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THE CIVIL WAR AS A FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

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In recent years, a number of historians have suggested that the Civil War deserves a larger place in our picture of the evolution of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet regime. The presumption is that "the origin of the Communist autocracy" (to quote Leonard Schapiro's title) may lie rather in the Civil War experience rather than in Marxist-Leninist ideology, Lenin's natural authoritarianism or the conspiratorial traditions of the pre-revolutionary party. Historiographically, it falls within the framework of "revisionism", meaning a critical reappraisal of the totalitarian model and, in particular, its applicability to the pre-Stalin period of Soviet history.

The Civil War, Stephen Cohen writes,[1] "had a major impact on Bolshevik outlook, reviving the self-conscious theory of an embattled vanguard, which had been inoperative or inconsequential for at least a decade, and implanting in the once civilian-minded party what a leading Bolshevik called a 'military-soviet culture'." In similar vein, Moshe Lewin had earlier noted that the Soviet regime in Lenin's last years "was emerging from the civil war and had been shaped by that war as much as by the doctrines of the Party, or by the doctrine on the Party, which many historians have seen as being Lenin's 'original sin'."[2] Commenting on the relevance of the Civil War experience to Stalin and Stalinism, Robert Tucker concludes:[3]

> War Communism had militarized the revolutionary political culture of the Bolshevik movement. The heritage of that formative time in the Soviet culture's history was martial

> zeal, revolutionary voluntarism and élan, readiness to resort to coercion, rule by administrative fiat (administrirovanie), centralized administration, summary justice, and no small dose of that Communist arrogance (komchvanstvo) that Lenin later inveighed against. It was not simply the "heroic period of the great Russian Revolution", as Lev Kritzman christened it in the title of the book about War Communism that he published in the mid-1920's, but above all the fighting period, the time when in Bolshevik minds the citadel of socialism was to be taken by storm.

Reading these characterizations of the Civil War experience, scholars who nave worked on any aspect of the early Soviet period are likely to have an intuitive sense of recognition and agreement. The behavior, language[4] and even appearance of Communists in the 1920s was redolent of the Civil War. The Civil War provided the imagery of the First Five-Year Plan Cultural Revolution, while War Communism was the point of reference if not the model for many of the policies associated with the industrialization drive and collectivization.[5] Moreover, many of the Old Bolsheviks, for whom the pre-revolutionary experience in the party remained vivid, had the sense that the Civil War had remoulded the party, not necessarily for the better. The new cadres of the Civil War conort, they suspected, had brought back into civilian life the habits acquired in the Red Army, the Cheka and the requisitions brigades.

Robert Tucker's contention that the Civil War experience deeply influenced Soviet political culture seems indisputable. But can we carry the argument further, and show that this was a crucial determinant of the Bolsheviks' subsequent policy orientation and form of rule? Can we demonstrate that the Civil War pushed

the Bolsheviks in directions they would otherwise not have taken? There are, after all, different types of formative experience. Some are predictable rites of passage; others are not predicted but can be accommodated within a previously-established framework; and a third category of experience conflicts so sharply with previous expectations that the previous framework has to be changed. Which of these categories do we have in mind when we speak of the formative experience of the Civil War?

The present paper examines these questions, first in relation to the Civil War as a whole, and then in relation to different aspects of the Civil War experience: 1) international revolution and nationalism, 2) dictatorship versus democracy, 3) centralization and bureaucracy, 4) terror and violence, 5) Bolshevik attitudes to the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

The Civil War

In discussion of the Civil War experience, it is sometimes implied that the Civil War was an accidental or aberrant occurrence, deflecting the Bolsheviks from the course they had chosen in the first eight months after the October Revolution. This was the premise of many Soviet works published after Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 1956, and it is also detectable in Gimpelson's recent "Voennyi kommunizm" (1973). It is associated with an emphasis on "Leninist norms" and Stalin's divergence from them.

But the Civil War was not an act of God which the Bolsheviks could not predict and for which they had no responsibility. Civil war was a predictable outcome of the October coup, which was why many counselled against it. The Bolsheviks had another option in October 1917 in Petrograd, since the Second Congress of Soviets was expected to produce either a Bolshevik majority or a majority in favor of 'all power to the soviets' (as it did); but Lenin insisted on pre-empting the Congress' decision by a largely symbolic armed insurrection organized by the Bolsheviks. Lenin, of course, had been writing for some years that the hope for revolution lay in the conversion of imperialist war into civil war. At the very least, one must conclude that Lenin was prepared to run the risk of civil war after the October Revolution.

However, it was not just a question of Lenin's attitudes. The Bolsheviks were a fighting party before the Civil War, associated with the Moscow workers' uprising in December 1905 and with crowd demonstrations and street violence in the capitals in the spring and summer of 1917. The "Peace" slogan from Lenin's April Theses (with reference to Russia's participation in the European war) gives a quite misleading impression of the party and what it stood for. This was clearly indicated in the first weeks of October, when a German attack on Petrograd seemed imminent and the city's workers were in a mood to resist: the Bolsheviks' popularity continued to rise (despite earlier accusations that Lenin was a German agent) because they were associated with belligerent readiness to fight class enemies and foreigners; and it was Kerensky and the Army High Command that were suspected

of weakness and an inclination to capitulate to the Germans.

Looking at the situation in Baku in January 1918, shortly before the local Bolsheviks staged their own "October Revolution", Ronald Suny notes that they expected that this would mean civil war, and moreover "the approaching civil war appeared to the Bolsheviks not only inevitable but desirable". He quotes the Bolshevik leader Shaumian - a Bolshevik moderate in many respects - as writing that[6]

> Civil war is the same as class war, in its aggravation and bitterness reaching armed clashes on the streets. We are supporters of civil war, not because we thirst for blood, but because without struggle the pile of oppressors will not give up their privileges to the people. To reject class struggle means to reject the requirements of social reforms for the people.

Suny's conclusion, I think, is applicable not only to Baku but to the Bolshevik Party as a whole. The Bolsheviks expected civil war, and doubted that they could achieve their objectives without it. In terms of my earlier classification of formative experiences (p.3), the Civil War was a predictable rite of passage.

This point may be extended by considering the two analyses of the Civil War that were most commonly made by Bolsheviks in the 1920s, and shaped their thinking on many other questions. First, the Civil War was a class war - a war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie[7] or, on a slightly more complex analysis, a war between the "revolutionary union of the proletariat and the peasantry" and the "counter-revolutionary union of capitalists and landowners".[8] Second, international capital had rallied to the support of the Russian propertied classes, demonstrating

that Russia's revolution was indeed a manifestation of international proletarian revolution,[9] and underlining the serious and continuing threat posed by the "capitalist encirclement"of the Soviet Union.

These were not new ideas derived from the experience of the Civil War. Class war was basic Marxism - and, as an analysis of the contending forces in the actual Civil War, the scheme of proletariat versus bourgeoisie had many deficiencies. The role of international capital was familiar to Russian Marxists not only from Lenin's Imperialism (1916) but also, in a more direct sense, from memories of the French loan of 1906 that enabled the old regime to survive the 1905 Revolution. Foreign intervention during the Civil War certainly could be seen as a demonstration of internationalist capitalist solidarity, though at the same time it demonstrated that that solidarity had limits. But it was an analysis based on à priori knowledge that sometimes led the Bolsheviks into misinterpretations, for example of the strength of West-European support for Poland in 1920.[10] All in all, the Civil War provided dramatic confirming evidence for Bolshevik views on class war and international capitalist solidarity - strengthening their basic framework of ideas but not, in these respects, changing it.

International revolution and nationalism

The experience of the Civil War period that strikingly failed to confirm Bolshevik expectations was the collapse of revolution in Europe, and the fact that the Bolsheviks' Russian Revolution survived in spite of it. In Marxist terms, the anomaly of Russia's 'premature' proletarian revolution could be handled by the argument that the 'weakest link' of the capitalist chain had broken first, and the other links would follow. The Bolshevik leaders repeatedly said in 1918-19 that their revolution could not survive and achieve socialism without revolutions in the more developed countries of Europe. But the outcome contradicted at least the first part of these statements, and the Bolsheviks had no choice but to reassess their ideas in the light of a situation they had not expected.

It was certainly a dramatic disillusionment (though one suspects that successful proletarian revolutions in Germany and Poland might have had even more traumatic consequences for the Bolsheviks). At the same time, there were other experiences contributing to the erosion of Bolshevik internationalism. In principle, the Bolsheviks supported national self-determination. In practice, with regard to the non-Russian territories of the old Russian Empire, they very often did not. This was partly a result of the complexities of the Civil War situation in border areas, with nationalist groups sometimes being supported by foreign powers and nationalist regimes sometimes tolerating the presence of White Armies (as in the Ukraine) and forbidding access to the

Red Army. It was also partly the result of ethnic-social complexities inherited from the old Russian Empire, for example the existence of a largely Russian working class in Ukrainian industrial centers, and of a substantial contingent of Russian workers along with the Armenian and Azerbaidzhani population of Baku. In such cases, the Bolsheviks in Moscow could regard themselves as supporting the local working-class revolution, whereas the local non-Russian population would see them as supporting fellow Russians and the old Russian imperialist cause. But these are not total explanations of the Bolsheviks' policies on the non-Russian territories of the old Empire, especially the policies in the form they had assumed by the end of the Civil War. The Bolsheviks <u>were</u> acting like Russian imperialists, and of course they knew it. As Stalin, the Commissar for Nationalities, wrote in 1920:[11]

> Three years of revolution and civil war in Russia have shown that without the mutual support of central Russia and her borderlands the victory of the revolution is impossible, the liberation of Russia from the claws of imperialism is impossible ... The interests of the masses of the people say that the demand for the separation of the borderlands at the present stage of the revolution is profoundly counter-revolutionary.

It is possible that the Bolsheviks were always a more "Russian" party than we usually imagine. David Lane has pointed out their comparative success with <u>Russian</u> workers in 1905-7, as opposed to the Mensheviks' success with non-Russians;[12] and Robert Tucker's discussion of Stalin's assumption of a Russian

identity together with a Bolshevik one[13] suggests some interesting questions about other Bolsheviks. There is some indication that in the pre-war years the Bolshevik komitetchiki in Russia hit very hard on the theme of the workers' exploitation by foreign capitalists. Be that as it may, the Bolsheviks entered the Civil War perceiving themselves as internationalists and unaware that they had any significant Russian identity. In the course of the Civil War, they saw the failure of international revolution, found themselves adopting quasi-imperialist policies, became defenders of the Russian heartland against foreign invaders and, in the Polish campaign in the summer of 1920, observed not only that Polish workers rallied to Pilsudski but that Russians of all classes rallied to the Bolsheviks when it was a question of fighting Poles. These experiences surely had great significance for the future evolution of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet regime.

Dictatorship versus democracy

As Cohen and others have pointed out, the Bolsheviks were not a highly centralized and disciplined elite party in 1917, and Lenin's prescriptions in What Is To Be Done? (1902) applied to the special circumstances of conspiratorial party organization in a police state. But by 1921, the Bolsheviks were stressing party discipline and ideological unity to the point of a ban on factions, had largely nullified the political power of the soviets

and consolidated a centralized, authoritarian regime, and were about to force the dissolution of the remaining opposition political parties. Was all this a product of the Civil War rather than of pre-revolutionary party tradition and ideology? Had the Bolsheviks been pushed in the direction of authoritarian centralization when there was an alternative democratic path they might have taken?

There can be little doubt that the Civil War tended to promote administrative centralization and intolerance of dissent, and the process has been well described in a recent book by Robert Service.[14] The question is whether there was a Bolshevik democratic alternative. Let us forget, for a moment, about What Is To Be Done? and consider Lenin's theory of proletarian dictatorship as described in two works written in 1917, Can The Bolsheviks Retain State Power? and State and Revolution. One thing that Lenin makes extremely clear in these works is that by dictatorship he meant dictatorship. The proletarian dictatorship would take over state power, not (in the short term) abolish it. In Lenin's definition, state power was necessarily centralized and coercive by its very nature. Thus the regime that would lead Russia through the transitional period would be a coercive, centralized dictatorship.

As described in State and Revolution, the organization of public life under socialism would bear many resemblances to soviet democracy. But socialism was a thing of the future; and in the meantime, Lenin seemed to regard soviet democracy as a kind

of training-ground in which the citizens would practice their democratic skills while the dictatorship ran the state. There may have been another Bolshevik view on the soviets, but if so, it made little impact. All the leading Bolsheviks were fond of the soviets, but after October, none seem to have taken them very seriously.

It has been suggested that the Bolsheviks were not necessarily committed to the one-party state when they took power.[15] This is surely untenable as far as Lenin is concerned (he did not, after all, write Can a Coalition of Socialist Parties Retain State Power?), but other Bolshevik leaders were initially more sympathetic to the idea of coalition, though this seemed to be based on a judgement that the Bolsheviks could not survive alone. There were many inhibitions about outlawing opposition parties, and the Civil War did help to salve Bolshevik consciences on this score. But, before the Civil War began, the Bolsheviks had not only taken power alone but also dispersed the Constituent Assembly when it came in with an SR majority. Surely the Bolsheviks had chosen their direction, even if they had not decided how fast to travel.

The issue of internal party factions is perhaps more complicated. Before the revolution, the Bolsheviks had been distinguished from other socialist parties by their intolerance of factions and groupings, and Lenin's special status as leader. But this relates primarily to the party-in-emigration, which after the February Revolution merged with the most prominent komitetchiki to form the leadership of a rapidly expanding Bolshevik Party.

The party became more diverse as it expanded, and there were frequent disagreements, communications failures and local initiatives in 1917. Factions, however, were a phenomenon of the post-October and Civil War period, the first emerging over the Brest Peace with Germany early in 1918. Since the Bolshevik Party was in process of becoming the sole locus of political life, it is reasonable to hypothesize that in some circumstances it might have chosen to institutionalize diversity and disagreement within its own ranks - in effect, loosening the one-party system by developing a multi-faction party.

This did not happen, but it is difficult to pin the responsibility squarely on the Civil War. For one thing, the factions were a Civil War phenomenon, and the ban on factions was imposed after the Civil War victory. For another, the factions came out of the Old Bolshevik intelligentsia: the lower-class rank-and-file of the party seem to have perceived them as frondistes, and only the Workers' Opposition made a real impact outside the party's top stratum. Finally, the desire for unity was very strong, and not simply a matter of expediency. Like Pobedonostsev, the Bolsheviks really did despise "parliamentarism", associating it with decadent bickering and the loss of a sense of purpose. As Kritsman put it, proletarian rule "exud/es/ a monistic wholeness unknown to capitalism, giving a foretaste of the future amidst the chaos of the present".[16] The factions detracted from the monistic whole, and this may well have been the basic reason that they failed to take root in the Bolshevik Party.

Centralization and bureaucracy

The "bureaucratic degeneration" of the Bolshevik Party (to borrow a Marxist concept often used by the oppositions of the 1920s) can certainly be traced to the Civil War period. But this surely is just a pejorative way of stating the obvious fact that, once having taken power, the Bolsheviks had to start governing, and the Civil War was the event that first drove this fact home. Of course, the Bolsheviks did not necessarily realize the full implications of taking power in 1917. The idea of bureaucracy was abhorrent to them, they had vague hopes that the soviets would render bureaucracy unnecessary, and they often referred to the fact that under socialism the state would wither away. But, as Lenin pointed out, it was not going to wither during the transitional period of proletarian dictatorship. The Bolsheviks quickly reconciled themselves to the need for "apparats" (a euphemism for bureaucracies) and "cadres" (their term for Communist officials and managerial personnel), at least in the short term.

It is true that non-bureaucratic organizations - soviets, factory committees, Red Guard units - played an important role in 1917, but had disappeared or become much less important by the middle of 1920. However, the shift from non-bureaucratic to bureaucratic organizational forms cannot be attributed solely to the exigencies of the Civil War. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks' first act in power was to announce the creation of Sovnarkom, a cabinet of ministers (people's commissars) in charge of different

branches of the central bureaucracy, headed by Lenin. This act was quite unexpected, since the slogan "All power to the soviets" implied an intention to abolish the Provisional Government, not to create a successor institution (Sovnarkom) with new Bolshevik personnel. In the following months, the elected provincial soviets started setting up departments with permanent, appointed staff, drawing on what remained of the old local-government and zemstvo organizations: these departments took instructions from both the local soviet executive commitee and the appropriate central People's Commissariat (Health, Finance, Agriculture etc.). Thus the process of formation of a state bureaucracy for the new regime was well under way before the outbreak of the Civil War.

But it is certainly possible to argue that the Civil War left a permanent mark on the nature of Soviet bureaucracy. The policies of War Communism - extensive nationalization of industry, state distribution and the prohibition on private trade, requisitioning, the aspiration towards state economic planning - required a large and complex bureaucratic structure to deal with the economy alone. These bureaucracies, moreover, dealt with many aspects of life that had not hitherto been subject to direct state regulation, even in Russia. They were generally ineffective, but in concept they had a totalitarian, dehumanizing aspect that provoked Zamiatin's anti-utopian satire, We (1920). (We should be read in conjunction with a remarkable passage in Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's ABC of Communism, where the authors explain how the planned economy of socialism is compatible with the withering away of the state. The planning will not be done by bureaucrats,

since there will be no permanent bureaucracy, but by "statistical bureaux" in which "one person will work today, another tomorrow". The statistical bureaux will make production and distribution decisions purely on the basis of statistical data, and, "just as in an orchestra all the performers watch the conductor's baton and act accordingly, so here all will consult the statistical reports and will direct their work accordingly".[17])

However, it was the Red Army that was the largest and best-functioning bureaucracy, virtually the backbone of Soviet nationwide administration in the Civil War years. The decision to create a regular army, which was controversial within the Bolshevik Party, was taken early in 1918 on the insistence of Trotsky and Lenin, who believed that partisan units would be ineffective against regular White forces. Like all regular armies, the Red Army was hierarchical and functioned on a command principle. There was a distinction between officers (komandnyi sostav) and men, and officers were appointed rather than elected. Recruitment was initially voluntary, but later moved on to a selective conscription basis. Officers from the old Imperial Army were drafted to serve as military commanders, with Communist political commissars working beside them and countersigning their orders.

Though relations between Communists were comradely and egalitarian, and the Red Army of these years did not use the stiff protocol and insistence on rank characteristic of its Tsarist predecessor, obedience to orders was still mandatory,

and disobedience was often ruthlessly punished. The Red Army was thus the first clearly authoritarian and hierarchical institution created by the revolutionary regime; and, since many of its commanders and commissars went into civilian administration after the Civil War, habits learned in the Red Army presumably went with them - habits of command, on the one hand, and the esprit de corps of men who had fought together, on the other.

In addition, the Red Army established a precedent which, without being directly emulated outside the military sphere, may have contributed to the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik Party through the appointment rather than election of party officers. The Red Army's political commissars were appointed, and they initially found themselves in competition with elected representatives of the Army's party organizations. The result was that in October 1918 all elective party committees above the level of the basic party cell in the Red Army were formally abolished.[18]

While elections were retained in all other types of party organizations, the trend towards de facto appointment of local party secretaries by the Central Committee apparat was clearly visible by the end of the Civil War. This reflected both the centre's effort to increase control over local organs, and the fact that the party committees were strengthening their position vis-à-vis the soviets and thus becoming important institutions of local government. "Appointmentism" - and particularly the political use of the Central Committee Secretariat's power to

appoint and dismiss - was one of the issues in the factional disputes of 1920-21, with the Democratic Centralists arguing that it was undemocratic and contrary to party traditions.

But there was no grass-roots movement of support for the Democratic Centralists, and one reason may have been that party tradition was actually quite ambiguous on this point. There was the tradition of 1917-18, when local party committees were exuberant, assertive and often effectively independent of any central control. But there was also the pre-revolutionary tradition, which was not so much undemocratic as simply different. The komitetchiki (professional revolutionaries) had always moved around, more or less on the instructions of the Bolshevik Center abroad, organizing local party cells, reviving moribund organizations and generally providing local leadership until they were arrested or moved on to another town. In the underground party, the sending of cadres from the center had normally been welcomed rather than resented; and this was still often the case in the early soviet years, when local organizations were often left leaderless as a result of Red Army and other mobilizations. The party - like the other revolutionary parties - really did not possess a strong tradition of election of local officers. What was happening during the Civil War was less that a tradition was flouted than that a habit that might have developed failed to do so.

Terror and violence

Next to the Red Army, the Cheka was the most effective and visible institution created during the Civil War years. It was also, like the Red Army, a new institution with no direct line of descent from its Tsarist predecessor. In fact, it operated quite differently from the old Okhrana, though the later Soviet security agencies tended to fall back into the old mould. The Cheka was an instrument of terror and class vengeance, not a routine bureaucracy. There was no advance plan to create such an instrument (the immediate justification for its creation was the looting and urban disorder that followed the October Revolution). But its existence was quite compatible with Lenin's statements in 1917 that the proletarian dictatorship must use the coercive power of the state against counter-revolutionaries and class enemies.

The Cheka worked within a framework of class justice, meaning differential treatment according to social position, and, in practice, punishment of "socially-alien" individuals without regard to any specific criminal or counter-revolutionary acts. It was a weapon for "the crushing of the exploiters". It was not constrained by law, could dispense summary justice, and used punitive measures ranging from arrest, expropriation of property and the taking of hostages to executions.

If one takes Bolshevik statements of the time at face value, they saw terror as a natural and predictable outcome of the Revolution, and found any other reaction extremely naive. They

were not even prepared to make pro forma apologies for bloodshed, but instead tended to flaunt their toughness or speak with an Olympian smugness that was calculated to infuriate other intellectuals. Lenin set the pattern (Solzhenitsyn has assembled the best quotes in his Gulag Archipelago), but others were not far behind: Bukharin, for example, wrote sententiously that[20]

> Proletarian coercion in all of its forms, beginning with shooting and ending with labor conscription, is ... a method of creating communist mankind out of the human materials of the capitalist epoch.

But such statements should not be taken at face value. Whatever their intellectual expectations (and there is no reason to think that the Bolshevik leaders ever anticipated terror and violence on the scale that actually occurred during the Civil War), the Old Bolshevik leaders had not led violent lives and could not fail to be emotionally affected. They were simply taking Isaac Babel's "no-comment" response to violence (in the Konarmiia stories) one step further by loudly asserting that they were neither surprised nor shocked at what they saw.

Thus one must assume that the Civil War terror was one of the major formative experiences for the Bolshevik leadership, as well as for the large number of Bolshevik cadres who served in the Cheka at this period before moving into other work in the 1920s.[21] But, in trying to define the nature of the experience, we are forced into the realm of speculation. In their own consciousness, as well as the consciousness of others, the Bolsheviks shared collective

responsibility for bloodshed. Their statements admitting and justifying it were on record. If the sense of a higher purpose ever failed, they would have to see themselves as partners in crime. If they fell from grace with the party, or themselves became victims of terror (as happened to a large proportion of the surviving leaders of the Civil War period in 1936-8), there would be many Soviet citizens sharing Solzhenitsyn's view that they had it coming to them.

But the experience could also be interpreted in another way. It could leave the impression that terror worked - after all, the Bolsheviks won the Civil War, and the regime survived against quite considerable odds. It could be seen as evidence that revolutions are fuelled by the baser passions of the lower classes, as well as their nobler aspirations, and that the terrorizing of an elite can have political pay-off. W. H. Chamberlin, noting the Bolsheviks' success in tapping "the sullen dislike which a large part of the poor and uneducated majority of the Russian people had always felt for the well-to-do and educated minority", concluded that[21]

> The course of the Revolution .. indicated that the poorer classes derived a good deal of satisfaction from the mere process of destroying and despoiling the rich, quite irrespective of whether this brought about any improvement in their own lot.

The same point was made in rather startling form by Lev Kritsman in his Heroic Period of the Russian Revolution, when he described how the former exploiters were "pushed out of Soviet society,

shoved into a corner like rubbish that could barely be tolerated", sent to prison or concentration camp or conscripted into forced labor.

> This ruthless class exclusivism, the social annihilation of the exploiting classes, was a source of great moral encouragement, a source of passionate enthusiasm /Kritsman's emphasis/ for the proletariat and all those who had been exploited. 22

The Bolsheviks and Russian society

i) The working class

Both in 1917 and 1921, the Bolsheviks saw themselves as a party of the working class, although in 1921 the proportion of working-class members was 41% as against 60% in 1917,[23] while the party's leadership throughout the period came primarily from the intelligentsia. But the relationship of the party and the working class had changed considerably during the Civil War years. In mid-1917, the proletariat's strength seemed enormous: this was partly because the proletariat actually was enormous, if one followed the Bolshevik practice of including not only the urban working class but also the millions of soldiers and sailors conscripted for the First World War. Furthermore, the workers, soldiers and sailors were giving enthusiastic support to the Bolsheviks. Spontaneous proletarian organizations like the factory committees and soldiers' committees were endorsing the Bolsheviks, and the Bolsheviks endorsed them in return.

In 1921, by contrast, more than half the industrial working class had vanished from the hungry towns and idle factories -

some to the Red Army, some into the new administrative organs, but most into the villages, where to all appearances they had been reabsorbed into the peasantry. Factory committees had given way to appointed managements. The Red Guards had been replaced by the Red Army, over five million strong. But by 1921, demobilization of the Red Army was in progress, and the Bolsheviks saw many of their former soldier-proletarians turning overnight into peasants or, still worse, into "bandits" spreading disorder in town and countryside. There were workers' strikes and rumours of increasing Menshevik influence in the factories. Finally, the Kronstadt sailors revolted against the rule of the "commissars" in the spring of 1921.

These were traumatic experiences for the Bolsheviks - Kronstadt as a symbol of repudiation by the revolutionary proletariat; the mass disappearance of workers into the villages as a token of the weakness and instability of the class in whose name the Bolsheviks had taken power. True, the Bolshevik leaders were to some extent protected against disillusionment with the working class by the fact that they had never been totally illusioned: the idea that the working class could fall from "proletarian consciousness" or fail to reach it had always been present in Lenin's writings, and it was in such circumstances that the party's role as the "vanguard of the proletariat" became particularly important. But were the experiences, as many Western historians have suggested, so traumatic that the Bolsheviks

thereafter lost all hope of the working class and retained only a nominal proletarian identity?

This was not the case - or at least, not yet. As will be clear to any reader of Bolshevik debates throughout the 1920s, the Bolsheviks continued to see themselves as members of a proletarian party. At the beginning of the decade, no party faction caused such concern to the leadership as the Workers' Opposition (the only faction with real support from Communist workers). In the later succession struggles, the votes of the factory cells were considered crucial, and may in fact have been so. In 1924 - with the working class strengthened and reconstituted as a result of the revival of industry - the leadership announced the "Lenin levy", a campaign to recruit workers into the party with the aim of re-establishing the numerical predominance of the proletarian group. The result was a massive recruitment of worker Communists that continued until the moratorium on party admissions at the beginning of 1933.

All this indicates a genuine and continuing interest in the working class, but one that was quite narrowly focussed. It was not really an interest in workers as workers, or the class as a class. It was an interest in workers (particularly skilled workers with some education) as party members and potential cadres. This too was a product of Civil War experience - or, strictly speaking, the first Bolshevik experience of ruling, which coincided in time with the Civil War. The Bolsheviks found that in order to rule they needed cadres (administrators, managers, military commanders, political commissars, Chekists, government officials and so on).

They assumed without discussion or hesitation that the best source of cadres was the working class. Ideally, a worker would go through the basic training of party membership before taking on cadre responsibilities, that is, becoming a full-time administrator. But in the Civil War period (as later during the First Five-Year Plan), the need for cadres was so great that non-party workers were often directly "promoted" into cadre jobs. At first, vague ideas were expressed about the periodic return of cadres to the factory bench, to re-charge the proletarian batteries and re-establish "contact with the class". It was probably impracticable; at any rate, it was not seriously tried. Cadres remained cadres, unless they were incompetent or positively desired to resume life as workers, which few did.

Thus, part of the Civil War experience for the Bolsheviks was learning what they meant by proletarian dictatorship. They meant a dictatorship in which a large proportion of the executants were former workers.[24] The party's link with the working class was a functional necessity rather than (or as well as) an idealistic commitment. This was the other side of the coin of class war: as the mighty were humbled, the lowly - or some of the lowly - had the chance to rise and take their places.

ii) The peasantry

At the beginning of NEP, the regime was introducing policies of conciliation of the peasantry, and Lenin was putting great emphasis on the necessary alliance (smychka) of proletariat and peasantry. However, this perhaps gives a misleading impression of the Bolsheviks' real attitudes and the nature of the Civil War experience with regard to peasants. The experience was disappointing, almost disastrous; and the dominant emotions on the Bolsheviks' side as well as the peasants' seem to have been resentment and hostility. From the Bolshevik standpoint, the peasants had caused War Communism to fail, since they would not produce a surplus if the surplus was to be requisitioned. In addition, there had been large-scale peasant revolts at the end of the Civil War: one historian categorizes these as "a second civil war";[25] and certainly the quelling of Makhno in the Ukraine and the Tambov revolt required major Red Army involvement. For all the talk of smychka, the Bolsheviks could no longer perceive the peasants as revolutionary allies (as they had done in 1917), but had the intuitive sense that they were enemies.

This was expressed as hostility to the "kulak" - the class enemy in the countryside - rather than to the peasantry as a whole. But in fact it was very difficult to distinguish kulaks from other peasants, especially given the levelling processes of the revolutionary and Civil War years. Russian Marxists had traditionally paid great attention to emergent class differentiation in

the countryside, and continued to do so throughout the 1920s. However, their practical experience during the Civil War could not but leave an underlying impression of a quite different kind. The attempt in 1918 to enlist the support of the poor peasantry in requisitioning (through the kombedy) had failed miserably. The peasantry as a whole had opposed requisitions. While the Bolsheviks claimed that the significance of their class analysis had been demonstrated by a "Second Revolution" in the countryside,[26] in which kulaks had been plundered by the poorer peasants and forced down to the general village level, this only underlined the oddness of their continuing preoccupation with the question: if the kulaks had been destroyed or at least seriously weakened, why should they remain such an object of hostility?

The frustration was surely with the peasantry as a whole - and, for that matter, with the backward, ignorant peasantry that the Populists had so foolishly admired; the peasantry that let itself and the country starve in the famine of 1921-2; the peasantry whose feckless bedniak tendencies were much more dangerous than any traces of kulak entrepreneurialism. The Bolsheviks went into the Civil War knowing that they did not like kulaks; perhaps the real formative experience of 1918-21 was the discovery that they did not like poor peasants either.

iii) The intelligentsia

For the Bolsheviks, there were two main issues involving the intelligentsia during the Civil War. The first was the use of "bourgeois experts", that is, non-Bolshevik military officers, professionals, civil servants and so on. The second was the relationship of intellectuals and workers in the Bolshevik Party itself - an issue that was no doubt bound to arise, given the party's intelligentsia leadership and claim to proletarian identity, but that was specifically associated at this time with the argument over the use of bourgeois experts.

In the circumstances of Civil War, the bourgeois experts that mattered were not poets, accountants or even engineers but officers who had served in the old Imperial Army. This had quite important consequences for the future, since it posed the question of loyalty in particularly acute form. Trotsky argued that the Red Army must use the old officers, regardless of the danger of defection and betrayal, because the Communists lacked military experience and expertise. This was strongly opposed by the party's Military Opposition; but Lenin supported Trotsky and their position was adopted. The Red Army not only took volunteers from the old officer corps but also conscripted persons in this category: about 50,000 of them were serving in the Red Army by the end of the Civil War.

The Tsarist officers who served as commanders in the field were under the supervision of political commissars. Most served

conscientiously, but nevertheless there were instances of desertion, sabotage, crossing over to the Whites and so on. Just how common this was is unclear, since almost all the assessments come from partisan sources.[27] But many Communists thought it was very common. Stalin was probably among them: his personal Civil War involved not only the well-known clashes with Trotsky but also (closely linked with those clashes) a series of episodes in which Stalin had first-hand experience of the old officers' treachery or what he perceived as their incompetence. Stalin never joined the party's Military Oppositionists in public objection to the use of the Tsarist officers, but clearly his position was very close to their's.[28]

The Military Opposition was one of a succession of factions - Left Communist, Military Opposition, Democratic Centralist, Workers' Opposition - that emerged in the years 1918-20; and there were a number of continuous themes running through the factional debates in addition to the anti-authoritarian, democratic "leftism" that has been most often remarked. Those who objected to the Central Committee's authoritarian habits were also often dubious about the use of Tsarist officers in the Red Army and the trend towards one-man management in industry, particularly when the appointed manager was a former capitalist or "bourgeois" engineer. They linked the democratic issue with the class one, implying that the party's intelligentsia leadership was behaving "like the old bosses" to the party's working-class rank-and-file.[29] They suggested that the leaders' willingness to use bourgeois experts was related to the fact that they came from the same class.[30] In the case of

the Workers' Opposition - the only faction that won substantial support in the party as a whole - there were strong hints that proletarian "intelligentsia-baiting" (in a party context) often had overtones of antisemitism.[31]

Lenin firmly put the lid on party factionalism in 1921, and he also took a very strong line on the absolute necessity of using bourgeois experts and the "Communist conceit" of those who failed to perceive it. Nevertheless, Lenin was not so much generalizing from the party's experience in the Civil War as trying to neutralize the generalizations that other Communists had made on the basis of that experience. The party came out of the Civil War distrusting the old intelligentsia and seeing that distrust as a mark of proletarian identity. Communists labelled the intelligentsia as part of the old bourgeois class enemy, and noted with disapproval that, unlike the old bourgeoisie as a whole, the intelligentsia had managed to survive the Civil War with much of its former status and privileges intact. And it was not only unreliability and lack of goodwill that the new regime could expect from the bourgeois experts: the example of some of the Tsarist officers in the Red Army left many Communists with the sense that outright betrayal, sabotage and collaboration with the capitalist enemy were on the cards as far as the bourgeois experts were concerned.[32]

As for the internal party situation, the question of intelligentia leadership - specifically, leadership by the group of cosmopolitan Old Bolshevik intellectuals, many of them Jewish

and most of them journalists and littérateurs by pre-revolutionary occupation, who had returned from long years of emigration after the February Revolution - had come close to the surface during the Civil War debates, despite Lenin's undoubted stature in the party and the unwillingness of other Communists to challenge his personal leadership. Clearly this was an issue in the succession struggle that followed Lenin's incapacitation and death. Of the contenders in the struggle, Stalin was in the exceptional position of having loyally supported Lenin against the factions, while at the same time staking out a position that had much in common with the proletarian "intelligentsia-baiting" that was one of the bases of internal party opposition during the Civil War. At this time, Stalin did not present himself as an intellectual; and he had not been an emigre. He defeated the party's leading intellectuals in the succession struggle; and from his standpoint at least, the intellectuals' decreasing prominence in the proletarian party was a predictable and desirable outcome. As he wrote to a German Communist in 1925:[33]

> With us in Russia, "old leaders" from among the literati wither away continuously. This process increased during periods of revolutionary crisis and slowed down during periods of crystallization of forces, but it took place continuously. The Lunacharskys, the Pokrovskys, the Stroyevs, the Rozhkovs, the Goldenbergs, the Bogdanovs, and the Krassins - this is the best muster that happens to come to my mind now of former Bolshevik leaders who have gone over to playing second fiddle. That is a process necessary for the renovation of the leading cadres of a living and developing party.

. . . . . .

Concluding remarks

The current interest in the Civil War as a formative experience is related to the effort to find a new explanation for the origins of Stalinism - to move the "original sin" (to borrow Moshe Lewin's phrase) from the theoretical premises of What Is To Be Done? to the actual circumstances of the Bolsheviks' first years in power. There is a prima facie case to be made for this interpretation. The Civil War circumstances encouraged or even required centralization and bureaucratization, and provided a justification for coercion and terror against class enemies. The party emerged from the Civil War as an "embattled vanguard", lacking social support, isolated, and disappointed for a series of reasons with both the proletariat and the peasantry. The insistence on monolithic party unity exemplified by the ban on factions came after the Civil War, but could well be seen as a response to Civil War experience. Many Bolsheviks got their first administrative experience in the Red Army or the Cheka; and in the years following the Civil War, the party owed much of its coherence to the bonds forged among comrades in arms. Moreover, the majority of Communists and cadres of the 1920s had entered the party either in 1917 or the Civil War years: they knew the pre-revolutionary party only by hearsay (and misleading hearsay at that, given the process of rewriting party history that began after Lenin's death).

However, there are important qualifications to be made on

the significance of the Civil War experience relative to earlier party experience, tradition and doctrine. Granted that the Bolshevik Party after February 1917 scarcely embodied the principles of Lenin's What Is To Be Done? (1902), were the premises of Lenin's Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power? (October 1917) equally irrelevant to the subsequent form of the Bolsheviks' "proletarian dictatorship"? The latter work suggested that the Bolsheviks would establish a centralized dictatorship, substitute Bolsheviks and "conscious workers" (the terms are used interchangeably) for the "130,000 landowners" who had previously staffed Russia's state bureaucracy, and use coercion against class enemies. This is quite an accurate prediction of what happened during the Civil War. One should perhaps give Lenin a little credit for leading his party the way he wanted it to go, just as one should give Stalin some credit for being a faithful Leninist.

The Civil War gave the new regime a baptism by fire. But it was a baptism the Bolsheviks and Lenin seemed to want. The Bolsheviks were a fighting party - even a street-fighting party - in 1917; that was one of the main reasons for their popularity with workers, soldiers and sailors. Their manner of taking power in October was almost a provocation to civil war. This was tough-minded, if it was a conscious strategy, but tough-mindedness was an old Bolshevik quality. In any case, it made some sense in political terms. A civil war, if the Bolsheviks could win it, represented the best hope of consolidating the new regime, whose

position at the beginning of 1918 was extremely precarious. The predictable costs of a civil war - social polarization, violence, wartime emphasis on unity and discipline, wartime centralization and emergency rule - were costs that the Bolsheviks were ready or even anxious to pay. The benefit, of course, was that the Revolution should have its "heroic period" of struggle and emerge strengthened and legitimized by victory.

My conclusion is that the Civil War was indeed a major formative experience for the Bolsheviks. But I see it as an experience of much the same type as Alexander Herzen's famous disillusionment with Europe when he observed the cowardice of the French liberal bourgeoisie during the 1848 Revolution in Paris. Herzen (as Martin Malia argued in his intellectual biography) left Russia in 1847 fully prepared to be disillusioned with Europe and disgusted with European bourgeois liberals; and he was lucky enough to find the occasion justifying disillusionment. The Bolsheviks, similarly, had the formative experience they were looking for in the Civil War. It was the formative experience for which their past and thoughts had prepared them.

NOTES

1. Stephen F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism", in Robert C. Tucker, ed., Stalinism (New York, 1977), pp.15-16.

2. M. Lewin, Lenin's Last Struggle (New York, 1970), p. 12.

3. Robert C. Tucker, "Stalinism as Revolution from Above", in Tucker, ed., Stalinism, pp. 91-2.

4. On "militarization" of language, see A. M. Selishchev, Iazyk revoliutsionnoi epokhi. Iz nabliudenii nad russkim iazykom poslednikh let (1917-1926) (2nd ed., Moscow, 1928), pp. 85-96.

5. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution as Class War", in Fitzpatrick, ed., Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931 (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), pp. 18-19, 25. See also Piatakov's comment on collectivization, quoted in Robert W. Davies, The Socialist Offensive (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p.148.

6. Ronald Grigor Suny, The Baku Commune 1917-18 (Princeton, 1972), pp. 207-8.

7. S. Gusev, Grazhdanskaia voina i Krasnaia Armiia (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), p. 52.

8. L. Kritsman, Geroicheskii period velikoi russkoi revoliutsii (2nd ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), p. 66.

9. Kritsman, op.cit., p. 47.

10. Norman Davies, White Eagle, Red Star (London, 1972), pp. 167-88.

11. Quoted in E. H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923 (London, 1966), vol.1, pp. 387-8.

12. David Lane, The Roots of Russian Communism (Assen, Netherlands, 1969), pp.52-8.

13. Robert C. Tucker, Stalin as Revolutionary (New York, 1973), pp. 137-43.

14. Robert Service, The Bolshevik Party in Revolution, 1917-1923. A Study in Organizational Change (New York, 1979).

15. See, for example, Roy A. Medvedev, Let History Judge. The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism (New York, 1973), pp.381-4.

16. Kritsman, op. cit., p. 78.

17. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, The ABC of Communism (London, 1969), p. 118.

18. Service, op. cit., p.94.

19. Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 274.

20. Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution (New York, 1973), p. 92 (from Bukharin's Ekonomika perekhodnogo perioda /1920/).

21. W.H.Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution (New York, 1965), vol. 2, p. 460.

22. Kritsman, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

23. T. H. Rigby, Communist Party Membership in the USSR 1917-1967 (Princeton, 1968), p. 85. These are official Soviet figures. "Workers" means persons who were workers by occupation on the eve of the Revolution.

24. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 14-17 and passim.

25. Oliver H. Radkey, The Unknown Civil War in Russia. A Study of the Green Movement in the Tambov Region 1920-1921 (Stanford, 1976), pp. 1-4.

26. On the"Second Revolution", see T. Shanin, The Awkward Class. Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 145-61.

27. For assessments, see S.A. Fediukin, Sovetskaia vlast' i burzhuaznye spetsialisty (Moscow, 1965), pp. 48-94.

28. See Service, op. cit., p. 102.

29. See, for example, Sapronov, in IX konferentsiia RKP(b). Sentiabr' 1920 goda. Protokoly (Moscow, 1972), pp. 159-60.

30. See remarks by Zinoviev and Sapronov in ibid., pp. 144 and 193.

31. The Workers' Opposition's hostility to the party intelligentsia was mentioned again and again at the X Party Congress. See particularly the comments by Yaroslavsky and Rafail in X syezd RKP(b). Mart 1921 g. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow, 1963), pp. 105, 263 and 274.

32. This idea was suggested to me by Dr Seweryn Bialer (Columbia University).

33. This appears in Stalin's Works, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1954) as "Letter to Comrade Me-rt". It was cited earlier, as a letter to Arkadi Maslow, in Ruth Fischer's Stalin and German Communism (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 436, and my quotation comes from her text.

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THE CIVIL WAR AS A FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

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In recent years, a number of historians have suggested that the Civil War deserves a larger place in our picture of the evolution of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet regime. The presumption is that "the origin of the Communist autocracy" (to quote Leonard Schapiro's title) may lie rather in the Civil War experience rather than in Marxist-Leninist ideology, Lenin's natural authoritarianism or the conspiratorial traditions of the pre-revolutionary party. Historiographically, it falls within the framework of "revisionism", meaning a critical reappraisal of the totalitarian model and, in particular, its applicability to the pre-Stalin period of Soviet history.

The Civil War, Stephen Cohen writes,[1] "had a major impact on Bolshevik outlook, reviving the self-conscious theory of an embattled vanguard, which had been inoperative or inconsequential for at least a decade, and implanting in the once civilian-minded party what a leading Bolshevik called a 'military-soviet culture'." In similar vein, Moshe Lewin had earlier noted that the Soviet regime in Lenin's last years "was emerging from the civil war and had been shaped by that war as much as by the doctrines of the Party, or by the doctrine on the Party, which many historians have seen as being Lenin's 'original sin'."[2] Commenting on the relevance of the Civil War experience to Stalin and Stalinism, Robert Tucker concludes:[3]

> War Communism had militarized the revolutionary political culture of the Bolshevik movement. The heritage of that formative time in the Soviet culture's history was martial

the Bolsheviks in directions they would otherwise not have taken? There are, after all, different types of formative experience. Some are predictable rites of passage; others are not predicted but can be accommodated within a previously-established framework; and a third category of experience conflicts so sharply with previous expectations that the previous framework has to be changed. Which of these categories do we have in mind when we speak of the formative experience of the Civil War?

The present paper examines these questions, first in relation to the Civil War as a whole, and then in relation to different aspects of the Civil War experience: 1) international revolution and nationalism, 2) dictatorship _versus_ democracy, 3) centralization and bureaucracy, 4) terror and violence, 5) Bolshevik attitudes to the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

The Civil War

In discussion of the Civil War experience, it is sometimes implied that the Civil War was an accidental or aberrant occurrence, deflecting the Bolsheviks from the course they had chosen in the first eight months after the October Revolution. This was the premise of many Soviet works published after Khrushchev's Secret Speech of 1956, and it is also detectable in Gimpelson's recent "Voennyi kommunizm" (1973). It is associated with an emphasis on "Leninist norms" and Stalin's divergence from them.

of weakness and an inclination to capitulate to the Germans.

Looking at the situation in Baku in January 1918, shortly before the local Bolsheviks staged their own "October Revolution", Ronald Suny notes that they expected that this would mean civil war, and moreover "the approaching civil war appeared to the Bolsheviks not only inevitable but desirable". He quotes the Bolshevik leader Shaumian - a Bolshevik moderate in many respects - as writing that[6]

> Civil war is the same as class war, in its aggravation and bitterness reaching armed clashes on the streets. We are supporters of civil war, not because we thirst for blood, but because without struggle the pile of oppressors will not give up their privileges to the people. To reject class struggle means to reject the requirements of social reforms for the people.

Suny's conclusion, I think, is applicable not only to Baku but to the Bolshevik Party as a whole. The Bolsheviks expected civil war, and doubted that they could achieve their objectives without it. In terms of my earlier classification of formative experiences (p.3), the Civil War was a predictable rite of passage.

This point may be extended by considering the two analyses of the Civil War that were most commonly made by Bolsheviks in the 1920s, and shaped their thinking on many other questions. First, the Civil War was a class war - a war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie[7] or, on a slightly more complex analysis, a war between the "revolutionary union of the proletariat and the peasantry" and the "counter-revolutionary union of capitalists and landowners".[8] Second, international capital had rallied to the support of the Russian propertied classes, demonstrating

International revolution and nationalism

The experience of the Civil War period that strikingly failed to confirm Bolshevik expectations was the collapse of revolution in Europe, and the fact that the Bolsheviks' Russian Revolution survived in spite of it. In Marxist terms, the anomaly of Russia's 'premature' proletarian revolution could be handled by the argument that the 'weakest link' of the capitalist chain had broken first, and the other links would follow. The Bolshevik leaders repeatedly said in 1918-19 that their revolution could not survive and achieve socialism without revolutions in the more developed countries of Europe. But the outcome contradicted at least the first part of these statements, and the Bolsheviks had no choice but to reassess their ideas in the light of a situation they had not expected.

It was certainly a dramatic disillusionment (though one suspect that successful proletarian revolutions in Germany and Poland might have had even more traumatic consequences for the Bolsheviks). At the same time, there were other experiences contributing to the erosion of Bolshevik internationalism. In principle, the Bolsheviks supported national self-determination. In practice, with regard to the non-Russian territories of the old Russian Empire, they very often did not. This was partly a result of the complexities of the Civil War situation in border areas, with nationalist groups sometimes being supported by foreign powers and nationalist regimes sometimes tolerating the presence of White Armies (as in the Ukraine) and forbidding access to the

identity together with a Bolshevik one[13] suggests some interesting questions about other Bolsheviks. There is some indication that in the pre-war years the Bolshevik komitetchiki in Russia hit very hard on the theme of the workers' exploitation by foreign capitalists. Be that as it may, the Bolsheviks entered the Civil War perceiving themselves as internationalists and unaware that they had any significant Russian identity. In the course of the Civil War, they saw the failure of international revolution, found themselves adopting quasi-imperialist policies, became defenders of the Russian heartland against foreign invaders and, in the Polish campaign in the summer of 1920, observed not only that Polish workers rallied to Pilsudski but that Russians of all classes rallied to the Bolsheviks when it was a question of fighting Poles. These experiences surely had great significance for the future evolution of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet regime.

Dictatorship versus democracy

As Cohen and others have pointed out, the Bolsheviks were not a highly centralized and disciplined elite party in 1917, and Lenin's prescriptions in What Is To Be Done? (1902) applied to the special circumstances of conspiratorial party organization in a police state. But by 1921, the Bolsheviks were stressing party discipline and ideological unity to the point of a ban on factions, had largely nullified the political power of the soviets

of training-ground in which the citizens would practice their democratic skills while the dictatorship ran the state. There may have been another Bolshevik view on the soviets, but if so, it made little impact. All the leading Bolsheviks were fond of the soviets, but after October, none seem to have taken them very seriously.

It has been suggested that the Bolsheviks were not necessarily committed to the one-party state when they took power.[15] This is surely untenable as far as Lenin is concerned (he did not, after all, write Can a Coalition of Socialist Parties Retain State Power?) but other Bolshevik leaders were initially more sympathetic to the idea of coalition, though this seemed to be based on a judgement that the Bolsheviks could not survive alone. There were many inhibitions about outlawing opposition parties, and the Civil War did help to salve Bolshevik consciences on this score. But, before the Civil War began, the Bolsheviks had not only taken power alone but also dispersed the Constituent Assembly when it came in with an SR majority. Surely the Bolsheviks had chosen their direction, even if they had not decided how fast to travel.

The issue of internal party factions is perhaps more complicated. Before the revolution, the Bolsheviks had been distinguished from other socialist parties by their intolerance of factions and groupings, and Lenin's special status as leader. But this relates primarily to the party-in-emigration, which after the February Revolution merged with the most prominent komitetchiki to form the leadership of a rapidly expanding Bolshevik Party.

Centralization and bureaucracy

The "bureaucratic degeneration" of the Bolshevik Party (to borrow a Marxist concept often used by the oppositions of the 1920s) can certainly be traced to the Civil War period. But this surely is just a pejorative way of stating the obvious fact that, once having taken power, the Bolsheviks had to start governing, and the Civil War was the event that first drove this fact home. Of course, the Bolsheviks did not necessarily realize the full implications of taking power in 1917. The idea of bureaucracy was abhorrent to them, they had vague hopes that the soviets would render bureaucracy unnecessary, and they often referred to the fact that under socialism the state would wither away. But, as Lenin pointed out, it was not going to wither during the transitional period of proletarian dictatorship. The Bolsheviks quickly reconciled themselves to the need for "apparats" (a euphemism for bureaucracies) and "cadres" (their term for Communist officials and managerial personnel), at least in the short term.

It is true that non-bureaucratic organizations - soviets, factory committees, Red Guard units - played an important role in 1917, but had disappeared or become much less important by the middle of 1920. However, the shift from non-bureaucratic to bureaucratic organizational forms cannot be attributed solely to the exigencies of the Civil War. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks' first act in power was to announce the creation of Sovnarkom, a cabinet of ministers (people's commissars) in charge of different

since there will be no permanent bureaucracy, but by "statistical bureaux" in which "one person will work today, another tomorrow". The statistical bureaux will make production and distribution decisions purely on the basis of statistical data, and, "just as in an orchestra all the performers watch the conductor's baton and act accordingly, so here all will consult the statistical reports and will direct their work accordingly".[17])

However, it was the Red Army that was the largest and best-functioning bureaucracy, virtually the backbone of Soviet nationwide administration in the Civil War years. The decision to create a regular army, which was controversial within the Bolshevik Party, was taken early in 1918 on the insistence of Trotsky and Lenin, who believed that partisan units would be ineffective against regular White forces. Like all regular armies, the Red Army was hierarchical and functioned on a command principle. There was a distinction between officers (komandnyi sostav) and men, and officers were appointed rather than elected. Recruitment was initially voluntary, but later moved on to a selective conscription basis. Officers from the old Imperial Army were drafted to serve as military commanders, with Communist political commissars working beside them and countersigning their orders.

Though relations between Communists were comradely and egalitarian, and the Red Army of these years did not use the stiff protocol and insistence on rank characteristic of its Tsarist predecessor, obedience to orders was still mandatory,

appoint and dismiss - was one of the issues in the factional disputes of 1920-21, with the Democratic Centralists arguing that it was undemocratic and contrary to party traditions.

But there was no grass-roots movement of support for the Democratic Centralists, and one reason may have been that party tradition was actually quite ambiguous on this point. There was the tradition of 1917-18, when local party committees were exuberant, assertive and often effectively independent of any central control. But there was also the pre-revolutionary tradition, which was not so much undemocratic as simply different. The komitetchiki (professional revolutionaries) had always moved around, more or less on the instructions of the Bolshevik Center abroad, organizing local party cells, reviving moribund organizations and generally providing local leadership until they were arrested or moved on to another town. In the underground party, the sending of cadres from the center had normally been welcomed rather than resented; and this was still often the case in the early soviet years, when local organizations were often left leaderless as a result of Red Army and other mobilizations. The party - like the other revolutionary parties - really did not possess a strong tradition of election of local officers. What was happening during the Civil War was less that a tradition was flouted than that a habit that might have developed failed to do so.

were not even prepared to make pro forma apologies for bloodshed, but instead tended to flaunt their toughness or speak with an Olympian smugness that was calculated to infuriate other intellectuals. Lenin set the pattern (Solzhenitsyn has assembled the best quotes in his Gulag Archipelago), but others were not far behind: Bukharin, for example, wrote sententiously that[20]

> Proletarian coercion in all of its forms, beginning with shooting and ending with labor conscription, is ... a method of creating communist mankind out of the human materials of the capitalist epoch.

But such statements should not be taken at face value. Whatever their intellectual expectations (and there is no reason to think that the Bolshevik leaders ever anticipated terror and violence on the scale that actually occurred during the Civil War), the Old Bolshevik leaders had not led violent lives and could not fail to be emotionally affected. They were simply taking Isaac Babel's "no-comment" response to violence (in the Konarmiia stories) one step further by loudly asserting that they were neither surprised nor shocked at what they saw.

Thus one must assume that the Civil War terror was one of the major formative experiences for the Bolshevik leadership, as well as for the large number of Bolshevik cadres who served in the Cheka at this period before moving into other work in the 1920s.[21] But, in trying to define the nature of the experience, we are forced into the realm of speculation. In their own consciousness, as well as the consciousness of others, the Bolsheviks shared collective

shoved into a corner like rubbish that could barely be tolerated", sent to prison or concentration camp or conscripted into forced labor

> This ruthless class exclusivism, the social annihilation of the exploiting classes, was a source of great moral encouragement, a source of passionate enthusiasm /Kritsman's emphasis/ for the proletariat and all those who had been exploited. 22

The Bolsheviks and Russian society

i) The working class

Both in 1917 and 1921, the Bolsheviks saw themselves as a party of the working class, although in 1921 the proportion of working-class members was 41% as against 60% in 1917,[23] while the party's leadership throughout the period came primarily from the intelligentsia. But the relationship of the party and the working class had changed considerably during the Civil War years. In mid-1917, the proletariat's strength seemed enormous: this was partly because the proletariat actually was enormous, if one followed the Bolshevik practice of including not only the urban working class but also the millions of soldiers and sailors conscripted for the First World War. Furthermore, the workers, soldiers and sailors were giving enthusiastic support to the Bolsheviks. Spontaneous proletarian organizations like the factory committees and soldiers' committees were endorsing the Bolsheviks, and the Bolsheviks endorsed them in return.

In 1921, by contrast, more than half the industrial working class had vanished from the hungry towns and idle factories -

thereafter lost all hope of the working class and retained only a nominal proletarian identity?

This was not the case - or at least, not yet. As will be clear to any reader of Bolshevik debates throughout the 1920s, the Bolsheviks continued to see themselves as members of a proletarian party. At the beginning of the decade, no party faction caused such concern to the leadership as the Workers' Opposition (the only faction with real support from Communist workers). In the later succession struggles, the votes of the factory cells were considered crucial, and may in fact have been so. In 1924 - with the working class strengthened and reconstituted as a result of the revival of industry - the leadership announced the "Lenin levy", a campaign to recruit workers into the party with the aim of re-establishing the numerical predominance of the proletarian group. The result was a massive recruitment of worker Communists that continued until the moratorium on party admissions at the beginning of 1933.

All this indicates a genuine and continuing interest in the working class, but one that was quite narrowly focussed. It was not really an interest in workers as workers, or the class as a class. It was an interest in workers (particularly skilled workers with some education) as party members and potential cadres. This too was a product of Civil War experience - or, strictly speaking, the first Bolshevik experience of ruling, which coincided in time with the Civil War. The Bolsheviks found that in order to rule they needed cadres (administrators, managers, military commanders, political commissars, Chekists, government officials and so on).

ii) The peasantry

At the beginning of NEP, the regime was introducing policies of conciliation of the peasantry, and Lenin was putting great emphasis on the necessary alliance (smychka) of proletariat and peasantry. However, this perhaps gives a misleading impression of the Bolsheviks' real attitudes and the nature of the Civil War experience with regard to peasants. The experience was disappointing, almost disastrous; and the dominant emotions on the Bolsheviks' side as well as the peasants' seem to have been resentment and hostility. From the Bolshevik standpoint, the peasants had caused War Communism to fail, since they would not produce a surplus if the surplus was to be requisitioned. In addition, there had been large-scale peasant revolts at the end of the Civil War: one historian categorizes these as "a second civil war";[25] and certainly the quelling of Makhno in the Ukraine and the Tambov revolt required major Red Army involvement. For all the talk of smychka, the Bolsheviks could no longer perceive the peasants as revolutionary allies (as they had done in 1917), but had the intuitive sense that they were enemies.

This was expressed as hostility to the "kulak" - the class enemy in the countryside - rather than to the peasantry as a whole. But in fact it was very difficult to distinguish kulaks from other peasants, especially given the levelling processes of the revolutionary and Civil War years. Russian Marxists had traditionally paid great attention to emergent class differentiation in

iii) The intelligentsia

For the Bolsheviks, there were two main issues involving the intelligentsia during the Civil War. The first was the use of "bourgeois experts", that is, non-Bolshevik military officers, professionals, civil servants and so on. The second was the relationship of intellectuals and workers in the Bolshevik Party itself - an issue that was no doubt bound to arise, given the party's intelligentsia leadership and claim to proletarian identity, but that was specifically associated at this time with the argument over the use of bourgeois experts.

In the circumstances of Civil War, the bourgeois experts that mattered were not poets, accountants or even engineers but officers who had served in the old Imperial Army. This had quite important consequences for the future, since it posed the question of loyalty in particularly acute form. Trotsky argued that the Red Army must use the old officers, regardless of the danger of defection and betrayal, because the Communists lacked military experience and expertise. This was strongly opposed by the party's Military Opposition; but Lenin supported Trotsky and their position was adopted. The Red Army not only took volunteers from the old officer corps but also conscripted persons in this category: about 50,000 of them were serving in the Red Army by the end of the Civil War.

The Tsarist officers who served as commanders in the field were under the supervision of political commissars. Most served

the Workers' Opposition - the only faction that won substantial support in the party as a whole - there were strong hints that proletarian "intelligentsia-baiting" (in a party context) often had overtones of antisemitism.[31]

Lenin firmly put the lid on party factionalism in 1921, and he also took a very strong line on the absolute necessity of using bourgeois experts and the "Communist conceit" of those who failed to perceive it. Nevertheless, Lenin was not so much generalizing from the party's experience in the Civil War as trying to neutralize the generalizations that other Communists had made on the basis of that experience. The party came out of the Civil War distrusting the old intelligentsia and seeing that distrust as a mark of proletarian identity. Communists labelled the intelligentsia as part of the old bourgeois class enemy, and noted with disapproval that, unlike the old bourgeoisie as a whole, the intelligentsia had managed to survive the Civil War with much of its former status and privileges intact. And it was not only unreliability and lack of goodwill that the new regime could expect from the bourgeois experts: the example of some of the Tsarist officers in the Red Army left many Communists with the sense that outright betrayal, sabotage and collaboration with the capitalist enemy were on the cards as far as the bourgeois experts were concerned.[32]

As for the internal party situation, the question of intelligentia leadership - specifically, leadership by the group of cosmopolitan Old Bolshevik intellectuals, many of them Jewish

Concluding remarks

The current interest in the Civil War as a formative experience is related to the effort to find a new explanation for the origins of Stalinism - to move the "original sin" (to borrow Moshe Lewin's phrase) from the theoretical premises of What Is To Be Done? to the actual circumstances of the Bolsheviks' first years in power. There is a prima facie case to be made for this interpretation. The Civil War circumstances encouraged or even required centralization and bureaucratization, and provided a justification for coercion and terror against class enemies. The party emerged from the Civil War as an "embattled vanguard", lacking social support, isolated, and disappointed for a series of reasons with both the proletariat and the peasantry. The insistence on monolithic party unity exemplified by the ban on factions came after the Civil War, but could well be seen as a response to Civil War experience. Many Bolsheviks got their first administrative experience in the Red Army or the Cheka; and in the years following the Civil War, the party owed much of its coherence to the bonds forged among comrades in arms. Moreover, the majority of Communists and cadres of the 1920s had entered the party either in 1917 or the Civil War years: they knew the pre-revolutionary party only by hearsay (and misleading hearsay at that, given the process of rewriting party history that began after Lenin's death).

However, there are important qualifications to be made on

position at the beginning of 1918 was extremely precarious. The predictable costs of a civil war - social polarization, violence, wartime emphasis on unity and discipline, wartime centralization and emergency rule - were costs that the Bolsheviks were ready or even anxious to pay. The benefit, of course, was that the Revolution should have its "heroic period" of struggle and emerge strengthened and legitimized by victory.

My conclusion is that the Civil War was indeed a major formative experience for the Bolsheviks. But I see it as an experience of much the same type as Alexander Herzen's famous disillusionment with Europe when he observed the cowardice of the French liberal bourgeoisie during the 1848 Revolution in Paris. Herzen (as Martin Malia argued in his intellectual biography) left Russia in 1847 fully prepared to be disillusioned with Europe and disgusted with European bourgeois liberals; and he was lucky enough to find the occasion justifying disillusionment. The Bolsheviks, similarly, had the formative experience they were looking for in the Civil War. It was the formative experience for which their past and thoughts had prepared them.

18. Service, op. cit., p.94.

19. Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 274.

20. Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution (New York, 1973), p. 92 (from Bukharin's Ekonomika perekhodnogo perioda /1920/).

21. W.H.Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution (New York, 1965), vol. 2, p. 460.

22. Kritsman, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

23. T. H. Rigby, Communist Party Membership in the USSR 1917-1967 (Princeton, 1968), p. 85. These are official Soviet figures. "Workers" means persons who were workers by occupation on the eve of the Revolution.

24. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 14-17 and passim.

25. Oliver H. Radkey, The Unknown Civil War in Russia. A Study of the Green Movement in the Tambov Region 1920-1921 (Stanford, 1976), pp. 1-4.

26. On the"Second Revolution", see T. Shanin, The Awkward Class. Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 145-61.

27. For assessments, see S.A. Fediukin, Sovetskaia vlast' i burzhuaznye spetsialisty (Moscow, 1965), pp. 48-94.

28. See Service, op. cit., p. 102.

29. See, for example, Sapronov, in IX konferentsiia RKP(b). Sentiabr' 1920 goda. Protokoly (Moscow, 1972), pp. 159-60.

30. See remarks by Zinoviev and Sapronov in ibid., pp. 144 and 193.

31. The Workers' Opposition's hostility to the party intelligentsia was mentioned again and again at the X Party Congress. See particularly the comments by Yaroslavsky and Rafail in X syezd RKP(b). Mart 1921 g. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow, 1963), pp. 105, 263 and 274.

32. This idea was suggested to me by Dr Seweryn Bialer (Columbia University).

33. This appears in Stalin's Works, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1954) as "Letter to Comrade Me-rt". It was cited earlier, as a letter to Arkadi Maslow, in Ruth Fischer's Stalin and German Communism (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 436, and my quotation comes from her text.