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LENINISM – THE SUBSTANCE OF COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM

Abstract

The author of the article analyzed totalitarianism in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There is an extensive scientific literature on the research of totalitarianism. Outstanding works on this matter include, in particular: Hannah Arendt's *Korzenie totalitaryzmu* [The Roots of Totalitarianism] which had several revised editions, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzeziński's *Dyktatura totalitarna i autokracja* [Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy] also in two editions, Leszek Kołakowski's *Główne nurty marksizmu. Powstanie, rozwój, rozkład* [The Main Currents of Marxism. Rise, Development, and Decay], Franciszek Ryszka's *Państwo stanu wyjątkowego. Rzecz o systemie państwa i prawa III Rzeszy* [Emergency State. On the System of State and Law of the Third Reich], as well as works by other scholars from many countries.

Totalitarianism in the 21st century continues to be a subject of scientific research conducted by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and philosophers. This topic continues to be of interest to the public opinion. The author expresses his belief that Poles are most interested in the features of the Soviet version of totalitarian communism. This is due to the history of Russian-Polish relations: the partitions of Poland, the 1920 Bolshevik-Polish war, the 45 years of Soviet control of the Polish People's Republic (1944/1945–1989), and today's threat from Putin's Russia. With all the wealth of scientific literature by prominent researchers around the world, the author would like to add his comments on the findings on totalitarianism in the Soviet

version. These comments come from a person who has already written many scholarly works on the history of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in particular. These are comments from a man who lived for 5 years under Nazi occupation and 45 years under the rule of communists in the Polish People's Republic.

Key words: totalitarianism, Russia, Lenin, expansion

1. This is not a historical text. Unfortunately

A great deal has already been written about totalitarian systems in Europe as well as in other parts of the world, including the ones by such renowned authors as Hannah Arendt, Zbigniew Brzeziński, Carl Friedrich, Leszek Kołakowski, and Franciszek Ryszka. Totalitarianism has taken such a heavy toll on all the areas of social life, at least in Europe, that it continues to be studied by historians, political scientists, and philosophers, and remains of interest to the public opinion. Let me express my conviction that for Poles this applies primarily to totalitarianism in the communist version, if only because of the centuries-long Russian-Polish conflict (partitions of Poland, the war of 1920, and today's threat from Putin's Russia) and the 45 years of Soviet control of the Polish People's Republic, which is in contrast to the Polish-German reconciliation, regardless of the claims of Jarosław Kaczyński.

“No one in the twentieth century has left such a deep mark on the world as Lenin”¹ – wrote philosopher and historian Colonel-General Dmitri Volkogonov, Russia's President Yeltsin's advisor. Even though it can be debated whether Lenin's influence was not equal to that of Hitler, another creator of a totalitarian system, there is a great deal of truth in that sentence.

A few years ago, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, a prominent Polish-Canadian political scientist,² stated that “the political system created by the victorious Bolsheviks on the ruins of the Tsarist Russia was the crucial and original totalitarianism of the

¹ D. Wołkogonow, *Siedmiu wodzów*, transl. W. Jeżewski, Warszawa 1999, p. 107.

² Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone (born in 1927 in Poland, died in 2017 in Warsaw), professor emeritus at Carleton University (Canada) and professor at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw, a prominent specialist in the problems of the USSR and former Eastern Bloc countries. The author of outstanding works in this field.

20th century. Initiated by Vladimir Lenin and implemented by Joseph Stalin, it can reasonably be referred to using the generalizing term Stalinism.”³ I share the opinion and admire the succinctness of the very apt phrase used in the first of the quoted sentences: it contains both the legacy of the Tsarist Russia, and the “criticality” of the Soviet totalitarianism, and also its originality. With all the wealth of scientific literature by prominent scholars around the world, I too would like to add my comments to the thoughts on totalitarianism; comments from a man who lived for 5 years under Nazis occupation and 45 years under the rule of communists in the Polish People’s Republic.

2. Russian traditions

Russian totalitarian traditions date back to the time of Tsar Ivan IV (15th century), who, among other things, by declaring internal war on the boyars, created the bizarre institution of *oprichnina* – *oprichniki*, fearsome death squads. When conquering part of the eastern Baltic coast, Peter I created St. Petersburg, which was built “on the bones of its builders.” This can clearly be likened to the construction of the White Sea Canal by slaves under Stalin, who admired Peter I. No different is Putin, who named the following three greatest figures in Russian history: Peter I, Stalin and himself – Putin (in a conversation with Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a former president of Poland). During the short reign of Paul I (1796–1801), the control over the tsar’s subjects’ lives reached its peak: in the four and a half years of his reign, nearly 2,200 laws of various kinds were passed. “Foreigners were subjected to special surveillance. (...) Denunciation consolidated its position as one of the civic virtues, perhaps the most important one. The import of any publications from abroad was banned for a time. Seven censor offices were established.”⁴

Nikolai Berdyaev wrote that “the Orthodox Moscow State was a totalitarian state,” and “Peter’s methods were fully identical as those used by the Bolsheviks.”⁵ Andrew Walicki believes that the reforms of Peter I deepened the differences between Russian

³ T. Rakowska-Harmstone, *Stalinizm – sedno i interpretacje*, [in:] *Czas totalitaryzmu. Stalinizm, faszyzm, nazizm o pokrewne systemy polityczne w XX wieku*, eds J. Szymoniczek, E.C. Król, Warszawa 2011, p. 206.

⁴ W.A. Serczyk, *Poczet władców Rosji (Romanowowie)*, Londyn 1992, pp. 164–165.

⁵ N. Berdayev, *Źródła i sens komunizmu rosyjskiego*, transl. H. Paprocki, Kęty 2005, pp. 8, 10.

autocracy (*samoderzhaviye*) and Western European absolutism; Russia continued the “totalitarian” tendencies of the Tsardom of Muscovy.⁶ Scholars such as R. Pipes, A. Walicki, and K. Chojnicka in particular, rightly state that “totality” is a feature of Russian culture. Consequently, it was easy to implant the Marxist vision of total world reconstruction precisely in Russia. N. Berdayev’s statement that “the first followers of Marx in the world were Russians” deserves to be repeated.⁷ It will not be out of place to recall that in the revolutionary culture of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, a movement called Narodnism (*Narodnichestvo*) was born; it had various currents and there over time split into competing parts, but the radical faction, whose leader was Pyotr Nikitich Tkachov (1844–1886), promoted the opinion that revolution in Russia should be carried out by professional revolutionaries aware of their objectives. “Two traditions began to accumulate then: tsarist despotism and the idea of a government of professional revolutionaries.”⁸ Lenin would embark on the path indicated decades earlier by Tkachov.

The governments of Russia’s last tsars, Alexander III (1881–1894) and Nicholas II (1894–1917), were definitely reactionary. The years of Alexander III’s reign in particular saw a harsh course towards Russification, which had a special impact on Poles, but also on other nationalities of this “prison of nations.” This also applies to the Jewish population: pogroms and the constant deterioration of so-called “Pale of Settlement” regulations became commonplace.⁹ Censorship in the state of the tsarist state was significantly tightened. The autocracy and the totality of social relations in the Russian

⁶ A. Walicki, *Zarys myśli rosyjskiej. Od Oświecenia do renesansu religijno-filozoficznego*, Kraków 2005, p. 28.

⁷ N. Berdayev, *Źródła i sens komunizmu rosyjskiego...*, op. cit., pp. 25, 48–49.

⁸ J. Baszkiewicz, *Władza*, Wrocław 1999, p. 156.

⁹ Pale of Settlement: established by Catherine II’s decree in 1791, revised and supplemented several times in the 19th century, an area of 25 western provinces stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and thus including mainly the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In principle, Jews were not allowed to live in the Russian Empire outside the Pale of Settlement, and were not even allowed to travel outside it. However, there were Jewish people who were privileged and allowed to live and work outside the zone, such as soldiers transferred to the reserves, university graduates, “useful merchants” and others; over time, the regulations were tightened and the number of those allowed to live outside the Pale of Settlement was reduced. These laws were very complicated and constantly changed. P. Johnson, *Historia Żydów*, transl. M. Godyń, M. Wójcik, A. Nelicki, Krakow 2010, pp. 357–358ff.

Empire provoked rebellion, which, as Gustav Herling-Grudziński aptly noted,¹⁰ caused many people to believe that revolution was the only way to improve the current situation. Edward Radziński used beautiful and wise words to describe the trial and the famous verdict in the case relating to the assassination attempt by Vera Zasulich: “The Court of Justice won a decisive victory over the Court of Law. (...) At this moment of great disregard for the law, the hour of revolution struck.”¹¹

Madeleine Albright wrote of Putin’s Russia that “hundreds of years of authoritarian rule have left a lasting mark.”¹²

3. Marxism-Leninism and the state

Marxism was “a doctrine of salvation, of a messianic vocation of the proletariat, of a future perfect society,¹³ but as a result of philosophical and political manipulation, only the dogma of class struggle has survived. Revolutionary ideologies are “a degenerate secular version of religious Messianism that has lived for a long time in at least three of mankind’s great religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. (...) The idea of a revolution as an apocalypse, as an entry into the final form, is radically different from the Enlightenment philosophy of progress.”¹⁴ Marx viewed the state as the enemy of a free man. “As long as there is a state – there is no freedom. When there is freedom – there will be no state.”¹⁵ This is the starting point of communist totalitarianism. Lenin repeated this thesis after Marx and Engels.¹⁶ Seen by Marx as an entity that tethers human freedom, the state turned out to be absolutely necessary to maintain a totalitarian system. Considered by Marx as superfluous and even harmful, the state was to be a condition for the existence of communist

¹⁰ G. Herling-Grudziński in conversation with W. Bolecki in: *Introduction to: G. Herling-Grudziński, Inny świat. Zapiski sowieckie*, Kraków 2000, p. 12.

¹¹ E. Radziński, *Aleksander II. Ostatni wielki car*, transl. E. Siemaszkiewicz and R. Śliwowski, Warszawa 2005, p. 310.

¹² M. Albright (in collaboration with B. Woodward), *Faszyzm: ostrzeżenie*, transl. by K. Mironowicz, Warszawa 2018, p. 194.

¹³ N. Berdayev, *Źródła i sens komunizmu rosyjskiego...*, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁴ L. Kotakowski, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Londyn 1984, p. 230.

¹⁵ W. Lenin, *Państwo a rewolucja*, [in:] W.I. Lenin, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 33, Warszawa 1987, pp. 90–91.

¹⁶ J. Baszkiewicz, *Władza...*, op. cit., p. 155.

totalitarianism. The totalitarian state was a protective “apparatus” for the system. There is no contradiction in this: after all, Marx thought about human freedom, while Lenin and Stalin thought about the power of the Communist Party and an empire called the world socialist republic. For the first Bolsheviks, Marxism became not only an inspiration, but also an object of faith. Over time, however, when the vision of a communist paradise on earth did not come true and staying in power became the goal, the ideology became only a camouflage for pathologies in the society and the system of government.¹⁷ Just as priests of various religions promising paradise try to convert “infidels” to the true faith (formerly using the threat of burning at the stake), so the Communists demanded that everyone professes their faith under threat of annihilation.

The party ruled out alternative thinking, which was already included in the early Leninist program described in the once famous pamphlet titled *What Is To Be Done?* (1902).¹⁸ In the Soviet state, censorship eliminating freedom of speech, indoctrination already extending to school children, as well as widespread and even compulsory denunciation, were employed to eliminate thinking in ways other than what the Communist Party dictated. In this way, the monoparty forced people to behave, and to a large or even very large extent, to think in a way that was desirable to it. In the Soviet Russia, this began in the Communist Party with a ban on the formation of factions. This was the beginning as far as party elites were concerned. “The ban on opposition parties entailed a ban on factions, and the ban on factions ended with a ban on thinking in a way that was different from the thinking of the infallible leader”¹⁹ – Lev Davidovich Trotsky (Bronstein) noted.

Leninism was a version of Marxism, with Stalinists believing that Lenin was faithful to Marx’s doctrine, while others have argued that Lenin’s doctrine was “more a caricature of Marxism than its continuation under the new conditions.”²⁰

¹⁷ See: T. Rakowska-Harmstone, *Stalinizm...*, op. cit., p. 207.

¹⁸ W. Lenin, *Co robić? Palące zagadnienia naszego ruchu*, [in:] W.I. Lenin, *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 1, [no translator], Warszawa 1949, pp. 174ff.

¹⁹ L. Trocki, *Zdradzona rewolucja. Czym jest ZSRR i dokąd zmierza*, transl. A. Achmatowicz, Pruszków 1991, p. 82.

²⁰ H. Olszewski, *Słownik twórców idei*, Poznań 1998, p. 255; cf. also N. Berdayev, *Źródła i sens komunizmu rosyjskiego...*, op. cit., p. 92; L. Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu. Powstanie, rozwój, rozkład*, Londyn 1988, p. 670; also, see R. Conquest, *Uwagi o spustoszonej stuleciu*,

The aforementioned Dmitri Volkogonov, in his extremely revelatory biography of Lenin, wrote, among other things, that Marx and Engels were theoreticians, while Lenin brought “Russian, sectarian, Asiatic Bolshevism” into their teachings, transforming their teachings “into a catechism of class struggle.”²¹

According to Marx and Engels’s concept, the bourgeois state was to be destroyed by an act of revolutionary violence, but in the period of elimination of the remnants of the exploiters’ resistance by the proletariat, the latter must have its own apparatus of oppression for this purpose: this will be the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Hannah Arendt noted that the Bolsheviks’ “seizure of power” was the replacement of the machine of the state by the party apparatus.²²

Lenin explicitly stated that “for the complete death of the state, complete communism is needed.”²³ This would fit in with the concept of a state ruled by a dictatorship of the proletariat, but Stalin’s 1928 proposition that “the death of the state will take place not through the weakening of state power, but through its maximum strengthening, which is necessary in order to kill the remnants of the dying classes, to organize a defense against the capitalist environment”²⁴ is a different philosophy. According to Trotsky, the dictatorship of the proletariat forms a bridge between the bourgeois system and the socialist system.²⁵

“Marx’s utopia relating to the disappearance of the state was the most dangerous utopia of all time. This is because the end of the state means the end of the legal order – but it does not mean the end of power. What remains after the death of the state, therefore, is naked power not limited by law, constitution, or convention.”²⁶

Writing about the rise of Leninism, Leszek Kołakowski pointed out that Marx and Engels did have a sense of the continuity of human culture and did not consider

transl. T. Biedroń, Poznań 2002; I. Berlin, *Karol Marks – jego życie i środowisko*, transl. W. Orliński, Warszawa 1999, p. 227.

²¹ D. Wołkogonow, *Lenin*, transl. M. Antosiewicz, Warszawa 1997, p. 57.

²² H. Arendt, *O rewolucji*, transl. M. Godyń, Kraków 1991, p. 268.

²³ W. Lenin, *Państwo a rewolucja*, in: *Lenin, Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 33, Warszawa 1987, p. 90.

²⁴ J. Stalin, *Zagadnienia leninizmu*, [no translator], Moskwa 1940, p. 393.

²⁵ L. Trockij, *Zdradzona rewolucja...*, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁶ R. Conquest, *Uwagi o spustoszonej stuleciu...*, op. cit., pp. 61–62.

the value of science, art, moral principles, religion, law, and social institutions to be mere instruments in the service of class interests. These were not shared by Lenin, for whom all of these things – including the law – were tools of class oppression. Consequently, for Lenin, there was no difference between rule by law and dictatorship.²⁷

4. Lenin's party

The aforementioned Tkachov was the first to show the direction, but it was Lenin who created a party composed of professional revolutionaries. As early as 1902, in a program outlined in a pamphlet titled *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin very strongly emphasized that “the organization of revolutionaries should include mainly and primarily people whose profession is revolutionary activity.”²⁸ The party was to be shaped along the lines of a military structure, and therefore had to be centralized and disciplined, and led by a strong leader.²⁹ Such would be the entire Soviet totalitarian system, so **Leninism created totalitarian structures before the Bolsheviks gained power in Russia.**

The hierarchical party, or more precisely its leaders, was equipped with knowledge about the course of human history that was almost secret. Therefore, the leader pointed in the “only right” direction, and consequently the party as a whole was independent of either the worker class or the proletariat. “We are the state”³⁰ – as Lenin emphatically said. Dmitri Volkogonov was right in saying that once the Leninist party took power, “it would be difficult to distinguish where the party ended and the security authorities began.”³¹ The process of fusion between the party and the state, especially between the party and the security authorities (VChKa/GPU/OGPU), began as early as October 1917.³²

The dictatorship of the proletariat is thus nothing less than the dictatorship of the party, or more precisely of the party leader. This creates, at the very least, autocracy

²⁷ L. Kotakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu...*, op. cit., p. 672.

²⁸ W. Lenin, *Co robić?...*, op. cit., p. 269.

²⁹ See, among others: *История отечественного государства и права*, ч. 2, (ред.) О.И. Чистяков, Москва 2006, p. 9.

³⁰ W. Lenin, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 44, Warszawa 1989, p. 379.

³¹ D. Wołkogonow, *Lenin...*, op. cit., p. 88.

³² Ibidem.

and, in the Russian case discussed herein, totalitarianism. Leszek Kołakowski describes Stalinism as “a near-perfect totalitarian society.”³³ It is generally agreed among historians and political scientists that Soviet totalitarianism drew heavily from centuries of Russian history. I fully agree with this opinion.³⁴

As is well known, the February Revolution of 1917 was born “in the bread line” and took everyone by surprise, despite the fact that internal ferment had been clearly growing for a long time (Narodnaya Volya, terrorist attacks, including the assassination of Alexander II, and the Revolution of 1905). In February (March) 1917, events occurred almost at lightning speed, and yet the February Revolution overturned all the systemic devices that existed in the Russian Empire. The tsar was gone, but was Russia still a monarchy? The Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet were formed spontaneously, but who was in charge of the revolution? The eight months of the Provisional Government represent the only period of political freedom in Russia’s history before 1991. Russia, “did not, however, owe this freedom to any legal order, but mainly to the fact that no social force was in control of the situation.”³⁵ The result was a Bolshevik coup d’état and a seizure of power – at first only in the capital – by the RSDLP(b). “The role of professional revolutionaries is usually not to make a revolution, but to seek to seize power when the revolution has already broken out”³⁶ – generalizes Hannah Arendt.

5. Marxism-Leninism and judicial law

Totalitarian regimes are futurocentric and intend to change the world by breaking with the established order,³⁷ in a manner characteristic of utopias.³⁸ Like all revolutionary regimes, they rule out being bound by pre-established rules and norms. Marx and Engels were not lawyers and consequently their remarks about the law were

³³ L. Kołakowski, *Czy diabeł...*, op. cit., p. 246.

³⁴ See for example: A. Lityński, *Rosja i ZSRR – krótka historia imperium bezprawia*, Sosnowiec 2023, passim.

³⁵ L. Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu...*, op. cit., p. 746.

³⁶ H. Arendt, *O rewolucji...*, op. cit., p. 263.

³⁷ K. Pomian, *Oblicza dwudziestego wieku. Szkice historyczno-polityczne*, Lublin 2002, p. 81.

³⁸ C.J. Friedrich, Z.K. Brzeziński, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge 1956, pp. 73ff.

vague and chaotic.³⁹ Lenin, on the other hand, abolished the pre-revolutionary law immediately after gaining power. The new law was supposedly to be created based on the revolutionary legal consciousness of the people applying the law (many of whom were illiterate). After all, in a state ruled by the dictatorship of the proletariat, everything was supposed to be different from the bourgeois systems, and under communism there would be no law at all.

Mussolini and Hitler also liberated themselves from legal restrictions, but it was the Bolsheviks in particular who denied all legal tradition; the ultimate goal under communism was for law to disappear. In his most serious scholarly treatise titled *The State and the Revolution*, Lenin, constantly citing Marx, argued that it was naïve to think that after the overthrow of capitalism people would immediately learn to work “without any legal norms (...), while other norms besides ‘bourgeois law’ do not exist.”⁴⁰ Therefore, in the first phase of communism, or socialism as Marx called it, the “narrow horizon of bourgeois law” is to be preserved, and since “law is nothing without an apparatus that can **compel** compliance with the norms of the law,” the consequence is the “inevitable existence of a **bourgeois state** (...). It turns out that under communism not only the law of the bourgeoisie, but even the bourgeois state – without the bourgeoisie is maintained for a period of time!”⁴¹ – concluded Lenin, who was later quoted by Trotsky.⁴² In contrast, in communism there would be no state and no law, but there would always be an indestructible communist party.⁴³ This also involves the abolition of previous concepts of natural law.⁴⁴

Let us recall what happened to the law after the Bolshevik Revolution.

As the 19th century drew to a close, the civil codes (the French civil code of 1804, the Austrian ABGB of 1811, the German BGB of 1896, and the Swiss ZGB of 1912)

³⁹ N. Reich, *Sozialismus und Zivilrecht. Eine rechtstheoretisch-rechtshistorische Studie zur Zivilrechtstheorie und Kodifikationspraxis im sowjetischen Gesellschafts- und Rechtssystem*, Frankfurt am Main 1972, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁰ W. Lenin, *Państwo a rewolucja...*, op. cit., p. 90.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 93, emphasis in the original.

⁴² L. Trocki, *Zdradzona rewolucja...*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴³ See: N. Reich, [in:] N. Reich, H.C. Reichel, *Einführung in das sozialistische Recht*, Munich 1975, p. 25.

⁴⁴ O. Taiwo, *Legal Naturalism. A Marxist Theory of Law*, New York–London 1996, p. 157.

influenced civil law for many years to come, well into the 21st century. In Russia, on the other hand, it was then, at the dawn of the twentieth century, in 1917, that with a single stroke of the pen (with decrees no. 1⁴⁵ and no. 3⁴⁶ *on the court*) the entire previous system of law was abolished.⁴⁷ The victorious Bolsheviks, with Lenin’s personal participation, pun in the “trash can of history” all modern principles of private law: freedom, equality, and property. “Private law develops in parallel with private property,” stated Marx,⁴⁸ and so the particular disapproval of private law is not surprising: after all, private property is, for a Marxist, the source of all evil, and *The Communist Manifesto* clearly announced its future abolition.

The so-called “private sphere” of a person’s life has become only relatively private in a totalitarian state. Lenin’s guidelines and instructions to the People’s Commissar [Minister] of Justice on this issue are well known.⁴⁹ By the summer of 1918, virtually all pre-revolutionary civil law had ceased to exist. Despite the turnaround during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the effects of the first five years or so after 1917 were basically perpetuated until the end of the USSR’s existence and even a little longer. Note that the proclaimed dictatorship of the proletariat was to be not

⁴⁵ *История законодательства СССР и РСФСР по уголовному процессу и организации суда и прокуратуры 1917–1954 гг. Сборник документов*, (ред.) С.А. Голунский, Москва 1955, pp. 31–32; *История советской конституции (в документах) 1917–1956*, Москва 1957, pp. 69–71; *История советской конституции. Сборник документов. 1917–1957*, Москва 1957, pp. 28–30.

⁴⁶ *История законодательства СССР и РСФСР (...) Сборник документов...*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴⁷ A. Lityński, *Prawo Rosji i ZSRR 1917–1991...*, op. cit., p. 229 and passim.

⁴⁸ K. Marx, *Ideologia niemiecka*, [in:] K. Marx, F. Engels, *Dzieła*, vol. III. Warszawa 1961, p. 300, quotation after J.M. Kelly, *Historia zachodniej teorii prawa*, transl. D. Pietrzyk and others, Kraków 2006, p. 356.

⁴⁹ Lenin emphatically commanded: “New civil legislation is being prepared. The People’s Commissariat of Justice ‘is floating with the current’ I can see that. And it has a duty to fight **against** the current. It must not take over the old bourgeois notion of civil law (more precisely, it must not be fooled by the dull, old bourgeois lawyers who take it over), but must create a new one. It must not succumb to the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, which ‘out of obligation’ supports the position of ‘adapting to Europe,’ but must **fight** against this position and shape a **new** civil law, a new attitude towards ‘private’ agreements, etc. We don’t recognize anything ‘private,’ for us **everything** that concerns the economy is **public law**, not private. We allow **only** state capitalism, and we are the state, as was said above. Hence – expand the scope of state interference in ‘private-law relations’; expand its right to cancel ‘private’ agreements; apply not the corpus iuris romani to ‘civil law relations’ but **our revolutionary legal consciousness**; W. Lenin, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 44, Warszawa 1989, p. 379–380.

only a political dictatorship, but also an economic one, implemented by nationalizing virtually the entire economy, including the market. This also included the labor market, hence the universal labor obligation, militarization of labor, i.e. labor coercion implemented with police and military terror. This is the proper perspective to look at the Gulag.

European societies entered the 20th century with the ballast of criminal law (both substantive and procedural) of the pre-Enlightenment era already overcome (in some cases long ago). Gone were the days when the main purpose of criminal law was deterrence by means of punishment, and the main method of arriving at a resolution of a case and a criminal sentence was a confession obtained by legal (sic!) torture. Since the time of Montesquieu and Cesare Beccaria, subjectivism, humanitarianism, and the idea of rehabilitation had come to the forefront of European criminal systems, with a pronounced Russian backwardness, albeit gradually reduced in the early 20th century. At the dawn of the 20th century, just before World War I, the principle *nullum crimen sine lege*, along with its complementary principles *nulla poena sine lege* and *lex retro non agit*, had been in force for a century and a half, if one counts symbolically from the date (1764) of the first edition of the historic booklet *An Essay On Crimes and Punishments* by the Marquis of Milan. The aforementioned principles were (and still are) not unjustifiably considered the foundation of the rule of law in criminal law, the basis for the predictability of the actions of state power in the field of criminal law, and the foundation of the legal safety of man, which is inherently due to all people.

The state (state apparatus) in the system created by Lenin was to be used as an instrument of class struggle. Any dictatorship involves, among other things, the abolition of the separation of powers. Consequently, courts are as much a part of the dictatorial bureaucracy as all other authorities: in a system ruled by the dictatorship of the proletariat, courts are also instruments of governance, including class struggle. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzeziński mention that, in addition to the six main themes, some researchers additionally point out that administrative control over the judiciary and courts is a distinguishing feature of totalitarianisms.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ C. Friedrich, Z. Brzeziński, *Dyktatura totalitarna i autokracja*, 2nd edition corrected by Carl J. Friedrich, transl. H. Jankowska, Warszawa 2021, p. 58, while referring on this matter to the modest – given the scientific magnitude of the work – chapter 10.

I believe that it is not just a matter of control (by the Communist Party and the security authorities, not the administration) over the courts; as I stated above, the courts are simply instruments of the ruling party, they are institutions of governance, they are authorities used for class struggle.

On the other hand, one must agree with the classics that it was the revolutionary aspect of the totalitarian system that resulted in a greatly expanded criminal law.⁵¹ Let us add: after all, it is a stronger and more effective tool for class struggle than private law. In 1917 and 1918, a number of political and legal acts were issued that included substantive or procedural criminal provisions. Many of these acts were prepared personally by Lenin: after all, he was a lawyer. Contrary to the proclaimed slogan of revolutionary legal consciousness and revolutionary conscience as sources of law, and even to the legal principle made on its basis, the formation of revolutionary criminal law was not handed over to the uncontrolled revolutionary conscience of the people's judges. The ease of producing legislation resulted in an avalanche of them in the early years of Soviet rule. As counted by Katarzyna Laskowska, more than four hundred criminal-law norms were established in the period from November 25, 1917 to June 1, 1922.⁵² It is clear that criminal law was treated as a tool for class struggle, a fight against the enemies of the regime, and as a weapon to destroy political opponents. Criminal law was treated as a means of social protection, with common preventive application of these measures. Criminal law is closely intertwined with terror, an undeniable feature of totalitarian systems.

On Lenin's initiative, as early as December 20/7, 1917, a decision was made by the Bolshevik government – the Council of People's Commissars chaired by Lenin – to establish a state security authority, the CheKa.⁵³ Interestingly, in the so-called April Theses (1917), Lenin announced “the abolition of the police, the army, the bureaucracy.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 174. = C. Friedrich, Z. Brzeziński, p. 174.

⁵² K. Laskowska, *Przestępczość w Rosji z perspektywy kryminologii i prawa karnego*, Białystok 2016, p. 43.

⁵³ CzeKa: Чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией, спекуляцией и преступлениями – Extraordinary Committee for the Fight against the Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Crime. That was its exact name; it is sometimes somewhat distorted in many publications. See documents in: *История законодательства СССР...*, op. cit., p. 64, 185.

⁵⁴ W.I. Lenin, *O zadaniach proletariatu w obecnej rewolucji*, [in:] W.I. Lenin, *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 2, [no translator], Warszawa 1951, p. 9.

The CheKa (called by other various names later)⁵⁵ was a government body⁵⁶ that implemented terror. The direct creator of the Soviet security authorities was Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky. Dzerzhinsky fueled terror with his orders and the limits on the number of executions that he set; ‘an explosion of criminal sadism swept the country.’⁵⁷ Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordiyevsky report that between 1917 and 1921 the CheKa probably carried out more than 250,000 executions.⁵⁸ It is estimated that the number of people convicted in the USSR during the first 10 years of Soviet rule approached 10 million people.⁵⁹ Dzerzhinsky was closely associated with Lenin for years, but towards the end of Lenin’s life Dzerzhinsky became closer to Stalin. Boris Bazhanov concluded that “Dzerzhinsky was always on the side of those who held the power.”⁶⁰ “The CheKa was the essence of the Bolshevik system of power.”⁶¹ As Dmitri Volkogonov writes, the CheKa was “Lenin’s beloved child” and the latter made no secret of the fact that it was an indispensable part of the system created by the revolutionary leader.⁶²

As is well known, the Great Terror was introduced by Stalin in the second half of the 1930s. It bore all the hallmarks of genocide, but in this communist paradise – the most hypocritical system in the history of the world – every person designated to be eliminated had to receive a sentence showing that he was a criminal. Under these conditions, it was necessary to establish a certain procedure that would allow hundreds

⁵⁵ State Political Authority, GPU – Государственное политическое управление; Unified State Political Authority, later OGPU – Обединенное государственное политическое управление; then People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs, NKVD – Народный комиссариат внутренних дел.

⁵⁶ Text in: *История законодательства СССР...*, op. cit., p. 64; В.А. Иванов, [in:] *Сорок лет советского права 1917–1957*, vol. 1, *Период строительства социализма*, (ред.) О.С. Иоффе, Ленинград 1957, pp. 567–568; Л.А. Николаева, Г.И. Петров, В.Д. Сорокин, [in:] *Сорок лет...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 132.

⁵⁷ D. Rayfield, *Stalin i jego oprawcy...*, op. cit., p. 85.

⁵⁸ C. Andrew, O. Gordievsky, *KGB*, transl. R. Brzeski, Warszawa 1997, p. 64.

⁵⁹ K. Laskowska, *Z badań nad przestępczością w Związku Radzieckim*, [in:] eds M. Mikołajczyk et al., *O prawie i jego dziejach księgi dwie. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Adamowi Lityńskiemu w czterdziestopięciolecie pracy naukowej i siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, Białystok–Katowice 2010, vol. 2, p. 54; see also: eadem, *Przestępczość w Rosji...*, op. cit., pp. 109 and others.

⁶⁰ B. Bażanow, *Byłem sekretarzem Stalina*, Warszawa 1985, p. 119.

⁶¹ R. Bender, entry: *Dzierżyński Feliks*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Białych Plam*, vol. V, Radom 2001, p. 183.

⁶² D. Wołkogonow, *Lenin...*, op., p. 249.

of thousands or even millions of judgments to be issued. *Crimen laesae iustitiae*⁶³ (the crime of insulting justice) in such a system must have been a normal part of the so-called justice system.

The communist Great Terror was implemented in the USSR primarily in an administrative mode and by non-judicial bodies, mainly the political police (NKVD), through the notorious troikas, dvoikas, and the OSO.⁶⁴ Most of those who were executed, sent to gulags, and placed in prisons never saw a courtroom. They were “tried” in absentia and not by a court, but by an administrative body, which was selected by the security authorities. One of the top Soviet security officers,⁶⁵ after his arrest in 1938, testified that usually two security officers “reviewed 500–600 and sometimes 1,000 cases in a few hours and their decision was final,” and that “usually 95% of the time it was the highest penalty.”⁶⁶ The efficiency of the “work” of the OSOs, troikas, and dvoikas was very high; for example, a dvoika composed of the head of the NKVD of the USSR, Nikolai Yezhov, and the prosecutor of the USSR, Andrei Vyshinsky, “processed” 551 cases on October 18, 1937, with all accused sentenced to execution; 1,667 cases on January 10, 1938; and 2,164 cases on January 21, 1939.⁶⁷ There was no right of appeal against their decision, nor was it possible to ask for clemency.

⁶³ I borrowed this term, wonderful but tragic in its meaning, from a book by Witold Kulesza, *Crimen laesae iustitiae. Odpowiedzialność karna sędziów i prokuratorów za zbrodnie sądowe według prawa norymberskiego, niemieckiego, austriackiego i polskiego*, Łódź 2013.

⁶⁴ OSO – a special council of the OGPU-NKVD – особое совещание.

⁶⁵ Stanislaw Frantsevich Redens, of Polish descent, in the years up to his arrest served successively as the head of the OGPU-NKVD in Transcaucasia, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Moscow region, and as the commissar of internal affairs of the Kazakh SSR; he was executed in 1940. Redens was married to Anna Alluyeva, a sister of Stalin’s second wife.

⁶⁶ See, for example, documents included in the following collection: *Z dziejów terroru w państwie radzieckim 1917–1953. Wybór źródeł*, introduction, translation, and compilation by J. Wojtkowiak, Poznań 2012, p. 114, also, see pp. 53–64.

⁶⁷ P. Wieczorkiewicz, *Uwagi o działalności sowieckiego aparatu sprawiedliwości i systemu śledczego w dobie wielkiej czystki*, [in:] K. Rokicki, *Departament X MBP – wzorce, struktury, działanie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 29; see also: N.S. Khrushchev, *On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*. A speech by the 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade N.S. Khrushchev, at the 10th Congress of the CPSU on February 25, 1956 [the original title: О культе личности и его последствиях. Доклад Первого секретаря ЦК КПСС Н.С. Хрущева XX Съезду Партии], *Izvestia CK KPSS* 1989, no. 3, p. 20; also A. Lityński, *Prawo Rosji i ZSRR 1917–1991...*, op. cit., p. 336.

As with everything else in the Soviet Union, central planning also covered the system of repression: individual republics and, within republics, oblasts received from NKVD headquarters quotas of people to be repressed (after all, it was known in advance how many spies, saboteurs, or counter-revolutionaries there were), with precise quotas of people to be shot and to be imprisoned in gulags. Starting in 1937, the so-called “nationality operations” began. Citizens of the USSR were “sentenced” to death, rarely to many years of imprisonment in a gulag solely by virtue of being of a certain nationality, which is a classic example of genocide. The *Polish operation*⁶⁸ (1937) was the first and model operation of the Great Terror: the largest single act of genocide in Polish history. At the root of the Great Terror was a constantly renewed conspiracy theory, which was initiated by Lenin and expanded by Stalin.⁶⁹

Despite the efforts of the staff of the Russian Memorial,⁷⁰ the number of victims will never be known. Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordiyevsky report that in 1956, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU issued a secret order to the KGB to produce a report on the repressions. The report showed that some 19 million people were arrested between 1935 and 1940, of whom at least 7 million were executed or died in gulags. These authors express the view that the actual number of victims is much larger.⁷¹ Christopher Andrew, in a book published 10 years later, after the escape

⁶⁸ For a little more information on this topic, see: N. Iwanow, *Zapomniane ludobójstwo. Polacy w państwie Stalina. „Operacja polska” 1937–1938*, Kraków 2014, passim; B. Garczyk, *Radziecka polityka narodowościowa w latach 1917–1941 na przykładzie Piotrogradu-Leningradu*, Poznań 2011, pp. 154, 167, passim; A. Lityński, *Ludobójstwo: operacja polska NKWD (1937–1938). Uchwała Biura Politycznego KC WKP(b) oraz rozkazy szefa NKWD ZSRR*, “*Studia Iuridica Lublinensia*”, vol. XIX (dedicated to the memory of Professor Marian Lech Klementowski (1943–2013)), eds. M. Kuryłowicz, W. Witkowski, pp. 181–199; *Rozstrzelać Polaków. Ludobójstwo Polaków w Związku Sowieckim w latach 1937–1938. Dokumenty z centrali*, compiled by T. Sommer, Warszawa 2010, p. 126.

⁶⁹ See: Ch. Andrew, W. Mitrokhin, *Archiwum Mitrochina. KGB w Europie i na Zachodzie*, transl. M.M. Brzeska and R. Brzeski, Warszawa 2001, p. 147.

⁷⁰ The Memorial Association, which received the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022 and many other high awards and recognition in democratic countries, and which was declared a foreign agent by the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation (meaning: Putin) on December 28, 2021, and then officially closed down.

⁷¹ Ch. Andrew, O. Gordievsky: *KGB...*, op. cit., p. 131. Robert Conquest, who is probably the world’s most outstanding expert on the period and problem in the USSR, in subsequent editions of his fundamental book *The Great Terror*, feels compelled to raise the estimates and writes that further analysis will probably show that these figures, too, are understated. Only for the two years of most intense terror (1937–1938), he estimates that: a) 8 million

of Vasily Mitrokhin, basically confirms these figures, and even provides slightly larger numbers.⁷² One should bear in mind that the numbers of convicts do not include the terrible repressions of the families: the wife, children, and possibly other relatives of the main convict. Property was confiscated, which could affect old parents who were not arrested. How many old people died as a result of the arrest of their children and how many children died as a result of the arrest of their parents? These questions will never be answered.

“Above the state and beyond the facades of superficial authority, in the labyrinth of multiplied offices, amidst the chaos of ineptitude lies the nucleus of power in the country: the super-efficient and super-competent secret police.”⁷³ It started with Dzerzhinsky, but will it end with Putin? We do not know. Madeleine Albright believes that “Putin poses a real threat” to the free world.⁷⁴

6. Marxism-Leninism and national issues

The concept of the United States of Europe was put forward by Lenin as early as 1915.⁷⁵ John Reed, an American journalist and communist, reports on his conversation with Trotsky just before the Bolshevik coup, in which Trotsky spread a vision of the proletariat creating a Federal European Republic while mentioning the right of nations to self-determination.⁷⁶ The understanding of human history as the

people were arrested; b) 1–1.5 million were executed; c) 2 million died in gulags; d) 1 million were imprisoned; e) 8 million were placed in gulags. Note that these numbers do not include people deported to remote areas of the USSR. R. Conquest states that the total number of “repressed” given in the 1990s was 40 million, which the author does not confirm, but also does not deny this figure. See: R. Conquest, *Wielki terror*, transl. W. Jeżewski, Warszawa 1997, pp. 534–535; see also: N. Werth, *Państwo przeciwko społeczeństwu. Przemoc, represje i terror w Związku Sowieckim*, transl. A. Nieuważny, in: *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania*, introduction to the Polish edition by K. Kersten, Warszawa 1999, pp. 181ff.

⁷² Ch. Andrew, W. Mitrokhin, *Archiwum Mitrochina...*, op. cit., p. 176.

⁷³ H. Arendt, *Korzenie totalitaryzmu*, vol. 2, translation by D. Grinberg, Warszawa 2008, p. 176.

⁷⁴ M. Albright (in collaboration with B. Woodward), *Faszyzm...*, p. 206.

⁷⁵ A. Andrusiewicz, *Cywilizacja rosyjska*, vol. 3, Warszawa 2009, p. 98.

⁷⁶ J. Reed, *Dziesięć dni, które wstrząsnęły światem*, transl. A. Dobrot [W. Grosz], Warszawa 1956, p. 53.

history of permanent class struggle had the effect of removing national problems into the shadow of that class struggle, which was diametrically opposed to them.⁷⁷ Nationalism hindered and slowed down the development of class consciousness, so it had to be fought.⁷⁸ The victory of the world proletarian revolution was to be the beginning of a world of universal class consciousness.⁷⁹ The call “workers of the world, unite” comprises the belief in the proletariat’s internationalist stance, which was essential for the victory of the global revolution, and thus, among other things, for the organization of international life. This, in turn, was opposed to the patriotism of the working class.⁸⁰

The communist regime was supposed to bring a solution to all national problems: national oppression would disappear, as would national divisions. However, as Mark Waldenberg aptly pointed out, neither Marx nor Engels cited any arguments in support of even the probable truth of these theses.⁸¹ They simply attempted to solve the national problem by making a groundless claim that the problem would cease to exist. Marx, as well as Engels, supported great powers and centralism.⁸² According to Robert Conquest, in Marx’ and Engels’ works, and consequently in the views of their followers, nationality issues were considered to be “an area of blindness,” and he cites evidence of this.⁸³

Beginning with Marx, Communists were hostile to federal forms and leaned toward a unitary form of proletarian republic,⁸⁴ but the Bolshevik Revolution only exacerbated

⁷⁷ M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Dzieje. Idee*, Warszawa 1992, p. 191; R. Pipes, *Czerwone imperium. Powstanie Związku Sowieckiego*, transl. W. Jeżewski, Warszawa 2015, p. 23.

⁷⁸ R. Pipes, *Czerwone imperium...*, op. cit., p. 23; see also: M. Billig, *Banalny nacjonalizm*, transl. M. Sekerdej, Kraków 2008, p. 59.

⁷⁹ M. Billig, *Banalny nacjonalizm...*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁸⁰ M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, op. cit., pp. 188–190.

⁸¹ Ibidem, pp. 207–208 = M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, op. cit., pp. 207–208.

⁸² R. Pipes, *Czerwone imperium...*, op. cit., p. 22; see also: A. Walicki, *Marksizm i skok do królestwa wolności. Dzieje komunistycznej utopii*, Warszawa 1996, p. 323; J. Smaga, *Narodziny i upadek imperium. ZSRR 1917–1991*, Kraków 1992, pp. 38ff.

⁸³ R. Conquest, *Uwagi o spustoszonej stuleciu...*, op. cit., p. 88.

⁸⁴ A. Sylwestrzak, *Rozwój federacji radzieckiej*, „Państwo i Prawo” 1982, vol. 12, p. 7; for more detailed information see: M. Waldenberg, *Kwestie narodowe...*, op. cit., p. 182ff; see also: W. Suhecki, *Geneza federalizmu radzieckiego*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 42, 90, passim.

nationality conflicts in Russia.⁸⁵ Lenin was a strong advocate of assimilating entire nations. Even at the dawn of World War I (1914), he both firmly rejected the concept of a federal form of state and disapproved of territorial autonomy. Lenin's vision in about 1914 was dichotomous: internationalism *versus* nationalism. The word "patriotism" does not appear in it at all. Once the war broke out, he reminded that *workers have no homeland (Communist Manifesto)* and called for actions that would bring about the defeat of his own country, for this would facilitate the revolution. As events unfolded, Lenin, who was pragmatic, began to appreciate the power of national movements, but wanted to use it for revolutionary purposes.

7. Territorial expansion

Like many others, I believe that this is another hallmark of all totalitarian systems. In Russia, however, this feature is of particular importance due to both the deep historical roots of Russian despotism of the tsars and the Soviet imperialism of the Bolsheviks, especially in Stalin's "most grim edition of totalitarianism."⁸⁶ The expansion of Putin's Russia must not be forgotten. But let us go back very briefly to Tsarist Russia.

Siberia is the largest Russian colony to this day. Maritime powers – Great Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and others – sought colonies overseas. Russia had no chance to compete with those powers on other continents. However, it had something better: by virtue of its geographic location, it directly bordered unimaginably vast areas of "no man's land": Central Asia and Siberia. By incorporating the colonized lands directly into the Russian state, Russia became the largest country in the world. Alaska's history should not be forgotten either. Richard Pipes reports that in the 150 years between the mid-16th century and the end of the 17th century, Russia expanded its territory every year by an area roughly the size of the Netherlands.⁸⁷ In the first half of the 1860s, Russia began military operations and made territorial advances in the

⁸⁵ See: A. Lityński, *Między „białym” a „czerwonym” imperium. Narody w Rosji 1917–1922*, Sosnowiec 2018, passim.

⁸⁶ B.M. Dworak, *Systemy totalitarne we współczesnej myśli filozoficznej i społecznej*, Kraków–Rzeszów–Zamość 2011, p. 36.

⁸⁷ R. Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London 1994, p. 83.

southern region of Central Asia. Russian colonial conquest in that part of the world ended after Russia defeated Afghan forces and established the border according to its will. It renewed its efforts already in the times of the USSR.

The consequences of this continue to this day: in the post-decolonization period, Russia is still essentially a colonial state; nothing has changed in this respect.

As for Bolsheviks' actions after 1917 regarding national issues, any student of history today is familiar with their scheme: first they recognized a nation's independence, which resulted in positive attitudes among some of the patriotic workers of a country to the Bolshevik government, and then they organized an internal putsch and came to the aid of those seizing power. "At the request" of the local communist center, the country is accepted into the Soviet Union as a republic. The Soviets also applied a familiar scheme to Poland. After the Red Army entered ethnically Polish territory in 1920, the Polish Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was transformed into the Provisional Polish Revolutionary Committee (Polrevcom), headed by Julian Marchlewski.

"Federalism in Russia (...) will play a transitional role – until the future socialist unitarism"⁸⁸ – this was the vision of Stalin who, after the Bolshevik coup, became the head of the Narcomnats.⁸⁹ In the interim, however, the dilemma was masterfully solved by creating republics with theoretically a large scope of their own power, while imposing centralization by a single communist party organized in military fashion; this is referred to as "democratic centralism" – two words that are mutually contradictory.

⁸⁸ J. Stalin, *Dzieła*, vol. 4, Warszawa 1951, p. 83.

⁸⁹ In the first Bolshevik government (the Council of People's Commissars), a hitherto unknown ministry was created especially for Stalin – the People's Commissariat of Nationalities (Народный комиссариат по делам национальностей, abbreviated as Наркомнац – Narcomnats). The Commissariat of Nationalities had sections for specific nationalities in its structure: Lithuanian, Latvian, etc., but a Polish section, called the Commissariat for Polish Issues, was the first one. A. Lityński, *Prawo Rosji i ZSRR 1917–1991...*, op. cit., pp. 400ff; *История советской конституции. Сборник документов. 1917–1957*, Москва 1957, p. 221; *История советской конституции (в документах) 1917–1956*, Москва 1957, p. 424; *Энциклопедия государства и права*, (ред.) П. Стучка, Москва 1930, vol. 2, p. 858; W. Suchecki, *Geneza federalizmu radzieckiego...*, op. cit., p. 91; for more details, see: K. Zieliński, *O Polską Republikę Rad. Działalność polskich komunistów w Rosji Radzieckiej 1918–1922*, Lublin 2013, pp. 24ff, 76ff, passim.

After the revolution and the first Great War, the Bolsheviks failed to preserve the former Tsarist empire in its entirety, much less to move westward “over Poland’s corpse” to reach Germany engulfed in revolution and bring the Bolshevik system to Europe. However, it succeeded to do so after World War II, which was actually started by the Soviet totalitarianism and the German Nazism which signed the Hitler–Stalin (Ribbentrop–Molotov) pact. “In the aftermath of Yalta, Russia became one of the centers of political power that decided about the future of the world”⁹⁰ – wrote at the end of his life Pavel Anatolievich Sudoplatov, one of those who faithfully and most effectively served that criminal system for decades. In turn, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, territorial expansionism is continued by Putin’s Russian Federation.

8. Concluding remarks

Communism is a total project of monumental proportions, encompassing all essential aspects of human life, with strong chiliastic characteristic elements: the rejection of the existing social order, followed by the conquest of the world in order to introduce an ideal state of humanity. For Lenin, the revolution and its aftermath were a social experiment. Leninism is a mentality, both a way of thinking and a way of acting; it is a genocidal project that, after all, aims at the physical annihilation of entire classes, which involves killing of millions of people just because they are members of a certain social class. Russia has a centuries-old tradition of authoritarian rule and the Soviet totalitarianism grew on this soil. The totalitarian Soviet imperialism had a genocidal face. Let me repeat my previous statement: it was Lenin who created totalitarian structures before the Bolsheviks even gained power in Russia. The roots of the Soviet totalitarianism and its shape are the work of Lenin, and Stalin continued this project. Leszek Kołakowski describes Stalinism as a near-perfect totalitarian society.⁹¹ Today, this is the path that Putin would like to take.

In a book written near the end of her life, which was rich in political experience, Madeleine Albright asks, What does Russia want? To her, the answer is simple: Russia is not guided by ideology, but by the desire for power.⁹²

⁹⁰ P. Sudoplatov, *Wspomnienia niewygodnego świadka*, transl. J. Markowski, Warszawa 1999, p. 211.

⁹¹ L. Kołakowski, *Czy diabeł...*, op. cit., p. 246.

⁹² M. Albright (in collaboration with B. Woodward), *Faszyzm...*, p. 202.

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► SUMMARY

Leninism – the Substance of Communist Totalitarianism

Russian totalitarian traditions date back to the time of Tsar Ivan IV (15th century). Stalin admired Tsar Peter I the Great, who built the Russian Empire. So did Putin, who named three of the greatest men in Russian history: Peter I, Stalin, and himself – Putin (in a conversation with Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a former president of Poland). Throughout the centuries, denunciation has become the most important civic virtue in Russia. The ideas and teachings of Marx and Engels were adopted by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov-Lenin, who changed and adapted them to better match the current situation. Leninism was a version of Marxism. Marx's goal was the freedom of man, while Lenin and Stalin's goal was the power of the Communist Party and of the Soviet empire.

After Lenin's death, his teachings were put into practice by Stalin. Lenin created a party composed of professional revolutionaries. The party was shaped along the lines of a military structure, and therefore it was centralized and disciplined. The entire Soviet totalitarian system had the same characteristic. Leninism created totalitarian structures before the Bolsheviks even gained power in Russia. Soviet totalitarianism drew heavily from Russian history. Territorial expansion is a feature of all totalitarian systems. In Russia, however, it has deep historical roots. That is how it was under the tsars, that is how

it was in the times of Soviet imperialism. After all, Siberia is the largest Russian colony. Russia is still essentially a colonial state. After the first Great War, the Bolsheviks did not succeed in preserving the former tsarist empire in its entirety, but they did it after World War II. Today, Putin's Russian Federation continues these efforts.