congress had set as the "paramount task" — did not arrive. The attempt was made: an agricultural collectivisation drive was launched in 1978, and it met the answer such drives have always met from a peasantry just handed the land — resistance, the slaughter of livestock rather than its surrender, flight across the Thai border — so that within a year or two it was quietly suspended. The economy stagnated through the early 1980s. And then, at its Fourth Congress in November 1986, the very party that had proclaimed the socialist revolution adopted the New Economic Mechanism (*chin thanakan mai*, "new economic management"): prices freed, cooperatives dissolved, private trade and enterprise licensed, and by 1988 a foreign-investment law among the most liberal in the region. It reintroduced, by deliberate policy, precisely the market and capitalist relations the book had said Laos would leap over. This was not a Lao aberration but the regional pattern — the same turn Vietnam took as *doi moi* in December 1986 and the Soviet Union as *perestroika* — and the Fourth International's press followed it as it happened. Writing in *International Viewpoint* in March 1991, Pierre Rousset described the

Vietnamese "key formulae of *doi moi* (renewal) and *tu duy moi* (new thought)" as an "economic liberalization" that had freed prices, courted foreign capital and split the society between the traders and peasants who gained by it and the wage-earners whose incomes it eroded — a portrait that fits Vientiane as closely as Hanoi, for Laos moved in step.

This is the verdict, and it falls exactly where permanent revolution said it would. A backward, war-ruined, overwhelmingly peasant country, isolated and led by a party standing in for a proletariat that barely existed, could not vault into socialism by the will of its cadres; the plan could not simply abolish the market. Trotsky had put the general point in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936): "Money cannot be arbitrarily 'abolished'," and the transitional epoch "does not mean a cutting down of trade, but, on the contrary, its extraordinary extension." The Fourth International restated the argument in the 1980s, in the debate between Ernest Mandel and Alec Nove over market and plan (*Quatrième Internationale* no. 28, April–June 1988) — a general theoretical reckoning, not a word of it about Laos, but joined at exactly the moment the bureaucratic states were reaching for the market *en masse*. What actually happened to Laos was not a transition to socialism bypassing capitalism. It was a bureaucratic party, its political monopoly wholly unbroken, presiding within a decade of the "beginning of the socialist revolution" over the reintroduction of capitalist relations. The book was right about the stage it had finished and wrong about the stage it foretold, and its wrongness took the very shape the reply had named in advance.

Vietnam: tutelage as "proletarian internationalism"

The seventh of Kaysone's "Lessons" is titled "Combining Ardent Patriotism with Genuine Proletarian Internationalism," and it is where the book's most consequential silence is not a silence at all but a transfiguration. The plain facts, most of them supplied by the book itself, are these. Kaysone joined the Communist Party of Indochina in 1949. That party — founded, he writes, by Ho Chi Minh in 1930 — led the revolutions of all three Indochinese countries under, in his own words, "the single leadership of one Party," until its Second Congress in 1951 resolved that each country should form a party of its own; the LPRP, constituted in 1955, was "the successor to the splendid cause of the Communist Party of Indochina in Laos." The military record is equally frank: the decisive offensives of the 1950s were carried out by Lao forces "supported by Vietnamese volunteers," and the victories of the 1970s came "with the close cooperation and broad support of the army and

people of fraternal Vietnam." The relationship Kaysone describes is one of "perfect unity of the two parties in their political outlook," a bond he calls, twice, a "special relationship" and "special relations" — "the special relations and splendid militant alliance between Laos and Vietnam, seeing in this an essential factor of victory."

Presented as internationalism, this is also a description of dependence, and the events of 1979 show how little independent room the "special relationship" left. On the two questions that divided the entire communist movement — the fate of Kampuchea and the quarrel with China — Laos took Hanoi's position exactly and without visible deliberation: endorsing the Vietnamese overthrow of the Khmer Rouge as a liberation "saving the people from extinction," condemning China's invasion of Vietnam as a "war of aggression," breaking with a neighbour on whose "solidarity and friendship" Kaysone says the Party had "always placed a high value." Even the theoretical vocabulary is imported: the "three revolutions" that Part Three makes the centrepiece of the transition — "revolution in the sphere of production relations... science and technology... ideology and culture" — is the Vietnamese Communist Party's formula, canonised at its congress of December 1976 and here taken over entire. The Lao–Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of July 1977, which formalised the garrisoning of Vietnamese troops in Laos, is not named in these pages; but the alignment it sealed saturates them.

To Kaysone's credit, the book does not simply efface the tension. Alongside the language of fraternal fusion runs an insistent theme of "self-reliance," "the principle of independence," the conviction "that the revolution in Laos is a task for the people of Laos to be achieved under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party." He is aware, in other words, that a nation whose army was trained by another's, whose party descends from another's, and whose foreign policy tracks another's must assert its sovereignty all the more loudly. The assertion is sincere and the dependence is real, and the book contains both without resolving them — which is itself the most honest thing in it.

The silences, and who filled them

A revolutionary leader's account of his own war will suppress what does not serve; the test is whether the suppression concerns something the author plainly knew and had reason to name. Four things meet that test here.

The first is the scale of the American air war. Kaysone

denounces the bombing at length and in the right words, and once — exactly once — he gestures at its magnitude: "The millions of tons of metal rained upon it by the enemy the army countered with hatred, courage, resourcefulness." But the phrase is deployed to honour the endurance of his soldiers, not to reckon with what the bombing did to the land and people he now governs. Nowhere does the book state what had by 1979 become widely documented: that Laos was, per head of population, the most heavily bombed country in the history of warfare; that the Plain of Jars — which appears in these pages only as a military prize "liberated" on 1 January 1961 — was depopulated and cratered into a moonscape; that the unexploded ordnance would kill Lao farmers for generations after the last plane left. A leader has reasons to dwell on such a catalogue, since it indicts his enemy absolutely. That Kaysone does not may be the tell of a different anxiety: to enumerate the devastation is to describe the ruined country his new state actually had to govern, and the book's forward-looking optimism cannot afford the inventory.

The second silence is the enemy Kaysone will not name. Throughout, the adversary is "the American imperialists," "the puppet army," "Thai mercenaries," "special-purpose crack troops... under their direct command." The word "Meo" occurs once, and it refers to an anti-French uprising of 1918–1922. Nowhere does the book acknowledge the CIA's "secret army" — the tens of thousands of Hmong recruited, armed and paid by American intelligence to fight the Pathet Lao, the largest covert paramilitary operation of the era. The omission is not innocent: the Hmong were a Lao people, the war among them was in part a civil war, and their post-1975 flight would become the country's gravest humanitarian wound. To name the secret army is to concede that the enemy included Lao citizens, and that the new state inherited their enmity.

Which is the third silence: the refugees. By the time Part Three was written, something on the order of a tenth of the population had fled the country, the Hmong most of all, into camps across the Thai border. The book records only the enemy's flight — American personnel and "reactionary leaders" who "pack their bags in haste and leave the country" — never the exodus of ordinary Lao. And the fourth is the fate of those who did not flee. The book's own euphemism is present and revealing. Enemy soldiers, Kaysone writes, were ordered to "participate collectively in seminars"; the previous ruling circles are those "who have consented to re-education in order to become fully-fledged working members of society." The Lao word was *samana*, "seminar," and behind it lay the re-education camps in which many thousands were held for years without trial — among them the deposed King, Savang

Vatthana, whom the book mentions only as an abstraction, the monarch whose "abdication" the Congress "accepted" before abolishing "the anachronistic monarchical regime." The King is never named. That he had been removed to a camp in the northeast, where he and the royal family would die, is nowhere in a book that presents his departure as a voluntary constitutional act.

On all four points the Fourth International's press, following Indochina week by week, said what Kaysone would not — and said it, crucially, while giving the Lao revolution its due. In March 1979, in the same weeks Kaysone was completing his third report, Intercontinental Press carried a long article, "Imperialism's 'Opium War' Against Laotian Revolution," that named the whole apparatus the book omits: that "the stiffest resistance to the regime is being waged in northwestern Laos, where members of the Meo nationality were organized into a mercenary army by the CIA in the 1960s," that Hmong refugees in Thai camps were being recruited for cross-border raids, that the American who had helped "organize the U.S. 'secret war' against the Pathet Lao" was still at work. The point is not that the Trotskyist press was hostile to the revolution — it was not. The resolution "New Advances in the Indochinese Revolution," adopted by the 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International, held that "the greatest advances in the intervening years outside Vietnam have been in Laos," and credited the government of "Premier Kaysone Phomvihane" with a course that, "vacillating but increasingly anticapitalist," had disbanded the royal army, abolished the monarchy, expropriated the big landlords and foreign firms and distributed land to the peasants. The difference is that the same resolution called the leadership "Stalinist" and named the refugees, the CIA army, and the bureaucratic character of the new states — the things a partisan of the revolution can say and its General Secretary cannot.

The reflexive test: a category that never turns inward

The deepest question to put to a Marxist-Leninist text is not how often it invokes the enemy but whether its own weapons can ever be aimed at itself. Kaysone's apparatus is complete and orthodox. The dictatorship of the proletariat is "the key aspect, the fundamental characteristic of any proletarian revolution," and its purpose is stated with precision: "the working class must immediately establish the dictatorship of the proletariat as its chief weapon in crushing any opposition from the exploiting classes that have just been overthrown, and in defeating any attempt to restore the previous system." The

aim of the socialist revolution is "to suppress any opposition or attempts to revive the remnants of the reactionary forces." The final and longest section demands that "the Party be the true directing force in the system of dictatorship of the proletariat." Opportunism, in the one place it is defined, marks "the fundamental difference between the consistently revolutionary ideology of the proletariat and the reformist ideology of opportunists of every kind" — an essence attached to no act and refutable by no evidence, the standard construction this series meets across the whole Progress corpus.

The point is what all of this is aimed at, and it is aimed, without exception, outward: at the exploiting classes, the remnants of reaction, the opportunists, the imperialists and their agents. There is a single passage of self-criticism, and it proves the rule. In the last section Kaysone acknowledges "many flaws and defects" in the Party — but every one is managerial. Theoretical work is "still inadequate"; ideological work "has not yet been radically restructured"; "many primary Party organisations are still weak"; Party workers "are often unable to cope." Not once does the critique reach the category itself — the possibility that a one-party dictatorship exercised in the name of an almost non-existent proletariat, in a country with no institutions of workers' democracy, might be not an instrument of the working class but a stratum ruling over it. The book can promise "genuine personal freedom" in the same breath as it announces the suppression of all opposition, and register no contradiction. This is the concrete meaning of the abstraction with which the theoretical section opened. The permanent revolution's insistence that a "dictatorship of the proletariat" without proletarian democracy becomes the rule of a bureaucracy over the workers is not a debating point about 1905; it is the exact description of the state whose foundations this book celebrates, offered thirty years earlier and refused in advance. The reflexive test — can the accusation ever be turned on the accuser's own side — comes back, as it does throughout this series, a flat no. That is the finding, and it is not about a word.

What the book is for

Read as history, Revolution in Laos is a genuine, if self-serving, record of a small nation's long fight for its independence, and the fight deserves the honour Kaysone pays it. Read as theory, it is a clear and unusually candid statement of the doctrine of stages in its Soviet colonial form — candid because, unlike the institute monographs, it is written by the man carrying the doctrine out, who will tell you that in the struggle "we did not emphasise the leading role of the Party,

did not talk about socialism," who will name the Vietnamese volunteers and the "special relationship," who will call the camps "seminars" to your face. Its value to a critical reader lies exactly there: it lets you watch the theory this series was founded to contest being applied, in real time, to a real country, by its own author — and then, in the decade that followed, it lets you watch that theory's central promise fail, the announced leap to socialism ending in the New Economic Mechanism and the return of the market, exactly as the tradition of permanent revolution had warned it must. The Fourth International's answer was on the presses in the same year, and it was not the imperialist's answer. It credited the land reform and the expropriations, defended Laos against Washington and Bangkok, and still insisted that a revolution led by a Stalinist party in perfect step with Hanoi and Moscow, garrisoned by foreign troops, silent about its own refugees and its own camps, was a deformed thing that the working people of Laos had yet to make their own. Between that judgment and this book's, the reader now has both texts, and can decide.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Nuclear Strategy and Common Sense

American nuclear doctrine read from Moscow at the end of detente - targeting, first strike, the SALT negotiations - by an author who signed off in May 1979 and never got to mention Reagan.

Nikolai Nikolaevich Luzin

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

Nikolai Luzin closes his introduction with a dateline: "The Author May 1979". Everything that matters about this book is contained in the distance between that line and the 1981 on its spine.

In May 1979 the SALT II treaty had not yet been signed. The NATO foreign and defence ministers had not yet met at Brussels. There were no Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Ronald Reagan was a candidate. By the time an English reader could buy *Nuclear Strategy and Common Sense* in a Progress edition, all four of those things had changed, and the world the book describes — a world in which détente is real, reversible only by American bad faith, and defended by a Soviet Union with nothing to answer for — had ceased to exist.

Some of that gap was closed before printing. The book is not a pure 1979 text: a thin later layer was worked into it, and it can be dated almost to the month. SALT II and the Vienna summit of June 1979 are treated at length, clause by clause. The NATO decision of December 1979 is there, in a section headed "Missiles Against Detente". The Brezhnev–Schmidt meeting of "the summer of 1980" is there. Presidential Directive 59, which Carter signed in August 1980, is there, and Luzin notes that it came "on the eve of the 1980 presidential elections". That is where the updating stops. Reagan's name does not appear in this book at all — not once, in eighty-two thousand words about American nuclear strategy, published in the year he took office. Neither does the 26th Congress of the CPSU, which met in February and March 1981 and which no Soviet foreign-policy book published after it would have failed to quote. The revision layer closes somewhere around September or October 1980: after PD-59, before the American election result, well before the Congress.

So this is a book of the last months of détente, written by a man who did not yet know détente was over, lightly patched by someone who suspected it might be, and shipped to English readers in the year of Reagan's inauguration, Solidarity, and

the first great Euromissile demonstrations. Progress did this habitually. The companion volume in this series, Radomir Bogdanov's *The US War Machine and Politics*, is a 1983 monograph in a 1986 jacket. Luzin's is a 1979 monograph in a 1981 jacket. The export operation was always about eighteen months behind the world it was arguing with.

The December that is in the book, and the December that is not

Now the finding that organises everything else.

Luzin's revision layer reaches into December 1979 and reports what happened there:

In mid-December 1979, NATO foreign and defence ministers yielded to Washington pressure and agreed to the manufacture and deployment in Britain, the FRG and Italy of new types of US medium-range nuclear weapons—108 Pershing-2 launching sites and 464 Tomahawk cruise missiles.

That is accurate — the double-track decision was taken on 12 December 1979, and the figures are right. The revision therefore demonstrably had access to events of that month. On 25 December 1979 the 40th Army crossed the Amu Darya and Soviet forces entered Afghanistan. The word "Afghanistan" occurs exactly once in this book, and the occurrence is this: "Soviet Russia was the first country to recognise Afghanistan's independence and to support the Turkish national liberation movement." It is a sentence about 1919.

A book about nuclear danger, revised through the summer of 1980, which can report the NATO ministers' meeting of December 1979 and cannot report the Soviet invasion of the same month, is not suffering from a publication lag. It is doing something else.

The book deserves to be argued with, not dismissed

That has to be said before anything more, because the case Luzin is making is largely true and he makes it with some distinction. He was a soldier. He was at the Elbe in April 1945 or writes as though he was — the book opens with the Soviet and American armies meeting there, the swapped buttons and cap stars, Bradley's jeep and Konev's Don stallion — and he returns to his own war repeatedly. Whatever else this is, it is not a committee product. It has a first person and a temper.

His account of the evolution of American nuclear doctrine from 1945 to 1960 is drawn from American sources and holds up. He traces the air-power strategy to Douhet by way of Mitchell, notes the Air Force's independence in 1947 and the presidential commission of 1948, sets out the vocabulary the Americans themselves used — total war, unlimited war, spasm war — and quotes Brodie's own definition of preventive war as "a premeditated attack by one country against another, which is unprovoked". He observes, correctly, that Dulles's "massive retaliation" of January 1954 renamed an existing strategy rather than inventing one, and he has Kissinger and Brodie in the footnotes conceding the point. On Hiroshima he takes the position that the bombing was militarily unnecessary and directed at Moscow rather than Tokyo — contested then and contested now, but a serious position held by serious people, and he argues it from Groves, Stimson's memorandum of 11 September 1945, and Maxwell Taylor.

His treatment of SALT II is the most useful thing in the volume and is now genuinely rare. He goes through the treaty provision by provision — the freeze on fixed ICBM launchers, the launch-weight and throw-weight ceilings, the fourteen-warhead limit on submarine-launched missiles, the ban on rapid-reload systems, the protocol undertaking on air-to-surface ballistic missiles — with an evident professional pleasure in the drafting. The treaty was signed in June 1979 and never ratified. A careful, sympathetic, contemporary exposition of what it actually contained, written before anyone knew it was dead, has documentary value that has only increased.

He is right about forward-based systems. The Western accounting that set Soviet medium-range missiles against the British and French forces while omitting the American aircraft, carriers and submarines assigned to the European theatre was a real piece of arithmetic sleight-of-hand, and Luzin names it: "Therefore, the Atlantic strategists point to a mote in another's eye but do not or refuse to see a beam in their own." He is

right that Pershing II and the Tomahawk, able to reach deep into Soviet territory from Western Europe, were strategic weapons in everything but the treaty definition — "The medium-range missiles deployed within the Soviet Union are not designed for, and are incapable of, hitting targets in the United States, while US medium-range missiles can be used for striking targets deep inside the Soviet Union." He is right that Eugene Rostow and the Committee on the Present Danger needed the Soviet threat to be larger than it was, and he quotes Rostow to that effect.

On the neutron bomb he is very good indeed. The Pentagon called the weapon clean because its blast radius was small:

Using the same logic it could have called potassium cyanide clean, too, for it does not harm the suit of the person who swallows it.

And his demolition of the "limited nuclear war" concept in PD-59 is the best passage in the book. He points out that the doctrine requires the enemy to cooperate:

It is too "iffy": if I strike first and the enemy fights by the rules, if I am first to destroy enemy nuclear weapons, if I can strike with surgical precision and prevent a retaliatory strike.

Then he brings his own war to bear on the counterforce planners:

no matter how thoroughly you planned an attack or how intensively artillery and air force prepared it, pockets of resistance always remained

That is a real argument, made from real knowledge, and the American strategic-studies community was making the same one at the same time. He goes on to note that the distinction between military and civilian targets is arbitrary because defence plants sit in cities, that multi-megaton counterforce strikes kill across a vast radius regardless of accuracy, and that Harold Brown had himself conceded that a controlled exchange might escalate. All correct. A reader who wants the Soviet case against American first-strike doctrine at its strongest will find it here, and will find it better argued than in most of what Progress printed.

The sentence that gives the game away

Two pages after the accurate account of the NATO decision, Luzin explains why the Western justification for it is false:

But first, in the past decade not a single medium-range nuclear carrier has been added to the number already stationed in the European part of the Soviet Union. Nor does the USSR deploy any such weapons on foreign soil. Second, the updating of some Soviet tactical weapons neither upsets the balance of forces in Europe nor alters the strategic situation in the region or in the world.

This is not a matter of interpretation. The RSD-10 Pioneer, which NATO designated the SS-20, entered service in 1976. It was a mobile, solid-fuelled, three-warhead MIRVed intermediate-range ballistic missile with a range of around five thousand kilometres, replacing the fixed, liquid-fuelled, single-warhead SS-4 and SS-5. By the time Luzin's revision layer closes, deployment ran to roughly two hundred launchers. It is the reason the December 1979 meeting happened. Luzin describes it — without naming it, because the designation "SS-20" does not occur anywhere in this book, nor do "SS-4" or "SS-5" — as "the updating of some Soviet tactical weapons".

A five-thousand-kilometre missile is not a tactical weapon, and Luzin knew what a tactical weapon was: on the same page he correctly lists Honest John at forty kilometres, Lance at a hundred and twenty, Sergeant at a hundred and forty, Pershing-1 at seven hundred and forty. He had the ranges in front of him. He simply declined to put the Soviet system on the same table.

The consequence is that the reader is handed a causal chain with its first link amputated. NATO decides, in December 1979, to deploy 572 missiles, for no reason but American appetite and West European servility. The Pioneer deployment that preceded it by three years is gone; the phrase "Soviet missiles" does not occur in the book at all. Whatever one thinks of NATO's response — and there was a serious left case that Pershing II and cruise were a first-strike programme dressed as a counter-deployment — the argument cannot be made honestly by deleting the thing being responded to. Luzin's version persuades only a reader who has no other source.

What else is not there

The pattern extends. Against a book that counts American warheads, bases and budgets with precision, set the following returns, all of them nil or near-nil:

There is no figure anywhere in this book for Soviet military expenditure — not in roubles, not as a share of national

income, not as a share of the state budget. Luzin uses the budget metric well and repeatedly on the United States: "the US military budget is a mirror of military strategy," he writes, and he is right. He never turns the mirror round. This is the same fault as in Bogdanov's *The US War Machine and Politics*, but one degree worse: Bogdanov at least gives the American figure — 5 to 13 per cent of GNP, over 25 per cent of federal spending — and simply omits the comparison. Luzin gives no Soviet number at all to omit. Two books, two authors, two decades apart in composition, the same hole in the same place. That is a genre rule, not an oversight.

There is no Soviet military-industrial complex. There is a section headed "People Versus the Military-Industrial Complex", and it is entirely about America. The nine Soviet defence-industrial ministries, the Military-Industrial Commission of the Council of Ministers, their first call on the country's best plant and best engineers, their representation in the Central Committee — none of this exists in the book, though the whole argumentative apparatus Luzin builds for the American case would apply to it without modification.

There is no "launch on warning", no "no first use", no SIOP or NSDM by name, and no Sakharov — who in January 1980, inside the revision window, was seized in Moscow and exiled to Gorky for objecting to the invasion the book does not mention.

And there is no Warsaw Pact intervention, ever. Czechoslovakia appears thirteen times — as Hitler's victim in 1938 and 1939, as a signatory of the treaties of the early 1970s, as a participant in the Vienna force-reduction talks, and as the butt of a Chinese joke about nuclear casualties — and never once in 1968. Hungary appears twice, both times in lists of signatory states. Instead there is this, quoted approvingly, from Andrei Gromyko in 1975:

in the twenty years of the Treaty its members, individually or jointly, have not initiated a single conflict nor acted to aggravate tensions in any region of the globe

Luzin adds: "It is quite obvious that the Warsaw Treaty is inherently defensive." Five Warsaw Pact armies had entered Czechoslovakia seven years before Gromyko said this, and Luzin was writing five years after he said it, with Soviet divisions in Afghanistan while he wrote.

The peace movement he means

The most revealing omission is not a missile. This book was

published in 1981. In 1981 the European peace movement was the largest street mobilisation in postwar European history: some 300,000 in Bonn on 10 October, "the largest demonstration in West Germany since World War II" as Intercontinental Press reported it, and more than 400,000 in Amsterdam on 21 November. Luzin uses the phrase "peace movement" seven times, and every single time he means something else. He means the movement "inaugurated at the First World Congress for Peace in April 1949 in Paris" — his own footnote — with its Stockholm Appeal of 1950, its World Congress of Peace Forces in Moscow in 1973, and its World Peace Council maintaining "working contacts with UN bodies". He means the apparatus. And of that apparatus he writes:

The time has passed when the peace movement was regarded as a "hand of Moscow".

The World Peace Council was funded and directed from Moscow. That was not a Western slander; it was the arrangement. The sentence is an unusually pure specimen of the book's method, which is to state the thing that would be convenient and move on.

Two more sentences of the same family. On the CPSU's authority: "The implementation of the decisions of Party congresses is obligatory for all organs of state power and that is why, as distinct from Western democracy, words and deeds are never at variance in the USSR." And, in the closing chapter, on why Soviet peace proposals are not better known abroad: "They are well known to people in the USSR and other socialist countries, but unfortunately not to people in the West." Luzin's whole peroration is a call to the ordinary citizen to inform himself, march, petition, and vote for peace candidates. He does not notice that he has just described a country where the information flows freely and the marching does not, and put it on the wrong side of the line.

There is one further detail, offered by the author himself and left standing without comment. In an author's note to the references he explains that "Article 71 of the Penal Code of the RSFSR envisages a prison sentence of three to eight years with or without exile of two to five years, for war propaganda." It is presented as evidence of Soviet seriousness about peace. He does not ask what a state that sends people to camps for the wrong speech about war does to people who make the wrong kind of speech about peace. Two years after this book appeared, the Moscow Group for the Establishment of Trust between the USSR and the United States would find out.

What was being said instead

Everything this book could not say was in print, in English, in the years it was written and shipped, from a left that opposed both alliances.

The closest thing to a contemporary answer is the resolution "Imperialist remilitarization and the struggle against austerity, for peace and socialism", passed by majority vote of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in October 1981 and printed in Intercontinental Press, vol. 20, no. 4, 8 February 1982. It reaches most of Luzin's conclusions about the United States — the militarisation of a crisis-ridden capitalist economy, the neutron bomb, the Rapid Deployment Force, the reorganisation of the American command structure. Then it does what Luzin will not:

In the same way, the deployment of arms such as the SS-20, aimed at China and Europe and incapable of reaching the United States, is not founded on the point of view of the defense of the USSR and provides an excellent pretext for imperialism to justify its rearmament drive among the masses in the West.

And on the cost, which Luzin never prices: the Soviet bureaucracy "has a defense policy that is exceptionally costly for the Soviet masses and in the end not very effective from the point of view of defending the workers states themselves." (In fairness, and because this series applies its standards in both directions: the same resolution misdates the NATO double-track decision to "November 12, 1979". Luzin's "mid-December 1979" is the correct one, and Intercontinental Press itself printed the right date — 12 December 1979 — in its report of the Amsterdam demonstration.)

The sharpest single document is the declaration of the International Marxist Group, the West German section of the Fourth International, published in Was Tun on 9 June 1983 and translated in Intercontinental Press, vol. 21, no. 13, 11 July 1983, under the headline "No new SS-20s!" It concedes what should be conceded — that without Soviet nuclear weapons imperialism would probably have used its own against China, Indochina and Cuba — and then refuses to stop there:

The answer of the Soviet bureaucracy to the imperialist arms buildup must nevertheless be perceived by the peace movement and the workers movement in Eastern Europe and in the West as a threat. It is neither suited to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism, nor prevent a nuclear war.

Its answer to Gromyko is direct. The professions of peace, it says, come from "the same ruling state and party apparatuses that ordered the tanks to roll against the workers in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland" — and that supported "the bloody occupation of Afghanistan". Its slogans were "No new nuclear weapons in the West or East!", solidarity with the independent peace movements of East Germany and the Soviet Union, and "For a nuclear weapon-free Europe from Portugal to Poland!"

Nor was this a sectarian eccentricity. Robert Went's report of the Amsterdam demonstration of 21 November 1981, in *Intercontinental Press* vol. 19, no. 46, 14 December 1981, records that the demand for withdrawal of both sets of missiles was carried at the rally by the Dutch Communist Party's own member of parliament. The movement Luzin was hoping would do Moscow's work for it had already declined the job. It is worth adding, because the reply corpus was not monolithic either, that *Intercontinental Press*'s own news analysis took a different view: Will Reissner wrote on 30 November 1981 that "The NATO missile plan, in fact, has nothing to do with Soviet SS-20s," treating the deployment as a first-strike programme for which the Pioneer was merely a pretext. One could hold that and still name the missile. Luzin could not name the missile.

On Afghanistan the answer was immediate. The United Secretariat's declaration, adopted at its meeting of 26–29 January 1980 and printed with two minority resolutions in *Intercontinental Press* vol. 18, no. 8, 3 March 1980, condemned the intervention, rejected the argument that demanding withdrawal would serve imperialism — "We, for our part, maintain just the opposite" — and predicted with some accuracy that "The Kremlin is in the process of getting bogged down in a war that it can never complete".

And for the underlying method — the reduction of a mass movement to foreign manipulation, which is how Luzin's book handles every inconvenient actor from Western journalists to the Chinese leadership — the answer is Ernest Mandel's reply to Felix Kouznetsov in the first issue of the *International Marxist Review* (vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1982), which printed the Soviet article and the rebuttal side by side. Against the thesis that a few dozen dissidents had manipulated nine million Solidarity members, Mandel wrote: "For Marxists it is social existence that determines consciousness, it is not 'manipulated consciousness' which determines existence." That is the objection to a whole style of argument, and this book is written in it.

What it is for

Read *Nuclear Strategy and Common Sense* for its subject and against its author. On the archaeology of American nuclear doctrine, on the fraud of the "clean" neutron weapon, on the incoherence of counterforce, on the forward-based systems the West kept off the ledger, and on the text of SALT II, Luzin is a competent and sometimes eloquent guide, and the moral premise he starts from — that a nuclear war would have no victor and must not be fought — was true then and is true now. He was not wrong to say it. Millions of people in Western Europe were saying it at the same moment, and rather more effectively, without him.

Read it also as a demonstration of what that premise costs when it is held by a state rather than a movement. Luzin's argument requires that only one side of the world be examinable. Every analytical instrument he owns — the budget as the mirror of strategy, the institutional interest in threat inflation, the range table, the causal chain — works perfectly, and he uses every one of them on a country he has never governed. Turned homewards they would have produced a different book, and a Soviet publishing house would not have printed it. That is the real information in this volume, and it is not in the argument. It is in the December that is missing.

The Priorities of Soviet Foreign Policy Today

The Soviet foreign-policy agenda at the turn of the 1980s - arms control, European security, Comecon, the developing world, the quarrel with Peking - by three specialists of the Academy's flagship international institute.

O. Bykov and others

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

A book called *The Priorities of Soviet Foreign Policy*

Today is making a promise in its title, and the first thing to establish is whether it keeps it. The Russian title page bound into this translation reads Актуальные проблемы внешней политики СССР — the topical, the current, the pressing problems. Everything the volume claims for itself rests on being up to date.

It is not, quite, and the gap is measurable.

Work through the datable events and the endnotes and the text stops moving in the spring of 1980. The last hard reference is to the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty countries, "which met in session in Warsaw in May 1980", cited to Pravda of 16 May 1980. A steel converter is commissioned at Esfahan in April 1980. China is said to have broken off the normalisation talks "early in 1980". Nothing in the book's substance is later than that. Then, laid over the top, there is a thin second layer: six references to the 26th CPSU Congress of February–March 1981, and one endnote to Brezhnev's Central Committee Report as published by Novosti in 1981. That is the whole of the updating.

You can tell the two layers apart by their texture. The 25th Congress of 1976 is mentioned fourteen times and its positions are argued; the 24th of 1971 eight times. The 26th gets six mentions and every one of them is empty. It "dealt in detail with international politics". It "is of outstanding international significance". It "has put forward a series of new important proposals and initiatives" — which are never named. The conclusion reports that Soviet policy "has been reaffirmed by the resolutions of the 26th CPSU Congress on international problems and by its new initiatives and proposals which have been met with interest and approval by the progressives throughout the world." A reader who wants to know what those initiatives were will not learn it here. The Congress has been welded to a finished manuscript.

Which matters, because of what fell into the gap. Between May 1980 and the Congress: the Gdańsk agreements of 31 August 1980 and the birth of Solidarność; the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq war in September; the American presidential election of November. Poland occurs five times in this book, and every occurrence is a list — Poland as a founder member of Comecon, Poland as a signatory of the 1970 treaty with the Federal Republic, Poland among the states whose western border was secured. Solidarity occurs twelve times and every occurrence is the abstract noun, the solidarity of the socialist countries with the peoples of Asia and Africa. Gdańsk: nil. Jaruzelski: nil. Martial law: nil. And Reagan: nil, in a book on Soviet foreign policy published in the year Ronald Reagan took office. Carter is named four times and is still, in these pages, the current President.

So this is a late-Brezhnev text of 1980 in a 1981 jacket, with a Congress pasted on. That is a milder version of the disease than this series usually finds — a year, not a decade — but for a book whose entire claim is currency, a year was the whole distance between the world it describes and the world its English reader was living in.

What kind of object it is

The catalogue calls Bykov, Razmerov and Tomashevsky editors. The book does not read like an edited collection, and this is worth stating because it is the sort of thing a reader assumes. There are no contributor bylines. There are no chapter attributions. There is no preface, no foreword, no acknowledgements, no list of participants, and no statement of who wrote what. The Russian title page names the three men and nothing else. Nowhere in fifty-three thousand words does the text say where its authors worked, and I am not going to assert an institutional affiliation I cannot source from the volume itself.

What that means for the "specific question" — does the collection permit internal disagreement? — is that the question

dissolves. There is a single voice from the first page to the last, and the seams that would let you see three hands at work have been planed flat. That is itself the finding, and it is not a neutral one. A book of this kind, on this subject, in 1980, was not a place where three scholars set out competing readings. It is a consensus document, and the consensus was not theirs to set.

There is a companion volume in this series that lets you watch the narrowing happen. D. Tomashevsky — the third name on this title page — is the sole author of *Lenin's Ideas and Modern International Relations*, published by Progress in 1974. Set the two side by side and count. In the 1974 book, ninety-two thousand words, the phrase "balance of power" occurs 129 times, "class struggle" 49 times, "proletarian internationalism" 17 times, and "detente" only 13. In the 1981 book, "detente" occurs 152 times, "balance of power" four times, "class struggle" thirteen. One man, seven years, and the analytical vocabulary has been replaced by a diplomatic one. The 1974 volume was trying to think about international relations. The 1981 volume is briefing for a negotiation.

The chapter that is worth reading

Section 3 of this series' house practice is to say plainly where a Progress book is good, and chapter II of this one, "The Problem of Preventing a Nuclear World War", is genuinely good. Not good for a Soviet book. Good.

Its central judgement is stated without hedging: "International security cannot rest on the balance of terror." It then explains why, in terms that would not embarrass a Western arms-control specialist of the same date. Strategic balance is dynamic, not static; the two sides' arsenals differ structurally, so their modernisation cycles cannot be symmetrical; and the balancing itself is corrosive. When one side breaks the equilibrium and the other restores it, the authors write, "The equilibrium is thus restored, albeit at the cost of greater material expenditure and with a lesser degree of mutual security." That is a precise statement of the arms-race trap, and it is exactly right.

The chapter is also right about timing, which is the part policy-makers habitually get wrong: "Military technology outstrips the process of restraining the arms race." "It is easier to restrain this race in its early stages. The loss of good opportunities markedly complicates the task at later stages." The worked example is MIRV, and it is honest history. Before SALT began, the book says, "there was a situation in which it was really possible to mutually ban the development of

MIRVs (multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles). Yet the American side chose to go ahead with its programme of deploying MIRV missiles, which raised the arms race to a higher level and greatly hampered the talks on subsequent agreements to limit strategic offensive arms." The contrast drawn with the ABM Treaty — a system limited early, before deployment, and therefore limited successfully — is the correct lesson and remains the standard one.

The analysis of "action—counter-action" is better still, because it does not stop at the mechanical version. The authors note that each side plans against the worst contingency in the remote future, that development cycles are long, that "play-safe" counter-measures are "quite understandable", and that domestic and short-range political objectives intrude. Then, in five words that could stand as the chapter's epigraph: "Engendered by politics, arms themselves engender politics."

And the conclusion is not fatalistic. "Scientific and technological progress in the military field is by no means an irresistible force. In the long run it can be controlled politically." Given political will, the book insists, "there is no type of weapon which cannot be effectively limited and physically reduced on a mutual and equitable basis." Anyone who read that in 1981 and dismissed it as propaganda was reading badly. It is the argument that produced the INF Treaty six years later, and the missiles it names were duly destroyed.

The catalogue of Soviet arms-control proposals in the same chapter is also, so far as it goes, real: no-first-use of nuclear and conventional weapons on a mutual basis; guarantees to non-nuclear states; nuclear-free zones; a comprehensive test ban with a moratorium on peaceful nuclear explosions; a chemical weapons convention; the unilateral withdrawal of "up to 20,000 Soviet troops, a thousand tanks" from the GDR announced in October 1979. These were made. Some were serious.

The missile that is not there

Which brings us to the falsification, and it sits inside the best chapter in the book.

Discussing the NATO double-track decision of December 1979, the authors reject the Western justification: "The Soviet Union is modernising its medium-range missiles which have been in service for decades. This natural modernisation was caused by, besides routine military-technological needs, the updating of the U.S. forward-based nuclear missiles stationed in Europe, and also of the British and French nuclear missiles."

Then the specific claim: "in the last decade the number of medium-range nuclear-arms carriers in the European part of the Soviet Union has not been increased by a single missile or a single aircraft. On the contrary, the number of medium-range missile launchers and the yield of their nuclear charges have even been reduced."

The string "SS-20" does not occur in this book. Neither does the RSD-10 Pioneer, which is what the Soviet Union called it.

Look at the shape of the claim. It counts carriers and launchers and it measures yield. On those three metrics it is defensible and possibly true. What it does not count is warheads, and the SS-20 carried three independently targetable ones where the SS-4 and SS-5 it replaced carried a single warhead each. Nor does it mention that the new missile was solid-fuelled rather than liquid-fuelled, road-mobile rather than fixed-site, far more accurate, and reloadable — which is to say that a replacement programme leaving the launcher count flat roughly tripled the deliverable warheads and transformed their survivability. The reduction in individual yield, offered here as evidence of restraint, is a straightforward consequence of splitting one large warhead into three smaller accurate ones. The sentence is not a lie in the ordinary sense. It is a true statement selected so that the reader cannot reach the fact.

And the cost of the omission is borne by the book's own case. The authors want to argue that Pershing II and the ground-launched cruise missile are a qualitative change and not a modernisation. That argument is available, and it is strong: the Pershing II's flight time to Moscow was a matter of minutes, which is a different thing from anything then deployed. But you cannot make it while refusing to name the weapon the other side says it is responding to. The chapter that so carefully explains "action—counter-action" declines to apply it at the one point where the first action was Soviet.

The same missile was being argued about in the Trotskyist press at exactly this date, and argued about better — precisely because naming it was permitted. Contrast that with the reasoning offered here and the difference is not one of politics but of what the writer is allowed to put on the page.

Sovereignty, and where it stops

Now the book's real structure. Chapter III sets out "The Soviet Conception of Peaceful Coexistence" and quotes the CPSU Programme at length on what it means:

"Peaceful coexistence" the CPSU Programme says,

"implies renunciation of war as a means of settling international disputes, and their solution by negotiation; equality, mutual understanding and trust between countries; consideration for each other's interests; non-interference in internal affairs; recognition of the right of every people to solve all the problems of their country by themselves; strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; promotion of economic and cultural co-operation on the basis of complete equality and mutual benefit."

The authors then gloss the third of these clauses themselves: "The concept of the peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems is based on the recognition of this difference, on the recognition of the right of every people to organise their life as they see fit, without any outside interference. Guided by this principle, the Soviet Union is against any 'export' of revolution."

Before following that where it leads, notice whose authority is being claimed. The book states that "The Soviet Union's approach to relations between the two opposing social systems and its work towards detente are based on Lenin's conception of the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems." The phrase "peaceful coexistence" occurs ninety-four times in these fifty-three thousand words. It does not occur once inside a quotation from Lenin. Every attribution is made in the authors' own voice; the passage above quotes the CPSU Programme, a document of 1961. The only quoted use of the idea anywhere near 1918 is Bukharin's, at the Seventh Party Congress, and he is using it to say there can be no such thing — "there could be no peaceful co-habitation between us, between the Soviet Republic and international capital". The doctrine's Leninist pedigree is asserted throughout and demonstrated nowhere.

That is not this volume's private habit. Tomashevsky's own Lenin's Ideas and Modern International Relations (Progress, 1974) does the same thing at twice the length: ninety-two thousand words in which no Lenin quotation contains the phrase, the bridge supplied in the author's voice, and the earliest attested use of the actual words honestly credited elsewhere in that book to Chicherin in June 1920. The same man, seven years apart, in a book of theory and a book of application, arrives at the same silence. It is the load-bearing citation of the whole doctrine and it does not exist.

The Brest-Litovsk passage that opens this volume shows the technique working on the other side of the ledger. Bukharin is quoted; then Trotsky is quoted holding that "deals with the

imperialists are inadmissible for the revolutionary class"; then the two are fused — "These concepts promulgated by the 'Left Communists' and Trotsky virtually excluded any foreign policy action on the part of the socialist state." But Trotsky's position at Brest was not the Left Communists'. Theirs was revolutionary war. His was the third option, "neither war nor peace": refuse to sign, refuse to fight, declare the war over unilaterally. It was a serious misjudgement and Lenin said so at the time, but it was not the policy the sentence attributes to him, and lumping the two erases the disagreement that made the episode worth arguing about. This is the third volume in this series caught making the identical amalgam. Tomashevsky performs it in the 1974 book. Georgi Arbatov, in *The War of Ideas in Contemporary International Relations* (Progress, 1973), writes that fighting "a 'revolutionary war' against the bourgeoisie of other countries" was "the line which the 'Left' Communists and the Trotskyites wanted the communist movement to adopt." Three books, one publisher, one manoeuvre. It has stopped being an author's error and become a house convention — and it is a revealing one, because the amalgam is needed. If Trotsky held a distinct third position, then the argument of 1918 was a real argument among Bolsheviks about how a workers' state conducts foreign policy, which is exactly the argument these books exist to foreclose.

Some seventy pages later, in the same volume:

"The anti-Soviet campaign in the West reached its climax in connection with the events in Afghanistan. In response to the Afghan government's request, the Soviet Union, in accordance with the Soviet-Afghan Treaty signed earlier, introduced into Afghanistan a limited contingent of troops to repel outside aggression."

The book does not experience this as a contradiction, and the reason is structural rather than careless. Read the definition again and notice its scope: peaceful coexistence governs relations between the two systems. It is a doctrine for dealing with capitalist states. Sovereignty appears in it in one direction only — the authors immediately add that the USSR "resolutely opposes all attempts by the imperialist powers to interfere in the domestic affairs of the socialist countries". Relations inside the socialist community are governed by something else entirely, and chapter V says what: co-ordination.

That chapter is candid in a way its authors probably did not intend. The socialist countries' unity of action, they write, is "based on the natural laws governing the development of world socialism". The mechanism "has no rigidly centralised forms" and is based, they say, entirely on "the full

independence of each socialist country" — and then, two paragraphs later, "The Warsaw Treaty Organisation is the main co-ordinating centre" for their foreign policy, with the Political Consultative Committee resolving "all major problems concerning their policy and security", supplemented by the annual Crimean meetings of party leaders. Gromyko is quoted with satisfaction: "We are not ashamed to refer to the foreign policy of the socialist states as a policy conducted on the basis of concord. We are proud of it because its strongest point is that on all major issues it is elaborated and effected jointly." And the frank sentence: "The ability of socialism to act in the international arena as an integral and coherent community, rather than a conglomerate of countries, constitutes its major advantage."

What is missing from that chapter is any account of what happened when a member declined to be integral and coherent. The word Czechoslovakia appears five times in this book — as a signatory of a 1935 pact with the USSR, as a signatory of the 1973 treaty with the Federal Republic, as a founder of Comecon, as a founder of the Warsaw Treaty, and as a state whose borders were confirmed. The year 1968 appears exactly once in the entire volume: in an endnote, as the publication date of an American book about Vietnam. The year 1956 appears exactly once: in an endnote, as the publication date of the proceedings of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of China. Hungary is named twice, both times in a membership list. The phrase "Brezhnev Doctrine" does not occur, and neither does the thing it names.

This is a book about the co-ordination of foreign policy within the socialist community, written by the state that had twice enforced that co-ordination with tanks, which mentions neither occasion. Nor, we should add, does it mention Khrushchev — whose name appears nowhere, although the 20th Congress is credited by name with the thesis that world war is no longer fatally inevitable, which is the doctrinal foundation of the entire volume. The conclusion is kept; the man who announced it, and the other thing he announced in 1956, are gone.

The reply that existed

The anti-Stalinist left answered these arguments as they were being made, and — this is worth saying, because the series is not in the business of retrospective courage — it did not answer with one voice.

On Afghanistan the Fourth International split three ways, in public, in print. Intercontinental Press–Inprecor of 3 March

1980 carried the United Secretariat's majority declaration together with two rival texts, each headed "[The following resolution was supported by a minority of the United Secretariat.]" One minority came close to the Soviet position by an entirely different route, holding that a victory for the Kabul government backed by Soviet troops "would be a blow to imperialism and Afghan reaction". The other refused. It began from the same premise as the first — "While revolutionary Marxists unconditionally defend the Soviet Union against imperialism, they are not at all obliged to defend every action undertaken by the Soviet bureaucracy" — and then said what this book cannot: "Without a doubt, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is being carried out in gross violation of the right of peoples to self-determination. It is, in fact, well known that the Soviet troops themselves overthrew Amin in order to replace him by Karmal, who they brought from exile with them." It ended with the demand "that the Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan immediately", and it made the argument by quoting Lenin's "Communism cannot be imposed by force" — the same maxim this volume invokes, in its own chapter II, to prove that the Soviet Union does not export revolution.

That is the sharpest thing you can put beside this book: not a hostile source, but a document written in January 1980, from the left, holding the Soviet state to a sentence of Lenin's that the Soviet state was simultaneously printing.

On Poland the reply is more direct still, because for once the two sides were printed facing each other. The first issue of the *International Marxist Review*, in the spring of 1982, ran extracts from an article by F. Kouznetsov, First Secretary of the Union of Moscow Writers, published in *Literaturnia Gazeta*, alongside a reply by Ernest Mandel. Kouznetsov's idiom is the idiom of this book. "Today in Poland it is difficult to directly attack the idea of socialism but one can disfigure it, misrepresent it and through that even destroy it. That is the particular tactic of the counter-revolution in Poland today." He explains the ten million members of *Solidarność* as the work of "anarcho-syndicalist ideas and conceptions" recuperated by outside agitators, and traces them, with some care, to Jacek Kuroń, who "idolised Trotsky and his theory of 'permanent revolution'."

Notice the asymmetry that opens up here. The *Priorities of Soviet Foreign Policy Today* names Trotsky twice, both times in 1918, both times as a "Left Communist" whose objection to the Brest-Litovsk peace "virtually excluded any foreign policy action on the part of the socialist state". He is a dead sectarian of the first year. Meanwhile the Soviet literary press was

explaining the largest independent workers' movement in the history of the bloc as a Trotskyist infection. Both propositions cannot be true, and the state was publishing both in the same eighteen months.

Mandel's reply is the counter-analysis this volume's economic chapters make no room for. Against Kouznetsov's claim that the union was damaging socialism, he asks who ran up the twenty-six billion dollars of debt to the capitalist banks — "The bureaucracy or *Solidarność*?" — and who opened negotiations for Poland's entry into the International Monetary Fund. He puts the question of power plainly: "The real issue is to know who will govern the workers state?" And he records the situation on the ground: "Today a situation of de-facto dual power exists in Poland. The workers can practically impose what they want at the level of the factories and in the towns. But they do not have state power." He was not an uncritical partisan of the union — "It is true that there is a strong syndicalist (or anarcho-syndicalist) influence in *Solidarność*. We regret that. We criticise it on the political level." — which is precisely why the analysis holds up.

This was not hindsight. An International Executive Committee resolution dated 28 September 1981, in *Intercontinental Press-Inprecor* of the same date, had already concluded that the union's regional coordination "contains within itself the embryo of a counter power of the workers in face of the bureaucracy" and that "the political antibureaucratic revolution has in fact already begun in Poland" — eleven weeks before the coup. When the coup came, the Bureau of the United Secretariat's statement of 17 December 1981, printed in *Intercontinental Press-Inprecor* of 18 January 1982, named it: "Eighteen months after the beginning of the antibureaucratic political revolution, Jaruzelski, his stooges, and the Kremlin have unleashed the counterrevolution by the military coup d'état of December 13, 1981" — in order to preserve the bureaucracy's monopoly of political power, "which is the basis of its exorbitant material privileges."

The same current was equally unwilling to be recruited by Washington. A Fourth International resolution in *Intercontinental Press-Inprecor* of early 1982 states the position on the Euromissiles without softening either edge: "The Fourth International has always counterposed the revolutionary solution to the Utopian illusions of 'peaceful coexistence' or 'victory' in a nuclear world war", and adds that the Communist parties inside the Western peace movement "are much more discreet on the question of unilateralism or on the necessity to disarm imperialism in order to eliminate the danger of war, given their general orientation of 'peaceful

coexistence." On China the same tradition refused the choice this book insists on. Its September 1981 resolution held that "The Chinese bureaucracy turned against Vietnam for similar reasons to those which led the Soviet bureaucracy to oppose Peking in the 1950s and 1960s", and that Peking used against Hanoi "the same methods against Vietnam as those that the Kremlin used against China". Chapter VI of this volume, sixty pages against "Peking's hegemonistic policy course", cannot entertain that symmetry for a sentence.

Behind all of it stands the argument Trotsky had made in 1936, in chapter 8 of *The Revolution Betrayed*, and which this book confirms in its own words without noticing. "Foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy, for it is conducted by the same ruling class and pursues the same historic goals." Trotsky's specific charge was not that the Soviet state had no right to diplomacy: "no serious revolutionary statesman would deny the right of the Soviet state to seek supplementary supports for its inviolability in temporary agreements with this or that imperialism. It is only necessary clearly and openly to show the masses the place of these partial and tactical agreements in the general system of historic forces." The charge was that the movement abroad had been converted into an instrument of that diplomacy — that the Communist International had become "a completely submissive apparatus in the service of Soviet foreign policy, ready at any time for any zigzag whatever", one that "deceives the workers with slogans like 'collective security' and 'disarmament', and thus becomes in reality a political agent of the imperialists among the working classes."

Read chapter III of this book against that. Here is its own formulation, and it is remarkable that it was printed:

"In their socio-historical content, relations between the socialist and capitalist countries are part of the worldwide class struggle. But this struggle is not waged by classes—it is waged by states through their foreign policy, by means of employing specific methods in a specific international setting."

The class struggle, conducted by states. Trotsky's indictment, offered as doctrine.

The book knows the objection, too, and answers it — which is the one moment it acknowledges that a left-wing critique of its position exists. It sets itself against "the Leftist attacks on the policy of peaceful coexistence", and states the charge accurately before dismissing it: "By asserting that peaceful coexistence is tantamount to 'aiding capitalism' and 'freezing

the socio-political status quo', the 'Left' distortionists of Marxism-Leninism forget that any revolution is primarily a result of inner developments and ignore the fact that economic competition between socialism and capitalism is their chief battlefield today." Set that last clause beside the volume's publication date. Economic competition as the chief battlefield, asserted in a book finished in 1980, by a state whose growth had been flattening for a decade and whose closest ally was about to default. And the charge about freezing the status quo was answered not by argument but by events: the status quo the doctrine protected was, within eighteen months, being enforced in Poland under martial law. Everything else follows from it: why the Polish working class is not a subject of this book but Polish membership of Comecon is; why the peace movement — the phrase occurs twice in fifty-three thousand words — is an auxiliary rather than an actor; why "national liberation" appears thirty-eight times and is always something the Soviet Union supports rather than something that might make demands of it.

What it is for

Read this as the last full statement of the détente position before détente was pronounced dead — a book that still believed, in the spring of 1980, that the framework of the 1970s could be repaired. Its chapter on nuclear war is honest work by people who understood the technology and had thought seriously about how arms races end, and its diagnosis was vindicated: the weapons it discussed were negotiated away, in 1987, on roughly the terms it proposed. That is not nothing.

Read it also for the exact shape of what its authors were not permitted to write. They could analyse the American military-industrial complex but not name the SS-20. They could quote the CPSU Programme on the right of every people to solve its own problems and, seventy pages on, describe the 40th Army entering Afghanistan as fraternal assistance. They could devote a chapter to the co-ordination of foreign policy within the socialist community without once mentioning Budapest or Prague. And they could write a book called *Today* which stopped, in every particular that mattered, before the August in which the Polish working class made the whole architecture obsolete.

Three men's names are on the title page and there is no way to tell which of them wrote what. That anonymity is not a bibliographical inconvenience. It is the book's most accurate self-description.

INTERNATIONALISM

Problems of the Communist Movement

The strategic problems of the non-ruling communist parties - alliances, the united front, the unions, the national movements - in a revision carried up to mid-1979 and then lightly restamped with a later congress.

Solomon Samuilovich Gililov

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

The word "solidarity" occurs twenty-eight times in this book. Not once does it refer to the trade union of that name.

That sentence is the whole problem of the 1981 edition of *Problems of the Communist Movement*, and it needs to be handled carefully, because the obvious accusation is not quite the right one. The copyright page reads: "First printing 1975 / Second printing 1981 / English translation revised and supplemented". This is not a book commissioned in 1981 and written past the Polish August. It is a 1975 book sent back through the shop. The question a reader is entitled to ask is what the revision actually did — and the answer can be established from internal evidence, because the text dates itself repeatedly.

It dates itself late in 1979. The foreword is new: it announces that "the present edition of the book *Problems of the Communist Movement* (the first appeared in 1975) has been revised to take into account more recent world events," reports that "Communist parties are active in 94 countries," and lists the events the revisers had in mind — "whether it is the revolution in Portugal or the national uprising in Iran, the victory of revolutionary democracy in Ethiopia or the defeat of imperialist agents in Afghanistan." Statistical series have been carried forward to 1977 and 1978. There is discussion of the 1977 Soviet Constitution, of the Trilateral Commission's membership in 1978, and of the third of Jimmy Carter's energy programmes: "July 1979 witnessed the birth of a new energy programme of the US government, the third in recent years." The most recent hard datum in the book is a strike count for "the first four months of 1979." Layered on top of that is a thin coat of 1981: Brezhnev's report to the Twenty-Sixth Congress, delivered in February 1981, is cited four times, and the Central Committee resolution on the 110th anniversary of Lenin's birth (1980) once.

So the revision is real and it is datable. Substantively the book was brought up to the middle of 1979; the 1981 element

consists of new footnotes to a new Brezhnev speech. And that has a consequence the publisher can hardly have intended. The year 1980 does not appear in this book at all — not once, in some 115,000 words. Poland appears four times: as the source of the 1952 constitution, twice in tables of socialist achievement, and once in connection with the treaties recognising the postwar European frontiers. The adjective "Polish" does not appear. Neither does Gdańsk, Wałęsa, Solidarność, martial law, or the Polish United Workers' Party. A book issued by the Soviet state's export publishing house, in English, in the year of the Solidarity congress and the December coup, contains no trace of either.

The two appearances of Poland in the statistical tables are worth setting down, because they are what a reader in Lagos or Lima was given instead. "In 1978 industrial output was 22 times higher in Bulgaria than in 1951, 8.3 in Hungary, 8.4 in the GDR, 13 in Mongolia, 14 in Poland, 29 in Rumania, and 7.9 in Czechoslovakia." And: "By comparison with 1960 in 1977 real incomes were 1.8 times higher in Bulgaria, 1.6 in Hungary, 1.8 in Poland, 2 in Rumania, 1.7 in the USSR, and 1.6 in Czechoslovakia." Those figures were compiled at the top of the debt-financed boom that Edward Gierek had run on Western credit since 1971. By the time they were printed in English the meat queues were back, the loans were unrepayable, and the strike wave had produced the largest independent workers' organisation ever to exist in the Soviet bloc. Poland is present in this book only as a growth rate.

What the book is, and who made it

No author is named anywhere — not on the title page, not in the foreword, which speaks throughout of "the authors" in the third person plural. Progress issued it as the anonymous product of a collective, translated from the Russian by David Skvirsky. Its institutional address can nevertheless be read off its citations. Brezhnev is named twenty-nine times. The other standing authority is Boris Ponomarev, cited from his 1978 Progress volume *The Living and Effective Teaching of Marxism-Leninism (A Reply to Its Critics)* and introduced in

the text as "Candidate-Member of the Politburo and a Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU" — that is, the head of the International Department, the body that ran relations with foreign communist parties. The strike statistics come from the Institute of the International Labour Movement of the USSR Academy of Sciences. This is a handbook produced by and for the apparatus that handled the fraternal parties, and its object, as the contents page announces, is method: "A Leninist Analysis of the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Socialist Revolution and Contemporaneity", the methodology of Lenin's theory of imperialism, the general crisis of capitalism and its present stage, state-monopoly capitalism, the theory of the socialist revolution, the paths of revolution, the party, and — in a final chapter whose last section is headed "Ways of Surmounting Differences" — the relations between communist parties.

It is that last subject, not Poland, that the book was revised to fight about. The 1975 original had been written into the argument with the West European parties; the 1979 revision keeps it there. "Eurocommunism" appears exactly once, in quotation marks, and only as something invented by others: "the anti-communist interpretation of 'Eurocommunism' is given as confirmation of this 'struggle'." The reader is told that a difference among fraternal parties may be discussed, or, where there is "a clear departure from the Marxist-Leninist guidelines," must be "combated resolutely and consistently." A companion volume in this series, M. I. Basmanov and B. M. Leibzon's *The Revolutionary Vanguard* (1977), conducts the same quarrel by proxy against expelled dissidents. This book conducts it by category.

The template that was waiting

The most consequential passage in the volume was written for other purposes and fits Poland exactly. Discussing the choice of state form, the authors observe that the enemies of socialism have learned not to attack the workers' state openly but to hollow it out:

In 1921, for example, the inspirers of the Kronstadt counter-revolutionary mutiny advanced the slogan "For the Soviets but without Communists" in an attempt to overthrow the power of the working class. Essentially a similar demand was put forward by the leaders of the counter-revolutionary uprising in Hungary in 1956. In Czechoslovakia in 1968 also the reaction did not demonstrate openly against the state and did not seek to change the form of power by force.

Kronstadt, Budapest, Prague: a single sequence in which every attempt by workers in a socialist country to organise outside the party is by definition the work of "the enemies of socialism and their foreign inciters." No Soviet troops enter this narrative, in 1956 or in 1968; no Hungarian or Czechoslovak worker has a grievance. The schema was in print in English, on the shelves, at the moment that the Gdańsk shipyard strike committee was drafting its twenty-one demands. Nothing needed to be added to this book to explain Solidarność. That is the point. The silence about 1980 is not a gap; the machinery for reading 1980 was already installed, and the reader who absorbed Chapter Three would meet the Polish August with the interpretation prepared.

Elsewhere the book supplies its own commentary at its own expense. Chapter Two quotes Lenin's definition of a revolutionary situation in full: "when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the 'upper classes' ... when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual ... when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses." That is a description of Poland in the autumn of 1980, and the authors set it out as a tool for analysing capitalist countries only. The word "solidarity" runs through the same chapters as the highest value of the movement — "the international unity and solidarity of the Communists in the common class struggle" — while millions of people in a socialist country were assembling under that word and are not here.

On the older record the book is, as its companions in this series are, mostly quiet. Stalin is named once: "In the prewar period there were some unjustified restrictions of democracy and violations of the law connected with the Stalin personality cult," followed by the Central Committee resolution of 30 June 1956 as the sufficient reply to anyone who raises the matter. The year 1937 occurs once, inside the bracketed dates of a volume of Dimitrov's selected works. There is no Left Opposition, no famine, no trials, no Comintern history to speak of, no Nazi-Soviet Pact, and no Fourth International — that organisation is not named, though "the Trotskyite theory of 'permanent revolution', which does not recognise the revolutionary potential of the peasants as an ally of the proletariat," is dismissed, and Trotsky himself appears chiefly to be convicted, on Lenin's authority, of "political adventurism" in 1905.

What survives

The economics does. It would be dishonest to pretend otherwise, and a reader told that everything here is worthless will misjudge the book and the period.

Chapter One is a serious attempt to read the crisis of the 1970s, and much of it is checkable and correct. The collapse of the postwar monetary order is recorded plainly: "In the course of its development the Bretton Woods capitalist monetary system, based on the undivided monopoly of the dollar, collapsed." The 1974–75 recession is identified as the deepest of the postwar period, which it was. Stagflation is described without the label and without embarrassment — the novelty, the authors say, is that "the drop in production and the growth of unemployment are combined with the uncontrollable rise in inflation," a combination that was at that moment demolishing the Phillips curve in Western economics faculties. The figures are specific: officially registered unemployment in the United States rising from 2,800,000 in 1969 to 6,326,000 in 1978, in Japan from 590,000 in 1970 to 1,260,000. The rise of the transnational corporation, the structural crises in energy, food, raw materials and the environment, the failure of national state-monopoly regulation and the turn to coordinated management through bodies like the Trilateral Commission, founded in 1973 — this is a coherent account, and its sources are open ones, including the United Mine Workers of America and Harry Bridges of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. The authors also refuse the crudest version of their own doctrine: communists, they insist, "have never predicted the 'automatic collapse' of capitalism," and the Twenty-Fifth Congress is quoted conceding that capitalism "still possessed considerable reserves."

Then comes the sentence that undoes it. Of the strengthening of the imperialist state and the military-industrial complex: "All this is just a flash in the pan." Four pages of measured analysis are cancelled by a reflex. The book cannot let a finding stand if the finding is uncomfortable, and that is the same disability, in the economic register, that produces the silence about Poland in the political one.

Where the reply is

It was written as the events happened, by people who regarded the Polish workers neither as counter-revolutionaries nor as a Western asset, and it is locatable.

The Fourth International's press was covering Poland before this book's first printing. "POLAND: The Bureaucracy vs. the

Workers" appeared in *Inprecor* no. 22 for 27 March 1975 — the year the first edition came out — tracing the subordination of the Polish trade unions to the state administration from 1947 onwards and the promises made and withdrawn after the Szczecin shipyard strikes. Three years later Cyril Smuga's "Polish Bureaucrats Try Price Increases on the Sly" (*Intercontinental Press* vol. 16 no. 30, 31 July 1978, translated from *Rouge*) described the two-tier market in meat and housing, the "commercial" shops at double the official price, and an average monthly wage of 4,168 zlotys. That is the economy the tables in this book render as real incomes 1.8 times higher than in 1960.

On the strike wave itself, Smuga's "How Polish Strike Wave Began" ran in *IP* vol. 18 no. 32, 1 September 1980, setting out Gierek's Western borrowing and the withdrawal of the 1971 concessions. Oliver MacDonald — the pen name of Peter Gowan — and Jo Singleton examined the other institution in the field in "Catholic Hierarchy and Stalinist Bureaucracy" (*IP* vol. 18 no. 35, 22 September 1980). The Fourth International's own assessment, "Polish Workers Confront the Bureaucracy" (*IP* vol. 18 no. 40, 27 October 1980), called the August settlement a victory of historic significance and itemised it: "the right to organizations of its own, the right to strike, the partial lifting of censorship, access to the mass media." The judgement was not uncritical — "Poland: Advance of the Workers and the Bureaucracy's Reply" (*IP* vol. 19 no. 11, 30 March 1981) is largely an argument about the suspension of the March general strike over the head of Solidarity's own national commission — and it was not naive about what was coming. "Defend the Political Revolution in Poland!" (*IP* vol. 19 no. 18, 18 May 1981) reported 200,000 troops on manoeuvres and quoted the report to the PUWP Central Committee plenum of 29 March 1981: "what we are seeing is no longer pressure on the government, but an open struggle against our party, the state, and socialism — it is already a struggle for power." By November, "Poland: the workers councils and self-management" (*IP* vol. 19 no. 41, 9 November 1981) was analysing the workers' councils as a situation of dual power.

Then, on 13 December 1981, General Jaruzelski declared martial law, and the union that had enrolled close to ten million members was suppressed. The Fourth International's statement, "Solidarity with the Polish workers", ran in *IP* vol. 20 no. 1, 18 January 1982, and named what the programme of the coup consisted of: "suspension and destruction of the independent trade union controlled by the workers themselves; elimination of the right to strike; abolition of the free and uncensored workingclass press ... and the proclamation of

martial law."

Read Problems of the Communist Movement against that, and its interest becomes precise. It is not a book that lies about Poland. It is a book whose method had already decided what Poland could mean, printed in the year Poland disproved it. Its economics could see the collapse of Bretton Woods and the return of mass unemployment in the West with considerable clarity, because those things were happening to somebody else. Its politics could not see ten million workers in a socialist country organising a union, because the category into which such people had to be placed — the inspirers of Kronstadt, the leaders of 1956, the reaction of 1968 — had been fixed in advance and could not be revised by any event. That is what "revised and supplemented" turned out to mean.

Disarmament and the Economy

What arms spending costs an economy, argued from SIPRI, US government statistics and American defence economists - including the fullest Soviet treatment in English of what converting military capacity to civil use would involve.

Rachik Faramazyan

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

R. Faramazyan finished this book at the precise moment its argument was overtaken by events. Disarmament and the Economy carries the date 1981 and means it: unlike most Progress translations, which lag their Russian originals by years, this one quotes Leonid Brezhnev's report to the 26th Congress of the CPSU, held in February and March 1981, as current news, and its statistical tables run to the 1980/81 US defence budget. There is no earlier edition hiding behind the spine. The text is exactly as old as it looks — and that is the problem, because the world it was written to describe, a world of deepening détente in which "the 1970s were marked by a turn from the cold war to international detente," had already begun to come apart under the author's pen.

By the time the book reached print, the Soviet Union had been at war in Afghanistan for a year; Ronald Reagan had entered the White House committed to a rearmament programme that would dwarf anything Faramazyan tabulates; and NATO's December 1979 decision to station cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe — itself a response to the Soviet SS-20 deployments that had begun in 1976 — had opened the Euromissile crisis that would dominate the decade. Faramazyan writes on the cusp, registering the danger without quite naming it: "Thunderclouds gathered on the international horizon by the beginning of the eighties," and "political detente is still to be supplemented by military detente." What he could not say, because his brief did not permit it, was that both superpowers were now committing themselves to the largest peacetime arms build-up in history, and that the burden he analyses so carefully for one of them fell just as heavily on the other.

The author was not a propagandist but a professional economist. Rachik Faramazyan worked at the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO) of the USSR Academy of Sciences — the Soviet Union's premier think-tank on the capitalist world — and the book wears its

scholarship openly. He draws on the SIPRI yearbooks, on US government statistics, on the work of American defence economists such as Murray Weidenbaum and Kenneth Boulding, on The New York Times and U.S. News and World Report. This is a real analytical apparatus, and much of what it produces is sound. The honest task of an introduction is to say where.

What the book gets right

The core of Disarmament and the Economy is a critique of military spending as economic waste, and on that ground it is largely correct and remains citable. Faramazyan's central proposition — that arms expenditure is a deduction from, not an addition to, a society's real wealth — is orthodox economics, not Soviet dogma. "Military expenses," he writes, "are a wasteful and unproductive use of material and manpower resources"; the arms race "depletes a country's domestic resources and reduces the possibilities for boosting its economic potential." He grounds the point in Marx's observation that the soldier "belongs to the incidental expenses of production, in the same way as a large part of the unproductive labourers who produce nothing themselves." Whatever one makes of the labour theory of value, the practical claim is unimpeachable: a tank consumed in deterrence is not a machine tool, a lathe, or a hospital bed.

From this Faramazyan builds a catalogue of the arms economy's distortions that any disarmament economist of the period could have signed. He argues that military research and development starves civilian industry of its best scientists and engineers, and he lets an American economist make the case for him, quoting Boulding: "There is much evidence to suggest that civilian industry is deprived of able research scientists and engineers because of the 'internal brain drain' into the war industry." He is properly sceptical of the "spin-off" mythology — the claim that military R&D pays for itself in civilian by-products — and marshals US Department of Commerce and NASA sources to puncture it, conceding that "we do not

deny the existence of spin-off" while showing that its scale was routinely exaggerated to justify the budgets. He documents the "revolving door" between the Pentagon and the arms contractors, the role of military procurement in state-monopoly management of demand, and the inflationary effect of deficit-financed rearmament, in which "prices increase 1.5–2 times quicker than in the civilian sector."

On the military-industrial complex itself the book is unusually concrete for a work of Soviet economics. Faramazyan defines it soberly, without the usual demonology, as "an alliance of military-industrial monopolies, the military and the state bureaucracy," and traces the institutional machinery by which it perpetuates itself: the "revolving doors" through which Pentagon officials pass into the arms firms and retired generals onto their boards; the concentration of NATO's military production and research in the United States; the export of small arms, submachine guns and tear-gas grenades to the police forces of client dictatorships, itemised from a Nation investigation. He is right that the complex has a material stake in the arms race, and right — quoting Lenin's phrase that war is for the arms suppliers a "rain of gold" — that its profits are a private appropriation of a public loss. None of this depends on the reader accepting the Soviet frame; it is the same military-industrial complex that a departing President Eisenhower had warned Americans about in 1961, described by an economist who had read the American literature closely.

The book's treatment of conversion is its most useful section, precisely because it argues against defeatism. The claim it sets out to demolish is that disarmament would wreck the economies that undertook it — throw arms workers onto the street, collapse demand, invite recession. Faramazyan answers with the labour-intensity point that later became a staple of the nuclear-freeze movement: because civilian production is "relatively less capital-intensive and more labour-intensive," each billion dollars switched from military to civilian use creates more jobs, not fewer. He cites the British Labour Party's Defence Study Group on the concrete reconversion of the Tornado programme to machine tools, medical equipment and civil aircraft — an argument that anticipates the Lucas Aerospace workers' alternative plan of the same years. And his closing chapters on the developing world make the strongest version of the "peace dividend" case: that disarmament would free resources for exactly the tasks the arms race defers. He quotes Fidel Castro's 1979 UN calculation that annual world military spending "could be used for building 600,000 schools for 400 million children, or 60 million modern apartments," and notes the UN's own finding that a cut of "only one per cent" in the developed nations' military budgets would close

the gap in agricultural aid to the poorest countries. These figures are real, they were sourced from UN documents, and the moral arithmetic behind them has not dated.

It is worth adding that this analysis was not the property of the Eastern bloc. The anti-Stalinist left had reached the same conclusions independently and earlier. Ernest Mandel, writing for the American Socialist Workers Party, had already made the "permanent arms economy" a central category of his analysis of post-war capitalism — "Workers Under Neo-capitalism," *International Socialist Review*, vol. 29 no. 6 (whole no. 189), November–December 1968 — treating chronic military spending as one of the props that had stabilised Western capitalism since 1945 while storing up inflation and waste. On the economics of militarism, Faramazyan and his sharpest critics were, for once, largely on the same page. Which makes the book's silence all the more conspicuous.

The burden that is never weighed

For a book whose entire method is to weigh the cost of arms against the alternative uses of the resources they consume, *Disarmament and the Economy* performs that operation on one half of the world only. The arms burden is measured, in scrupulous detail, for the United States, for the NATO allies, for Japan, for China — Faramazyan notes that China "spends over 40 per cent of her state budget on military aims" — and even for the newly independent states, whose military spending he rightly calls "a heavy burden for the still weak and underdeveloped economies of many of these countries." The one economy that is never placed on the scale is the one the author lived in.

This is not an oversight; it is structural, and the book states its own governing premise plainly. Militarism, for Faramazyan, is not a universal temptation of great powers but a disease specific to a mode of production: "the roots of militarism and the arms race were embedded in the economic and class character of capitalism." He quotes Lenin to seal the point — "Modern militarism is the result of capitalism" — and the logic follows inexorably. If militarism is capitalism, then socialism cannot, by definition, be militarist, and Soviet military spending cannot be a burden of the same kind. It can only be defensive, reactive, reluctant: "the socialist countries were compelled in the post-war years to strengthen their defensive capabilities," and "it is due to the capitalist countries that the arms race continued for so many years." The category that organises the whole book has been built so that it can never

point homeward.

When the Soviet figures do appear, they appear to be dismissed. In a single sentence Faramazyan disposes of the question that his 200 pages on Western spending have taught the reader to take seriously: "In 1970, the USSR allocated 17,900 million roubles for defence as compared with 17,000 million in 1981. In recent years, Soviet military spending is being reduced not only in absolute, but also in relative terms: its share in the nation's budget has decreased from 11.5 per cent in 1970 to 5.7 per cent in 1981." A superpower matching the United States weapon for weapon across three decades is asked to be understood as spending less on arms in 1981 than in 1970, and shrinking. Western estimates that told a different story are waved off as propaganda: the arms lobby, he says, "widely publishes exceedingly overestimated figures on the Soviet military budget," estimates "so obviously biased that even bourgeois politicians have to admit this."

The single line of the official Soviet defence budget was known even at the time to be a fiction — a residual accounting figure that omitted weapons procurement, military R&D, and much else, all of which were distributed across other headings. The true weight of Soviet military spending on the Soviet economy is genuinely contested and always will be, because the state that could have counted it chose not to; but the range of serious Western estimates ran from roughly 12 to 17 per cent of GNP, and by some later reckonings higher still, against the two-per-cent-or-so that Faramazyan's rouble figure implies. In the perestroika years Soviet officials themselves began to concede numbers several times the published one. Whatever the exact figure, the guns-versus-butter distortion that Faramazyan diagnoses so acutely in the American economy — the internal brain drain, the starving of civilian sectors, the diversion of the best engineers and the scarcest materials — was hollowing out his own economy at least as severely, and arguably more so, because the Soviet economy was so much smaller and poorer than the one it was straining to match. The instrument the book forged for measuring waste was the one instrument it could not turn around.

The pattern holds even where the Soviet economy does enter the argument. In the chapter on conversion, the USSR appears — but only as the triumphant exemplar of how painless disarmament can be. Faramazyan argues that "public ownership of the means of production and a centralised planned economy create conditions for a more efficient conversion of the military economy to civilian uses," and offers the post-war reconversion as proof: tank plants turned to tractors, artillery plants to excavators, "8.5 million men"

demobilised by the beginning of 1948 and retrained without mass unemployment. It is a genuine historical episode and it makes his feasibility case well. But notice what the framing does. The Soviet military economy is something that was converted, once, in 1946, and the story is closed; it is never a thing that exists, in 1981, at a scale that would itself need converting. The demobilisation of a wartime army becomes evidence that socialism disarms gracefully, while the standing peacetime arms economy of the other superpower — the one running in parallel to the American build-up the book measures so carefully — is simply not in the picture.

There is a smaller silence that tells the same story. The book that names the Trident, the MX, the cruise missile and the neutron bomb — and devotes pages to the militarism of the Pentagon's propaganda machine — never once names the SS-20, the Soviet intermediate-range missile whose deployment from 1976 was the proximate cause of the Euromissile crisis it is living through. It surfaces only as a symmetrical abstraction, in the USSR's own proposal for "a moratorium on the stationing in Europe of medium-range nuclear missiles by the NATO countries and the USSR" — the Western systems and the Soviet ones balanced in a single clause, the specific weapon that started the sequence left unnamed. And in passing the book supplies a textbook instance of a habit this series has documented across the Soviet foreign-policy literature: it derives the doctrine of "peaceful coexistence" from Lenin — "a principle which Lenin had originally suggested and proved to be inescapable" — without once quoting Lenin saying it, sourcing the actual words instead to Brezhnev's speech to the 25th Congress.

The answer the tradition had already given

The objection to Faramazyan is not that he criticised the arms race. It is that he exempted his own state from a critique that his own tradition had long since applied to it. For the charge that Soviet military spending was a real burden on Soviet workers, borne for the sake of the ruling stratum, is not a Cold War invention of the West. It is Trotsky's, made from within the revolutionary-socialist tradition, forty-five years before Faramazyan wrote.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), the chapter "Foreign Policy and the Army" analyses Soviet defence spending in exactly the terms Faramazyan reserves for the capitalist states — as a deduction extracted from a poor society at the expense of its people. Trotsky's Soviet Union has to maintain an expensive standing army rather than a cheaper militia precisely because it is poor: "The Soviet Union must pay dear for its

defense, because it is not sufficiently rich for the cheaper militia system." He adds, in a formulation that indicts the whole apparatus: "It is exactly because of its poverty that the Soviet society has hung around its neck the very costly bureaucracy." The burden, he saw, would be met "at the expense of the rest of the population" — the same population whose living standards Faramazyan promises disarmament will raise, in every economy but this one. And Trotsky read the restoration of ranks, titles and a privileged officer corps in the mid-1930s as a military expression of the bureaucracy's consolidation of its own position, not of the workers' state's defensive needs. *The Revolution Betrayed*, ch. 8, is the direct answer to *Disarmament and the Economy*, ch. 1: the arms burden falls on both social systems, because in both a privileged stratum spends the producers' surplus on arms and calls it necessity.

That reply had been renewed in Faramazyan's own decade. Mandel's analysis of the "permanent arms economy" treated militarised spending as a structural feature to be criticised wherever it appeared, and the Fourth International's press through the 1970s and early 1980s insisted on the symmetry that Progress could not print: that the arms race had two engines, that the SS-20 and the cruise missile were answers to each other, and that the working people of the East paid for their bombs as surely as the working people of the West paid for theirs. Faramazyan's economics could have carried him to that conclusion. His premise — that militarism is a property of capitalism alone — forbade it.

What survives

Strip away the exemption, and a genuinely useful book remains. On the waste and irrationality of the Western arms economy, on the falsity of the claim that disarmament must mean depression, on the feasibility of conversion, and on the developmental catastrophe of a world that spends on weapons what it will not spend on schools and food, Faramazyan is a serious and honest guide, and his figures — drawn from UN, SIPRI and American sources — can be cited with confidence. He was right that the arms race was "a purposeless waste of material and spiritual wealth." He was right that disarmament would have been a dividend for the whole of humanity. He was wrong only in the direction every writer under that discipline was required to be wrong: he could see the burden crushing every economy on earth except the one that was crushing his own. The tragedy of the book is that its author had built, with real skill, the exact instrument needed to measure that burden — and was not permitted to point it at home.

Scientific and Technical Revolution: Economic aspects

How technology actually entered Soviet production - investment structure, plant renewal, the gap between research and the factory - by a planning economist candid about numbers that would not come out.

Solomon Aronovich Heinman

Introduction to the 1981 Edition

Scientific and Technical Revolution: Economic Aspects is a book about efficiency, written by a man who had spent his working life inside the machinery of Soviet planning, at the moment that machinery began, unmistakably, to run down. Its author is S. A. Heinman — the Progress spelling of Kheinman — described on the back cover as "a professor and a leading researcher at the Institute of Economics of the USSR Academy of Sciences," and the description is exact: he was a specialist in the economics of technical progress, one of the technicians of growth rather than one of its priests. Where the series' other book on this theme spoke in sixteen voices, this one speaks in a single professional voice, and that is its interest. It is not the doctrine sung by a chorus of academicians; it is the doctrine as an economist tries to make it add up. The addition does not come out, and the most valuable thing about the book is how much of the shortfall Heinman is honest enough to record — in the very act of denying that it means what it means.

The date on the spine, for once, can be trusted. Progress often printed translations years behind their Russian originals; this one is close to current. Heinman quotes the 26th Congress of the Communist Party (February–March 1981) as the newest word, cites the completed results of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (1976–1980), and reaches forward to the Guidelines for 1981–1985 and "the Period up to 1990." His statistical series mostly close in 1977, which fixes the drafting of the Russian book to about 1979–80, freshened for the English edition with the Congress just held. So this is a document of the last full Brezhnev year but one — after Afghanistan, before the succession, at the exact hinge that later Soviet writers would call *zastoi* (stagnation), a word the regime of 1981 would not permit itself. That silence is the frame the whole book must be read inside.

It helps to feel the texture of that year. By 1981 "developed socialism" had become the regime's official name for its own

present — a formula that quietly replaced the promise of an imminent communism with the reassurance that the existing order was itself the destination, mature and in no hurry. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan the Congress adopted set the most modest growth targets of any Soviet plan to date, and would go on to miss even those. The reforms of the 1960s had been abandoned; the men who ran the economy were, like Heinman, in their sixties and seventies, defending arrangements they had built. Optimism in such a book is not a personal quirk but a period style — an official cheerfulness maintained over an accumulating unease that could be described in fragments but never as a whole. Heinman writes squarely inside that style, and against it, sometimes in the same paragraph.

What was the book for? It is the economist's brief in a long international argument, the same argument its 1972 predecessor in this series was fielding — see the introduction to *The Scientific and Technological Revolution: Social Effects and Prospects*, a collection built around the identical slogan. The slogan is Leonid Brezhnev's, set as a task to the 24th Congress in 1971 and quoted by Heinman as the organising purpose of everything that follows: "organically to fuse the achievements of the scientific and technical revolution with the advantages of the socialist economic system." The scientific and technical revolution — the STR, the Russian *nauchno-tehnicheskaya revolyutsiya* or NTR, the wave of atomic energy, automation, synthetic materials and computers that both blocs agreed was remaking industrial life — was to be married to central planning, and the offspring was to be an efficiency the capitalist West could not match. The 1972 volume argued the case philosophically and sociologically. Heinman's job is narrower and harder: to show it in the numbers, in the language of inputs and outputs, capital-to-output ratios and the productivity of labour. He has picked the ground on which the doctrine is most exposed.

The doctrine deserves to be stated at its strongest, because Heinman states it well. Technology, for him, has no social meaning of its own; the relations of production decide what a

machine does. From that genuinely Marxist premise — the same premise the 1972 sibling defended against Western "technological determinism," the belief that a given machine produces the same society everywhere — he draws the confident conclusion that "only the socialist relations of production make it possible fully to realise the STR's creative potential." Brezhnev supplies the wager in its purest form, quoted approvingly: the scientific and technical revolution "acquires a true orientation consistent with the interests of man and society only under socialism." And the plan is the instrument that will collect the winnings. The USSR economy, Heinman writes, has been "growing steadily, switching systematically to an ever more intensive" path of development — replacing the old growth-by-addition, more workers and more raw materials, with growth by rising productivity. That switch is the book's promise. It is also, read against the calendar, its confession.

Before pressing the confession, credit what the book earns, because a reader told it is worthless would learn nothing and would be wrong. Heinman is a real economist, and large stretches of this book are real economics that survive the collapse of the state that commissioned them. His method for classifying technical progress — sorting every advance by whether it economises on labour, on materials, or on fixed assets, and tracing how each choice ripples through the proportions of the economy — is sound input-output analysis, and his insistence that reducing the material-intensiveness of production (the tonnage of steel and fuel sunk into each unit of output) was the central Soviet weakness was correct and, if anything, understated. His long chapter on ecology is neither complacent nor propagandistic; he treats pollution and the exhaustion of resources as real constraints, not as diseases confined to capitalism. His readings of Western futurology — Alvin Toffler's "eco-spasm," the Tinbergen group's report to the Club of Rome, John McHale's *The Future of the Future* — are done from the originals, cited by page, and argued with rather than sneered at. He is at his best on the "limits to growth" debate then convulsing the West: against the fashionable counsel that industrial civilisation should cap its own expansion, Heinman answers, correctly, that the "limit" being proposed was a limit on the poor, a way of freezing a grossly unequal world in place, and that the real question was not whether to grow but how — which resources to husband, which to substitute, how to lower the tonnage of materials and energy buried in each unit of output. That is a serious position, and it aged better than the Malthusian panics he was answering. Where he is describing what a machine does to a labour process, or how a new material changes the balance of an industry, he is worth reading still. The genuine Marxist

analysis of technology and the economy is here, and it should be rescued intact.

It should be rescued, above all, because it is Heinman's own economics that names the disease his doctrine denies. This is the difference between the 1981 book and its 1972 sibling, and it is why the later, quieter volume is in some ways the more damning specimen. The collection of 1972 was pure confidence; its authors never let the doubt onto the page. Heinman lets it on, again and again, in the flattened idiom of the planning report, and then declines to read what he has written.

Take the problem of incentives — the question of what, under socialism, actually drives a manager to adopt a better technique. Heinman states it with disarming candour. The Soviet system had abolished unemployment and the fear of bankruptcy; those were real gains, and he is right to count them. But then, in a sentence that ought to have stopped him cold: "These obvious social advantages of the Soviet system also eliminate automatic incentives for speeding up technical progress like competition and the danger of going bankrupt." There it is — the admission that the planned economy had removed the goad that forces a capitalist firm to innovate or die, and had found nothing automatic to replace it. Heinman files this not as a contradiction but as "the complicated task of setting up an economic mechanism" to supply the missing spur. The task was real; it was the task Soviet reform economists had been failing to solve since Yevsei Liberman's proposals of the 1960s, and would go on failing to solve until the state expired. Heinman sees the hole in the floor and calls it an item of the agenda.

Take automation, the very heart of the STR he is celebrating. Heinman does not claim it is sweeping through Soviet industry. On the contrary, with the honesty of a man who has read the plan-fulfilment figures, he writes that "the experience of the 1960s and the 1970s does not suggest that even in the 1980s automated control systems will spread extensively beyond the framework of some lines of production." That is an extraordinary thing to find in a book whose thesis is that socialism is uniquely fitted to master automation: an admission, from the author, that two decades of trying had not made it spread, and that a third was unlikely to. The same restraint runs through his repeated return to what he calls the problem of "mechanising manual labour" — "a social problem of prime importance," he writes, and he is right that it was. In 1981 something on the order of two-fifths of Soviet industrial workers, and a majority in construction and agriculture, still did their work by hand; the "revolution" of the title had

washed over a workforce large parts of which were using the tools of a much earlier century. Heinman names this. He simply does not draw from it the conclusion it forces — that an economy which cannot mechanise its own hand labour after sixty years is not the economy best placed to lead the world into automation.

And take his own decisive measure. Heinman does not choose some soft yardstick; he chooses the hardest one available, and quotes the 26th Congress choosing it for him: "The most concentrated indicator here is the productivity of labour. It rose during this period nearly 50 per cent." He means the boast to reassure. But fifty per cent across the whole Tenth Five-Year Plan is a compound rate in the low single figures — and it was, in fact, the weakest performance of any postwar Soviet plan. Growth in national income had fallen with almost every five-year plan since the late 1950s: from the confident seven and eight per cent of the 1960s to something the official series put near four and outside estimates put lower still. Heinman's own turn to "intensive" development is the tell. A country switches from growth-by-addition to growth-by-efficiency precisely when the additions run out — when there are no more idle workers to hire, no more virgin land to plough, no cheap way left to burn more fuel. He even names the wall: the demographic turn expected from the early 1980s, when the working-age population would grow more slowly than at any time since the war — the exhaustion, in the plainest terms, of the extensive path. The intensive turn was not a triumphant advance to a higher stage. It was a forced retreat from a growth model that had stopped working, dressed in the language of a plan.

So the reflexivity test this series applies to every Soviet volume — can the book's own central category ever be turned on the book's own side? — produces an unusually precise result here. Heinman's category is efficiency, the productivity of labour, and unlike most of his colleagues he half-turns it on himself. He lists the incentive gap, the automation that will not spread, the sea of unmechanised hand labour, the demographic wall. What he cannot do is assemble these into the single judgement they demand. Each defect is quarantined as a "task," a "problem," a "complicated" item for the mechanism; none is allowed to touch the thesis that socialism is the system that masters the STR. The confidence and the evidence sit on the same pages and are never introduced to each other. The word stagnation does not appear, because in 1981 it could not; the thing itself is scattered through the book in pieces, each labelled as its own opposite.

Where the earlier sibling failed on the future of computing —

the 1969 decision to abandon original Soviet designs and clone the IBM System/360, which fixed Soviet machines a generation behind by policy, a story told in that introduction — Heinman's book records the same defeat from the other end, in the ledger rather than the laboratory. He can see that computer output had grown enormously from a base of almost nothing, and that its rate of growth was already falling; he can see that automated control was not spreading; he can see the manual labour it was supposed to abolish still there. The convergence question the 1972 collection refused — whether a hierarchical, expert-managed, bureaucratically planned industrial order in the East had come to share the real features of managed capitalism in the West, a question its companion volumes *The Future of Society* and *The American Utopia* also bolted shut — Heinman does not raise either. But his economics keeps supplying the evidence that the plan, praised as the frictionless conductor of technical advance, was in fact its slow and clogged one.

Which is why the answer to this book was in print forty-five years before it, and was addressed to precisely Heinman's chosen ground. In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky made the productivity of labour the whole test of the Soviet regime's fate — the same test Heinman invokes and then flinches from. "These two problems, state and money," Trotsky wrote, "reduce themselves in the last analysis to the problem of problems: productivity of labor" (ch. 4, "The Struggle for Productivity"). It is not a slogan but a criterion, and he took it from Marx, for whom "all economy ... comes down in the last analysis to an economy of time." By that measure Trotsky refused the very verdict Heinman's book exists to pronounce. Socialism, he insisted, "could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism." Until it did, the case was open: "In that sense, decisive for all civilization, socialism has not yet triumphed. It has shown that it can and should triumph. But it has not yet triumphed. All assertions to the contrary are the fruit of ignorance and charlatanism." Heinman's whole book is one long assertion to the contrary — but assembled, to his credit, out of materials that keep proving Trotsky's point.

Trotsky had also refused, in advance, the move by which the doctrine substituted forms of ownership for achieved results. "It is exactly for the Marxist," he wrote, "that this question is not exhausted by a consideration of forms of property regardless of the achieved productivity of labor." State ownership resting on a low productivity of labour "mean only a transitional regime whose destiny history has not yet finally weighed" (ch. 3). That is the exact ground Heinman occupies

and cannot hold: he wants the public ownership to guarantee the efficiency, and his own figures show the efficiency arriving late, thin, and slowing.

And Trotsky named the mechanism Heinman's economics gestures at but is forbidden to identify. The missing incentive, the innovation that would not spread, the hand labour that would not mechanise — for the Fourth International's tradition these were not separate "tasks" but symptoms of one thing: a privileged administrative caste whose interest in its own security had become a brake on the productive forces it managed. The bureaucracy's "autocratic rule," Trotsky wrote, "is coming into greater and greater contradiction with the development of the productive forces of the country — just as absolute monarchy became in its time irreconcilable with the development of the bourgeois market" (ch. 11). This is the analysis the "organic fusion" doctrine was built to forestall, and it explains the exact pattern of Heinman's honest defects. A stratum that fears disruption will not build the automatic penalty for failing to innovate, because that penalty would fall on itself; it will keep the manual labour rather than risk the upheaval of abolishing it; it will import yesterday's Western machine rather than gamble on tomorrow's untried one. The productivity race Heinman was so sure of was lost, as Trotsky's category predicts, not for want of Soviet science, which was formidable, but because the social relations he called an advantage were the fetter. Trotsky had put the same failure in a single sentence about the Soviet workplace of the 1930s: the bureaucracy "spurs on the workers with all its might, but is unable to make a proper use of labor power" (ch. 1). Fifty years on, in Heinman's careful modern prose about incentives and control systems, it is still true, and still unnamed.

None of this makes the volume worthless — the reverse. As economics it holds where it describes; as a historical document it is close to irreplaceable. Here is one of the ablest technicians of Soviet growth, at the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences, setting his professional name to the promise that the machine age belonged to central planning — in the very year the planned economy's own reports made the promise impossible to keep, and writing enough of the counter-evidence into his own chapters that a reader with the calendar open can watch him lose the argument to himself. The tragedy is not that he lied; much of what he wrote he plainly believed, and some of it was true. The tragedy is the one question a book about the economics of the scientific revolution under socialism never turned on its own subject — whether the plan it praised might be the thing that could not keep up — and the fact that the answer, stated in his own

chosen terms, the productivity of labour "in the last analysis," had been sitting in print since 1936, in a book he was not permitted to open.

PHILOSOPHY

The Role of the Individual in History

If history moves by law, what is left for the great man to do? Plekhanov's classic answer - short, lucid, and still the clearest statement of the problem in the Marxist tradition.

Georgi Plekhanov

Introduction to This Edition

Of all the short books in the Marxist library, this is the one whose fate is the sharpest joke history has played on its publisher. The Role of the Individual in History — Georgi Plekhanov gave it the longer, drier title On the Question of the Individual's Role in History, and it is under that heading that it appears in the Selected Philosophical Works from which the present text is taken — argues, with more wit and rigour than any rival, that the great man is not the author of his age, that he can be replaced, and that no personality however towering can bend the course of history to its will. The state that printed it by the million spent those same decades building the most extravagant cult of a single personality the modern world has seen. The essay in your hands is the standing refutation of the regime that canonised it. Nothing an introduction can add improves on that fact; the most it can do is set it out.

The argument and its moment

Plekhanov wrote the essay in 1898 and published it that year in the St Petersburg journal *Nauchnoye Obozreniye* (Scientific Review), under one of the pen-names he used to slip past the tsarist censor. He was then the acknowledged head of Russian Marxism in exile, and the piece belongs to the same campaign as the writings that had made his name. In the 1880s he had demolished the Narodniks — the Populists who staked everything on the "critically thinking individual", the hero who would drag a sleeping peasant Russia toward socialism by force of will and self-sacrifice. That was a pamphleteer's quarrel with a Russian sect. Here the quarrel matures into a general theory, and its immediate targets widen: on one side the subjectivists, chief among them the Populist sociologist N. K. Mikhailovsky — the "esteemed sociologist" the essay opens by teasing — who made the individual a free-standing force pulling history along; on the other the mechanical determinists and the shallow "economic" fatalists who abolished the individual altogether, reducing a human being to a negligible quantity in an equation already solved.

Plekhanov refuses both exits, and the refusal is the book. He states the antinomy in as many words — the individual as everything, the individual as nothing — and then, in a formula that is pure Hegel put to work, insists that neither term may be sacrificed to the other: the correct standpoint is reached only when the elements of truth in both are blended in a synthesis. What follows is a long, delighted excursion through eighteenth-century France — Louis XV and the incompetent generals of the Seven Years War, the deaths of Mirabeau and Robespierre, the "good sword" the Directory went looking for and found in Bonaparte — deployed to show exactly how much accident is granted and exactly where its writ stops. The play of chance is real: had a brick fallen on Robespierre in early 1793, or a bullet found Bonaparte at Arcole, "his place would of course have been taken by somebody else", and that somebody would have done broadly what the moment required. Accident decides which individual answers a social need, and colours how the need is met; it cannot conjure the need away, or invent one that the productive forces have not prepared.

From this comes the essay's central and justly famous definition, which deserves to be read slowly:

A great man is great, not in his personal features lending an individual complexion to historic events but in his possession of traits which make him the most capable of serving his time's great social needs, which have arisen under the influence of general and particular causes.

Carlyle, Plekhanov notes, called great men Beginners, and he accepts the word while emptying it of the worship Carlyle poured into it: "A great man is precisely a Beginner because he sees farther than others do and his desires are stronger than in others." The hero is not the man who can halt or reverse the natural course of things but the one whose activity is "the conscious and free expression" of a course that would otherwise work itself out blindly and more slowly. He matters, and he matters enormously — Plekhanov is no fatalist, and says so flatly: individuals "can influence the fate of society", their influence "is sometimes very considerable", but "the

possibility of its being exercised and its extent are determined by society's organisation". The great man moves the world by seeing sooner and wanting harder what the world, in any case, was going to need.

What holds and what strains

On its own terms the essay is close to flawless of its kind, and its virtues are the ones that make Plekhanov worth reading at all: the generosity toward opponents, the delight in concrete historical texture, the refusal of the easy formula in either direction. It is the finest short statement in the tradition of a genuinely dialectical account of human agency — one that neither flatters the individual into a demiurge nor dissolves the individual into a statistic. A century of readers who wanted to know why history is neither the biography of great men nor an automatic machine have been sent here, and rightly.

Where it strains is exactly where its author's own life would later strain, and the two failures are the same failure. The engine of the essay is the sentence that the great man "cannot eliminate the given economic relations if the latter correspond to a definite state of the productive forces." As a discipline against the voluntarist — against the Narodnik who thinks will alone can leap over a stage of development — it is bracing and correct. But the same discipline, carried into politics as a rule for reading off tactics from the "definite state of the productive forces", is what would leave Plekhanov himself stranded. If the productive forces dictate that the coming Russian revolution can only be bourgeois, then the workers' party must trim its horizon to that measure and wait — and it was precisely this deduction, drawn from a premise Lenin shared, that carried Plekhanov into Menshevism, into support for the imperial war in 1914, and finally into denouncing October 1917 as a crime against the laws of history. The rigour and the limitation are one thing seen from two sides. The essay's strength as philosophy is its refusal of wishful voluntarism; its weakness as a guide to action is the same refusal, hardened into a fatalism about what a class may attempt before the productive forces have signed the permission slip.

There is, then, a tragedy folded into this little book, and it is the essay's own doing. By its criterion the great man is the one who "sees farther than others" and grasps "his time's great social needs" in time to meet them. Measured against that standard — his own — 1917 is the year Plekhanov's finest instrument turns and convicts its maker. The social need was there; a beginning was demanded; and the man who had taught a generation of revolutionaries how to read history could not read the need his own moment had thrown up, and set himself

against those who could. No external verdict is required. The book supplies it.

The state that could not take its own medicine

Now to the use the essay was put to, which is where an introduction earns its place. Reproduced faithfully below, complete with the Institute of Marxism-Leninism's own explanatory notes, this text was a fixture of Soviet political education for the better part of a century — a set piece on "the individual in history", assigned, summarised, examined. And every year it was taught, its plainest sentences stood in open contradiction to the regime that assigned it.

For the doctrine the essay hammers home is that no individual is indispensable and none can override the course set by material conditions. Yet the Soviet state under Stalin was organised around the opposite proposition in its most naked form: a single figure presented as the indispensable maker of events, the "Lenin of today", the coryphaeus of the sciences, the leader whose personal genius was said to author victories and whose name was chanted as though history flowed from his will. The cult of personality was not a stylistic excess grafted onto Marxism; it was a working refutation of the very text the same presses were turning out under Plekhanov's name. To hand a Soviet student *The Role of the Individual in History* was to hand them the sharpest available argument against the portrait of Stalin hanging on the classroom wall — and to trust, correctly for a long time, that no one would say so.

The contradiction became, for one extraordinary moment, official. When Khrushchev moved in 1956 to dismantle the dead Stalin's reputation, the category he reached for was precisely this one: the "cult of the personality", the error of ascribing to one man what belonged to the class, the party, the objective march of events. The Marxist theory of the role of the individual — Plekhanov's theory, taught from Plekhanov's essay — was wheeled out to explain the disaster. But it was wheeled out to do half a job. It was allowed to indict the dead man; it was not allowed to ask how a doctrine so thoroughly taught had been so thoroughly ignored in practice for twenty-five years, or what kind of state permits a cult its own textbooks forbid. The essay's thesis was good enough to bury Stalin and never permitted to examine the system that had produced him. That is the exact shape of the apparatus's honesty throughout: scrupulous on the page, sealed off from the mirror.

To the editors' credit — and it is a real credit, of a kind not

every book in this catalogue can claim — the apparatus reproduced here does not tamper with Plekhanov's argument. The notes, given in full below in the Institute's own numbering, are honest scholarship: they identify Mikhailovsky behind the "esteemed sociologist", gloss the French history, place the quotations. Nothing in the annotation bends the essay toward the current line. The distortion was never in what the notes say; it was in what the whole edifice of Soviet Marxism declined to notice — that the book it was printing was a charge sheet against its own practice, and that the charge was never answered because it was never allowed to be read as one.

Why it still matters

Read outside the shadow of that contradiction, the essay recovers its full force, and the force is not antiquarian. Two temptations perennially organise the way people think about history, and Plekhanov is the standing rebuke to both. The first is the Great Man theory in its endlessly renewed forms — the disruptor, the founder, the strongman who alone bends the arc — the flattery every cult of leadership lives on, and against which this small book remains the most economical antidote ever written. The second is the fatalism that abolishes agency altogether, whether in the vulgar economic determinism Plekhanov himself was already fighting or in its later, glossier descendants: history as a machine in which nothing anyone does could have been otherwise. Between the demiurge and the cog, Plekhanov holds open the difficult middle where human beings really act — where individuals matter enormously, and matter within limits they did not set and cannot wish away.

That there is a tragedy at the heart of the book — that its author failed his own test at the one moment it counted — does not weaken the teaching; it deepens it. It is the surest proof the essay could ask for that seeing farther is not a permanent possession, that the theorist of historical necessity is as answerable to it as anyone, and that no doctrine, however true, exempts the man who holds it from the demand to grasp his own moment while there is still time to act in it. Plekhanov wrote the manual for recognising the beginner history requires, and then, in 1917, could not recognise the beginning. The Soviet state printed the manual and staged the cult it forbade. Both failures point the same way — back to the living core the essay defends against every idol and every fatalism alike: that men and women make their own history, and do not make it just as they please, and that the whole art is to know the difference.