

so significantly after 1917. Professor Roberts has updated and improved our understanding of War Communism, but his treatment of such issues as the contradictory principles which underlay certain policies, the evolution of Lenin's concept of socialism, and Lenin's sincerity leaves one not completely satisfied.

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PROFESSOR ROBERTS REPLIES:

I would point out that Lenin did not have "contradictory attitudes" about the organizational nature of the ultimate socialism that was the goal. He understood clearly that it would be an organizational system in which production would be for direct use by the community and in which products would not enter into use through purchase. The contradictory attitudes Burch mentions have to do with the transition to socialism—the nature and duration of the transitional period and whether there would be a direct transition. They also have to do with the vagaries of propaganda necessities and with attaining and maintaining effective power. Lenin may have experienced difficulty in making up his mind about what to do, but he frankly admits that "war communism" represented an effort at transition to socialism. The effort at transition was made, whatever the probability Lenin might have assigned to its success.

The noncommodity character of socialism was understood by many. There were different ideas about how to achieve the noncommodity economy, and various specifics were not resolved a priori. But many of those differing over, for example, workers' control versus control by central planning authority, and transitional period versus direct transition, understood the noncommodity character of socialism.

It is plausible that the Bolsheviks, once in power, would attempt a transition to socialism. According to Marx's materialist conception of history, the mode of production determines the social, political, and legal institutions and the consciousness of men. Unless the mode of production were socialist, historical materialism precluded the Bolsheviks remaining in power. Yet in 1921 they realized that their efforts to achieve a socialist mode of production also precluded their remaining in power. Herein was their real dilemma. The requirements of theory and of reality contradicted each other.

Burch should not interpret my speculations, concerning whether Lenin came to realize his predicament and to have any prescience that was ineffective, as doubts on my (or Lenin's) part that the policies were socialist policies. Neither should the fact that in 1921 Lenin definitely realized the costs (if only in political terms) of the policies be misconstrued by Burch to mean that "it makes little sense" to explain the policies in terms of socialist aspirations.

Apparently my statement that Lenin "either sincerely thought or was forced to pretend that he thought that the policies of 'war communism' were an effort to establish socialism" is misleading. I do not mean that Lenin might not have regarded the policies as socialist ones, but that as early as 1918 the suspicion might have dawned on Lenin that the socialist program was one of economic disaster. Prior to the definite realization (1921) that a continuation of the socialist program would result in the Bolsheviks' loss of power, any skepticism Lenin may have had about the *success* of a transition to socialism would have been restrained by avoid-

ing finding himself in the category of Mensheviks, whom he denounced as "pseudo-Marxist lackeys of the bourgeoisie" for their belief that it was too early to establish socialism in Russia.

Sometime between 1917 and 1922 the suspicion might have dawned on Lenin that the effort to establish a noncommodity form of economic organization was utopian, with or without a transitional period. This has indeed dawned on many present-day economists in the Soviet Union, but orthodox Marxists continue to define socialism or communism as a noncommodity form of production. The conflict (in economics) between the modern-day revisionist and orthodox Marxists can be understood in these terms. Revisionists realize that it is impossible (in a modern economic context) to organize production in a noncommodity form and that efforts to do so are at the expense of economic rationality, yet they cannot say Marx was utopian and still hope to be recognized as Marxists. Therefore, they attempt to revise Marx and identify markets or commodity production with socialism.

The programmatic content of Marxian socialism calls for the replacement of a commodity with a noncommodity form of production. In my article my purpose was to show that the policies of "war communism" were an effort to establish socialism. After decades of a reign of mythology, I looked at the evidence provided by Lenin. That evidence is unequivocal. I suspect that resistance to the evidence is basically a matter of reluctance to acknowledge the power of ideology to introduce and maintain folly as a force in Soviet economic history.

TO THE EDITOR:

I am seeking information about a Russian writer named Sergei Gussiev Orenburgsky, born in the later 1860s, author of two novels, *Land of the Fathers* and *Land of the Children*. The latter was published in English translation by Longmans, Green in 1928 (the translator was Nina Nikolaevna Selivanova). It is thought that he came to the United States in the 1920s and lived for some years in New York City. It would be much appreciated if anyone possessing such information could write me at the address shown.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Like one of your correspondents (March 1971 issue), I am beginning to become disenchanted with the contents of the *Slavic Review*, but for a different reason. Whereas Mr. Lupinin says that the *Slavic Review* is not historical enough, in my mind it is now too historical, and what is more, far too literary. When I first subscribed to the *Slavic Review* eight years ago, there seemed to be a much larger proportion of articles dealing with contemporary Soviet affairs, particularly Soviet politics, than now. I regret the shift in content. Perhaps articles of the previous kind are just not being written these days; I do not know. At any rate, while the *Slavic Review* has maintained its usual high standards, I find that it is moving far enough away from my interests to encourage me to read it in the Library rather