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analyze more deeply the interplay (critical in all revolutionary situations) between street politics and institutional politics and the ways the two created or prevented possibilities for different revolutionary conclusions.

But no criticism should detract from the great achievement of this major work. It will surely become the standard source on these events for years to come and should be a useful resource for all historians interested in modern Russian history.

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How should we understand the 1917 revolutions in the Russian empire? When and why did the many-sided and mass participatory upheaval that ensued on the downfall of the tsarist autocracy become, at least in the cities, the Bolshevik revolution? Did the assertion of Bolshevik hegemony over the revolutionary process, accompanied by a grudging partial restoration of capitalism in the 1920s, constitute a stable outcome? Whence 1929, and how do we characterize it? As a new revolution? A continuation of 1917? Its betrayal?

Drawing on the extensive and long-available paper trail generated by revolutionaries obsessed with workers, Gennady Shkliarevsky seeks to revise the oft-told story of labor in the revolution. He focuses on what he calls the labor movement during the brief period from February 1917 to midsummer 1918. By moving even this much beyond the time frame of the October coup, however, he refreshingly shifts the historical problematic. Instead of the standard subject of workers’ heroic self-mobilization and their apparent support for the Bolsheviks in October, he addresses the transformation of labor organizations from weapons in the workers’ struggle to tools in the creation and consolidation of the Bolshevik dictatorship, a dramatic turn of events that he feels remains poorly explained. Abjuring appeals to Russia’s dire circumstances, the author offers an analysis of the institutional interests and concerns of labor organizations, in an attempt to show their complicity in their own undoing.

In 1917 the labor movement was bifurcated between so-called factory committees (essentially strike committees that did not disband when strikes ended) and trade unions, with the latter, for reasons that are never made clear, striving relentlessly to subordinate the former. This aim transcended party affiliation, uniting Bolshevik trade unionists with activists whom the author designates as moderate socialists. Opposition to subordination came from anarchists, syndicalists, and those whom the author calls radical Bolsheviks. To preserve their independence, factory committees had to turn
against the moderates, advocates of the kind of democratic system based on soviets that factory committees favored. But if support for the “democratic cause” would have meant the end of the factory committees’ autonomy, alliance with the radical Bolsheviks tended in the same direction, for in the authors’ view the radical Bolsheviks’ commitment to the factory committees, or any other organization, could only be tactical, given their belief in “proletarian dictatorship.” In the event, the factory committee leadership chose the radical Bolsheviks, and for a time the movement grew.

As for the trade unions, whose overlapping organizational structure brought enormous confusion (some metalworkers in Petrograd belonged to twenty-four different unions), moderate socialists were dominant, but they were swept along by events, first supporting the doomed Provisional Government, then coming around late to the acceptance of a transfer of power to the soviets. Shkliarevsky argues that this radical shift, and the policies of trade unions in general, were motivated less by rank-and-file workers’ attitudes, as usually claimed, than by the Provisional Government’s inability to regulate industry or create an effective system for mediating industrial disputes, essentially forcing union leaders into opposition. Workers and labor functionaries, even if former workers, had different interests.

The Bolshevik seizure of power, which the author avers was a sign of their desperation, is said to have made the stance of the moderate socialists virtually untenable and to have transformed the positions of labor organizations. In the name of the general interests of the proletariat and the proletarian state, factory committees found themselves carrying out a policy of brutal class war against workers. Repression did not arise after the exigencies of the civil war made themselves felt, in other words, but before, as a result of individual choices.

When Vladimir Lenin, the staunch defender of factory committees, suddenly abandoned them in favor of trade unions in March 1918 (seeing an opportunity to take advantage of Menshevik disarray and assert Bolshevik control over the labor movement as a whole), factory committees lost their autonomy. But for trade unions, the long-sought subordination of the factory committees turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory, for trade unionists, like the factory committees, ended up in a situation where they felt obliged to do Lenin’s dirty work, promoting the imposition of dictatorship in the name of the workers. The self-inflicted tragedy of labor organizations was complete.

But whom, in the end, does Shkliarevsky really blame? Judgmental as he can be of the moderate socialists (especially their misplaced fear of workers), he appears to consummate his indictment against them for collaborating in the formation of a dictatorship by relying on their self-exculpating condemnation of Lenin for being an all-powerful and uncompromising zealot. “Lenin’s dictatorial policies,” the author writes, “were not prompted by the current conditions but were rooted in his ideological commitment to dictatorship” (p. 200), an assertion that cannot be proven. Shkliarevsky never explains why supposedly robust worker organizations turned out to be dependent on the patronage of one man, or what larger context entered into labor functionaries’ decisions to repress militant workers.

With the ongoing war, peasant land seizures, national revolts, and sense of collapsing authority, the puzzle would seem to be less the onset of dictatorship than the endurance of that dictatorship, as well as what it represented and how that changed over time. An institutional history of labor organizations, however enlightening, cannot answer such questions, which requires an analysis of the uses of the categories of class and class war, the understandings of the threat of counterrevolution, the process of
territorial reconquest commensurate with the civil war, and the international situation. Shkliarevsky himself cites the strategy advocated by Iulii Martov, perhaps the quintessential "moderate socialist," in 1920: opposition to Bolshevism as a terror system; support for Bolshevism as a bulwark against international imperialism and its internal counterrevolutionary allies. Advancement of the latter precept rendered the former moot.

Lewis Siegelbaum, in a well-written and scrupulous synthesis of the abundant new scholarship on the 1920s (including his own), maintains that contrary to some recent claims, the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was not dominated by a revivalist civil war spirit, or indeed by any unifying set of political or cultural tendencies (including the NEP itself). Through an appreciative dialogue with the multivolume work of E. H. Carr, Siegelbaum recaptures the sense of directionlessness and uncertainty prevalent during the 1920s. The New Economic Policy's partial restoration of capitalism was tentative and piecemeal, he reminds us, and the anxieties over the policy's implications and consequences increased the more far-reaching they seemed to become. If Siegelbaum commendably refuses to organize his narrative of the 1920s and the NEP as a supposed lost alternative, he also refuses to treat the period as a mere prelude. Standing in the 1920s no one could have predicted the 1930s, he argues, for not only was 1928–32 a new revolution, it was an improvisation with no long-term vision—what Siegelbaum, echoing Moshe Lewin, calls a Promethean leap into the unknown.

Rather than the debates and campaigns of the Communist Party, the author chooses as his main organizing principles state and society, in a bid to "normalize" Soviet history. He subdivides the state into a military and police component, a civilian component focused on the soviets (or local councils), an economic and administrative component revolving around the commissariats and trade unions, and what he calls the political state (i.e., the Bolsheviks). Why there are so many parts, and how they fit together, remains a bit unclear, especially because some elements fade in the narrative (the military and police, most prominently). But deliberate construction of a dynamic state is plausibly put forth as one of the keys to Bolshevik endurance.

When it comes to society, Siegelbaum opts for an analysis not based on town and country, center and periphery, nationality, or some combination thereof, but on class, of which he asserts there were three: the workers, the peasants, and the intelligentsia. (Readers will note that this division roughly corresponds to the internal one laid down in the 1930s, with the exception that the Soviet intelligentsia was accorded the status of a "stratum," not a class.) One can only rejoice that the author takes seriously the importance of class, demonstrating its centrality in the minds of contemporaries. But to use a class analysis, however nuanced, to analyze a revolution that was fundamentally about class categories is to make what should be the object of analysis into the method.

Siegelbaum's classes, moreover, seem to come apart in the presentation of empirical detail, experiencing ever-deeper crises rather than cohesion. Perhaps the one "class" that does retain some coherence is that of the experts, administrators, and policemen. Subsuming these people under the heading "intelligentsia" was how Stalin avoided explanation for the formation of a new elite. By contrast, Siegelbaum, following Robert Daniels, Dan Orlovsky, and ultimately Leon Trotsky, writes that these lower-middle strata "grafted themselves onto the revolution," forming its social base.

Admirably open-ended as Siegelbaum's clearheaded narrative remains, his view that 1918–29 represents an epoch between revolutions appears to imply that the 1917–18 revolution reached closure. Yet was it not the continual preoccupation with socialist
revolution, and the absence of the social justice and wholesale transformation associated with such a revolution, that made the 1920s seem directionless and uncertain? The author, though, virtually reduces the problem of socialism in the revolution to one of showing that government policies of the civil war period were introduced ad hoc and then of detailing how the compromises of the NEP affected each social class in turn. He seems to suggest that a shared aspiration for socialism and a search for its meaning either did not exist or were too weak and diffuse to merit separate analysis.

At the same time, Siegelbaum asserts that the NEP was politically "sabotaged," rather than that it succumbed to its own contradictions (as if the latter did not pave the way for the former). What would induce a regime to sabotage its own policies? Similarly, he writes that "the idea of going back to capitalism in order to move ahead to socialism was tricky" (p. 228), but does not say why. Limiting his discussion of ideology for the most part to denying its significance, the author then concedes that the improvised revolution of 1929 was expressed in the language and symbols of socialism, and that it seemed to work. Where and by whom were these symbols kept alive, what did they mean, and how could a leap into the unknown have achieved stability, rather than collapsing in a heap?

Siegelbaum apologetically omits discussion of the international context (something that Carr, working with more space, kept at the center). He does briefly take up what is euphemistically designated the "in-gathering of nations," offering a narrative of the territorial reconstitution of the empire almost in passing. (He rejects the coercion-only explanation for imperial reconquest of Richard Pipes, advocating that the national republics, together with women, constitute an agenda for further research.) One would scarcely guess that the Soviet state was through and through an imperial entity, or that many of the most powerful Bolsheviks in the 1920s and beyond were precisely the ones who led the military invasions, from Sergei Kirov and Grigory Ordzhonikidze in the Caucasus to Mikhail Frunze in Byelorussia and Central Asia. On this point and many others, however, Siegelbaum's book largely reflects the nature of the historiography, to which he has provided an exacting interpretive guide.

Jonathan Coopersmith has written a monograph less about the electrification of Russia, as his title suggests, than about the failure to carry out large-scale electrification, owing to the benign neglect of the tsarist regime (entering the Great War the capital, Petersburg, was dependent on imported coal), the dislocation of the civil war, and the limitations of the Soviet economy prior to the industrialization drive. In the period he considers, some power stations were built, so that by 1926 the Soviet Union produced 1,130 million kilowatts of electricity. But almost four-fifths of this total was concentrated in only three cities (Moscow, Leningrad, and Baku), and it amounted to less than 10 percent of German, and less than 2 percent of U.S., output. Through such vivid comparisons were the deep anxieties over Russian backwardness deepened.

Coopersmith is not primarily interested in technical or economic issues associated with electricity, but rather with using it as a lens to analyze mentalities. He contrasts the tsarist regime's military and psychological investment in railroads with the Soviet leadership's ballyhooed formation of a state commission for electrification, likening the latter to Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" program in its ability to capture imaginations, link scientists and politicians, and mobilize resources. Known as GOELRO, the commission produced a five-hundred-page plan that was unveiled at the Eighth Congress of Soviets in 1920 with a gigantic illuminated map of the country. Not only was the plan developed in rooms that were freezing, but during its unveiling the lighting of the meeting hall caused blackouts elsewhere in Moscow.
The 1920 GOELRO plan, a reflection of the rise to prominence of native engineering professionals, was criticized by some people as "electrofiction," although others judged it insufficiently revolutionary. For the latter, electrification, and technology more generally, promised an immediate radiant future. By 1921, however, central authorities were already downplaying long-term visions for short-term crisis management, while becoming embroiled in arguments over whether the central state, as envisioned by GOELRO, or local governments should control the still-to-happen process of electrification. The vision of GOELRO was realized only after Cooper-smith’s study ends, as but one part of Stalin’s industrialization drive.

Coopersmith calls electricity a “state technology,” by which he appears to mean that the early Soviet state fixated on it. He does not, however, explore this point by connecting it with the young regime’s alarm about its vulnerable position vis-à-vis more advanced countries, or its poignant attempts to gain legitimacy. Nor does he tease out the implications of his findings for the period after 1926. Nonetheless, intentionally or not, Coopersmith ends up showing how revolutionary the Stalin era turned out to be, and how the radical dream of achieving a quick leap from backwardness to modernity, while eliminating exploitation, persisted throughout the uncertain decade of the 1920s.

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It is perhaps too early to begin postmortems on the Soviet system, but surely one major reason for the precipitous collapse of that once-mighty empire must be sought in its nationality problems. Until quite recently most scholars tended to downplay the danger posed to the Soviet state by its diverse and hardly somnambulant nationalities. At the present time the pendulum has swung the other way, and some seek in the nationality question the answer to all of the former Soviet Union’s difficulties.

Happily, the present book belongs to neither of these extremes. Here the aim is quite straightforward: to provide an account of the interplay between Soviet economic, political, and “national” policies during the crucial period. In Ukraine, as in many other borderland areas of the Soviet Union, the task of the Bolsheviks to form a loyal working class was complicated by the national question. As George Liber points out, Ukrainians tended to belong to the peasantry and to live concentrated in the countryside while the urban areas were dominated by Russians, Jews, and Poles. Furthermore, the restrictive policies of the tsarist regime had stymied the development of national self-consciousness among Ukrainians. Before 1917 they had to a large extent remained in the countryside, hostile to the towns and their inhabitants and generally sheltered from the storms and stresses of modernity. This was the legacy that the Bolsheviks vowed to sweep away.

The fundamental problem facing the Bolsheviks in Ukraine in the early 1920s, according to Liber, was to legitimize “an urban-based revolution nationally alien to the Ukrainian countryside” (p. 7). Thus, the Soviet regime needed not so much to placate the existing Ukrainian nationality but to create a new one that would be urban, modern, literate, and—not incidentally—communist. It was with this goal in mind that the