

Russian Revolution : Social Equality Leadership School seminar, 2-3 April 2011

Introduction by RP after the 39-minute film on Lenin and the Russian Revolution.

1. [Slide 1 *topographical map of USSR*] I'll try to avoid simply repeating what's in the film, or what's in the reading material.
2. The vastness of Russia is its primary characteristic – key to the defeat of invaders like Napoleon, and later Hitler, and key to its internal historical development since time immemorial. In SELS we have looked at *serfdom* in the feudal societies of Western Europe. Serfdom *came* later and *stayed* later in Russia than in other European countries.¹ As in those other countries serfdom was the product of *force* combined with *necessity*. But far less than in those other countries was it a spontaneously developed *local* relation. Tying the free peasants to the land as serfs was imposed systematically by the Russian state in order to stop them moving away to other open land in the face of invasions by the Mongolian “Golden Horde”, [Slide 2 *map of Golden Horde c 1300 and paintings of siege of Moscow and Crimean Tatars*] and by Tatars from the Crimea. Serfdom was imposed by the state to provide for a standing army; to sustain the nobles in organising the defence of the southern borderlands; and to ensure the reliable extraction of grain and taxes.
3. The noble landlord, given ownership of the land, became virtually the owner of his serfs, and flight was made a criminal offence. [Slide 3 *two illustrations of serfs*] “The landowner could transfer the serf [personally] without land to another landowner while keeping the serf's personal property and family”.² [Slide 4 *illustration of sale of serfs*] Runaway serfs were pursued like runaway slaves.
4. “About four-fifths of Russian peasants were serfs according to the censuses of 1678 and 1719; free peasants remained only in the North and North-East of the country.”³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, only about half of

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom_in_Russia

² Id.

³ Id.

Russian peasants were still serfs on landlords' land. The other half lived and worked on the vast state lands. They were considered "state peasants",⁴ performing their obligations in military service and taxes directly to the state. Here you can see the enormous *strength* of Tsarism, *and also its ultimate weakness*.

5. Military pressure on the Russian state came not only from the south, but, in time, also from the west. Later, two World Wars, and then the Cold War, were in fact a culmination of this pressure from the west, until Russia was at length absorbed (in our own time) into capitalist globalisation. From the latter part of the sixteenth century when the Russian feudal state came in contact with rival Western European powers, "the development of state power in Russia proceeded at a forced pace under the watchword of military necessity."⁵ [Slide 5 *Peter the Great and Europe*] Catching up with the West was most vigorously pursued by Tsar Peter I (Peter the Great) who ruled from 1689. He built a fleet and sought to modernise the army and state on Western lines. The capital Petersburg was built on land conquered from Sweden. [Slide 6 *Petersburg map*]
6. The modernisation of the urban centre, as far as it went, was paid for by an intensified exploitation of the peasants, serf and non-serf. It strengthened both the feudal landlords and Tsarism for a time, only for that to turn into its opposite once capitalism developed. "Under pressure from richer Europe," wrote Trotsky, "the Russian State swallowed up a far greater relative part of the people's wealth than in the West, and thereby not only condemned the people to a twofold poverty, but also weakened the foundations of the possessing classes."⁶
7. Hundreds of rural rebellions occurred over the centuries, and were brutally put down. In part to meet this, but *mainly under the pressure of foreign competition to modernise the Russian economy*, Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom in 1861. [Slide 7 *Tsar Alexander II*] The serfs were now legally freed from feudal ties and

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation_reform_of_1861_in_Russia

⁵ E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, 1924-1926, vol 1, p 19.

⁶ Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol I, chapter I, p 23.

obligations to the landlords – but they did not receive the land on which they worked. The details varied over a vast and diverse territory, but typically a peasant now had the *right* – if he had the money – to buy out about half of the land he and his family cultivated.⁷ [Slide 8 Household and assigned serfs] The landlords “kept nearly all the meadows and forests”⁸ as part of their half share of the land. Typically, peasants now became indebted to the landlords in rents and land-‘redemption’ money, in addition to whatever debts they had before. They resented this deeply. Russia at the time of the emancipation had twenty-three million serfs belonging to 103,000 landlords – an average of 223 serfs each. The arable land which the freed peasantry now had to rent or buy from the landlords was valued at much higher than its real value: “yesterday’s serfs discovered that, in becoming free, they were now hopelessly in debt.”⁹ [Slide 9 Serfs and their masters]

8. The landlords were largely by now mere parasites, taking an estimated one-third of income and production without any apparent necessary function.¹⁰ At the time of the reform one third of their estates and two thirds of their serfs were mortgaged to the state, or to banks, as security for unpaid debts. This was why they had to accept the emancipation dictated by the Tsar.¹¹ Later on, the peasants’ debts to the landlords, and the landlords’ debts to the state and to the banks, were an important reason why, in 1917, the urban capitalist class was against the confiscation of the landlords’ land and its distribution to the peasants. Landlordism and capitalism had become intermeshed.
9. We are accustomed to thinking of peasants as small proprietors. The peasant population in Russia, however, serf and non-serf, lived in villages [Slide 10 Peasant village] run by a *mir* or ‘commune’ with an assembly led by ‘elders’ –

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation_reform_of_1861_in_Russia

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom_in_Russia

⁹ Victor Serge, *From Serfdom to Proletarian Revolution* (1930), quoted at <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/RUSserfs.htm>

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id.

largely self-sufficient and self-administered units scattered across the land every 10 km or so.¹² In principle, land and resources were shared within the *mir*. The fields were allotted among the families in strips, distributed according to the quality of the soil. These were periodically redistributed within the villages to produce level economic conditions.¹³ [Slide 11 Meeting of mir elders]

10. The deep hold of this communal form of property on the Russian rural population caused Karl Marx to consider, in the drafts for his reply to a question from Vera Zasulich in 1881, the possibility that the Russian *mir* might be sustained as a component of collective production *within a more general socialist transformation* – without ever being dissolved into a capitalist economy.¹⁴ However the Russian Marxists later rejected this idea in their arguments against the populist Narodniks – and Engels (who survived Marx into the 1890s) agreed with them.¹⁵ [Slide 12 Lenin & book cover] Lenin, in his meticulous book-length study of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*,¹⁶ written from 1896-1899, showed in detail that commercial capitalism and differentiation of private land-holding was making rapid progress on the land. In fact, by 1916, about half of the land retained by the landlords at the time of emancipation had passed into peasant hands.¹⁷ There were rich peasants (or “kulaks”), [Slide 13 Kulaks] middle peasants, and a mass of poor peasants and agricultural labourers with little or nothing except a thirst for land.
11. After the emancipation of the serfs the rural population grew, but the urban population grew faster. There was a rapid *industrialisation*. In the fifty years from 1860 to 1910, Russia’s industrial production increased 10.5 times, compared with Germany’s 6 times and Britain’s 2.5 times.¹⁸ However, in the case of Russia

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation_reform_of_1861

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ See Marx-Engels *Collected Works*, vol 24 pp 346-372.

¹⁵ Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, vol II, pp 432-3.

¹⁶ *Collected Works*, vol 3.

¹⁷ Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (Penguin, 1969), p 23.

¹⁸ Id., p 13.

this was off a very low base, and it did not signify that Russia was catching up. Agricultural production, in which the vast majority of the population were engaged, grew at a much slower pace, and Russia's national income per head of population fell increasingly behind that of Europe and the United States.

12. The belated development of capitalism in Russia meant that relatively large-scale industry was implanted ready-made from abroad. The disparity between modern city and backward countryside was sharpened. In the United States, in 1914, enterprises employing more than 1,000 workers made up only 18 per cent of the total. In Russia they made up more than 40 per cent of the total.¹⁹ This meant a high concentration of industrial workers in the urban population, open to the most advanced ideas. This provided the basis for the industrial proletariat (still only about ten per cent of the population) to take the lead in the struggle against Tsarism; [Slide 14 *Women factory workers on strike*] and it provided the basis for the conversion of radical intellectuals to Marxist ideas. Combined and uneven development – the most advanced features side by side and interconnected with persistent backwardness – characterised the whole situation.
13. Generally speaking, an army presents a picture of society in uniform. The mainly peasant army had enabled Tsarism to retain power in the 1905 revolution, in which the militant working class suffered defeat. With the catastrophic First World War, however, the peasant basis of the army no longer provided reliable support. [Slide 15 *Soldiers in Petrograd protest against the War*] As the film has told us, of those sent to the front to fight for the war aims of their own masters and exploiters, “four million never came back”. Add to that the slaughter on the other side. These crimes of mass murder by the ruling classes are glossed over in most of the histories, which would see only the crimes of the revolution – and which see revolution itself as a crime.
14. [Slide 16 *Map of Europe and Constantinople*] In the First World War, Turkey under the Ottomans took the side of Germany. Tsarist Russia, allied with Britain and

¹⁹ Id., p 27.

France, pursued the imperialist ambition of Peter the Great of taking Constantinople (now called Istanbul) from Turkey and thus securing for Russia a warm-water port – the access of its warships to the oceans of the world all year round. After the fall of the Tsar in the February Revolution of 1917, the Provisional Government pursued the same imperial ambition in continuing the World War.

15. **[Slide 17 Russian Marxist leaders]** In their debates prior to 1917, all the tendencies of Russian Marxism had agreed that the Russian revolution was and would be “bourgeois” in character. If you have read Trotsky’s *Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution*, you will have seen his quotations from Lenin in that regard. Trotsky himself wrote in 1908-9:²⁰

So far as its direct and indirect tasks are concerned, the Russian revolution is a ‘bourgeois’ revolution because it sets out to liberate bourgeois society from the chains and fetters of absolutism and feudal ownership. But the principal driving force of the Russian revolution is the proletariat and that is why, so far as its method is concerned, it is a proletarian revolution.

And earlier, on the same page:

[O]nly a party which has the revolutionary urban masses behind it, and which is not afraid, out of pious respect for bourgeois private property, to revolutionize feudal ownership, can rely on the peasantry at a time of revolution.

16. Lenin in 1906, replying to the debate on the land question at the Unity Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in Stockholm, summed up his own position and that of the Bolshevik faction in these words:²¹

[T]he Russian revolution can achieve victory by its own efforts, but it cannot possibly hold and consolidate its gains by its own strength. *It cannot do this unless there is a socialist revolution in the West.* Without this condition restoration is inevitable, whether we have municipalisation [of the land], or nationalisation [of the land], or division of the land: for under each and every form of possession and property the small proprietor will always be a bulwark of restoration. After the complete victory of the democratic revolution the small proprietor will inevitably turn against the proletariat; and the sooner the *common enemies* of the proletariat and of the small proprietors, such as the capitalists, the landlords, the financial bourgeoisie,

²⁰ Leon Trotsky, *1905*, (Penguin) p 66.

²¹ *Collected Works*, vol 10, p 280. Emphasis added.

and so forth are overthrown, *the sooner will this happen*.

In other words the peasants, having secured their own immediate aims by revolution together with the proletariat, would turn and let the autocracy restore itself unless the proletariat had the necessary reserves of strength to prevent it.

Our democratic republic has no other reserve [continued Lenin] than the socialist proletariat in the West.

Lenin was confident that the proletariat in the West would respond to a thorough-going democratic revolution in Russia, in which the peasants would (as he said) “set to work immediately and directly to settle accounts with the government officials and the landlords in the most drastic manner”.²² But also important was the extent of class differentiation among the peasants themselves, and between landowners and their landless labourers.

17. Opposing the idea of municipal ownership of the land put forward by the Menshevik faction, Lenin argued for nationalisation of the land, saying that municipalisation was wrong both in the political and the economic sense:²³

In a democratic republic, nationalisation of the land would undoubtedly provide the widest field for the class struggle – the widest field possible and thinkable under capitalism. Nationalisation means the abolition of absolute rent, a reduction in the price of grain, **the maximum freedom for competition and a free penetration of capital into agriculture**.²⁴ Municipalisation, on the contrary, narrows the field of the nation-wide class struggle, for it does not free all production relations in agriculture from absolute rent, and it cuts up our general demands into particular demands. ... Municipalisation means narrowing and obscuring the class struggle.

18. Lenin was not fond of left-wing posturing or phrase-mongering. His speech on the land question just quoted is the speech of the most effective anti-capitalist revolutionary leader in history. Yet he explicitly advanced the nationalisation of the land *not as a socialist measure* but as a necessary radical measure to sweep away the archaic feudal and local obstacles that stood in the way of *the development of the market, of competition, of the penetration of capital and capitalist relations into agriculture* – a measure to promote class differentiation and a modern class struggle

²² Id., p 282.

²³ Id.

²⁴ Emphasis added.

throughout the nation. For that, in his view, was the only way to *socialism* – not in an isolated, backward Russia within which restoration of some sort would eventually be inevitable, but in deliberate conjunction with the anticipated socialist revolution in the West.

19. Inherent in Lenin's approach was that the Russian working class would have to place itself politically at the head of the peasant masses, as it had attempted to do in 1905, in order to carry out the necessary political revolution against the entrenched power of Tsarism, the landlords, the established capitalist class, the banks and international finance capital. From this came his idea of the "*democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*", which became the policy of the Bolsheviks. The idea was that the proletariat would push the democratic *bourgeois* revolution based on the peasantry as far as possible to its radical limits – although, without a socialist revolution in the West, the proletariat would inevitably lose its hold on political power in the longer run.
20. The Mensheviks, including Lenin's old teacher Plekhanov (the 'father' of Russian Marxism) recoiled from all these dangerous implications. For them, history had to proceed in clearly delineated stages of development, and since (as all agreed) *Russia* was *itself* ripe only for the further development of *capitalism*, the only thing the Russian proletariat could do was to ally itself with the liberal capitalists and, once Tsarist absolutism was overthrown, to press for liberal reforms. You can see that this view of the problem was essentially *national*. But was it *realistic*? In the revolution itself, the liberals went over to reaction. Their own class interests set them directly against the demands and struggle of the working class; bound them to Russia's imperialist aims in continuing the World War regardless of the slaughter; set them against revolution on the land and even against implementing land reforms until the War had been won. (You could not have peasants *en masse* leaving the army at the front to go and attend to their interest in land redistribution at home.) The Mensheviks, as well as the leaders of the mass peasant party, the Socialist-Revolutionaries (the former Narodniks), were set on compromise and so dragged politically at the tail of the

bourgeoisie, immediately betraying at the top every gain achieved by struggle from below. They all came to political ruin in 1917. [Slide 18 *Mass meeting of Putilov factory workers*]

21. Lenin's party, the Bolsheviks, came to power not on slogans of "socialism", but on the slogans *Peace, Land and Bread*. These seemingly simple things the class-compromising politicians could not or rather *would not* deliver, although they began with all the mass support necessary to do so. The point was – and this was the key to the Bolsheviks' success – that only a workers' party willing to go to the end in the political struggle against the capitalist class could be relied upon to carry out in practice the real content of even a *bourgeois*-democratic programme. [Slide 19 *Lenin depicted at Putilov factory, May 1917*] Between February and October 1917 the downtrodden Russian masses came to understand this, assisted mainly by the experience of great events but also by firm, patient and skilful Bolshevik tactics and slogans. The film incorrectly stated that Lenin's policy was civil war.²⁵ Lenin's policy was "*All Power to the Soviets!*" – the elected assemblies of workers', peasants' and soldiers' delegates – but for the ruling classes this meant civil war, and Lenin was prepared to face that.
22. [Slide 20 *Kerensky*] The Socialist-Revolutionary Party leaders, headed by Kerensky, while enjoying overwhelming support and trust from the peasants, had abandoned their own program of agrarian revolution when they entered into political coalition with the capitalists. It was in fact Lenin and the Bolsheviks who carried their program out. [Slide 21 *All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies*] Lenin carefully noted the peasant demands based on 242 local mandates which were submitted to the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. In summary (I quote):

The peasants [in reality the poor peasants] are demanding the abolition of the right to private ownership of land; the conversion of *all* private land holdings, etc., into the property of the whole people, without compensation; the conversion of land tracts farmed on a highly efficient level (orchards, plantations, etc.) into "model farms", their transfer to "the

²⁵ Compare Lenin's article "The Tasks of the Revolution", September 26 and 27, 1917 (old calendar), *Collected Works*, vol 26, pp 67-68.

exclusive use of the state and the communes”; the confiscation of “*all* livestock and farm implements”, etc [from the landowners].²⁶

The Social-Revolutionary Party leadership, however, recoiled from these demands and jumped over to supporting a milk-and-water reform program of the liberals preserving landed proprietorship but promising “fair rentals” to the so-called “rightful owners” including the landlords. In an article published on the eve of the October insurrection, Lenin declared:

The peasants must know how they have been cheated and betrayed to the landowners by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

The peasants must know that it is only the *workers'* party, the *Bolsheviks*, who are prepared to stand to the last for the interests of the *poor* peasants and *all* working people against the capitalists and the landowners.²⁷

23. With the success of the insurrection, power was in the hands of the Soviets.

[Slide 22 Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, meeting in Petrograd] The first decree of the Soviet government, the day after the insurrection, was its decree on immediate peace without annexations or indemnities; repudiating all the secret treaties giving privileges to Russia, or to Great Russians over the national minorities; and with peace negotiations to be conducted openly in front of the peoples of all countries.

24. Its second decree the same day – the decree on land – abolished landed proprietorship forthwith and placed all landed estates, including all crown, monastery and church lands, with all their livestock, implements and buildings at the disposal of the peasants' local land committees and the Soviets of Peasant Deputies, to enable them to carry out their own land program in their own way. Lenin's earlier program of nationalisation of the land for the purpose of opening up the development of capitalist agriculture had now been superseded by events. Nationalisation of the land was carried out, but now combined with the localisation he had previously criticised, and now plainly on an anti-capitalist basis. *The confines of bourgeois-democratic revolution had necessarily been overstepped.* The

²⁶ See Lenin, “Socialist-Revolutionary Party Cheats the Peasants Once Again”, *Collected Works*, vol 26, pp 229-233. Emphasis in the original.

²⁷ Id., p 233.

entire content of the Peasant Mandate on the Land, compiled from the 242 local peasant mandates mentioned earlier, was proclaimed a provisional law.²⁸ Thus, at a stroke, the Bolsheviks in power took the mass basis of peasant support away from Kerensky and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Without this, and without the declaration for immediate peace, victory in the civil war would have been impossible.

25. In regard to industry, the Soviet government tried to overcome the chaos and breakdown brought about by the revolution since February by decreeing workers' control over all significant enterprises. Taking ownership from the capitalists was initially avoided. In his article on "*How to organise competition*", at the end of 1917,²⁹ Lenin spoke only of competition *in accounting and control*, in order to prevent idling and cheating! This was the "main economic task" in the words of Lenin.³⁰ There was, he said, "enough bread, iron, timber, wool, cotton and flax in Russia to satisfy the needs of everyone, if only labour and its products are properly distributed" and the enemies of the people suppressed.³¹ But how was production and distribution to be organised, if not by the mechanism of market price? Who would produce or receive what, and how much? What about the organisation of the division of labour? It is clear that there was absolutely no plan. Just "produce whatever you can" was the message to the workers and the peasants. Apart from the land, nationalisation in the first few months was limited to the banks, the private sections of the railways and the merchant fleet. But it obviously could not stop there. Very rapidly – and especially once the civil war began – the desperate situation, and the resistance of the capitalists, led to nationalisation of all the factories and this occurred systematically from June 1918. What also followed was forcible extraction of grain surpluses from the peasants who had surpluses, the kulaks and middle peasants, who hoarded grain. Very rapidly the basis was laid for a centralised

²⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol 26, p 260.

²⁹ Id., p 404.

³⁰ Id., p 410.

³¹ Id., p 411.

state dictatorship, which was only feebly, and then only for a time, under the democratic political control of the working class.

26. **[Slide 23 Trotsky; Lenin]** Back in 1905, Leon Trotsky, analysing the revolutionary events in which he played a leading role, had come to the conclusion that Lenin's concept of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" – a revolutionary government sweeping away the feudal rubbish, keeping the capitalist class from political power, *but remaining itself within the framework of capitalist economy* until the socialist revolution in the West came to its aid – was inherently unrealistic. The working class, to succeed in the *political* tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, would be compelled to place itself at the head of the poor peasantry and try to take power itself; but in succeeding, it would be compelled to proceed to measures of socialisation incompatible with a bourgeois-democratic framework. *Sustaining workers' power and measures of socialisation would, of course, still depend on the support of socialist revolution in the West.* This was the concept of the "*permanent revolution*" – not implying any ridiculous notion of revolution-without-end, but rather a term borrowed from Marx, who had used it in the mid-19th century to express the thought of an uninterrupted progression in Europe from bourgeois to proletarian revolution.³² In the course of the World War, Lenin – although he had previously rejected Trotsky's concept as "absurdly ultra-left" – became convinced that the proletariat would itself have to take the power, and establish its own class rule (*"the dictatorship of the proletariat"*) with all the consequences which that entailed. **[Slide 24 Lenin and Trotsky together]** Thus, from his arrival in Petrograd in April 1917 he put forward – to the surprise of the Bolsheviks – a program of tasks and demands involving no significant difference with Trotsky. Together they led the October revolution to victory. That victory, however, would have been impossible without the Bolshevik *party*.
27. We should not get intoxicated over the victory of the working class in October 1917. "Permanent revolution" in Russia, as in any backward country, described

³² See the discussion in Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol II, ch 8.

a *predicament* much more than it described a *solution*. The political success of it in Russia, in my opinion, was ultimately the product of the World War. And in what sense did it succeed ultimately? What it meant in practice was that the political avalanche had now posed tasks of an economic nature for which the social basis had simply not been laid. The advanced proletariat of the West did *not* come to the rescue of workers' power in Russia. Although the prospect was by no means hopeless, the expected socialist revolution in Europe *failed comprehensively* over the ensuing two decades. And then came the Second World War. Yet so thorough-going was the destruction of feudal and capitalist class power during and after the civil war in Russia that capitalism was not restored in Russia (and the other territories that became the Soviet Union) for more than seventy years. In the interim there arose the monstrous totalitarian dictatorship of Stalinism. [Slide 25 *Stalin and Berlin wall*] The history of the phenomenon of Stalinism, and of the attempt to build "socialism in one country" – a history itself long and involved and rich in lessons mainly of a negative kind – is beyond the limits of the task given to me today.

28. While it was a question of reconstruction, of electrification, of building infrastructure, of developing military power and using the scientific spin-offs from that, great steps forward could eventually be taken on the basis of an economy in which the organisation of the division of labour was run essentially without the market but – as *forced labour*, rural and urban – by means of a massive bureaucratic state apparatus of command and control. Its advances should never be understated. After all, the Soviet Union defeated Hitler's Germany; then, using German know-how as the Americans did, it was the first to put a man in space; it produced rocket engines superior to those of the USA; it became for a time the second industrial power in the world. But in the end it could not use or match the phenomenal advances for the working and consuming population that are inherent in new technology coupled with the world-wide division of labour of modern times.
29. [Slide 26 *Trabant*] The economic historian and statistician Angus Maddison

fairly describes in these words the economic situation prevailing before the Soviet Union eventually collapsed in 1991:³³

Capital-[to-]output ratios were higher than in capitalist countries. Materials and energy were used wastefully as they were supplied below cost. Shortages created a chronic tendency to hoard inventories. The ratio of energy consumption to GDP was much higher than in western Europe. The steel consumption/GDP ratio was four times as high as in the United States. Transfer of technology from the west was hindered by trade restrictions, lack of foreign direct investment, and restricted access to foreign investors, technicians and scholars. Work incentives were poor, malingering on the job was commonplace. The quality of consumer goods was poor. Retail outlets and service industries were few. Prices bore little relation to cost. Bread, butter, and housing were heavily subsidized. Consumers wasted time queuing, bartering, or sometimes bribing their way to the goods and services they wanted. There was an active black market, and special shops for the nomenklatura [the privileged bureaucrats of the state]. There was increasing cynicism, frustration, alcoholism, and a decline in life expectation.

30. It was not the intention of the Russian Revolution to close itself off from the world – on the contrary – but it ended up doing just that. Its vast expanse – one fifth of the land surface of the globe – and all its eventual military power did not save it in the end from the competition of the world market. Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* more than 160 years ago that cheap goods are the heavy artillery with which the bourgeoisie batters down all Chinese walls. So it was and so it will be – until we find an effective road to the *world* transformation of the property system that now rules us all. To understand the basis for that transformation, and to find that road, is our purpose in SELS.

[Slide 27 Three questions for discussion: (1) Why did Lenin insist, prior to 1917, that the Russian revolution would be “bourgeois”? Why did he change his mind? (2) What would you have done? (3) Did the Russian socialist revolution succeed or fail?]

³³ *Contours of the World Economy 1–2030 AD*, Oxford University Press 2007, pp 341-2.