PART I

IDENTITY AND EMPIRE

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Reconceptualizing Bolshevism

Feliks Dzierżyński, the Bolshevik revolutionary father of the Soviet Cheka (forerunner to the KGB), once wrote to his sister about the fact that one-quarter of his life had been spent in Tsarist prisons, forced exile, or hard labor: "I can assure you that I am happier than those who live an aimless life in freedom… and if I were faced with the choice: prison or a life of liberty without purpose I would chose the former, otherwise life would simply not be worth living" (Dzerzhinskii 2002: 129). This is what we would perhaps normally associate with political radicalism, and especially with revolutionary Bolshevism: committed, disciplined, ideologically monochromatic individuals. And indeed this book was originally conceived as an exploration of the emergence of Bolshevism as such a Weberian, heroic-charismatic elite, one that responded to a moment of acute social and political crisis with a revolutionary vision of a new social order.

No doubt elements of this Weberian conceptualization have still left their mark in the chapters that follow. But careful and systematic reconstruction of the Bolsheviks' biographies suggested that an entirely different dimension of their radicalizations and political mobilization needed elaboration: Dzierżyński also remarked that he would not have been able to introduce a certain "Bernstein" to his most committed Christian workers because even the best of them had not yet "mastered their anti-Semitism," so "to succeed in … mass agitation, we have to avoid certain questions" (quoted in Tobias 1972: 102–3). Of course the irony was that Dzierżyński – soon to become one of the most famous leaders of the Russian Revolution – was ethnically Polish, something of sufficient influence on his politics that Lenin bemoaned that he and the Georgian Grigorii Ordzhonikidze had become "too Russian" in compensation for their non-Russianness (Service 2000: 468). Georgianness, however, was not a problem for Stalin in the early years – he proudly published polemics and poetry in his native tongue. And yet, the Jewish Trotsky had to famously defend himself as "an internationalist and not a Jew," the russified (Ukrainian) Mykola Skrypnyk could vigorously promote a Ukrainianized Bolshevism, and the Old Believer Alexandr Shliapnikov openly identified as a sectarian. In other

words, the subtle calibration of ethnic origins in revolutionary socialism was not idiosyncratic. It was striking because of its ubiquity.

These ethnic dynamics within the socialist class-revolutionary movement went beyond questions of organizational tactics or strategy; they were constitutively built into the core of the movement through the identities and experiences of its social carriers. Put differently, the ideological framing of this revolutionary struggle did not fully reflect the powerful underlying social dynamics that gave it rise, shape, and momentum. So while there are traces of how a charismatic-heroic movement organized itself, this book centrally offers an account of how a revolutionary class-universalist ideology was materially organized around – and indeed was itself constituted by – socioethnic particularism.

More concretely, most of the scholarly work on the Russian Revolution has assumed that its leadership drew from the Russian intelligentsia and that its socialist ideology was a response to the class conflicts and exclusions generated by an autocratic, industrializing Russian state. Substantively, this book challenges both the Russianness and the class basis of Bolshevism's political mobilization. It takes as its point of departure the empirical finding that the Bolsheviks were largely ethnic minorities. Ethnic Russians were a significant minority, but Jews, Latvians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Poles, and others comprised nearly two-thirds of the revolutionary elite. And, in a highly distinctive social composition, ethnicity was strongly aligned with class, suggesting that class and ethnicity were intersectional experiences of varying significance in the political radicalism of the Bolshevik revolutionaries.

The central analytical claim is that Bolshevism may represent an interesting case in the construction of a universalist, class ideological movement based on socioethnic identities, networks, and experiences. Whether socialist or liberal, universalist ideologies are usually not products of "citizens of the world," but of very specific material and social conditions (Calhoun 2003). Yet if the social and political conditions that give rise to, and sustain, universalist ideas are kept analytically distinct from the ideological content of the universalist projects themselves, then a universalist ideology about classes and class conflict may not necessarily be a response to class conflict alone. Indeed the evidence shows that Bolshevism's Russian-inflected class universalism was especially appealing in those social locations across the Russian Empire most affected by socioethnic or imperial exclusions. It particularly appealed to those seeking secularism in response to religious tensions, a universalist politics where ethnic violence and sectarianism were exclusionary, and an ethnically neutral and tolerant imperial imaginary where geopolitics or Russification were especially dangerous, or where imperial cultural frameworks predominated in the case of the ethnic Russians. But because Bolshevism emerged out of particular imperial networks and experiences of socioethnic exclusion, it necessarily embedded ethnicity into its socialist class universalism. The political mobilization was framed around class, and socialist class conflict was its master narrative, but the most important segment of the movement's social carriers were radicalized

largely around socioethnic experiences and exclusions, giving its revolutionary class ideology a significant ethnic inflection.

Of course it has long been acknowledged that the early Soviet elite comprised a significant number of non-Russians. Yet most scholars focused on their class origins and paid little attention to how ethnic backgrounds might have interacted with class and influenced Bolshevism. Early accounts of the Bolsheviks viewed them as part of the Russian intelligentsia; rootless, alienated intellectuals drawn to radical ideologies and to the eschatological aspects of Russian revolutionary socialism, their moral and messianic politics were seen as responses to an exclusionary state or to disengagement from a weak civil society; they were ideologically motivated political actors who seized power in a moment of social unrest and political collapse by leading disaffected social groups (Pipes 1964; Seton-Watson 1967; Schapiro 1968; Raeff 1984). In response to these political accounts, and prompted in part by E.P. Thompson's (1963) classic work, attention shifted away from elites and intellectuals to popular social movements (Haimson 1964, 1965; Koenker 1981; Bonnell 1983; Mandel 1983; Smith 1983; Suny 1983, 1994). The pivotal role of the Bolsheviks was to lead revolutionary action, create and articulate the political discourse, and generally provide ideological orientation and focus for more general social unrest. Others specifically conceived of the Bolsheviks as modernizers, or functional revolutionary elites, who emerged for developmental purposes in a "backward" state to organize the process of catching up (Moore 1966; Janos 1991; Jowitt 1992).

Despite these accounts' considerable differences, however, class remained the dominant framing narrative for understanding both elite and popular revolutionary politics – a framing borrowed from the revolutionaries' own discourse – and "Russian" remained the implicit or explicit contextual reality. Skocpol's (1979) account of the effects of geopolitical fiscal crises on state finances and agrarian reform, for instance, neglected the Russian state's considerable imperial anxieties over the loyalty of its non-Russian minority populations on its borders. Although consistently referring to the Russian state as "Imperial Russia," Skocpol omitted the consequences of its imperial qualities from the analyses that were then joined. Similarly, McDaniel's (1988) account of Russia's autocratic-capitalist development neglected the fact that much of the regime's anticapitalism derived from its anti-Semitism and Jews' historical association with the commercial professions and with peasant "capitalist exploitation" (Witte 1921; Löwe 1993: 111–22, 139). And no distinction was made to account for the fact that there were several national intelligentsias and working classes in play.

Tsarist Russia, then, was not only a modernizing autocratic state, but also a nationalizing, multiethnic empire whose key geopolitical threat was conceived by elites as laying in internal sedition, irredentism or separatism, and ethnic disloyalty, and whose autocratic capitalist development was actually highly ethnically differentiated across the empire. Bolshevism not only emerged out of both of these tensions, but it instantiated both into its contentious politics.

There was, in short, an exceedingly thin distinction between foreign and nationality policies in the minds of imperial elites and administrators (Starr 1978; von Hagen 1998; Lieven 1999; Weeks 2001; Lohr 2003: ch. 4; Rieber 2004; Baron and Gatrell 2004). And the Russian state's most socially consequential domestic policies resulted precisely from the entwining of geopolitics and multiethnicity, and from the securitization of ethnicity (Seton-Watson 1967; Kappeler 1982; Lieven 2000; on the concept of securitization of ethnicity, Kymlicka 2004). The key objective was to maintain the territorial empire, something that would be replicated in the platforms of all the major political mobilizations in revolutionary Russia, on both the left and the right, albeit under different rationales.

Indeed in 1917, Tsarist Russia was only 44 percent ethnically Russian, with more than 130 recognized nationalities (Bauer et al. 1991; Kappeler 1992).[1] This was not yet a modern class society, but an intricate, multiethnic empire: socioeconomic class positions were cross-cut by traditional status categories of estate, confession, occupation, region, culture, ethnicity, and emergent nationalities. In fact, the field has recently seen excellent empirical research on the Russian Empire's nationalities and on the sociological workings of the imperial realm, adding the very imperial qualities that were omitted from previous work (for general discussions see inter alia Lieven 2000; Suny and Martin 2001; Lohr 2003; Brown 2004; Miller and Rieber 2004; Miller 2004b; Gerasimov, Glebov, Kaplunovski, Mogilner, and Semyonov 2005; Petrovsky-Shtern 2009b). More specifically, we know that nonclass identities predominated both official categorization and self-ascription as state practices in the documentation of identities shifted from organizing diversity around estate and religion to ethnicity, nationality, and even race across various regions of the empire (see inter alia Reshetar 1952; Freeze 1986; Haimson 1988; Wirtschafter 1992, 1994; Fitzpatrick 1993; Slocum 1998; Pomeranz 1999; Holquist 2001; Steinwedel 2001; Steinberg 2002; Werth 2002; Crews 2003; Sanborn 2003; Cadoit 2005, 2007). Increasingly, the emphasis has been on identities and analyses of culture and power (Suny 2000: 487; Wortman 2000); on Russian nationalism and on the role of religions (Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam); on the complex hybridity of the imperial borderlands in the Tsarist period and beyond (Martin 1998; Brown 2004; Hirsch 2005; Badcock 2007); and on the ways in which Russianness was constantly rearticulated in connection with colonization, encounters with the non-Russian indigenous – and often Muslim – populations, and in Russian settlements in frontier areas (Brower and Lazzarini 1997; Geraci 2001a, 2001b; Jersild 2002; Khodarkovsky 2002; Sunderland 2004; Mamedov 2008). These new bodies of research should be folded into any account of Bolshevism's revolutionary mobilization – if only to properly reconstruct and contextualize the

[1] I use Bauer, Kappeler, and Roth (1991) throughout for statistics assembled from the 1897 All-Russian Imperial Census. For the data in the original, see *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii 1897g.* (St. Petersburg: Tsentral'nyi statisticheskii komitet, 1897–1905).

social worlds, experiences, identities, and routes to racialization of its social carriers.

We should not, therefore, accept uncritically the class narrative or political framing of Bolshevism's revolutionary mobilization. Given the Bolsheviks' socioethnic composition, it may not have been solely class conflict to which they were responding, but also to regional-nationalist, ethnic conflicts, interests, and ideas. A good part of socialism's appeal lay in its secularist and universalist theory of an implied *Rossiiskii* or imperial state, in its ecumenicalism, and in its seeming indifference to ethnicity – its antinationalist value. Socialism may have been an antidote to the disintegrating effects of a multinational empire as much as, or indeed more than, to the alienating effects of an industrializing state.

Methodological Approach, the Data, and the Sources

Goldstone (2001) noted that comparative historical sociology's fourth generation of revolutionary theory entwines work on social movements with that on revolutions. It explores identities, leaderships, ideologies, and social networks, and in particular draws attention to neighborhoods, communities, occupations, and schools as important sites of identity formation and radical mobilization (Gould 1995; Zhao 1998, 2001). In the Russian case, revolutionary elites' class origins are usually examined (Haimson 1955; Koenker 1981; Bonnell 1983; Mandel 1983), but little attention is paid to the influence of ethnocultural networks, ethnic neighborhoods and communities, and to the intersection of ethnicity and places of employment (key exceptions are Brym 1978; Frankel 1981; Suny 1993a: 11–18; Rieber 2001).

But examining this dimension of their radicalism entails an analytical reorientation. It moves us away from conceptualizing radical politics in revolutionary Russia as either working-class formations or as the alienation of privileged elites and intellectuals, and toward an analysis of key social (ethnic) groups in civil society, and the positions of professionals and middling-class groups in particular (e.g., Zhao 1998, 2001; Goldstone 2001; Mann 2004; Clemens 2007: 24.11). If marginalized groups, in articulating alternative social orders, can be critical to the spread of transformative ideologies (Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991: 425), then a set of otherwise diverse social groups can share a common dimension of experience or social location that funnels them into revolutionary politics. In method, then, I follow Michael Mann's general sociology. Groups defined by common experience can carry with them shared practices and orientations that facilitate coordinated action in a social movement, so in Mann's account shared experiences and occupational identities created the path to fascism (see also discussion in Clemens 2007). Mann (1993: ch. 6, 2004, 2005) emphasizes how particular social locations (e.g., refugee status or state employments) entailed distinct but limited opportunities for action that, in turn, both accommodated a variety of motives (e.g., opportunism, anti-Semitism) and sustained group interactions to generate the early commitment of individuals to fascism. By examining the social locations of the mobilization or group

emergence, we can see how Bolshevisms' political narrative was framed around class, but actually organized largely around socioethnic networks of schooling and employment, or communal solidarities. Class and ethnicity were contested and intertwined identities as they meshed both grievances and loyalties in intricate ways, and these were in turn reflected in Bolshevism's composition and in the Bolsheviks' political mobilization.

I therefore explore the specific social locations of the Bolsheviks' radical mobilization in the imperial matrix and trace their individual routes to radicalism. In places where social inequalities had ethnic markers, revolutionary challenge was more potent because it could manipulate conflicting loyalties and mobilize more than one dimension of identity and more than one set of grievances. I highlight, for instance, the empire's borderlands, multiethnic urbanism, and quasi- or problematic assimilationism as such shared dimensions of experience, drawing attention to the distinctive associational lives of the empire's ethnic minorities, as well as to social groups other than the economic bourgeoisies: culture, identity, education, and urbanization were as important to their forms of social organization as were capital, income, or class (Bradley 2002; Steinberg 2002; Meir 2006). Class was increasingly becoming a viable identity alternative to *sosloviia* (or estates, similar to *états* or *Ständer*). But while *sosloviia* by themselves could not provide an index of patterns of shared experiences or collective behavior, especially among the urban classes, when combined with education, occupation, ethnicity, religion, and social location, they can begin to define the social worlds of key socioethnic groups (Haimson 1988: 2).

And yet transformative socialist ideologies also require a sense of "totality and alternative" (Mann 1993). When the politics of class is confined to workplaces and does not involve ethnic spaces, totalizing ideologies are undermined (Katznelson 1981). Yet ethnic ties can provide the necessary shared experiences and social trust to form the basis of certain workplaces radicalisms. Gould's (1995: 27–9, 154, 181, 197–201) work on revolutionary France showed that in 1871 in Paris, insurgents' identities were rooted in neighborhoods, networks, and urban communities that also served as mobilizing structures for the emergence of a unified class-conscious movement. Ethnic networks can factionalize political movements, they can sectionalize class movements, or they can appropriate their own ideology (nationalism). In late Imperial Russia, both class (economy) and status (politics) were autocratically organized around ethnicity, so imagined class communities were most often built around ethnic, religious, or cultural solidarities. Bolshevism drew from ethnic communities, socioethnic professional networks, and networks of sectional and local-regional identities, mobilizing them into a political movement based on class. This, and the fact that social inequalities were combined with ethnic or cultural markers, made totalizing challenges to the larger social order easier: political repression first incorporated, and then suppressed, ethnic divisions, and so it helped shape the emergence of a class-universalist ideology constituted by ethnic and imperial marginality.

The Data Set

The choice of a data set – or the choice of the Bolshevik leadership – itself implies certain judgments. Focusing on Lenin and the small pre-1917 Bolshevik Party renders the data set exceedingly small and limits its theoretical scope to the ideological influence and social significance of a handful of revolutionaries (e.g., Haimson 1955; Lane 1975). Recent work using the 1917 Central Committee and Military Revolutionary Council similarly limits theorization only to those elites that seized power at a particular moment in 1917.[2] And yet a data set comprising the leadership from 1917 (or earlier) through the 1930s, with the close of the longer revolutionary period, would count more than 700 individuals and require theorization of revolutionary Bolshevism as well as "high Stalinism." It would also virtually preclude a meaningful collective biography, much less detailed biographical reconstruction.

Therefore this study follows Mawdsley (1995) and uses the ninety-three members (full or candidate) of the RSDRP(b)/RKP[3] Central Committees (CC) in the key revolutionary years from 1917 to 1923, inclusively. These CCs included members of the Politburo, the Orgburo, and the Secretariat, or the key organs of power in the new Soviet state. The CC membership of 1917–23 provides a useful historical, analytical, and practical demarcation. Analytically, these elites were the social carriers of Bolshevik ideology in its insurgent, revolutionary, or transformative phase: this leadership took power in a key moment of (geo)political collapse, dismantled the existing order, and designed a new social order with Lenin largely in control of the revolutionary effort. It was this early elite that provided the ideological and institutional frameworks that mapped the transition from an empire problematized by ethnicity to a "nation-state" problematized by class.

This data set also offers a useful historical demarcation. Whereas there was little biographical variation within the 1917–23 elite, significant qualitative and quantitative changes took place in the CCs from 1924 with Lenin's death: Stalin's consolidation hugely expanded subsequent CCs and proletarianized and russified the Soviet elite. So 1924 marks off the heterogeneity of revolutionary Bolshevism – a product of the empire – from the homogeneity of the Stalin years, a product of the revolution.

An additional issue is raised in this connection: there may have been lots of ethnic minorities in the leadership because they were recruited that way – to solve strategic and political problems in the peripheries (hence explaining the presence of many South Caucasians, but not why there were so few Ukrainians and so many Jews); or because of Lenin's well-known fondness for Jews and Latvians; or because of Bolshevism's popularity (or lack of) in a given region; or indeed any combination of these. However, first, we know too little about the inner workings of the early Bolshevik party to fully assess its mechanisms

[2] See the forthcoming work by Michael Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, Vol. III (Cambridge University Press).

[3] The Russian Social Democratic Worker's Party (Bolshevik)/Russian Communist Party.

for recruitment. There is, for instance, evidence that the ethnic minorities were themselves instrumental in recruiting coethnics, in the border regions especially, thereby shifting the question from one of recruitment into the leadership to one of ethnic mobilization (in the case of the Caucasus, for example, see Rieber 2001: 1682). Moreover, as I suggest in Chapter 8, it was similarly true that ethnic Russian workers were also recruited for "narrative" purposes. Second, while certain patterns of recruitment were no doubt operating, these individuals would have had to have been available for recruitment in the first instance, still leaving open the question of the appeal of Bolshevism to various minorities. But most significantly, and as I show in Chapter 2, other radical parties of the center-left (Constitutional Democrats [Kadets], Socialist Revolutionaries [SRs], and Mensheviks) were remarkably similar in socioethnic profile to the Bolsheviks. So unless they all had the same recruitment mechanisms and rationales, something contextual also had to be operating: if other radical organizations had similar ethnic compositions, then ethnic diversity was more likely related to wider strategies of empire and nation-building processes than to the specific nature of Bolshevik recruitment per se.

Measuring Class

The second key methodological issue concerns the measurement of class. Measurement of two key classes in revolutionary Russia – the intelligentsia and the working class – is particularly difficult because they were relatively new socioeconomic realities. As late as 1917, official categories for socioeconomic position were still represented by the *sosloviia* or estates. *Sosloviia* were ascriptive and usually hereditary, and they defined individuals' rights and obligations toward the state. But official classification bore little resemblance to economic realities: the *sosloviia* became poor social indicators as increased education, urbanization, migration, and the geographic penetration of industrial capitalism created new socioeconomic positions. Shifts in wealth could result in downward mobility to lower guilds or out of the *sosloviia* entirely, and with that came a concomitant loss of rights (Rieber 2006: 600). Moreover, the intelligentsia and urban working classes did not fit easily into these *sosloviia*. A growing number of industrial workers still ascribed to the peasantry even if they lost most of their ties to the countryside, whereas many in the free professions ascribed to the *meshchanstvo*, in effect the petty townspeople estate (Haimson 1988: 2). In practice, *sosloviia* were ceding to professional and occupational social ascriptions, particularly among the urban and middle strata, both Russian and non-Russian. So any meaningful measurement of class in imperial Russia has to incorporate this modernizing tension between *sosloviia* and *sostoianiia*, respectively, the legal status assigned by the state and the occupation in which one actually engaged (Haimson 1988: 1; Cadoit 2005).

I therefore situate the class origins of the Bolsheviks using a combination of *soslovie*, profession, and class because together they capture the complex reality of social identities in the last decades of the empire, and because these ascriptions are variously – if unevenly – found in (auto)biographies, census