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5 The Revolutionary Party: A Plan and a Diagnosis

> Feeling, Comrade C, is a mass element, but thought is organization. Comrade Lenin said that organization is the highest of all of us.
> —Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur*

> Communism was modernity's most devout, vigorous and gallant champion. . . . It was under communist . . . auspices that the audacious dream of modernity, freed from obstacles by the merciless and omnipotent state, was pushed to its radical limits: grand designs, unlimited social engineering, huge and bulky technology, total transformation of nature.
> —Zygmunt Bauman, *"Living Without an Alternative"*

Lenin's design for the construction of the revolution was in many ways comparable to Le Corbusier's design for the construction of the modern city. Both were complex endeavors that had to be entrusted to the professionalism and scientific insight of a trained cadre with full power to see the plan through. And just as Le Corbusier and Lenin shared a broadly comparable high modernism, so Jane Jacobs's perspective was shared by Rosa Luxemburg and Aleksandra Kollontay, who opposed Lenin's politics. Jacobs doubted both the possibility and the desirability of the centrally planned city, and Luxemburg and Kollontay doubted the possibility and desirability of a revolution planned from above by the vanguard party.

Lenin: Architect and Engineer of Revolution

Lenin, if we judge him from his major writings, was a convinced high modernist. The broad lines of his thought were quite consistent; whether he was writing about revolution, industrial planning, agricultural organization, or administration, he focused on a unitary scientific answer that was known to a trained intelligentsia and that ought to be followed. The Lenin of practice was, of course, something else again. His capacity for sensing the popular mood in fashioning Bolshevik propaganda, for beating a tactical retreat when it seemed prudent, and for striking boldly to seize the advantage was more relevant than his high modernism to his success as a revolutionary. It is Lenin as a high modernist, however, with whom we are primarily concerned.

The major text for the elaboration of Lenin's high-modernist views of revolution is *What Is to Be Done?*[1] High modernism was integral to the central purpose of Lenin's argument: to convince the Russian left that only a small, selected, centralized, professional cadre of revolutionaries could bring about a revolution in Russia. Written in 1903, well before the "dress rehearsal" revolution of 1905, this view was never entirely abandoned, even under totally different circumstances in 1917 between the February overthrow of the czar and the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, when he wrote *State and Revolution.* I shall compare Lenin's view in these two works and in his writings on agriculture with Rosa Luxemburg's "Mass-Strike, Party, and Trade Unions," written in reply to *What Is to Be Done?* and with the writings of Aleksandra Kollontay, an important figure in what was called the Workers' Opposition, a group within the Bolshevik party who criticized many of Lenin's policies after the revolution.

The Lenin of What Is to Be Done?

Lenin's choice of the title *What Is to Be Done?* has great significance. It was also the title of an exceptionally popular novel by Nicholas Chernyshevsky, in which a "new man" of the intelligentsia set about destroying the old order and then ruling autocratically to establish a social utopia. It had been the favorite book of Lenin's adored older brother, Alexander, who had been executed in 1887 for a plot against the czar's life. Even after Lenin became a Marxist, it was still his favorite book: "I became acquainted with the works of Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov, but it was only Chernyshevsky who had an overwhelming influence on me."[2] The idea that superior knowledge, authoritarian instruction, and social design could transform society pervades both works.

Certain metaphors suffuse Lenin's analysis of the link between the vanguard party and the workers in *What Is to Be Done?* They set the tone of the work and limit what can be said within its confines. These metaphors center on the classroom and the barracks.[3] The party and its local agitators and propagandists function as schoolteachers capable of raising merely economic complaints to the level of revolutionary political demands, or they function as officers in a revolutionary army who deploy their troops to best advantage. In their roles as teachers, the vanguard party and its newspaper develop a pedagogical style that is decidedly authoritarian. The party analyzes the many and varied popular grievances and, at the right time, "dictate[s] a positive programme of action" that will contribute to a "universal political struggle."[4] In fact, Lenin complained, the party's activists have been woefully inadequate. It is not enough to call the movement a "vanguard," he insisted. "We must act in such a way that *all other units of the army* shall see us, and be obliged to admit that we are the vanguard." The goal of the vanguard party is to train willing but "backward" proletarians in revolutionary politics so that they may be inducted into an army that will "collect and utilize every grain of even rudimentary protest," thereby creating a disciplined revolutionary army.[5]

In keeping with these metaphors, the "masses" in general and the working class in particular become "the body," while the vanguard party is "the brain." The party is to the working class as intelligence is to brute force, deliberation to confusion, a manager to a worker, a teacher to a student, an administrator to a subordinate, a professional to an amateur, an army to a mob, or a scientist to a layman. A brief explanation of how these metaphors work will help situate Lenin's own version of high-modern, albeit revolutionary, politics.

Lenin realized, of course, that the revolutionary project depended on popular militancy and spontaneous protest. The problem of relying solely on popular action from below, however, was that such action was scattered and sporadic, making easy pickings for the czarist police. If we think of popular action as incendiary political material, the role of the vanguard party was to concentrate and aim this explosive charge so that its detonation could bring down the regime. The vanguard party "merged the *elemental* destructive force of a crowd with the *conscious* destructive force of the organization of revolutionists."[6] It was the thinking organ of the revolution, ensuring that the otherwise diffuse brute force of the masses was effectively used.

The logic of this perspective led Lenin to think of the vanguard party as a would-be general staff to a vast but undisciplined army of raw recruits already in combat. The more unruly the army, the greater the need for a small, cohesive general staff. To his competitors on the left (the Economists), who argued that ten wise men could easily be grabbed by the police, whereas one hundred fools (the revolutionary crowd) could not be stopped, Lenin replied, "Without the 'dozen' of tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society is capable of conducting a determined struggle."[7]

Lenin's analogies to military organization were not just colorful figures of speech; they were how he thought about most aspects of party organization. He wrote of "tactics" and "strategy" in a straightforwardly military style. Only a general staff is capable of deploying its

revolutionary forces in accord with an overall battle plan. Only a general staff can see the entire battlefield and anticipate enemy movements. Only a general staff would have the "flexibility . . . to adapt itself immediately to the most diverse and rapidly changing conditions of struggle," the "ability to renounce an open fight against overwhelming and concentrated forces, and yet capable of taking advantage of the awkwardness and immobility of the enemy and of attacking at a time and a place where he least expects attack."[8] The earlier failures of social democrat revolutionaries could, he insisted, be attributed precisely to the absence of organization, planning, and coordination that a general staff could provide. These "young warriors," who had "marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training," were "like peasants from the plough, snatching up a club." Their "immediate and complete defeat" was a foregone conclusion "because these open conflicts were not the result of a systematic and carefully thought-out and gradually prepared plan for a prolonged and stubborn struggle."[9]

Part of the necessity for strict discipline arose from the fact that the enemies of revolution were better armed and more sophisticated. This explains why "freedom of criticism" among the revolutionary forces could only favor opportunists and the ascendancy of bourgeois values. Once again Lenin seized on a military analogy to drive the point home: "We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and are under their almost constant fire. We have combined voluntarily, especially for the purpose of fighting the enemy and not to retreat into the adjacent marsh," that is, freedom of criticism.[10]

The relationship envisioned by Lenin between the vanguard party and its rank and file is perhaps best exemplified by the terms "mass" or "masses." Although the terms became standard in socialist parlance, they are heavy with implications. Nothing better conveys the impression of mere quantity and number without order than the word "masses." Once the rank and file are so labeled, it is clear that what they chiefly add to the revolutionary process are their weight in numbers and the kind of brute force they can represent if firmly directed. The impression conveyed is of a huge, formless, milling crowd without any cohesion—without a history, without ideas, without a plan of action. Lenin was all too aware, of course, that the working class does have its own history and values, but this history and these values will lead the working class in the wrong direction unless they are replaced by the historical analysis and advanced revolutionary theory of scientific socialism.

Thus the vanguard party not only is essential to the tactical cohesion of the masses but also must literally do their thinking for them. The party functions as an executive elite whose grasp of history and dialectical materialism allows it to devise the correct "war aims" of the class struggle. Its authority is based on its scientific intelligence. Lenin quoted the "profoundly true and important utterances by Karl Kautsky," who said that the proletariat cannot aspire to "modern socialist consciousness" on its own because it lacks the "profound scientific knowledge" required to do so: "The vehicles of science are not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia*."[11]

This is the core of Lenin's case against spontaneity. There are only two ideologies: bourgeois and socialist. Given the pervasiveness and historical power of bourgeois ideology, the spontaneous development of the working class will always lead to the triumph of bourgeois ideology. In Lenin's memorable formulation, "the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness."[12] Social democratic consciousness, in contrast, must come from outside, that is, from the socialist intelligentsia. The vanguard party is depicted as conscious, scientific, and socialist in the full sense and is contrasted with the masses who are, by extension, unconscious, prescientific, and in constant danger of absorbing bourgeois values. Lenin's stern admonitions about indiscipline—"to deviate from it [socialist ideology] in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology"[13]—leave the impression of a general staff whose tight control is the only counterweight to a force of conscripts who might at any moment disband and wander off.

Another metaphor occasionally replaces those of the army and classroom in Lenin's discourse. It is the image of a bureaucratic or industrial enterprise in which only the executives and engineers can see the larger purposes of the organization. Lenin appeals to something like a division of labor in revolutionary work, where the executive has a monopoly on the advanced theory without which revolution is impossible. Resembling factory owners and engineers who design rational plans for production, the vanguard party possesses a scientific grasp of revolutionary theory that makes it uniquely able to guide the entire proletarian struggle for emancipation. It was a bit too early, in 1903, for Lenin to refer to the assembly lines of mass production to make his point, but he appropriated the next best analogy from the building industry. "Pray tell me," he proposed. "When a brick layer lays bricks in various parts of an *enormous structure*, the like of which has never been seen before, is it a 'paper' line that he uses to help him find the correct place to place each brick, to indicate to him the ultimate goal

of the work as a whole, to enable him to use not only every brick but even every piece of brick, which, joining with the bricks placed before and after it, forms a complete and all embracing line? And are we not now passing through a period in our party life, when we have bricks and bricklayers, but we lack the guiding line, visible to all, by which to guide our movements?"[14] What the party has is the blueprint of the entire new structure, which its scientific insight has made possible. The role of the workers is to follow that part of the blueprint allotted to them in the confidence that the architects of revolution know what they are doing.

The analogy to the division of labor in modern capitalist production has implications roughly parallel to those of the military metaphor. Both, for example, require authoritarian methods and central control. Thus Lenin wrote of the party's need "to distribute the thousand-and-one minute *functions* of their organizational work," complained of "technical defects," and called for the unification of "all these tiny fractions into one whole." As he concluded, "specialization necessarily presupposes centralization, and in its turn imperatively calls for it."[15]

It is surely a great paradox of *What Is to Be Done?* that Lenin takes a subject—promoting revolution—that is inseparable from popular anger, violence, and the determination of new political *ends* and transforms it into a discourse on technical specialization, hierarchy, and the efficient and predictable organization of *means*. Politics miraculously disappears from within the revolutionary ranks and is left to the elite of the vanguard party, much as industrial engineers might discuss, among themselves, how to lay out a factory floor. The vanguard party is a machine to produce a revolution. There is no need for politics within the party inasmuch as the science and rationality of the socialist intelligentsia require instead a technically necessary subordination; the party's judgments are not subjective and value laden but objective and logically inevitable.

Lenin extends this line of reasoning to his characterization of the revolutionary elite. They are not mere revolutionaries; they are "professional revolutionists." He insists on the full meaning of the term "professional": someone who is an experienced, full-time, trained revolutionist. This small, secret, disciplined, professional cadre is specifically contrasted to workers' organizations, which are large, public, and established according to trades. The two are never to be confused. Thus, to the analogy of the factory manager vis-à-vis the worker, Lenin adds that of the professional vis-à-vis the apprentice or amateur. It is assumed that those in the second category will defer to those in the first on the basis of their greater technical knowledge and experience.

Just as Le Corbusier imagines that the public will acquiesce to the knowledge and calculations of the master architect, so Lenin is confident that a sensible worker will want to place himself under the authority of professional revolutionists.

Let us return, finally, to the metaphor of the schoolroom where the vanguard party is the teacher and the masses are the pupils. Lenin is hardly unique in his use of this analogy. His was a pedagogical age in general, and reading circles for workers and schools for socialist militants were common, especially in Germany, where Rosa Luxemburg taught at the Socialist Party's school in Berlin. Although the imagery of the schoolroom may have been commonplace, Lenin's particular use of it to characterize socialist training bears emphasis. A tremendous amount of Lenin's thought and prose was devoted to "socialist instruction" broadly understood. He was preoccupied with how militants might be trained, the role of the party newspaper, *Iskra*, and the content of speeches, manifestos, and slogans. But Lenin's socialist schoolroom is fraught with danger. His constant fear is that the teachers will lose control of the students and be swamped by the pervasive influence of narrow economic demands, legislative reforms, and purely local concerns. The classroom metaphor is inherently hierarchical, but Lenin's main worry is that his socialist teachers will succumb and "go native." Lurking near the surface of Lenin's writings is a powerful cultural judgment, which is evident here in a representative passage.

> Our very first and most imperative duty is to help to train working-class revolutionists who will be on the same level *in regard to party activity* as intellectual revolutionists (we emphasize the words "in regard to party activity" because although it is necessary, it is not so easy and not so imperative to bring workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Therefore attention must be devoted *principally* to the task of *raising* the workers to the level of revolutionists, but without, in doing so, necessarily *degrading* ourselves to the level of the "labor masses" as the Economists wish to do, or necessarily to the level of the average worker, as [the newspaper] *Svoboda* desires to do.[16]

The dilemma for the party is how to train revolutionists who will be close to the workers (and perhaps of worker backgrounds themselves) but who will not be absorbed, contaminated, and weakened by the political and cultural backwardness of the workers. Some of Lenin's worries have to do with his conviction at the time that the Russian working class and most of its socialist intelligentsia were woefully backward compared to their German counterparts. In *What Is to Be Done?* German social democracy and the German trade-union movement function repeatedly as the model, in terms of which Russia is found want-

ing. But the principle behind Lenin's concerns transcends national differences; it stems from the sharply delineated, functional roles that the party and the working class each played. Class consciousness, in the final analysis, is an objective truth carried solely by the ideologically enlightened who direct the vanguard party.[17]

However contrary to Newton's first law of motion, the central idea informing Lenin's logic is that the party will be an "unmoved mover." An intimate association with the working class is absolutely necessary to the task of propaganda and agitation, but it must be a closeness that will never threaten the hierarchy of knowledge, influence, and power. If professional revolutionists are to be effective leaders, they require the kind of detailed understanding and knowledge of the workers that successful teachers need of their students, military officers need of their troops, or production managers need of their workforce. It is knowledge for the purpose of achieving goals set by an elite. The relationship depicted is so asymmetrical that one is even tempted to compare it to the relation that a craftsman has to his raw material. A woodworker or a mason must know his inert materials well in order to realize his designs. In Lenin's case, the relative inertness of the material being shaped is implied by the global imagery of "the masses" or "the proletariat." Once these flattened terms are used, it becomes difficult to examine the enormous differences in history, political experience, organizational skills, and ideology (not to mention religion, ethnicity, and language) that exist within the working class.

There is still another contingent and Russia-centered reason why Lenin might have insisted on a small, disciplined, and secret cadre of revolutionists. They were, after all, operating in an autocracy, under the noses of the czarist secret police. After commenting favorably on the openness of competition for office within the German Social Democratic Party, where, owing to certain political and press freedoms, all candidates' public records were known, he exclaimed, "Try to put this picture in the frame of our autocracy!"[18] Where a revolutionary must conceal his identity, under pain of arrest, such openly democratic methods were impossible. The revolutionaries in Russia must, Lenin argued, adapt their tactics to those of their enemy—the political police. If this were the only argument Lenin made for secrecy and iron discipline, then it could be treated as an incidental tactical concession to local conditions. But it was not. The secrecy of the party was designed to prevent contamination from below as much as arrest and exile. There is no other way to interpret passages like the following: "If such an organization [a secret body of 'tried' revolutionists] existed on a firm theoretical basis, and possessed a Social-Democratic journal,

we would have *no reason to fear that the movement will be diverted from its path by the numerous 'outside' elements that will be attracted to it*."[19]

How would the movement be diverted? Lenin had chiefly two potential dangers in mind. The first was the danger of spontaneity, which makes the tactical coordination of revolutionary pressure impossible. The second was, of course, the virtually inevitable ideological diversion of the working class toward trade unionism and legislative reform. Since authentic, revolutionary class consciousness could never develop autonomously within the working class, it followed that the actual political outlook of workers was always a threat to the vanguard party.

It is perhaps for these reasons that when Lenin wrote of propaganda and agitation, it was a one-way transmission of information and ideas that he had in mind. His unrelenting emphasis on a party newspaper fit nicely into this context. A newspaper, even more than "agitation" before heckling or sullen crowds, creates a decidedly one-sided relationship.[20] The organ is a splendid way to diffuse instructions, explain the party line, and rally the troops. Like its successor, the radio, the newspaper is a medium better suited to sending messages than to receiving them.

On many occasions, Lenin and his colleagues took the threat of contamination more literally and spoke in metaphors drawn from the science of hygiene and the germ theory of disease. Thus it became possible to talk of "petit-bourgeois bacilli" and "infection."[21] The shift in imagery was not far-fetched, for Lenin did want to keep the party in an environment that was as sterile and germ-free as possible lest the party contract one of the many diseases lurking outside.[22]

Lenin's general treatment of the working class in *What Is to Be Done?* is strongly reminiscent of Marx's famous depiction of the smallholding French peasantry as a "sack of potatoes"—just so many "homologous" units lacking any overall structure or cohesion. This premise shapes in turn the role of the vanguard party. The trick is to change a formless, sporadic, fragmented, and localized anger among the masses into an organized force with purpose and direction. Just as the force of a powerful magnet aligns a chaos of thousands of iron filings, so the party's leadership is expected to turn a crowd into a political army. At times it is hard to know what the masses actually bring to the revolutionary project beyond the raw material they represent. Lenin's catalogue of the functional roles that the party assumes is quite comprehensive: "We must go among all classes of people as *theoreticians*, as *propagandists*, as *agitators*, and as *organizers*."[23] The inference to be drawn from this list is that the revolutionists are to provide knowledge, opinion, the

urge and direction to action, and organizational structure. Given this unidirectional flow of intellectual, social, and cultural services from above, it is hard to imagine what role the masses could have had beyond being mustered up.

Lenin conceived of a division of revolutionary labor that resembled what came to be the expectation (if rarely the practice) of Communist parties both in and out of power. The central committee made all the crucial decisions about tactics and strategy, while the mass organizations and trade unions affiliated with the party served as "transmission belts" for instructions. If we consider the vanguard party, as Lenin did, to be a machine for bringing about the revolution, then we see that the vanguard party's relation to the working class is not much different from a capitalist entrepreneur's relation to the working class. The working class is necessary to production; its members must be trained and instructed, and the efficient organization of their work must be left to professional specialists. The ends of the revolutionist and the capitalist are, of course, utterly different, but the problem of *means* that confronts each is similar and is similarly resolved. The problem of the factory manager is how to deploy so many factory "hands" (interchangeable units all) for the purpose of efficient production. The problem of the scientific socialist party is how to efficiently deploy the masses in order to hasten the revolution. Such organizational logic seems more appropriate to factory production, which involves steady routines, known technologies, and daily wages, than to the decidedly nonroutine, high-stakes endeavor of revolution. Nevertheless, it was the model of organization that structured much of Lenin's argument.

To grasp the picture of Lenin's utopian hopes for the vanguard party, one might relate it to the "mass exercises" that were enormously popular among both reactionary (mobilizing) and left-wing movements of the turn of the century. Set in huge stadiums or on parade grounds, they involved thousands of young men and women trained to move in unison. The more complicated their maneuvers, which were often set to rhythmic music, the more impressive the spectacle. In 1891, at the Second National Congress of Sokol, a Czech gymnastic and physical fitness organization promoting nationalism, no fewer than seventeen thousand Czechs gave an elaborate display of coordinated movement.[24] The whole idea of mass exercises was to create a striking exhibition of order, training, and discipline from above, one that would awe participants and spectators alike with its display of disciplined power. Such spectacles assumed and required a single centralized authority, which planned and executed the display.[25] It is little wonder that the new mass-mobilization parties of all stripes should

have found public exhibitions of this kind compatible with their organizational ideology. Lenin was far too realistic to imagine that the Russian social democrats would ever resemble anything this coherent and disciplined. Nevertheless, it was clearly the model of centralized coordination to which he aspired and thus the yardstick by which he measured his achievements.

Lenin and Le Corbusier, notwithstanding the great disparity in their training and purpose, shared some basic elements of the high-modernist outlook. While the scientific pretensions of each may seem implausible to us, they both believed in the existence of a master science that served as the claim to authority of a small planning elite. Le Corbusier believed that the scientific truths of modern construction and efficient design entitled him to replace the discordant, chaotic historical deposit of urbanism with a utopian city. Lenin believed that the science of dialectical materialism gave the party unique insight into the revolutionary process and entitled it to claim the leadership of an otherwise disorganized and ideologically misled working class. Both were convinced that their scientific knowledge provided correct, unitary answers to how cities should be designed and how revolutions might be brought to fruition. Their confidence in their method meant that neither the science of designing cities nor that of designing revolutions had much to learn from the existing practices and values of their intended beneficiaries. On the contrary, each looked forward to refashioning the human material that came under their purview. Both, of course, had the improvement of the human condition as their ultimate goal, and both attempted to attain it with methods that were profoundly hierarchical and authoritarian. In the writings of both men, metaphors of the military and the machine pervaded; for Le Corbusier, the house and city were machines for living, and for Lenin, the vanguard party was a machine for revolution. Appeals to centralized forms of bureaucratic coordination—especially the factory and the parade ground—creep naturally into their prose.[26] They were, to be sure, among the most far-reaching and grandiose figures of high modernism, but they were at the same time representative.

Theory and Practice: The Revolutions of 1917

A detailed account of the two Russian Revolutions of 1917 (February and, above all, October) would take us too far afield. What is possible, however, is to sketch briefly some of the principal ways in which the actual revolutionary process resembled little the organizational doctrines advocated in *What Is to Be Done?* The high-modernist

scheme for revolution was no more borne out in practice than were high-modernist plans for Brasília and Chandigarh borne out in practice.

The most discordant fact about the Russian Revolution was that it was not to any significant degree brought about by the vanguard party, the Bolsheviks. What Lenin did succeed brilliantly in doing was in capturing the revolution once it was an accomplished fact. As Hannah Arendt succinctly put it, "The Bolsheviks found power lying in the street, and picked it up."[27] E. H. Carr, who wrote one of the earliest and most complete studies of the revolutionary period, concluded that "the contribution of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to the overthrow of czarism was negligible" and that indeed "Bolshevism succeeded to an empty throne." Nor was Lenin the prescient commander in chief who could see the strategic situation clearly. In January 1917, a month before the February Revolution, he wrote disconsolately, "We of the older generation may not see the decisive battles of the coming revolution."[28]

The Bolsheviks, on the eve of the revolution, did have a modest working-class base, especially among the unskilled in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, anarchists, and unaffiliated workers predominated. What is more, the workers who were affiliated with the Bolsheviks were rarely amenable to anything like the hierarchical control envisioned in *What Is to Be Done?*

Lenin's aspiration for revolutionary practice was that the Bolsheviks would come to form a tight, disciplined, command-and-control structure. Nothing could have been further from actual experience. In all but one crucial respect, the revolution of 1917 was very much like the miscarried revolution of 1905. Workers in revolt took over the factories and seized municipal power, while in the countryside, the peasantry began seizing land and attacking the gentry and tax officials. Neither of these activities, either in 1905 or in 1917, was brought about by the Bolsheviks or any other revolutionary vanguard. The workers, who spontaneously formed soviets to run each factory in 1917, disregarded at will the instructions of their own Executive Committee of Soviets, not to mention the Bolsheviks. For their part, the peasantry took the opportunity created by a political vacuum at the center to restore communal control over land and enact their local concept of justice. Most of the peasants had not even heard of the Bolsheviks, let alone presumed to act on their orders.

What must forcefully strike any reader of accounts of the detailed events of late October 1917 is the utter confusion and localized spontaneity that prevailed.[29] The very idea of centralized coordination in this political environment was implausible. In the course of battle, as military historians and astute observers have always understood, the

command structure typically falters. Generals lose contact with their troops and are unable to follow the rapidly changing tides of battle; the commands the generals do issue are likely to be irrelevant by the time they reach the battlefield.[30] In Lenin's case, the command-and-control structure could hardly falter, as it had never existed in the first place. Ironically, Lenin himself was out of step with the party's leadership (many of whom were behind bars) and was criticized on the eve of the Revolution as a reckless putschist.

The new element in 1917 that made a revolutionary outcome far more likely than it had been in 1905 was World War I—specifically, the military collapse of the Russian offensive in Austria. Soldiers by the thousands threw down their weapons to return to the cities or to seize land in the countryside. The provisional government of Aleksandr Kerensky had little or nothing in the way of coercive resources to deploy in its defense. It is in this sense that the Bolsheviks "succeeded to an empty throne," although Lenin's small military uprising of October 24 proved a crucial stroke. What followed in the years until 1921 is best described as the *reconquest*, now by the fledgling Bolshevik state, of Russia. The reconquest was not simply a civil war against the "Whites"; it was also a war against the autonomous forces that had seized local power in the revolution.[31] It involved, first and foremost, a long struggle to destroy the independent power of the soviets and to impose piecework, labor control, and the abrogation of the right to strike on the workers. In the countryside, the Bolshevik state gradually imposed political control (in place of communal power), grain deliveries, and, eventually, collectivization on the peasantry.[32] The process of Bolshevik state making entailed a great deal of violence against its erstwhile beneficiaries, as the uprisings of Kronstadt, Tambov, and the Maknovchina in the Ukraine attested.

The model for the vanguard party depicted so sharply in *What Is to Be Done?* is an impressive example of executive command and control. Applied to the actual revolutionary process, however, it is a pipe dream, bearing hardly any relation to the facts. Where the model is descriptively accurate, alas, is in the exercise of state authority after the revolutionary seizure of power. As it turned out, the structure of power that Lenin hoped would characterize the making of the revolution was more closely approximated by the long-lived "dictatorship of the proletariat." And in this case, of course, the workers and peasants did not consent to the structure of power; the state imposed it as a matter of imperative coordination.

Since the revolutionary victors get to write the official history of how they achieved power, it matters little, in one sense, how snugly

their account fits the historical facts. Because most citizens come to believe the neatly packaged account, whether or not it is accurate, it further enhances their confidence in the clairvoyance, determination, and power of their revolutionary leaders. The standard "just so" story of the revolutionary process is perhaps the ultimate state simplification. It serves a variety of political and aesthetic purposes, which in turn help to account for the form it assumes. Surely, in the first instance, the inheritors of the revolutionary state have a vested interest in representing themselves as the prime animators of the historical outcome. Such an account emphasizes their indispensable role as leaders and missionaries, and in the case of Lenin, it accorded best with the stated organizational ideology of the Bolsheviks. The authorized histories of revolutions, as Milovan Djilas points out, "describe the revolution as if it were the fruit of the previously planned action of its leaders."[33] No cynicism or mendacity need be involved. It is perfectly natural for leaders and generals to exaggerate their influence on events; that is the way the world looks from where they sit, and it is rarely in the interest of their subordinates to contradict their picture.

After seizing state power, the victors have a powerful interest in moving the revolution out of the streets and into the museums and schoolbooks as quickly as possible, lest the people decide to repeat the experience.[34] A schematic account highlighting the decisiveness of a handful of leaders reinforces their legitimacy; its emphasis on cohesion, uniformity, and central purpose makes it seem inevitable and therefore, it is to be hoped, permanent. The slighting of autonomous popular action serves the additional purpose of implying that the working class is incapable of acting on its own without outside leadership.[35] The account is likely to take the opportunity to identify enemies outside and inside the revolution, singling out appropriate targets of hatred and suppression.

The standard account promoted by revolutionary elites is buttressed by the way in which the historical process itself "naturalizes" the world, erasing evidence of its contingency. Those who fought in "The Russian Revolution" discovered this fact about themselves only later, when the revolution was an accomplished fact. In the same way, none of the historical participants in, say, World War I or the Battle of the Bulge, not to mention the Reformation or the Renaissance, knew at the time that they were participating in anything that could be so summarily described. And because things *do* turn out in a certain way after all, with certain patterns or causes that are clear in retrospect, it is not surprising that the outcome should sometimes seem inevitable. Everyone forgets that it might all have turned out quite differently.[36] In that

forgetting, another step in naturalizing the revolutionary triumph has been taken.[37]

When victors such as Lenin get to impose their theories of revolution, not so much on the revolutionary events themselves, but on the postrevolutionary official story, the narrative typically stresses the agency, purpose, and genius of the revolutionary leadership and minimizes contingency.[38] The final irony, then, was that the official story of the Bolshevik Revolution was made, for more than sixty years, to conform closely to the utopian directions outlined in *What Is to Be Done?*

The Lenin of State and Revolution

The later Lenin of *State and Revolution* is often juxtaposed to the Lenin of *What Is to Be Done?* to demonstrate a substantial shift in his view of the relationship between the vanguard party and the masses. Without a doubt, much of Lenin's tone in the pamphlet, written at breakneck speed in August and September of 1917—after the February Revolution and just before the October Revolution—is difficult to square with the text of 1903. There were important tactical reasons why, in 1917, Lenin might have wanted to encourage as much autonomous popular revolutionary action as possible. He and other Bolsheviks were concerned that many workers, now masters of their factories, and many Russian urbanites would lose their revolutionary ardor, allowing Kerensky's provisional government to gain control and block the Bolsheviks. For Lenin's revolutionaries, everything depended on destabilizing the Kerensky regime, even if the crowds were not at all under Bolshevik discipline. No wonder that, even in early November, before the Bolsheviks had consolidated power, Lenin sounded very much like the anarchists: "Socialism is not created by orders from above. State bureaucratic automatism is alien to its spirit; socialism is alive, creative—the creation of the popular masses themselves."[39]

While *State and Revolution* has an egalitarian and utopian tone that echoes Marx's picture of Communism, what is striking for our purpose is the degree to which Lenin's high-modernist convictions still pervade the text. First, Lenin leaves no doubt that the application of state coercive power is the only way to build socialism. He openly avows the need for violence after the seizure of power: "The proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization of force, the organization of violence, . . . for the purpose of *guiding* the great mass of the population—the peasantry, the petite bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians—in the work of organizing Socialist economy."[40] Once again Marxism provides the ideas and training that alone create a brain for the working

masses: "By educating a workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to Socialism, of directing and organizing the new order, of being teacher, guide and leader of all the toiling and exploited in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie."[41] The assumption is that the social life of the working class will be organized either by the bourgeoisie or by the vanguard party, but never by members of the working class themselves.

At the same time, Lenin waxes eloquent about a new society in which politics will have disappeared and in which virtually anyone could be entrusted with the administration of things. The models for Lenin's optimism were precisely the great human machines of his time: industrial organizations and large bureaucracies. In his picture, the growth of capitalism has built a nonpolitical technostructure that rolls along of its accord: "Capitalist culture has *created* large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and *on this basis* the great majority of functions of the old 'state power' have become so simplified and can be reduced to such simple operations of registration, filing, and checking that they would be quite within the reach of every literate person, and it will be possible to perform them for working men's wages, which circumstance can (and must) strip those functions of every shadow of privilege and every appearance of official grandeur."[42] Lenin conjures up a vision of the perfect technical rationality of modern production. Once the "simple operations" appropriate to each niche in the established division of labor are mastered, there is quite literally nothing more to discuss. The revolution ousts the bourgeoisie from the bridge of this "ocean liner," installs the vanguard party, and sets a new course, but the jobs of the vast crew are unchanged. Lenin's picture of the technical structure, it should be noted, is entirely static. The forms of production are either set or, if they do change, the changes cannot require skills of a different order.

The utopian promise of this capitalist-created state of affairs is that anyone could take part in the administration of the state. The development of capitalism had produced massive, socialized, bureaucratic apparatuses as well as the "training and *disciplining* of millions of workers."[43] Taken together, these huge, centralized bureaucracies were the key to the new world. Lenin had seen them at work in the wartime mobilization of Germany under Rathenau's guiding hand. Science and the division of labor had spawned an institutional order of technical expertise in which politics and quarrels were beside the point. Modern production provided the basis of a technically necessary dictatorship. "In regard to . . . the importance of individual dictatorial powers,"

Lenin observed, "it must be said that large-scale machine industry—which is precisely . . . the foundation of socialism[—] . . . calls for absolute and strict *unity of will*, which directs the joint labours of hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of people. . . . But how can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one. . . . We must learn to combine the public-meeting democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline while at work, with *unquestioning obedience* to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work."[44]

In this respect, Lenin joins many of his capitalist contemporaries in his enthusiasm for Fordist and Taylorist production technology. What was rejected by Western trade unions of the time as a "de-skilling" of an artisanal workforce was embraced by Lenin as the key to rational state planning.[45] There is, for Lenin, a single, objectively correct, efficient answer to all questions of how to rationally design production or administration.[46]

Lenin goes on to imagine, in a Fourierist vein, a vast national syndicate that will virtually run itself. He sees it as a technical net whose mesh will confine workers to the appropriate routines by its rationality and the discipline of habit. In a chillingly Orwellian passage—a warning, perhaps, to anarchist or lumpen elements who might resist its logic—Lenin indicates how remorseless the system will be: "Escape from this national accounting will inevitably become increasingly difficult . . . and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are men of practical life, not sentimental intellectuals and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of social life in common will have become a *habit*."[47]

Except for the fact that Lenin's utopia is more egalitarian and is set in the context of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the parallels with Le Corbusier's high modernism are conspicuous. The social order is conceived as a vast factory or office—a "smoothly humming machine," as Le Corbusier would have put it, in which "each man would live in an ordered relation to the whole." Neither Lenin nor Le Corbusier were unique in sharing this vision, although they were exceptionally influential. The parallels serve as a reminder of the extent to which much of the socialist left as well as the right were in thrall to the template of modern industrial organization. Comparable utopias, a "dream of authoritarian, military, egalitarian, bureaucratic socialism which was openly admiring of Prussian values," could be found in Marx, in Saint-Simon, and in the science fiction that was widely popular in Rus-

sia at the time, especially a translation of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.[48] High modernism was politically polymorphous; it could appear in any political disguise, even an anarchist one.

The Lenin of The Agrarian Question

In order to clinch the argument for Lenin's consistently high-modernist stance, we need only turn to his writings on agriculture, a field in which high-modernist views were hotly contested. Most of our evidence can be drawn from a single work, *The Agrarian Question*, written between 1901 and 1907.[49]

This text was an unremitting condemnation of small-scale family farming and a celebration of the gigantic, highly mechanized forms of modern agriculture. For Lenin it was not just a question of aesthetics of scale but a question of historical inevitability. The difference between low-technology family farming and large-scale, mechanized farming was precisely the difference between the hand-operated looms of cottage-industry weavers on one hand and the mechanized looms of large textile factories on the other. The first mode of production was simply doomed. Lenin's analogy was borrowed from Marx, who frequently used it as a way of saying that the hand loom gives you feudalism and the power loom gives you capitalism. So suggestive was this imagery that Lenin fell back on it in other contexts, claiming, for example, in *What Is to Be Done?* that his opponents, the Economists, were using "handicraft methods," whereas the Bolsheviks operated as professional (modern, trained) revolutionaries.

Peasant forms of production—not to mention the peasants themselves—were, for Lenin, hopelessly backward. They were mere historical vestiges that would undoubtedly be swept away, as the cottage-industry weavers had been, by the agrarian equivalent of large-scale machine industry. "Two decades have passed," he wrote, "and machinery has driven the small producer from still another of his last refuges, as if telling those who have ears to hear and eyes to see that the economist must always look forward, towards technical progress, or else be left behind at once, for he who will not look ahead turns his back on history; there is not and there cannot be any middle path."[50] Here and in other writings Lenin denounced all the cultivation and social practices associated with the customary, communal, three-field system of land allotments that still pertained in much of Russia. In this case, the idea of common property prevented the full development of capitalism, which, in turn, was a condition of revolution. "Modern agricultural technique," he concluded, "demands that *all* the conditions of the ancient, conservative, barbarous, ignorant, and pauper methods of economy on peasant allotments be transformed. The three-field system, the primitive implements, the patriarchical impecuniosity of the tiller, the routine methods of stock breeding and crass naive ignorance of the conditions and requirements of the market must all be thrown overboard."[51]

The suitability of a logic drawn from manufacturing and applied to agriculture, however, was very much contested. Any number of economists had carried out detailed studies of labor allocation, production, and expenditures for rural producer households. While some were perhaps ideologically committed to developing a case for the productive efficiency of small property, they had a wealth of empirical evidence that had to be confronted.[52] They argued that the nature of much agricultural production meant that the economic returns of mechanization were minimal when compared to the returns of intensification (which focused on manuring, careful breeding, and so on). The returns to scale as well, they argued, were minimal or negative beyond the average acreage of the family farm. Lenin might have taken these arguments less seriously had they all been based on Russian data, where the backwardness of rural infrastructure impeded mechanization and commercial production. But most of the data came from Germany and Austria, comparatively developed countries, where the small farmers in question were highly commercialized and responsive to market forces.[53]

Lenin set out to refute the data purporting to show the efficiency or competitiveness of family agriculture. He exploited the inconsistencies of their empirical evidence and introduced data from other scholars, both Russian and German, to make the case against them. Where the evidence seemed unassailable, Lenin claimed that the small farmers who did survive managed to do so only by starving and overworking themselves, their wives and children, their cows, and their plow animals. Whatever profits the small farms produced were the consequence of overwork and underconsumption. Although such patterns of "auto-exploitation" were not uncommon within peasant families, Lenin's evidence was not completely convincing. For his (and Marx's) understanding of modes of production, the survival of artisanal handiwork and small farming had to be an incidental anachronism. We have since learned how efficient and tenacious small-scale production can be, but Lenin was in no doubt about what the future held. "This inquiry demonstrates the technical superiority of large-scale production in agriculture . . . [and] the overwork and underconsumption of the small peasant and his transformation into a regular or day-labourer for the

landlord. . . . The facts prove incontestably that under the capitalist system the position of the small peasant in agriculture is in every way analogous to that of the handicraftsman in industry."[54]

The Agrarian Question also allows us to appreciate an additional facet of Lenin's high modernism: his celebration of the most modern technology and, above all, electricity.[55] He was famous for claiming that "Communism is Soviet Power plus the Electrification of the whole countryside." Electricity had, for him and for most other high modernists, a nearly mythical appeal. That appeal had to do, I think, with the unique qualities of electricity as a form of power. Unlike the mechanisms of steam power, direct waterpower, and the internal combustion engine, electricity was *silent*, precise, and well-nigh invisible. For Lenin and many others, electricity was magical. Its great promise for the modernization of rural life was that, once transmission lines were laid down, power could be delivered over long distances and was instantly available wherever it was needed and in the quantity required. Lenin imagined, incorrectly, that it would replace the internal combustion engine in most farm operations. "Machinery powered by electricity runs more smoothly and precisely, and for that reason it is more convenient to use in thrashing, ploughing, milking, cutting fodder."[56] By placing power within reach of an entire people, the state could eliminate what Marx termed the "idiocy of rural life."

Electrification was, for Lenin, the key to breaking the pattern of petit-bourgeois landholding and hence the only way to extirpate "the roots of capitalism" in the countryside, which was "the foundation, the basis, of the internal enemy." The enemy "depends on small-scale production, and there is only one way of undermining it, namely, to place the economy of the country, including agriculture, on a new technical basis, that of modern large-scale production. Only electricity provides that basis."[57]

Much of the attraction of electricity for Lenin had to do with its perfection, its mathematical precision. Man's work and even the work of the steam-driven plow or threshing machine were imperfect; the operation of an electric machine, in contrast, seemed certain, precise, and continuous. Electricity was also, it should be added, centralizing.[58] It produced a visible network of transmission lines emanating from a central power station from which the flow of power was generated, distributed, and controlled. The nature of electricity suited Lenin's utopian, centralizing vision perfectly. A map of electric lines from the generating plant would look like the spokes of a centralized transportation hub like Paris (see chapter 1), except that the direction of flow was one way. Transmission lines blanketed the nation with power

in a way that overcame geography. Electricity equalized access to an essential part of the modern world and, not incidentally, brought light—both literally and culturally—to the *narod* (literally, the "dark people").[59] Finally, electricity allowed and indeed required planning and calculation. The way that electricity worked was very much the way that Lenin hoped the power of the socialist state would work.

For Lenin, much the same developmental logic applied to the top elite of the vanguard party, the factory, and the farm. Professionals, technicians, and engineers would replace amateurs as leaders. Centralized authority based on science would prevail. As with Le Corbusier, the degree of functional specificity within the organization, the degree of order provided by routines and the substitutability of units, and the extent of mechanization were all yardsticks of superior efficiency and rationality. In the case of farms and factories, the larger and more capital intensive they were, the better. One can already glimpse in Lenin's conception of agriculture the mania for machine-tractor stations, the establishment of large state farms and eventual collectivization (after Lenin's death), and even the high-modernist spirit that would lead to such vast colonization schemes as Khrushchev's Virgin Lands initiative. At the same time, Lenin's views have a strong Russian lineage. They bear a family resemblance to Peter the Great's project for Saint Petersburg and to the huge model military colonies set up by Alexei Arakcheev with the patronage of Alexander I in the early nineteenth century—both designed to drag Russia into the modern world.

By focusing on Lenin's high-modernist side, we risk simplifying an exceptionally complex thinker whose ideas *and* actions were rich with crosscurrents. During the revolution he was capable of encouraging the communal seizure of land, autonomous action, and the desire of rural Soviets "to learn from their own mistakes."[60] He decided, at the end of a devastating civil war and a grain-procurement crisis, to shelve collectivization and encourage small-scale production and petty trade. Some have suggested that in his last writings he was more favorably disposed to peasant farming and, it is speculated, would not have forced through the brutal collectivization that Stalin ordered in 1929.

Despite the force of these qualifications, there is little reason, I think, to believe that Lenin ever abandoned the core of his high-modernist convictions.[61] This is apparent even in how he phrases his tactical retreat following the Kronstadt uprising in 1921 and the continuing urban food crisis: "Until we have remolded the peasant, . . . *until large-scale machinery has recast him*, we must assure him of the possibility of running his economy without restrictions. We must find forms of co-

existence with the small farmer, . . . *since the remaking of the small farmer,* the reshaping of his whole psychology and all his habits, is a task requiring generations."[62] If this is a tactical retreat, the acknowledgment that the transformation of the peasants will take generations does not exactly sound like the words of a general who expects to resume the offensive soon. On the other hand, Lenin's faith in mechanization as the key to the transformation of a recalcitrant human nature is undiminished. There is a new modesty—the fruit of effective peasant resistance—about how tortuous and long the path to a modern, socialized agriculture will be, but the vista, once the journey is made, looks the same.

Luxemburg: Physician and Midwife to the Revolution

Rosa Luxemburg was more than merely a contemporary of Lenin. She was an equally committed revolutionary and Marxist who was assassinated, along with Karl Liebknecht, in Berlin in 1919 at the behest of her less revolutionary allies on the left. Although Jane Jacobs was a critic of Le Corbusier and high-modernist urban planning in general, Le Corbusier had almost certainly never heard of Jacobs before he died. Lenin, on the other hand, had met Luxemburg. They wrote largely for the same audience and in the knowledge of each other's opinions, and indeed Luxemburg specifically refuted Lenin's arguments about the vanguard party and its relation to the proletariat in a revolutionary setting. We will chiefly be concerned with the essays in which Luxemburg most directly confronts Lenin's high-modernist views: "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" (1904), "Mass-Strike, Party, and Trade Unions" (1906), and her posthumously published "The Russian Revolution" (written in 1918, first published in 1921, after the Kronstadt uprising).

Luxemburg differed most sharply with Lenin in her relative faith in the autonomous creativity of the working class. Her optimism in "Mass-Strike, Party, and Trade Unions" is partly due to the fact that it was written, unlike *What Is to Be Done?* after the object lesson of worker militancy provided by the 1905 revolution. Luxemburg was especially struck by the massive response of the Warsaw proletariat to the revolution of 1905. On the other hand, "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" was written before the events of 1905 and in direct reply to *What Is to Be Done?* This essay was a key text in the refusal of the Polish party to place itself under the central discipline of the Russian Social Democratic Party.[63]

In emphasizing the differences between Lenin and Luxemburg,

we must not overlook the ideological common ground they took for granted. They shared, for example, Marxist assumptions about the contradictions of capitalist development and the inevitability of revolution. They were both enemies of gradualism and of anything more than tactical compromises with nonrevolutionary parties. Even at the strategic level, they both argued for the importance of a vanguard party on the grounds that the vanguard party was more likely to see the whole situation (the "totality"), whereas most workers were more likely to see only their local situation and their particular interests. Neither Lenin nor Luxemburg had what might be called a sociology of the party. That is, it did not occur to them that the intelligentsia of the party might have interests that did not coincide with the workers' interests, however defined. They were quick to see a sociology of trade-union bureaucracies but not a sociology of the revolutionary Marxist party.

Luxemburg, in fact, was not above using the metaphor of the factory manager, as did Lenin, to explain why the worker might be wise to follow instructions in order to contribute to a larger result not immediately apparent from where he stood. Where the difference arises, however, is in the lengths to which this logic is pursued. For Lenin, the totality was exclusively in the hands of the vanguard party, which had a virtual monopoly of knowledge. He imagined an all-seeing center—an eye in the sky, as it were—which formed the basis for strictly hierarchical operations in which the proletariat became mere foot soldiers or pawns. For Luxemburg, the party might well be more farsighted than the workers, but it would nevertheless be constantly surprised and taught new lessons by those whom it presumed to lead.

Luxemburg viewed the revolutionary process as being far more complex and unpredictable than did Lenin, just as Jacobs saw the creation of successful urban neighborhoods as being far more complex and mysterious than did Le Corbusier. The metaphors Luxemburg used, as we shall see, were indicative. Eschewing military, engineering, and factory parallels, she wrote more frequently of growth, development, experience, and learning.[64]

The idea that the vanguard party could either order or prohibit a mass strike, the way a commander might order his soldiers to the front or confine them to barracks, struck Luxemburg as ludicrous. Any attempt to so engineer a strike was both unrealistic and morally inadmissible. She rejected the instrumentalism that underlay this view. "Both tendencies [ordering or prohibiting a mass strike] proceed from the same, pure anarchist [*sic*] notion that the mass strike is merely a technical means of struggle which can be 'decided' or 'for-

bidden' at pleasure, according to one's knowledge and conscience, a kind of pocket-knife which one keeps clasped in his packet, 'ready for all emergencies,' or decides to unclasp and use."[65] A general strike, or a revolution for that matter, was a complex social event involving the wills and knowledge of many human agents, of which the vanguard party was only one element.

Revolution as a Living Process

Luxemburg looked on strikes and political struggles as dialectical, historical processes. The structure of the economy and the workforce helped to shape, but never determine, the options available. Thus, if industry was small scale and geographically scattered, strikes would typically be small and scattered as well. Each set of strikes, however, forced changes in the structure of capital. If workers won higher wages, for example, the increases might provoke consolidations in the industry, mechanization, and new patterns of supervision, all of which would influence the character of the next round of strikes. A strike would also, of course, teach the workforce new lessons and alter the character of its cohesion and leadership.[66] This insistence on process and human agency served Luxemburg as a warning against a narrow view of tactics. A strike or a revolution was not simply an end toward which tactics and command ought to be directed; the process leading to it was at the same time shaping the character of the proletariat. *How* the revolution was made mattered as much as whether it was made at all, for the process itself had heavy consequences.

Luxemburg found Lenin's desire to turn the vanguard party into a military general staff for the working class to be both utterly unrealistic and morally distasteful. His hierarchical logic ignored the inevitable autonomy of the working class (singly and in groups), whose own interests and actions could never be machine-tooled into strict conformity. What is more, even if such discipline were conceivable, by imposing it the party would deprive itself of the independent, creative force of a proletariat that was, after all, the subject of the revolution. Against Lenin's aspiration for control and order Luxemburg juxtaposed the inevitably disorderly, tumultuous, and living tableau of large-scale social action. "Instead of a fixed and hollow scheme of sober political action executed with a prudent plan decided by the highest committees," she wrote, in what was a clear reference to Lenin, "we see a vibrant part of life in flesh and blood which cannot be cut out of the larger frame of the revolution: The mass strike is bound by a thousand veins to all parts of the revolution."[67] When contrasting her understanding to Lenin's, she consistently reached for metaphors from complex, organic processes, which cannot be arbitrarily carved up without threatening the vitality of the organism itself. The idea that a rational, hierarchical executive committee might deploy its proletarian troops as it wished not only was irrelevant to real political life but was also dead and hollow.[68]

In her refutation of *What Is to Be Done?* Luxemburg made clear that the cost of centralized hierarchy lay in the loss of creativity and initiative from below: "The 'discipline' Lenin has in mind is by no means only implanted in the proletariat by the factory, but equally by the barracks, by the modern bureaucracy, by the entire mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state apparatus. . . . The ultracentrism advocated by Lenin is permeated in its very essence by the sterile spirit of a *nightwatchman* (*Nachtwachtergeist*) rather than by a positive and creative spirit. He concentrated mostly on *controlling* the party, not on *fertilizing* it, on *narrowing* it down, not *developing* it, on *regimenting* and not *unifying* it."[69]

The core of the disagreement between Lenin and Luxemburg is caught best in the figures of speech they each use. Lenin comes across as a rigid schoolmaster with quite definite lessons to convey—a schoolmaster who senses the unruliness of his pupils and wants desperately to keep them in line for their own good. Luxemburg sees that unruliness as well, but she takes it for a sign of vitality, a potentially valuable resource; she fears that an overly strict schoolmaster will destroy the pupils' enthusiasm and leave a sullen, dispirited classroom where nothing is really learned. She argues elsewhere, in fact, that the German Social Democrats, by their constant efforts at close control and discipline, have demoralized the German working class.[70] Lenin sees the possibility that the pupils might influence a weak, timorous teacher and deplores it as a dangerous counterrevolutionary step. Luxemburg, for whom the classroom bespeaks a genuine collaboration, implicitly allows for the possibility that the teacher might just learn some valuable lessons from the pupils.

Once Luxemburg began thinking of the revolution as analogous to a complex natural process, she concluded that the role of a vanguard party was inevitably limited. Such processes are far too complicated to be well understood, let alone directed or planned in advance. She was deeply impressed by the autonomous popular initiatives taken all over Russia after the shooting of the crowd before the Winter Palace in 1905. Her description, which I quote at length, invokes metaphors from nature to convey her conviction that centralized control is an illusion.

> As the Russian Revolution [1905] shows to us, the mass strike is such a changeable phenomenon that it reflects in itself all phases of political and economic struggle, all stages and moments of the revolution. Its applicability, its effectiveness, and the moments of its origin change continually. It suddenly opens new, broad perspectives of revolution just where it seemed to have come to a narrow pass; and it disappoints where one thought he could reckon on it in full certitude. Now it flows like a broad billow over the whole land, now it divides itself into a gigantic net of thin streams; now it bubbles forth from under the ground like a fresh spring, now it trickles flat along the ground. . . . All [forms of popular struggle] run through one another, next to each other, across one another, flow in and over one another; it is an eternal, moving, changing sea of appearances.[71]

The mass strike, then, was not a tactical invention of the vanguard party to be used at the appropriate moment. It was, rather, the "living pulse-beat of the revolution and at the same time its most powerful driving-wheel, . . . the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution."[72] From Luxemburg's perspective, Lenin must have seemed like an engineer with hopes of damming a wild river in order to release it at a single stroke in a massive flood that would be the revolution. She believed that the "flood" of the mass strike could not be predicted or controlled; its course could not be much affected by professional revolutionists, although they could, as Lenin actually did, ride that flood to power. Luxemburg's understanding of the revolutionary process, curiously enough, provided a better description of how Lenin and the Bolsheviks came to power than did the utopian scenario in *What Is to Be Done?*

A grasp of political conflict as process allowed Luxemburg to see well beyond what Lenin considered to be failures and dead ends. Writing of 1905, she emphasized that "after every foaming wave of political action a fructifying deposit remains from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth."[73] The analogy she drew to organic processes conveyed both their autonomy and their vulnerability. To extract from the living tissue of the proletarian movement a particular kind of strike for instrumental use would threaten the whole organism. With Lenin in mind she wrote, "If the contemplative theory proposes the artificial dissection of the mass strike to get at the 'pure political mass strike,' then by this dissection, as with any other, it will not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it all together."[74] Luxemburg, then, saw the workers' movement in much the same light as Jacobs saw the city: as an intricate social organism whose origin, dynamics, and future were but dimly understood. To nevertheless intervene and dissect the workers' movement was to kill it, just as carving

up the city along strict functional lines produced a lifeless, taxidermist's city.

If Lenin approached the proletariat as an engineer approached his raw materials, with a view toward shaping them to his purposes, Luxemburg approached the proletariat as a physician would. Like any patient, the proletariat had its own constitution, which limited the kind of interventions that could be made. The physician needed to respect the patient's constitution and assist according to its potential strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the autonomy and history of the patient would inevitably influence the outcome. The proletariat could not be reshaped from the ground up and fitted neatly into a predetermined design.

But the major, recurrent theme of Luxemburg's criticism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks generally was that their dictatorial methods and their mistrust of the proletariat made for bad educational policy. It thwarted the development of the mature, independent working class that was necessary to the revolution and to the creation of socialism. Thus she attacked both the German and Russian revolutionists for substituting the ego of the vanguard party for the ego of the proletariat—a substitution that ignored the fact that the objective was to *create* a self-conscious workers' movement, not just to use the proletariat as instruments. Like a confident and sympathetic guardian, she anticipated false steps as part of the learning process. "However, the nimble acrobat," she charged, referring to the Social Democratic Party, "fails to see that the true subject to whom this role of director falls is the collective ego of the working class which insists on its right to make its own mistakes and learn the historical dialectic by itself. Finally, we must frankly admit to ourselves that the errors made by a truly revolutionary labor movement are historically infinitely more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the best of all possible 'central committees.' "[75]

Nearly fifteen years later, a year after the October 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power, Luxemburg was attacking Lenin in precisely the same terms. Her warnings, so soon after the revolution, about the direction in which the dictatorship of the proletariat was headed seem prophetic.

She believed that Lenin and Trotsky had completely corrupted a proper understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To her, it meant rule by the *whole* proletariat, which required the broadest political freedoms for all workers (though not for enemy classes) so that they could bring their influence and wisdom to bear on the building of socialism. It did not mean, as Lenin and Trotsky assumed, that a small

circle of party leaders would exercise dictatorial power merely in the name of the proletariat. Trotsky's proposal that the constituent assembly not convene because circumstances had changed since its election struck Luxemburg as a cure that was worse than the disease. Only an active public life could remedy the shortcomings of representative bodies. By concentrating absolute power in so few hands, the Bolsheviks had "blocked up the fountain of political experience and the source of this rising development [the attaining of higher stages of socialism] by their suppression of public life."[76]

Beneath this dispute was not just a difference in tactics but a fundamental disagreement about the nature of socialism. Lenin proceeded as if the road to socialism were already mapped out in detail and the task of the party were to use the iron discipline of the party apparatus to make sure that the revolutionary movement kept to that road. Luxemburg, on the contrary, believed that the future of socialism was to be discovered and worked out in a genuine collaboration between workers and their revolutionary state. There were no "ready-made prescriptions" for the realization of socialism, nor was there "a key in any socialist party program or textbook."[77] The openness that characterized a socialist future was not a shortcoming but rather a sign of its superiority, as a dialectical process, over the cut-and-dried formulas of utopian socialism. The creation of socialism was "new territory. A thousand problems—only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and *improvisations*, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts."[78] Lenin's use of decrees and terror and what Luxemburg called the "dictatorial force of the factory overseer" deprived the revolution of this popular creative force and experience. Unless the working class as a whole participated in the political process, she added ominously, "socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals."[79]

Looking ahead, so soon after the revolution, to the closed and authoritarian political order Lenin was constructing, Luxemburg's predictions were chilling but accurate: "But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of the press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution. . . . Public life gradually falls asleep. . . . In reality only a dozen outstanding heads [party leaders] do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom then, a clique affair, . . . a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense."[80]

Aleksandra Kollontay and the Workers' Opposition to Lenin

Aleksandra Kollontay was in effect the local voice of a Luxemburgian critique among the Bolsheviks after the revolution. A revolutionary activist, the head of the women's section of the Central Committee (Zhenotdel), and, by early 1921, closely associated with the Workers' Opposition, Kollontay was a thorn in Lenin's side. He regarded the sharply critical pamphlet she wrote just before the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 as a nearly treasonous act. The Tenth Party Congress opened just as the suppression of the workers' and sailors' revolt in Kronstadt was being organized and in the midst of the Makno uprising in the Ukraine. To attack the party leadership at such a perilous moment was a treacherous appeal to "the base instincts of the masses."

There was a direct connection between Luxemburg and her Russian colleague. Kollontay had been deeply impressed by reading Luxemburg's *Social Reform or Revolution* early in the century and had actually met Luxemburg at a socialist meeting in Germany. While Kollontay's pamphlet echoed most of Luxemburg's criticisms of centralized, authoritarian socialist practice, its historical context was distinctive. Kollontay was making her case as part of the Workers' Opposition argument for an all-Russian congress of producers, freely elected from the trade unions, which would direct production and industrial planning. Alexander Shlyiapnikov, a close ally of Kollontay, and other trade unionists were alarmed at the increasingly dominant role of technical specialists, the bureaucracy, and the party center and the exclusion of workers' organizations. During the civil war, martial-law techniques of management were perhaps understandable. But now that the civil war was largely won, the direction of socialist construction seemed at stake. Kollontay brought to her case for trade-union co-management of industry a wealth of practical experience acquired in the frustrating job of negotiating with state organs on behalf of working women who had organized creches and canteens. In the end, the Workers' Opposition was outlawed and Kollontay was silenced, but not before leaving behind a prophetic legacy of criticism.[81]

Kollontay's pamphlet attacked the party state, which she compared to an authoritarian schoolteacher, in much the same terms used by Luxemburg. She complained, above all, that the relationship between the central committee and the workers had become a stark one-way relationship of command. The trade unions were seen as a mere "connecting link" or transmission belt of the party's instructions to the workers; unions were expected to "bring up the masses" in exactly the way a schoolteacher whose curriculum and lesson plans are mandated

from above passes those lessons on to pupils. She castigated the party for its out-of-date pedagogical theory, which left no room for the potential originality of the students. "When one begins to turn over the pages of the stenographic minutes and speeches made by our prominent leaders, one is astonished by the unexpected manifestation of their pedagogical activities. Every author of the thesis proposes the most perfect system of bringing up the masses. But all these systems of 'education' lack provisions for freedom of experiment, for training and for expression of creative abilities by those who are to be taught. In this respect also all our pedagogues are behind the times."[82]

There is some evidence that Kollontay's work on behalf of women had a direct bearing on her case for the Workers' Opposition. Just as Jacobs was afforded a different view of how the city functioned by virtue of her additional roles as housewife and mother, so Kollontay saw the party from the vantage point of an advocate for women whose work was rarely taken seriously. She accused the party of denying women opportunities in organization of "creative tasks in the sphere of production and development of creative abilities" and of confining them to the "restricted tasks of home economics, household duties, etc."[83] Her experience of being patronized and condescended to as a representative of the women's section seems directly tied to her accusation that the party was also treating the workers as infants rather than as autonomous, creative adults. In the same passage as her charge that the party thought women fit only for home economics, she mocked Trotsky's praise for the workers at a miner's congress, who had voluntarily replaced shop windows, as showing that he wanted to limit them to mere janitorial tasks.

Like Luxemburg, Kollontay believed that the building of socialism could not be accomplished by the Central Committee alone, however farseeing it might be. The unions were not mere instruments or transmission belts in the building of socialism; they were to a great extent the subjects and the creators of a socialist mode of production. Kollontay put the fundamental difference succinctly: *"The Workers' Opposition sees in the unions the managers and creators of the communist economy, whereas Bukharin, together with Lenin and Trotsky, leave to them only the role of schools of communism and no more."*[84]

Kollontay shared Luxemburg's conviction that the practical experience of industrial workers on the factory floor was indispensable knowledge that the experts and technicians needed. She did not want to minimize the role of specialists and officials; they were vital, but they could do their job effectively only in a genuine collaboration with the trade unions and workers. Her vision of the form this collaboration might

take closely resembles that of an agricultural extension service and farmers to whose needs the service is closely tied. That is, technical centers concerned with industrial production would be established throughout Russia, but the tasks they addressed and the services they provided would be directly responsive to the demands of the producers.[85] The experts would serve the producers rather than dictating to them. To this end Kollontay proposed that a host of specialists and officials, who had no practical factory experience and who had joined the party after 1919, be dismissed—at least until they had done some manual labor.

She clearly saw, as did Luxemburg, the social and psychological consequences of frustrating the independent initiatives of workers. Arguing from concrete examples—workers procuring firewood, establishing a dining hall, and opening a nursery—she explained how they were thwarted at every turn by bureaucratic delay and pettifoggery: "Every independent thought or initiative is treated as a 'heresy,' as a violation of party discipline, as an attempt to infringe on the prerogatives of the center, which must 'foresee' everything and 'decree' everything and anything." The harm done came not just from the fact that the specialists and bureaucrats were more likely to make bad decisions. The attitude had two other consequences. First, it reflected a "distrust towards the creative abilities of the workers," which was unworthy of the "professed ideals of our party." Second, and most important, it smothered the morale and creative spirit of the working class. In their frustration at the specialists and officials, "the workers became cynical and said, 'let [the] officials themselves take care of us.'" The end result was an arbitrary, myopic layer of officials presiding over a dispirited workforce putting in a "bad-faith" day on the factory floor.[86]

Kollontay's point of departure, like Luxemburg's, is an assumption about what *kinds* of tasks are the making of revolutions and the creating of new forms of production. For both of them, such tasks are voyages in uncharted waters. There may be some rules of thumb, but there can be no blueprints or battle plans drawn up in advance; the numerous unknowns in the equation make a one-step solution inconceivable. In more technical language, such goals can be approached only by a stochastic process of successive approximations, trial and error, experiment, and learning through experience. The kind of knowledge required in such endeavors is not deductive knowledge from first principles but rather what Greeks of the classical period called *mētis*, a concept to which we shall return. Usually translated, inadequately, as "cunning," *mētis* is better understood as the kind of knowledge that can be acquired only by long practice at similar but rarely identical tasks,

which requires constant adaptation to changing circumstances. It is to this kind of knowledge that Luxemburg appealed when she characterized the building of socialism as "new territory" demanding "improvisation" and "creativity." It is to this kind of knowledge that Kollontay appealed when she insisted that the party leaders were not infallible, that they needed the "everyday experience" and "practical work of the basic class collectives" of those "who actually produce and organize production at the same time."[87] In an analogy that any Marxist would recognize, Kollontay asked whether it was conceivable that the cleverest feudal estate managers could have invented early capitalism by themselves. Of course not, she answered, because their knowledge and skills were directly tied to feudal production, just as the technical specialists of her day had learned their lessons within a capitalist framework. There was simply no precedent for the future now being forged.

Echoing, for rhetorical effect, a sentiment that both Luxemburg and Lenin had uttered, Kollontay claimed that "it is impossible to decree communism. It can be created only in the process of practical research, through mistakes, perhaps, but only by the creative powers of the working class itself." While specialists and officials had a collaborative role of vital importance, "only those who are directly bound to industry can introduce into it animating innovations."[88]

For Lenin, the vanguard party is a machine for making a revolution and then for building socialism—tasks whose main lines have, it is assumed, already been worked out. For Le Corbusier, the house is a machine for living, and the city planner is a specialist whose knowledge shows him how a city must be built. For Le Corbusier, the people are irrelevant to *the process* of city planning, although the result is designed with their well-being and productivity in mind. Lenin cannot make the revolution without the proletariat, but they are seen largely as troops to be deployed. The goals of revolution and scientific socialism are, of course, also for the benefit of the working class. Each of these schemes implies a single, unitary answer discoverable by specialists and hence a command center, which can, or ought to, impose the correct solution.

Kollontay and Luxemburg, in contrast, take the tasks at hand to be unknowable in advance. Given the uncertainty of the endeavor, a plurality of experiments and initiatives will best reveal which lines of attack are fruitful and which are barren. The revolution and socialism will fare best, as will Jacobs's city, when they are joint productions between technicians and gifted, experienced amateurs. Above all, there is no strict distinction between means and ends. Luxemburg's and

Kollontay's vanguard party is not producing a revolution or socialism in the straightforward sense that a factory produces, say, axles. Thus the vanguard party cannot be adequately judged, as a factory might, by its output—by how many axles of a certain quality it makes with a given labor force, capitalization, and so on—no matter how it goes about producing that result. Also, the vanguard party of Luxemburg and Kollontay is at the same time producing a certain kind of working class—a creative, conscious, competent, and empowered working class—that is the precondition of its achieving any of its other goals. Put positively, the way the trip is made matters at least as much as the destination. Put negatively, a vanguard party can achieve its revolutionary results in ways that defeat its central purpose.

Part 3

The Social Engineering of Rural Settlement and Production

Legibility is a condition of manipulation. Any substantial state intervention in society—to vaccinate a population, produce goods, mobilize labor, tax people and their property, conduct literacy campaigns, conscript soldiers, enforce sanitation standards, catch criminals, start universal schooling—requires the invention of units that are visible. The units in question might be citizens, villages, trees, fields, houses, or people grouped according to age, depending on the type of intervention. Whatever the units being manipulated, they must be organized in a manner that permits them to be identified, observed, recorded, counted, aggregated, and monitored. The degree of knowledge required would have to be roughly commensurate with the depth of the intervention. In other words, one might say that the greater the manipulation envisaged, the greater the legibility required to effect it.

It was precisely this phenomenon, which had reached full tide by the middle of the nineteenth century, that Proudhon had in mind when he declared, "To be ruled is to be kept an eye on, inspected, spied on, regulated, indoctrinated, sermonized, listed and checked off, estimated, appraised, censured, ordered about. . . . To be ruled is at every operation, transaction, movement, to be noted, registered, counted, priced, admonished, prevented, reformed, redressed, corrected."[1]

From another perspective, what Proudhon was deploring was in fact the great achievement of modern statecraft. How hard-won and tenuous this achievement was is worth emphasizing. Most states, to speak broadly, are "younger" than the societies that they purport to administer. States therefore confront patterns of settlement, social rela-

tions, and production, not to mention a natural environment, that have evolved largely independent of state plans.[2] The result is typically a diversity, complexity, and unrepeatability of social forms that are relatively opaque to the state, often purposely so. Consider, for a moment, the patterns in such urban settlements as Bruges or the *medina* of an old Middle Eastern city touched on earlier (see chapter 2). Each city, each quarter, each neighborhood is unique; it is the historical vector sum of millions of designs and activities. While its form and function surely have a logic, that logic is not derived from any single, overall plan. Its complexity defies easy mapping. Any map, moreover, would be spatially and temporally limited. The map of a single neighborhood would provide little guidance to the unique intricacies of the next neighborhood, and a description that was satisfactory today would be inadequate in a few years.

If the state's goals are minimal, it may not need to know much about the society. Just as a woodsman who takes only an occasional load of firewood from a large forest need have no detailed knowledge of that forest, so a state whose demands are confined to grabbing a few carts of grain and the odd conscript may not require a very accurate or detailed map of the society. If, however, the state is ambitious—if it wants to extract as much grain and manpower as it can, short of provoking a famine or a rebellion, if it wants to create a literate, skilled, and healthy population, if it wants everyone to speak the same language or worship the same god—then it will have to become both far more knowledgeable and far more intrusive.

How does the state get a handle on the society? Here and in the next two chapters, I am especially concerned with the logic behind large-scale attempts to redesign rural life and production from above. Seen from the center, the royal court or the seat of state, this process has often been described as a "civilizing process."[3] I prefer to see it as an attempt at domestication, a kind of social gardening devised to make the countryside, its products, and its inhabitants more readily identifiable and accessible to the center. Certain elements of these efforts at domestication seem, if not universal, at least very common, and they may be termed "sedentarization," "concentration," and "radical simplification" of both settlement and cultivation.

We shall examine in some detail two notorious schemes of agrarian simplification—collectivization in Soviet Russia and ujamaa villages in Tanzania—searching both for the larger political logic of their design and for the reasons behind their manifold failures as schemes of production. First, however, it may help to provide a schematic illustration of this process from the history of Southeast Asia, which reveals a great continuity of purpose that joins the projects of the precolonial, colonial, and independence regimes together with the modern state's progressive capacity to realize these projects of planned settlement and production.

The demography of precolonial Southeast Asia was such that control of land per se, unless it was a strategically vital estuary, strait, or pass, was seldom decisive in state building. Control of the population—roughly five persons per square kilometer in 1700—mattered far more. The key to successful statecraft was typically the ability to attract and hold a substantial, productive population within a reasonable radius of the court. Given the relative sparseness of the population and the ease of physical flight, the control of arable land was pointless unless there was a population to work it. The precolonial kingdom thus trod a narrow path between a level of taxes and corvée exactions that would sustain a monarch's ambitions and a level that would precipitate wholesale flight. Precolonial wars were more often about rounding up captives and settling them near the central court than asserting a territorial claim. A growing, productive population settled in the ambit of a monarch's capital was a more reliable indicator of a kingdom's power than its physical extent.

The precolonial state was thus vitally interested in the sedentarization of its population—in the creation of permanent, fixed settlements. The greater the concentration of people, providing that they produced an economic surplus, the greater the ease of appropriating grain, labor, and military service. At the crudest level, this determinist geographical logic is nothing more than an application of standard theories of location. As Johann Heinrich von Thünen, Walter Christaller, and G. William Skinner have amply demonstrated, the economics of movement, other things being equal, tend to produce recurring geographical patterns of market location, crop specialization, and administrative structure.[4] The political appropriation of labor and grain tends to obey much the same locational logic, favoring population concentration rather than dispersion and reflecting a logic of appropriation based on transportation costs.[5] In this context, much of the classical literature on statecraft is preoccupied with the techniques of attracting and holding a population in an environment where they can flee to the nearby frontier or settle under the wing of another nearby prince. The expression "to vote with one's feet" had a literal meaning in much of Southeast Asia.[6]

Traditional Thai statecraft hit on a novel technique for minimizing flight and attaching commoners to the state or to their noble lords. The

Thai devised a system of tattoos for literally marking commoners with symbols making it clear who "belonged" to whom. Such tattooing is evidence that exceptional measures were required to identify and fix a subject population inclined to vote with its feet. So common was physical flight that a large number of bounty hunters made a living coursing the forests in search of runaways to return to their lawful owners.[7] Similar problems beset the estates of Roman Catholic friars in the early years of Spain's dominion in the Philippines. The Tagalogs who were resettled and organized for supervised production on the Latin American model frequently fled the harsh labor regime. They were known as *remontados*, that is, peasants who had gone "back up to the hills," where they enjoyed more autonomy.

More generally, for precolonial and colonial Southeast Asia, it might be helpful to think in terms of state spaces and nonstate spaces. In the first, to put it crudely, the subject population was settled rather densely in quasi-permanent communities, producing a surplus of grain (usually of wet rice) and labor which was relatively easily appropriated by the state. In the second, the population was sparsely settled, typically practiced slash-and-burn or shifting cultivation, maintained a more mixed economy (including, for example, polyculture or reliance on forest products), and was highly mobile, thereby severely limiting the possibilities for reliable state appropriation. State spaces and nonstate spaces were not merely preexisting ecological and geographical settings that encouraged or discouraged the formation of states. A major objective of would-be rulers was to *create* and then expand state spaces by building irrigation works, capturing subjects in wars, forcing settlement, codifying religions, and so on. The classical state envisaged a concentrated population, within easy range, producing a steady supply of easily transportable, storable grain and tribute and providing a surplus of manpower for security, war, and public works.

Edmund Leach's perceptive effort to understand the frontiers of Burma implicitly followed this logic in its reconstruction of the traditional Burmese polity. He suggested that we look at the precolonial Burmese state not as a physically contiguous territory, as we would in the context of modern states, but as a complex patchwork that followed an entirely different logic. We should picture the kingdom, he insisted, in terms of horizontal slices through the topography. Following this logic, Burma was, in practice, a collection of *all* the sedentary, wet-rice producers settled in valleys within the ambit of the court center. These would be, in the terms suggested above, the state spaces. The next horizontal stratum of the landscape from, say, five hundred feet to fifteen hundred feet would, given its different ecology, contain inhabitants who practiced shifting cultivation, were more widely scattered, and were therefore less promising subjects of appropriation. They were not an integral part of the kingdom, although they might regularly send tribute to the central court. Still higher elevations would constitute yet other ecological, political, and cultural zones. What Leach proposed, in effect, is that we consider all relatively dense, wet-rice settlements within range of the capital as "the kingdom" and the rest, even if relatively close to the capital, as "nonstate spaces."[8]

The role of statecraft in this context becomes that of maximizing the productive, settled population in such state spaces while at the same time drawing tribute from, or at least neutralizing, the nonstate spaces.[9] These stateless zones have always played a potentially subversive role, both symbolically and practically. From the vantage point of the court, such spaces and their inhabitants were the exemplars of rudeness, disorder, and barbarity against which the civility, order, and sophistication of the center could be gauged.[10] Such spaces, it goes without saying, have served as refuges for fleeing peasants, rebels, bandits, and the pretenders who have often threatened kingdoms.

Of course, the ecology of different elevations is only one among many factors that might characterize nonstate spaces. They also appear to share one or more of the following distinctive features: they are relatively impenetrable (wild, trackless, labyrinthine, inhospitable); their population is dispersed or migratory; and they are unpromising sites for surplus appropriation.[11] Thus marshes and swamps (one thinks of the now beleaguered Marsh Arabs on the Iraqi-Iranian border), ever-shifting deltas and estuaries, mountains, deserts (favored by nomadic Berbers and Bedouins), and the sea (home to the so-called sea gypsies of southern Burma), and, more generally, the frontier have all served as "nonstate spaces" in the sense that I have been using the term.[12]

Contemporary development schemes, whether in Southeast Asia or elsewhere, require the creation of state spaces where the government can reconfigure the society and economy of those who are to be "developed." The transformation of peripheral nonstate spaces into state spaces by the modern, developmentalist nation-state is ubiquitous and, for the inhabitants of such spaces, frequently traumatic. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's sensitive account of the attempts of the Indonesian state to capture, as it were, the nomadic Meratus hill peoples of Kalimantan describes a striking case in point. The Meratus live, as she notes, in an area that, "so far, has eluded the clarity and visibility required for model development schemes." As migratory hunter-gatherers who at the same time practice shifting cultivation, who live in con-

stantly changing kinship units, who are widely dispersed over a demanding terrain, and who are, in Indonesian eyes, pagans, the Meratus are a tough case for development. Indonesian officials have tried, in their desultory fashion, to concentrate the Meratus in planned villages near the main roads. The implicit goal was to create a fixed, concentrated population that officials in charge of the management of isolated populations could see and instruct when touring the district.[13] Meratus immobility was the precondition of state supervision and development, whereas much of the identity of the Meratus as a people depended on "unhampered mobility."[14]

The inaccessibility of the Meratus was, in state-development parlance and in the eyes of government officials, an index of their lamentable backwardness. They were described by their would-be civilizers as "not yet arranged" or "not yet ordered" (*belum di-ator*), as "not yet brought to religion" (*belum berugama*), and their cultivation practices were described as "disorderly agriculture" (*pertanian yang tidak teratur*). For their part, the Meratus grasped the essentials of what the government had in mind for them. They had been asked to settle along the main tracks through the forest, one local leader observed, "so the government can see the people." The clustered houses they were asked to settle in were meant, they believed, to "look good if the government came to visit."[15] Cast in a discourse of development, progress, and civilization, the plans of the Indonesian state for the Meratus peoples are at the same time a synoptic project of legibility and concentration.

It is in the context of actual rebellion where the effort to create and sharply distinguish state spaces from nonstate spaces is carried to its logical conclusion. The nature of military threat requires clearly defined and easily monitored and patrolled state spaces, such as forts, forced settlements, or internment camps. Modern examples of this can be found in the so-called new villages in Malaya during the Emergency following World War II, which were designed particularly to sequester a Chinese smallholder and rubber-tapping population and prevent it from providing manpower, food, cash, and supplies to a largely Chinese guerrilla force in the hinterland beyond. In an arrangement later copied in the "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam, the reluctant residents were lodged in identical, numbered houses arrayed in straight lines.[16] The population's movement in and out was strictly monitored. They were one short step away from the concentration camps built in wartime to create and maintain a legible, bounded, *concentrated* state space and seal it off as completely as possible from the outside. Here, direct control and discipline are more important than appropriation. In recent times there have been unprecedented efforts to reclaim non-

state space for the state. In any case, that is one way to characterize the massive use of Agent Orange to defoliate large sections of forest during the Vietnam War, thus render the forest legible and safe (for government forces, that is).

The concept of state spaces, suitably modified for the context of a market economy, can also help us to resolve an apparent paradox in colonial agrarian policy in Southeast Asia. How do we explain the decided colonial preference for plantation agriculture over smallholder production? The grounds for the choice can certainly not have been efficiency. For almost any crop one can name, with the possible exception of sugarcane,[17] smallholders have been able historically to out-compete larger units of production. Time and time again, the colonial states found, small producers, owing to their low fixed costs and flexible use of family labor, could consistently undersell state-managed or private-sector plantations.

The paradox is largely resolved, I believe, if we consider the "efficiencies" of the plantation as a unit of taxation (both taxes on profits and various export levies), of labor discipline and surveillance, and of political control. Take, for example, rubber production in colonial Malaya. At the beginning of the rubber boom in the first decade of the twentieth century, British officials and investors no doubt believed that rubber produced by estates, which had better planting stock, better scientific management, and more available labor, would prove more efficient and profitable than rubber produced by smallholders.[18] When they discovered they were wrong, however, officials persisted in systematically favoring rubber estates at some considerable cost to the overall economy of the colony. The infamous Stevenson scheme in Malaya during the worldwide depression was a particularly blatant attempt to preserve the failing estate sector of the rubber industry by limiting smallholder production. Without it, most estates would have perished.

The fact that, in protecting the estate sector, the colonizers were also protecting the interests of their countrymen and those of metropolitan investors was only one factor in explaining their policy. If it were the main reason, one would expect the policy to lapse with the country's independence. As we shall shortly see, it did not. The plantations, although less efficient than smallholders as producers, were far more convenient as units of taxation. It was easier to monitor and tax large, publicly-owned businesses than to do so for a vast swarm of small growers who were here today and gone tomorrow and whose landholdings, production, and profits were illegible to the state. But

because plantations specialized in a single crop, it was a simple matter to assess their production and profits. A second advantage of estate rubber production was that it typically provided centralized forms of residence and labor that were far more amenable to central political and administrative control. Estates were, in a word, far more legible communities than were the Malay *kampung*, which had its own history, leadership, and mixed economy.

A comparable logic can be usefully applied to the establishment of federal land schemes in independent Malaysia. Why did the Malaysian state elect to establish large, costly, bureaucratically monitored settlements in the 1960s and 1970s when the frontier was already being actively pioneered by large-scale voluntary migration? Pioneer settlement cost the state virtually nothing and had historically created viable household enterprises that grew and marketed cash crops. As an economic proposition, the huge rubber and palm oil concerns established by the government made little sense. They were enormously costly to set up, the capital expenditure per settler being far beyond what a rational businessman would have invested.

Politically and administratively, however, the advantages of these large, centrally planned, and centrally run government schemes were manifold. At a time when the attempted revolution of the Malayan Communist Party was still fresh in the minds of the country's Malay rulers, planned settlements had some of the advantages of strategic hamlets. They were laid out according to a simple grid pattern and were immediately legible to an outside official. The house lots were numbered consecutively, and the inhabitants were registered and monitored far more closely than in open frontier areas. Malaysian settlers could be, and were, carefully selected for age, skills, and political reliability; villagers in the state of Kedah, where I worked in the late 1970s, understood that if they wanted to be selected for a settlement scheme, they needed a recommendation from a local politician of the ruling party.

The administrative and economic situation of the Malaysian settlers was comparable to that of the "company towns" of early industrialization, where everyone worked at comparable jobs, were paid by the same boss, lived in company housing, and shopped at the same company store. Until the plantation crops were mature, the settlers were paid a wage. Their production was marketed through state channels, and they could be dismissed for any one of a large number of infractions against the rules established by the scheme's officials. The economic dependency and direct political control meant that such schemes could regularly be made to produce large electoral majorities

for the ruling party. Collective protest was rare and could usually be snuffed out by the sanctions available to the administrators. It goes without saying that the settlements of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) allowed the state to control the mix of export crops, to monitor production and processing, and to set producer prices in order to generate revenue.

The publicly stated rationale for planned settlement schemes was almost always couched in the discourse of orderly development and social services (such as the provision of health clinics, sanitation, adequate housing, education, clean water, and infrastructure). The public rhetoric was not intentionally insincere; it was, however, misleadingly silent about the manifold ways in which orderly development of this kind served important goals of appropriation, security, and political hegemony that could not have been met through autonomous frontier settlement. FELDA schemes were "soft" civilian versions of the new villages created as part of counterinsurgency policy. The dividend they paid was less an economic return than a dividend in expanding state spaces.

State plans of sedentarization and planned settlement have rarely gone as anticipated—in Malaysia or elsewhere. Like the scientific forest or the grid city, the targets of development have habitually escaped the fine-tuned control aspired to by their inventors. But we must never overlook the fact that the effect of these schemes, however inflected by local practice, lies as much in what they replace as in the degree to which they live up to their own rhetoric.

The concentration of population in planned settlements may not create what state planners had in mind, but it has almost always disrupted or destroyed prior communities whose cohesion derived mostly from nonstate sources. The communities thus superseded—however objectionable they may have been on normative grounds—were likely to have had their own unique histories, social ties, mythology, and capacity for joint action. Virtually by definition, the state-designated settlement must start from the beginning to build its own sources of cohesion and joint action. A new community is thus, also by definition, a community demobilized, and hence a community more amenable to control from above and outside.[19]

6 Soviet Collectivization, Capitalist Dreams

The master builders of Soviet society were rather more like Niemeyer designing Brasília than Baron Haussmann retrofitting Paris. A combination of defeat in war, economic collapse, and a revolution had provided the closest thing to a bulldozed site that a state builder ever gets. The result was a kind of ultrahigh modernism that in its audacity recalled the utopian aspects of its precursor, the French Revolution.

This is not the place, nor am I the most knowledgeable guide, for an extensive discussion of Soviet high modernism.[1] What I aim to do, instead, is to emphasize the cultural and aesthetic elements in Soviet high modernism. This will in turn pave the way for an examination of an illuminating point of direct contact between Soviet and American high modernism: the belief in huge, mechanized, industrial farms.

In certain vital respects, Soviet high modernism is not a sharp break from Russian absolutism. Ernest Gellner has argued that of the two facets of the Enlightenment—the one asserting the sovereignty of the individual and his interests, the other commending the rational authority of experts—it was the second that spoke to rulers who wanted their "backward" states to catch up. The Enlightenment arrived in Central Europe, he concludes, as a "centralizing rather than a liberating force."[2]

Strong historical echoes of Leninist high modernism can thus be found in what Richard Stites calls the "administrative utopianism" of the Russian czars and their advisers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This administrative utopianism found expression in a succession of schemes to organize the population (serfs, soldiers, workers,

functionaries) into institutions "based upon hierarchy, discipline, regimentation, strict order, rational planning, a geometrical environment, and a form of welfarism."[3] Peter the Great's Saint Petersburg was the urban realization of this vision. The city was laid out according to a strict rectilinear and radial plan on completely new terrain. Its straight boulevards were, by design, twice as wide as the tallest building, which was, naturally, at the geometric center of the city. The buildings themselves reflected function and hierarchy, as the facade, height, and material of each corresponded to the social class of its inhabitants. The city's physical layout was in fact a legible map of its intended social structure.

Saint Petersburg had many counterparts, urban and rural. Under Catherine the Great, Prince Grigory Potemkin established a whole series of model cities (such as Ekaterinoslav) and model rural settlements. The next two czars, Paul and Alexander I, inherited Catherine's passion for Prussian order and efficiency.[4] Their adviser, Alexei Arakcheev, established a model estate on which peasants wore uniforms and followed elaborate instructions on upkeep and maintenance, to the point of carrying "punishment books" inscribed with records of their violations. This estate was made the basis of a far bolder plan for a network of widely scattered, self-sufficient military colonies, which by the late 1820s included 750,000 people. This attempt to create a new Russia, in contrast to the disorder, mobility, and flux of a frontier society, quickly succumbed to popular resistance, corruption, and inefficiency. Long before the Bolsheviks took power, in any case, the historical landscape was littered with the wreckage of many miscarried experiments in authoritarian social planning.

Lenin and his confederates could implement their high-modernist plans starting from nearly zero. The war, the revolution, and the subsequent famine had gone a long way toward dissolving the prerevolutionary society, particularly in the cities. A general collapse of industrial production had provoked a vast exodus from the cities and a virtual regression to a barter economy. The ensuing four-year civil war further dissolved existing social ties as well as schooling the hard-pressed Bolsheviks in the methods of "war Communism"—requisitions, martial law, coercion.

Working on a leveled social terrain and harboring high-modernist ambitions in keeping with the distinction of being the pioneers of the first socialist revolution, the Bolsheviks thought big. Nearly everything they planned was on a monumental scale, from cities and individual buildings (the Palace of Soviets) to construction projects (the White Sea Canal) and, later, the great industrial projects of the first Five-Year

Plan (Magnitogorsk), not to mention collectivization. Sheila Fitzpatrick has appropriately called this passion for sheer size "gigantomania."[5] The economy itself was conceived as a well-ordered machine, where everyone would simply produce goods of the description and quantity specified by the central state's statistical bureau, as Lenin had foreseen.

A transformation of the physical world was not, however, the only item on the Bolshevik agenda. It was a cultural revolution that they sought, the creation of a new person. Members of the secular intelligentsia were the most devoted partisans of this aspect of the revolution. Campaigns to promote atheism and to suppress Christian rituals were pressed in the villages. New "revolutionary" funeral and marriage ceremonies were invented amidst much fanfare, and a ritual of "Octobering" was encouraged as an alternative to baptism.[6] Cremation —rational, clean, economical—was promoted. Along with this secularization came enormous and widely popular campaigns to promote education and literacy. Architects and social planners invented new communal living arrangements designed to supersede the bourgeois family pattern. Communal food, laundry, and child-care services promised to free women from the traditional division of labor. Housing arrangements were explicitly intended to be "social condensers."

The "new man"—the Bolshevik specialist, engineer, or functionary—came to represent a new code of social ethics, which was sometimes simply called *kultura*. In keeping with the cult of technology and science, kultura emphasized punctuality, cleanliness, businesslike directness, polite modesty, and good, but never showy, manners.[7] It was this understanding of kultura and the party's passion for the League of Time, with its promotion of time consciousness, efficient work habits, and clock-driven routine, that were so brilliantly caricatured in Eugene Zamiatin's novel *We* and that later became the inspiration for George Orwell's *1984*.

What strikes an outside observer of this revolution in culture and architecture is its emphasis on public form—on getting the visual and aesthetic dimensions of the new world straight. One can perhaps see this best in what Stites calls the "festivals of mustering" organized by the cultural impresario of the early Soviet state, Anatoly Lunacharsky.[8] In the outdoor dramas he produced, the revolution was reenacted on a scale that must have seemed as large as the original, with cannons, bands, searchlights, ships on the river, four thousand actors, and thirty-five thousand spectators.[9] Whereas the actual revolution had all the usual messiness of reality, the reenactment called for military precision, and the various actors were organized by platoon and mobi-

lized with semaphore and field telephones. Like mass exercises, the public spectacle gave a retroactive order, purpose, and central direction to the events, which were designed to impress the spectator, not to reflect the historical facts.[10] If one can see in Arakcheev's military colonies an attempt to prefigure, to represent, a wished-for order, then perhaps Lunacharsky's staged revolution can be seen as a representation of the wished-for relationship between the Bolsheviks and the proletarian crowd. Little effort was spared to see that the ceremony turned out right. When Lunacharsky himself complained that churches were being demolished for the May Day celebrations, Lazar Kaganivich, the city boss of Moscow, replied, "And *my* aesthetics demand that the demonstration processions from the six districts of Moscow should all pour into Red Square at the same time."[11] In architecture, public manners, urban design, and public ritual, the emphasis on a visible, rational, disciplined social facade seemed to prevail.[12] Stites suggests that there is some inverse relation between this public face of order and purpose and the near anarchy that reigned in society at large: "As in the case of all such utopias, its organizers described it in rational, symmetrical terms, in the mathematical language of planning, control figures, statistics, projections and precise commands. As in the vision of military colonies, which the utopian plan faintly resembled, its rational facade barely obscured the oceans of misery, disorder, chaos, corruption and whimsicality that went with it."[13]

One possible implication of Stites's assertion is that, in some circumstances, what I call the miniaturization of order may be substituted for the real thing. A facade or a small, easily managed zone of order and conformity may come to be an end in itself; the representation may usurp the reality. Miniatures and small experiments have, of course, an important role in studying larger phenomena. Model aircraft built to scale and wind tunnels are essential steps in the design of new airplanes. But when the two are confused—when, say, the general mistakes the parade ground for the battlefield itself—the consequences are potentially disastrous.

A Soviet-American Fetish: Industrial Farming

Before plunging into a discussion of the practice and logic of Soviet collectivization, we should recognize that the rationalization of farming on a huge, even national, scale was part of a faith shared by social engineers and agricultural planners throughout the world.[14] And they were conscious of being engaged in a common endeavor. Like the architects of the Congrés Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, they

kept in touch through journals, professional conferences, and exhibitions. The connections were strongest between American agronomists and their Russian colleagues—connections that were not entirely broken even during the Cold War. Working in vastly different economic and political environments, the Russians tended to be envious of the level of capitalization, particularly in mechanization, of American farms while the Americans were envious of the political scope of Soviet planning. The degree to which they were working together to create a new world of large-scale, rational, industrial agriculture can be judged by this brief account of their relationship.

The high tide of enthusiasm for applying industrial methods to agriculture in the United States stretched roughly from 1910 to the end of the 1930s. Agricultural engineers, a new specialty, were the main carriers of this enthusiasm; influenced by currents in their parent discipline, industrial engineering, and most particularly by the doctrines of the prophet of time-motion studies, Frederick Taylor, they reconceptualized the farm as a "food and fiber factory."[15] Taylorist principles of scientifically measuring work processes in order to break them down into simple, repetitive motions that an unskilled worker could learn quickly might work well enough on the factory floor,[16] but their application to the variegated and nonrepetitive requirements of growing crops was questionable. Agricultural engineers therefore turned to those aspects of farm operation that might be more easily standardized. They tried to rationalize the layout of farm buildings, to standardize machinery and tools, and to promote the mechanization of major grain crops.

The professional instincts of the agricultural engineers led them to try to replicate as much as possible the features of the modern factory. This impelled them to insist on enlarging the scale of the typical small farm so that it could mass-produce standard agricultural commodities, mechanize its operation, and thereby, it was thought, greatly reduce the unit cost of production.[17]

As we shall see later, the industrial model was applicable to some, but not all, of agriculture. It was nonetheless applied indiscriminately as a creed rather than a scientific hypothesis to be examined skeptically. The modernist confidence in huge scale, centralization of production, standardized mass commodities, and mechanization was so hegemonic in the leading sector of industry that it became an article of faith that the same principles would work, pari passu, in agriculture.

Many efforts were made to put this faith to the test. Perhaps the most audacious was the Thomas Campbell "farm" in Montana, begun —or, perhaps I should say, founded—in 1918.[18] It was an industrial

farm in more than one respect. Shares were sold by prospectuses describing the enterprise as an "industrial opportunity"; J. P. Morgan, the financier, helped to raise $2 million from the public. The Montana Farming Corporation was a monster wheat farm of ninety-five thousand acres, much of it leased from four Native American tribes. Despite the private investment, the enterprise would never have gotten off the ground without help and subsidies from the Department of Interior and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Proclaiming that farming was about 90 percent engineering and only 10 percent agriculture, Campbell set about standardizing as much of his operation as possible. He grew wheat and flax, two hardy crops that needed little if any attention between planting and harvest time.[19] The land he farmed was the agricultural equivalent of the bulldozed site of Brasília. It was virgin soil, with a natural fertility that would eliminate the need for fertilizer. The topography also vastly simplified matters: it was flat, with no forests, creeks, rocks, or ridges that would impede the smooth course of machinery over its surface. In other words, the selection of the simplest, most standardized crops and the leasing of something very close to a blank agricultural space were calculated to favor the application of industrial methods. In the first year Campbell bought thirty-three tractors, forty binders, ten threshing machines, four combines, and one hundred wagons; he employed about fifty men most of the year, but hired as many as two hundred during the peak season.[20]

This is not the place to chronicle the fortunes of the Montana Farming Corporation, and in any event Deborah Fitzgerald has done so splendidly.[21] Suffice it to note that a drought in the second year and the elimination of a government support for prices the following year led to a collapse that cost J. P. Morgan $1 million. The Campbell farm faced other problems besides weather and prices: soil differences, labor turnover, the difficulty of finding skilled, resourceful workers who would need little supervision. Although the corporation struggled on until Campbell's death in 1966, it provided no evidence that industrial farms were superior to family farms in efficiency and profitability. The advantages industrial farms did have over smaller producers were of another kind. Their very size gave them an edge in access to credit, political influence (relevant to taxes, support payments, and the avoidance of foreclosure), and marketing muscle. What they gave away in agility and quality labor they often made up for in their considerable political and economic clout.

Many large industrial farms managed along scientific lines were established in the 1920s and 1930s.[22] Some of them were the stepchildren of depression foreclosures that left banks and insurance companies holding many farms they could not sell. Such "chain farms," consisting of as many as six hundred farmsteads organized into one integrated operation (one farm to farrow pigs, say, and another to feed them out, along the lines of contemporary "contract farming" for poultry), were quite common, and buying into them was a speculative investment.[23] They proved no more competitive to the family farm than did Campbell's corporation. In fact, they were so highly capitalized that they were vulnerable to unfavorable credit markets and lower farm gate prices, given their high fixed costs in payroll and interest. The family farm could, by contrast, more easily tighten its belt and move into a subsistence mode.

The most striking proposal designed to reconcile the American small-property regime with huge economies of scale and scientific, centralized management was that of Mordecai Ezekial and Sherman Johnson in 1930. They outlined a "national farming corporation" that would incorporate all farms. It would be vertically integrated and centralized and "could move raw farming materials through the individual farms of the country, could establish production goals and quotas, distribute machinery, labor and capital, and move farm products from one region to another for processing and use. Bearing a striking resemblance to the industrial world, this organizational plan was a sort of gigantic conveyor belt."[24] Ezekial was no doubt influenced by his recent tour of Russian collective farms as well as by the plight of the depression-stricken economy. Johnson and Ezekial were hardly alone in calling for centralized industrial farming on a massive scale, not just as a response to economic crisis but as a matter of confidence in an ineluctable high-modernist future. The following expression of that confidence is fairly representative: "Collectivization is posed by history and economics. Politically, the small farmer or peasant is a drag on progress. Technically, he is as antiquated as the small machinists who once put automobiles together by hand in little wooden sheds. The Russians have been the first to see this clearly, and to adapt themselves to historical necessity."[25]

Behind these admiring references to Russia was less a specifically political ideology than a shared high-modernist faith. That faith was reinforced by something on the order of an improvised, high-modernist exchange program. A great many Russian agronomists and engineers came to the United States, which they regarded as the Mecca of industrial farming. Their tour of American agriculture nearly always included a visit to Campbell's Montana Farming Corporation and to M. L. Wilson, who in 1928 headed the Department of Agricultural Eco-

nomics at Montana State University and later became a high-level official in the Department of Agriculture under Henry Wallace. The Russians were so taken with Campbell's farm that they said they would provide him with 1 million acres if he would come to the Soviet Union and demonstrate his farming methods.[26]

Traffic in the other direction was just as brisk. The Soviet Union had hired thousands of American technicians and engineers to help in the design of various elements of Soviet industrial production, including the production of tractors and other farm machinery. By 1927, the Soviet Union had also purchased twenty-seven thousand American tractors. Many of the American visitors, such as Ezekial, admired Soviet state farms, which by 1930 offered the promise of collectivized agriculture on a massive scale. The Americans were impressed not just by the sheer size of the state farms but also by the fact that technical specialists—agronomists, economists, engineers, statisticians—were, it seemed, developing Russian production along rational, egalitarian lines. The failure of the Western market economy in 1930 reinforced the attractiveness of the Soviet experiment. Visitors traveling in either direction returned to their own country thinking that they had seen the future.[27]

As Deborah Fitzgerald and Lewis Feuer argue, the attraction that collectivization held for American agricultural modernizers had little to do with a belief in Marxism or an affinity for Soviet life.[28] "Rather it was because the Soviet idea of growing wheat on an industrial scale and in an industrial fashion was similar to American ideas about the direction American agriculture should take."[29] Soviet collectivization represented, to these American viewers, an enormous demonstration project without the political inconveniences of American institutions; "that is, the Americans viewed the giant Soviet farms as huge experiment stations on which Americans could try out their most radical ideas for increasing agricultural production, and, in particular, wheat production. Many of the things they wished to learn more about simply could not be tried in America, partly because it would cost too much, partly because no suitable large farmsite was available, and partly because many farmers and farm laborers would be alarmed at the implications of this experimentation."[30] The hope was that the Soviet experiment would be to American industrial agronomy more or less what the Tennessee Valley Authority was to be to American regional planning: a proving ground and a possible model for adoption.

Although Campbell did not accept the Soviet offer of a vast demonstration farm, others did. M. L. Wilson, Harold Ware (who had extensive experience in the Soviet Union), and Guy Riggin were invited to

plan a huge mechanized wheat farm of some 500,000 acres of virgin land. It would be, Wilson wrote to a friend, the largest mechanized wheat farm in the world. They planned the entire farm layout, labor force, machinery needs, crop rotations, and lockstep work schedule in a Chicago hotel room in two weeks in December 1928.[31] The fact that they imagined that such a farm *could* be planned in a Chicago hotel room underlines their presumption that the key issues were abstract, technical interrelationships that were context-free. As Fitzgerald perceptively explains: "Even in the U.S., those plans would have been optimistic, actually, because they were based on an unrealistic idealization of nature and human behavior. And insofar as the plans represented what the Americans would do if they had millions of acres of flat land, lots of laborers, and a government commitment to spare no expense in meeting production goals, *the plans were designed for an abstract, theoretical kind of place.* This agricultural place, which did not correspond to America, Russia, or any other actual location, obeyed the laws of physics and chemistry, recognized no political or ideological stance."[32]

The giant *sovkhoz*, named Verblud, which they established near Rostov-on-Don, one thousand miles south of Moscow, comprised 375,000 acres that were to be sown to wheat. As an economic proposition, it was an abject failure, although in the early years it did produce large quantities of wheat. The detailed reasons for the failure are of less interest for our purposes than the fact that most of them could be summarized under the rubric of *context*. It was the specific context of this specific farm that defeated them. The farm, unlike the plan, was not a hypothecated, generic, abstract farm but an unpredictable, complex, and particular farm, with its own unique combination of soils, social structure, administrative culture, weather, political strictures, machinery, roads, and the work skills and habits of its employees. As we shall see, it resembled Brasília in being the kind of failure typical of ambitious high-modernist schemes for which local knowledge, practice, and context are considered irrelevant or at best an annoyance to be circumvented.

Collectivization in Soviet Russia

> What we have here isn't a mechanism, it's people living here. You can't get them squared around until they get themselves arranged. I used to think of the revolution as a steam engine, but now I see that it's not.
> —Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur*

The collectivization of Soviet agriculture was an extreme but diagnostic case of authoritarian high-modernist planning. It represented an

unprecedented transformation of agrarian life and production, and it was imposed by all the brute force at the state's disposal. The officials who directed this massive change, moreover, were operating in relative ignorance of the ecological, social, and economic arrangements that underwrote the rural economy. They were flying blind.

Between early 1930 and 1934, the Soviet state waged a virtual war in the countryside. Realizing that he could not depend on the rural Soviets to "liquidate the *kulaks*" and collectivize, Stalin dispatched twenty-five thousand battle-tested, urban Communists and proletarians with full powers to requisition grain, arrest resistors, and collectivize. He was convinced that the peasantry was trying to bring down the Soviet state. In reply to a personal letter from Mikhail Sholokhov (author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*) alerting him to the fact that peasants along the Don were on the verge of starvation, Stalin replied, "The esteemed grain growers of your district (and not only of your district alone) carried on an 'Italian strike' (*ital'ianka*), sabotage!, and were not loathe to leave the workers and the Red Army without bread. That the sabotage was quiet and outwardly harmless (without bloodshed) does not change the fact that the esteemed grain growers waged what was virtually a 'quiet' war against Soviet power. A war of starvation, dear comrade Sholokhov."[33]

The human costs of that war are still in dispute, but they were undeniably grievous. Estimates of the death toll alone, as a result of the "dekulakization" and collectivization campaigns and the ensuing famine, range from a "modest" 3 or 4 million to, as some current Soviet figures indicate, more than 20 million. The higher estimates have, if anything, gained more credibility as new archival material has become available. Behind the deaths rose a level of social disruption and violence that often exceeded that of the civil war immediately following the revolution. Millions fled to the cities or to the frontier, the infamous gulag was vastly enlarged, open rebellion and famine raged in much of the countryside, and more than half of the nation's livestock (and draft power) was slaughtered.[34]

By 1934, the state had "won" its war with the peasantry. If ever a war earned the designation "Pyrrhic victory," this is the one. The *sovkhoz* (state farms) and *kolkhoz* (collective farms) failed to deliver on any of the specifically socialist goals envisioned by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and most Bolsheviks. They were an evident failure in raising the level of grain production or of producing cheap and abundant foodstuffs for an urban, industrializing workforce. They failed to become the technically efficient and innovative farms that Lenin had anticipated. Even in the realm of electrification, Lenin's touchstone of modernization, only

one in twenty-five collective farms had electricity by the eve of World War II. By no measure had the collectivization of agriculture created "new men and women" in the countryside or abolished the cultural difference between the country and the city. For the next half-century, the yields per hectare of many crops were stagnant or actually inferior to the levels recorded in the 1920s or the levels reached before the Revolution.[35]

At another level, collectivization was, in a curious state-centric way, a qualified success. Collectivization proved a rough-and-ready instrument for the twin goals of traditional statecraft: appropriation and political control. Though the Soviet kolkhoz may have failed badly at generating huge surpluses of foodstuffs, it served well enough as a means whereby the state could determine cropping patterns, fix real rural wages, appropriate a large share of whatever grain was produced, and politically emasculate the countryside.[36]

The great achievement, if one can call it that, of the Soviet state in the agricultural sector was to take a social and economic terrain singularly unfavorable to appropriation and control and to create institutional forms and production units far better adapted to monitoring, managing, appropriating, and controlling from above. The rural society that the Soviet state inherited (and for a time encouraged) was one in which the allies of the czarist state, the great landlords and the aristocratic officeholders, had been swept away and been replaced by smallholding and middle peasants, artisans, private traders, and all sorts of mobile laborers and lumpen elements.[37] Confronting a tumultuous, footloose, and "headless" (acephalous) rural society which was hard to control and which had few political assets, the Bolsheviks, like the scientific foresters, set about redesigning their environment with a few simple goals in mind. They created, in place of what they had inherited, a new landscape of large, hierarchical, state-managed farms whose cropping patterns and procurement quotas were centrally mandated and whose population was, by law, immobile. The system thus devised served for nearly sixty years as a mechanism for procurement and control at a massive cost in stagnation, waste, demoralization, and ecological failure.

That collectivized agriculture persisted for sixty years was a tribute less to the plan of the state than to the improvisations, gray markets, bartering, and ingenuity that partly compensated for its failures. Just as an "informal Brasília," which had no legitimate place in official plans, arose to make the city viable, so did a set of informal practices lying outside the formal command economy—and often outside Soviet law as well—arise to circumvent some of the colossal waste and

inefficiencies built into the system. Collectivized agriculture, in other words, never quite operated according to the hierarchical grid of its production plans and procurements.

What seems clear, in the brief account that follows, is that collectivization per se cannot be laid solely at the feet of Stalin, though he bore much responsibility for its exceptional speed and brutality.[38] A collectivized agriculture was always part of the Bolshevik map of the future, and the great procurement struggles of the late 1920s could hardly have had any other outcome in the context of the decision to pursue forced-draft industrialization. The party's high-modernist faith in great collectivist schemes survived long after the desperate improvisations of the early 1930s. That faith, which claimed to be both aesthetic and scientific, is clearly visible in a much later agrarian high-modernist dream: namely, Khrushchev's virgin lands scheme, launched well after Stalin's death and after his crimes during collectivization had been publicly denounced. What is remarkable is how long these beliefs and structures prevailed, in spite of the evidence of their manifold failings.

Round One: The Bolshevik State and the Peasantry

> It sometimes seems to me that if I could persuade everyone to say "systematize" each time he wanted to say "liberate" and to say "mobilization" every time he wanted to say "reform" or "progress" I would not have to write long books about government-peasant interaction in Russia.
>
> —George Yaney, *The Urge to Mobilize*

In the particular book quoted above, Yaney was writing about prerevolutionary Russia, but he could just as easily have been writing about the Bolshevik state. Until 1930, the continuities between the rural policy of the Leninist state and its czarist predecessor are more striking than their differences. There is the same belief in reform from above and in large, modern, mechanized farms as the key to productive agriculture. There is also, alas, the same high level of ignorance about a very complex rural economy coupled, disastrously, with heavy-handed raids on the countryside to seize grain by force. Although the continuities persisted even after the institutional revolution of 1930, what is new about the all-out drive to collectivize is the revolutionary state's willingness to completely remake the institutional landscape of the agrarian sector, and at whatever cost.

The new Bolshevik state faced a rural society that was significantly more opaque, resistant, autonomous, and hostile than the one encountered by the czarist bureaucracy. If the czarist officials had provoked massive defiance and evasion in their "crude Muscovite tribute-collecting methods" during World War I,[39] there was every reason to suspect that the Bolsheviks would have an even harder time squeezing grain from the countryside.

If much of the countryside was hostile to the Bolsheviks, the sentiment was abundantly reciprocated. For Lenin, as we have seen, the Land Decree, which gave to the peasants the land that they had seized, had been a strategic maneuver designed to buy rural quiescence while power was consolidated; he had no doubt that peasant smallholdings must eventually be abolished in favor of large, socialized farms. For Trotsky, the sooner what he called "the Russia of icons and cockroaches" was transformed and "urbanized," the better. And for many of the newly urbanized, rank-and-file Bolsheviks, the abolition of the "dark and backward peasant world" was a "vital part of their own emerging personal and working-class identity."[40]

The peasantry was virtually terra incognita to the Bolsheviks. At the time of the revolution, the party had throughout Russia a grand total of 494 "peasant" members (most of them probably rural intelligentsia).[41] Most villagers had never seen a Communist, although they may well have heard of the Bolshevik decree confirming peasant ownership of the land that had been seized. The only revolutionary party with any rural following was the Social Revolutionaries, whose populist roots tended to make them unsympathetic to Lenin's authoritarian outlook.

The effects of the revolutionary process itself had rendered rural society more opaque and hence more difficult to tax. There had already been a sweeping seizure of land, dignified, retrospectively, by the inappropriate term "land reform." In fact, after the collapse of the offensive into Austria during the war and the subsequent mass desertions, much of the land of the gentry and church, as well as "crown land," had been absorbed by the peasantry. Rich peasants cultivating independent farmsteads (the "separators" of the Stolypin reforms) were typically forced back into the village allotments, and rural society was in effect radically compressed. The very rich had been dispossessed, and many of the very poor became smallholders for the first time in their lives. According to one set of figures, the number of landless rural laborers in Russia dropped by half, and the average peasant holding increased by 20 percent (in the Ukraine, by 100 percent). A total of 248 million acres was confiscated, almost always by local initiative, from large and small landlords and added to peasant holdings, which now averaged about 70 acres per household.[42]

From the perspective of a tax official or a military procurement unit, the situation was nearly unfathomable. The land-tenure status in

each village had changed dramatically. Prior landholding records, if they existed at all, were entirely unreliable as a guide to current land claims. Each village was unique in many respects, and, even if it could in principle have been "mapped," the population's mobility and military turmoil of the period all but guaranteed that the map would have been made obsolete in six months or sooner. The combination, then, of smallholdings, communal tenure, and constant change, both spatial and temporal, operated as an impenetrable barrier to any finely tuned tax system.

Two additional consequences of the revolution in the countryside compounded the difficulties of state officials. Before 1917, large peasant farms and landlord enterprises had produced nearly three-fourths of the grain marketed for domestic use and export. It was this sector of the rural economy that had fed the cities. Now it was gone. The bulk of the remaining cultivators were consuming a much larger share of their own yield. They would not surrender this grain without a fight. The new, more egalitarian distribution of land meant that extracting anything like the czarist "take" in grain would bring the Bolsheviks in conflict with the subsistence needs of small and middle peasants.[43]

The second and perhaps decisive consequence of the revolution was that it had greatly enhanced the determination and capacity of peasant communities to resist the state. Every revolution creates a temporary power vacuum when the power of the ancien regime has been destroyed but the revolutionary regime has not yet asserted itself throughout the territory. Inasmuch as the Bolsheviks were largely urban and found themselves fighting an extended civil war, the power vacuum in much of the countryside was unusually pronounced. It was the first time, as Orlando Figes reminds us, that the villages, although in straitened circumstances, were free to organize their own affairs.[44] As we have seen, the villagers typically forced out or burned out the gentry, seized the land (including rights to common land and forests), and forced the separators back into the communes. The villages tended to behave as autonomous republics, well disposed to the Reds as long as they confirmed the local "revolution," but strongly resistant to forced levies of grain, livestock, or men from any quarter. In this situation, the fledgling Bolshevik state, arriving as it often did in the form of military plunder, must have been experienced by the peasantry as a reconquest of the countryside by the state—as a brand of colonization that threatened their newly won autonomy.

Given the political atmosphere in rural Russia, even a government having detailed knowledge of the agricultural economy, a local base of support, and a knack for diplomatic tact would have confronted great

difficulties. The Bolsheviks lacked all three. A tax system based on income or wealth was possible only with a valid cadastral map and an up-to-date census, neither of which existed. Farm income, moreover, varied greatly with regard to yields and prices from year to year, so any income tax would have had to have been exceptionally sensitive to these conditions in local harvests. Not only did the new state lack the basic information it needed to govern efficiently, it had also largely destroyed the czarist state apparatus of local officials, gentry, and specialists in finance and agronomy who had managed, however inadequately, to collect taxes and grain during the war. Above all, the Bolsheviks generally lacked the village-level native trackers who could have helped them to find their way in a hostile and confusing environment. The village soviets that were supposed to play this role were typically headed by villagers loyal to local interests rather than to the center. An alternative organ, the Committee of the Rural Poor (*kombedy*), which purported to represent the rural proletariat in local class struggles, was either successfully coopted by the village or locked in often violent conflict with the village soviet.[45]

The inscrutability of the mir to most Bolshevik officials was not simply a result of their urban social origins and the admitted complexity of village affairs. It was also the product of a conscious local strategy, one that had demonstrated its protective value in earlier conflicts with the gentry and the state. The local commune had a long history of underreporting its arable land and overreporting its population in order to appear as poor and untaxable as possible.[46] As a result of such deception in the census of 1917, the arable land in Russia had been underestimated by about 15 percent. Now, in addition to the woodland, pastures, and open land that the peasantry had earlier converted into cropland without reporting it, they had an interest in hiding much of the land they had just seized from the landlords and the gentry. Village committees did, of course, keep records for allocating allotment land, organizing communal plow teams, fixing grazing schedules, and so on, but none of these records was made available either to officials or to the kombedy. A popular saying of the period captures the situation nicely: the peasant "owned by decree" (that is, the Land Decree) but "lived secretly."

How did the hard-pressed state find its way in this labyrinth? Where possible, the Bolsheviks did try to establish large state farms or collective farms. Many of these were "Potemkin collectives" designed merely to give cover of legitimacy to existing practices. But where they were not a sham, they revealed the political and administrative attractiveness of a radical simplification of the landholding and tax-

paying unit in the countryside. Yaney's summary of the logic entailed is impeccable.

> From a technical point of view it was infinitely easier to plough up large units of land without regard for individual claims than it was to identify each family allotment, measure its value in the peasants' traditional terms, and then painfully transpose it from scattered strips into a consolidated farm. Then, too, a capital city administrator could not help but prefer to supervise and tax large productive units and not have to deal with separate farmers. . . . The collective had a dual appeal to authentic agrarian reformers. They represented a social ideal for rhetorical purposes, and at the same time they seemed to simplify the technical problems of land reform and state control.[47]

In the turmoil of 1917–21, not many such agrarian experiments were possible, and those that were attempted generally failed badly. They were, however, a straw in the wind for the full collectivization campaign a decade later.

Unable to remake the rural landscape, the Bolsheviks turned to the same methods of forced tribute under martial law that had been used by their czarist predecessors during the war. The term "martial law," however, conveys an orderliness that was absent from actual practice. Armed bands (*otriady*)—some authorized and others formed spontaneously by hungry townsmen—plundered the countryside during the grain crisis of spring and summer 1918, securing whatever they could. Insofar as grain procurement quotas were set at all, they were "purely mechanical accounting figures originating from an unreliable estimate of arable and assuming a good harvest." They were, from the beginning, "fictional and unfulfillable."[48] The procurement of grain looked more like plunder and theft than delivery and purchase. Over 150 distinct uprisings, by one estimate, erupted against the state's grain seizures. Since the Bolsheviks had, in March 1918, renamed themselves the Communist Party, many of the rebels claimed to be for the Bolsheviks and the Soviets (whom they associated with the Land Decree) and against the Communists. Lenin, referring to the peasant uprisings in Tambov, the Volga, and the Ukraine, declared that they posed more of a threat than all the Whites put together. Desperate peasant resistance had in fact all but starved the cities out of existence,[49] and in early 1921, the party, for the first time, turned its guns on its own rebellious sailors and workers in Kronstadt. At this point the beleaguered party beat a tactical retreat, abandoning War Communism and inaugurating the New Economic Policy (NEP), which condoned free trade and small property. As Figes notes, "Having defeated the White Army, backed by eight Western powers, the Bolshevik government surrendered before its own peasants."[50] It was a hollow victory. The deaths from the hunger and epidemics of 1921–22 nearly equaled the toll claimed by World War I and the civil war combined.

Round Two: High Modernism and Procurement

The conjunction of a high-modernist faith in what agriculture should look like in the future and a more immediate crisis of state appropriation helped to spark the all-out drive to collectivization in the winter of 1929–30. In focusing on just these two issues, we must necessarily leave to others (and they are a multitude) the gripping issues of the human costs of collectivization, the struggle with the "right" opposition led by Bukharin, and whether Stalin intended to liquidate Ukrainian culture as well as many Ukrainians.

There is no doubt that Stalin shared Lenin's faith in industrial agriculture. The aim of collectivization, he said in May 1928, was "to transfer from small, backward, and fragmented peasant farms to consolidated, big, public farms, provided with machines, equipped with the data of science, and capable of producing the greatest quantity of grain for the market."[51]

This dream had been deferred in 1921. There had been some hope that a gradually expanding collective sector in the 1920s could provide as much as one-third of the country's grain needs. Instead, the collectivized sector (both the state farms and the collective farms), which absorbed 10 percent of the labor force, produced a dismal 2.2 percent of gross farm production.[52] When Stalin decided on a crash industrialization program, it was clear that the existing socialist agricultural sector could not provide either the food for a rapidly growing urban workforce or the grain exports necessary to finance the imported technology needed for industrial growth. The middle and rich peasants, many of them newly prosperous since the New Economic Policy, had the grain he needed.

Beginning in 1928, the official requisition policy put the state on a collision course with the peasantry. The mandated delivery price of grain was one-fifth of the market price, and the regime returned to using police methods as peasant resistance stiffened.[53] When the procurements faltered, those who refused to deliver what was required (who, along with anyone else opposing collectivization, were called kulaks, regardless of their economic standing) were arrested for deportation or execution, and all their grain, equipment, land, and livestock were seized and sold. The orders sent to those directly in charge of grain procurement specified that they were to arrange meetings of

poor peasants to make it seem as if the initiative had come from below. It was in the context of this war over grain, and not as a carefully planned policy initiative, that the decision to force "total" (*sploshnaia*) collectivization was made in late 1929. Scholars who agree on little else are in accord on this point: the overriding purpose of collectivization was to ensure the seizure of grain. Fitzpatrick begins her study of the collectives with this assertion: "The main purpose of collectivization was to increase state grain procurements and reduce the peasants' ability to withhold grain from the market. This purpose was obvious to peasants from the start, since the collectivization drive of the winter of 1929–30 was the culmination of more than two years of bitter struggle between the peasants and the state over grain procurements."[54] Robert Conquest concurs: "The collective farms were essentially a chosen mechanism for extracting grain and other products."[55]

It appears that this was also how the vast majority of the peasantry saw it, judging from their determined resistance and what we know of their views. The seizure of grain threatened their survival. The peasant depicted in Andrei Platonov's novel about collectivization sees how the seizure of grain negates the earlier land reform: "It's a sly business. First you hand over the land, and then you take away the grain, right down to the last kernel. You can choke on land like that! The muzhik doesn't have anything left from the land except the horizon. Who are you fooling?"[56] At least as threatening was the loss of what little margin of social and economic autonomy the peasantry had achieved since the revolution. Even poor peasants were afraid of collectivization, because "it would involve giving up one's land and implements and working with other families, under orders, not temporarily, as in the army, but forever—it means the barracks for life."[57] Unable to rely on any significant rural support, Stalin dispatched twenty-five thousand "plenipotentiaries" (party members) from the towns and factories "to destroy the peasant commune and replace it by a collective economy subordinate to the state," whatever the cost.[58]

Authoritarian High-Modernist Theory and the Practice of Serfdom

If the move to "total" collectivization was directly animated by the party's determination to seize the land and the crops sown on it once and for all, it was a determination filtered through a high-modernist lens. Although the Bolsheviks might disagree about means, they did think they knew exactly what modern agriculture should look like in the end; their understanding was as much visual as scientific. Modern agriculture was to be large in scale, the larger the better; it was to be highly mechanized and run hierarchically along scientific, Taylorist principles. Above all, the cultivators were to resemble a highly skilled and disciplined proletariat, not a peasantry. Stalin himself, before practical failures discredited a faith in colossal projects, favored collective farms ("grain factories") of 125,000 to 250,000 acres, as in the American-assisted scheme described earlier.[59]

The utopian abstraction of the vision was matched, on the ground, by wildly unrealistic planning. Given a map and a few assumptions about scale and mechanization, a specialist could devise a plan with little reference to local knowledge and conditions. A visiting agricultural official wrote back to Moscow from the Urals in March 1930 to complain that, "on the instruction of the Raion Executive Committee, twelve agronomists have been sitting for twenty days composing an operational-production plan for the non-existent raion commune without ever leaving their offices or going out into the field."[60] When another bureaucratic monstrosity in Velikie Lukie in the west proved unwieldy, the planners simply reduced the scale without sacrificing abstraction. They divided the 80,000-hectare scheme into thirty-two equal squares of 2,500 hectares each, with one square constituting a kolkhoz. "The squares were drawn on a map without any reference to actual villages, settlements, rivers, hills, swamps or other demographic and topological characteristics of the land."[61]

Semiotically, we cannot understand this modernist vision of agriculture as an isolated ideological fragment. It is always seen as the negation of the existing rural world. A kolkhoz is meant to replace a mir or village, machines to replace horse-drawn plows and hand labor, proletarian workers to replace peasants, scientific agriculture to replace folk tradition and superstition, education to replace ignorance and *malokulturnyi*, and abundance to replace bare subsistence. Collectivization was meant to spell the end of the peasantry and its way of life. The introduction of a socialist economy entailed a cultural revolution as well; the "dark" narod, the peasants who were perhaps the great remaining, intractable threat to the Bolshevik state, were to be replaced by rational, industrious, de-Christianized, progressive-thinking kolkhoz workers.[62] The scale of collectivization was intended to efface the peasantry and its institutions, thereby narrowing the gulf between the rural and urban worlds. Underlying the whole plan, of course, was the assumption that the great collective farms would operate like factories in a centralized economy, in this case fulfilling state orders for grain and other agricultural products. As if to drive the point home, the state confiscated roughly 63 percent of the entire harvest in 1931.

From a central planner's perspective, one great advantage of collectivization is that the state acquired control over how much of each crop was sown. Starting with the state's needs for grains, meat, dairy products, and so on, the state could theoretically build those needs into its instructions to the collective sector. In practice, the sowing plans imposed from above were often wholly unreasonable. The land departments, which prepared the plans, knew little about the crops they were mandating, the inputs needed to grow them locally, or local soil conditions. Nevertheless, they had quotas to fill, and fill them they did. When, in 1935, A. Iakovlev, the head of the Central Committee's agricultural department, called for collective farms to be managed by "permanent cadres" who "genuinely knew their fields," he implied that the present incumbents did not.[63] We catch a glimpse of the disasters from the Great Purges of 1936–37, when a certain amount of peasant criticism of kolkhoz officials was briefly encouraged in order to detect "wreckers." One kolkhoz was instructed to plow meadows and open land, without which they could not have fed their livestock. Another received sowing orders that doubled the previous acreage allotted for hay fields by taking in private plots and quicksands.[64]

The planners clearly favored monoculture and a far-reaching, strict division of labor. Entire regions, and certainly individual *kolkhozy*, were increasingly specialized, producing only, say, wheat, livestock, cotton, or potatoes.[65] In the case of livestock production, one kolkhoz would produce fodder for beef cattle or hogs while another would raise and breed them. The logic behind kolkhoz and regional specialization was roughly comparable to the logic behind functionally specific urban zones. Specialization reduced the number of variables that agronomists had to consider; it also increased the administrative routinization of work and hence the power and knowledge of central officials.

Procurement followed a comparable centralizing logic. Starting with the needs of the plan and a usually unreliable estimate of the harvest, a series of quotas for every oblast, *raion*, and kolkhoz was mechanically derived. Each kolkhoz then claimed that its quota was impossible to fulfill and appealed to have it lowered. Actually meeting a quota, they knew from bitter experience, only raised the ante for the next round of procurements. In this respect collective farmers were in a more precarious situation than industrial workers, who still received their wages and ration cards whether or not the factory met its quota. For the *kolkhozniki*, however, meeting the quota might mean starvation. Indeed, the great famine of 1933–34 can only be called a collectivization and procurement famine. Those who were tempted to make

trouble risked running afoul of a more grisly quota: the one for kulaks and enemies of the state.

For much of the peasantry, the authoritarian labor regime of the kolkhoz seemed not only to jeopardize their subsistence but to revoke many of the freedoms they had won since their emancipation in 1861. They compared collectivization to the serfdom their grandparents remembered. As one early sovkhoz worker put it, "The *sovkhozy* are always forcing the peasant to work; they make the peasants weed their fields. And they don't even give us bread or water. What will come of all this? It's like *barschina* [feudal labor dues] all over again."[66] The peasants began to say that the acronym for the All-Union Communist Party—VKP—stood for *vtoroe krepostnoe pravo*, or "second serfdom."[67] The parallel was not a mere figure of speech; the resemblances to serfdom were remarkable.[68] The kolkhoz members were required to work on the state's land at least half-time for wages, in cash or kind, that were derisory. They depended largely on their own small private plots to grow the food they needed (other than grain), although they had little free time to cultivate their gardens.[69] The quantity to be delivered and price paid for kolkhoz produce was set by the state. The kolkhozniki owed annual corvée labor dues for roadwork and cartage. They were obliged to hand over quotas of milk, meat, eggs, and so on from their private plots. The collective's officials, like feudal masters, were wont to use kolkhoz labor for their private sidelines and had, in practice if not in law, the arbitrary power to insult, beat, or deport the peasants. As they were under serfdom, they were legally immobilized. An internal passport system was reintroduced to clear the cities of "undesirable and unproductive residents" and to make sure that the peasantry did not flee. Laws were passed to deprive the peasantry of the firearms they used for hunting. Finally, the kolkhozniki living outside the village nucleus (khutor dwellers), often on their old farmsteads, were forcibly relocated, beginning in 1939. This last resettlement affected more than half a million peasants.

The resulting labor rules, property regime, and settlement pattern did in fact resemble a cross between plantation or estate agriculture on one hand and feudal servitude on the other.

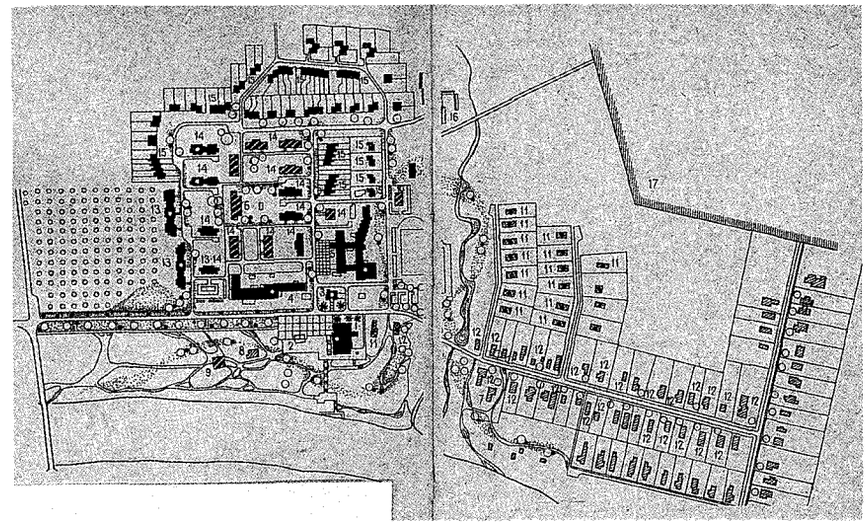
As a vast, state-imposed blueprint for revolutionary change, collectivization was at least as notable for what it destroyed as for what it built. The initial intent of collectivization was not just to crush the resistance of well-to-do peasants and grab their land; it was also to dismantle the social unit through which that resistance was expressed: the mir. The peasant commune had typically been the vehicle for organizing land seizures during the revolution, for orchestrating land use

and grazing, for managing local affairs generally, and for opposing procurements.[70] The party had every reason to fear that if the collectives were based on the traditional village, they would simply reinforce the basic unit of peasant resistance. Hadn't the village soviets quickly escaped the state's control? Huge collectives, then, had the decided advantage of bypassing village structures altogether. They could be run by a board consisting of cadres and specialists. If the giant kolkhoz was then divided into sections, one specialist could be named manager of each, "'*like the bailiffs in the old days*' [of serfdom] as [one] . . . report wryly noted."[71] Eventually, except in frontier areas, practical considerations prevailed and a majority of the kolkhozy coincided roughly with the earlier peasant commune and its lands.

The kolkhoz was not, however, just window dressing hiding a traditional commune. Almost everything had changed. All the focal points for an autonomous public life had been eliminated. The tavern, rural fairs and markets, the church, and the local mill disappeared; in their places stood the kolkhoz office, the public meeting room, and the school. Nonstate public spaces gave way to the state spaces of government agencies, albeit local ones.

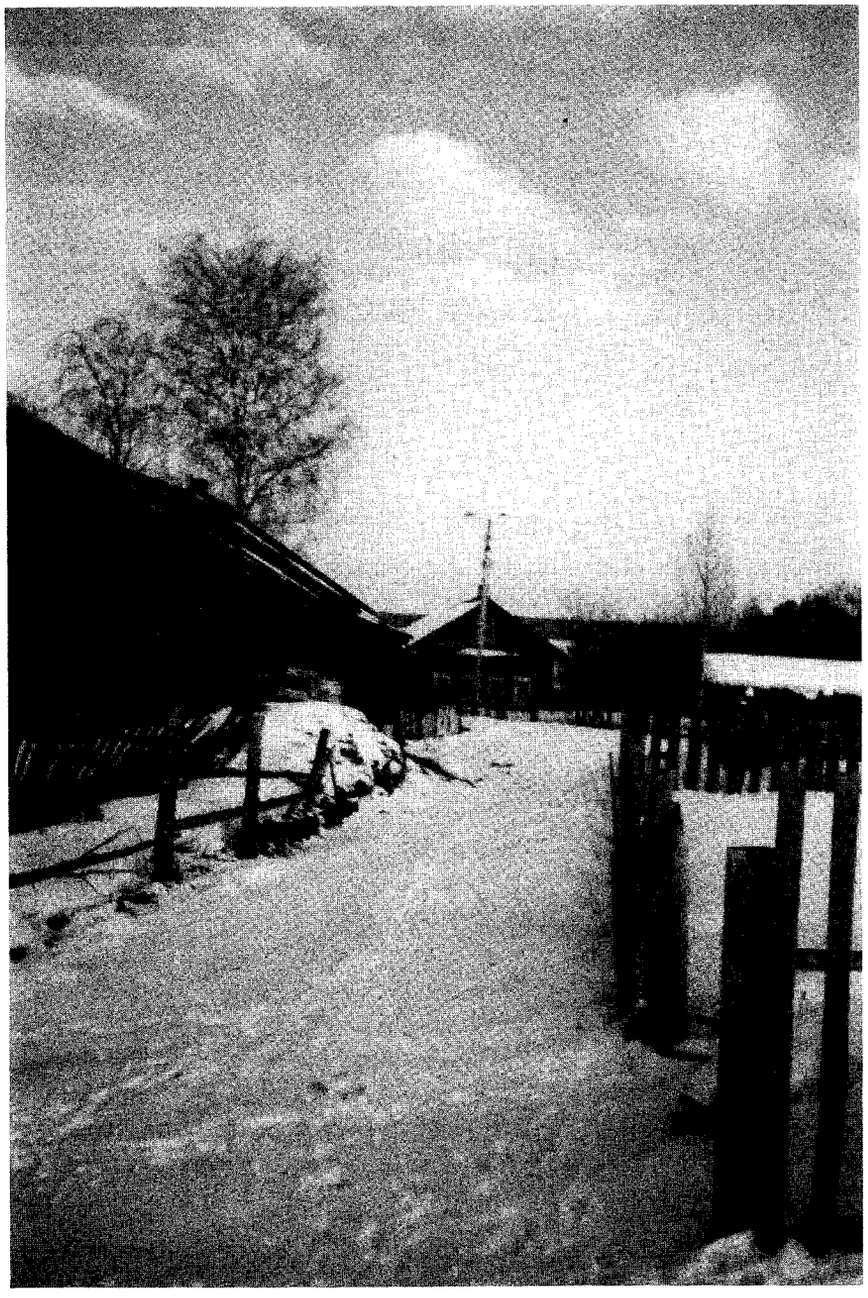
The concentration, legibility, and centralization of social organization and production can be seen in the map of the state farm at Verchnyua Troitsa (Upper Trinity) in Tver Oblast (figure 28).[72] Much of the old village has been removed from the center and relocated on the outskirts (legend reference 11).[73] Two-story apartment houses containing sixteen flats each have been clustered near the center (legend references 13, 14, 15; see also figure 29), while the local administration and trade center, school, and community building, all public institutions run by the state, lie close to the center of the new grid. Even allowing for the exaggerated formalism of the map, the state farm is a far cry from the sprawl and autonomous institutional order of the precollectivized village; a photograph showing the old-style housing and a lane illustrates the stark visual contrast (see figure 30).

Compared to Haussmann's retrofitting of the physical geography of Paris to make it legible and to facilitate state domination, the Bolsheviks' retrofitting of rural Russia was far more thoroughgoing. In place of an opaque and often obstinate mir, it had fashioned a legible kolkhoz. In place of myriad small farms, it had created a single, local economic unit.[74] With the establishment of hierarchical state farms, a quasi-autonomous petite bourgeoisie was replaced with dependent employees. In place, therefore, of an agriculture in which planting, harvesting, and marketing decisions were in the hands of individual households, the party-state had built a rural economy where all these decisions would be made centrally. In place of a peasantry that was



28. Plan of the state farm at Verchnyua Troitsa (Upper Trinity) in Tver Oblast, showing the following sites: *1*, community center; *2*, monument; *3*, hotel; *4*, local administration and trade center; *5*, school; *6*, kindergarten; *7–8*, museums; *9*, shop; *10*, bathhouse; *11*, old wooden house moved from new construction area; *12*, old village; *13–15*, two- and three-story houses; *16*, garage (private); and *17*, agricultural sites (farm, storage, water tower, and so on)

29. At Verchnyua Troitsa, one of the new village's two-story houses, each containing sixteen flats



30. Houses along a lane in the old village at Verchnyua Troitsa

technically independent, it had created a peasantry that was directly dependent on the state for combines and tractors, fertilizer, and seeds. In place of a peasant economy whose harvests, income, and profits were well-nigh indecipherable, it had created units that were ideal for simple and direct appropriation. In place of a variety of social units with their own unique histories and practices, it had created homologous units of accounting that could all be fitted into a national administrative grid. The logic was not unlike the management scheme at McDonald's: modular, similarly designed units producing similar products, according to a common formula and work routine. Units can easily be duplicated across the landscape, and the inspectors coming to assess their operations enter legible domains which they can evaluate with a single checklist.

Any comprehensive assessment of sixty years of collectivization would require both archival material only now becoming available and abler hands than my own. What must strike even a casual student of collectivization, however, is how it largely failed in *each* of its high-modernist aims, despite huge investments in machinery, infrastructure, and agronomic research. Its successes, paradoxically, were in the domain of traditional statecraft. The state managed to get its hands on enough grain to push rapid industrialization, even while contending with staggering inefficiencies, stagnant yields, and ecological devastation.[75] The state also managed, at great human cost, to eliminate the social basis of organized, public opposition from the rural population. On the other hand, the state's capacity for realizing its vision of large, productive, efficient, scientifically advanced farms growing high-quality products for market was virtually nil.

The collectives that the state had created manifested in some ways the facade of modern agriculture without its substance. The farms *were* highly mechanized (by world standards), and they *were* managed by officials with degrees in agronomy and engineering. Demonstration farms really did achieve large yields, although often at prohibitive costs.[76] But in the end none of this could disguise the many failures of Soviet agriculture. Only three sources of these failures are noted here, because they will concern us later.[77] First, having taken from the peasants both their (relative) independence and autonomy as well as their land and grain, the state created a class of essentially unfree laborers who responded with all the forms of foot-dragging and resistance practiced by unfree laborers everywhere. Second, the unitary administrative structure and imperatives of central planning created a clumsy machine that was utterly unresponsive to local knowledge or to local conditions. Finally, the Leninist political structure of the Soviet Union

gave agriculture officials little or no incentive to adapt to, or negotiate with, its rural subjects. The very capacity of the state to essentially reenserf rural producers, dismantle their institutions, and impose its will, in the crude sense of appropriation, goes a long way toward explaining the state's failure to realize anything but a simulacrum of the high-modernist agriculture that Lenin so prized.

State Landscapes of Control and Appropriation

Drawing on the history of Soviet collectivization, I shall now venture a few more frankly speculative ideas about the institutional logic of authoritarian high modernism. Then I shall suggest a way of grasping why such massive social bulldozing may have worked tolerably well for some purposes but failed dismally for others—an issue to which we shall return in later chapters.

The headlong drive to collectivization was animated by the short-term goal of seizing enough grain to push rapid industrialization.[78] Threats and violence had worked, up to a point, for the harvests of 1928 and 1929, but each annual turn of the screw elicited more evasion and resistance from the peasantry. The bitter fact was that the Soviet state faced an exceptionally diverse population of commune-based smallholders whose economic and social affairs were nearly unintelligible to the center. These circumstances offered some strategic advantages to a peasantry waging a quiet guerrilla war (punctuated by open revolt) against state claims. The state, under the existing property regime, could only look forward to a bruising struggle for grain each year, with no assurance of success.

Stalin chose this moment to strike a decisive blow. He imposed a designed and legible rural landscape that would be far more amenable to appropriation, control, and central transformation. The social and economic landscape he had in mind was of course the industrial model of advanced agriculture—large, mechanized farms run along factory lines and coordinated by state planning.

It was a case of the "newest state" meeting the "oldest class" and attempting to remake it into some reasonable facsimile of a proletariat. Compared to the peasantry, the proletariat was already relatively more legible as a class, and not just because of its central place in Marxist theory. The proletariat's work regimen was regulated by factory hours and by man-made techniques of production. In the case of new industrial projects like the great steel complex at Magnitogorsk, the planners could start virtually from zero, as with Brasília. The peasants, on the other hand, represented a welter of small, individual household enterprises. Their settlement pattern and social organization had a historical logic far deeper than that of the factory floor.

One purpose of collectivization was to destroy these economic and social units, which were hostile to state control, and to force the peasantry into an institutional straitjacket of the state's devising. The new institutional order of collective farms would now be compatible with the state's purposes of appropriation and directed development. Given the quasi–civil war conditions of the countryside, the solution was as much a product of military occupation and "pacification" as of "socialist transformation."[79]

It is possible, I believe, to say something more generally about the "elective affinity" between authoritarian high modernism and certain institutional arrangements.[80] What follows is rather crude and provisional, but it will serve as a point of departure. High-modernist ideologies embody a doctrinal preference for certain social arrangements. *Authoritarian* high-modernist *states*, on the other hand, take the next step. They attempt, and often succeed, in imposing those preferences on their population. Most of the preferences can be deduced from the criteria of legibility, appropriation, and centralization of control. To the degree that the institutional arrangements can be readily monitored and directed from the center and can be easily taxed (in the broadest sense of taxation), then they are likely to be promoted. The implicit goals behind these comparisons are not unlike the goals of premodern statecraft.[81] Legibility, after all, is a prerequisite of appropriation as well as of authoritarian transformation. The difference, and it is a crucial one, lies in the wholly new scale of ambition and intervention entertained by high modernism.

The principles of standardization, central control, and synoptic legibility to the center could be applied to many other fields; those noted in the accompanying table are only suggestive. If we were to apply them to education, for example, the most illegible educational system would be completely informal, nonstandardized instruction determined entirely by local mutuality. The most legible educational system would resemble Hippolyte Taine's description of French education in the nineteenth century, when "the Minister of Education could pride himself, just by looking at his watch, which page of Virgil all schoolboys of the Empire were annotating at that exact moment."[82] A more exhaustive table would replace the dichotomies with more elaborate continua (open commons landholding, for example, is less legible and taxable than closed commons landholding, which in turn is less legible than private freeholding, which is less legible than state ownership). It is no coincidence that the more legible or appropriable form can more read-

Legibility of Social Groups, Institutions, and Practices

	Illegible	Legible
Settlements	• Temporary encampments of hunter-gatherers, nomads, slash-and-burn cultivators, pioneers, and gypsies	• Permanent villages, estates, and plantations of sedentary peoples
	• Unplanned cities and neighborhoods: Bruges in 1500, medina of Damascus, Faubourg Saint-Antoine, Paris, in 1800	• Planned grid cities and neighborhoods: Brasília, Chicago
Economic units	• Small property, petite bourgeoisie	• Large property
	• Small peasant farms	• Large farms
	• Artisanal production	• Factories (proletariat)
	• Small shops	• Large commercial establishments
	• Informal economy, "off the books"	• Formal economy, "on the books"
Property regimes	• Open commons, communal property	• Collective farms
	• Private property	• State property
	• Local records	• National cadastral survey
Technical and resource organizations		
Water	• Local customary use, local irrigation societies	• Centralized dam, irrigation control
Transportation	• Decentralized webs and networks	• Centralized hubs
Energy	• Cow pats and brushwood gathered locally or local electric generating stations	• Large generating stations in urban centers
Identification	• Unregulated local naming customs	• Permanent patronyms
	• No state documentation of citizens	• National system of identification cards, documents, or passports

ily be converted into a source of rent—either as private property or as the monopoly rent of the state.

The Limits of Authoritarian High Modernism

When are high-modernist arrangements likely to work and when are they likely to fail? The abject performance of Soviet agriculture as an efficient producer of foodstuffs was, in retrospect, "overdetermined"

by many causes having little to do with high modernism per se: the radically mistaken biological theories of Trofim Lysenko, Stalin's obsessions, conscription during World War II, and the weather. And it is apparent that centralized high-modernist solutions can be the most efficient, equitable, and satisfactory for many tasks. Space exploration, the planning of transportation networks, flood control, airplane manufacturing, and other endeavors may require huge organizations minutely coordinated by a few experts. The control of epidemics or of pollution requires a center staffed by experts receiving and digesting standard information from hundreds of reporting units.

On the other hand, these methods seem singularly maladroit at such tasks as putting a really good meal on the table or performing surgery. This issue will be addressed at length in chapter 8, but some valuably suggestive evidence can be gleaned from Soviet agriculture. If we think of particular crops, it is apparent that collective farms were successful at growing some crops, especially the major grains: wheat, rye, oats, barley, and maize. They were notably inefficient at turning out other products, especially fruits, vegetables, small livestock, eggs, dairy products, and flowers. Most of these crops were supplied from the minuscule private plots of the kolkhoz members, even at the height of collectivization.[83] The systematic differences between these two categories of crops helps to explain why their institutional setting might vary.

Let us take wheat as an example of what I will call a "proletarian crop" and compare it with red raspberries, which I think of as the ultimate "petit-bourgeois crop." Wheat lends itself to extensive large-scale farming and mechanization. One might say that wheat is to collectivized agriculture what the Norway spruce is to centrally managed, scientific forestry. Once planted, it needs little care until harvest, when a combine can cut and thresh the grain in one operation and then blow it into trucks bound for granaries or into railroad cars. Relatively sturdy in the ground, wheat remains sturdy once harvested. It is relatively easy to store for extended periods with only small losses to spoilage. The red raspberry bush, on the other hand, requires a particular soil to be fruitful; it must be pruned annually; it requires more than one picking, and it is virtually impossible to pick by machine. Once packed, raspberries last only a few days under the best conditions. They will spoil within hours if packed too tightly or if stored at too high a temperature. At virtually every stage the raspberry crop needs delicate handling and speed, or all is lost.

Little wonder, then, that fruits and vegetables—petit-bourgeois crops—were typically not grown as kolkhoz crops but rather as sidelines produced by individual households. The collective sector in effect

ceded such crops to those who had the personal interest, incentive, and horticultural skills to grow them successfully. Such crops can, in principle, be grown by huge centralized enterprises as well, but they must be enterprises that are elaborately attentive to the care of the crops and to the care of the labor that tends them. Even where such crops are grown on large farms, the farms tend to be family enterprises of smaller size than wheat farms and are insistent on a stable, knowledgeable workforce. In these situations, the small family enterprise has, in the terms of neoclassical economics, a comparative advantage.

Another way in which wheat production is different from raspberry production is that the growing of wheat involves a modest number of routines that, because the grain is robust, allow some slack or play. The crop will take some abuse. Raspberry growers, because successful cultivation of their crop is complex and the fruit is delicate, must be adaptive, nimble, and exceptionally attentive. Successful raspberry growing requires, in other words, a substantial stock of local knowledge and experience. These distinctions will prove germane to the Tanzanian example, to which we now turn, and later to our understanding of local knowledge.