

The 'authoritarian personality': an anti-Western hoax

by Michael Minnicino

Part II

The first part 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 Comintern official Georg Lukacs, and became the Soviet Union's most important cultural warfare operation against the West.

By emphasizing the "messianic" feature of socialism, Georg Lukacs had touched upon the great, largely unspoken, problem with Marxism. Karl Marx and his followers maintained that the Marxian system completely explained history: Capitalism was doomed, and must be replaced by socialism, and ultimately Communism—that was the inevitable law of history.

Unfortunately, history was not cooperating, or so it looked, during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Workers were not being inexorably ground down by an ever-more-vicious capitalism, and hardly appeared ripe for class war. Rather, reasonable people in those nations still under aristocratic rule generally looked to American republicanism as the model for the future.

Thus, most of socialist activity during those years was taken up with one attempt after another to maintain the intellectual integrity of Marxian "scientific lawfulness," while at the same time holding back the increasing popularity of republicanism.

Lenin is generally recognized as the founder of "Russian Marxism"; Lukacs has been described by many authors as "the founder of Western Marxism." These are fair statements; for it was Lukacs (and, in his own way, Lenin) who recognized that the only salvation of Marxism lay in emphasizing the irrationalist and racist cultism which Karl Marx originally imbibed from his teacher Karl von Savigny.

The key is, to make the socialist's relationship to the "laws of history" psychologically identical in form to certain types of religious fundamentalists' relationship to "God," or a fascist's relationship to "the People." That is, man must be "liberated" from the divine spark of reason. Reason—that by

which the individual participates in the constant expostulation of Divine Will, a fundamental tenet of Western republicanism, and that by which we understand natural law—must be made irrelevant, in fact, suspect.

The wide credibility today accorded the concept of the "authoritarian personality" is terrible testimony to the success of this transformation. Anyone who believes in universal truth understandable through reason, and rejects every individual's right to their own "personal truth," is suspected of fascist tendencies.

To the Communist, "all is permitted," because he is the midwife to an inevitable history, and capitalism is coming to an end; to the religious fundamentalist (be he Christian, Jewish, or Muslim), "all is permitted," because he is saved, and the whole world is coming to an end; to the Nazi, "all is permitted," because he is performing the cultural will of the people, and evil (usually, in the form of racial impurity) is coming to an end.

Lukacs struggled hard to discern the means by which this "daemonism," as he called it, could be best unleashed. In his early years, he toyed with the idea of transposing the Bal Shem cult, a fundamentalist Jewish cult based on a mystical interpretation of the Kabballah, to a wider audience. In 1910, he was still unsure about socialism: "It seems that socialism does not possess the religious power which is capable of filling the entire soul: a power which characterized primitive Christianity." After a year more of studying Marx, Lukacs was sure: "The system of socialism, and its view of the world, Marxism, form a synthetic unity—perhaps the most unrelenting and rigorous synthesis since medieval Christianity."

With this, Lukacs had the beginnings of his "Dostoevsky Project," and Communism's most powerful cultural weapon against Western civilization.

'Enough of Judeo-Christian teachings'

Georg Lukacs was born György Löwinger, in Budapest in 1885. When György was four years old, his father, the director of both the Anglo-Austrian Budapest Bank and the Kreditanstalt of Hungary, was ennobled, for financial ser-

vices rendered to the Hapsburg Imperial Court. The family changed its Jewish name to the Austro-Hungarian sounding “von Lukacs”; when Georg became a Communist, he dropped the aristocratic “von.”

At age 17, Georg fell in with Ervin Szabó, the leading intellectual of Budapest, and the city’s countercultural poet-laureate, Endre Ady. The latter two got their training at the *salon* of Mihály Pollascek, Szabó’s uncle and the father of philosophers Karl and Michael Polanyi; there, they were introduced to the writings of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, and personally to the emigré Russian *narodnik*-socialist Samuel Klatschko.

Both Ady and Szabó became deeply concerned with the influence of the great Hungarian freedom fighter Kossuth, who 50 years before had said, “Either the continent of Europe has no future at all, or this future is American republicanism.” Ady denounced the American form of government as “illusory . . . immoral.” Szabó had a battle cry he used often: “We have had enough of Judeo-Christian teachings.”

At the beginning of the century, Szabó became a leader of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, and of the Sociological Society of Budapest. (These were still the days when socialism was considered by many to be one of the “schools” of sociology.) He translated Marx for the first time into Hungarian, and started giving presentations on Marxian thought to the society. In his first speech, he introduced Marx “as an example of that ‘heroic life’ which Friedrich Nietzsche esteemed so highly.”

Marx, said Szabó, gave sociology its scientific foundation, by understanding that the mechanism of social change exists entirely in class war, in what Lukacs would slightly later call, “the diabolic forces lurking in all violence.” Said Szabó, “The order of economic cooperation in a socialist society means, outwardly, the subjugation of individuals to the will of the community . . . the most unbearable form of servitude. . . . It follows that the working class has to adjust psychologically to the future order well in advance. . . . Industrial development . . . is a negative factor in mental adjustment. . . . Class struggle is the positive factor.”

It was with Szabó, that Lukacs began to think of socialist revolution as, effectively, psychological conditioning against technological progress. Szabó died in 1918, before he could see the fruits of his labor; he is considered a founder of Hungarian Communism, and, to this day, his portrait is carried next to Marx and Engels in Hungarian May Day parades.

‘The abolition of culture’

Lukacs left Budapest in 1909, to study in Berlin as a private student of Georg Simmel, the author of the 1900 *Philosophy of Money*, an analysis generally well-received by socialists, including Lenin. His fellow students at Simmel’s home included sociologist Karl Mannheim and Ernst Bloch, later the philosopher-in-residence to Communist East Germany.

Simmel’s fixation was a concept in Marx, the “fetishism of commodities.” In brief: Marx claimed that, under capitalism, a worker’s product was not his own, but belonged to the capitalist; in fact, the produced commodity becomes, in the hands of the capitalist class, an instrument of the worker’s further subjugation. Simmel believed that, in advanced industrial society, *all* products, both physical and intellectual become “fetishized,” and become alien things, even to their creators.

Marx, said Simmel and his collaborators, had failed to understand this more generalized “alienation,” and had underestimated the interconnectedness of the economic base and the cultural superstructure; Marx had failed to appreciate his teacher von Savigny’s distinction between *Zivilization* and *Kultur*.

A bit of background: When Friedrich Schiller, for instance, used the word *Kultur* (culture) at the beginning of the 19th century, he meant a universal, transmittable process—every human being, as one of God’s reasonable creatures, was capable of culture. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, a linguistic shift had been accomplished by von Savigny and his heirs; “culture” had been transformed into a term denoting non-transferrable, racially determined qualities of “soul.” If one wanted to describe industrial progress, the veneer of capitalism—a process eminently transferrable, but “soul-less”—one used *Zivilization* (civilization).

The sentiment is summed up by a quote from Paul Ernst, a writer with whom Simmel lived from 1895 to 1897: “We must free ourselves from the link between our conception of culture and conquests of civilization. Barbarians can use electricity and navigate the skies; but only cultured men have deep feelings and lofty thoughts.” This ideology later became very important for the Nazis, who liked to stress, for instance, that France and Britain had advanced civilizations, but degenerate cultures, and therefore could not resist the “soul” of the German people. Ernst, formerly a literary lion of the German Social Democracy and a correspondent of Friedrich Engels, himself became a Nazi.

But, before World War II, this ideology was shared by both Nazis and Communists. In fact, after Ernst had gone fascist, Simmel’s student Lukacs (by then one of the most famous Communists in Europe) wrote him, “However much our ideas may differ, discussion is possible so long as our judgments of capitalism are similar. I believe that you are mistaken on nearly every question, but you are not on the other side of the barricades.”

After some months with Simmel in 1910, Lukacs wrote *The Soul and Forms*, the book that instantaneously made his intellectual reputation in continental Europe. Nominally an anthology of aesthetic criticism, *The Soul and Forms* outlines Lukacs’s theory of *Aufhebung der Kultur* (the abolition of culture). Art, so the theory goes, must expose the alienation of industrial society; it must degenerate, in order to expose degeneration. Art helps to develop *Kulturhass* (cultural

hatred), and the yearning for the days before capitalism and modern industry. Thus, a great example of art, is the poet Theodor Storm, whose “19th-century artist’s outlook is deeply and genuinely related to the outlook of the Middle Ages, that golden age of the romantic nostalgia for craftsmanship.”

The popular new novelist Thomas Mann is also good, says Lukacs, because, like Storm, his “atmosphere of decay . . . is monumental.”

Mann delighted in a kindred spirit, and publicly praised Lukacs’s piece as “a beautiful and profound book . . . brilliant, extremely fine, and truthful.” This is the start of the perverted Svengali-Trilby relationship between Mann and, first Lukacs, and later Teodoro Adorno, one of Lukacs’s chief heirs. In this early period, Mann and Lukacs also shared their interest in Dmitry Merezhkovsky, a Russian writer widely read in Germany. Both Lukacs and Mann used Merezhkovsky’s characterization of Dostoevsky as the “Dante of the East”; it is believed that the Russian writer inspired Lukacs to steep himself in Dostoevsky.

Merezhkovsky was most well-known as the German-language popularizer of the Dostoevskian concept of the “Third and Final Rome” which would soon rise in the East, and rule the world. Merezhkovsky was also the primary source for Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, whose pre-World War I book *The Third Reich* was used as a textbook for the development of Nazism.

‘Dostoevsky was present’

Professor Max Weber’s Heidelberg home was the logical next step for Lukacs, as his hatred of all Western culture grew.

Weber has since, of course, been canonized as one of the great father figures of the social sciences; professorships are named for him around the world, and his books are treated like Holy Writ. His *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is one of those books that almost every college graduate in America has read . . . and almost no one remembers. It is worth remembering.

The book is one extended diatribe against American republicanism, and, in particular, the influence of Benjamin Franklin. “The impression of many Germans that the virtues expressed by Americanism are pure hypocrisy,” begins Weber, “seems to have been confirmed by this striking case” of Benjamin Franklin. The American Founding Father is called “a colorless deist,” and Weber concludes that in the days of medieval Christianity, Franklin’s philosophy “would have been proscribed as the lowest sort of avarice and as an attitude entirely lacking in self-respect.”

Weber’s attack on Franklin, and, by ham-handed implication, on Friedrich List and other German followers of Franklin who developed the modern German economy, is the basis of Weber’s claim that German industrial progress was not actually capitalist in nature. During primitive and medieval periods, Weber states, physical objects retained an “aura” (later, a very important word for the Frankfurt School). Un-

der capitalism, these objects have lost their aura due to “disenchantment” (*Entzauberung*).

Protestantism is the ideology of disenchantment, and its triumph, says the atheist Weber, was crucial to the modern organization of labor on the mass scale necessary for the change from earlier social-economic forms, to capitalism . . . as Karl Marx had said. This organization takes on a life of its own, and attempts to rationalize and dominate every aspect of society. This is Weber’s famous theory of bureaucracy.

The difference between Protestant Germany and Protestant America is primarily racial. America has no real soul; its rationalization has degenerated completely into bureaucracy. Germany has bureaucracy, too, but it is tempered by *Kultur*: its people work and make wealth, but they do so “passionately,” with a “calling” (Weber used the German word *Beruf*, vocation). Unlike Franklin and the avaricious American republicans, German leaders are not merely organizers of society, they are capable of *charisma*.

These days, everything is “charismatic.” Weber coined the term, and meant by it the ability to appeal to the *non-rational* within the consciousness of a people.

This was the philosophical environment in which Lukacs arrived at Weber’s house in 1913. Both Weber’s wife Marianna and his teaching assistant, Paul Honigsheim, testify that Lukacs immediately dominated the “Sunday Circle,” weekly philosophical meetings in the drawing room. Lukacs’s closest allies were Nicolai von Bubnov, a professor of Russian mysticism at Heidelberg University, and Martin Buber, the Jewish existentialist-theologian. Lukacs introduced collaboration between the Weber group, and a similar work-circle that included Buber and Gustav Landauer. The Buber-Landauer group was, at the time, trying to organize a plan to return German society to small agrarian units, not unlike the schemes of the present-day environmentalist Green Party.

Honigsheim writes in his memoirs that the discussion of Dostoevsky was so constant and so intense that it seemed “Dostoevsky was present every week.” Out of this Dostoevskyan think tank, came the oddest assortment of sociologists, fascists, and Communists:

- Hugo Münsterberg, psychologist, who went to Harvard University, wrote the first theoretical study of motion pictures, and trained Walter Lippmann;

- Roberto Michels, who became the theoretical godfather of Italian fascism;

- Karl Jaspers, the existentialist philosopher and sidekick of Nazi Martin Heidegger, who, after World War II, popularized the idea of German “collective guilt”;

- Otto Gross, a psychoanalyst whom Sigmund Freud called his best student after Carl Jung; Gross’s only book, *The Secondary Function of the Brain*, claimed that all people could be divided into two basic mental types, one like Alyosha Karamazov and the other like Dimitry Karamazov; he ran a self-described “cult of Astarte,” which included Frieda and Else von Richthofen; Else slept with Weber, his brother,

and ultimately married Weber's teaching assistant Edgar Jaffe; sister Frieda ultimately married the "blood and soil" novelist D.H. Lawrence; we shall return to these later.

● Almost the entire leadership of the Bavarian Soviet Republic of April 1919 was trained in Weber's drawing room; Edgar Jaffe became minister of finance; Ernst Toller became commander of the Bavarian Red Army; Gustav Landauer became number-two man. Ironically, the only two people not trained in the Weber Sunday Circle, "head of state" Kurt Eisner and cultural commissar and expressionist poet Edgar Műsham, were assassinated by a suicide squad from the Thule Society, which later sponsored the rise of Adolf Hitler.

The Grand Inquisitor

Lukacs left Germany as the First World War looked inevitable, but not before publishing *The Theory of the Novel*. Here, and in some unpublished writings from the same period, we first see what he called "the Dostoevsky Project." Writing in his 1962 preface to the book, Lukacs notes that his purpose was to pose the question, "Who will save us from Western civilization?"

Here, we are told that modern literature is merely a struggle to recapture the "primeval" psychological happiness that was lost under capitalism; the novel form, for instance, "is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God. The novel hero's psychology is demonic." The future of literature lies with Dostoevsky, "the Dante of the new age."

Lukacs explains that the model for the "new man" must be Alyosha Karamazov—as I described in Part I—and he also notes that Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* provides not only the model for the goal, but also the model for the *means*. The key is the "Grand Inquisitor" section of that book, the famous dream sequence in which Jesus Christ is brought for interrogation before a harsh Grand Inquisitor. The piece is usually discussed as a debate between religion, and the earthly institution of the church.

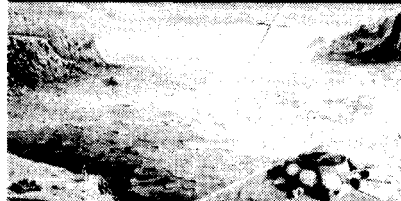
All previous interpretations of that section are wrong, said Lukacs; what Dostoevsky meant to portray is: The Grand Inquisitor is right, and Jesus is wrong. The Inquisitor represents man in the real world, who must commit any act for the good of the community; and in those acts, he knows "neither crime nor madness . . . for crime and madness are objectifications of transcendental homelessness—the homelessness of an action in the human order of social relations." The Inquisitor is the model for the revolutionary cadre; he understands that the world "has been abandoned by God," and acts accordingly. Jesus is a hopeless abstraction; a goal which gullible people emulate, but which can never exist in the real world. The true "saint" is the Inquisitor, and Dostoevsky has him conclude: "And we who, for their happiness, have taken their sins upon ourselves, we stand before you and say, 'Judge us if you can and if you dare.'" Within five years, Lukacs would have his opportunity to turn men who knew "neither crime nor madness," loose on society.

Next: The Dostoevskian Revolution

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