

The 'authoritarian personality': an anti-Western hoax

by Michael Minnicino

Part III

The first two parts of this series described how the concept of the "authoritarian personality" was created in the 1930s as a weapon against the idea of technological progress by the Institute for Social Research. The ISR, also known as the Frankfurt School, was founded by the Hungarian Communist International official Georg Lukacs, and became the Soviet Union's most important cultural warfare operation against the West.

Consider the state of Europe almost exactly 70 years ago.

In the five years from the end of 1918 to the end of 1923, a "New Age" revolution swept the continent. Despite certain local variations, this revolution's core ideology was invariably anti-capitalist (often feudal), anti-rational, and racist. It had different names in different places: it was generally known as "Fascism" in Italy, "Nazism" in Germany, and "Bolshevism" in Russia.

These were not "authoritarian" movements—that false description would be manufactured many years later. These were very explicitly "anti-authoritarian" revolutions, promising "the wave of the future," and the overthrow of the paternalistic bourgeoisie and the soulless bureaucrats who represented the "old order."

It is always difficult to write history about those things which most people think they know, and even more so, in the age of television. We have been warped by soap operas, and by that soap opera writ large, the "docu-drama."

All great playwrights of history, from Aeschylus, to Shakespeare, to Schiller, tried to craft characters whose individuality encompassed a whole world, wherein the audience could see itself, its society, and the great issues its society faced. The docu-drama attempts the exact opposite. The great struggles for which millions shed and let blood, around which nations died or were born, must be shrunk to the petty motivations of a few individuals. "I know all about the Holocaust," says the victim of docu-drama viewing, "it was horrible . . . but I liked the love scenes." (This was completely understood by the Frankfurt School, which first studied the psychological effects of the radio soap opera in the early 1930s, and, as we shall later see, shaped modern television programming to this purpose.)

Docu-drama accepts only the history of highly identifiable good guys and bad guys. In its most sophisticated forms,

it will show the occasional good guy seduced to evil, or a bad guy who demonstrates his "heart of gold" before the last commercial; but, processes do not really exist. Herein, for instance, rests the entire credibility of Hannah Arendt's definition of "totalitarianism": Nazis and Fascists are "bad guys," and Bolsheviks are idealists who, in their haste to do good, "give in to the dark side of the Force"—to use a banal modern phrase.

Things were not so obvious as the 20th century was ending its second decade.

The Great War ended in November 1918, and Germany, a monarchy, became the Weimar Republic. At about the same time, the Bolsheviks dropped the word "Provisional" from the name of their year-old government in Petrograd, and began work on the ratification of a Soviet constitution, although it was not immediately clear to observers what "Soviet" meant. (Ironically, the word was first used to describe the "workers' councils" that were set up by the Russian secret police at the beginning of the century.)

That did not stop others in Europe from declaring their own local insurrections to be "Soviet." That is what the Spartakus organization of Rosa Luxemburg called its Berlin uprising; it was crushed by the end of January 1919. Next came the "Bavarian Soviet Republic" in the south of Germany; it was led by a strange collection of intellectuals, including Germany's two most famous avant-garde poets. This collapsed in February.

But in March, Hungary—about half-way between Russia and Germany—declared itself to be a "Soviet Republic," and received official credentials as such in a radio broadcast by Vladimir Lenin himself. The same month, a few hundred miles away in Italy, a revolutionary party calling itself "Fascist" announced its existence; it was unclear what "Fascism"—named after the fasces, a forgotten symbol of authority in ancient Rome—actually meant, but the party was headed by a well-known socialist revolutionary.

The Hungarian affair ended within an embarrassing 133 days, in August. However, in September, in nearby Fiume on the Adriatic coast, Italy's most famous avant-garde poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio, seized the town at the head of an armed force of revolutionaries. They didn't call themselves "Fascists" or "Soviets," but they all wore black shirts and daggers, and saluted each other with a rigidly upraised right arm; they

declared free love legal, and rang the church bells of the city every time their leader completed a new poem, among other mystifying policies.

Left or right?

As the 1920s began, the distinctions between left and right became almost meaningless. In Italy, Mussolini's Fascist thugs were beating up socialists and democrats, and calling for a "workers' state"; in Russia, Lenin's Bolshevik thugs were beating up socialists and democrats, and calling for a "workers' state." This comparison may sound glib to modern ears, but it is not. What would you have found, if you were an "investigative journalist" in 1922?

On the first level, you would have found that Lenin's credentials as a socialist were no better than Benito Juarez Mussolini, the son of socialists and editor of Italy's mainstream socialist daily newspaper until 1915. The two had read the same books, were trained by the same people, and, over the years, shared the same friends, although they presumably never met each other. And, the similarities went well beyond personalities.

Both seized state power with *military* forces so small, as to barely count as a skirmishing unit in the recently concluded Great War. Clearly, their opponents had been weakened to the point of collapse *before* the insurrection, and they themselves had resources outside the country, far larger than that which they were able to mobilize in the streets. Lenin's organization inside Russia was controlled less by him, than by the Okhrana; this huge secret police operation was nominally loyal to the Czar, but in fact committed to the Czar's overthrow on behalf of Russia's Old Believer religious fanatics in alliance with Western financial interests, largely British. Much of what was called Bolshevik organizing, was in fact first cleared with the British embassy. One of the top case officers of the whole affair was the head of British Military Intelligence in St. Petersburg, Col. Sir Samuel Hoare.

Hoare had just come to Russia from northern Italy, where he had run military intelligence operations. His primary task there was to fund Mussolini's organizing. This fact was so well known, that Hoare used to joke about it with Mussolini in 1935, when Mussolini was Il Duce, and Hoare, then British Foreign Secretary, was negotiating the Hoare-Laval Pact to legitimize Italy's illegal invasion of Ethiopia.

Higher level controls were shared by the Fascists and the Bolsheviks, although an investigator in 1922 might not have been able to discern them. Lenin, and substantial amounts of gold, had arrived in Russia to start the Bolshevik phase of the revolution via a sealed train from Switzerland. It had been organized by super-spy Alexander Parvus; this much was known to many. More recently, it has been found that Parvus was working for the Venetian financier, Giuseppe Volpi, Count of Misurata. Volpi di Misurata was the power-broker behind Mussolini, too, and controlled the Italian dictator directly through Dino Grandi, Mussolini's closest ad-

viser on the Fascist Grand Council.

Mussolini and Grandi both emphasized the similarities between Fascism and Bolshevism. Even before the Fascist Party was founded, both had studied the sociological theories of Roberto Michels, a veteran of Max Weber's Sunday Circle, and subscribed to the idea that social change was based on the "class warfare" between "proletarian nations" and "capitalist nations." That was how both explained the First World War, and their support for Italy's entry into it.

When Mussolini and Grandi came to power, they declared Italy a "workers' state"; the official history of the movement described Fascism only as "*un socialismo molto battagliero*" ("a very pugnacious socialism"). In 1933, when a book was published titled, *The Triumph of Fascism in the U.S.S.R.*, it was reviewed favorably in the Fascist theoretical journal by Il Duce himself, and as late as 1938, Mussolini was on record saying Stalin was a Fascist without the courage to admit it.

The 'barbarian intellectuals' of Russia

There were many in Russia who agreed.

The Bolshevik Revolution was developed and nurtured by those who wanted to protect Holy Mother Russia from the fatal poisons of reason, republicanism, industrial progress, and other accompaniments of Western Judeo-Christian civilization. Such philosophies would prevent Russian culture from establishing what Dostoevsky called, "the Third and Final Rome," the great Eastern imperium that would rule for a thousand years.

"For a long time," wrote Nicolai Berdiaev from Moscow in 1921, "we [Russians] have recognized the distinction between culture and civilization. . . . Beneath their hostility to Western culture, many Russian writers and thinkers revealed not their hostility to Western culture, but to Western civilization. . . . Russian easternism, Russian Slavophilism was but an open struggle of the spirit of religious culture against the spirit of irreligious civilization."

Berdiaev belonged, at the time, to one of the Revolution's high-brow propaganda units, the Free Philosophical Association. The association was founded in 1919 by R. V. Ivanov-Razumik, a member of the left wing of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party, precariously allied to the Bolsheviks; and included three of Russia's top avant-garde poets, Alexander Blok, Andrei Belyi, and Sergei Esenin. Informally known as the "Scythians," this group used the writings of Dostoevsky and "anthroposophist" mystic Rudolf Steiner to prove that the Bolshevik revolution was the beginning of the "new age" that would sweep the world.

Said Ivanov-Razumik in 1920, "Russia is the country where out of the blood and torments of the revolution has been completed the birth . . . of a new world. . . . The new ecumenical idea now incarnated into the world through 'backward,' 'uncultured,' 'dark' Russia resembles the birth of Christianity twenty centuries ago in dark, uncultured, and

backward Judea, rather than in advanced, cultured, brilliant Rome.” Thus, the Scythians called themselves, “barbarian intellectuals.”

In 1922, these particular barbarians were officially expelled from the Soviet Union, although they had already set up satellite operations in Berlin and elsewhere two years previous. The Scythians were part of a huge strategic deception operation conducted after the Revolution by “the Trust,” the alliance of Western financial interests with the Soviet secret services. This operation included wave after wave of

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cultural “exiles” from Russia who flooded Germany and France in order to undermine civilization, using both “pro-Bolshevik” and “anti-Bolshevik” philosophies. Despite differences in coloration, all these groups shared funding from a top financier of the Trust, A.I. Guchkov, and were supervised by novelist Ilya Ehrenberg, a notorious intellectual thug, and later a Stalinist executioner.

Closely allied to the Scythians, was the *Smena Vekh* group in Germany, which called upon Russians to return to their motherland in order to build a “new epoch” based on the “worldwide influence of Russia and Russian culture.” The founder of *Smena Vekh*, N.V. Ustrialov, also coined the phrase, “National Bolshevism,” by which he meant: “Nationalism, not in opposition to other nations, but fusing with them, leading them. The poet Blok’s Christ leads the Red Army men on with a bloody banner—the only Christ in which one can still believe is the new Rus.”

Such sentiments found resonance throughout Germany, where the Strasser brothers formed the National Bolsheviks, an important component of a tiny new party, previously known as the German Workers’ Party, but newly renamed the National Socialist German Workers’ Party by its leader, military intelligence informer Adolf Hitler. In fact, many of the early recruits came to the Nazis because they had been impressed with the success of Russian “national socialism” in the Bolshevik Revolution. One such was Josef Goebbels, who in 1922 was trying unsuccessfully to peddle his first novel, *Michael*, about a young student who reads Dostoevsky, tries

to achieve “genuine socialism,” and dies the sad, sad death of all novel heroes in those days. “In the last analysis,” wrote Goebbels slightly later, “it is better to go down with Bolshevism than live in eternal capitalist servitude.”

When Hitler attempted a coup d’état in Munich in November 1923, the so-called “Beer Hall Putsch,” it was not altogether clear whether this was a left- or right-wing affair; banners written by Goebbels proclaimed in blood-red, “The bourgeois state is coming to an end; a new Germany must be forged!” Just five months before, the Secretary of the Communist International in Moscow, Karl Radek, had made a public speech calling for a tactical alliance of German Communists with the Nazis around the protests over the death of Leo Schlageter, a member of the National Bolshevik wing of the Nazis who had been executed for terrorism by the French occupation forces in the Ruhr region.

A pure Dostoevskian revolution

The success of the Bolshevik Revolution also had a startling effect on Georg Lukacs, drawing his confused thoughts on socialism together into a vicious conception that would be the starting point for the Frankfurt School. It is useful to back-track here, in order to give a more detailed report on Lukacs’s Budapest Soviet of 1919. Here, we see the 1917-23 New Age wave of revolutions in its most naked form—as pure Dostoevskyism.

In 1917, Lukacs returned to Budapest, recontacting Ervin Szabó, his former mentor, who had said, “We have had enough of Judeo-Christian teachings.” Together, they set up the Free School of *Geisteswissenschaften* (which might inadequately be translated, “humanities” or “mental studies”). Lecturers at the school included, in addition to Lukacs and Szabó: the “Russian School” composers Zoltan Kodaly and Bela Bartok; Bela Balázs, a film theorist who left the employ of Leni Reifenstahl, later Hitler’s personal film-maker, to become professor of film at Moscow University; the sociologist of culture Karl Mannheim; and art historian Arnold Hauser. The school initiated contacts with the Logos group, which published a magazine in both Germany and Revolutionary Russia; Logos was dominated by the writings of Berdiaev, and an older Russian mystic, Vladimir Soloviev, whose work deeply influenced the cult theories of anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (in fact, Steiner’s Russian wife translated Soloviev into German).

Lukacs’s clout in Budapest’s intellectual scene was greatly aided when he received honorable mention in two documents printed in 1918, and widely read through the early years of the Weimar period: Thomas Mann’s autobiographical *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*, and Max Weber’s published lecture, *Science as a Calling* (wherein the scientist model is the hoaxster, Hermann Helmholtz). Lukacs was a sufficiently “hot property” that the head of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP), Bela Kun, personally petitioned him to join the party, as soon as Kun arrived in Budapest

from Russia.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed in October 1918; the rumor, widespread in Budapest at the time, was that the fall of the Emperor was demanded by an unnamed British Army brigadier, operating out of the embassy. A broad coalition was formed by Count Károly on November, and Kun arrived by mid-month; Lukacs joined the HCP in December and was almost immediately placed on the “alternate Central Committee,” the party’s second-tier leadership body. Lukacs organized a series of seminars at Budapest University, a cadre school for the coming revolution; he himself lectured on “Terror as a Source of Law.”

In February, the coalition government turned on the HCP, arresting Kun and his Central Committee; while Kun sat ignorant in jail, the second, clandestine Central Committee, dominated by Lukacs and others, started giving orders for armed insurrection. Under the threat of warfare, the coalition collapsed; the more moderate Social Democrats appealed to the HCP, and a “Hungarian Soviet Republic” was declared March 21. Lukacs was named People’s Deputy Commissar of Public Education and Culture; the Commissar was a do-nothing Social Democrat, and Lukacs controlled the Commissariat.

Here, now, was Lukacs’s chance to create the “spontaneous, wild, and blind revolt” that he thought would be necessary to create a new society peopled by Alyosha Karamazov. Old trade unionists were horrified to see that the overthrow of the monarchy had mutated into some monster. József Lengyel remembered in 1959 that, when he went to the House of the Soviet in 1919, he was “literally dumbfounded” to find Lukacs leading the Central Committee in discussion of insane philosophical problems. “One of these problems: We communists should take the sins of the world upon ourselves, so that we may be capable of saving the world. . . . Just as God ordered Judith to kill Holofernes—that is, to commit a sin—so he may order communists to destroy the bourgeoisie, both metaphorically and physically. . . . In support of their argument, they used to refer to Dostoevsky’s ‘Grand Inquisitor.’ ”

Ilona Duczynska, a leading HCP member at the time who later quit communism, reported that Lukacs was “perhaps the only brain behind Hungarian communism. . . . [He] once said to me: ‘The highest duty for communist ethics is to accept the need to act immorally. This is the greatest sacrifice that the revolution demands of us.’ ” Duczynska also claims to have heard Lukacs say: “The true communist has the conviction that Evil will be transformed into its opposite, Good, through the dialectic of historical development.” Lukacs’s manichean terrorism, concluded Duczynska, “spread like a secret doctrine . . . until it was finally considered as the quintessence of real communism.”

It is clear that the depredations of Ottó Korvin, the head of Kun’s Cheka (secret police), were goaded by Lukacs’s reportedly incessant remonstrations with him. Lukacs’s So-

cial Democratic boss at the Commissariat testifies that Lukacs identified anti-regime intellectuals for harassment and liquidation. The Dostoevskian lunacy in Budapest reached such heights that, when the cadets of the Budapest Military Academy started an abortive rebellion, it was decided not to execute them, but rather to force them to attend a seminar on the Grand Inquisitor section of Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*.

“Politics is only a means; culture is the goal,” Lukacs wrote in the Official Statement of the People’s Commissariat of Public Education, by which he meant the “anti-paternalism” that would become such an important part of the Frankfurt School’s authoritarian personality studies. Lukacs was so extreme, that he probably greatly contributed to the growing counter-revolutionary ferment. His commissariat called for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, but was forced to rescind; it started sex education classes, and was seriously investigating the free distribution of contraceptives. The anti-Communist writer Victor Zitta notes: “Special lectures were organized in schools and literature printed and distributed to ‘instruct’ children about free love, about the nature of sexual intercourse, about the archaic nature of bourgeois family codes, about the outdatedness of monogamy, and the irrelevance of religion, which deprives man of all pleasure. . . . This call to rebellion addressed to children was matched by a call to rebellion addressed to Hungarian women. Among the numerous curious pamphlets published under Lukacs’s auspices . . . one calls upon women over the world to unite and overthrow the chains imposed on them by exploitative bourgeois-spirited males.”

Lukacs’s attempts to “abolish culture” (as he said), were complemented by an appreciation for a new technology that was to become so important to his students at the Frankfurt School: film. Lukacs set up a Chamber of Film within his Commissariat, which included his friend Balász, later the official film theorist of the Soviet Union; Bela Lugosi, the ham actor of *Dracula* fame, and Alexander Korda, who became one of the most powerful film producers in England, and was film-maker to British Intelligence during and after World War II.

Lukacs was trying to “force-grow” a counterculture. He failed, but as we shall see in a later section, his heirs were much more successful in their attempts at the same thing in America and Europe during the 1960s.

Four months after it started, the Hungarian Soviet began its collapse under military pressure from a joint Romanian-Czechoslovakian army. In the final days, Lukacs went to the front as the Political Commissar of one of the Red Armies, where he was noted for his recklessness. After 133 days, the experiment in Dostoevskian rule ended. Lukacs, with the help of his friend Karl Mannheim, escaped to Vienna, disguised as a monk.

Next: The strange case of Martin Heidegger