

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Seventy-Four

The Revolution In Russia

LESSON IDEA

To continue our study of revolutionary methods and procedures, and to learn why the Russian Revolution of 1917 succeeded where so many others had failed.

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MICHAEL BAKUNIN, professional revolutionary, incorrigible idler, and son of a Russian noble, was an army dropout who preferred to dabble in philosophy and to meddle in other people's affairs. "I infinitely regret having nourished this reptile," wrote a fellow revolutionary. "He is a man with whom it repels me to shake hands."

So it was not surprising that this Russian "reptile," who preferred borrowing money from friends to earning it, gravitated to Paris in 1848 to preach revolution, equality of salaries, and the leveling of all classes. When his tirades and radicalism proved too much for the Paris leaders, they sent him on a mission to the Slavs, in the declared hope he would break his neck. "What a man! What a man!" said one. "The first day of a revolution he is a treasure, the second he is only good to shoot."

But Bakunin journeyed eastward to become, not a casualty of revolution, but an enthusiastic participant in insurrections in Russia, Prague, and finally in Dresden, where he was arrested and imprisoned. After several years in German prisons, he was turned over to the Czarist government of Russia for another term of imprisonment. Alexander II finally sent him to Siberia where, free to move about, he "took up a little work" for the first time in his life. The emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861, an

immense concession to the cause of liberty, pleased him but mildly — not as a victory for his Cause, but as another weapon for attacking the imperial authority of the Czar. Before the end of the year, he had escaped from Siberia, travelled across Japan and America, and settled in London. There he began working on fresh plots with conspirators of all nationalities.

As one of his fellow revolutionaries noted: "Bakunin renewed his youth; he was in his element. It is not only the rumbling of insurrection, the noise of the clubs, the tumult in the streets and public places, nor even the barricades that made up his happiness; he loved also the movement of the day before, the work of preparation, that life of agitation, yet at the same time rendered continuous by conferences — those sleepless nights, those parleyings and negotiations, rectifications, chemical ink, cyphers, and signs agreed upon beforehand." Another revolutionist of the London conclave, one who took his work more seriously, added that Bakunin "excited himself exactly as if it were a question of preparing a Christmas tree — that annoyed me."

IF BAKUNIN SEEMED to enjoy his new profession, which was nothing less than plotting murder and arson, more than some of his sour-faced Communist associates, it was because he was an Anarchist. The keynote to his thinking was total liberty, not forced equality. Instead of cutting

everyone down to the same pattern, Bakunin's goal was to give all men a lawless freedom to do whatever they liked – the idler should be free to live on other men's labors, the drunkard to drink himself into imbecility, the murderer to cut throats until he wearied of the sport, the thief to steal until he had enough to satisfy himself. The difference between an Anarchist and a Communist, says Nesta Webster, "is that which exists between the amiable eccentric who . . . wishes to open all the cages in a menagerie and leave the wild beasts free to roam about the world, and the lion-tamer who loves at the crack of his whip to see king of beasts and performing poodle alike meekly rotating on a merry-go-round."

The important thing to remember is that both Anarchists and Communists united in revolution; and both, like tigers aroused by the smell of blood, loved violence for its own sake. Both shared the conviction that to bring about a successful revolution, *any* program that led to the annihilation of "all rulers, ministers of State, nobility, the clergy, the most prominent capitalists, and other exploiters" was acceptable. "Therefore," both preached, "great attention should be given specially to the study of chemistry and the preparation of explosives, as being the most important weapons, etc." And further: "It is no longer aristocracy and royalty that the people can intend to destroy. Here perhaps but a *coup de grâce* or two are yet needed. No, but in the coming onslaught the object is to smite the entire middle-class with annihilation . . . Science now puts means into our hands which make it possible to arrange for the wholesale destruction of the brutes in a perfectly quiet and business-like fashion."

Does this sound familiar? [*If your family has studied the French Revolution of 1789, as told in Lessons #36 and #37 of The Family Heritage Series, they should recognize the characteristics of French*

guillotine politics. In any case, be sure to point out that the vast majority of the over one million people executed by the French revolutionists were "common people," not aristocrats.]

Bakunin's favorite toast was: "To the destruction of all law and order and the unchaining of evil passions." And it was Bakunin and others like him who prepared Russia in the late 1800's for the Communist revolution that was to enslave her in the 1900's. Both groups shared a common philosophy, which Bakunin described in his *Revolutionary Catechism* in these words: "Every effort is to be made to heighten and increase the evil and sorrows which will at length wear out the patience of the people and encourage an insurrection *en masse*." Both also were the declared enemies of Christianity, one calling it the "opiate of the people," the other "a swindle invented by jugglers." Each agreed that "whoever assailed Christianity assailed, at the same time, monarchy and capitalism."

IT WAS IN RUSSIA in 1917 that Anarchists and Communists, after many false starts, assassinations, and strikes, established a base camp for their goal: the destruction of all governments and all civilizations, so they could become the rulers of a "new world order." The ingredients used in 1917 were the same ones that bathed France in blood three times in the previous century – a rapidly growing working class that was underpaid and overworked and which, like the gullible French workers of 1848, expected the paradise they had been promised to be delivered to them within twenty-four hours, preferably gift-wrapped. Russia was a nation groaning under the burdens of war; she had lost millions of her best and most patriotic men on the battlefield. There was a food shortage, partially caused by nature and partially by revolutionary sabotage; and all of these problems were made worse by indecision and offers of appeasement from those in power. The results were as predictable in Russia in 1917 as they had been in France in 1789, 1848, or 1871.

But while earlier revolutions had a life span measured in months, the Russian Revolution has held millions of people in its vise of terror for almost seventy years. How did it succeed? Why has it endured where others failed? Since one of the most decisive factors was the enormous amount of

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

For the detailed history of the overthrow of the Czar and the revolution in Russia, we suggest reading *Czarism And Revolution* by Arsene de Goulévitch. De Goulévitch was a Russian by birth, a survivor of the Lenin regime who fled to France and founded the anti-Communist organization, Union of Oppressed People. This book is available (hardbound, \$4.00) from most American Opinion Bookstores, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

money placed at the disposal of the revolutionaries, the next question is: Who provided the money?

Arsene de Goulévitch, in *Czarism and Revolution*, listed three major sources: "1) *The least important source*. Funds of Russian origin which helped to swell the revolutionary coffers and which fall into two categories: (a) A few successful Moscow business men and industrialists, descending from the people, were captivated by the teaching of the Social Democratic leaders. Flattered by alluring promises of prominent posts in the 'Russian Social Democratic Republic' of the immediate future, they assumed an attitude of hostility to Czarism and the upper classes.

"(b) The second Russian source to feed the revolution was used as pocket money by the future People's Commissars... It derived from the proceeds of hold-ups... by armed bands of revolutionary bandits.

"The robberies of the branches of the State Bank in Helsingfors (Helsinki) in 1906 and in Tiflis in 1907 were the most daring of these hold-ups. The leaders of the Tiflis raid have since gained considerable notoriety. They were Litvinov, subsequently USSR delegate to the United Nations and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and... Stalin.

"2) *British and American*. The main purveyors of funds for the revolution, however, were neither the crackpot Russian millionaires nor the armed bandits of Lenin. The 'real' money primarily came from certain British and American circles which for a long time past had lent their support to the Russian revolutionary cause. Thus Trotsky, in his book *My Life* speaks of a large loan granted in 1907 by a financier belonging to the British Liberal Party. This loan was to be repaid at some future date after the overthrow of the Czarist régime.

"The important part played by the wealthy American banker, Jacob Schiff, in the events in Russia, though as yet only partially revealed, is no longer a secret... From the day that he was placed at the head of Kuhn, Loeb & Co., one of the influential American banking houses, Schiff's behavior was that of an avowed enemy of Russia [*Czarist*]... We are also in possession of more detailed information stemming... from the French Intelligence Service: Twelve million dollars are reported to have been donated by Schiff to the Russian revolutionaries in the years preceding the war...

"3) *German*. The very considerable financial resources... were further augmented, starting from August 1914, by 70 million marks, paid by the Germans to Lenin's organization with the object of attacking Russia [*Germany's enemy in World War I*] in the rear and fomenting a revolution."

THE SECOND unique factor in the Russian Revolution was leadership — particularly Lenin's. The revolutionaries who struck the original blow, deposed the Czar and his family, and established the Provisional Government, included a wild assortment of radicals. They ranged from such moderate throat-cutters as the Mensheviks to brutal mass murderers like the Anarchists and Bolsheviks (Lenin's group). But none of the three Communist dictators who ultimately flattened Russia under an iron hammer took any part in the initial blows. Lenin was living comfortably in Switzerland, having been exiled for trying to topple the Czar in the abortive Communist revolution of 1905. Trotsky, also in exile, was a reporter for a Communist newspaper on the lower east side of New York City. Stalin was in prison in Siberia.

When news of the Czar's abdication reached Europe, revolutionaries of every nationality headed for Moscow like vultures zeroing in on a fresh carcass. Only Lenin held back, believing the new outbreak to be but another damp firecracker in a long string of revolutionary fizzles. The new regime was doomed to repeat the mistakes of the Paris Commune and earlier efforts, he believed, without his personal leadership. But the Germans enticed him out of his European hideaway with promises of safe passage across Europe in a private railway car, complete with its own kitchen and chef. At least thirteen other Bolsheviks were included in the party, as well as Lenin's family.

Why do you suppose the Germans were so anxious to get Lenin to Russia? [*Encourage discussion. The most obvious reason, of course, is that Germany was at war with Russia (as well as England, France, and America), and any internal revolution that would weaken the Russian war effort, or cause Russia to sue for a separate peace with Germany, would enable millions of German troops to fight on the Western front. The less obvious reason is that international revolutionaries within the German high*

command wanted to see the Russian effort succeed. None Dare Call It Conspiracy, Chapter Four, will provide more details about many of these German revolutionaries.]

With the help of highly-placed American revolutionaries, Trotsky and 275 revolutionaries sailed from New York City in March 1917. Stalin, pardoned by the new Provisional Government, returned from Siberia. What resulted was a massive power struggle for leadership. Lenin and the Bolsheviks emerged victorious, and initiated a reign of terror that has continued to this day. No one was safe — especially not fellow revolutionaries. According to Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: “Not one citizen of the former Russian state who had ever joined a party other than the Bolshevik Party could avoid his fate. He was condemned In fact, all Russia’s political parties [were] buried, except the victorious one” The Bolshevik leaders were determined there would be no further power struggles, no counterrevolutions launched by those trained in the art.

To establish “strictly revolutionary order,” Lenin proclaimed that the Communists would purge “the Russian land of all kinds of harmful insects.” And under the term “insects,” says Solzhenitsyn, “he included not only all class enemies but also ‘workers malingering at their work’ The people in the local . . . self-governing bodies in the provinces were, of course, insects. People in the cooperative movement were also insects, as were all owners of their own homes. There were not a few insects among the teachers in the gymnasiums [schools]. The church parish councils were made up almost exclusively of insects, and it was insects, of course, who sang in church choirs. All priests were insects — and monks and nuns even more so.”

It would have been impossible, as Solzhenitsyn notes, to carry out this purging by any normal, legal procedures. In the interests of “revolutionary efficiency,” the Cheka, or secret police, were charged with implementing the entire program, from investigation, arrest, and interrogation to prosecution, a secret trial, and execution. Lenin’s goal was simple: “We are going to bang our fist on the table so hard that the world will shake in terror.”

The Communist terror in Russia was much more sophisticated than the guillotine head-chopping of

previous revolutions. The warm smell of blood at public executions can inflame a nation to kill its killers. Lenin had no intention of inflaming passions, but of paralyzing the will. Imagine what it would be like to see your mother killed. Would you want revenge? But what happens if a loved one simply disappears, and for months or even years you cannot find out where she was taken, or even if, after years of waiting, she is dead or alive? [*Encourage discussion.*] Massive, indiscriminate slaughter can have the same paralyzing effect. Knowing, for example, that all anti-Communists are to be killed is not nearly as horrifying as to see women and children picked at random from a crowd and slain — just as an example for the rest of the populace.

Or consider what would happen under a dictatorship when trust is destroyed, when you know that even your closest friends might be persuaded to give some damaging evidence against you — perhaps in exchange for money, or the promised return of a husband or wife, or simply for more food. How could you organize a counterrevolution if everyone you knew might be a spy for the secret police? Whom could you trust? [*Discuss this point and use your imagination to envision such a situation among your own circle of friends.*]

All of these terror techniques Lenin used from the very beginning. Yet the dictatorship he established was constantly threatened and often approached the point of self-destruction. Only the frequent and repeated intervention of support and money and influence from revolutionaries outside Russia saved it. But that is a story for another lesson.

DURING THE WEEK

Ask family members to read part of Chapter Two of *The Gulag Archipelago*, picking one or two personal incidents of the terror initiated by Lenin to relate to the group. *The Gulag Archipelago* is available (paperbound, \$1.95) from most American Opinion Bookstores, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

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