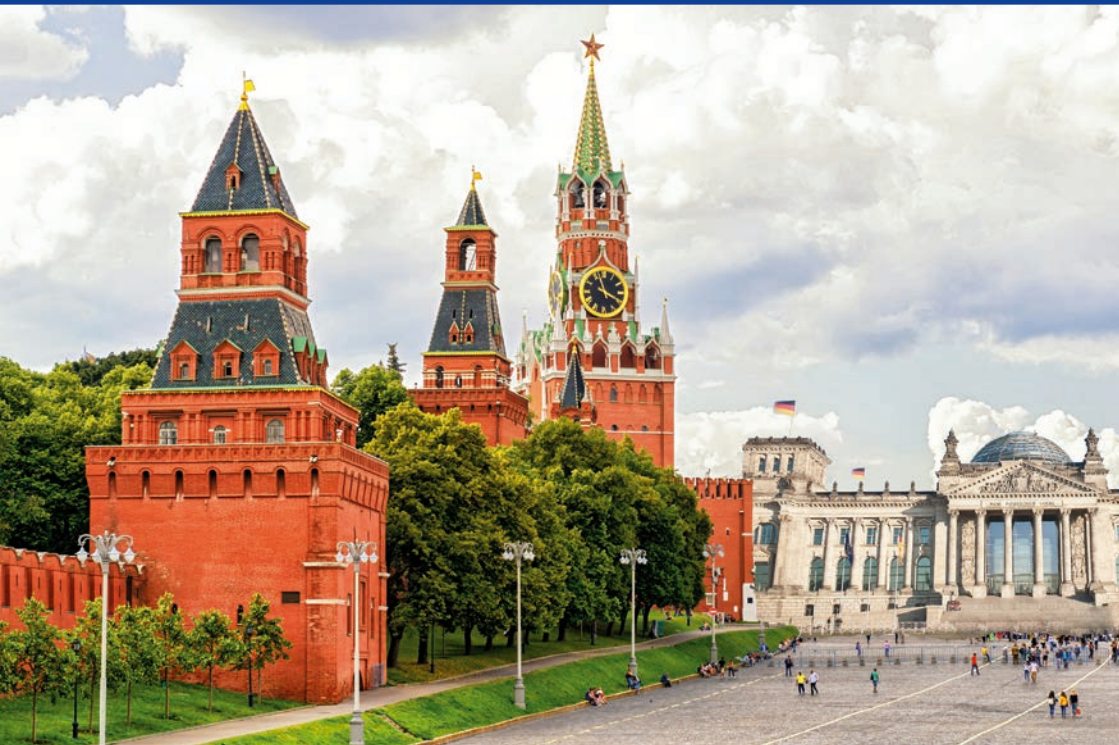




Leonid Luks

AGGRIEVED POWERS?

*Essays on Contemporary Russian
and German History*

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Leonid Luks

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How Do Breaks in Civilization Begin?

Introductory Considerations¹

The “short” 20th century began with an extraordinary identity crisis of parliamentarism and liberalism, marked by a revolt against pluralistic societies and their values. In its radicalism, this revolt exceeded all previous revolts of this kind. Why did Germany and Russia form the center of this insurrection against the values that are usually associated with the West? The first part of the book deals with this topic.

This insurrection had the character of a double revolution. The destroyers of the foundations on which the Christian-Jewish culture is based entangled the defenders of this culture in a war on two fronts. They were attacked in the name of equality, justice and international solidarity as well as that of the hierarchical-elitist principle, the irreconcilable national egoism and the idea of race.

Thereby it was the influential representatives of the educated class and not the generally feared “masses” who battled values such as tolerance and humanity with particular radicality. Not the revolt of the masses, but the revolt of the intellectual elite caused the greatest blow to European humanism, wrote the Russian exile historian Georgii Fedotov in 1939.²

European humanism suffered the greatest setbacks in its confrontation with two schools of thought, which were creatures of the otherwise liberal 19th century but were to develop their destructive potential only in the totalitarian 20th century: racial ideology and class struggle theory. Two works written around the turn of the

1 Revised version of a paper that has been published in my essay collection *Zeithistorische Streitfragen. Essays und Repliken*. Münster 2012, pp. 153-181. Compare on this also my essay “Das Jahrhundert der Verwirklichung totalitärer Utopien und der Lager”, in: Blecking, Diethelm / Peiffer, Lorenz (eds.): *Sportler im “Jahrhundert der Lager”*. Profiteure, Widerständler und Opfer. Göttingen 2012, pp. 12-26 and “The Totalitarian Double Revolution of the Twentieth Century (1917–1933) and Its Ideological Roots—An Outline” in my book *A Fateful Triangle. Essays on Contemporary Russian, German and Polish History*. Ibidem Stuttgart 2019, pp. 11-42.

2 Fedotov, Georgii: K smerti ili k slave?, in: *Novyi Grad* No. 14, 1939, p. 102.

century had a particularly strong influence on the adaptation of both currents: *The Foundations of the 19th Century* of the English-German publicist and writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Lenin's *What is to be Done?*

Firstly, a few things about the first book: in an almost Marxian manner, Chamberlain believed that he had identified the cause of all causes, the *prima causa*, of all historical processes, namely the life-and-death struggle between the "highly creative" Aryan or Indo-European race and its "enemy" – Semitism, respectively Judaism.

The readers of Chamberlain, longing for simplistic solutions, were incredibly grateful to the author for his "key" to the unraveling of the "meaning of history".³ On December 31, 1901, The German emperor Wilhelm II, who belonged to the greatest admirers of Chamberlain, wrote to the author of the *Foundations*:

There you come, with a spell you bring order into chaos, light into the darkness; goals, which must be aimed and worked for; explanations for the inky suspected, paths which are to be pursued for the salvation of the Germans and thus for the salvation of humanity!⁴

Chamberlain's book, however, contained not only "simple" answers to the most complicated questions in the history of mankind, but also a guide to action. He showed what means had to be applied to alter the course of history, which is characterized by the struggle between the Aryan and the Semitic races, in such a way that it is beneficial for Aryanism. He passionately argued the case for a "Carthaginian" solution of the Semitic question, that is, for the elimination of the Semitic danger according to the Roman model of 146 BC:

[One] thing is as clear as the noonday sun; if the Phoenician people had not been destroyed, [...] mankind would have never seen this nineteenth century, upon which, with all due recognition of our weaknesses [...], we yet look back with pride [...]. The least mercy shown to a race of such unparalleled tenacity as the Semites would have sufficed to enable the Phoenician

3 On this see also: Chamberlain, Houston Stewart: *Briefe 1882–1924 und Briefwechsel mit Kaiser Wilhelm II.* Munich 1927. Vol. 1-2, here Vol. 2, p. 142; Kinzig, Wolfgang: *Harnack, Marcion und das Judentum. Nebst einer kommentierten Edition des Briefwechsels Adolf von Harnacks mit Houston Stewart Chamberlain.* Leipzig 2004, p. 212.

4 Chamberlain, *Briefe*, Vol. 2, p. 142. Translation into English by the translator.

nation to rise once more; in a Carthage only half-burned the torch of life would have glimmered beneath the ashes, to burst again into flame as soon as the Roman Empire began to approach its dissolution [...], and yet we should need to be blind or dishonest, not to confess that the problem of Judaism in our midst is one of the most difficult and dangerous questions of the day.⁵

The utopia of the “Carthaginian” solution of the Jewish question, conceived by Chamberlain at the threshold of the 20th century, was, on the European continent, almost fully realized in the middle of this century. It was part of the essence of this century that it was the time of the realization of several utopian dreams that had once been considered unfeasible. In the 19th century, the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev wrote in his book *The New Medieval Age*, one had often complained that utopias are beautiful but cannot be realized. In the 20th century humanity was confronted with a completely different experience. Utopias are much easier to realize than initially assumed. The question which now arises is how to prevent the realization of utopias.⁶

And, in fact, the protagonists of the utopian outlines shaped the political events of the 20th century, especially in its first half, and pushed the liberal-democratic opponents, who did not think in “end-time categories” and regarded politics as the “art of the possible”, onto the defensive. What became the symbol of the realized utopia were the concentration camps, which, according to the Polish-British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, were “the models and plans for the totalitarian society [...]”. The camps were the testing ground for societies, which should be organized like concentration camps”.⁷

Those who sought to realize their utopian visions in the 20th century were underpinned on the one hand by the *Foundations of*

-
- 5 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the 19th Century*.
URL: https://archive.org/stream/TheFoundationsOfThe19thCentury_362/MicrosoftWord-Documet1_djvu.txt.
 - 6 Berdiaev, Nikolai: *Das Neue Mittelalter. Betrachtungen über das Schicksal Rußlands und Europas*. Tübingen 1950, p. 122.
 - 7 Bauman, Zygmunt: *Das Jahrhundert der Lager*, in: *Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Hefte* 1994, pp. 28–37, here p. 34.

the 19th Century but, on the other, by Lenin's *What is to be Done?* published just three years later.

When Lenin wrote his work, the entire Second International, founded in 1889, was in the midst of the revisionist struggle, which showed that the utopian energies that the Marxist movement still had in the early decades were gradually drying up. The Social Democratic parties of the West were increasingly concerned with parliamentary, unionist and local political questions and by no means with revolutionary ultimate goals. This descending into everyday life and routine incensed many Social Democrats, who still felt obliged to the legacy of the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. Nevertheless, they became increasingly isolated within their respective parties.

The visions of the *Communist Manifesto* on the abolition of private property and the establishment of a classless society inspired only the radical margins of the workers' movement around 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War. Three years later, however, representatives of this direction became sole rulers in one of the largest empires on earth. *The utopia came to power*, one could say with the book title of the Russian exile historians Aleksandr Nekrich und Mikhail Geller about the history of the Soviet Union.⁸

After the decline of the revolutionary wave in the West after 1849, the revolutionary center of the continent moved to Russia. Here, an uninterrupted intensification of political conflicts and a polarization of society were taking place, as Marx and Engels had predicted for the West. Despite this, at the beginning of the 20th century the tremendous Tsarist apparatus of power seemed almost omnipotent and absolutely superior to the revolutionary groups of all stripes. In this constellation, Lenin's *What is to be Done?* was written, which would later turn out to be as important and defining for the Marxist movement as the *Communist Manifesto*.

8 Geller, Mikhail / Nekrich, Aleksandr: *Utopiia u vlasti. Istoriia Sovetskogo Soiuza s 1917 goda do nashikh dnei*, Vol. 1–2. London 1982.

Like Chamberlain, Lenin believed in the regularities of historical development, but at the same time — here again paralleling the author of the *Foundations* — wanted to influence the spontaneous historical processes voluntarily. These analogies in the reasoning of the two authors are astonishing when one considers that Chamberlain was inspired by a world view characterized by unlimited pessimism (Arthur de Gobineau's thesis of the permanent process of decay of the white race), whereas Lenin had inherited an unlimited optimism from Marx (the inevitable victory of the proletarian revolution).

With his "Carthaginian model", Chamberlain, as already mentioned, wanted to demonstrate that Gobineau's pessimistic view was unfounded. The decay of the Aryan race can be stopped when the most important cause of this process — the Jewry — was defeated. Thus he called upon the Aryan race to create, with a superhuman effort of will, a racial "paradise on earth".

Lenin, too, was inspired by the vision of a paradise on earth, this time a social one that, similar to Chamberlain, should be built through an effort of will. He categorically rejected evolutionary solutions of the labor question, which the Western "revisionists" and their Russian fellowmen were supporting in order to improve the economic situation of the proletarians gradually. This would only distract from the actual goal, the destruction of existing society. Lenin's hopes of salvation were not dissimilar to those of Marx and Engels, as these can be found in the *Communist Manifesto*.⁹ He, too, seemed to proclaim in an almost Early Christian manner: salvation is near. But who is the savior? Marx and Engels had linked their messianic hopes with the proletariat. Both turned out to be false prophets. The aim of the overwhelming majority of industrial

9 Bertram Wolfe emphasized that Lenin, in his writings, tends to quote the romantic and "voluntaristic" Marx of the revolutionary period (1848–1850) and not so much the later "deterministic" Marx, who is concerned primarily with the "laws" of the economic development of the capitalist systems (Wolfe, B.: "Marxism and the Russian Revolution", in: Wolfe, B.: *An Ideology in Power. Reflections on the Russian Revolution*. New York 1969, pp. 3–41, here p. 23). This is not surprising. For, according to the laws "discovered" by Marx, the victory of a "proletarian revolution" was not possible in the agrarian Russia, at least during Lenin's lifetime.

workers was by no means the establishment of a “realm of freedom” instead of a class society, but modest affluence within the existing society, what they indeed achieved at the turn of the century, at least in the West. They could hardly be won over for the utopian plans of ivory tower intellectuals.

Lenin, who spent the years between 1900 and 1917 with a brief interruption in the Western exile, could observe this “erosion of the utopian” at close range. The disappointment about the Marxian “savior” is the common thread of *What is to be Done?* Spontaneously, on their own, the proletarian masses only attained a “trade-unionist” consciousness, Lenin explained. The Socialist consciousness, the striving for the creation of a new, unprecedented world, could be imparted only by an avantgarde: “[The] workers *could not* have a Social Democratic consciousness. This could only be brought to them from the outside”.¹⁰

Lenin dreamed of a strictly disciplined, centrally managed conspirational organization of professional revolutionaries: “Give us an organization of revolutionaries, and we shall overturn the whole of Russia!”, Lenin wrote in 1902. One year later, this party emerged as the result of a division of the Russian Social Democrats into a Bolshevik and a Menshevik wing. 14 years later, the Bolshevik party achieved what Lenin had predicted in 1902—“overturn[ing] the whole of Russia”.¹¹

The first part of this book will deal with the consequences of this upheaval as well as the upheaval inspired by Chamberlain’s ideas. The contributions of the second part are primarily concerned with the causes of the erosion of the Tsarist and Soviet empires as well as with Vladimir Putin’s attempt to revise by force the “judgement of history” (the dissolution of the USSR) passed on 8 December 1991.

The third part of the book is dedicated to the divided Russia, the advocates of an all-powerful paternalistic state and their opponents.

10 Lenin, Vladimir: *Werke*, Vol. 1-40. Berlin 1961 ff., Vol. 5, p. 385. Translation into English by the translator.

11 Lenin, *Werke*, Vol. 5, p. 483. Translation into English by the translator.

This volume contains texts that have the character of essays and do not claim to provide exhaustive answers to the questions posed. The aim here is merely to attempt an approach to the topic. As this volume consists of a series of independent texts that have already been published elsewhere, it sometimes contains repetitions that could hardly been avoided.

Translated by Jerome Schäfer

I. Russian-German Parallels

I.1. Russia and Germany in the 20th Century – Two Peculiar Paths

The 20th century began with a rebellion against pluralistically founded societies and the values they endorsed. In its radicalism, this rebellion surpassed all previous uprisings of this sort. Germany and Russia formed the center of this rebellion against values that are conventionally associated with the West (see also Introductory Considerations). Of course, it is necessary to bear in mind that this rebellion in Germany was inspired by ideas that were the opposite of those in Russia.

In Germany, the anti-Western uprising was directed in the first place against the ideals of the French revolution, against “the ideas of 1789”. Despite the fact that Germany was part of the Western world, the radical critique of values that constituted this world was a traditional element of German cultural history. Thus, Fedor Dostoevsky called Germany “a protesting country”, In his “Diary of a Writer” he wrote in May–June 1877 that

the most characteristic [...] feature of this great, proud, special people, from the very first minute of its appearance in the historical world consisted in the fact that it never wanted to align itself in its calling [...] with the extreme Western world, i.e. with all the successors of the ancient Roman calling. It has protested against this world for two thousand years and though it has not said [...] its Word [...] in exchange for the ancient Roman idea, it seems that it was always convinced that it is in a condition to present this *New Word*.¹²

The anthropologist Helmut Plessner explains the German protest against the West, which reached its first climax in 1914, was caused, amongst other things, by the fact that Germany “missed” – as a result of the disastrous Thirty Years War – the 17th century during which Western Europe began the triumphant march of Enlightenment and political humanism. To a non-trivial extent, this “missed”

12 Dostoevskii, Fedor: *Dnevnik pisatel'ia za 1877 god*. Paris (sine anno). YMCA Press, pp. 209-210.

century was the reason why Germany was a “belated” nation that turned into an opponent of the West and the ideas that shaped it.¹³

Things stood differently in Russia. Here the process of repulsion from the West was inspired by Western ideas, above all those of 1789. In 1917 it seemed that Russia was destined to become the new refuge of the ideals of 1789, which allegedly the Western bourgeoisie had reneged on.

Why were Germany and Russia so especially receptive to totalitarian temptations, albeit with different accents? Perhaps this was linked with the especially deeply rooted yearning in both countries to overcome their internal divisions – national in Germany, social and cultural in Russia.

The euphoria that swept through Germany at the time of the wars of unification, above all the Franco-German war of 1870-71, represented a sub-variant of a revolution in the place of the abortive revolution of 1848-9 that did not solve the national question.

Many Germans interpreted the unification of Germany as a kind of completion of national history which was connected with euphoric expectations. Some even asked themselves why their generation had been received the honor of witnessing such epochal transformations. The historian Heinrich von Sybell, in a letter to his colleague Hermann Baumgarten from 27 January 1871, expressed this mood clearly:

what have we done to deserve the Lord’s grace in living through such grandiose events? How will we live after this? That what has been the subject of our wishes and aspirations for twenty years should now have happened in such an infinitely wonderful manner! How will we live from now, where at my age can I find new meaning that is necessary to live?¹⁴

However, history continues. Euphoria in Germany quickly turned sour when the expected national reconciliation failed to materialize despite Bismarck’s brilliant foreign policy coups. The dust of 1870-71 quickly settled. The nation remained internally divided and fractured by religious, territorial and social problems, until the moment when the ideas at the outbreak of World War One in the summer of

13 Plessner, Helmut: *Die verspätete Nation*. Stuttgart 1974.

14 Gall, Lothar: Bismarck. *Der weiße Revolutionär*. Frankfurt/Main 1980, p. 467.

1914 forged a nation that no longer knew “any parties” and seemed to be monolithic, as in 1870-71. The military inspiration of the summer of 1914 was a pan-European phenomenon but only in Germany did it become a new stage in the process of nation-building. For campaigners for the “organic” unity of the nation this process did not go as far as they wanted, however. The seemingly “invincible” army ultimately lost the war, which many attributed to weakness on the home front. Now the struggle for the organic unity of the nation, for the purging of all foreign elements that stood in the way, took on an ever increasing outrageous character and lost any connection with reality. Only in this atmosphere¹⁵ could the demagogic “program” of racist anti-Semites who blamed the Jews for all the ills of the Germans be realized. Hitler’s seizure of power, which was directly connected to the exclusion of Jews from public life in Germany, was viewed by many Germans as the continuation of the process of unification begun in 1864-1871 during the wars of unification and re-started in 1914, as a sort of revolution. The thrill of unity in 1933 is especially glaringly described in the biography of Hitler written by Joachim C Fest.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Russia experienced a similar euphoria not in 1914 but in 1917. The war in Russia was not connected to expectations of rewards and salvation, other than among a thin layer of educated people. This changed with the revolution of 1917.

The deification of revolution has a long history in Russia. The materialization of this deification was in the first place among the revolutionary intelligentsia – a phenomenon that the West has no equivalent of, as Theodor Schieder justly remarks.¹⁷ The thought of the intelligentsia carried Manichean features. Tsarist autocracy symbolized evil to them, the simple Russian people – goodness, and they proceeded from the premise that the mechanical elimination of evil automatically leads to the victory of the good, as Russian

15 Rauschnig, Hermann: *The Conservative Revolution*. New York 1941, pp. 262-263.

16 Fest, Joachim C.: *Hitler. Eine Biographie*. Frankfurt/Main 1973, pp. 513-570.

17 Schieder, Theodor: Das Problem der Revolution im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Idem: *Staat und Gesellschaft im Wandel der Zeit. Studien zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. München 1970, pp. 42-44.

philosopher Semen Frank observed.¹⁸ But not love for the people so much as unquenchable hatred of its enemies was the all-consuming passion of the adepts of revolution. Frank writes: “the soft-by-nature and full-of-love intellectual-narodnik became stupid, narrow, vengeful fanatic-revolutionary, or at any case the moral type of the menacing and evil man-hater began to dominate and educate others in its image”.¹⁹

The power of this type of people consisted above all in the fact that, as Frank explained further, they embodied values to which a large portion of the intelligentsia adhered, although in a far more extreme form. Their readiness to sacrifice everything “for the good of the people” and to fight with all available means against its enemies was a moral requirement that it was impossible to elude.²⁰

The uncompromising revolutionary activity of the intelligentsia led to the situation that it did not attach any significance to deep metaphysical questions because they would only distract from the struggle for the emancipation of the people, Nikolai Berdiaev added. Pure materialism and atheism were the only intellectual baggage of the intelligentsia.²¹

Only the “idealistic turn” that gathered pace at the start of the 20th century among a part of the Russian intelligentsia led to the gradual rejection of the deification of revolution. However, this change of paradigm arrived too late: the millenarian fantasies of the intelligentsia and its belief in the restorative power of revolution had already infected the common people, until then still rooted in a pre-Petrine worldview. For the Russian peasantry throughout the course of centuries, the orthodox Tsar had embodied the state. As soldiers, they had fought for Orthodoxy, the Tsar and the fatherland. The Russian historian Georgii Fedotov noted in connection

18 Frank, Semen: *Ėtika nigilizma*, in: *Vekhi. Sbornik statej o russkoi intelligentsii*. Moscow 1909, pp.175-210.

19 Frank, Semen: *Krushenie kumirov*, in: *Idem: Sochineniia*. Moscow 1990, p. 121.

20 *Ibid*, pp. 119-120.

21 Berdiaev, Nikolai: *Filsofskaia istina i intelligentskaia pravda*, in: *Vekhi*, pp.1-22.

with this that the concept of the fatherland in this triad was not allotted last place by chance.²² The idea of a modern nation state that defined itself as the pinnacle of creation independently of religious affiliation had only penetrated a part of the educated elite in Russia by the start of the 20th century. Lower layers of Russian society, admittedly, were experiencing the process of modernization, which had led to the weakening of their loyalty to the Church and the Tsar, but they still had not discovered a bond with the modern idea of the nation state. They were hanging between the past and the future, and their worldview vacuum was filled increasingly by the idea of revolution. Belief in revolution represented a change from the already significantly depleted belief in the Orthodox Tsar. In this manner, the revolutionary intelligentsia won its decades-long battle with the Tsarist bureaucracy for “the spirit” of the people.

The intelligentsia “enlightened” the people whose traditional ideas were overcome, wrote the Russian philosopher Sergei Bulgakov in 1908. This “victory”, however, would have tragic consequences for Russia, Bulgakov continued.²³

It is necessary to add that modern revolutionary teachings with the help of which the intelligentsia tried to “enlighten” the people merged with traditional ideals of justice for the lower layers of Russian society, which carried a clearly expressed egalitarian character. “Of all forms of justice equality above all speaks to the Russian consciousness”, Fedotov wrote.²⁴

After the fall of the Tsarist monarchy in 1917, the egalitarian euphoria that possessed the Russian population acquired a spontaneous scale and was directed against the principle of hierarchy *per se*, which is the foundational principle of the construction of any state. All political parties in Russia tried to contain this egalitarian exultation that threatened to submerge all the civilized “superstructure” of the country – all, except the Bolsheviks. Vladimir Lenin stoked the flames of the aspiration for liberation from all forms of

22 Fedotov, Georgii: *Revoliutsiia idet*, in: *Sovremennye zapiski*, No. 39, 1929, pp. 306-359.

23 Bulgakov, Sergei: *Dva grada. Issledovaniia o prirode obshchestvennykh idealov*. Moscow 1911, Vol. 2, pp. 159-163.

24 Fedotov, Georgii: *Narod i vlast'*, in: *Vestnik RSChD*, No. 94, 1969, pp. 79-95.

inequality, for the creation of an “organic,” unified social organism and for the destruction of the “bourgeois state” because he knew that only on its ruins would it be possible to build “the party state of a new type” that he dreamed of. For the realization of this aim he was even prepared to unite with the unenlightened masses.

Fedor Stepun, a participant of the events of 1917, writes that in 1917 Lenin understood that in certain situations the leader should give in to the will of the masses in order to win. Despite the fact that Lenin was “a person with a great willpower, he obediently conceded to the masses on the demands of its darkest instincts”.²⁵

However, Lenin’s alliance with the anarchic masses was only a short-term event. Straight after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution “the party of a new type” tried to de-politicize its “allies” and turn them into the screws of the totalitarian mechanism. Since the state of being drunk with freedom in 1917 continued to act on Russians for a long time after, on the first attempt to adapt untamed Russian reality to the Marxist utopia the Bolsheviks met with fierce resistance. The party answered with terror, which was fated to become, with short intervals until the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, one of the most important foundations of the new regime.

But now back to Germany: the struggle with liberal values, or to be more precise with democratic parliamentarism, became stretched to breaking point after defeat of the allegedly “undefeated on the field of battle” nation in World War One.

Wounded national pride became the dominant motive for the way of thinking and determined the tactics of the supporters of national revenge, which included leading thinkers of the so-called “Conservative revolution”.²⁶ (cf. the article about Euarasians and the Conservative Revolution in this book).

25 Stepun, Fedor: *Sochineniia*. Moscow 2000, p. 342.

26 Moeller van den Bruck, Arthur: *Das dritte Reich*. Hamburg 1931, pp. 71-72

Liberalism borrowed from the West was declared by the supporters of the conservative revolution and other nationalist groupings to be a fatal enemy of the Germans.

The supporters of the conservative revolution in their criticism of parliamentary democracy and liberalism based themselves on traditional conservative assumptions and labelled liberalism a life-destroying force. Allegedly, it destroyed organic ties in society and unloosed base, egoistic instincts. Not the service of a common cause, but one's own interests was what liberalism proclaimed.

The dreams of the conservative revolutionaries about a national dictatorship, about the liquidation of the liberal state, about Germany being ready for a war of unlimited expansion, including world domination, their longing for a strong hand, for a "third empire" that would complete history, all this logically supported their realization in the Third Reich, that was established in reality on 30 January 1933. The victory of the Nazis in parliamentary elections in the early 1930s brought jubilation to the majority of conservative revolutionaries. To the group of few sceptics belonged Ernst Niekisch together with his group "Resistance" and Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin. The elite circles of the Conservative revolutionaries mocked the plebeian character of the Nazi movement, and viewed patronizingly Hitler's attempt to take power by legal rather than revolutionary means, but these were minor details. In the eyes of the majority of the radical critics of the Weimar republic who belonged to the conservative-revolutionary or right camp, the rise of the Nazis represented the end of the hateful liberal epoch and the beginning of national revival. This is why they initially related to the new state – and not without reason – as their own child. But this was a case of the sorcerer's apprentice. Only gradually did it become clear to them what monsters they had awoken. The loss of illusions took on broad dimensions.²⁷

The dizzying successes of Hitler were thus made possible not only by the fanatic dedication of his supporters but also by the

27 Kuhn, Helmut: Das geistige Gesicht der Weimarer Zeit, in: *Zeitschrift für Politik*, No. 8, 1961, pp. 1-9

short-sightedness of his allies — the German conservatives. The military historian Manfred Messerschmidt referred in this connection to “the partial overlap of aims”.²⁸

This overlap was not confined to politics. Many representatives of the conservative elite absorbed the Nazi ideology even though, for example, the national-socialist racial theory to a large degree undermined such central tenets of national-conservative forces as “the nation” and “the state”. The German-Russian social democrat Alexander Schiffrin subtly noted this circumstance in 1931 when he wrote that the concept of race goes against the grain of the concept of nation and state — as a result the state is turned into the executive organ for the maintenance and strengthening of the race (see also the chapter I.4.)²⁹

Like the Bolsheviks, the National Socialists attempted to create a new man, to whom the taboos imposed by Judeo-Christian ethics were altogether alien. They, too, questioned the humanity of their opponents. With one difference: since the enemies of National Socialism were primarily biologically defined, in the Third Reich, in contrast to the Bolshevik state, “false origin” could not be corrected by “correct attitude”. Transitions from one camp to another were not possible. The Jews, who were regarded as the most tenacious opponents of the Aryan race, should be completely “removed”, and after the Wannsee Conference, completely destroyed.³⁰ This purpose was served primarily by the extermination camps Treblinka,

28 Messerschmidt, Manfred: Die Wehrmacht in NS-Staat, in: Bracher, Karl-Dieter/Funke, Manfred/Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf (eds.): *Deutschland 1933-1945. Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft*. Düsseldorf 1992, pp. 377-403.

29 Schiffrin, Alexander: Gedankenschatz des Hakenkreuzes, in: *Die Gesellschaft*, No. 2, 1931, pp.114-115.

30 The fact that the National Socialist program of the “removal” of the Jews aimed at completeness and did not tolerate any exceptions could be inferred from the words Hitler utters in a conversation with the Croatian Minister of War on 21 July 1941: “If, for any reason, a single state would tolerate a Jewish family, this seat of bacilli would lead to a new decomposition. If there were no Jews in Europe, the unity of the European states would no longer be impaired”. (Michaëlis, Herbert/Schraepfer, Ernst/Scheel, Günter (eds.): *Ursachen und Folgen. Vom*

Sobibór, Belżec, Chełmno, and above all Auschwitz-Birkenau, that were built on occupied Polish territory. As the Polish historians Jan Gumkowski and Kazimierz Leszczyński rightly say, using the term “camp” for these institutions is misleading. Usually people were murdered just a few hours after their arrival.³¹

Such factories of death were unknown in the Soviet Gulag Archipelago, where people were usually destroyed by work. Thus the uniqueness of the National Socialist terror system is symbolized by terms such as Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka.³²

The Berlin historian Jörg Baberowski, who is concerned with the comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism, asks why “the Stalinist spiral of violence did not lead to an industrially

deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart. Eine Urkunden- und Dokumentensammlung zur Zeitgeschichte. Berlin 1958, Vol. 17, p. 308). The words of the “Führer” represented, in a Führer state, not only a private opinion, but they were often intended to be an instruction to action. When Hitler talked to the Croatian Minister of War about the “solution of the Jewish question”, the rapid advance of the *Wehrmacht* took place within the “Eastern Campaign”, which was closely linked to the radicalization of the National Socialist Jewish policy. The mass murder of Jewish men in the occupied territories was followed, eight weeks after the beginning of the “Eastern Campaign”, by the extension of the extermination campaigns to the entire Jewish population, including women and children (Longerich, Peter: *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung.* München 1998, p. 580; Burrin. Philippe: *Die Entscheidung zum Völkermord.* Frankfurt/Main 1993, p. 118-119; Friedländer, Saul: *Die Jahre der Vernichtung. Das Dritte Reich und die Juden.* München 2006, pp. 244-245; Snyder, Timothy: *Bloodland. Europe between Hitler and Stalin.* New York 2010, pp. 195-201; Geyer, Michael// Fitzpatrick, Sheila (eds.): *Za ramkami totalitarizma. Srovnatel'nye issledovaniia stalinizma i natsizma,* Moscow 2011, p. 495).

31 Gumkowski, Janusz/Leszczzyński, Kazimierz: *Okupacja hitlerowska w Polsce.* Warszawa 1961, p. 69.

32 Thereby one must emphasize that the Communists were among the harshest critics of the thesis of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. It is therefore surprising that Stéphane Courtois, in his introduction to *The Black Book of Communism*, describes the Communists as maybe the most important protagonists of this thesis. He writes: “After [the Communists] had first denied the special nature of the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, they soon recognized the advantage they could gain from acknowledging this uniqueness”. (Courtois, Stéphane et.al: *Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus. Unterdrückung. Verbrechen und Terror.* München 1998, p. 35). Thereby Courtois ignores the fact that denying the uniqueness of the Holocaust was for the Moscow headquarters of the communist world movement virtually constitutive until Gorbachev’s Perestroika.

organized mass murder”.³³ The author explains this by the enormous territorial expansion of the Soviet Union, allowing the regime to banish—from its point of view—“hostile elements” to remote areas of the empire. This explanation, however, is unsatisfactory. When the National Socialists began the “industrially organized mass murder” at the end of 1941, they controlled a vast territory stretching from the Atlantic to the suburbs of Moscow. No one would have hindered them from using the Jews, who had been deported to the East, as working slaves according to the pattern of the “Gulag”. The fact that they were murdered had surely no geopolitical, demographic or economic, but primarily ideological reasons.

The Nazi regime regarded the Jews as the universal enemy, who, for the National Socialists, embodied the “old”, the so-called “slave morality”, which they wanted to replace with the new “master morality”. The “old morality”, that is, the Decalogue, was indeed closely connected with Judaism, so the murder of the Jews represented, for the creators of “Auschwitz”, the seemingly indispensable prerequisite for the triumph of the “new morality”.³⁴

The relatively smooth functioning of the National Socialist extermination machinery was possible not least because the executors had, normally, internalized the National Socialist dogma that the Jews were not human beings: “Countless diseases have their cause in one bacillus: the Jew!”, Hitler said in one of his monologues. “We will be healthy if we eliminate the Jews”, was Hitler’s conclusion.³⁵

Zygmunt Bauman writes about this drive of totalitarian rulers for final solutions:

The modern mind cherishes the dream of a complete society purified from the remains of human weakness [...] To achieve this, all the obstacles that

33 Baberowski, Jörg/Doering-Manteuffel, Anselm: *Ordnung durch Terror. Gewaltexzesse und Vernichtung im nationalsozialistischen Staat und im stalinistischen Imperium*. Bonn 2006, p.89; see on this also Geyer/Fitzpatrick, *Za ramkami*, pp. 299-300.

34 Śpiewak, Paweł: Shoah, drugi upadek, in: *Więź*, No. 7-8, 1986, pp. 3-13.

35 Adolf Hitler. *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1944*. ed. By Werner Jochmann. München 2000, p. 293.