

# Hegel, Freedom and the Ideological Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy

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*In the preface to the Science of Logic, Hegel wrote, "If it is remarkable when a nation loses its constitutional theory . . . it is certainly no less remarkable when a nation loses its metaphysics." In this article, Mr. Lukes examines the Hegelian notion of freedom and traces its development in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Lukács. He concludes that the Hegelian idea of freedom became adulterated as it passed from one thinker to another, and that it no longer provides the metaphysical foundation for present-day Soviet politics. Because the Soviet ideology has lost this fundamental underpinning, it no longer designs its foreign policy with the idea of freedom in mind.*

"Man is in his very nature destined to be free," wrote Hegel.<sup>1</sup> Such a man is, naturally, free "in virtue of his manhood alone, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc. This is an assertion which thinking ratifies and to be conscious of it is of infinite importance."<sup>2</sup> Less than a century later, a Russian jurist, Lenin, subsidized "from the secret funds of the German Foreign Ministry,"<sup>3</sup> triggered off an enormous social experiment. At the beginning the true nature of the new regime was hard to assess. Russia was traditionally a backward country ruled by enigmatic Czars and, at times, obscure advisers; she was also too distant from the battlefields of France where the whole world was watching generations of young men atomized in the brutal machinery of the First World War. Originally, or so it seemed, the Bolsheviks announced legitimate objectives. Peace was certainly one of them. Lenin's

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1. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: The Colonial Press, 1900), p. 417.
2. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 134, paragraph 209.
3. Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-67* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 45.

promise that the Bolsheviks would not follow the French example of "guillotining defenseless people"<sup>4</sup> was of importance not just methodologically. And yet, before the first revolutionary year was over, Lenin attacked "a narrow-minded intelligentsia" who "sob and fuss" over terror and executions by the Cheka. Continued Lenin: "When we are reproached with cruelty, we wonder, how people can forget the most elementary Marxism."<sup>5</sup>

Obviously, a profound change must have taken place somewhere on the road from Hegel to Lenin. This paper will attempt to describe and analyze certain significant stages of this shift. It is tempting to dismiss the inquiry by simply pointing out that there was the unbridgeable gap between a bourgeois conservative, Hegel, and a radical iconoclast, Lenin. This explanation would not suffice. Hegel, as Lenin, considered revolution the greatest of all historical phenomena; e.g., the French Revolution which "resulted from Philosophy"<sup>6</sup> seemed to Hegel a beautiful sunrise. The difference between the two stages was not, therefore, one of radicalism.

Rather, it appears that somewhere on the road from Hegel to Lenin an important Kantian idea was lost: a human being is an end in himself and must never be treated as a means. While Hegel, almost passionately, returns over and over again to the theme of right, justice, human dignity, and free will, Lenin asserts at least as forcefully that Red Terror is not just a notion without content. And indeed, very soon the *Cheka* was to prove the old Czarist *Okhrana* relatively ineffective.

Just as the idea that human life was the final supreme value had disappeared, another theme had entered: Marx, Engels, and Lenin seem to suggest that in philosophy as well as in life one should simply reach out and seize whatever happens to be the objective. Of course, we are mortal and, at times, grotesquely powerless, but our aspirations are cosmologically global. This, however, requires the courage and willingness to accept total risks. Thirst for the Absolute is an honorable *sine qua non* of the process of critical discovery. In the opening monologue of Goethe's *Faust*, the hero refuses dogmatic slumber as vigorously as Kant had proclaimed the death of metaphysics. However, problems emerge as soon as Faust leaves the level of ontological speculations. He gives up his soul (signs the contract with Mephistopheles) and hopes to be served one moment of happiness. Unlike his ancient predecessors Orestes and Oedipus, and this is significant, Faust does not seem to suffer tremendously for his audacious *quid pro quo* deal. But the tragedy engulfs Gretchen, Philemon, and Baucis: the unheroic, always cautious, unexceptional but infinitely more human figures.

4. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), vol. VIII, p. 64.
5. *Pravda*, 18 December 1918, as quoted by Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), p. 723.
6. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 446.

Others have to pay for the unlimited ambitions of the desperate Doctor, who proclaimed:

No scruple nor doubt could make me ill.  
I am not afraid of the Devil or hell.<sup>7</sup>

Goethe may not be required reading behind the Kremlin wall, but there is an ostentatiously Faustian element in Soviet foreign policy. There have been many attempts to understand it. Originally dismissed as visionary Bolsheviks, later as purely Machiavellian champions of power-politics, Soviet leaders have managed to evade simplistic categories. In 1945, when the West woke up to the Soviet military and (immediate or imminent) political presence in Bucharest, Sofia, Warsaw, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, and Berlin, hurried calculations were performed. Comparing divisions, tanks, and morale proved, as U.S. Under-Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett put it, "all the Russians need to get to the Channel is shoes."<sup>8</sup> Strangely enough, the Kremlin leaders were at that time involved in philosophical discussions concerning Lenin's concept of adventurism and capitulationism. Similarly, Soviet actions in Berlin, Budapest, Prague, and Kabul were apparently<sup>9</sup> motivated as much by ideological as by purely strategic considerations. Students of the Soviet scene need not be reminded that possible Red Army action in Poland can be decided upon by the Politburo which may be discussing not only geopolitical and strategic aspects of such an intervention, but also Marx's and Lenin's views on trade unions.

Kissinger has confirmed<sup>10</sup> what Soviet sources have said repeatedly: since 1917 and, particularly, 1945, the world has been divided into two camps. While intermittent compromises are possible for tactical purposes (e.g., to regulate the arms-race if it becomes too expensive), there can never be any compromise on the ideological front. There is one small problem, however: since in the Soviet Union military as well as economic policies are viewed as manifestations and instruments of a global ideological goal, it follows that there can be no deep-structure compromise at all. Soviet politicians, having accepted Leninism as their EU ANGELION, seem to maneuver toward a Kafkaesque situation best described by the existentialist himself: "From a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back. That is the point that must be reached."<sup>11</sup>

7. J.W. von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 93.

8. Quoted in Alan K. Henrikson, "The Creation of the North Atlantic Alliance, 1948-1952," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. XXXII, No. 3 (May-June 1980).

9. Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Difficulty of Knowing Where to Stop," *Orbis*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer 1980), pp. 201-18.

10. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), pp. 658-9.

11. As quoted by Delmore Schwartz, *Summer Knowledge* (New York: A New Directions Book, 1967), p. 29.

Clearly, this is a manifestation of the Faustian motif. We have seen that it is not necessarily the overachiever who pays the heaviest toll for his mistaken step into emptiness. It may be, therefore, useful to examine the roots and manifestations of Soviet ideology which, together with geopolitics, seem to lead to a *va banque* situation. It will be argued that, as the concerned philosophical systems get less Hegelian, they also lose the necessary focus on life and freedom of the human being as such. Whatever their *secondary* contributions may be, one simply has to remark with the Trojan priest: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*.

In the simple analysis that follows, Marx and Engels, on the one hand, and Lenin and Lukács, on the other, will be examined against the background of the notion "Hegelian." The latter will serve as a semantic linchpin of the two pairs. And legitimately so: Hegelianism is, of course, as an important entity of German classical philosophy, one of the three proclaimed sources of Marxism (the other two being French utopian socialism and English political economy). Marx and Engels are on the left side of our construct, closer to the sources than Lenin and Lukács, where Lukács represents a recent manifestation of Marxism-Leninism. Labels are notoriously confusing in philosophy but this is not to say that one cannot use them at all: Thales was certainly a pre-Socratic and Hume an empiricist. Notice, however, that the former is merely a time-related observation and the latter an epistemological categorization. Let us say tentatively that Lukács is, in our construct, as much more Hegelian than Lenin as Engels is not more Hegelian than Marx.

#### "HEGELIAN"

What is "Hegelian"? Kant's assertion that our understanding of the external world cannot go beyond experience only emphasizes the metaphysician's central dilemma: no matter how radically he divorces himself from his mere being-in-nature, there is always his shadow on the ground. One may recall Hamlet in this context:

O! that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!<sup>12</sup>

The dichotomy between the metaphysician's intellectual ambition and his human, all-too-human (as Nietzsche would later put it) limitations was almost resolved by the young Hegel, who attempted to localize his philosophy in the middle of "the sun," i.e., where one exists without a shadow:

12. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene II, lines 129-131.

The last embodiment of spirit — spirit which at once gives its complete and true content the form of self, and thereby realizes its notion, and in doing so remains within its own notion — this is *Absolute Knowledge*. It is the spirit knowing itself in the shape of spirit, it is knowledge which comprehends through notions. Truth is here not merely *in itself* absolutely identical with certainty; it has also the shape, the character of certainty of self; or in its existence — i.e., for spirit knowing it — it is in the *form* of knowledge itself.<sup>13</sup>

This radical postulate is hardly what one would expect from a philosopher whose earlier period is often described as “theological.” With this in mind, it is less surprising that after *Phenomenology*, his final breach with Schelling, Hegel returned to a philosophy which would later be generally interpreted as the ideology of the Prussian state.

Hegel covered an extremely large part of the ontological and political spectrum. Sometimes he clearly felt that the Absolute was at hand and anticipated the emergence of absolute wisdom, knowledge, an unlimited freedom for the contemplative thinker; in another stage the Absolute is simply identified with Prussia. But he never became the German Bentham, a fact lamented by his liberal critics, such as Haym.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, from one point of view, the term “Hegelian” is an empty notion; from another, it subsumes so many different and often mutually exclusive stages (*Theological Writings, The German Constitution, Logic, Phenomenology of Mind, Philosophy of History, History of Philosophy*) that what they may have in common is by far outnumbered by their distinctive features. In both cases the notion “Hegelian” is blind.

#### KARL MARX

In the case of Karl Marx, the situation is equally confusing: he is contradiction incarnate. A Promethean rebel who usually behaved as a conservative lawyer; an eschatologist preaching radical egalitarianism who collapsed when his daughter married the grandson of a mulatto and a Caribbean Indian,<sup>15</sup> a tender man loved by children in his London neighborhood who wrote (just when his wife had to borrow money to pay for their child's coffin): “Shall I call it good luck or bad? I didn't get the post [a position in a railway office] because

13. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp. 797-798.

14. Cf. Gyorgy Lukács, *The Young Hegel* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), p. 316.

15. Lewis S. Feuer, “Karl Marx and the Promethean Complex,” *Encounter* (December 1968), p. 19. (“You may do there what one of my daughters has done towards solving the color question, by marrying a nigger.”)

of my bad handwriting.”<sup>16</sup> What should one think about the man who tells the world: “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.”<sup>17</sup> He later writes his daughter: “By peace I mean family life, children’s voices, the whole of that ‘microscopic little world’ which is so much more interesting than the ‘macroscopic world!’”<sup>18</sup>

Marx’s philosophical production is by no means less complex than his personal life. *In toto*, the structure of Marxism is pre-Cartesian. It will be recalled that Descartes’s philosophy is the first intellectual account designed as a *system*: the philosopher cannot start in the middle, e.g., with God, but has to enter via *cogito, ergo sum*. It is his realization of this first truth that elevates him to the level of *mathesis universalis*; once there, because all truths are equal, one must only avoid making a wrong conclusion, falling from the level of truth. Pre-Cartesian philosophical systems, on the other hand, can be approached from several different directions. Aristotle, for example, may start analyzing the stone or God interchangeably and without violating the logic of the whole structure. Marxism, as opposed to later Hegelianism, is postulated as an open and ever-growing structure, the meaning of which is necessarily and by definition changed by time. In a sense, Marxism is at once the *definiendum* and the *definiens*. We may know, therefore, what Marx probably thought about a problem at some given time, but we still do not know what Marxism is as a whole. Hermeneutics as an approach is wrong for Marxism or, more generally, for Marxist texts *a priori*.

Marxism, quite in tune with the tradition of German Idealism, started as a critical enterprise. The great era of criticism was opened up by the three critiques of Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason, Practical Reason, and Judgment*). Marx and Engels thus only reflected the *Zeitgeist* when they originally entitled their first attack on Strauss, Stirner, Bauer, Hess *et al*, *A Critique of Critical Critique* (it was later published as *The Holy Family*).

Until well into this century, Marx’s philosophy was viewed as a bipolar system. His earlier writings, particularly his doctoral dissertation, were interpreted as critically Hegelian, while his later works were seen as Marxist. The caesura between the two philosophies was usually explained as a qualitative leap from a young student’s preparatory notes to a great thinker’s mature opus, *das Kapital*. It was only around 1930 that Lukács and Karl Korsch interpreted

16. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

17. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 44.

18. Feuer, “Karl Marx and the Promethean Complex,” p. 29.

Marx's *Frühschriften* as richer than *das Kapital*; Erich Fromm, for instance, saw Marx as an existentialist thinker<sup>19</sup> whose philosophy was "in secular, non-theistic language, a new and radical step forward in the tradition of prophetic Messianism; it was aimed at the full realization of individualism, the very aim which has guided Western thinking from the Renaissance and the Reformation far into the nineteenth century."<sup>20</sup> Yet, for all the new discoveries, the caesura was still there, until finally, in 1953, Dietz Verlag published *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* and the missing link was found. This allowed Althusser to divide all of Marx's works into four parts: 1840-1844 (early works), 1845 (works of transition), 1845-1857 (works of maturation; that includes the *Grundrisse*), and 1857-1883 (works of maturity).<sup>21</sup>

The 1844 *Manuscripts* have created some deserved fascination among philosophers because they achieved an almost ideal balance between philosophical, economic and social theories. Marx is there sometimes clearly Hegelian, especially when he asserts that the final test of any civilization is the extent to which it allows the human being to develop his potential. Now, man should turn to himself in order to bring his potential infiniteness to surface. Marx's focus on the concept of self-restoration of man is located "in politics" but still seems to remain a "task of philosophy:"

Thus it is the *task of history* once the *otherworldly truth* has disappeared, to establish the *truth of this world*. The immediate *task of philosophy*, which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its *unholy forms* now that it has been unmasked in its *holy form*. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.<sup>22</sup>

Against the disintegrating climate of controlled hedonism, Marx postulates heroism of the brave soul: "[Communism] is the *definitive* resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution."<sup>23</sup> For all its declaratory shallowness it is still obvious that philosophy serves in this stage an honorable purpose: to restore human dignity. That did not last for long.

19. Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), p. v.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

21. Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris: Librairie Francois Maspero S.A., 1965), p. 27.

22. Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 251.

23. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, p. 127.

Marx's concern with the German Hegelians led to Hegel. His assertion that the dialectic in Hegel stands on its head (*auf dem Kopf*) is well known. "It must be turned right side up again," claims Marx, "if you would discover the rational kernel [*den rationellen Kern*] within the mystical shell [*in der mystischen Hülle*]." There is a double error in Hegel, observes Marx. Firstly, "the *philosopher* sets up himself (that is the one who is himself an abstract form of estranged man) as the *measuring rod* of the estranged world. The whole *history of the alienation process* and the whole *process of the retraction* of the alienation is therefore nothing but the *history of the production* of abstract (i.e., absolute) thought — of logical, speculative thought."<sup>24</sup> Secondly, Hegel presents "the *human character* of nature and of the nature created by history — man's products . . . in the form that they are *products* of abstract mind and as such, therefore, phases of *mind — thought entities*."<sup>25</sup>

Several perfectly valid arguments that Marx might have against Hegel, however, seem to melt away and lose their legitimacy because of his general misconception of what philosophy should be. What once was a careful and, perhaps, painful process of anticipation as well as reflection and constitution of the Mind is suddenly turned into a truncheon beating an implausible rhythm of heuristic violence. Marx insists: "The people must be taught to be *terrified* of themselves to give them *courage*."<sup>26</sup> This may sound like a maxim of the Inquisition but it is all quite serious. Philosophy is no longer an instrument whereby man reaches beyond his solely bodily existence: "As philosophy finds its *material* weapon in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its intellectual weapon in philosophy . . . The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat."<sup>27</sup>

Now, the one minor problem — that the proletariat either does not accept the idea or that it does not exist as a homogeneous, anonymous, and silent unit — seems easy to solve: if it does not exist, create it. Marx left the level of philosophy querying:

Where, then, is the *positive* possibility of German emancipation?

*Answer:* In the formation of a class with *radical chains*, a class in civil society that is not of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering and claiming no *particular right* because no *particular wrong* but *unqualified wrong* is perpetuated on it, a sphere that can invoke no *traditional* title but only a *human* title,

24. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 175.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

26. Easton and Guddat, *Writings of the Young Marx*, p. 253.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

which does not partially oppose the consequences but totally opposes the premises . . . a sphere, finally, that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them; a sphere, in short, that is the *complete loss* of humanity and can only redeem itself through the *total redemption of humanity*. This dissolution of society as a particular class is the proletariat.<sup>28</sup>

The *Grundrisse* of 1857 is as Hegelian as the 1844 *Manuscripts* and sometimes even more so. It deals with the same concepts (*Entäußerung*, objectification, appropriation) and clearly supports the theme of alienation. In a sense, the *Grundrisse* is the most complete of Marx's works.

It is necessary to emphasize, however, that the truth about Hegel's influence on Marx is that it is not so deep as it presents itself. It is not tautological to say that Hegel remains Hegel, but Marx remains a communist. Marx calls for total redemption of humanity but simultaneously proclaims the unacceptable and potentially explosive theorem that economics and ethics are inextricably linked. This, of course, is not Hegelian at all. Marx's method notions, and, at times, even his whole attitude may have been quite Hegelian, but the essence of his ends was radically different. For illustration, compare Hegel's and Marx's interpretations of the worker-labor relation. Hegel, of course, operates on a different level of abstraction: "The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman [*das knechtische Bewusstsein*]. This doubtless appears in the first instance outside itself, and not as the truth of self-consciousness. But just as lordship showed its essential nature to be the reverse of what it wants to be, so, too, bondage will when completed, pass into the opposite of what it immediately is: being a consciousness repressed within itself, it will enter into itself, and change round into real and true independence."<sup>29</sup> Both, the Lord and the Bondsman, are indeed involved in acts of abstract negation, but "labor . . . is desire restrained and checked, *evanescence delayed* and *postponed*; in other words, *labor shapes and creates*."<sup>30</sup> While Hegel sought to reconstitute and restore, Marx simply postulated the impossibility of bridging the gap between the worker's exterior and interior. Marx, the Prometheus of modern men, told the masses (apparently in an attempt to form the desired class with radical chains):

. . . labor is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being . . . in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself . . . The worker therefore only feels

28. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

29. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 237.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor.<sup>31</sup>

And how would such a debased creature be turned into the liberator of being? Simple, Marx tells the workers, only "you will have to go through fifteen or twenty or fifty years of civil wars and international wars not only in order to change extant conditions, but also in order to change yourself and to render yourselves fit for political dominion."<sup>32</sup>

It may be true that Hegel's system in part stands on its head because almost everything is presented as an intellectual construct, a by-product of mental processes. But, then, one can always translate different levels of abstraction into orders incorporating greater or lesser degrees of the Absolute, i.e., see them as being higher or lower on the ontological scale. Marxist philosophy, paradoxically, stands *itself* on its head, turns itself upside down: a philosopher observes the totality and then tries to describe it as an abbreviated philosophical reflection. Marx, on the other hand, *starts* with an intellectual construct (the morality of which is quite another matter) and *then* proceeds to create, destroy, or simply prune the reality so as to make it fit his intellectual system. It is as if nature could be interpreted as having been *built* to reflect the oils of a landscape painter, and the reality of human beings *modeled* to fit the anatomy of Bruegel's peasant scenes.

#### ENGELS

In a strange sense, Engels had to be a Hegelian. When Marx was already writing Greek verses to his future wife, Engels' philosophical equipment was zero. And when Marx finally broke with Young Hegelian radicalism, Engels knew little of philosophy before Hegel. If ignorance of all other philosophy (including Kant) makes one a Hegelian — Engels could be correctly called a Hegelian. Strangely enough, this did not make him a lesser Marxist. On the contrary: the public secret of official Soviet ideology is that, at times, Engels was well ahead of Marx, i.e., more Marxist. And it all makes sense: as Marx wove the subtle web of classical philosophy, Engels proclaimed Proudhon's rather naive "La propriété c'est le vol," the most philosophical idea of the French communists. His first publication was *Outline of a Critique of Political Economy*, but it was not until 1878 that he became seriously involved in philosophy, and even his *Anti-Dühring* and *Ludwig Feuerbach* are quite unphilosophical in the Hegelian sense.

31. Marx, *Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 110.

32. Feuer, "Karl Marx and the Promethean Complex," p. 18.

Engels, of course, rejected Hegel's idealism but attempted to preserve and develop the idea of an incessantly flowing process and movement of natural being. It is beyond the limits of this paper to discuss the technicalities of Engels' attempt (in his *Dialectics of Nature*) to reinterpret Hegel's three laws (quantity into quality, interpenetration of opposites, and negation of the negation) as the fundamental laws of the universe. Let it suffice to say that Hegel and Engels had two diametrically different conceptions of Nature. Engels is a mechanistic monist seeing Nature as a pure continuum emptied of Hegelian hierarchies. Engels, more than Heraclitus, could have said PANTA RHEI. He is a totalist constructing a universal ontology.

Engels replaced philosophy with positive science. What once was the philosopher's laboratory, the Mind, was turned into a trivial mirror image of the material dialectical process of the external world. What once was an active surveyor was replaced by a passive collector of empirical data. Engels, unlike Marx, was not truly familiar with the history of philosophy. His materialism is vulgar and unpersuasive. A philosopher can accept Descartes's innate ideas, Hume's *tabula rasa*, or a mixture of both, but not the demagoguery which distorted the Kantian and Hegelian attempts to overcome the absoluteness of subject-object separation. It should be noticed that no attention was paid to Kant's revolutionary observation that the *Vernunft* understands the laws of Nature because it has itself inserted them into it: "The understanding does not derive its laws (*a priori*) from, but prescribes them to, nature."<sup>33</sup> Engels felt that he had completed Marx, and, ironically, he had.

#### LENIN

It is postulated above that Lukács was more of a Hegelian than Lenin, and it seems plausible that the latter would have agreed, as he was not an academically ambitious professor. It was with deep sincerity that he wrote in *State and Revolution*: "It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of revolution' than to write about it."<sup>34</sup>

To assess correctly Lenin's Hegelian heritage, the reader must patiently suffer through *Philosophical Notebooks*. What the Soviet editors call "a crystallization of unsurpassed depth and richness of thought . . ."<sup>35</sup> is but a long series of naive "discoveries" of Hegelian philosophy interwoven with an equally long series of arrogant misinterpretations. In the *Notebooks* Lenin insists with the passion of a neophyte that Hegel must be read materialistically. Exactly how to

33. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Chicago: The Open Court, 1949), p. 82.

34. V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1969), postscript to the first edition.

35. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 17.

do it is shown with true Leninist zeal: "Nonsense! lies! slander!" is his comment on Hegel's treatment of Epicurus.<sup>36</sup> It is virtually impossible to determine exactly what Lenin wants to say about Hegel; it is clear, though, what he thinks about himself: he is the Archimedes of the Revolution and he has found the key to the existence of general being in the Hegelian triad. He did consider Hegel extremely important, but claimed that he did not learn much from "that idealistic scoundrel!!"<sup>37</sup> Clearly, Hegel and Lenin operated on two different intellectual planes. Hegel was a philosopher. By contrast, Lenin was first of all a man of action and philosophical disputation had little meaning for him *per se* — if it did not serve the revolution and could not be turned into a weapon in the political struggle.

From this point of view, Hegel and Lenin could be presented as diametrically opposed: for Lenin even the most abstract philosophical category had no independent contemplative generality. For Hegel, on the other hand, even the following statement is purely philosophical and theoretical, not a blueprint for action:

The individual, therefore, who is going to act seems to find himself in a circle where each moment already presupposes the others, and hence seems unable to find a beginning, because it only gets to know its original nature, the nature which is to be its original purpose, by first acting, while in order to act it must have that purpose beforehand. But just for that reason it has to start straight away and, whatever the circumstances are, without troubling about beginning, means, or end, proceed to action at once.<sup>38</sup>

An individual, according to Hegel, must act in order to throw himself into eternity, i.e., to leave behind *work* "which contains the truth of this individuality."<sup>39</sup> Lenin on the other hand, did not see the need for creative action. He needed an organization of revolutionists, not ephemeral categories: "Give us an organization of revolutionists, and we shall overturn the whole of Russia!"<sup>40</sup>

Marx's appeal to *form* a class with radical chains found an able follower in Lenin as well as in other radical social reformers. Their claim that impossibility of a social experiment can be proven only *ex post* confirms our suspicion that the whole society is viewed as one big laboratory in which the scientist is free to experiment with explosives *ad libitum* as only a fatal explosion would prove

36. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

38. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 422.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 428.

40. Feuer, "Karl Marx and the Promethean Complex," p. 23.

him wrong. Clearly, when a scientist realizes that his experiment is leading nowhere, he may have his test tubes washed or even replaced at a minimal cost. Then he starts anew. A grand-scale social experiment may result, however, in destruction of civilized society and, indeed, suffering and death. It is wrong to compare *a priori* anyone with Hitler, as even Stalin's crimes had never been presented as an end in themselves but rather as a means. However, it comes unavoidably to one's mind (when one thinks about Lenin's promise "we shall overturn Russia") that Hitler said in 1933: "Give me ten years and you won't recognize Germany anymore."<sup>41</sup>

Marx and Engels did not live to see their newly formed class with radical chains on its way to liberalization of the whole society. Lenin did. The lonely hours that he had spent in the Bern Library in 1914-1916 were over. Anyone who thought that the harsh language and oppressive methods he introduced into philosophy were to be directed only against professors who cannot be trusted so far "as a single word when it comes to philosophy . . ." <sup>42</sup> was to learn a bitter lesson. A close witness of the Bolshevik Revolution, Maxim Gorki, warned on October 18, 1917:

Rumors are . . . being spread that "some action by the Bolsheviks" will take place . . . This means, again, trucks tightly packed with people holding rifles and revolvers in hands trembling with fear — and these rifles will fire at the windows of stores, at people, at anything. . . . An unorganized crowd, hardly understanding what it wants, will crawl out into the street, and, using this crowd as a cover, adventurers, thieves, and professional murderers will begin to "create the history of the Russian revolution." In a word, there will be repeated that bloody and senseless slaughter which we have already witnessed. . . .<sup>43</sup>

The only chance for an individual, says Hegel, to exist according to the Absolute in this profane everyday world is to live in a free society. There, the individual finds, "is nothing . . . which may not be reciprocal, nothing in regard to which the independence of the individual may not, in dissipating existence on its own account [*Fürsichseyn*], in negating itself, give itself its positive significance of existing for itself."<sup>44</sup>

On November 7, 1917, reports Gorki,<sup>45</sup> both Lenin and Trotsky were already poisoned with the venom of power, and this was "evidenced by their shameful attitude toward freedom of speech, the individual, and the sum total of those

41. A sign on a bombed-out house in Germany, 1945.

42. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, p. 296.

43. Maxim Gorki, *Untimely Thoughts* (New York: P.S. Eriksson), p. 83.

44. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 377.

45. Gorki, *Untimely Thoughts*, p. 85.

rights for the triumph of which democracy struggled. . . . Blind fanatics and dishonest adventurers are rushing . . . to the destruction of the proletariat and of the revolution."<sup>46</sup> The new leaders, as the Romanov government before them, "seize and drag off to prison all those who think differently."<sup>47</sup>

Hegel noticed that antiquity saw wisdom and virtue in living "in accordance with the customs of one's own nation."<sup>48</sup> Lenin, on the other hand, came to impose his will upon it. Gorki writes: "The working class cannot fail to understand that Lenin is only performing a certain experiment on their skin and on their blood, that he is striving to push the revolutionary mood of the proletariat to its furthest extreme and see — what will come of this?"<sup>49</sup> Life, in all its complexity, warns Gorki, is unknown to Lenin, who is not without the psychological traits of a Russian nobleman. The anarchy does not disturb Lenin; he has learned from his books how to raise masses on their hind legs. "The working class," concludes Gorki, "is for Lenin what ore is for a metalworker . . . What does Lenin risk if the experiment should fail?"<sup>50</sup>

#### LUKÁCS

Gyorgy Lukács was a true philosopher and also a brilliant practitioner of an important art: survival in Stalin's Russia as well as in Nagy's government. His Hegelian roots are well known; some of his works are quite serious, honest, and scholarly. Sadly, however, an equally voluminous part of his production is less serious, designed apparently to ventilate his Marxist-Leninist dogma.

Whatever his personal weak points may have been (the sycophantic portrait of Lenin is among them), Lukács was a philosopher *par excellence* — whenever he chose to be. His main advantage, as Kolakowski observes, was that "he alone expressed the fundamental tenets of Leninism in the language of the German philosophical tradition and, unlike the unsophisticated Marxists of his day, he wrote in a manner that enabled at least some Western intellectuals to digest his thoughts."<sup>51</sup>

His magnum opus, *The Young Hegel*, is a brilliant and sober account of the most complex of philosophers. It is Marxist but fair, written with fresh imagination, and often innovative. One has to notice in this context Lukács's realization that Hegel probably wrote *Phenomenology* with Goethe's *Faust* on his mind; several intellectual and philosophical affinities between the two works

46. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

48. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 378.

49. Gorki, *Untimely Thoughts*, p. 86.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

51. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), vol. III, p. 253.

are quite profound: "The road on which Goethe discovers his *Faust* or *Wilhelm Meister* is, broadly speaking, the same as that of the spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology*."<sup>52</sup>

For a proclaimed Marxist, Lukács is amazingly tolerant. He presents himself as a disciple not only of Hegel and Marx but also of Dilthey and Windelband. The only school he attacks forcibly is Viennese neo-positivism, but even then he makes an exception for Wittgenstein. His loyalties, however, were never mixed. First Marx, then Hegel: "This interpretation of Hegelian philosophy is neither more nor less than the attempt to apply to his [Hegel's] earlier development the brilliant insight formulated by Marx . . ."<sup>53</sup>

*The Young Hegel* stands in a sharp contrast with *The Destruction of Reason*, an essentially Stalinist work. Here, Lukács argues, all who are not entirely and truly in agreement with Marxism, are, *ipso facto*, heralds of Nazism. It is worth noting that Lukács let the book be published, unchanged, after Stalin's death in 1954. Indeed, he declared in *My Way To Marx* that he had refused to criticize Stalin, since any such criticism was bound to degenerate into support for Fascism.<sup>54</sup>

The intermittent explosions of Western interest in Lukács are understandable: he subsumed all the fashionable figures of the day, Hegel and Stalin, Goethe and Lenin; he sat in his apartment overlooking the Danube and gave interviews that satisfied the mainly French and German fascination with a red commissar who could quote Homer.

He was well portrayed in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* as the Jesuit Naphta. Liberation and development of the individual are not what our age demands, lectures Naphta. "What it needs, what it wrestles after, what it will create — is Terror."<sup>55</sup> Is he really a Jesuit, inquire members of his audience later? He said so many bizarre things. Is that allowed? Is that the doctrine of the Roman Church? It is very simple, we are told: "Herr Naphta is, of course, first of all a Jesuit. He is that always, and before anything else. But he is also a man of intellect . . . and as such he is always searching for new combinations."<sup>56</sup>

Lukács was indeed a philosopher who could have gained a prominent place in the intellectual history of this century. Instead, he chose to hide in the womb of dogma and lies. He was more than qualified to defend and create the very categories that his idolology betrays. "If I warn you against this man . . . it is because all his thoughts are voluptuous, and stand under the aegis of death — and death is the most dissolute of powers."<sup>57</sup>

52. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, p. xii.

53. *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

54. Kolakowski, *Main Currents*, p. 303.

55. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (New York: Knopf, 1958), p. 400.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 411.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

## CONCLUSION

Who, it may be asked, was truly Hegelian? If the question means "who consciously developed Hegelian philosophy in order to improve man's position in the universe, to make him more noble and mature, i.e., more human," the answer must be: none of them. Hegel introduced or developed philosophical principles that brought to light certain by-products of human history, e.g., alienation, capital, and class-divisions. Therefore, he would never have condemned the idea of radical change *in toto*. However, he always offered a way out, an alternative to an impossible situation. He also did not fail to notice undeniable gradual progress in history:

They [the Orientals] only know that *one is free*. But on this very account, the freedom of the one is only caprice. . . . That *one* is therefore only a Despot; not a *free man*. . . . The Greeks . . . and the Romans likewise knew only that *some* are free — not man as such. . . . The Greeks, therefore, had slaves; and their whole life and the maintenance of their splendid liberty was implicated with the institution of slavery. . . . We know that all men absolutely (man as *man*) are free.<sup>58</sup>

Not surprisingly, perhaps, this motive is not to be found in Marxist thought. Apparently, an honest search for intellectual values is incompatible with the omnipresent *Parteilichkeit*, the entry to all sorts of Marxism.

Marx's hero, Prometheus, stole fire from the gods and gave it to man. As a punishment for his crime, Zeus sent to earth Pandora from whose box all human misfortunes (but hope) were let loose. Prometheus never felt guilty for the suffering he had imposed on others. And, perhaps, rightly so. All misfortunes aside, he became the giver of the arts and sciences; after all, life of man is full of *quid pro quo* situations. With a degree of logic in it, some of the old Bolsheviks may have believed that the fire they were about to deliver to humanity in 1917 was going to heal all the open wounds left behind by almost any revolutionary change, such as blood-shed, terror and disintegration of civilized rule. It may have seemed that almost any sacrifice was worth liberating Russia, Poland, etc., from the oppressiveness of the Czar's executioners. Tragically, it became obvious too soon that the Soviet leaders' need of *morituri te salutant* by far exceeded that of the bloodiest Czars.

Marx's messianic myth about the classless society which would emerge from an apocalyptic battle between the Good and the Evil did not produce paradise on earth. By its emphasis on hatred and violence, however, it unleashed a new Pandora's box and contributed to the castration of *homo sapiens*.

It appears that now, after the collapse of Hitlerism, Stalinism, and Maoism,

58. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 189.

an attempt must be made to restore humanism to international relations. Humanism has been traditionally based on universal planetary thinking that rejects emphatically the maxim of the great Florentine, Dante, which Marx chose as his motto: "Follow your own path and let people say what they will."

Our century has witnessed a whole series of Faustian attempts to simply reach out and achieve an enormous revolutionary change of a cunningly biased design. It is a positive aspect of history that it tends to free itself from all systems that do not recognize that political freedom is a universal human right. It is an absolute principle which "brings us to the last stage in History, our world, our own time."<sup>59</sup>

59. *Ibid.*, p. 442.