



PROGRESS QUARTERLY

Critical Introductions to the Reissued Classics

VOLUME IX · NUMBER 1

ПРОГРЕСС · МОСКВА

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ANTI-IMPERIALISM

US Policy in Latin America: Postwar to Present

Washington's Latin American policy from Nixon to Reagan's second term - Panama, the Carter turn, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the debt crisis, Contadora - by three working Soviet area specialists.

A. N. Glinkin and others

Introduction to the 1987 Edition

The English title misdescribes the book. *US Policy in Latin America: Postwar to Present* promises four decades; the Russian title on the imprint page — *Evolutsiya latinoamerikanskoi politiki SShA*, "The Evolution of US Latin American Policy" — promises what the book actually delivers, and the authors say so in their own first sentence: "This book presents a study of the evolution of US Latin American policy in the 1970s and early 1980s." The postwar decades get six pages of run-up. Guatemala 1954 appears twice, in passing. The Bay of Pigs is named once, as Playa Girón, in a paragraph about a Congressional resolution of April 1985. The Cuban missile crisis is "the Caribbean crisis of 1962" and is mentioned only as the origin of a diplomatic understanding the Reagan administration wanted out of. This is not a history of American intervention in the hemisphere. It is a close, current, professionally sourced study of Washington's regional policy from Nixon to Reagan's second term, and it should be read as that.

Who wrote it: A. N. Glinkin, V. F. Martynov and P. P. Yakovlev, three Soviet Latin Americanists, translated by Patricia Beriozkina. The footnotes place them precisely. They cite their own earlier work in *Latinskaya Amerika*, the Soviet journal of the field, and in *SShA: ekonomika, politika, ideologiya*; Glinkin's *Recent History of the Countries of Central America* (Moscow, 1975) is cited in the apparatus. Their introduction describes the book as "part of the continuing research of Latin American specialists in the USSR" and lists six predecessor volumes going back to 1960. These are working area specialists, not propagandists on assignment, and the difference shows on every page where the subject is Washington.

The date on the spine is not the date of the book. The imprint signature reads 014(01)-87, and the English edition is 1987, but the evidence stops nearly two years earlier. The latest datable event I can find anywhere in the text is the sixteenth OAS consultative meeting of 29 July 1985. The book cites the

International Court of Justice's provisional measures on the mining of Nicaraguan harbours, ordered in May 1984, but not the Court's judgment on the merits of 27 June 1986 — a decision that would have been the single most useful citation in the entire volume, and which no author writing after that date would have omitted. Iran-Contra, which broke in November 1986 and confirmed the book's central charge about the contras from inside the American executive, is likewise absent. Gorbachev appears once, in a single sentence about a meeting with Raúl Castro; Chernenko is described as "the late General Secretary," which places composition after March 1985. So: a manuscript closed in the second half of 1985, in the first months of the Gorbachev period but written entirely out of the preceding one, issued in Russian and then in English in 1987. Read it as a 1985 book. Argue with it as a 1985 book.

Where it is right

It is right about a great deal, and an introduction that hedged here would be worthless. The record of United States conduct in Latin America between 1945 and 1985 is among the best-documented criminal records of the twentieth century, and by 1985 most of it was in the public domain — through the Church Committee, through the ITT hearings, through the American press itself. Glinkin, Martynov and Yakovlev worked from that material, and their sourcing is the sourcing of a serious book: the Department of State Bulletin, US Congressional hearings and Joint Economic Committee reports, UNCTAD documents, SIPRI, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Financial Times, Le Monde, alongside Pravda and Granma.

The ITT chapter is accurate. The company plotted against the Popular Unity government before Allende took office; the CIA worked with it; Frank Church's subcommittee established this in 1973 and the book quotes Church to the effect that the two were so intertwined it was hard to say where one ended and the other began. EXIMBANK cut Chile's credit a month after the nationalisation of Anaconda and Kennecott. The Inter-American Development Bank lent Chile \$11.6 million

across the whole Popular Unity period against an average of \$30 million a year before it, and the World Bank lent nothing at all — the book gives the figures and names Robert McNamara's justification. That is a documented credit blockade, and the book documents it.

It is right that the Carter administration's human rights policy was selective to the point of fraud, and it proves the point with the strongest available example: in defiance of Congressional legislation of June 1976 barring military assistance to the Chilean junta, Pinochet received up to \$120 million in American arms in 1977–78. It is right that Reagan lifted the Carter sanctions imposed after Chilean secret police murdered Orlando Letelier in Washington, that Jeane Kirkpatrick went to Santiago to announce agreement with the junta, and that in January 1983 the IMF granted Pinochet roughly a billion dollars while US law nominally prohibited assistance to gross violators of human rights. It is right about the CIA's contra manual published in October 1984 — the book quotes its instructions to tear out electrical wiring, put dirt in fuel tanks and scatter nails on roads — and right about the mining of Nicaraguan harbours, and right that a Soviet ship was among those damaged. Its account of American logistical support to Britain in the Malvinas war, down to the use of Ascension Island and the transfer of Sidewinder, Shrike, Harpoon and Stinger missiles, is detailed and, so far as the published record goes, sound.

Its narrative of the invasion of Grenada on 25 October 1983 is the best thing in the book: hour by hour, the Pearls airport landing at five in the morning, the paratroop drop near St George's, the assault on the Cuban construction workers' camp, the eleven warships, the escalation from under two thousand troops to nearly six thousand, the destruction of a hospital. And it is right, and worth saying loudly in 2025, that the wave of Latin American condemnation was general — Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Guyana, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil and the Dominican Republic are each quoted or cited, from official statements and parliamentary resolutions. The book's central thesis, stated in its introduction — that "changes in US policy with regard to the region are only relative inasmuch as although the forms, methods and specific strategic objectives may be different, the policy essentially remains the same" — was not Soviet cant in 1985. It was, on the evidence assembled here, correct.

None of that is diminished by what follows. It is the reason for taking what follows seriously.

Chile, and the question the book refuses

The overthrow of the Popular Unity government is the strongest case any indictment of American policy in the hemisphere can make, and this book cannot make it. Allende's name occurs six times in the whole volume. The eleventh of September 1973 is never narrated. There is no Track II, no Kissinger, no order to make the economy scream, no murder of General Schneider. The coup enters the book in a single sentence, at the end of a passage about corporations:

"It was the transnationals which decisively prepared the ground for the fascist overthrow, and, as was the case with ITT, staged the coup."

That is an explanation with no Chileans in it. Not the officer corps, not the Christian Democrats, not the gremios, not the truck owners' strike, and above all not the Chilean working class, which is absent from its own defeat. The monopolies staged the coup; the Chileans were the terrain it was staged on.

This is not carelessness. Economism of this kind performs a function. If the defeat was manufactured abroad, then no question arises about the strategy pursued at home — and the strategy pursued at home was the Chilean Communist Party's, which was Moscow's, the peaceful and constitutional road to socialism through an elected government administering a state it had not touched. The Progress list carried whole volumes celebrating that road. A book that examined why it ended in the National Stadium would have had to examine them. So the book does not examine it, and the reader is left with a Chile in which the only agents are American ones.

The counter-argument was made at the time, from the left, by people who had just got out alive. On 28 September 1973, seventeen days after the coup, the Peruvian revolutionary Hugo Blanco — flown out of Santiago via the Swedish embassy — and the Argentine socialist Eduardo Creus gave an interview in Mexico City, printed in Intercontinental Press on 8 October 1973 under the title "Eyewitness Account of Repression in Chile." Blanco describes the raids that preceded the coup, carried out under the Arms Control Law passed by the parliamentary right in late 1972: "The UP did not actively oppose it, however. The UP deputies abstained and Allende did not veto it." He describes the government's instruction that workers guard the factories without occupying them, so that after a day's work in the battle of production they should "stay on at night doing guard duty," with the result that "it was essentially the vanguard that was trapped in the factories when the military launched its attack."

Asked directly what the Chilean experience had shown about the theory of the peaceful road to socialism, Creus answered that it "did not have much to do with reality," and gave the reason: "on many occasions when the workers occupied the factories, it was the Allende government itself that cleared them out." On the arms that did exist: "The left organizations had a lot of guns. But these weapons were not in the hands of the workers. They were kept in special arsenals by the leaderships." And on the coup's outcome: "with the proper organization, the resistance could have assumed gigantic proportions."

A reader may reject that assessment. It is a contested judgement, and it was contested then. What cannot be defended is a book about the destruction of the Popular Unity government that does not know the argument exists. The strategic question — whether a workers' government can hold power through a state apparatus it has left intact — is the question Chile posed to the international left, and this book, published fourteen years later by the state whose party had answered it one way, does not put it.

A small correction while we are here: the book attributes the 1972 exposure of the ITT memoranda to "the American journalist John Anderson." It was Jack Anderson.

Cuba without an inside

Cuba occupies more of this book than any other country, and the treatment is the mirror image of Chile's: everything that happens to Cuba comes from Washington, and nothing happens inside Cuba at all. The book records that scholars found the island "safely socialist," that its "economic and social achievements and continued development of socialist democracy were recognised by the majority of countries in this part of the world," and that more than a hundred American firms — Monsanto, Dow, Union Carbide, Dupont, Coca-Cola, Goodyear, Firestone — enquired about future trade in 1975. All of that is well sourced.

What is missing is anything that would let a reader understand Cuba as a society with its own contradictions. There is no accounting of the Soviet subsidy: nothing on the preferential sugar price, nothing on the oil re-export arrangement, nothing on the terms of Cuba's membership of the CMEA, which the book mentions three times and only in connection with Latin American trade. A study whose whole method is to trace the economic dependence of Latin American states on the United States declines to apply that method once to the dependence it might have measured most exactly.

Two absences are specific enough to name. On 23 August 1968 Fidel Castro delivered the speech endorsing the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia. Intercontinental Press printed the full text across three issues that autumn, together with, on 16 September 1968, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International's reply of 1 September, which opened by "categorically rejecting Fidel Castro's endorsement of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and other troops" and insisted in the same breath on defending Cuba against the American blockade. That is the difficult position, and it was taken at the time. The word "Czechoslovakia" does not occur in this book.

In March 1971 the poet Heberto Padilla was arrested in Havana and made to deliver a self-criticism, and the writers who had been the revolution's most valuable friends abroad broke with it. Intercontinental Press of 17 May 1971 carried it on the cover — "Cuban Poet's Arrest: A Blow to the Revolution" — and printed the international letter to Castro. Padilla does not appear in this book either.

There is a third silence that bears directly on the book's own argument. It treats the sixth summit of the non-aligned movement, held in Havana in September 1979 with ninety-four countries represented, as a triumph of Cuban prestige and a defeat for American diplomacy, which it was. It does not mention what happened next. The Soviet Army entered Afghanistan in December; on 14 January 1980 the UN General Assembly deplored the intervention by 104 votes to 18, with Cuba voting against; and Cuba's chairmanship of the non-aligned movement never recovered, its candidacy for the Security Council seat collapsing after scores of inconclusive ballots. The book carries the credit and drops the consequence, three months later, in the same paragraph-sequence.

The Carter Doctrine, and the word that is not there

Here the omission stops being a matter of emphasis. Chapter Three, section four, is titled "Military Policy. The Carter Doctrine and Latin America." It describes the doctrine as announced in the State of the Union message, quotes Carter's undertaking to defend American interests "by all necessary means, including military force," and calls it "the basis of Washington's new adventurist course in international affairs." It observes that "The Carter Doctrine, of course, was primarily anti-Soviet in nature and spearheaded against the socialist countries," and then, in the next sentence, that "The areas close to the borders of the Soviet Union were singled out for special attention."

The State of the Union message was delivered on 23 January 1980. The Soviet Army had entered Afghanistan four weeks earlier. The doctrine's operative sentence was about the Persian Gulf. The area close to the borders of the Soviet Union that had been singled out for special attention was Afghanistan.

The word "Afghanistan" does not occur once in this book. Neither does "Kabul," nor "Hungary," nor "Czechoslovakia," nor "Poland" — and this from a volume whose research closed in 1985, while the war was in its sixth year, four years after martial law was declared in Warsaw and Solidarność, a trade union of ten million, was driven underground. An earlier passage in the same section reproaches Washington for restricting arms sales to Latin America while pursuing "the US policy to stir up tension and accelerate the arms race in the regions bordering the Soviet Union." Twice, within a few pages, the argument walks up to the border and stops.

This is what the double standard looks like when it is executed by competent scholars. Everything the book says about the illegitimacy of great-power intervention in the affairs of small states — the Dominican Republic in 1965, Grenada in 1983, the mining of Nicaraguan harbours, the doctrine of non-interference invoked from a dozen Latin American foreign ministries — was true, and was equally true of Kabul. The authors could not say so. The book's moral vocabulary was rationed by the state that printed it.

Grenada in a footnote

One more instance, because it is exact. Maurice Bishop was placed under house arrest by a faction of his own party and shot with several colleagues on 19 October 1983, six days before the American landing. The book's seven-page account of "The Grenada Tragedy" does not mention this. The reader who works through the invasion hour by hour will not learn from the main text that Grenada's prime minister was already dead. The information is in endnote 23 to Chapter Four, in fourteen words:

"In October 1983, the situation presented itself: a splintering in the Grenada leadership led to tragic events and the eventual murder of Maurice Bishop."

"A splintering." "Tragic events." No names, no politics, no account of how a revolutionary government destroyed itself. The same journal that had campaigned against the invasion under the banner "U.S. Hands Off Grenada!" in its issue of 7 November 1983 published, on 26 December, a long interview with Don Rojas, Bishop's press secretary, who had spoken to

him less than an hour before he was killed. Rojas traces the crisis to Bernard Coard's resignation from the political bureau in July 1982 and the proposal of joint leadership in September 1983, and describes the assassination as having been "served up on a platter with all the trimmings" to Washington "by a group of immature, unscientific, and, in many respects, opportunistic elements within the New Jewel Movement who proclaimed themselves to be the most militant and anti-imperialist faction of all." He also states flatly that there was "absolutely no involvement" by Cuba or the Soviet Union in the party's internal collapse. That is how it is possible to oppose an imperialist invasion without lying about what preceded it. The Progress volume chose the footnote.

An honest word about the reply

The tradition this introduction is written from was not united on Afghanistan, and it would be dishonest to imply otherwise while making so much of the book's silence. On 3 March 1980 Intercontinental Press printed the declaration adopted by a majority of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at its meeting of 26–29 January, together with two competing resolutions supported by minorities. The majority did not condemn the intervention; the journal's own editorial columns that winter attacked the Spanish and Italian communist parties for adding their voices to what it called the capitalist propaganda campaign against Soviet military aid. One of the minority texts, "Draft Resolution on the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," argued the other way, and argued it in terms that have worn better: "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, be they progressive or anti-imperialist in their stated motivations."

The difference between that record and this book's is not that our side was right and theirs wrong on the question. It is that the argument was printed. Three positions, in one issue, over the signature of the body that held them. Nothing in the Progress catalogue was produced that way, and nothing could be.

How to read it

Take the research and refuse the frame. On the mechanics of American power in the hemisphere between 1970 and 1985 — the reorganisation of the OAS, the arithmetic of the arms trade, the credit blockade of Chile, the Santa Fe document, the Kissinger commission, the contra manual, the Malvinas supply

chain, the hour-by-hour invasion of Grenada — this is a useful book, and much of what it establishes has only been confirmed by the declassifications of the four decades since. Where it fails, it fails in one direction and one direction only: it cannot see any state but the United States as capable of intervention, cannot see any socialist country from the inside, and cannot name the war its own government was fighting while it was written.

Both halves of that judgement matter. The first, because a reader who is told the whole thing is worthless will discard evidence that is not worthless and will be worse armed against the next intervention. The second, because a book that indicts one superpower's crimes while its publisher conducts a nine-year war it may not mention has surrendered the ground on which the indictment stands. The strongest reply to the Reagan administration's Latin American policy was never going to come from Moscow. It came from the people the book writes about — the Nicaraguans, the Salvadoreans, the Chileans in the cordones — and from those who were prepared to apply the same standard in every direction, including their own.

What Is Dialectical Materialism?

Dialectical materialism explained for the general reader, plainly and without jargon - and a text that reached its Gorbachev-era reprint without a word altered, registering nothing of the opening around it.

Vassily Krapivin

Introduction to the 1987 Edition

The copyright page settles the most important question about this book before you reach the first page of text. It reads: "First printing 1985 Second printing 1987", above the line "© Progress Publishers 1985". The 1987 on the spine is a reprint date. What you are holding is a 1985 book.

That distinction decides everything. 1987 was the second full year of perestroika and glasnost, a year in which Soviet historians were publicly quarrelling about the Moscow Trials and Soviet philosophers were beginning, cautiously, to say things in *Voprosy Filosofii* that would have ended a career five years earlier. A popular introduction to dialectical materialism published in Moscow in 1987 would be a document of that opening. This one is not. It was written and set before the opening began, and Progress ran the plates again without changing a word.

The internal evidence is unambiguous, and it is worth reporting as counts rather than impressions. Searching the full text with word boundaries: perestroika, zero. Glasnost, zero. Gorbachev, zero. Restructuring, zero. Acceleration, zero. Chernobyl, zero. Afghanistan, zero. The Twenty-Seventh Congress of February 1986, which rewrote the Party programme and is the obvious landmark for any 1987 ideological text, appears in no form — the word Congress does not occur in the book at all. Every dated citation in the apparatus is to a Progress volume of Lenin's Collected Works, printed in 1977 or 1980. The single passage that reaches for contemporary reference does so in the vaguest available terms: "In the 1980s, capitalism has intensified its abuse of scientific and technical achievements for anti-humane purposes by developing the most sophisticated and obnoxious mass destruction weapons". That is a sentence about Reagan's second term, written before anyone in the building knew that the general secretary would shortly be saying something else.

So the nil return is the finding, and it should be stated plainly: this is a pre-Gorbachev manual circulating under a

Gorbachev-era imprint. Readers who come to it looking for the moment official Soviet philosophy noticed that its world was changing will not find it here.

What the book is, and who it was written for

The second thing the apparatus tells you is who was meant to read it. The back matter lists the series: ABC of Social and Political Knowledge, nineteen numbered titles, of which this is No. 6. The order is instructive. No. 5 is *What Is Scientific Communism?*, No. 6 *What Is Dialectical Materialism?*, No. 7 *What Is Historical Materialism?* — which is, precisely, Plekhanov's tripartite division of Marxist theory, turned into a syllabus. George Novack sets out that division in his essay "Sociology and Historical Materialism": Plekhanov divided Marxist thought into dialectical materialism as the general approach to reality, historical materialism as its application to society, and scientific socialism as its application to capitalism's supersession. The ABC series is that scheme with catalogue numbers on it.

The book's own structure follows the same logic. It is divided not into chapters but into ten "Topics", the standard unit of the Soviet party-school curriculum, each subdivided into numbered sections, with a glossary of "Philosophical Terms in Common Use" at the back. Whole passages are addressed to a student working through a course: there is a discussion of how to use analysis and synthesis "in the study of dialectical and historical materialism", and another on "pedagogical induction and deduction". This is not a treatise and does not pretend to be. It is a teaching manual, and it should be judged as one.

For whose school? The Foreword answers directly, and this is the most valuable single sentence in the book. Krapivin thanks "the personnel of the Inner-Party Education Department under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, the Ideological and Political Education Department of the MPEA Party of Labour, the Ideological Department of the FRELIMO Party, the management and teaching staff of the Dr. Agostinho Neto National Party School and the Central Party School of

the FRELIMO Party". So the commission is explicit. This is a cadre textbook for the ruling parties of Cuba, Angola and Mozambique — for what Soviet doctrine called the states of socialist orientation.

Once you know that, the book's illustrations stop looking like neutral pedagogy. Explaining how the interaction of opposites drives change, Krapivin's example is the reorientation of production after independence, concluding that the new economy will be "primarily oriented towards contacts with the socialist countries, the natural allies of the newly independent states". Explaining the categories of necessity and chance, his example is that "elimination of underdevelopment is a necessity, which stems from the law-governed development of newly independent societies, especially those which have chosen the socialist orientation". Soviet foreign policy is not argued for anywhere in this book. It is smuggled in as worked examples in the chapter on dialectical categories, where a student learning the material is least equipped to notice that a political claim has been slipped in among the physics.

The same audience explains a genuine oddity of the text. In sixty-four thousand words of Soviet philosophy, the phrase "Soviet Union" occurs twice, "USSR" three times, and "CPSU" exactly once. The book has been carefully de-nationalised, so that the doctrine arrives in Luanda and Maputo as universal science rather than as a Russian export. That is a deliberate piece of craft, and it is worth noticing precisely because it is invisible.

Where the book is good

It would be easy, and dishonest, to stop there. A popularisation is a hard thing to do well, and over long stretches Krapivin does it well.

The exposition of quality, quantity and measure is the best part of the book. He does not simply assert that quantitative change produces qualitative change; he builds the concept of measure carefully, distinguishes basic from non-basic qualities, and picks examples that actually teach. Colour is inessential to petrol; combustibility is essential, and petrol that has lost it is no longer fuel. Water is liquid between zero and one hundred degrees at normal pressure, and that range is its measure. Then he does something a lesser writer would not: he connects the technical concept to something the reader already knows. "The philosophical concept of measure in a sense corresponds to the popular notion that through immoderation (i. e., a disruption of measure) positive turns into negative, and useful becomes harmful." Food in excess damages health. That is real teaching

— it earns the abstraction by cashing it out.

The treatment of matter is also good. Krapivin gives an honest and clear account of the crisis in physics around 1900: the atom turns out to be divisible, the electron's mass turns out to vary with velocity, particles annihilate into light, and philosophers who had identified matter with a particular physical picture find their materialism collapsing along with the picture. "As a result, every new discovery in the natural sciences caused fresh confusion and contradictions in the understanding of matter." The resolution he offers — Lenin's, that matter is a philosophical category and not a commitment to any particular inventory of ultimate constituents — is stated fairly and is, on its own terms, right.

Most surprising of all is Topic 10, on the methods of cognition, where Krapivin discusses induction, deduction, analogy and modelling. What distinguishes it is that he insists on the limits of each. Induction "cannot take into account the development of the object being studied". Deduction's possibilities "are limited by the totality of its basic general premises and by its inability to validate these premises". Analogy yields only probability and "cannot serve as an instrument of logical proof". He quotes Engels on induction and deduction belonging together as necessarily as synthesis and analysis. He even warns his students against "mechanical cramming", which "can only enrich a person's memory, but will then encumber it". A reader who worked through this section attentively would come out of it better equipped to think than most undergraduates. There is no reason to pretend otherwise.

Where the book collapses

The collapse is not gradual and it is not everywhere. It happens at one point, and it happens for a reason.

Krapivin's account of contradiction is thoroughly orthodox and, up to a point, uncompromising. Contradiction is universal; it is internal; it is the source of all development; nothing anywhere is exempt. He is emphatic that every phenomenon is shot through with it. Then he reaches the socialist countries, and the machinery stops.

"Socialist development is marked by non-antagonistic contradictions. All classes, social groups and individuals in the socialist society have the same fundamental economic interests and politico-moral principles." The universal solvent has met the one substance it cannot dissolve. And Krapivin then explains how such contradictions as remain are handled: not

through class struggle, but "through organised efforts of the whole people" and "the society's new motive forces, like socio-political and ideological unity, strengthening legality, socialist patriotism, criticism and self-criticism".

That list, and above all the phrase it ends on, is not Krapivin's. It is Andrei Zhdanov's, from his intervention at the philosophers' conference of June 1947 — the occasion on which the Central Committee's cultural enforcer instructed Soviet philosophers to discover a form of development peculiar to socialism. Zhdanov's words were these: in Soviet society, where antagonistic classes have been liquidated, development "takes place, not in the form of a struggle of antagonistic classes and cataclysms, as it does under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the genuine motive force of our development, the powerful instrument in the hands of the party. This is without doubt a new form of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law."

We can quote Zhdanov because Raya Dunayevskaya quoted him, in "Stalinists Falsify Marxism Anew" in *Fourth International*, vol. 9 no. 7 (whole no. 89), printed as September 1948 though that issue date is unreliable — the year after the speech, and thirty-seven years before Krapivin's first printing. She gave the primary trail as well: *Voprosy Filosofii* no. 1, 1947; *Bolshevik* no. 16, 30 August 1947; *English in Political Affairs*, April 1948. Her verdict was that a demand for a dialectical law free of contradictions makes not the masses but the bureaucracy the driving force of history. The doctrine Krapivin reproduces in a Moscow primer for African and Cuban party schools in 1985 had been named, sourced and answered before he was old enough to study it.

What makes the doctrine false is not a philosophical error but a factual one, and the factual answer was in print before Zhdanov spoke. In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky described exactly the antagonisms whose existence Krapivin denies: "As a result of these flagrant differences in wages, doubled by arbitrary privileges, the bureaucracy has managed to introduce sharp antagonisms in the proletariat" (ch. 6, "The Growth of Inequality"). His summary judgement, in ch. 9, is the sentence a dialectician ought to have had to answer: "The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism". Krapivin's book runs to sixty-four thousand words on contradiction and contains not one occurrence of the word privilege, and one of bureaucratic — in a passage about the vices of dogmatists.

The second collapse is a silence, and it is enormous. The

Marxist philosophy, Krapivin says, was created by Marx and Engels and "creatively developed by Lenin, by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union". And after Lenin? One sentence: "The Leninist stage in the development of the Marxist philosophy also includes works by Lenin's associates, by leaders of the CPSU and the Marxist-Leninist parties of other countries, and research done by Marxist-Leninist philosophers throughout the world."

That is the entire institutional history of Soviet philosophy from 1924 to 1985, and there is not a proper noun in it. Word-boundary searches of the full text return zero for Deborin, zero for Mitin, zero for Zhdanov, zero for Lysenko, zero for Bukharin, zero for Trotsky, zero for Stalin, zero for "Menshevising idealism", zero for 1931 and zero for 1947. Nothing here indicates that in 1931 a Central Committee resolution destroyed the Deborin school and installed Mitin's people over it; that Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* was, for two decades, what dialectical materialism was for hundreds of millions of readers; that Zhdanov's 1947 intervention set the terms Krapivin is still using; or that the genetics Krapivin's own quantity-into-quality section illustrates with hybridised apples was outlawed in the Soviet Union in 1948, the philosophy faculties concurring. And "Lenin's associates" is the cruellest phrase in the book, because a great many of them were shot.

There is a third failure, and it is the neatest, because the book supplies its own indictment. Krapivin defines dogmatism accurately: it "results from the absolutisation of some propositions, conclusions, or formulas, which are considered outside the context of concrete conditions, place and time", and it "manifests itself in a rehearsal of mechanically memorised propositions, formal attitudes, bureaucratic practices". He is describing the ABC of Social and Political Knowledge.

The reply

The natural counterweight is not a treatise, which would be an unfair match, but another popularisation written for another party's cadre. In 1942, in New York, George Novack delivered nine lectures on dialectics to members and sympathisers of the Socialist Workers Party while its leaders were being prosecuted under the Smith Act. He opens by naming the circumstance: "Here are members and sympathisers of a revolutionary political party under government persecution in the midst of World War II, the biggest war in world history." The lectures are quoted here from *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, 5th ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971); the

text carries references as late as 1963, so the wording is Novack's own but not necessarily his wording of 1942. Like Krapivin's book, they are elementary, oral in register, and addressed to activists rather than academics. They are the fair comparison.

The difference shows in the first minutes. Novack tells his audience that he will not proceed as he did with formal logic, by stating fundamental laws and deriving from them: "We shall approach dialectics not as a closed system. On the contrary it is an open system and therefore our approach is elastic, concrete, more informal." He goes further: "Dialecticians recognise that all formulas must be provisional, limited, approximate, because all forms of existence are transient and limited. This must also apply to the science of dialectics and to the formulations of its laws and ideas." And the conclusion, which reads as though written with the ABC series in front of him: "Dialectical thinking, therefore, cannot be completely comprised in any fixed set of formulas, nor can dialectics be codified in the same way and to the same extent as formal logic. To address such a demand to dialectics, to seek to impose perfect formulas upon its processes, betrays a captivity to the method of formal thinking."

He is not being evasive, and it matters that he says so at once: "But this does not at all mean that dialectics is subject to no laws or that these laws cannot be stated in lucid terms." Three laws and six paired categories can be taught. The question is whether they are taught as an open method or handed over as a closed inventory to be examined on.

The sharpest contrast is in the use each man makes of the same law. Krapivin illustrates the transformation of quantity into quality with water, petrol and hybridised fruit — chosen, one suspects, because they carry no risk. In Lecture VI, Novack applies it to the organisation his listeners belonged to. The Third International degenerated for years; after the German catastrophe of 1933 passed without revolt in its ranks, "the process of degeneration had reached the point of death. Quantitative changes had brought about a new quality. The Third International was beyond cure — it was dead. It had become, like the Second International, a 'stinking corpse.' It was buried by Stalin in 1943." Whereupon the policy of reforming it became, in his flat list, "unnecessary, incorrect, outworn, unrealistic". That is the law of measure applied where it costs something. It is the same law. One man uses it to explain a kettle; the other uses it to explain why he had to leave his own International.

Novack also diagnosed the genre directly. In "Is Nature

Dialectical?" he writes: "In the Soviet Union, where the socialist revolution abolished capitalism decades ago, dialectical materialism is the state philosophy. Under Stalin, in fact, it became scholasticised and ossified". He had said the same thing earlier, reviewing Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* in *Fourth International*, vol. 1 no. 7, December 1940: cut off from politics, "Marxism shrivelled from a vigorously growing ideological movement into a sterile scholasticism", and "under Stalinist auspices there cannot be any consistent or fruitful development of the science of dialectical materialism".

Two honest limits on the reply. First, the tradition tracked the doctrine but barely tracked its institutions: searches across the Trotsky corpus, the Fourth International run of 1940–56, the *Biulleten' Oppozitsii* English texts, the Novack archive, Intercontinental Press and International Viewpoint return nothing on the Deborin purge, nothing on "Menshevism idealism", and nothing on the Institute of Philosophy beyond a passing mention. Dunayevskaya on Zhdanov is very nearly the whole of it. Second, on perestroika itself the archive has a structural gap in exactly the wrong place: Intercontinental Press, the Trotskyist weekly of record, ceased publication with its issue of 11 August 1986, so the paper best placed to cover the opening died as it began; International Viewpoint takes the subject up only from late 1987, in nos. 128 to 130.

What does exist, and stands directly against this reprint, is Ernest Mandel's "The significance of Gorbachov", the lead article of *International Marxist Review* vol. 2 no. 4, Winter 1987 — contemporaneous with the second printing. Mandel argues that the damage runs deeper than any particular falsehood: what has discredited the tradition is "the thorough discrediting of communism, socialism, and Marxism by its transformation into a state doctrine (or even a state religion), the overall balance sheet of the Stalin and Brezhnev eras, and the gap between reality and the official ideology, which seems completely lying". Later in the same article, weighing an ordinary piece of Soviet reporting against the official literature, he remarks that it says more about social reality in the USSR and Eastern Europe "than one hundred books of 'Marxism-Leninism' made incomprehensible through adaptation to the needs and interests of the bureaucracy". (The IMR scan breaks that word across a line; I have closed it up.) Krapivin's is one of the hundred, and it was on the presses in Moscow the year Mandel wrote the sentence.

How to read it

Read it, first, as evidence about its own moment — not 1987 but 1985, and not Moscow's intelligentsia but the party schools

of Havana, Luanda and Maputo. It is the clearest surviving statement of what the Soviet Union thought it was exporting, to whom, and in what form.

Read it, second, for the parts that are simply good. The sections on measure, on matter, and on the methods of cognition are competent teaching by someone who took the job seriously, and a reader will learn from them.

Read it, third, for the exact location of the fracture. Krapivin argues, correctly and at length, that contradiction is universal and that nothing develops except through it — and then exempts from that law the one society in which he lived. Everything wrong with the book follows from that single exemption: the missing sixty years, the missing names, the missing word privilege, and the definition of dogmatism that fits the book better than anything the book was aimed at.

Novack, reviewing the first publication of *Dialectics of Nature* in 1940, gave the reason to keep such volumes in print, and named the awkwardness of doing so: "In science as in society remnants of the heritage of the October Revolution are here and there embedded within Stalinism; some good can still emanate from this abomination: a contradiction which will doubtless horrify the anti-dialecticians." That is the spirit in which this edition is offered. Some good can still emanate from it. Not, however, the good it was printed to do.

What Is Historical Materialism? (ABC #7)

Historical materialism for beginners - production, classes, the state, revolution, the role of the individual - and the last complete statement of the doctrine before the vocabulary began to change under it.

Zoya Andreevna Berbeshkina and others

Introduction to the 1985 Edition

The companion volume to this one carried a trap on its copyright page. Vassily Krapivin's *What Is Dialectical Materialism?*, No. 6 in the same series, has 1987 on the spine and "First printing 1985 / Second printing 1987" inside: a Gorbachev-era jacket over a Brezhnev-era text. Expecting the same here is the obvious move, and it is wrong. The copyright page of this book reads "© Издательство «Прогресс», 1985" and "English translation © Progress Publishers 1985", with the Soviet imprint code ending `014(01)-85`, and it records no printing history at all. Our catalogue lists a 1987 printing; no copy of one has been seen for this edition, and nothing in the text we hold supports dating it later than 1985.

That matters less here than it did for Krapivin, because this book can be dated from the inside with unusual precision. The latest event it cites is the plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee of December 1983, invoked on the environment. Its freshest statistic is from 1982. Its most recent Party landmark is the Twenty-Sixth Congress of 1981. It describes the Soviet Constitution as "the epitome of all that has been reached during the sixty years of Soviet government" — a 1977 sentence, still standing. And it uses the phrase "developed socialism" eighteen times, a formula that was the organising concept of Soviet self-description under Brezhnev and that the Twenty-Seventh Congress of February 1986 quietly retired. This is a manuscript closed in 1984 and printed in 1985.

So the nil returns on perestroika, glasnost, Gorbachev and Chernobyl are chronology, not findings, and are not offered as findings. None of those things had happened. What the date does establish is the reverse: this is the last full statement of the doctrine before the doctrine was opened up — the position from which Soviet social theory was about to have to move.

Three authors are named — Zoya Berbeshkina, Lyudmila Yakovleva, Dmitry Zerkov — and the book supplies nothing whatever about them: no affiliation, no note, no division of

labour between the eleven chapters. What it does supply is the machinery around them. The series editorial board is printed in full: F. M. Volkov as chief editor, Ye. F. Gubsky as deputy, and F. M. Burlatsky, V. V. Krapivin, Yu. N. Popov, V. V. Sobolev, F. N. Yurlov and V. D. Zotov. Krapivin, who wrote No. 6, sits on the board that commissioned No. 7. This is not a book by three scholars so much as a slot in a curriculum, filled.

The curriculum is worth reading off the back cover, because it is Plekhanov's. The ABC of Social and Political Knowledge runs to twenty numbered titles, of which No. 4 is *What Is Philosophy?*, No. 5 *What Is Scientific Communism?*, No. 6 *What Is Dialectical Materialism?* and No. 7 this one. That is precisely the tripartite division of Marxist theory that Plekhanov established and that George Novack sets out in "Sociology and Historical Materialism" — dialectical materialism as the general account of reality, historical materialism as its application to society, scientific socialism as its application to capitalism's supersession — with catalogue numbers attached. Hold that thought; it returns.

One expectation carried over from the companion volume is refuted here, and the refutation is worth reporting. Krapivin's Foreword thanked the Cuban Party's Inner-Party Education Department, the MPLA and FRELIMO and two African party schools, and his book was correspondingly de-nationalised: "Soviet Union" twice, "USSR" three times, "CPSU" once, in sixty-four thousand words. This volume's Foreword thanks nobody and names no commissioning body. It opens on "Millions of people in all parts of the world" and stops. And it is not de-nationalised at all: in fifty-nine thousand words, "Soviet Union" occurs twenty-three times, "USSR" twenty-one, "CPSU" three. The USSR is present on almost every doctrinal question as the worked case. The copy scanned for this edition even carries an American distributor's stamp on the back cover, a Chicago address on West Ohio Street, partly destroyed by the scanner. Whatever the two books shared, they were not aimed at the same room. Cuba is still here — thirteen mentions, alongside Angola, Vietnam and Ethiopia — but so, unmistakably, is Moscow.

What the book does well

It would be easy and dishonest to go straight to the failures. Over long stretches this is competent teaching, and in two places it is better than that.

The section on society and nature is the best thing in the book. It concedes, without being forced to, that "Even under socialism, the problem of environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources may become very serious." It then gives an accurate, non-ideological account of transboundary pollution: British industry built extra-high smokestacks so that waste would not fall where it was made, southerly winds carried the smoke to Scandinavia, and "Fish have died there in hundreds of lakes and rivers, the growth of forests has been retarded, and the soil, which was never very rich, has become still poorer." That is acid rain described correctly in a Soviet primer of 1985, with the conclusion drawn that "No country is secure from the threat of pollution even if it has no developed industry of its own." A student would learn something true from it.

The treatment of population is also better than its reputation. The authors distinguish carefully between a demographic problem and a Malthusian explanation of it, concede that providing food, energy and work for a growing population is genuinely hard — "Great difficulties often arise" — and then insist that world hunger "is essentially the harsh legacy of colonialism and the result of the policies" of the powers that imposed it. One may think that too simple; it is not a stupid position, and it is argued rather than asserted.

The philosophical spine is honestly taught in places. The chapter on objective laws opens on the real question — "May one recognise that history is governed by objective laws and also recognise man's conscious (free) activity?" — and answers it with a distinction most undergraduate courses fail to make: "Necessity should not be confused with inevitability." The section on the subjective factor grants that "Under certain conditions, the subjective factor may even play a determining role", and names the opposite error accurately: "Ignoring the subjective factor is characteristic of vulgar (one-sided, unscientific) economic materialism." It even admits that "Socialism also knows spontaneous processes (like the unpredictable results of individual economic decisions or the consequences of outside conditions)". These are real concessions inside a determinist framework and they are the marks of someone who has taught the material to students who asked questions.

The apparatus is honest in one respect that deserves crediting, because the series has learned not to assume it. The book's fifty-odd footnotes go overwhelmingly to Lenin and to Marx and Engels in the Collected Works, as expected — but the one non-Marxist source it attacks at length it also cites properly: "Z. Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages*, The Viking Press, New York, 1970, p. XIV." That is a real reference a reader can check.

Where it breaks, and why

The failures are not scattered. They cluster at exactly one point, and the point is the one that makes this volume more interesting than its companion. Dialectical materialism is a doctrine about nature; you can teach it for three hundred pages without ever meeting the society you live in. Historical materialism is a doctrine about society, written by people living in a society, and the test it cannot avoid is whether its own categories are allowed to point homeward.

The house formulation of that test is exact: error is admissible; the category is not. This book proves the formulation, because it does concede errors. It admits socialist spontaneity, socialist environmental damage, "non-antagonistic contradictions" under socialism which "cannot be dismissed", and the persistence of individualism after the revolution. What it never does is let a classification turn inward.

Start with the single most important word. In fifty-nine thousand words on society, the state, classes and political organisation, the word bureaucracy occurs exactly once. (A naive search returns zero, because the scan breaks it across a line as "bu- / reaucracy"; the hyphenation has been closed silently here and throughout, and where a quotation runs across a page the scanner's running head and page number have been removed from it. Nothing else in any quotation has been altered.) Here is the one occurrence, from the chapter on the state:

First to be destroyed are institutions protecting the old, exploiter social order, such as the bureaucracy and the law-enforcement agencies.

Bureaucracy enters this book solely as a feature of the state the revolution demolishes. It is not a risk, not a tendency, not a category available for use. Privilege appears four times: a caste of priests in Ancient Egypt, class privileges in Britain, the lost privileges of expropriated exploiters, and a world outlook as "the privilege of every person". Inequality appears ten times, distributed across primitive society, slavery, feudalism,

capitalist nations and bourgeois law — and not once inside socialism. These are not silences of the kind that could be explained by a page limit. They are the shape of a vocabulary built so that certain sentences cannot be formed in it.

The same architecture governs the treatment of the state. The book defines "political regime" in general terms, as "the set of methods used in exercising power, showing the extent to which democratic rights and freedoms are realised" — a category that plainly applies to any state whatever. It then supplies the taxonomy: "The regimes prevalent in contemporary bourgeois states are: parliamentary, military dictatorial, fascist, semi-fascist, and so on." No socialist regime types are offered, because on this account a socialist state has a class essence and therefore does not need a regime analysis. The USSR's own political system is given instead as a list of four institutions, headed by "the socialist state of all the people" with "the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (the core of the Soviet political system)" second.

And the withering away of the state, which in Lenin is a function of internal social development, is here made hostage to something else entirely:

From this it follows that the state will not wither away before the correlation of forces in the world is so much in favour of socialism that there will no longer be a threat of aggression against the socialist countries.

That is a promise with an external escape clause attached, and the clause has no expiry date.

The method has a still sharper form. The book states, as a general law, that "It has been proved historically that external politics is a continuation of internal politics. States behave on the international scene much the same way as their ruling classes do at home." It is a good law, and it is Marxist. It is then applied in one direction only: "This holds true for contemporary bourgeois states, and notably for US imperialism." Two pages later the authors write that "The absence in socialist society of social antagonisms, generating war, and of classes whose interest lies in war and the arms race is reflected in the socialist countries' foreign policy of peace and friendship among nations." That sentence was written and set in Moscow at some point in 1984, more than four years after the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan. Afghanistan occurs nowhere in the book. The authors possessed both a general law about the continuity of internal and external policy and a large recent instance of their own state acting abroad, and the law is not permitted to travel.

Then there is the treatment of the doctrine's founding proposition. Chapter One arrives at "the fundamental principle of historical materialism" — that social being determines social consciousness — and needs an illustration. It chooses this one:

Thus, in socialist countries the socialist transformation of small-scale peasant economy farming is implemented on co-operative principles. The life and work of the peasantry in production work collectives (formerly everybody worked on individual farms) bring about radical changes in their views and psychology: they become collectivist, internationalist, and socialist.

The word collectivisation does not occur anywhere in this book. Thirteen occurrences of the stem are all collectivism and collectivist. What is being described in that paragraph is the collectivisation of Soviet agriculture, rendered in the present tense, in the passive voice, with no country, no decade, no agent and no cost, as the textbook example of the law that material life shapes consciousness. Historians continue to argue about the death toll of 1932–33 and the range is wide; nobody argues that the peasantry entered the collective farms as an illustration of a philosophical principle. This is the single paragraph on which the volume should be judged, because the failure is not a suppressed fact sitting in a footnote — the suppression is doing the pedagogical work.

Finally, and most revealingly, Chapter Nine. Its second section is called "The Role of Outstanding Individuals". That is Plekhanov's subject and very nearly his title: *The Role of the Individual in History* (1898) is the classic Russian treatment, it was written against exactly the "hero and the crowd" theory this chapter attacks, and Progress had Plekhanov's *Selected Philosophical Works* in five volumes on its own list, cited by page in other Soviet textbooks of the period. Plekhanov's name occurs once in this book, inside the title of a Lenin article. The chapter reproduces his argument — that the demand for leadership is generated by conditions, and that "In his or her place there could be another outstanding figure" — without him.

Having reached the question, the chapter then names the outstanding individuals: "Jose Marti and Fidel Castro in Cuba, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Agostinho Neto in Angola, Ernst Thaelmann in Germany, Antonio Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti in Italy, Maurice Thorez in France, and so on." Eight men, and Lenin. Not one Soviet figure after 1924. In a Soviet textbook, on the role of the individual in history, the entire Soviet leadership of six decades is a blank.

And then the sentence that the whole chapter exists to reach:

Personality cult is foreign to the science of revolution and the practice of existing socialism. When and where these instances do appear, for certain temporary reasons, they harm the revolutionary movement and socialist construction.

Read it slowly. The cult is foreign to the practice — that is, it cannot be generated by socialist society, only visited upon it. It appears "when and where", never who or when. It has "certain temporary reasons" which are not specified. It harms things, and nobody does it. Thirty-two years after the Twentieth Congress, this is the whole of it. Immediately before, the chapter has already disposed of the people concerned in a single clause: "we know quite a few names of those who played an important part and enjoyed authority among the masses while they were revolutionary fighters, and lost their influence the moment they left their ranks." Quite a few names, and not one of them printed. Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin: zero, zero, zero — checked against the scanner's known damage patterns as well as the plain spellings.

The glossary supplies the concept that makes this coherent. "Responsibility, historical" is defined as "individuals', classes', and parties' awareness of the negative consequences entailed in non-use of objectively conditioned possibilities of historical development." Historical responsibility, in this book, is responsibility for opportunities not taken. There is no definition here under which anyone could be responsible for anything they did.

One further measurement, offered without the inference the series has retired. Opportunism and its cognates occur four times, revisionism nine — modest by the standards of this catalogue, and frequency proves nothing on its own. What is worth reporting is the shape. Revisionism "is an attempt to revise Marxism-Leninism on the pretext of developing it. This leads to opportunism: a direct betrayal of the interests of the working class." No revisionist is named. No act is dated. No organisation is identified. The charge is an essence, and it is unfalsifiable by construction — and it is never, in either form, available for use against the Party that commissioned the book.

The apparatus tells the same story from another angle. The book attacks bourgeois futurology at length and names two men. Brzezinski it cites properly. Alvin Toffler it summarises across two paragraphs and never cites at all. And the most recent bourgeois work in the whole volume is Brzezinski's of 1970 — the "contemporary" opposition against which a 1985

primer defines itself is fifteen years old.

The reply

The exact counterpart to Chapter Nine exists, and it is worth putting beside it. George Novack published "Importance of the Individual in History-Making" in the International Socialist Review, vol. 26 no. 1 (whole no. 170), Winter 1965, p. 3, under his pen name William F. Warde — the attribution is from the ISR's own printed index of 1964–66 — and later collected it in Understanding History as "From Lenin to Castro". It is a popular essay on the same question, written for the same kind of reader — activists, not academics — and turning on an argument between Isaac Deutscher and Trotsky over whether Lenin was replaceable in 1917. It reaches Plekhanov by name in its third paragraph, calling The Role of the Individual in History a "classical essay" and summarising its argument accurately. It quotes Deutscher's chapter and Sidney Hook's New Leader review of 11 May 1964. It concedes what it must: "There are long stretches of time when the strongest-willed revolutionist cannot in the least avail against the march of events and practically counts for nothing in redirecting them." And it treats the cult of the individual not as something foreign to socialism but as an intellectual problem with a history, discussing Deutscher's charge that Trotsky himself had lapsed toward it and giving the psychological explanation offered, before rejecting it on evidence. Every disputant is named, every claim is sourced, and the reader is left able to disagree. Berbeshkina, Yakovleva and Zerkina's version of the same chapter contains no disputant, no source and no date.

On the substance, the standing answer is Trotsky's, and it is answering these formulations specifically. Against "the socialist state of all the people", The Revolution Betrayed (1936) had already written: "State property becomes the property of 'the whole people' only to the degree that social privilege and differentiation disappear, and therewith the necessity of the state" (ch. 9, "Social Relations in the Soviet Union"). Against the announcement that the classless structure of society will be established within the framework of developed socialism, ch. 10 offers the shortest possible reply: "Classes are abolished. Of Soviets there remains only the name. But the bureaucracy is still there." And against the deferral of the state's withering away to the world correlation of forces, ch. 3 names a different cause: the Soviet state is prevented from dying away "not by the 'relics' of former ruling classes... It is prevented by immeasurably mightier factors, such as material want, cultural backwardness and the resulting

dominance of 'bourgeois law'. One may reject Trotsky's conclusions; what cannot be said is that the question had not been put.

The sharpest contemporaneous exchange sits in the first issue of the International Marxist Review (vol. 1 no. 1, 1982), which printed extracts from an article by Felix Kuznetsov — identified there as First Secretary of the Union of Moscow Writers, writing in Literaturnaya Gazeta — on Poland, alongside Ernest Mandel's reply, "Poland and the bureaucracy". Kuznetsov's piece attributes Solidarność to manipulation by a handful of KOR conspirators working for NATO. Mandel's answer turns the doctrine of this textbook against its own house:

For Marxists it is social existence that determines consciousness, it is not 'manipulated consciousness' which determines existence.

And a paragraph later: "In limiting themselves to talking lightly of simple leadership 'errors' Kremlin ideologists ... want to hide this elementary truth of historical materialism." (The journal prints Kuznetsov's forename inconsistently — Felix in its editorial headnote, Victor in Mandel's text; the writer is Felix Kuznetsov, and the ellipsis above removes the slip rather than reproducing it.) That is the charge, made three years before this book was printed and on precisely its terrain: not that Soviet historical materialism is false in its premises, but that it suspends its own founding premise at the border.

Two honest limits. There is no contemporaneous reply to this book anywhere in the archives held for this series, and no reason there should be — it is a party-school primer, not an event. Intercontinental Press, the Trotskyist weekly best placed to have noticed it, ceased publication on 11 August 1986; the International Marxist Review has a hole from 1983 to 1985 and only one issue before 1986. What the reply corpus supplies is not a review but the argument, made earlier and on the record.

How to read it

Read it, first, for what it is: the last complete, unembarrassed statement of Soviet historical materialism before the language changed. In 1985 the syllabus still ran on "developed socialism", the state was still "of the whole people", and the Twenty-Sixth Congress was still the horizon. Within eighteen months every one of those phrases would be in trouble. No later document shows the position so plainly, because after 1986 nobody in Moscow could set it out without hedging.

Read it, second, for the passages that are simply good — the account of transboundary pollution, the refusal to confuse necessity with inevitability, the concession that spontaneity survives socialism. These are not window-dressing; they are what a careful teacher wrote when the subject let him.

Read it, third, for the exact location of the fracture, which is easier to find here than in any other volume in this series, because the book is about society and cannot get out of the way. Its authors possessed a general law that external policy follows internal policy, and applied it only to Washington. They possessed the category of bureaucracy, and spent it on the state the revolution destroys. They possessed a concept of historical responsibility, and defined it so that it could only mean an opportunity missed. They possessed the founding proposition that social being determines social consciousness, and illustrated it with the collectivisation of Soviet agriculture, told as a story in which the peasants changed their minds. Every one of those is a working Marxist instrument, correctly described on the page, pointed carefully away from home.

Plekhanov, in the book that gave this series its architecture and whose author it does not name, wrote that the task of the dialectical materialist is to carry the torch out of "the narrow study of the 'intellectual.'" Licht, mehr Licht, he added. It is the right demand to bring to this volume, and it is the one it cannot meet.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Russian Thinkers

Russian economic and social thought from Peter the Great to the first Marxists - Radishchev, the Decembrists, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, the Populists - by a scholar alert to censorship as its shaping condition.

Andrei Vladimirovich Anikin

Introduction to the 1988 Edition

This is a good book, and it should be said plainly at the outset, because most of what follows will be a quarrel with its frame rather than its scholarship. Andrei Anikin set out to trace the history of Russian socio-economic thought from Pososhkov, the self-taught merchant who wrote his Book on Poverty and Wealth under Peter I, through the Smithian professors of the early nineteenth century, Radishchev, the Decembrist economists, Herzen and Chernyshevsky, down to the Populist theorists Vorontsov and Danielson and the first Russian Marxists. He does it with learning, sympathy and a novelist's eye for the person inside the doctrine. For an English reader this is very nearly the only door into a tradition that Russians have argued over for a century and a half, and Anikin holds it open generously. Where he reads a thinker closely — Chernyshevsky's economic essays, Sieber's reading of Capital, the difference between Danielson and Vorontsov that both sides usually blur — he is worth reading and often the only guide in English. That is the first thing to establish, and the ground of everything else: this is genuine scholarship, not apparatus prose, and it deserves to be met as such.

Two strengths carry the book and are worth naming before the criticism, because they are what a reader gains from it. The first is Anikin's grasp of censorship as the shaping condition of Russian thought, not a footnote to it. "The censor haunted the Russian printed word like a spectre," he writes, and he means it structurally: a prohibition on writing about serfdom that "lasted for about thirty years," a repression that "obliged many authors to remain silent, and the bolder and more skilful to write by implication," a whole literary-political genre — the thick journal where economics sat beside fiction — evolved to slip past the censor. He grounds this in Lenin's own account of the "accursed Aesopian language" he was forced into when he published Imperialism, and the effect is to make the reader see the thought and the repression as a single object. The second strength is the human one. Anikin insists on the cost. "Russian social thought and economic science begins in the Peter and Paul fortress," he writes, and he keeps the ledger: Pososhkov

dead in prison, Radishchev exiled and driven to suicide, Pestel hanged, Chernyshevsky sentenced to penal servitude, Herzen and the rest in emigration — "A martyrology," he calls it, and does not look away. This is what he means by "the powerful humanist current in Russian thought," and it is the book's real subject: not a doctrine assembling itself, but people paying for ideas. A history of Russian thought as "a living process of cultural interaction" rather than a ledger of foreign borrowings is exactly what the subject needed in English, and Anikin supplies it.

Anikin was a serious Soviet historian of economic thought. The book announces its own companion volume — A Science in Its Youth, his study of the pre-Marxian Western economists, which ran through four Russian editions between 1971 and 1985 and appeared in English from Progress in 1975 — and describes the present work as the deliberate completion of that earlier one, the Russian half he had first left out. The two books share a method and a temper: biography braided into the history of ideas, a refusal of rhetoric, a fondness for the "curious facts about a bygone age." He is, in the best sense, a man of the archive. When he writes that he was "somewhat surprised to discover that no detailed biography" of Danielson or Vorontsov exists, you believe he went looking.

Dating the book

The spine says 1988, and the temptation is to read the book as a child of glasnost — freer air, the archives opening, the reassessments then convulsing Soviet historiography. Resist it. The English edition is a 1988 object; the book inside it is older, and its intellectual frame predates the thaw it appears to belong to. The only Party congress cited anywhere in it is the Twenty-Fourth, of 1971. There is no Twenty-Seventh Congress, no Gorbachev, no perestroika; the words "restructuring" and "acceleration" occur, but as ordinary English, not as the slogans of 1986. The chapter on the Third World rests on the Soviet development theorists of the seventies — Ulyanovsky, Brutents, Khoros — and on the doctrine of "non-capitalist development" that belongs to that

decade. The density of the book's own citations peaks sharply in the middle 1970s. Only the footnotes reach later: a handful of references to editions of 1985, 1986 and 1987, an apparatus lightly refreshed on a manuscript conceived a decade before. So this is a détente-era synthesis in a glasnost jacket. It matters, because it means the freedoms one might expect of 1988 — the naming of what the twentieth century did to this heritage — are simply not on offer. The book stops, by design, at the young Lenin in 1900, and everything that the tradition it honours would suffer after 1917 lies on the far side of a wall the book does not cross.

The forerunner frame

The organising idea is stated in the opening pages and carried out to the last. Anikin quotes Lenin, from 1920, on how "revolutionary Russia" arrived at Marxism "through the agony she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment," through "the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia" — and takes this as his charter. The history of Russian thought becomes the pre-history of Bolshevism. Every thinker is placed on a single road and graded by how far along it he got. Chernyshevsky is praised as "the only other man in Europe who approached this task" — the fusion of classical economics with socialism — "from a similar position and at the same time as Marx." Sieber, the Kiev economist whose second edition of his Ricardo book Marx annotated, "should be seen as a major forerunner of Russian Marxism." The final chapter is titled, without irony, "In Lieu of a Conclusion: The 1890s and the Young Lenin." The book is a genealogy, and its terminus is fixed before the first chapter opens.

This is worth naming precisely, because it is the reflexive point in a scholarly key. The standard against which every thinker is measured — Marxism-Leninism as realised in the Soviet state — is the one thing in the book never itself examined. Herzen's "limitations," Anikin writes, "consisted above all in the fact that Herzen did not grasp the natural inevitability of capitalist development in Russia." Herzen "could not accept" Marxism's "basic postulates." The Populists were "objectively" outside "the main current of the revolutionary movement." In each case the yardstick is assumed and the thinker found wanting against it; the yardstick is not asked to account for itself. A history written this way can be immensely learned about its subjects and wholly incurious about its own premise.

And yet — here honesty cuts toward the book, not away from it — the forerunner genealogy is not a Soviet invention, and

the tradition from which this introduction is written built the same one. In 1925, on the twentieth anniversary of the first revolution, Trotsky drew the identical line: "Without Radishchev there would not have been Pestel. Without Pestel, no Zhelyabov. Without Zhelyabov we would not have had Alexander Ul'yanov. And without Alexander there would not have been Vladimir" — and concluded that "In Leninism live the Decembrists, the teachers of the 1860s, the Populists and the People's Will." The revolutionary heritage of Herzen, Chernyshevsky and the Narodniks is claimed by the whole of the movement that came out of October, ours included. So the objection to Anikin cannot be that he honours these men as ancestors. It is that he honours them as a finished genealogy — a ramp whose top is known and whose whole meaning is the arriving — rather than as a living argument whose questions stayed open and, in some cases, are open still.

The Narodnik question

The live nerve of the whole subject is the quarrel between the Populists (Narodniks — the agrarian socialists of the 1870s) and the first Russian Marxists — Plekhanov's break with Populism in the 1880s, Lenin's *What the "Friends of the People" Are in 1894*. It is here that a Soviet author is most under pressure to flatten a real debate into a morality play, and it is here that Anikin is at his most interesting, because he mostly does not.

He gives the Populists their due as men and as thinkers. Of Danielson and Vorontsov he writes that "we can never question their personal integrity and democracy, their desire to find for Russia the path to socialism." Vorontsov was "a serious researcher and a brilliant polemicist," "a worthy opponent for the early Russian Marxists"; "Russian peasant democracy found in Vorontsov the most talented exponent of its ideas." This is not the tone of a hatchet. More striking still, Anikin turns the same critical instrument on the Marxist side. Plekhanov, he says — quoting the Soviet economist Pashkov approvingly — having freed himself of the belief in a peasant socialist revolution, "then completely disregarded the peasantry as a revolutionary force." Plekhanov "applied to Russian populism the criterion of West European utopian socialism," and this "fell far short of a full appreciation of its social content and historical significance." Against Plekhanov, Anikin sets the authority of Lenin, who "repeatedly demanded that account be taken of the historically genuine and progressive content of populism." A Soviet book that corrects the founder of Russian Marxism for being too hard on the Populists, in the name of Lenin's more generous later reading,

is not doing the crude thing. It is doing something a serious historian should do.

But the frame reasserts itself at the verdict. The Populists' socialism, Anikin writes, was "objectively speaking... petty-bourgeois"; "objectively speaking, they found themselves outside the main current of the revolutionary movement." The little word "objectively" does the work the argument should do: it converts a contested political judgement into a fact of nature, delivered from the standpoint of the side that won. "Only the Russian Marxists at the end of the century," he writes, "formulated a historically promising approach to this long-standing problem." Everyone else was, at best, on the way.

And there is one chapter where the teleology stops being an academic habit and becomes something with a policy behind it. "Non-Capitalist Development" lifts the nineteenth-century debate out of its century and sets it to work on the present. "The question of the link between the ideology of Russian populism and modern populist trends in the Third World," Anikin writes, "is of very great interest," and he pursues it through the Soviet development theorists of the day. The Narodnik dream of skipping capitalism becomes the Soviet doctrine of the 1970s that former colonies can advance to socialism under the tutelage of "the Soviet Union and the socialist countries gathered around it" — quoting Ulyanovsky, that "non-capitalist development, which means a socialist orientation, has, in reality, become one of the main paths of social and economic progress." Sun Yat-sen, Nkrumah, Cárdenas, Sékou Touré's Guinea, Ben Bella's Algeria, Tanzania are enrolled as latter-day Narodniks who, at their best, "shift to Marxism-Leninism." Here the past is not being understood on its own terms at all; it is being made to ratify a contemporary geopolitics. This is the sharpest edge of the forerunner method — history graded not merely by proximity to Marx but by service to the foreign policy of the Soviet state — and it is the one place where the book's scholarship is bent to a use its subjects would not have recognised.

The argument was live, and stayed live

Set beside Anikin's settled outcome, the revolutionary-Marxist reading of the same quarrel treats it as unfinished business — and, tellingly, reaches several of Anikin's own better judgements without his teleology. In "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution" (1939) Trotsky summed the matter up in a way that refuses to hand Plekhanov a clean victory: "Narodnikism, in the wake of the Slavophiles, proceeded from illusions concerning the absolutely original paths of Russia's

development, and waved aside capitalism and the bourgeois republic. Plekhanov's Marxism was concentrated on proving the principled identity of the historical paths of Russia and of the West. The program derived from this ignored the wholly real and not at all mystical peculiarities of Russia's social structure." That last clause is the crux. Plekhanov's anti-Populist Marxism was not simply correct; it was one-sided in the opposite direction, so fixed on proving Russia would travel the ordinary capitalist road that it lost sight of what was genuinely peculiar in Russian development — above all the weight of the peasantry, the very thing the Populists had grasped and the very thing that would return, transformed, in Lenin's strategy and in the theory of permanent revolution. The debate was not closed by Plekhanov's polemics; it ran on into 1905, 1917 and after.

The remarkable thing is how close Anikin comes to this himself. His correction of Plekhanov on the peasantry is, in substance, the same observation. What he lacks is permission to follow it where it leads — to say that the Marxist victory over Populism was a victory that left a real question standing, rather than the terminus of a road. The difference between the two readings is not the respect paid to the ancestors, which is common ground. It is that one treats the quarrel as a court case long since decided and the other as an argument the twentieth century reopened at terrible cost.

Chernyshevsky, and a shared inheritance

Nowhere is the common ground clearer than over Chernyshevsky, who is not a target of this tradition but a shared possession of it. Lenin took the title of his own founding pamphlet, *What Is to Be Done?*, from Chernyshevsky's novel. Plekhanov wrote the first Marxist study of him — the N. G. Chernyshevsky that Anikin rightly names in his opening paragraph as one of the books that first carried Russian thought to the West. Anikin's own chapters on Chernyshevsky are among his best: patient with the economic essays, alert to the censorship that forced the man to "write by implication," unwilling to reduce the novelist to the economist or either to a precursor. When he insists that Chernyshevsky "did not simply copy Georges Sand and Fourier, but wrote a profoundly original work," he is defending Russian thought against exactly the "cocktail of ideas" condescension — the tallying of "English Influence," "French Influence," "German Influence" against a thin residue of "Native Currents" — that he skewers in his introduction. On this, Anikin and the tradition this series writes from are on the same side.

Correcting the record — and what the frame cannot say

The record here needs less correction than most volumes in this series, because Anikin mostly is not falsifying; he is selecting, and the selection is the frame. Two things are worth marking.

First, to Anikin's credit, he foregrounds figures the Soviet apparatus of his day often preferred to leave in shadow. Plekhanov is one of them. Across the Progress philosophy textbooks of exactly this period — Afanasyev's *Marxist Philosophy* (1980), Frantsov's *Philosophy and Sociology* (1975), Krapivin's *What Is Dialectical Materialism?* — the founder of Russian Marxism is named zero times each, even where the revolutionary democrats are credited, because his Menshevism after 1903 made him awkward. Anikin, by contrast, gives Plekhanov ninety-odd pages of attention and a warm portrait, "a human firework of erudition and wit." That he does so is a small act of scholarly integrity worth registering. The companion Progress edition of Plekhanov's *Development of the Monist View of History*, republished in 1980, is the natural place for a reader to go next.

Second, and unavoidably, the wall at 1900. A book that traces this heritage to the young Lenin and then stops cannot tell you what became of the heritage. Chernyshevsky wanted the peasant commune saved; the Populists staked everything on the peasant as the bearer of a Russian socialism. Within a generation of the point where Anikin lays down his pen, the peasantry those men loved would be collectivised by force and the commune abolished from above; the Old Bolsheviks who were the living end of his genealogy would be shot; Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rakovsky would go the way the book cannot mention because the book ends before they enter it. Trotsky appears exactly once in Anikin's hundred and thirty thousand words, and only inside the title of a Lenin article in a footnote. Stalin does not appear at all — which, for a book ending in 1900, is chronology and no reproach. But the structural silence is not chronology. By closing the story at the moment of triumph, the forerunner method spares itself the one question its own frame ought to force: whether "the victory of socialism in Russia," which Anikin invokes as the settled meaning of the whole preceding history, delivered to the peasant and the worker what Herzen and Chernyshevsky and Vorontsov had wanted for them. That is the reflexive test this scholarly book quietly fails — not by lying, but by ending in time to avoid asking.

The reading this series offers instead

None of this is a reason to do without Anikin. It is a reason to read him alongside a tradition that honours the same ancestors and keeps the argument open. Trotsky's 1922 essay on Plekhanov — the "first crusader of Marxism on Russian soil," whose greatness and whose fall lay in the same fact, that he was a theoretician without a revolution to apply the theory in — is the counterpart to Anikin's portrait and the sharper for being written by a rival. "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution" (1939) restates the whole Populist-Marxist quarrel as Anikin will not: a three-cornered argument, Plekhanov's, Lenin's and Trotsky's, in which no party simply won and the peasant question Plekhanov dismissed came back to decide everything. For the fate of the peasantry after the genealogy's triumphant close — the commune Herzen dreamed of and the collectivisation that destroyed it — there is *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), which reads the Soviet outcome by the standard of what the revolution had promised, exactly the standard Anikin's frame declines to apply.

Read that way, Anikin's book is not diminished but completed. He has recovered a heritage and read much of it with real love. What he could not do, in 1988 as much as in 1975, was ask what that heritage became. This introduction is written in the conviction that honouring Herzen, Chernyshevsky and the Populists means keeping their questions open — not laying them to rest at the foot of a monument.

Capitalism at the End of the Century

The Soviet Union's two best institutes on where capitalism stood at the century's end - technology, the multinationals, debt, the arms economy - written around the Twenty-Seventh Congress and Reykjavik.

A. M. Yakovlev

Introduction to the 1988 Edition

A reader who opens this book expecting a document of the glasnost year will be puzzled within twenty pages, and the puzzle is worth solving, because the answer tells you more about the Soviet Union in 1988 than the book's contents do.

Capitalism at the End of the Century carries a 1988 imprint. It is a collective volume — Progress describes it on the back cover as the work of "a collection by well-known Soviet economists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, and journalists" — running to some 171,000 words across fifteen chapters and an essay "In Lieu of an Introduction". Its footnotes identify the milieu precisely, even though no contributor list survives in this text: the estimates come from the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO) and the Institute of the United States and Canada of the USSR Academy of Sciences. These were the two elite research institutes of the late Soviet state, the places where people whose job was to know what was actually happening in the capitalist world went to work. This is not a book by apparatus hacks. It is a book by professionals.

It is also not a book of 1988.

The date of the text

Set aside the spine and follow the evidence. The book's argumentative spine is Gorbachev's Political Report to the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU, held in February and March 1986; the Congress is cited nineteen times and the Political Report is the volume's most-quoted single source, more authoritative in these pages than Marx. The disarmament chapter turns on Gorbachev's statement of 15 January 1986, and on the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, reported as the live diplomatic situation. The most recent Western source cited is Fortune for August 1986. The most recent Soviet statistical source is the yearbook for 1986. The chapters were evidently finished in 1986 or 1987 — the latest volume of the Collected Works of Marx and Engels cited is volume 29, of 1987 — and

the Russian original will have gone to press around then, with the English translation following in 1988 in the ordinary Progress manner.

There is exactly one sentence in 171,000 words that knows about anything after 1986, and it reads like what it is:

Developments since 1985 are evidence of the feasibility of disarmament measures. The Soviet-American INF Treaty was signed during the visit of Mikhail Gorbachev to the USA in December 1987. In June 1988 the sides exchanged instruments of ratification.

That is a stop-press paragraph, dropped into Chapter Five at proof stage — June 1988 is the very last moment at which it could have been added — to keep the book's one genuinely current argument current. Nothing else in the volume was updated. So the honest description is: a 1986–87 text in a 1988 jacket, with a single 1988 patch on the disarmament chapter.

One anomaly can be cleared away at the outset. A reader scanning this book will find years as late as 1995 and 1996 in a volume dated 1988, and might reasonably wonder whether the text has been silently revised later. It has not. Every one of these is a forecast, and they are worth listing because they are a good sample of the book's method: Japanese expectations that a fifth-generation computer's vocabulary would "top 10,000 words" by 1990; industrial-robot sales rising to \$10 billion by 1990 and US sales to \$3 billion by 1995; American "teleworkers" increasing to ten million by 1990; developing-country cereal imports reaching 226 million tons by 2000; UN demographic projections for 1995–2000. The single non-forecast is the book's report that at Reykjavik "Gorbachev and Reagan agreed that such weapons belonging to the Soviet Union and the United States must be completely eliminated by 1996" — a 1986 event described by its 1996 target date. There is no dating anomaly. A book about capitalism's future is full of dates in the future.

1988 or 1978?

This series has learned to ask the question directly, because Progress imprints routinely conceal texts a decade older than their jackets. Here the answer is unusual and more interesting than a simple verdict: the book is split. Its foreign-policy chapters are absolutely of their moment. Its domestic vocabulary is not merely dated — it is absent.

The greps are stark. In 171,000 words, the word *perestroika* appears zero times. Glasnost: zero. Administrative-command, the term Soviet economists were by then using for their own system: zero. Brezhnev: zero. Khrushchev: zero. The English word "restructuring" occurs twenty-four times, and one might expect it to be the translator's rendering of *perestroika* — Progress often used it that way. It is not. Every single occurrence refers either to the restructuring of the capitalist economy or, in the disarmament chapters, to "the restructuring of political thinking". The Soviet domestic reform does not appear in this book under any name at all.

Nor does any Soviet economic difficulty. The book admits none. There is no sentence anywhere in it acknowledging that the USSR had a growth problem, a technology problem, or an agricultural problem. The nearest approach is oblique and comes wrapped as a task rather than a confession — of which more below.

Set that against what was actually happening in the year of the imprint. The Law on the State Enterprise came into force on 1 January 1988; the Law on Cooperatives legalised private enterprise in May; the Nineteenth Party Conference met at the end of June and put competitive elections and the rule of law on the agenda; the Memorial society was taking shape around the demand that the victims of the Terror be counted and named; and the mass-circulation press was publishing the history of collectivisation and the purges to an audience of millions. None of this is in this book. It could not be: the book was written before most of it.

And then there is the silence that is not explained by the date at all. Stalin appears zero times in this volume. Trotsky, zero. Collectivisation, zero. Cult of personality, zero. The word "repression" occurs twice, and on both occasions it describes capitalism. A 171,000-word survey of the twentieth century, published by the Soviet state's export house in the year the Terror became a matter of open public discussion in Moscow, does not mention Stalin once. When the book wants an authority on the appeal of communism in the capitalist countries, it reaches past the entire Soviet experience to Ernst Thälmann — the German Communist leader murdered at Buchenwald in 1944, whose party's catastrophe in 1933 was a

direct product of the Comintern policy this book's tradition still would not discuss — and reports that his words about "the victorious advance of socialism in the Soviet Union" being the Communists' strongest argument "now have a new ring". (The extracted text OCRs the name as "Thaiman".) That sentence could have been written in 1938. It is the tell: on its own history, this book is not late, not early, but silent, and the silence is a choice its authors did not make in 1988 but inherited and declined to break.

The general crisis, and what it cost to defend it

The doctrine of the "general crisis of capitalism" — the claim, formalised in Comintern usage in the 1920s and never abandoned, that capitalism entered a terminal historical decline in 1917 and has been in it ever since — is still asserted here, thirty-four times. It structures the whole book. Chapter One is titled "In the Labyrinths of the General Crisis". The introduction calls the twentieth century "a century of the comprehensive and deepening crisis of capitalism, which continues to bring mankind wars, suffering, starvation and spiritual emptiness."

But the same sentence continues: "Its crisis is evident, but the system still retains resources for survival."

That clause is the book's real subject, and the second section of Chapter One — "The Reserves of Capitalism" — is the most intellectually alive thing in the volume. It is a substantial, and by Soviet standards nervy, retreat. It licenses itself with a formula from the Twenty-Seventh Congress, quoted here as authority:

the present stage of the general crisis does not lead to any absolute stagnation of capitalism and does not rule out the possibilities for economic growth, and the mastering of new scientific and technical fields.

Having obtained that licence, the chapter uses it. It divides the postwar capitalist economy into three periods — reconstruction to the mid-1950s, relative stability to the 1970s, and then the slowdown — and concedes that for "nearly three decades after the end of the war the upward phases of the capitalist cycle were, as a rule, longer and more intensive, while the crises of general overproduction were not as deep or as long." It lists the new industries by name: "radioelectronics and microelectronics, missiles and aerospace, lasers, nuclear energy, new lines in chemistry, biotechnology and genetic engineering". It insists — against the whole thrust of the doctrine it is defending — that state-monopoly regulation and

scientific-technical progress are not temporary expedients: "It would be wrong, in principle, to assume that these were short-term factors and that they have not become intrinsic to present-day capitalism."

And then, in a single sentence, it concedes the thing that would destroy the Soviet Union within three years: "In the most developed countries, it still has some advantages stemming from the higher level of social labour productivity."

The concession is immediately converted into a task — "The CPSU Programme formulates the vital task of attaining the world's highest level of social labour productivity and efficiency of production, so depriving capitalism of this advantage" — and the subject is dropped. But it is there, in print, from IMEMO, in 1987: the West is more productive, and that is capitalism's reserve.

Readers should know that Soviet economists had been punished for saying less. Yevgeny Varga — cited respectfully in this book's Chapter Six — argued after 1945 that capitalism had acquired durable new capacities for regulating itself and would not shortly collapse. His institute was broken up and he was compelled to recant. The "Reserves of Capitalism" chapter is Varga's argument, made forty years later, by people who could finally make it. That history is not in this book either, but it is the reason the chapter reads as cautiously as it does.

What holds up

The house rule of this series is that a reader told everything is worthless learns nothing, and here the rule has real work to do, because a good deal of this book is simply competent applied economics that has aged better than what replaced it.

The analysis of the falling rate of profit in Chapter Six is done from official US statistics rather than from doctrine, and correctly identifies the compression of profitability in the later 1960s as the thing that preceded and caused the investment slowdown — arriving at the conclusion that "the slowdown in economic development was not caused by the alleged deceleration of scientific and technical progress, but by the capitalist relations, which prevent the introduction" of what was available. Whatever one makes of the last clause, the sequencing is right and was not obvious at the time.

Chapter Seven's "three centres" framework — the United States, Western Europe and Japan as rival imperialist poles rather than a single bloc — was better than the Western commentary that treated the Atlantic alliance as permanent,

and the book states the consequence plainly: "Labour productivity and product quality in these countries are often higher than they are in the United States." It notes that the United States crossed into net external debtor status in mid-1985, which is correct and was then still news.

Chapter Eight on the Third World is the strongest in the book. The debt figures are sound and the interpretation is sounder: developing-country external debt rising by almost \$500 billion between 1980 and 1985, debt service consuming close to a quarter of export earnings, primary commodity prices at a quarter-century low, and the whole mechanism read as a transfer of the costs of Northern economic restructuring onto the South. That is what the 1980s debt crisis was, and it took mainstream economics a further decade to say so. The chapters on the transnational corporations are likewise serious, and notably unwilling to cheat: the book concedes that the TNCs "have been boosting labour productivity and advancing technical progress, even if in a contradictory manner."

None of this is an accident. It is what the Academy institutes were for, and it survives the collapse of the framework it was written inside. Against the triumphalism of 1989–91 — the end of history, the permanent great moderation — a reader would have been better served by Chapter Six than by most of what was published in the West in those years.

Where the book breaks, and the reply

Two things give the volume away.

The first is the militarism chapter, where the New Political Thinking does something the book does not acknowledge it is doing. To justify disarmament diplomacy with a capitalist adversary, Chapter Five must detach war from the nature of capitalism, and it does, explicitly: "Rabid militarism is not inherent in capitalism as a natural and everlasting necessity... The link is rather of a political nature." Whatever one thinks of the conclusion, this is the abandonment of the Leninist theory of imperialism, performed silently, in a book whose other chapters continue to invoke that theory as settled. The volume never notices the contradiction, because noticing it would require the kind of open theoretical argument that Soviet publishing still did not permit in 1987, even as it permitted the substance.

The second is the productivity concession, and this is where the anti-Stalinist Marxist tradition has the better of the argument by fifty years. The book treats the West's productivity advantage as an embarrassing residue to be

eliminated by exhortation. Trotsky had made it the central diagnostic category of Soviet society in the mid-1930s. In "Russia and the World Proletariat", written on 14 September 1935, he put it as directly as it can be put:

This decisive fact – the low productivity of labour power in the Soviet Union – provides the key that puts us in a position to open up all the other secrets.

The argument is developed at length in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936): that a nationalised economy which cannot outproduce capitalism cannot defend itself against capitalism, that the bureaucracy's privileges are a function of scarcity rather than a temporary blemish, and that the regime's refusal to submit its own economic performance to open measurement and criticism was itself a cause of the shortfall. Fifty-one years later, IMEMO's economists conceded the fact and could not discuss the cause. The book's readers in 1988 were three years from finding out which analysis had been right.

Ernest Mandel's work supplies the other half of the reply. Where this book explains the postwar boom as a set of capitalist "reserves" temporarily masking a general crisis, Mandel's long-wave account — *Late Capitalism* (1972; English edition 1975) and *Long Waves of Capitalist Development* (1980) — treated the 1948–73 expansion and the depressive wave that followed as regular features of capitalist accumulation, needing no doctrine of terminal decline to explain them and offering no comfort about capitalism's imminent collapse. That framework has held up. The "general crisis", asserted here thirty-four times, has not.

A note on the editor's name

The title page gives the editor as A. M. Yakovlev. He is not Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev, Gorbachev's Politburo ally and the architect of glasnost, who — confusingly — had himself directed IMEMO from 1983 to 1985. The initials differ and nothing in this text supports the identification. Readers and cataloguers should resist a conflation that would make this book look far more reformist than it is.

What it was for

Progress commissioned this volume for export, and the back cover names the audience: "social science lecturers and students of the social sciences" outside the USSR. It was ammunition — an authoritative, up-to-date, statistically furnished account of the capitalist world that a Western

Communist Party lecturer could use, refreshed to carry the new Gorbachev foreign policy and the Twenty-Seventh Congress line.

It is worth reading now for two things it did not intend. The first is the economics, which is honest work done under constraint and which deserves the credit given above. The second is the shape of the silence: a book that could rethink war, security and the balance of forces in six months, and could not say the word Stalin, or the word perestroika, or admit a single Soviet difficulty, in 171,000 words. The system was capable of revising its analysis of the enemy at speed. What it could not do, three years before it ceased to exist, was talk about itself. That, and not the general crisis of capitalism, is the crisis this book is a document of.

HISTORY Felix Dzerzhinsky

The official life of the Cheka's founder, written for his 110th anniversary and closing not on Lenin but on Andropov - published in the year Soviet newspapers began printing the Terror.

Sergei Petrovich Khromov

Introduction to the 1988 Edition

The spine says 1988. The book does not.

Near the end of the final chapter the authors write: "One hundred and ten years have passed since Dzerzhinsky's birth, over sixty years have passed since his death." Dzerzhinsky was born in 1877 and died in 1926. The sentence dates itself to 1987. Everything else in the text agrees. The last political event the book knows about is the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress of February–March 1986, invoked twice — once in the introduction, once in the closing pages, where the Soviet people "have begun work to implement the congress' decisions and attain the targets set for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan," which ran 1986 to 1990. The introduction still announces that "The world's first socialist country has entered the stage of developed socialism" — Brezhnev's formula, not Gorbachev's — while in the next breath adopting the new vocabulary of "accelerating the country's socio-economic development." That is the language of uskoreníe, the 1985–86 phase, before perestroika had displaced it. The word perestroika does not appear in the book. Neither does glasnost. No source cited postdates 1985.

So this is a Russian text written in 1986–87 for the 110th anniversary of Dzerzhinsky's birth, translated by Natalia Belskaya and issued in English by Progress in 1988. The distinction matters more here than in almost any other volume in this series. 1988 was the year of the Nineteenth Party Conference, the year Soviet newspapers printed the Terror, the year Memorial was founded to count and name the dead. A biography of the founder of the Soviet secret police published in that year would have to answer for something. A biography written a year or two earlier, on an anniversary schedule, does not — and this one does not. It reaches English readers as an artefact of the moment just before the argument broke open, wearing a jacket from the moment it did.

The commission is legible in the book's last citation. Not Lenin, not a Party congress: the authorities the final page

reaches for are the Twenty-Seventh Congress and then Yuri Andropov, quoted from a speech of 9 September 1977 marking Dzerzhinsky's centenary — Andropov who was then Chairman of the KGB. The book is a work of institutional self-description. It is the security organs' account of their own founder, produced by a team of historians under Semyon Khromov as editor-in-chief, working from the Central Party Archives and describing itself, without irony, as "a scientific biography."

Set the argument aside for a moment, because the first three chapters are worth having. Dzerzhinsky was born on the family's small estate near the Nalibokskaya Pushcha to a consumptive schoolmaster who died when the boy was five, joined the Social-Democratic Party of Lithuania at eighteen, and spent eleven years — a quarter of his life — in tsarist prisons, penal servitude and Siberian exile. He escaped twice. He was sentenced to life exile in Siberia in 1909 and to three years' hard labour in 1914. The book's account of this, built on his letters to his sister Aldona and to his wife Sofia, on Sofia Dzerzhinskaya's memoir, and on Polish-language recollections that have never appeared in English, is straightforward biography and largely reliable. It is also, in places, unexpectedly fine. His mother told the children stories about "the indemnities levied against the people, the reprisals against them, and vexing taxes," and he wrote to Sofia in 1914 that "every violent act I learned about, I felt as an act of violence against me personally." In 1902 he led a rising in the Siedlce prison yard; the prisoners disarmed the wardens, raised a red flag over the walls, and elected him chairman of what they declared a "free republic." Sofia gave birth to their son in a Warsaw cell and kept him there for the first eight months of his life. Nothing in this material is in serious dispute, and no English biography assembles it as fully.

His personal incorruptibility is not in dispute either. The book supplies the anecdote from Dmitry Sverchkov about the glass of milk in the railway carriage in Siberia in 1922, which Dzerzhinsky refused as "an absolutely inadmissible luxury, an unpardonable extravagance." Everything known about him supports it. The chapters on transport after 1921 and on the

Supreme Economic Council after 1924 describe real work: the winter mission to Siberia to move grain and seed to the famine districts of the Volga, the reconstruction of the railways, the beginnings of Soviet tractor and aircraft manufacture. And the chapter on the besprizorniki, the millions of children orphaned and abandoned by the civil war, records something genuinely humane. Lunacharsky's recollection of Dzerzhinsky bursting into his office is one of the most attractive passages in the book: "One can't help thinking when looking at the children that everything is really for them! The fruits of the revolution are not for us, they are for them!" The Children's Commission he chaired from January 1921 reached, on the book's own accounting, four million of five and a half million children, and left one and a half million untouched, which the authors state plainly.

But read Dzerzhinsky's circular of the same day to the local Chekas, which the book also prints, and the shape of the whole problem appears in a single sentence: "Caring for the children is the surest way to eradicate counter-revolution."

That is not cynicism. It is the honest thought of a man for whom every human question had become a security question, because he was running the organ that had been given every human question to answer.

The book's account of that organ begins on 7 December 1917. Dzerzhinsky reported to the Council of People's Commissars on the commission he proposed. Its purpose was, first, "to cut short and foil all counter-revolutionary efforts and sabotage activities throughout Russia, no matter from where they may proceed"; second, "To turn over to the Revolutionary Tribunal all saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries, and to develop methods of combating them"; third, "The commission will conduct only a preliminary investigation, to the extent required by effective counteraction." He asked for the right to confiscate property, evict people from their lodgings, cancel their ration cards and publish their names.

Take that founding charter seriously, because the book prints it and then narrates its dismantling without noticing. Point two hands the accused to a court. Point three restricts the commission to preliminary investigation. Within a year the Cheka was shooting people, and within five the same body — under Dzerzhinsky, and by decree of October 1922 which the book records without comment — was "granted the right to execute participants in bandit raids and armed robberies without a court trial." The distance between the December 1917 charter and the October 1922 decree is the whole history the book declines to write. It presents both as achievements.

On the Red Terror the book gives a single sentence and a footnote. After Uritsky's assassination and the shooting of Lenin on 30 August 1918, the Council of People's Commissars "passed a resolution on red terror as a temporary extraordinary measure of the proletarian state's self-defence, a response to white terror," and Dzerzhinsky is quoted calling it "nothing but an expression of the will of the poorest peasantry and the proletariat — to check all attempts at a revolt, and to win." The footnote reads, in full: "Mass red terror was stopped in early November 1918."

There are no numbers. There is no decree on concentration camps — the phrase "concentration camp" does not occur in the book, nor does the word "hostage," nor any account of the hostage-taking that the Cheka practised systematically in 1918–19. Executions are never described, only implied, and the word "shot" appears in this book overwhelmingly in connection with tsarist troops shooting workers. The entire concession the authors make runs to three lines: "True, a number of mistakes were made in the process. Some innocent persons were arrested; searches, especially in the provinces, were sometimes made without adhering to the rules of procedure, and the investigation of cases was at times too prolonged. A shortage of experienced personnel exacerbated the situation." Procedural irregularity and understaffing. That is the sum.

Meanwhile the book's own definition of the enemy quietly expands. Describing 1919 it explains that the Mensheviks and SRs had "instigated strikes at war industry factories and revolts in the army," and that this "made it imperative to introduce harsher punitive measures." A strike at a war factory is a strike by workers. The reader is invited to file it under counter-revolution and move on.

The silences are the finding, and they are specific and checkable. Search the text of this book and you will not find the word Kronstadt. Not once. The Tenth Party Congress of March 1921 appears only in a footnote, as a source for a Lenin quotation about Warsaw. Tambov is named three times, always as a place where bandits and kulaks were active, never as a peasant war put down with poison gas. Nor is there any mention of the Georgian affair of 1922–23 — the commission Dzerzhinsky himself chaired, whose findings provoked Lenin's furious last notes on Great-Russian chauvinism. The word "Georgian" does not appear in the book. Ordzhonikidze appears three times, all in 1917 contexts, and never in connection with Georgia at all.

Above all, the institution is never followed past 1923. The

Cheka becomes the GPU in February 1922 and the OGPU in November 1923, and there the lineage stops. The letters NKVD appear only in their 1919 sense, as the Commissariat for Internal Affairs Dzerzhinsky ran alongside the Cheka. Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria are absent. The year 1937 appears exactly once in the entire book, and it appears like this — a footnote explaining that the All-Russia Central Executive Committee was "The supreme legislative, administrative and controlling body of state authority in Soviet Russia in 1917–37." A terminal date, no cause given. There is a second such date. The introduction lists among the book's sources the documents of "the Communist Party of Poland (1918–1938)." Both parentheses close on a catastrophe the authors will not name.

That second one deserves a moment, because it makes the omission personal rather than abstract. The Polish Communist Party was dissolved by the Comintern in 1938 and its leadership destroyed. Adolf Warski, whom this book's introduction names as one of Dzerzhinsky's "first biographers," was shot in the Soviet Union in 1937. So was Julian Leński, quoted admiringly in the twelfth chapter as the party's former General Secretary. Józef Unszlicht, Dzerzhinsky's deputy at the Vecheka and a recurring figure here; Martyn Latsis, whom Dzerzhinsky brought onto the commission in May 1918; Jānis Peters, Deputy Chairman of the Vecheka, quoted in the conclusion on Dzerzhinsky's modesty; Artur Artuzov, who ran the Savinkov operation — all were shot in 1937–38 by the organisation Dzerzhinsky founded. The book's roster of witnesses is substantially a roster of the executed, and it says so of none of them.

There is also the standard falsification of 1917, which by 1987 had been abandoned in Soviet scholarship for thirty years and survives here intact. The introduction states that Dzerzhinsky "was one of the members of the Party Centre directing" the October insurrection. Chapter Four elaborates: "The Central Committee meeting elected the Revolutionary Military Centre to exercise leadership over the uprising. The members were Yakov Sverdlov, Joseph Stalin, Andrei Bubnov, Moissei Uritsky and Felix Dzerzhinsky." Some fourteen pages then describe the work of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee — its round-the-clock guard, its commissars, its proclamation on 25 October — without ever naming its chairman. Trotsky's name does not occur in this book. Not in 1917, not in the civil war, not in the succession struggle, not anywhere. Stalin's occurs twice, both times in this same 1917 material, both times favourably.

Finally there is the death. Dzerzhinsky collapsed on 20 July

1926 after speaking at a Central Committee plenum, and died in his Kremlin flat at 4.40 that afternoon. The book's framing is: "Representatives of the opposition were trying to paint a distorted picture of the country's economic development, and a well-substantiated rebuff was strongly needed to dash their hopes and expose their errors. Dzerzhinsky's report did just that." The opposition is not named, its arguments are not stated, and the reader is not told that the man Dzerzhinsky spent his last two hours refuting was Trotsky's ally Kamenev, or that the United Opposition had been formed three months earlier. That he died at fifty in the middle of that fight is the one thing about his death the book is not willing to make anything of. It prefers "a soldier killed in battle."

The answer to this book already exists, and it is more interesting than a denunciation, because the anti-Stalinist left did not treat Dzerzhinsky as a villain.

Trotsky, who bore direct responsibility for the repression of Kronstadt, defended it and him. In *More on the Suppression of Kronstadt*, written in 1938 against Victor Serge, he wrote: "Concerning the repressions, as far as I remember, Dzerzhinsky had personal charge of them and Dzerzhinsky could not tolerate anyone's interference with his functions (and properly so)." And then: "Whether there were any needless victims I do not know. On this score I trust Dzerzhinsky more than his belated critics." He would not soften it. "But I am ready to recognize that civil war is no school of humanism... In this sense I carry full and complete responsibility for the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion." A reader who wants the case for Kronstadt's suppression put honestly by a participant will find it there, and will find no comfort in it. That is the point of reading it.

The sharper statement is earlier. On 4 January 1930, after the GPU shot Yakov Blumkin for carrying a letter from Trotsky, Trotsky wrote the piece published in *Biulleten' Oppozitsii* as *Jakob Blumkin Shot by the Stalinists*. Its argument is precisely the one this Progress volume cannot make:

During the years of the civil war, the Cheka carried out grim work. But this was done under the control of the party. Hundreds of times from inside the party there came protests, declarations, and demands for explanations about one sentence or another. At the head of the Cheka stood Dzerzhinsky, a man of outstanding moral authority... This altogether constituted the guarantee that the Cheka was a weapon of the revolutionary dictatorship. Now the party is strangled.

Against Dzerzhinsky he sets what came after: Menzhinsky, "not a man but the shadow of one," and Yagoda, "a despicable careerist who has tied his fortune to Stalin, and who is ready to perform anything he is told to do, without thinking and without questioning." Blumkin, he concludes, "has been shot — by decision of the GPU. That could have happened only because the GPU has become Stalin's personal instrument."

This is a serious argument and it should not be accepted uncritically. It rests on a distinction — Cheka under party control, GPU as one man's instrument — that assumes the party could indefinitely control an organ it had exempted from the courts. By 1930 Trotsky had a great deal of evidence that it could not, including the fact that he was writing from Turkey. He was, moreover, a witness in his own cause: the same 1939 reply to Serge that concedes secret trials "greatly increase the possibility of mistakes" defends them as an unavoidable feature of civil war, and never confronts the question of what happens when the emergency organ outlives the emergency. That is the argument Trotsky did not make, and the honest thing is to say so.

The Fourth International came closer to making it. Writing in 1951 about Yugoslavia's secret police, Ernest Mandel — as E. Germain — put the general proposition in one line: "its existence, like the existence of the Cheka in Russia, is not a proof of the strength, but of the weakness of the revolution." That is the sentence this book cannot contain. Everything in it treats the Vecheke as evidence of the revolution's power — "a strong shield and an avenging sword," in the conclusion's phrase, headed by a man who was "at the same time a deeply humane and just arbiter with the power to decide a person's fate." Read that formulation twice. An arbiter with the power to decide a person's fate, and no court above him, is not a description of justice. It is a description of what justice is replaced by.

There is one more piece of the reply, and it bears directly on this book's own text. The list of five names that Chapter Four gives for the "Revolutionary Military Centre" is not an invention of the Progress authors; it is the minute of the Central Committee meeting of 16 October 1917, and Trotsky quoted the same minute in his 1937 *The Stalin School of Falsification* (chapter four, "Letter to the Bureau of Party History") in order to demolish the use being made of it. Neither Trotsky nor Lenin belonged to the body, he pointed out, which "alone demonstrates that the committee had only a subordinate organizational significance." The five were sent to reinforce the Military Revolutionary Committee. "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!" Fifty years later, on a biography of one of those five, the correction was still standing.

What is the reader to make of Dzerzhinsky, then? The objection from this tradition has never been that a revolution has no right to defend itself. It is that Dzerzhinsky was given an extraordinary commission — the word is in its name, and it meant temporary — and that the commission was never wound up. It acquired the power to kill without trial, then kept it; it was renamed, then renamed again; it survived the emergency that justified it, then the leader who founded it, then the party that was supposed to control it, and finally it consumed most of the people named as sources in this book. Dzerzhinsky did not intend that and did not live to see it. But he built the mechanism, he defended its exemption from the courts, and in his last years he chaired the commission on Georgia that Lenin said he could not trust for impartiality. That is a political record, not a moral verdict, and it is the record this biography exists to prevent its readers from assembling.

Read the first three chapters for the man. Read Chapters Five and Six for what an institution says about itself when it is allowed to write its own history and nobody asks it about the years after 1926. Then read the footnote about 1917–37, and the parenthesis around 1918–1938, and notice that the authors could count.

HISTORY

Feudal Society and Its Culture

A global history of the Middle Ages - Europe, Byzantium, Russia, the Arab world, Ethiopia, the Americas, India, China and Japan - written by regional specialists who treat each society and its culture as one story.

Victor Rutenburg and others

Introduction to the 1988 Edition

Feudal Society and Its Culture is one of the more ambitious books Progress Publishers ever sent abroad, and one of the least polemical. It is a collaborative world-history of the Middle Ages, "written by a group of scholars from Moscow and Leningrad," edited by the medievalist Victor Rutenburg, who signs its second preface. Its subject is not a country or a century but a whole epoch taken globally: Western Europe and Byzantium, Russia, the Arab and Iranian lands, North Africa, Ethiopia, pre-Columbian and colonial America, India, China and Japan, each treated by a specialist in the region, and each treated for its society and its culture together. "The distinctive characteristic of this book," the publishers write, "lies in the fact that it presents a synthesis of social and cultural history." That aim — to write the economic history of the medieval world and its art, learning, religion and everyday life as a single story, and to do so on a genuinely planetary scale — was unusual in any historiography of the period, and the execution is frequently very good. This is a work of scholarship, and it should be read as one. Its faults are not the falsifications this series is usually obliged to name; they are conceptual, and they are inherited.

Begin, as this series always does, by dating the text rather than the spine. The copyright page reads "© Progress Publishers 1988," and the book was typeset in the USSR. But 1988 was the fourth year of perestroika, the year of the Nineteenth Party Conference, and nothing whatever of that moment has reached this manuscript. The words Gorbachev, perestroika and glasnost do not occur; neither does restructuring in its political sense, nor any reference to the Twenty-Seventh Congress; the years 1985, 1986 and 1987 are entirely absent. The latest datable reference in 232,000 words is to 1974, and the historiographical apparatus — the invocation of L. V. Cherepnin and his school on the formation of the Russian centralized state, for instance — belongs to the Soviet academy of the 1960s and 1970s. This is a pre-glasnost book in a glasnost jacket: an older manuscript, settled in the framework of the Brezhnev-era academy, that reached English

translation only in 1988. Whatever loosening was underway in Soviet intellectual life by then, it did not touch these pages, and the reader should not look here for it.

The frame: feudalism as a universal stage

What organizes the book, from the first page of the publishers' preface to the last chapter on Japan, is a single proposition: that "feudalism" is not a name for a particular arrangement of medieval Europe but a universal, law-governed stage through which the whole of humanity — or very nearly the whole — was obliged to pass. The disparaging Enlightenment view of the Middle Ages, the preface explains, has been repudiated, and "feudalism has been recognized as a natural stage in historical development." Feudalism, the editor's preface adds, differed radically from the slavery that preceded it and the capitalism that followed: "It was a necessary historical stage through which most peoples of the world have had to pass." The authority for this is stated plainly and without argument: "The theory of social formations on which Soviet historical science is based is used as the foundation for the scientific periodization of history."

That sentence is the hinge of the whole book, and it is worth pausing on. The "theory of social formations" it names is the doctrine, canonized in Soviet scholarship from the 1930s, that every society climbs the same five-runged ladder — primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, communist — in the same order. Within the book the doctrine is a given, a foundation, a tool of periodization applied to the evidence. It is never itself examined. Feudal fragmentation in Europe is "part of the law-governed evolution of feudal relations"; commodity production emerges "within the regularities governing its general development"; the epoch as a whole is a lawful sequence unrolling on one foundation, "the feudal mode of production." The question this series always asks — by what standard, and is the standard sound? — is the one question the book is built to foreclose. The periodization is the frame through which everything is seen, and a frame is the last thing a picture shows you.

Bound up with the stage-frame is a second inheritance: the class-struggle master-narrative. "The history of the Middle Ages is the history of acute class conflict between the peasants and the feudal lords," the preface announces, and the vocabulary bears it out — the words peasant, uprising and revolt together run to hundreds of occurrences. The feudal state "was always an instrument of power in the hands of the feudal lords and hostile to the masses of the peasants." Religion, likewise, is read as superstructure: the three great faiths "became the synthesis of and sanction for the feudal system, bestowing upon it the aura of divine authority." Some of this is simply true, and usefully said. The medieval order was a structure of domination; its lords did live off the coerced surplus of the direct producer; the Church was, among other things, an ideological pillar of that order. A history that says so is not thereby falsified. The difficulty is narrower, and it appears where the master-narrative meets the material the book is actually strongest on — the culture.

What the book earns

For the greater part of its length *Feudal Society and Its Culture* is not a demonstration of a schema but a rich, generous survey, and the credit belongs where the learning is real. The Byzantine chapter is the work of someone who knows the field intimately: it carries the reader through the iconoclast crisis, the Macedonian and Palaeologan cultural revivals, the Hesychast controversy of the fourteenth century, and the strange late flowering at Mistra where Gemistos Plethon dreamed of a Byzantium reformed on Platonic lines — and it makes the genuinely interesting argument that Byzantine art "stopped at the threshold of the Renaissance without crossing the line," pressing right up to realism and then, under the "cold winds of ascetic hesychasm," freezing. The Russian chapter is alive to its own subject's art in a way official histories rarely manage: Rublyov and Dionisy are discussed as painters, the icon treated as "an historical work" in which a people read its own sufferings and deliverance, the Italian architects of Ivan III's Kremlin named one by one. The Western European chapters move with evident authority through the Carolingian and Ottonian "renaissances," the rise of the towns and the guilds, scholasticism from Duns Scotus to Gerson, the symbolism of the Gothic, the Reformation and the Renaissance — and here the editor's own hand is visible, for the treatment of Florence, of Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio, and above all of the Ciompi revolt of 1378, the "first proletarian uprising" as the book (citing Marx) calls it, has the vividness of a lifelong specialism.

Nor does the reach stop at Europe. The book's deliberate, and admirable, ambition is to make the medieval history of Africa, Asia and the Americas "equal participants" in a single world-historical process rather than a footnote to Christendom — and the chapters on China's poetry, on the syncretism of Mahayana Buddhism with Shinto in medieval Japan, on the art of flower arrangement, on the medieval theatre of Ethiopia, on the astronomy and architecture of the Maya, Aztec and Inca, are written with real curiosity and real information. This impulse — to treat the whole world's Middle Ages as worth serious cultural attention, and to bind social and cultural history together — is the book's genuine and lasting contribution, and it was ahead of much Western medieval scholarship of its day, which was still largely confined to Latin Europe.

It should be said, too, that the authors are not crude, and do not pretend the schema is frictionless. The publishers' preface concedes openly that "the distinctive and the common characteristics of feudalism in the East (Hither Asia, India, China and Japan) present a problem which is still widely discussed among historians," and promises that "the authors of this book have not intended to gloss over it. On the contrary, they retain a variety of approaches and opinions." That is an honest sentence, and the chapters largely honour it: the difficulties of the East are not hidden. This is the mark of scholars working in good faith, and it is why the book's central weakness is so clearly visible — because the authors themselves keep laying out the evidence that strains against their category.

The one thing that cannot be named

Search this book for the concept Marx built specifically to describe the very societies its Eastern chapters cover, and it is not there. The phrase Asiatic mode of production occurs zero times; the word Asiatic appears only in its geographical sense ("the Asiatic continent," "Asiatic trade"). Across chapters on India, China, Japan and the Iranian and Arab lands — precisely the ground for which Marx coined the term — the category is simply absent. This is the same finding the companion introduction to *A History of India* in this series reached independently, and here it is generalized across half the world.

The absence is not an oversight; it is a decision taken decades before these authors wrote and far above their heads. Marx's own list of the great epochs in the economic development of society, set out in the 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, ran: the Asiatic, the ancient, the

feudal and the modern bourgeois modes of production. The Asiatic mode was Marx's — a society of self-sufficient village communities, with no private property in land, the state standing above the villages as universal landlord, tax and rent fused into a single levy — and he developed it in his 1853 articles on British India for the *New York Daily Tribune* and in his correspondence with Engels that summer. In the Soviet theoretical debates of the late 1920s and early 1930s, culminating in the Leningrad discussion of 1931, the Asiatic mode was condemned and effectively banned: it implied that much of humanity had travelled a distinct and non-progressive road, which offended both the universal five-stage ladder then being canonized and the political need to promise the colonial world a future identical to Europe's. Stalin's 1938 codification, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, fixed the five stages as the road every society walks. After that, the historian of Asia had one permitted task: to find feudalism where Marx had found something he thought was neither ancient nor feudal.

The Indian chapter of this book is the case where the strain becomes almost unbearable, and it is unbearable precisely because the author is honest. Under the heading "Indian Feudalism" he records that Indian society lacked what European feudalism had. "The hierarchical structure of the ruling class was weakly developed and during certain periods non-existent." "Revenue from the peasants was normally levied in the form of a fixed state tax." "Also in India there was no serfdom in the sense of the juridical personal dependence of the peasants on their feudal land owner." "Estate barriers in India were replaced with caste barriers." And, decisively: "The Indian form of feudalism differed from the European both in the predominance of state ownership of the land." He goes further, to the very edge of the forbidden thought: "By Indian law the ruler collected taxes only because he defended the land from foreign invasion," so that "State ownership of the land never gave the treasury the right to dispose of this land," and "nowhere in the Indian historical sources is there any document establishing the monarch's ownership of the land."

Set that inventory down and read it back: no private property in land, tax and rent merged, no serfdom, a weak or absent lordly hierarchy, the state as landlord, the self-sufficient caste-village persisting to the present day. This is the Asiatic mode of production, enumerated feature by feature, in the author's own sentences. Every diagnostic Marx used is present except the name. The scholarship arrives at the concept from every direction and then, at the last step, files it under a category it fits nowhere — "the Indian form of feudalism" — because that is the only category the schema permits. The

word Marx wrote is the one word that cannot be written.

What the Indian chapter does acutely, the book does everywhere. "Feudalism in America" opens on the Aztec, Maya and Inca — societies the chapter itself describes as moving "from a primitive communal society to one based on slaveowning" and never as feudal at all, so that the chapter's real feudalism turns out to be the transplanted Iberian kind arriving with Cortés and Pizarro. (This is a nuance to the schema's credit: the pre-Columbian civilizations are not simply crammed onto the ladder.) Byzantium is granted "complete and unconditional private ownership of the land," which makes its "feudalism" look markedly unlike the Western model that gives feudalism its name. Only for Ethiopia, where medieval land grants really did resemble European fiefs, does the label sit easily. The universal category, in short, is universal by fiat; the actual societies keep exceeding it, and the book's honesty is what lets us see them do so.

The reply: a method, not a staircase

The tradition from which this series writes never accepted that history is a single staircase every nation must climb in the same order and at the same tread. Its objection is not to historical materialism — the analysis of societies through their modes of production and the class relations built on them — but to the freezing of that method into a fixed ladder of obligatory stages, which is a different and lesser thing. The distinction is exactly the one the book effaces when it makes "the theory of social formations" a foundation rather than a question.

Three lines of that reply are worth pointing the reader toward. First, Marx himself, whose 1859 enumeration this book invokes as "the founding fathers of Marxism" but silently truncates: the Asiatic mode he named is the missing rung, and its suppression is not a reading of Marx but a departure from him. Second, the debate among Marxist historians in the West that ran throughout the very years this manuscript was taking shape — the exchange between Maurice Dobb and Paul Sweezy in the early 1950s over the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (1946) behind it — which turned precisely on the point that the transition was neither uniform nor mechanical, that "feudalism" covered widely divergent social orders, and that a schema treating the stages as an escalator flattens what most needs explaining. Ernest Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory* (1968) took the further step of restoring the Asiatic mode to the analysis of pre-capitalist societies and insisting that the sequence of forms was a field of concrete study, not a

template known in advance.

Third, and most directly, there is Trotsky's law of uneven and combined development, formulated against exactly the unilinear stagism that Stalinism turned into dogma. Backward societies, on this account, do not obediently repeat the advanced ones' path; they fuse archaic and modern forms into something without precedent. "To jump over intermediate stages is the way of backward countries," Trotsky wrote in his 1932 lecture *In Defence of October*; "the law of combined development expressed itself in the economic field at every step." That is a far better instrument for the medieval world this book describes — a world where, on its own evidence, caste-villages and state-landlordism in India, tributary empires in China, and classic vassalage in France were contemporaries that no single tread of a single ladder can hold together. Historical materialism as its founders practised it was a method of concrete analysis, sensitive to exactly these differences. The "theory of social formations" as canonized in Moscow was the method's fossil: the conclusions reached in advance, the evidence sent to find them.

There is a final, lighter observation, offered as such. This is a book fluent in the language of domination and ideology — the feudal state as "an instrument of power in the hands of the feudal lords," the Church as the "sanction for the feudal system," bestowing on it "the aura of divine authority," the whole superstructure derived from the property relations beneath it. It turns that analytic vocabulary on medieval lords and priests with skill. The one structure to which it is never turned is the periodizing authority itself — "the theory of social formations on which Soviet historical science is based," which stands outside the analysis as its unexamined foundation, the one doctrine in a materialist book that is permitted to float free of the social conditions that produced it. The point need not be pressed; the authors were medievalists, not apologists, and the silence is the schema's, not theirs.

None of this makes the book worth less than its learning. It makes it a document of constrained intelligence, which is the more valuable thing, because the constraint is legible and the research beneath it holds. A reader who knows that "feudalism" here is a mandatory label rather than a demonstrated finding can read straight through it and lose almost nothing: the Byzantine art criticism, the Russian icons, the Florentine *popolo minuto*, the flower-arrangers of Kyoto and the astronomers of Yucatán are all still there, described by people who cared about them and knew them well. Where the book insists on the feudal formation while itemizing state-owned land, absent serfdom and the missing hierarchy,

the reader may quietly supply the category the authors were not allowed to use. The forced periodization is a tax levied on the prose. It is not a corruption of the scholarship — which is exactly why we can detect it, in the authors' own sentences, contradicting the label they were required to affix.

MARXISM

Fundamentals of Scientific Socialism

The catechism taught to foreign Communist cadres at the Central Committee's own school for them - the world socialist system, the crisis of capitalism, the party - completed three years before the system dissolved.

G. P. Chernikov and others

Introduction to the 1988 Edition

A textbook is a confident object. It does not argue so much as instruct, and *Fundamentals of Scientific Socialism* instructs with the calm of a system that expects to be teaching the same lessons a century hence. It carries the © Progress Publishers date 1988, and for once the spine is nearly honest about the text: the argument runs up through the Reykjavik summit of October 1986 and Gorbachev's statement of 28 February 1987, and stops there, so what you are reading is a primer completed in the first months of 1987 and printed in 1988. That precision matters, because the date is the whole drama of the book. This is the elementary catechism of the "world socialist system" and the "general crisis of capitalism," taught with the assurance of an ascendant creed — and it was published three years before that system dissolved. Between the sentence "Socialism is invincible" and the lowering of the red flag over the Kremlin lie thirty-six months. The book does not know this. It could not. But a reader in any later year holds a document whose confidence is answered by the event it was written just before, and the honest thing is to read it as its authors meant it and let the chronology speak for itself, without gloating.

Ask first who wrote it and for whom, because the answer is not the usual one for this series. The authors are a team of the Moscow Institute of Social Sciences headed by Professor G. P. Chernikov; the translation is by Gayane Chalyan. The Institute of Social Sciences was not an ordinary academy. It was the CPSU Central Committee's school for foreign Communists — the institution that descended from the International Lenin School of the Comintern years — where cadres of the world's Communist and workers' parties came to Moscow to be trained. So this is not export literature aimed at a curious browser in a London bookshop. It is a teaching manual for the cadres of the world movement, and it says so plainly in its closing pages, where it tells the reader to "apply the theory you have learned to concrete situations obtaining in your country and region, to specific tasks facing the revolutionaries," and directs him toward Lenin's writings "devoted to the problems of revolutionary process in developing countries." The worked

examples carry the foreign policy of the state that ran the school. This is the elementary "scientific socialism" as the CPSU wished the international movement to learn it, at the exact moment the CPSU itself was beginning — cautiously, in this book barely at all — to change.

That is the first thing to establish, because the book comes dressed in the vocabulary of that change and it is worth being exact about how much of it is real. The perestroika lexicon is present, and datable. The "27th Congress" of 1986 is invoked; there is "acceleration" of socio-economic development, twelve times over, and once the Russian word itself, *uskoreniye*; there is "new thinking" in the disarmament chapter, tied to Gorbachev's proposals of January 1986 and the Delhi Declaration. What is absent is as telling as what is present. The word *perestroika* does not appear. *Glasnost* does not appear; neither openness nor Chernobyl, though the reactor had burned in April 1986, well within the book's evidentiary reach. The single occurrence of "restructuring" is applied not to the Soviet economy but to the demand of the developing countries "aimed at restructuring economic relationships between the developing and the imperialist states" — the old call for a New International Economic Order, not the domestic reform. And the reform that the book does describe is *uskoreniye* in its earliest and most orthodox sense: the shift from "extensive" to "intensive" growth, better management, the "team form of labour organisation," "socialist production democracy." This is the reform slogan of 1985–86, before it acquired either its later name or its later teeth.

So the honest finding on the reform question is that the new words are grafted onto an untouched skeleton, and the graft does not take. Acceleration, in this book, is bolted onto the same five-stage history, the same general crisis of capitalism, the same world socialist system, the same democratic centralism. Where the reform vocabulary might have opened something, the text closes it. "The strengthening of the Party's leading role," it insists, "far from contradicting the objective of improving and advancing socialist democracy, is in fact its indispensable condition." Democratisation here means the Party doing its work better; it is *uskoreniye* — that "the

development of the Party's political line upon uskoreniye" — not the political opening that glasnost would shortly come to mean. The Brezhnev-era category "developed socialism" is retained. Stalin is not named once in the entire volume; neither is Trotsky; the Terror, the famine, 1956, 1968 are all absent — silences to which we will return. A book that had absorbed the spirit of the reform it names could not have been so undisturbed. This is a doctrine that has learned some new phrases and changed none of its architecture, and it is precisely that quality — an orthodox structure wearing a reformer's coat — that makes it a valuable document of the moment before everything gave way.

The architecture deserves stating exactly, because the book states it clearly and its clarity is its use to us. The frame is the standard one. There is the materialist outlook — "social being plays a determining role in relation to social consciousness" — laid down in the first chapter as the ground of everything after. There is the ladder of formations: "Prior to socialism, four successive stages are known in mankind's history: primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal," and capitalist, each a "socio-economic formation" defined by its mode of production. There is the October Revolution and "socialist construction," narrated as an unbroken ascent. There is the contemporary epoch, whose leading force is named without hedging: "Socialist nations are the leading force of the world revolutionary process, since they implement the objectives determining the future of all mankind." There is the general crisis of capitalism, whose origin is fixed by doctrine — "the ensuing split of the world into two opposing social systems—the capitalist and the socialist—is the main manifestation of the general crisis of capitalism." There is the anti-imperialist struggle and the "states of socialist orientation." There is the Communist movement as vanguard, and the struggle for peace. Each of the eight chapters takes one girder of this frame, and the frame is offered not as a hypothesis about the world but as the shape of the world.

Some of what hangs on that frame is genuine, and a reader owes the book the acknowledgement. When it transmits Marx, it transmits him accurately. The chapter on capitalism gives a clean, correct account of surplus value: the worker in a ten-hour day may reproduce his own keep in four hours, and the capitalist "appropriates, without compensation, what the worker produces during the additional 6 hours—the surplus value." It generalises the point in a way Marx would have recognised — "In any exploiter society there would inevitably exist necessary labour and surplus labour; the latter is appropriated by the exploiting class without compensation" — and it draws the honest structural parallel between the feudal

lord's levy on the peasant and the capitalist's on the wage-worker. The materialist conception of history, the analysis of exploitation as unpaid labour, the Leninist account of imperialism to which the book gestures — these are not Soviet inventions but the real inheritance of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and where the book teaches them it is teaching something true and worth learning. A reader told that the whole volume is worthless would be misled, and would learn nothing about why so many serious people once found this tradition compelling. The machinery of Marxist analysis is here, in working order.

The trouble is what the machinery is permitted to analyse. Every category the book sharpens — crisis, exploitation, a state that serves a ruling stratum, the deteriorating condition of the masses — is pointed in one direction only: outward, at capitalism. Turn each tool back toward the society that manufactured it and it goes slack. The book can see, with real acuity, that a state may be an instrument by which a minority holds down a majority; that was its account of every formation before socialism. It can see that public property may be captured for private enrichment — but only abroad. In the passage on the states of socialist orientation, discussing Africa and Asia, the book warns with open eyes that "the public sector is used by certain circles close to the government for personal enrichment, spawning a new layer of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie opposed to social renewal." That is a precise and honest observation. It is also the exact category — a stratum enriching itself through its control of nationalised property — that the book declares metaphysically impossible at home. Of the USSR it states flatly: "The establishment of the socialist type of the public ownership of the means of production removed all possibilities of oppression, appropriation of other people's labour, and exploitation of man by man. Exploiter classes ceased to exist." The tool that cuts cleanly through a state farm in Africa cannot be lifted against a ministry in Moscow. This is the reflexivity failure in its purest form: not the frequency of a word, not the presence or absence of citations, but the plain fact that the book's most powerful concepts are barred, by construction, from ever applying to its author's own side.

The same asymmetry governs the treatment of the state and of crisis. The Soviet state is "the socialist state of the whole people," representing "the interests of the entire Soviet people"; its difficulties are conceded but externalised — attributed to "the low level of economic and cultural development at the early stage," to the defence burden imposed by "the most reactionary forces of the old world," to "miscalculations and errors" that "the CPSU does a great job in

correcting." Crisis is something capitalism has; the socialist world lives, to borrow the phrase a sibling volume in this series uses of Chernikov's own economics, in permanent daylight. And the daylight is at its brightest exactly where 1988 should have made it hardest to sustain. "The advantages of this type of economic policy and international division of labour," the book says of the CMEA bloc, "have made the socialist community the most dynamic and rapidly developing group of countries in the world." That sentence was set in type as the Soviet economy slid into the stagnation its own economists would soon name, and it is the single most poignant line in the volume — the doctrine at its most confident, on the eve of the refutation it did not survive.

This is not an isolated tic of one textbook; it is the signature of an authorship. Professor Chernikov spent his career applying the vocabulary of terminal crisis to the West. In *The Crisis of Capitalism and the Condition of the Working People* (Progress, 1980) he built the whole book on the "general crisis of capitalism" as the dying of a system, a death he dated to 1917 and then traced through sixty-three years of the corpse's continued transformation. In *The Political Economy of Capitalism* (with M. Ryndina; Progress, 1974, revised into the 1980s) he anatomised the capitalist mode with real competence and then, at its frontier, hands the reader over to a companion volume on the political economy of socialism — the crisis kept scrupulously on one side of the join. The present primer is the elementary distillation of that lifelong division of labour: capitalism gets the diagnosis, socialism gets the daylight. And the "states of socialist orientation" doctrine that the book expounds at length — the claim, running through the sibling Progress volumes by Ulyanovsky (*Present-Day Problems in Asia and Africa*, 1978) and Tarabrin (*USSR and Countries of Africa*, 1980), that formerly colonial nations can pass to socialism "skipping the capitalist stage" under revolutionary-democratic vanguards — is the export edge of the same optimism. The book even concedes that these regimes' "revolutions 'from above' are not supported 'from below,'" and still concludes that "socialist orientation has proved its viability." It was, from the vantage of 1988, on the point of proving nothing of the kind.

Set against this the answer the anti-Stalinist Marxist tradition had already written, half a century before, and to the very claims this book repeats. When Chapter Three narrates the completion of socialist construction and presents the 1936 Constitution as its crowning proof — the Constitution that "declared the socialist economic system and socialist ownership of the means of production to be the economic foundation of the Soviet state" — it is restating, almost word

for word, the document that Trotsky dismantled in *The Revolution Betrayed*, written in that same year, 1936. Trotsky's tenth chapter, "In the Mirror of the New Constitution," reads that constitution as exactly a mirror — but of "the ruling stratum," an instrument imbued with a lie. To the book's central boast that exploitation had been abolished, he had the flat reply: "When the new constitution announces that in the Soviet Union 'abolition of the exploitation of man by man' has been attained, it is not telling the truth." To the "socialist state of the whole people," he set the plain observation that the workers' state had not behaved as Marxism said a workers' state must. The programme promised a state that begins to die away from the first day of proletarian power; instead, Trotsky wrote in his third chapter, "at the end of its second decade of existence, it has not only not died away, but not begun to 'die away.'" Far from withering, "the bureaucracy not only has not disappeared, yielding its place to the masses, but has turned into an uncontrolled force dominating the masses." That is the analysis this primer exists to foreclose, and it was in print, in the book's own founding tradition, before any of its student readers were born. The reader who wants the reply should go to *The Revolution Betrayed*, chapters three, nine and ten. On the doctrine of peaceful coexistence that Chapter Four restates as "the only form of international relations possible in the current conditions of nuclear threat," the fullest answer from the same tradition is Ernest Mandel's "Peaceful Coexistence and World Revolution" (*International Socialist Review*, March–April 1970), which traces the doctrine's real history rather than its official pedigree.

The reflexivity test also names the book's silences, and here the finding is the silence itself. This is a 1988 volume, written as glasnost was reopening the Soviet past in the Soviet press, and it does not touch it. Collectivisation is narrated as the smooth unfolding of "Lenin's cooperation plan," its violence reduced to the state being "obliged to apply the force of law to those who let grain rot rather than sell it." The famine of 1932–33, which killed millions in precisely the grain regions the book names as the vanguard of "total collectivisation," does not appear; the word famine occurs nowhere. Stalin, who presided over the entire construction the third chapter celebrates, is never named. The Terror of 1936–38 is absent. So is the Soviet suppression of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 — the latter listed only as a country that "took the path of socialist construction." For a cadre manual whose whole authority rests on the record of "socialist construction," these are not incidental omissions. They are the shape of the case: the record is presented with its catastrophes surgically removed, so that the ascent can appear unbroken. A

student in Luanda or Managua learning "scientific socialism" from this book would carry away a twentieth-century history from which the Soviet twentieth century's darkest decade had simply been deleted.

None of this makes the book negligible; it makes it revealing. Read it for what it genuinely transmits — the materialist conception of history, the theory of surplus labour, the real analytical inheritance of Marx — and it repays reading. Read it for what it claims about the state it served, and it is a specimen: the last confident edition of a catechism, issued at the hinge of the reform that would expose it, still teaching that the socialist community was "the most dynamic and rapidly developing group of countries in the world" and that "the Earth's future is socialism." Its authors believed both propositions and had spent careers demonstrating them. Within four years the school that taught this book, the Party that ran the school, and the world socialist system whose leadership the book proclaimed had all ceased to exist. The volume is not discredited by that so much as dated by it, exactly, to the year of its own composition — a photograph of a doctrine at the instant before the ground moved, taken by people who had no idea they were standing on a fault line. That is a document worth preserving, and worth reading with the tenderness one owes to any confident thing about to be overtaken by history, and with the clear eyes its own tradition, in Trotsky's hands, would have demanded.

MARXISM

Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder

Lenin against purism - why revolutionaries must work in hostile unions, use parliaments they despise, and compromise - written for the Comintern's Second Congress and later used to beat the flexible.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

Introduction

The handbook of flexibility, made into a rod

Lenin wrote "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder at speed in April and May 1920 and had it in delegates' hands for the Second Congress of the Communist International that summer. It was a tract for a particular moment. Across Europe new Communist parties were forming out of the wreckage of the war and the wave of revolt that followed it, and many of the freshest recruits had drawn a bracing, mistaken lesson from Bolshevik victory: that revolutionaries should keep their hands clean — boycott bourgeois parliaments, refuse to work inside the conservative trade unions, spurn all compromise with reformist leaders. Lenin wrote to talk them out of it. The "infantile disorder" of the title is exactly this purism — leftism not as excess of principle but as political immaturity, the refusal to do the patient, soiling work of winning a majority.

Read for what it is, the book is one of the most attractive things Lenin ever wrote, because it shows him at his least dogmatic. "The art of politics," he says, "consists in correctly gauging the conditions and the moment." A serious leader "must be able to distinguish concrete cases of compromises that are inexcusable and are an expression of opportunism and treachery" from those that are simply the price of reaching people where they actually are. Communists must work in reactionary unions precisely because that is where the workers are; they must use parliament as a platform even while despising it; they must "begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material... but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism." Against the sect's craving for purity, this is a small masterclass in tactical intelligence, and it has kept its value wherever the far left has been tempted to mistake isolation for integrity.

What the Soviet edition made of it

The text printed here is the Progress Publishers translation by Julius Katzer, drawn from Volume 31 of the Collected Works and, as the Soviet note is careful to say, "published according to the first edition print, the proofs of which were read by Lenin himself." That last detail is doing quiet work. By the time this edition circulated, the pamphlet was no longer a contribution to a live tactical argument; it was scripture, and the apparatus that printed it wanted its authority sealed. The Institute of Marxism-Leninism's framing presents the book as a finished doctrine of party organisation, its polemical occasion — a specific quarrel with named German, Italian, Dutch and British ultra-lefts in 1920 — flattened into timeless instruction. A tract about when to compromise became a manual about obeying.

The strength, and the opening it left

The strength is real and needs no defence: the anti-sectarian core of the book is permanently useful. Its weaknesses are the ones that the later misuse would exploit. The first is the optimism of 1920. Lenin writes on the crest of a wave he believes is still rising — the German revolution unfinished, the Comintern young and confident — and the whole argument assumes that flexible tactics are being urged on parties about to make revolutions. When the wave broke, the tactical counsel remained but its premise was gone, and a book written to make impatient revolutionaries effective could be read instead as a licence for indefinite accommodation.

The second is the language of iron. Lenin insists that Bolshevism won because of "the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party," that "without a party of iron... such a struggle cannot be waged successfully." In the mouth of a civil-war leader addressing seasoned militants this is one thing; lifted out and set in stone it is another. The book has almost nothing to say about the danger that "iron discipline" turns into bureaucratic command the moment the mass movement beneath it falls quiet — the very silence that, as Lars Lih notes of Lenin's own gloomier retrospects, was already settling over Soviet Russia by 1921. Lenin trusted the

discipline because he trusted the living pressure of the workers behind it. He did not write the sentence that guards against the discipline outliving the pressure.

The uses it was put to

That missing sentence is where the misuse enters, and it is not subtle. Within four years the pamphlet had been turned inside out. During the "Bolshevisation" of the Communist parties in 1924–25, Moscow used Left-Wing Communism as the charter for forcing every foreign party onto a single organisational model under its own control — homogenisation dressed as Leninism, with the book's authority behind it. Under Stalin it became an all-purpose weapon: the charge of "left-wing," "ultra-left" or "sectarian" deviation, always with this text as proof, was laid against oppositionists of every stripe, including the very Left Opposition that had the best claim to Lenin's tactical inheritance. And the book was worked from the other side too. Its subtle case for compromise — hedged by Lenin with warnings against "opportunism and treachery" — was stripped of the hedges and made the alibi for the Popular Front's slide into open class-collaboration, the kind of compromise Lenin had said a leader must "direct all the force of criticism" against. A book written against sectarian rigidity became the sacred text of the most rigid, most centrally controlled apparatus the workers' movement had ever produced; a book about the art of compromise became cover for its abuse.

The reflexivity is exact, and it is why this volume belongs beside *The State and Revolution* in any honest reading of the Progress library. The pamphlet that taught flexibility was used to enforce conformity; the handbook against purism became the rulebook of a monolith. Those expelled in its name — the oppositionists who went on quoting the tactical Lenin against the bureaucratic one — were the readers who had understood it best.

Lenin wrote *Left-Wing Communism* to keep a young movement from mistaking purity for principle. Within a decade the apparatus had completed the substitution from the other end, replacing principle with obedience and citing this book as it did so. Read it, as it deserves, for the tactical intelligence that still instructs — and read it, as this series must, against the discipline it was made to justify.