



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Stalin as Marxist. The Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism

van Ree, E.

Publication date
2005

Published in
Stalin. A New History

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Ree, E. (2005). Stalin as Marxist. The Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism. In S. Davies, & J. Harris (Eds.), *Stalin. A New History* (pp. 159-180). Cambridge University Press.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Reprinted with permission from

Stalin. A New History

Davies, Sarah, James Harris (eds.)

Cambridge University Press

2005: 159-80

9 Stalin as Marxist: the Western roots of Stalin's russification of Marxism

Erik van Ree

Introduction

There exists an extensive scholarly literature highlighting the impact of Russia's national traditions on the Stalinist state and society. The present article focuses on ideology, understood as a body of interconnected ideas providing a comprehensive view of the actual and desirable state of society.¹ As a rule, scholarly literature is more interested in the Stalinist transformations of the real world than in the dictator's dogmatic pronouncements. Nevertheless, there exists a rough consensus that Stalin substantially russified Marxist ideology. Assuming that the Russian tradition powerfully influenced Stalinist realities, this is what we would expect. It goes against common sense for state ideology to have remained unaffected when state policies and everyday social realities have not. Not only in his day-to-day practice of power, but in his ideology, too, Stalin adapted himself to the authoritarianism, bureaucratic etatism, and patriotism that were important elements in the Russian political tradition.

However, on a closer look the consensus on Stalin's russification of Marxism is rather shallow. Some authors hold that the dictator did indeed impose a drastic shake-up of Marxist ideology. But others disagree, arguing that he did not change all that much in the existing ideology itself, and that to look in that direction would be to miss the point. The real change lay in his style of presentation and in the ideology's new function of legitimising his dictatorship. On a close examination of official dogma and formulas, one finds Stalin basically repeating

I want to thank Mark Tauger for suggesting the title of this paper, and David Brandenberger for making me think again about the problem of causality.

¹ The *Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science* discusses various usages of the term 'ideology', among which are a 'belief system'; a 'world-outlook [*Weltanschauung*]', consisting of 'characteristic ideas, systematised enough to have a semblance of universality'; and a 'bundle of ideas, "a family of concepts"'. Frank W. Bealey, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 157–99.

established Marxist ideas. This interpretation would imply that, strictly speaking, Stalin did not really russify Marxist ideology at all – a baffling and counter-intuitive conclusion. Nevertheless, in what follows I will argue (in line with the second ‘school’) that most of what appears shockingly ‘heretical’ in Stalin’s work did indeed remain consistent with Marxism. Furthermore, even on those points where (as the authors of the first ‘school’ claim with justification) the dictator did reformulate Marxism, his innovations mostly remained consistent with other Western revolutionary traditions. Most of Stalin’s apparently novel and truly Russian ideas were long ago foreshadowed among the mainstream of Western European revolutionary thought. My argument ends with a discussion of the real paradox we are, then, confronted with: how could Stalin have remained so close to Western revolutionary origins, and have nevertheless produced an obviously russified ideological system?

Stalinism and Marxism

Gustav Wetter is among the most prominent representatives of the first ‘school’. In his *Der dialektische Materialismus*, he mainly discusses the contributions to ‘historical materialism’ allegedly made by Stalin.² In his discussion of Stalin’s treatment of the ‘national factor’, Wetter mentioned the thesis that, provided they preserve a ‘socialist content’, nations are entitled to cultures with a ‘national form’ of their own: under Soviet socialism they may at first richly flourish, fusing later under global socialism. In accordance with the new patriotism under Stalin, Russia was treated as the central area of human history and figures from the tsarist past, such as Ivan the Terrible and General Kutuzov, were rehabilitated.³

Wolfgang Leonhard has argued that there is a ‘vast schism’ between original Marxism and Stalinism, listing Stalin’s alleged innovations: ‘socialism in one country’; the notion of ‘building socialism’; the idea that the economic prerequisites of socialism may be established *after* forced industrialisation; the collectivisation of agriculture; the ‘intensification of class struggle’; ‘strengthening of the socialist state’; the sacrifice of world

² Focusing on political ideology, I will however not discuss purely philosophical questions. For Stalinist philosophy, see Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind: Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change*, rev. edn. (New York: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), ch. 7; Anton Donoso, ‘Stalinism in Marxist philosophy’, *Studies in Soviet Thought* 19 (1979), 113–41; Evert van der Zweerde, *Soviet Historiography of Philosophy: istoriko-filosofskaja nauka* (London: Kluwer, 1997); Erik van Ree, ‘Stalin as a Marxist philosopher’, *Studies in East European Thought* 52 (2000), 259–308.

³ Gustav A. Wetter, *Der dialektische Materialismus. Seine Geschichte und sein System in der Sowjetunion. Vierte, bearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (Vienna: Herder, 1958), pp. 228ff, 233–4, 251–68.

revolution to Soviet patriotism; Great Russian chauvinism; and 'peaceful coexistence' with capitalism.⁴

Trotsky's critique presents Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary digression from Bolshevism. In his work he addresses the questions of Russian national isolation, codified in the formula of 'socialism in one country', and the preservation of the state bureaucracy, instead of its being smashed and absorbed by organs of direct democracy.⁵

Robert Tucker has discussed Stalin's 'Russian Red patriotism', expressed in his 1917 claim of 'creative Marxism' that Russia might lead the way to socialism, and in his acceptance of the formula of 'Russia One and Indivisible'. Lenin's idea of 'building socialism' modified the Marxist assumption that revolution could break out only in industrialised countries. But Lenin believed that a complete victory of socialism in backward Russia without support of the advanced countries was impossible. Stalin's 'socialism in one country' thus took a further step away from Marx's conception of world revolution.⁶ Stalin's 'Russian national Bolshevism' propagated a 'revolution from above', carried out by a terroristic state bureaucracy. This was at odds with the final, reformist Leninism in that Stalin reinterpreted the world revolution in the spirit of Russian nationalism as, mainly, a Red Army operation.⁷

Brandenberger and Dubrovsky discuss Stalin's 'state-oriented patriotic ideology'. The new 'national Bolshevism' accepted the progressive role of historical Russian state-building and celebrated the role of the individual

⁴ Wolfgang Leonhard, *Three Faces of Marxism. The Political Concepts of Soviet Ideology, Maoism, and Humanist Marxism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 95–125.

⁵ See, for example, L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

⁶ Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), pp. 118, 156, 174–5, 245–8, 368ff. For a discussion of the doctrine of 'socialism in one country', see also Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 295–300.

⁷ Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), pp. 28–32, 39–65. For others counterposing Stalin to the later Lenin, Trotsky, and/or Bukharin, see, for example, Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chs. 2–3; Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: The Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), chs. 11–12. See also Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). The Leninist A. Zimin (*U istokov Stalinizma* (Paris: Izdatel'stvo Slovo, 1984)) researched the beginnings of Stalin's ideological digressions from Leninism in the years 1918–23. See also the multi-volume study of the Trotskyist opposition under Stalin by Vadim Rogovin (especially: *Byla li al'ternativa? 'Trotskizm': vzgliad cherez gody* (Moscow: Terra, 1992) and *Vlast' i oppozitsiia* (Moscow: Terra, 1993)).

in history, including tsars and tsarist officials – a departure from materialist proletarian internationalism. The new Stalinist ideology became ‘national in form, statist in content’.⁸ Recently, Terry Martin has argued that in abandoning the Marxist understanding of the nation as a modern construct, Stalin adopted the ‘primordial’ interpretation of the nation as an ethnic identity with deep historical roots. Russian centrality was the other pillar of the ‘Friendship of the Peoples’ around which the new Stalinist ideology was built.⁹

Authors in what I referred to as the second ‘school’ proceed from a different angle. Isaac Deutscher analysed the influence of the Orthodox tradition, which turned Stalin’s Marxism into an ‘atheistic creed’, arguing that Stalin’s formulations were dogmatic in style and presentation and not innovative in their substance.¹⁰ Leszek Kolakowski noted that Stalinist Marxism ‘cannot be defined by any collection of statements, ideas, or concepts’. His focus was not on matters of content but rather on the fact that there arose an all-powerful interpreter of Marxism: ‘Marxism as codified by Stalin’ was merely a ‘bold, primitive version’ of Leninism. Kolakowski saw two exceptions pre-1950, namely ‘socialism in one country’ and the ‘intensification of class struggle’. But even ‘socialism in one country’ had little theoretical significance. Kolakowski believed that the debate between Stalin and Trotsky was largely a fake – both hoped for the construction of socialism in an isolated Russia and for world revolution. As to post-1949 ideological developments, according to Kolakowski, Stalin’s ‘linguistics’ were mere ‘sensible truisms’ and his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (1952) repeated ‘traditional Marxist motives’.¹¹ Ewan Mawdsley takes the same position: ‘Stalin added little to Marxism-Leninism’. Despite variations, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin shared a basic orientation on anti-capitalism, the urban working class, and violent class struggle. Even ‘socialism in one country’ was not incompatible with late Leninism.¹²

⁸ D. L. Brandenberger, and A. M. Dubrovsky, ‘“The People Need a Tsar”: the Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931–1941’, *Europe-Asia Studies* 5 (1998), 873–92.

⁹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 442ff.

¹⁰ I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 269–72. M. Vaiskopf, *Pisatel’ Stalin* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002) highlights Orthodox and epic influences on Stalin, his style of writing, his metaphors, and the structure of his thinking.

¹¹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*, III, *The Breakdown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 4, 12, 21ff, 38, 97, 100–1, 104ff, 141–3.

¹² Ewan Mawdsley, *The Stalin Years: The Soviet Union, 1929–1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 5–10.

Andrzej Walicki agreed that Stalin's contributions to Marxist theory were virtually nonexistent. The only thing that was new was its closed, didactic style and the use he made of it as a means of indoctrination. As far as ideas were concerned, Stalin was truly 'merely Lenin's faithful disciple'. 'Revolution from above' was no radical departure from Bolshevism, for Lenin had never abandoned the option of state violence. Discussing Stalin's patriotism, Walicki notes that the dictator continued to divide pre-revolutionary Russian culture into popular and reactionary sections. The relevance of Stalin's patriotism lies not in its perversion of Marxism, but in its function as an instrument of totalitarian control.¹³ Other scholars, too, are not convinced that Stalinist patriotism amounted to serious doctrinal innovation. Discussing Stalin's nationalism, E. A. Rees observes mostly appeals to Russian national pride. Even under the anti-Semitic and xenophobic 'High Stalinism' the basic doctrines of Marxism-Leninism were not repudiated. Traditional symbols of Russian nationalism, monarchy, and church, were not as such rehabilitated.¹⁴ The same position is taken by Mikhail Agursky. Though Stalinism was a form of National Bolshevism, an outright 'Russian etatist ideology', Stalin did not transform Marxism. He rather preserved it as a 'screen' to camouflage his nationalism.¹⁵

Summing up, if Marxism is treated strictly as an ideology, a body of interconnected ideas, there appears to be no clear consensus on Stalin's russifying it. Among those scholars who do perceive such a transformation, we find the expected focus on bureaucratic etatism and nationalism. The matter of the 'intensification of class struggle' may be linked to terrorist state activities. But not a few thoughtful scholars argue that, despite this bureaucratic etatism and nationalism, Stalinism cannot be

¹³ Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 398, 403–9, 414, 424–54.

¹⁴ E. A. Rees, 'Stalin and Russian Nationalism', in Geoffrey Hosking and Robert Service (eds.), *Russian Nationalism Past and Present*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 77–106.

¹⁵ Mikhail Agursky, *The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the USSR* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), pp. xii–iii, xv, 74, 80. In *Stalinshchina kak Dukhovnyi Fenomen (Ocherki Bol'shevizmovedeniia, kniga 1)* (Frankfurt M.: Posev, 1971), Roman Redlikh treats Stalinist ideology as a pseudo-religion of 'myths and fictions' designed to enforce compliance with the dictatorship. Valerii Chalidze defends the thesis of Stalin's preservation of Marxist-Leninist 'phraseology'. See *Pobeditel' Kommunizma. Mysli o Staline, sotsializme i Rossii* (New York: Chalidze Publications, 1981), pp. 42ff. In his later years, the dictator introduced several 'heresies' of a patriotic and anti-cosmopolitan nature. Compare Vladimir Shlapentokh's thesis that Stalin preserved the ideology of 'world revolution' as a cover for Soviet state interests. 'The World Revolution as a Geopolitical Instrument of the Soviet Leadership', *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 3 (1999), 322–4.

significantly distinguished from Marxism or Leninism other than through its dogmatic, codified, and scholastic style and its strengthened function of legitimising dictatorship.

In discussing Stalin's russification of Marxism, we are faced with a daunting problem. Our conclusions depend not only upon an accurate reading of Stalinism but crucially also of the Marxist 'base line' against which it would be 'measured'. We will have to deal with the original Marxism; with Karl Kautsky's 'orthodox Marxism' of the Second International, among which Lenin initially counted himself; and with the mature Leninism, the school Stalin graduated from. To make matters worse, it would be wildly naïve to assume that pre-Stalinist Marxism is any less subject to interpretative debate than Stalinism itself. Through a critical discussion of existing accounts of Marxism and Stalinism, this study aims to produce a plausible reading of the Marxist status of the Stalinist ideology.

Proletarian revolution in a backward country and 'revolution from above'

According to Second International 'orthodox Marxism', socialist revolution was feasible only under conditions of developed capitalism. In much of the literature on Leninism this is taken as *the* Marxist orthodoxy.¹⁶ However, most Marx specialists do not quite agree with this simple view. Alan Gilbert argues that Marx never made the triumph of proletarian revolution dependent on the proletariat comprising a majority of the population. Throughout his career Marx urged the workers of predominantly peasant countries to take power in a coalition with peasant parties.¹⁷

¹⁶ See, for example: Leonhard, *Three Faces*, pp. 24ff, 67; Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 395; Christopher Read, *The Making and Breaking of the Soviet System* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 4, 10.

¹⁷ Alan Gilbert, *Marx's Politics. Communists and Citizens* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), p. 219; see also Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels: Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818–1850* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), chs. 5–7. In George Lichtheim's analysis, Marx and Engels adhered to a proletarian revolution in backward Germany until 1851. Thereupon Marx 'tacitly' abandoned the radical strategy. Engels broke consistently with it. See Lichtheim, *Marxism. An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 51ff, 122ff. On the pre-1851 Marx, Kolakowski agrees with Lichtheim. After 1850, Marx could not make up his mind whether proletarian revolution was possible in predominantly peasant nations. *Main Currents*, I, *The Founders*, pp. 125ff, 227ff, 234ff, 309–10; II, *The Golden Age*, p. 409. For a stronger view of Marx's continued belief in proletarian revolutions in predominantly peasant countries: David McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 223–30.

In 1848–50, Marx and Engels advised the German communists to join up with the bourgeoisie against monarchy and feudalism. After the democratic revolution the workers should immediately turn to the proletarian revolution. There was no hint of postponing that until the workers formed a majority. In 1850 Marx did warn the German workers that they might perhaps be fit to rule only after decades of civil war. But in 1856 he was confident that a peasant war could help the German proletariat to victory. Marx's first use of the concept of the 'dictatorship of the working class' referred to the predominantly peasant France of 1850. Marx and Engels called the 1871 Commune a workers' government. Had Paris been triumphant, the peasant majority would naturally have recognised it. These well-known remarks are put in perspective in Marx's 1874–5 notebooks on Bakunin, in which he concluded that a 'radical social revolution' was possible only 'where, together with capitalist production, the industrial proletariat occupies at least an important place within the population'. It must do as much for the peasants as the French bourgeoisie did in 1789.¹⁸ 'An important place within the population', no more. Even in the predominantly peasant countries of continental Western Europe Marx hoped for the establishment of proletarian governments supported by the peasantry.¹⁹

According to Marx and Engels, a breakthrough to communism in Russia might be possible provided a revolutionary government could stop the disintegration of the village commune. But without support from revolutionary regimes in Western Europe this would be unlikely. In an isolated revolutionary Russia capitalist development was inevitable.²⁰ But this prediction of the disintegrating village commune indicated no more than predicting the capitalist development of the Russian countryside. To my knowledge, Marx and Engels never claimed that a proletarian government could only take power in Russia once the

¹⁸ Cited in Hunt, *Political Ideas*, p. 322.

¹⁹ Shlomo Avineri argues against this interpretation. Marx did expect proletarian revolution to break out first in backward Germany, but mostly warned against premature proletarian revolutions, which, under conditions of economic unripeness, could only assist the bourgeoisie. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 151, 185–201, 219–20, 239ff. I do not find Avineri's argument convincing. His numerous quotations show that Marx found the Jacobin experiment misconceived and that he rejected wild insurrectionary tactics. At *that* time conditions for social radicalism were indeed absent. Avineri does not plausibly show that Marx rejected a strategy for proletarian takeover in Germany and France from 1848 onwards.

²⁰ See Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1965–74), vol. XVIII, p. 565; XIX, pp. 107ff, 296; XXII, pp. 428–9, 435; Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road. Marx and 'The Peripheries of Capitalism'* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 99ff.

country had turned into a developed industrial state and the working class dominated numerically.

But what about the economic conditions of communism? In 1847 Engels called for the formation of democratic governments establishing proletarian rule in Great Britain as well as in France and Germany, where, as he mentioned explicitly, the working class was in the minority. These governments should start 'immediately' to attack private property and ever further concentrate all industry, agriculture, and trade in the hands of the state. This would only become realisable, though, 'in the measure in which the productive forces of the country are being multiplied by the labour of the proletariat'.²¹ The *Communist Manifesto* urged the workers to nationalise all means of production and 'multiply [them] as quickly as they can'. The more advanced the country, the quicker preparations for uprooting private property could be taken, but in all countries it would come under immediate attack.²² Hal Draper calls this a 'transitional programme'. The economic conditions for the abolition of private property were not yet available, but: 'One of the tasks of proletarian rule itself is to bring this about'.²³ The proletarian revolution created the conditions for communism through accelerated industrialisation. In 1874, Marx noted further that in continental Western Europe the peasants were still in the majority. Nevertheless, proletarian governments could win over the peasants and facilitate the transition from private to collective property in land.²⁴

In 1895, Engels admitted that he and his friend had in 1848 and 1871 been too optimistic. *Only now* did he understand that 'the situation of the economic development on the continent had then been by far not ripe enough for the replacement of capitalist production'.²⁵ Engels' prudence highlights the shift towards a new moderation. According to Kolakowski, it was Kautsky who formulated the new view in a complete form that proletarian revolutions were only possible in developed capitalist countries.²⁶ Then again, even he at times wavered towards the old Marxism, as when he opted for a Russian revolution 'on the borders between bourgeois and socialist society'.²⁷ It appears that with proletarian revolution in

²¹ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, IV, pp. 372–4. ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 481, 493.

²³ Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, II, *The Politics of Social Classes* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp. 187, 193.

²⁴ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, XVIII, pp. 630, 631; see also, XVII, pp. 551–2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, XXII, pp. 512–17; quotation, p. 515.

²⁶ Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, II, pp. 44ff, 331ff.

²⁷ See Moira Donald, *Marxism and Revolution. Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists, 1900–1924* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 70ff; Bruno Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia: Perception and Prejudice 1848–1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 220–30.

backward Russia and the notion of a 'revolution from above' in which the proletarian state organises collectivisation and industrialisation at an accelerated pace, the Bolsheviks were in effect backing away from the orthodoxy of the day to return to the original Marxist radicalism.

Socialism in one country

According to Marx and Engels, socialism in a single country was impossible. French and German revolutions could only be successful if the tsar, the bulwark of political reaction, and British capitalism, dominating the world market, were overthrown. Communism presupposed more or less simultaneous revolution in England, America, France, and Germany. Not all Marxists agreed, though. In *The Isolated Socialist State* (1878) the German social democrat Georg Vollmar argued, that '*the final victory of socialism in at first only one single state or several states*' was possible. A socialist economy could function in one state, and this state could defend itself against the bourgeois world.²⁸ In his book on the 1891 Erfurt programme, Kautsky argued that under socialism international trade would be strongly reduced. 'Economic independence' was the best model.²⁹ He foresaw nationally confined, more or less autarkic socialist states. Thus Marxism offered two 'orthodoxies' to the Bolsheviks.³⁰

Without acknowledging his debt to Vollmar and Kautsky, Lenin wrote in 1915 that 'the victory of socialism initially in some or even in one given capitalist country is possible.' After 'having expropriated the capitalists and having organised socialist production at home', the victorious proletariat would face the capitalist world.³¹ Defending Marx, Trotsky argued that even a socialist Germany could never survive on its own. Lenin did not refer to Russia, but there is no denying that he defended socialism in one country as a principle. In the following years he was often less sanguine, emphasising that even developed states needed assistance from abroad to bring a socialist project to completion. He did not believe that backward Russia could survive in revolutionary isolation at all. Then again, from 1918 onwards he did gradually begin to acknowledge that possibility. In his last writings he almost in so many

²⁸ Georg Vollmar, *Der isolierte sozialistische Staat. Eine sozialökonomische Studie* (Zurich: Verlag der Volksbuchhandlung, 1878), p. 4.

²⁹ Karl Kautsky, *Das Erfurter Programm in seinem grundsätzlichen Theil erläutert von Karl Kautsky. Sechste Auflage* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1905), pp. 117ff.

³⁰ See also Walicki, *Marxism*, p. 220.

³¹ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (henceforth PSS) (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1958–72), XXVI, pp. 353–5. See also XXX, p. 133.

words accepted the possibility of an isolated socialist Russia. But the question of Lenin is to a degree irrelevant for the present argument.³² Whether Stalin and Bukharin were or were not faithful to him in 1924–5, the main thing is that the idea of socialism within national walls originated among the German ‘orthodox Marxists’.

Proletarian dictatorship, class struggle, and the state

One only has to read *The Communist Manifesto* to see that Marx and Engels considered the communist party to be some sort of vanguard.³³ Kautsky followed them, and it is debatable whether Lenin’s early formulations of *What is to be Done?* constituted a Blanquist position going beyond Kautsky.³⁴ However, there is no question that Lenin’s doctrine of revolutionary minority dictatorship (in which the vanguard of the class embodies the proletarian dictatorship), was alien to Marx and Engels’ political philosophy. But Kautsky’s claim that the only point of their ‘proletarian dictatorship’ was that the proletarian majority would automatically dominate a democracy is dubious.³⁵ Marx and Engels envisioned the revolutionary state during the transitional period of expropriation of the bourgeoisie and leading up to communism as a radical direct democracy, with a legislative assembly elected by universal suffrage and which subjected and dismantled the executive bureaucracy. The ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ represented the *Diktat* of the legislative power.³⁶ But this does not fully answer the question of the kind of measures Marx expected of the revolutionary state.

³² See Erik van Ree, ‘Socialism in one country: a reassessment’, *Studies in East European Thought* 50 (1998), 77–117.

³³ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, IV, p. 474.

³⁴ For Lenin quoting Kautsky in good faith, see: Neil Harding, *Lenin’s Political Thought*, I, *Theory and Practice in the Democratic Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1977), chs. 2, 6, and 7 (especially pp. 167ff); Donald, *Marxism*, pp. 24ff. For the opposite position, see John Kautsky, *Karl Kautsky. Marxism, Revolution and Democracy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 59ff. According to Hal Draper, Plekhanov took a Blanquist position before Lenin. *The ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), pp. 64ff. Robert Mayer disagrees. ‘The Dictatorship of the Proletariat from Plekhanov to Lenin’, *Studies in East European Thought* 4 (1993).

³⁵ Karl Kautsky, *De Dictatuur van het Proletariaat* (Amsterdam: J. Emmering, 1919), p. 25.

³⁶ See Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, III, *The ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986); Hunt, *Political Ideas*, pp. 284–336; J. Ehrenberg, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Marxism’s Theory of Socialist Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, I, pp. 124, 228, 234, 255–8, 310, 361; McLellan, *Thought*, pp. 210–18, 240–2; Avineri, *Social and Political*, pp. 31ff, 43–52, 202–14.

Marx and Engels condemned the Jacobin Terror. To establish a virtuous state on the basis of a private economy was impossible. The Terror was a product of despair provoked by fantastic and premature goals.³⁷ Nevertheless, Marx acknowledged that the Terror had been the 'plebeian way' to deal with absolutism and feudalism.³⁸ In 1848–50 he himself called for 'revolutionary terrorism'. Later, he and Engels remained convinced that the bourgeoisie would take up arms to resist the democratic state's policy of expropriation. Only violence could frighten them into submission. Even in democratic countries where the proletariat might come to power peacefully, 'slave-owners' rebellions' would put the sword into the hand of the revolution.³⁹ The question has been researched by David Lovell, who argues that, despite their democratic orientation, Marx and Engels expected the need for violent emergency measures against resisting defeated classes.⁴⁰

This is the context in which to consider one of Stalin's alleged innovations of Marxism. The dictator insisted that, as socialism approaches, the class struggle will intensify because of the increased resistance of the defeated exploiters.⁴¹ How original was this? Lenin, too, observed that after the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, the class struggle often became more bitter instead of subsiding. Capitalism resists the more furiously the closer it comes to its death. It was precisely their defeat which enormously increased the exploiters' 'energy of . . . resistance'.⁴² Earlier, Plekhanov argued that defending a historically lost cause will often increase the reactionaries' 'energy of resistance' and 'turn it into an energy of *despair*'.⁴³ What is more, it was agreed among German social democrats of the late nineteenth century that 'the more successful the party was, the more its opponents would be forced into illegal actions'.⁴⁴ It was Stalin who formulated the intensification of class struggle as a principle, but the underlying idea of desperate resistance of the exploiters

³⁷ Avineri, *Social and Political*, ch. 7. ³⁸ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, p. 107; IV, p. 339.

³⁹ See, for example, *Ibid.*, XVII, p. 546; XVIII, pp. 308, 630; Draper, *Dictatorship*, pp. 112, 369; Gilbert, *Marx's Politics*, p. 238.

⁴⁰ David W. Lovell, *From Marx to Lenin. An Evaluation of Marx's Responsibility for Soviet Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). On Marx's proletarian dictatorship and the use of force, see also Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, I, pp. 310, 361.

⁴¹ I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13 vols. (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1946–52), XI, pp. 171–2; XII, pp. 34, 38; XIII, p. 211; I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 3 vols., ed. Robert McNeal (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1967), I (XIV), pp. 213–14.

⁴² Lenin, *PSS*, XXXVI, p. 382; XXXVIII, pp. 386–7; XXXIX, pp. 13, 280; XL, p. 302; XLI, pp. 6, 54–5.

⁴³ G. W. Plechanow, *Ueber die Rolle der Persönlichkeit in der Geschichte* (Berlin: SWA-Verlag, 1946), p. 21.

⁴⁴ Gary P. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky, 1854–1938: Marxism in the Classical Years* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1978), p. 118.

in the face of defeat was only too familiar for Marxists. This had been the essence of why Marx and Engels considered proletarian dictatorship necessary at all. ~"

Turning to the question of bureaucracy: Marx and Engels's abhorrence of it did not prevent them from adopting the Jacobin formula of the 'one and indivisible' republic. The Paris Commune led them to accept local self-government, but not federalism.⁴⁵ Eventually, Engels concluded that federalism did suit large states like the United States, but not Germany. And in *all* countries, centralism remained the end goal.⁴⁶ Moreover, Marx and Engels's negative assessment of bureaucracy did not remain unchallenged. As Massimo Salvadori analyses, Kautsky believed that the proletarian takeover would not diminish officialdom. Rather than be smashed, the state apparatus would be captured and set to work under strict parliamentary control.⁴⁷ In Marx and Engels' scheme, upon the completion of the expropriation process, the radical democratic state was expected to dissolve itself into a self-administering communist society. Kautsky did not, to my knowledge, explicitly reject the idea of an eventual withering away of the state, but his work implies this. Like Max Weber, he treated bureaucracy as the indispensable administrative machinery of any modern state. In his *Das Erfurter Programm*, he argued that the state should be transformed into a 'socialist community', but there is no indication of what this would imply apart from the working class taking control of it.⁴⁸

Among Russian Marxists, Lenin rehabilitated Marx's smashing fantasies in *State and Revolution*, but even before October he acknowledged that the economic state apparatus should be captured intact.⁴⁹ What is more, the state could only wither away in the second, highest stage of communism. Under socialism, as Lenin called Marx's first stage of communism, it was still needed to enforce the norms of distribution.⁵⁰ Andrzej Walicki points out that it was Trotsky who, in his defence of terrorism against Kautsky, insisted that the road to socialism 'lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the principle of the State.' He compared it to a lamp which, just before going out, shoots

⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, XVII, pp. 339–41; see also VII, pp. 252–3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXII, pp. 235–6.

⁴⁷ Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880–1938* (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 11–14, 34–47, 155–64, 267–76; Karl Kautsky, *Die soziale Revolution*, II, *Am Tage nach der sozialen Revolution* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1902), p. 16; Karl Kautsky, 'Die neue Taktik, IV. Die Eroberung des Staatsgewaltens (Schluss)', *Die Neue Zeit* 2, 46 (1912), 725, 727, 732.

⁴⁸ Kautsky, *Erfurter Programm*, pp. 119, 123–45, 229–32. See also Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, II, p. 49; Steenson, *Karl Kautsky*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ Lenin, *PSS*, XXXIV, pp. 306–7. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XXXIII, pp. 94–5, 97, 99.

up in a brilliant flame. The proletarian dictatorship must be the most ruthless form of state.⁵¹ In 1933, Stalin indicated that the dying of the proletarian state took place not through its weakening, but through its 'maximum strengthening'. As the state could only wither away after the demise of classes, it should first make a maximum effort 'to kill off the rudiments of the dying classes'. It was, furthermore, necessary for defence against capitalist encirclement.⁵² In 1938–9, Stalin further proclaimed that, even though socialism was now in the main achieved, the military threat necessitated a further strengthening of the state. As long as capitalist encirclement endured, the state would be preserved, even under the second stage of full communism. Its withering away was postponed to the triumph of socialism on a world scale.⁵³ In the light of Lenin's and Trotsky's earlier pronouncements, Stalin's innovations look modest. More significantly, these Russian innovations were preceded by an acceptance of the bureaucratic state among German Marxists.

'Soviet patriotism'

One of Stalin's alleged innovations concerns his idea of 'socialist nations'. The fusion of nations could only be effected after the triumph of socialism on a world scale. In the absence of that, socialism would see a 'flourishing of national cultures, socialist in content and national in form'.⁵⁴ It is a moot point whether Marx and Engels envisioned a complete fusion of nations or allowed the continued existence of some national particularities,⁵⁵ but the

⁵¹ Walicki, *Marxism*, p. 344. ⁵² Stalin, *Sochineniia*, XIII, pp. 211, 350

⁵³ N. N. Maslov, 'I. V. Stalin o "Kratkom kurse istorii VKP(b)"', *Istoricheskii arkhiv* 5 (1994), 18, 20–2; Stalin, *Sochineniia*, I (XIV), pp. 394–5. See also, *Ibid.*, III (XVI), pp. 165, 295. In 1946 the possibility of 'communism in one country' was proclaimed. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵⁴ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, VII, pp. 137–9; X, pp. 150–1; XI, pp. 333–49; XII, pp. 362–8; XIII, pp. 3–7. See also Gerhard Simon, *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion. Von der totalitären Diktatur zur nachstalinischen Gesellschaft* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1986), pp. 153–7; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 245–6, 447–8. For a discussion of 'national in form', *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14, 182–4.

⁵⁵ For various viewpoints on this matter, see: Solomon Bloom, *The World of Nations. A Study of the National Implications in the Work of Karl Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 22–8, 70; Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism & Socialism: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), pp. 10–18, 76–9; Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 7–8, 18–19; Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism. Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 52–4, 64–8. See also Erik van Ree, 'Nationalist elements in the work of Marx and Engels. A critical survey', *MEGA-Studien* 1 (2000), 42–5.

characterisation of socialism as an era of flourishing nations had been formulated earlier by the prominent Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer.⁵⁶

In Stalin's 1944 definition, 'Soviet patriotism' meant dedication and loyalty to the motherland, conceived as a 'unified, brotherly family' of nations, each preserving its own tradition.⁵⁷ The USSR was represented as either a Brotherhood or a Family of the Peoples.⁵⁸ The leading role was for the Russian nation, though, on grounds of its size; its relatively developed industrialisation; its national homogeneity; its developed culture; its talent for state-building and loyalty to the state; and its revolutionary activism and socialist sympathies.⁵⁹ 'Soviet patriotism' referred, finally, to the Soviet state as the avant-garde of the international communist movement and the dynamic centre of world politics. The Russians were, as Stalin said in 1933, 'the most talented nation in the world'.⁶⁰

Marx and Engels' alleged principled objections to patriotism are generally illustrated by their remark of the workers having 'no fatherland'. But this is followed by the announcement that, through its conquest of political power, the proletariat will 'raise itself to the status of a national class, constitute itself as the nation'. Then again, even under capitalism national differences were disappearing, and 'the rule of the proletariat will make them vanish even more'.⁶¹ In interpreting this, lacking the vote and property, the proletariat of 1848 was practically excluded from the nation. But by taking power they acquired a fatherland. It is a widely held view among Marx scholars that the *Manifesto*, despite its expectation of the fusion of nations, contains this element of proletarian patriotism, of proletarian nation-states during the transitional period to communism.⁶²

⁵⁶ Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Ignaz Brand, 1907), pp. 105–18, 367–74. See also Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, II, pp. 286–7. Stalin took pains to quote Lenin's 1920 remark that 'national and state differences' would continue to exist for a long time even after the global triumph of proletarian dictatorship. *PSS*, XLI, p. 77. See also Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, II (XV), pp. 161–2.

⁵⁸ See: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 270, chs. 9, 11. See also Simon, *Nationalismus*, pp. 171–9. For another interpretation: Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), ch. 1.

⁵⁹ See Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917–13* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 24–8, 144, 214; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, pp. 50ff; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 399, 453. For Stalin's well-known pronouncements on the Russian nation, see also *Sochineniia*, II, p. 304; IV, p. 75–6, 285–7; V, pp. 34, 46, 265; VI, pp. 186; XIII, pp. 24–6; II (XV), pp. 203–4.

⁶⁰ Cited in Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 453.

⁶¹ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, IV, p. 479.

⁶² See, for example, Bloom, *World of Nations*, pp. 22–8, 70; Davis, *Nationalism*, pp. 10–18, 76–9; Connor, *National Question*, pp. 7–8, 18–19; Peter Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), pp. 20–1.

On several occasions, Marx and Engels did discuss the proletariat as a patriotic force, capable of revolutionary regeneration of the fatherland.⁶³ The Bolshevik Civil War slogan of the 'socialist fatherland' was in line with this tradition. Lenin praised French 'revolutionary patriotism' as an example. The revolution served to regenerate Russia and make it capable of similar military feats by overtaking the advanced countries economically.⁶⁴ In his February 1931 speech, Stalin acknowledged that the workers did not have a fatherland before 1917, but *now* 'we have a fatherland and we'll defend its independence'. Whereas the tsars could not prevent Russia from being beaten, the Bolsheviks could.⁶⁵ The claim that the revolution created a fatherland for the workers and raised it into an object of dedication was not an unusual position for a Marxist to take.

Marx and Engels further supported the 'great' nations of Central Europe – Poles, Germans, Hungarians – as 'bearers of progress' deserving their own states. The small Slavic and Romanian peasant peoples, '*national refuse*' lacking the capacity for independent survival, should be assimilated. Engels even demanded a revolutionary '*war of annihilation and ruthless terrorism*' against the 'counter-revolutionary nations of Europe'.⁶⁶ A German declaration of war against Russia, the mainstay of bureaucratic absolutism, would serve as a contribution to the 'propaganda of civilisation'.⁶⁷ Then again, the Russian barbarians were advanced in relation to the Asians. As Engels noted, Russian colonial rule was a civilising force among Bashkirs and Tatars.⁶⁸

Marx and Engels obviously adopted Hegel's distinction between 'historic' and 'non-historic' nations; those capable and incapable of independent state formation. Some scholars are of the opinion that this formed an alien element in their economic materialism.⁶⁹ Others argue that they recognised the progressive significance of the modern state, the framework for overcoming feudal fragmentation and for industrial capitalist development. History proceeds through 'progressive centralisation', *through* the national state to communism. It was only logical to support progressive nations capable of state formation and to block the path of

⁶³ See for example Marx and Engels, *Werke*, IV, p. 518; XVII, pp. 330, 341. See also Agursky, *Third Rome*.

⁶⁴ Lenin, *PSS*, XXXIV, pp. 195, 198; XXXVI, pp. 78–80.

⁶⁵ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, XIII, pp. 38–40.

⁶⁶ Cited in Roman Rosdolsky, 'Engels and the "Nonhistoric" Peoples: the National Question in the Revolution of 1848', *Critique* 18–19 (1986), 86, 125, 127.

⁶⁷ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, V, pp. 202, 395. ⁶⁸ Cited in Davis, *Nationalism*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ For example: Rosdolsky, 'Engels', pp. 86, 104–18, 111, ch. 8; Ronaldo Munck, *The Difficult Dialogue. Marxism and Nationalism* (London: Zed Books, 1986), ch. 1; Connor, *National Question*, ch. 1.

retrograde others who were, for reasons of size or lack of character, incapable of that feat – as obstacles to capitalist modernity, i.e. precisely for reasons of economic materialism.⁷⁰ Whichever of these two interpretations is the most tenable, Marx and Engels had no problem with dividing nations into civilised, progressive and reactionary, barbaric ones.

Furthermore, early in their career Marx and Engels expected the world revolution to begin in France. Revolutionary France should declare war on England and sweep the English revolutionaries to power. Revolutionary France and Germany should also overthrow the tsarist state.⁷¹ Impressed by the Jacobin and Napoleonic examples, Marx and Engels expected specific states to act as the vanguard of the world revolution. After the defeat of the Paris Commune, they observed a shift of the centre of gravity of the workers' movement. Theoretically, and organisationally more capable than the French, the German workers turned into the new international vanguard.⁷² Then again, after the murder of Alexander II, Marx and Engels admitted that Russia formed the 'vanguard of the revolutionary action in Europe'.⁷³ In 1902 Kautsky noted that the Slavs entered the 'ranks of the revolutionary nations'. The 'centre of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action' shifted to them.⁷⁴ In sum, for all its real internationalism, Marxism contained patriotism and the idea of defining specific nations as progressive world leaders among its birthmarks.

When 'Soviet patriotism' began to be stressed after 1934, a new conception of Russian history – 'patriotic', 'russocentric', and 'statist'⁷⁵ – was worked out. The Christian conversion of Russia was a progressive event. Gathering and centralising the Russian state and expanding it into non-Russian areas, from early Kievan times to Peter the Great, were progressive. Ivan IV was a progressive tsar. Peter's reforms were progressive. However, from Catherine until the mid-nineteenth century Russia served as the reactionary gendarme of Europe. Nevertheless, Russian defensive wars were always progressive; battles to defend the homeland were

⁷⁰ Bloom, *World of Nations*, pp. 11–22, 33–6; Ephraim Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism. Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 1991), ch. 1; Ian Cummins, *Marx, Engels and National Movements* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 20, 29, 31–4. See also Walicki, *Marxism*, pp. 163–6.

⁷¹ See for example: Marx and Engels, *Werke*, I, p. 391; VI, pp. 149–50; VII, pp. 19, 79. See also Agursky, *Third Rome*, pp. 19, 63.

⁷² See, for example, Marx and Engels, *Werke*, XIX, pp. 4, 24, 544; XXII, p. 255; XXXIII, p. 5; XXXVI, p. 231.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, XIX, p. 296; see also XVIII, p. 567.

⁷⁴ Cited in Agursky, *Third Rome*, p. 71. See also Donald, *Marxism*, 70ff.

⁷⁵ Brandenberger and Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar', pp. 877, 879; Maureen Perrie, *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 25.

praiseworthy even when part of the unjust Crimean and First World Wars. Finally, Russian expansion into Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia had been relatively beneficial to the peoples concerned. Asian historical leaders who had fought Russia were condemned as representative of backward socio-economic systems. Anti-colonial struggles were only approved of if part of a common struggle with the Russian people against the imperial government.⁷⁶

This was 'history in the service of patriotism'.⁷⁷ But it does not follow logically that it strayed from Marxist historiography.⁷⁸ That tsarism represented classes exploiting the Russian and colonised peoples was never denied. Historians tending to a 'single stream' interpretation of Russian history were called to order.⁷⁹ The basic argument was that, *despite its reactionary class character*, the formation of the Russian state and important episodes of its expansion had been progressive *in its time*. The Russian people needed a centralised state to overcome feudalism and allow capitalist development; this state needed a certain geographical scope; and its expansion into 'backward' areas furthered progress. All this remained arguably within a Marxist paradigm.⁸⁰

Furthermore, I do not find Martin's thesis of a Stalinist abandonment of the Marxist idea of the nation as a modern construct entirely convincing. The cultivation of national folklore and classical literature as phenomena with a continuous, ancient history is considered indicative of primordialism.⁸¹ But although the pre-modern roots of the nation were emphasised, nations remained modern constructs. In the Stalinist scheme, 'nationalities' (*narodnosti*) or 'peoples' (*narody*) became modern nations by overcoming feudal fragmentation and the creation of national

⁷⁶ See Brandenberger and Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar'; David Brandenberger, "... It is imperative to advance Russian nationalism as the first priority": Debates within the Stalinist Ideological Establishment, 1941–1945', in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds.), *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 275–99; Perrie, *Cult*. See also Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian*, pp. 52–66.

⁷⁷ Perrie, *Cult*, 25ff; Brandenberger and Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar'; Brandenberger 'It is imperative'.

⁷⁸ Brandenberger and Dubrovsky call the new doctrine a 'significant departure from the materialist proletarian internationalism' ('The People Need a Tsar', pp. 873, 880). Brandenberger notes that the break was incomplete; in a balancing act, one attempted to popularise the 'central Marxist convictions' with the help of traditional vocabulary. ('It is imperative', p. 276).

⁷⁹ See, for example, the debates on Russian colonial rule over Kazakhstan in 1944. Brandenberger, 'It is imperative'; Perrie, *Cult*, pp. 99–102.

⁸⁰ Marx and Engels acclaimed the overthrowing of the Golden Horde and the gathering of the Russian lands by Ivan III. The early absolute monarchies represented the progressive phenomenon of 'national unity'. *Werke*, XXI, pp. 400–1; XVI, pp. 160.

⁸¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 442–51.

markets. Even in late Stalinism, the Russian nation (*natsiia*) arose only with modernity. The preceding ethnos represented the nation's prehistory. The interpretation of languages as phenomena with deep historicity paralleled this.⁸² Stalinist attention to Russian struggles against foreign invaders in late medieval times, and to the character-building effect of these struggles, can be similarly interpreted as highlighting not the primordial character of the Russian nation but precisely the fact that this nation was a historical creation.⁸³

Martin observes another transformation in Stalinist ideology after 1933, namely a 'shift from class to people and the popular'.⁸⁴ The concept of the *narod* referred to the common people, a conglomerate of popular classes and strata: workers, peasants, intellectuals. The exploiting classes, capitalist and landowning, were excluded. *Narodnost*, 'popularity', had the dual meaning of conforming to national traditions and of being close to the common people. Popularity became the criterion to which Soviet life was supposed to conform. It should be acknowledged that this shift from class to people was not a complete one. Stalin announced that the lines between the Soviet classes were blurred.⁸⁵ The Soviet press treated cultural and scientific heroes such as Pushkin and Lomonosov as representatives of a 'Russian people' unspecified in class terms. But they did not represent tsarist Russia, whose ruling classes despised these heroes, selfishly putting their class interests above the people.⁸⁶ Likewise, one only has to leaf through the sixteenth volume of Stalin's *Works* to see that after the war he did observe a struggle between the 'peoples' and the outrageously rich and egotistic 'ruling circles' in the world at large, rather than a strict Marxist opposition of proletariat and bourgeoisie. But that capitalism remained the basis of the system he despised was never in doubt.

Thus, Marxist class analysis was only partially dissolved into the vague dichotomy of people and elite. Yet, this was enough to allow a further transformation of patriotism. Stalinist patriotism was rooted in the perspective of the world's development from feudalism through capitalism to communism. Pride was taken in the Russians and the Soviet state for their

⁸² Stalin, *Sochineniia*, XI, p. 336; III (XVI), pp. 117–23. See I. Tsamerian, 'Natsiia i narodnost', *Bol'shevik* 6 (1951), 57–62. Also, Klaus Mehnert, *Stalin versus Marx: The Stalinist Historical Doctrine* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), pp. 29–30.

⁸³ Brandenberger and Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar', 878, 882; Brandenberger, 'It is imperative', 277; Perrie, *Cult*, pp. 29, 31–3, 98.

⁸⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 449–50. See also Perrie, *Cult*, pp. 29–30.

⁸⁵ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, I (XIV), p. 146. See also Wetter, *Der dialektische Materialismus*, p. 260; Mehnert, *Stalin*, pp. 59–60.

⁸⁶ Compare Rees, 'Stalin and Russian', p. 100; Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian*, p. 246.

being the foremost agents of this socio-economic process. However, as the proletariat was de-emphasised in relation to the 'people', there was a shift from rivalry of socio-economic systems to rivalry of nations. The shift was never complete. Stalin never considered capitalist restoration, but it was real enough.

Late Stalinism has been analysed by Frederick Barghoorn and Klaus Mehnert as a mixture of Marxism and Russian nationalism.⁸⁷ For Mehnert, its basis is contained in Stalin's 1948 thesis that every people has a unique individuality which forms its particular contribution to world civilisation.⁸⁸ National authenticity is the central value. Self-reliant state development, rejecting 'borrowing' and 'kowtowing to things foreign', realises the unique potential of the people. World science and culture form no integrated wholes, but sums of separate national cultures and sciences. All nations must maximise their own uniqueness and contribution to world civilisation, that is, strive for the 'priority' of their own economy, culture, and science. The concepts of 'national pride' and 'national dignity', and the contrasting 'homeless cosmopolitanism', refer to the recognition or rejection of national authenticity.

The specific Russian and Soviet claim to world superiority was only an outrageous application of this general approach. It was claimed that, from earliest times, the Russian and Slav nations created their own states and cultures independently. Throughout their history the Russians were generally ahead of other peoples, in terms of inventions and discoveries, and in practically all fields: philosophically, culturally, politically, economically, and technologically. Theirs was the most vital language of all. That the Russians entered upon the socialist road first was only the latest example of their unique talent for pioneering activity.⁸⁹ Stalin's idea of 'Slav solidarity' against the Germans included the celebration of the deeply humane and progressive character of the Slavs, as well as negative characterisations of the Germans.⁹⁰ The campaign against cosmopolitanism, reaching high gear in early 1949, acquired an anti-Semitic focus. With his definition of nations including a common territory, Stalin suspected the Jews, with their tradition of diaspora, of

⁸⁷ Mehnert, *Stalin*, pp. 126–8; Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian*, pp. 246, 260. See also Roman Szporluk, 'History and Russian ethnocentrism', in Edward Allworth (ed.), *Ethnic Russia in the USSR: The Dilemma of Dominance* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), p. 42.

⁸⁸ Mehnert, *Stalin*, p. 29. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, III (XVI), pp. 100–1.

⁸⁹ Mehnert, *Stalin*; Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian*, pp. 199–262.

⁹⁰ Mehnert, *Stalin*, pp. 77–8; Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth-Century Revolutionary Patriotism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), pp. 181, 197, 237–9.

being unusually susceptible to cosmopolitanism and of lacking loyalty to the Soviet state.⁹¹

This anti-cosmopolitanism no longer fitted Marxist frameworks however generously interpreted. Attributing psychological profiles to nations, Marx and Engels did often not carefully reduce these to socio-economic roots either, but national authenticity never became their analytical point of departure. Then again, in a paradoxical twist, Stalinism's Marxist component was only slightly hollowed out. Stalin's upgrading of love of fatherland and national character to supreme values had little to do with Marxism, but anti-capitalism remained incorporated, when it was insisted that cosmopolitanism was produced by capitalism, which puts money and profit over fatherland.⁹² Late Stalinism was an ideology that bluntly put *two* points of departure: nation and class, and *two* main goals: national development and world communism, next to each other and left the impossible job of reintegrating them into one whole to its baffled interpreters.

Discussion

It seems justifiable to conclude that most of Stalin's heretical innovations were in fact developed earlier within the broad mainstream of German Marxism: Marx, Engels, Vollmar, and Kautsky, or among the Austro-marxists. We found this to be the case for proletarian revolution in backward countries; revolution from above; socialism in one country; the intensifying class struggle against the desperate, defeated classes; the unified and indivisible republic; preservation of the bureaucratic state under socialism; socialism as an era of national diversification; proletarian patriotism; the notion of vanguard and backward nations; and the idea of the relative progressiveness of early state centralisation and colonialism.

We found two elements without an obvious Marxist pedigree. First, Lenin's doctrine of revolutionary minority dictatorship. Second, the diffuse concepts of the 'people', the 'popular', and an 'anti-cosmopolitanism' that raised national authenticity into an independent, supreme concern. Then again, though, in embracing the idea of sectarian dictatorship, Lenin followed in the footsteps of Pestel', Zaichnevskii, and Tkachev, so this tradition was arguably the Russian branch of the Western ideology of

⁹¹ Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 145–61; also Arno Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden. Die tragische Geschichte des Jüdischen Antifaschistischen Komitees und der sowjetischen Juden* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), pp. 225–30.

⁹² See van Ree, *Political Thought*, pp. 204–5.

Jacobinism-Blanquism. The Russian originality of the complex of 'people', 'popularity', and 'anti-cosmopolitanism' is questionable too. Under Stalin it was claimed that such notions, especially in relation to cultural matters, were rooted in the Russian tradition of 'revolutionary democrats' such as Chernyshevskii and Belinskii. However, populist definitions of the national community as the people minus an aristocratic elite, and as a primarily political community nevertheless endowed with a unique cultural identity that needs to be nurtured, also repeat basic patterns from Rousseau and the Jacobins. This is not strange. The nineteenth-century Russian revolutionaries Stalin admired were influenced by early revolutionary thinking in the West.⁹³ Let me add that one observes further striking similarities between the ideology of High Stalinism and Hamburg's 'national bolshevism' of the early 1920s. Partly continuing Lassalle's work, Laufenberg and Wolffheim's communist patriotism recognised the non-class functions of the state and celebrated a national popular community from which the bourgeoisie was excluded.⁹⁴

Looking at it from this angle, the Russian originality of Stalin's ideology seems almost to evaporate. It contains hardly anything specifically or originally Russian. Even where his tenets did diverge from Marxist frameworks, we can still find important precedents from among the West European revolutionary movement. This conclusion raises the question of causality. How organic was the development of Stalin's ideology in the Marxist context? The problem is that, with his wish to preserve his Marxist-Leninist credentials at all costs, Stalin locked himself in a tight straightjacket. He could not publicly refer to the German national Bolsheviks, once condemned by Lenin. He could never admit to in some respects preferring Jacobin revolutionary patriotism to the Marxist class approach. He could never refer to Kautsky, Vollmar, or Otto Bauer. Ironically, he could not even refer to Engels' work about historic and non-historic nations. The texts by Engels Stalin could have enlisted in support of his own theses contain anti-Russian outrages and terroristic, genocidal passages directed against the Slav peoples. Due to his own dogmatic presentation, Stalin could not speak freely about his sources and preferences. Instead, he had to cover his traces. To make matters worse, my own admittedly far from exhaustive research in some

⁹³ For discussions of Russian populism and Jacobinism, and Western influences, see Astrid von Borcke, *Die Ursprünge des Bolschewismus. Die jakobinische Tradition in Russland und die Theorie der revolutionären Diktatur* (Munich: Berchmans, 1977); Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979).

⁹⁴ L. Dupeux, 'Nationalbolschewismus' in *Deutschland 1919–1933. Kommunistische Strategie und konservative Dynamik* (Munich: Beck, 1985), pp. 82ff.

of the Soviet archives concerning Stalin, the results of which I have presented in my recent book,⁹⁵ have convinced me that it will indeed be difficult to recover his traces. For example, a pretty thorough search through the leader's private library, though rewarding in many respects, does not clearly show Stalin's ideological indebtedness to non-Russian Marxists like Kautsky or to people like Belinskii and Chernyshevskii for that matter. His notes in the relevant books, even when rather extensive, often do not allow us to draw straightforward conclusions. Even in the private sphere Stalin was often a closed figure. In a way, the conclusion of the present paper leaves us, then, at the beginning rather than at the end of a line of research.

These caveats aside, we are left with the paradox that Stalinist ideology contained little that was not prefigured in the Western revolutionary movement; but was at the same time perfectly adapted to Russian traditions of authoritarianism, bureaucratic etatism, and patriotism. For all its lack of originality, it did at the same time represent a typically Russian Marxism. The explanation of the paradox is, perhaps, simple enough: the preceding Western revolutionary tradition was – formulated anachronistically – more permeated with 'Stalinist' elements than we would like to think. Stalinism did not have to be created from scratch, its elements were there for the picking. The real originality of the Stalinist ideology lay in its particular synthesis. When he rehashed Marxist and radical patriotic notions previously formulated in Western Europe, Stalin made a selection of what to adopt, discarding much of Western Marxism in the process – roughly all liberal and democratic elements. And his selection did produce a remarkable construct. I know of no other ideology preserving both Marxism and radical patriotism in almost unalloyed form and combining them boldly into a new, almost incoherent whole. This was a 'national bolshevism' in the fullest sense of the word.

⁹⁵ Van Ree, *Political Thought*.