

Revolutionary Economies and War: A Diachronic Comparison of the Napoleonic Continental System and Soviet War Communism

Matthew Dangstorp

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Supervisor: Professor Jan Hennings
Second Reader: Dr. Alexandr Voronovici

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Abstract

The present thesis presents a diachronic comparison of the economic systems of Napoleonic France and the early Soviet Union; The Continental System and War Communism. Methodologically, the comparison is inspired by Charles Tilly's *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, and Jürgen Kocka's *Comparative and Transnational History*.

The comparison has two principal objectives. First to question the uniqueness of the Soviet Union's socialist experiment from a structural economic perspective by comparing with a historical antecedent with whom it shared certain similarities but marked ideological differences. Second, the comparison postulates the Continental System and War Communism as the approaches of two different societies to the same problem; a comparison of the last mercantilist challenge to capitalism with the first socialist one.

Structurally, the paper will be divided into three chapters presenting three thematic components, roughly separated chronologically, and subjecting them to comparison. First the broad topic of economic theory and practice in the early 19th and early 20th centuries as well as its understanding by Napoleon and Lenin will be treated. Second, the Continental System and War Communism will be examined in their institutional frameworks. Third, the implantation, progression, and collapse of the systems will be compared.

This investigation concludes the following. First, that despite their great ideological and temporal distance, the two projects shared a markedly similar logic and structural similarity. Second, despite both systems being formulated as desirable economic alternatives for the population at large to a demonized global capitalism, the systems' primary means of enforcement was coercion. Third, despite their many flaws, neither system was inherently doomed, but were rather overthrown from without, contingently.

Acknowledgements

If I could speak to myself when I began my university career, I would strongly suggest to be unafraid to ask advice from those who know more than you, which, even as a graduate student, is nearly everyone in a university setting. I now know to ask for advice early and often, thus, this list of acknowledgments will be both lengthy and incomplete.

I have been blessed with an immensely supportive family, without whom I would know none of the success in life that I currently enjoy. To my mother, Laurie and my father, Deryl, I hope that my thanks can adequately express the debt that I, and this present thesis, owe you. My thanks extend also to my brother Jacob who was a welcome source of support and empathy while concurrently in the terminal year of his diploma. Also, to Barbara, who knows herself the various reasons for which she deserves my sincere thanks.

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The blame for any weakness or error in this present work rests solely on my shoulders as the author. I could not have asked for a better group of supporters and contributors.

Preface

The present thesis is a historical work, submitted to the department of history to fulfill the formal requirements for a Master's degree in history. Despite this outwardly formal character the subject matter and, more precisely, the questions asked about the subject matter may seem slightly unusual. This is due no doubt in part to the fact that comparative historical works are rare compared to their single subject counterparts; diachronic comparisons rarer still.

Beyond the question of the choice of subject and the manner of its treatment, I feel obliged to add a brief auto-biographical comment. Though history is certainly the discipline to which I have consecrated by far the most man hours to date, I began my university formation as a student of economics and questions of an economic nature are still those that compel me most. Sadly, I found scant little space within the formal field of economics to work on questions of a critical nature and history has proven a most hospitable surrogate.

Nowhere in this thesis will impenetrable economic jargon be presented, though several key concepts will be inevitably treated. This thesis will not furnish heretofore untreated archival documents to radically change the understanding of the Soviet Union or the First French Empire. Rather, it will attempt to juxtapose their economic experiences in such a way as to think about their shared challenge in a somewhat novel way. This is the modest goal of the present work.

Altogether, I feel that this work may be better described as belonging to the field of political economy with important historical dimensions. Unfortunately, the term remains basically inoperative in the contemporary academic environment or vulgarized to refer simply to mathematical economic questions wherein government activity, taxation or international trade, forms part.

In the end, perhaps best to not spend too much time worrying about labels.

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Introduction

This thesis is a comparison of the interaction between revolutionary war and macroeconomic decision making in the First French Republic and Empire with the Soviet Union. Specifically, we will be looking at the economic regime of the Napoleonic Continental System, which lasted formally from 1806-1814, alongside the earliest economic efforts of the Soviet Union broadly referred to as “War Communism” beginning in 1917 until the establishment of the NEP in 1921.

What are the motivations for this research? What will this comparison contribute exactly, beyond yet another addition to the centenary literature on the Russian Revolution? Speaking broadly, this thesis is motivated in part by a few historiographical absences. First, there has been little to no effort made to compare the Lenin years of the Soviet Union with the Napoleon years of the French Revolution save for broad, panoramic coverage of centuries of revolution.¹ The two periods merit comparison based on several important similarities but most important of all the shared challenge of formulating and implementing a novel economic system amidst the pressures of a wartime environment.

Linked to this motivation is the fact that while there are important similarities between the two periods and the two regimes, there are enormous differences in rhetoric and general orientation. One regime actively promoted bureaucracy while the other railed against it viciously. One regime waged an international war that extended across Europe while the other fought a Civil War principally within its own territory. Not to mention the fact that the Bolsheviks explicitly referred to Bonapartism as the worst-case scenario for the development of their revolution (save perhaps their overthrow and mass arrest/execution) and Trotsky’s appearance as

¹ For example: Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1993).

the likely Bonaparte candidate was an important element to his undoing.² Importantly, as this thesis will hopefully demonstrate, despite these many differences, the economic programs of the regimes encountered many of the same pitfalls and developed similar governing logics. Explaining this unlikely convergence is important. The Soviet economic project has been explained as the manifestation of Socialist/Bolshevik ideology into policy, thus, unique.³ Comparing the Soviet experiment with a revolutionary antecedent may help to explain some structural phenomenon related to the implementation of new political and economic regimes within the context of revolutionary war in general.

The second principal motivation is that notable historians and commentators of both the Soviet Union and the First French Republic & Empire have called for a renewal of interest and research into economic matters given the general neglect of the past thirty years. In a co-written article for *Kritika* in 2014, Oscar Sanchez-Sibony and Andrew Sloin made such a call.⁴ Anna Krylova echoed their concern in another journal more recently.⁵ Concerning the French case, Pierre Branda has made a call for new researchers in a number of his works.⁶

2017 is an auspicious time to be writing about the Russian Revolution. There indeed has been no better time since 1989 with the bicentenary of the French Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union. From the very moment the Bolsheviks seized power, and indeed before, the

² Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy : The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998). 593.

³ This is universally the case amongst authors who are at least somewhat sympathetic to the Bolshevik cause as in E.H. Carr's *The Bolshevik Revolution* or Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Russian Revolution*. Even detractors like Richard Pipes' *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* or Orlando Figes' *A People's Tragedy*, while making allusions to historical instances that caused equivalent suffering to the Bolshevik Revolution, do not question the unique and new character of the Soviet Union and Communism in general.

⁴ Andrew Sloin and Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, "Economy and Power in the Soviet Union, 1917–39," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15, no. 1 (2014).

⁵ Anna Krylova and Elena Osokina, "Introduction: The Economic Turn and Modern Russian History," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 43, no. 3 (2016).

⁶ Pierre Branda, *Le Prix De La Gloire : Napoléon Et L'argent* (Paris: Fayard, 2007). Introduction.

narrative was constructed both by the Bolsheviks themselves and observers, linking the two revolutions together.⁷

In the classical Marxist tradition, the two revolutions represented the two epoch-marking events of the modern world. The French Revolution, as a bourgeois revolution, put an end to Feudalism in France and represented the death knell of feudal relations in Europe and the world over. The Russian Revolution was the first important socialist revolution in the world, ended capitalist relations in Russia and was to, sooner or later, be repeated the world over until socialist revolutions had replaced the international capitalist order with a socialist one.

The Russian Revolution's international progress only continued in fits and starts throughout the world. Many, including Stalin and Soviet government itself, became less bullish on the idea that the Russian Revolution meant the certain doom of global capitalism, at least in the rapid timeframe imagined in the early twenties. Socialism in One Country was this feeling made manifest. Nonetheless, historiographical treatments of the two subjects still tended to operate in this same mode. The two revolutions represented like forces in history, to be opposed to conservative or reactionary moments like the Congress of Vienna, the pan-European crackdown after the failed 1848 revolutions, the British intervention in Greece at the end of the Second World War, or the Pinochet coup in Chile. For many scholars and observers, they were considered as positive events worthy of praise despite certain problematic elements.⁸

The apex of this historiographical tendency came in the 1960's with the rise of historical sociology and the popularization of social history more generally. Barrington Moore Jr.'s seminal, but now sadly neglected work, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* inspired

⁷ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "War and Revolution," in *Collected Works* (1964). 398-420.

⁸ E.H. Carr and Maurice Dobb are the two scholarly voices most emblematic of this approach before the 1960's relating to the Soviet case. Regarding the French Revolution, it is practically impossible to find works that are on the whole critical of the legacy of the French Revolution in the first half of the twentieth century.

a generation of historians to engage in large scale, comparative historical analysis.⁹ In this full-fledged subdiscipline of historical study the number and choice of cases varied widely but it was practically taken for given that Russia and France would form part of the analysis; to neglect them would be to ignore the most important, salient, and distinct moments of historical change.

1989 presented an opportunity to change this narrative; critical voices of revolutions became dominant. Francis Fukuyama famously pronounced the end of history after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, mirroring, ironically, Marxist logic. The Revolutions of 1989 ended the process of experimentation in social organization; liberal capitalism and parliamentary democracy had won the war of thousands of years of ideas and there was no sense to question it any further.¹⁰ Martin Malia went even further.

There is no such thing as socialism, and the Soviet Union built it. Thus, when a disastrously noncompetitive economic performance at last made this paradox apparent, the institutionalized fantasy of ‘really existing’ Marxism vanished into thin air. The ‘surreality’ of Sovietism suddenly ceased, and Russia awoke as from a bad dream amidst the rubble of a now septuagenarian disaster.¹¹

François Furet proposed a radical revision of historiographic tendencies in France and abroad. Once a member of the French Communist Party and a supporter of the structural historians of the *Annales* school, Furet underwent a conservative conversion and condemned the violent tendencies and state driven terror of the French Revolution which he claimed were inherent in the revolutionary act itself.¹² Such an attitude does not make him unique, Richard

⁹ Foremost among the works directly inspired by Moore that dealt with the Russian and French Revolutions is Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions : A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992). 39-55.

¹¹ Martin E. Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy : A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994). 497.

¹² Furet would broach the subject frequently but the landmark work is : François Furet, *Penser La Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

Pipes had said just the same of the Russian Revolution throughout the Cold War.¹³ But, 1989 gave Furet a chance to provide a unifying condemnation of the Russian and the French Revolutions.

Previous historians had claimed, explicitly or tacitly, that the French Revolution represented a major instance of historical progress, advancing the cause of the Enlightenment and the development of human reason, and the Russian Revolution had done much the same. Furet wished to turn this logic on its head. What these two moments in history signified to Furet, were idealism, adventurism, instability, and meaningless bloodshed. 1789 inaugurated a two-hundred-year period of wasted revolutionary politicking which the events of 1989 happily bookended. Politics as usual could resume.¹⁴

Now, almost twenty years later, most are justifiably dubious of this conclusion as a result of various destabilizing political events and a general state of economic malaise and uncertainty since 2008. Commensurately, the state of historiography is similarly muddled. In 2017, the general attitude in treating the Russian Revolution is one of extreme hesitation and uncertainty ironically paired with the collective understanding that the events of 1917 must be reckoned with due to the confluence of dates. The French and Russian Revolutions no longer seem as unbreakable a pair; 2017 sees the Russian Revolution being discussed in isolation, primarily. Numerous scholars on the subject have remarked on this unusual state of affairs and described the prevailing stance towards the Russian Revolution as *silence*.¹⁵ The most convincing, though general, diagnosis of this situation was furnished by Stephen A. Smith who suggests that while

¹³ Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). See especially the chapters on Lenin's Personality, pp. 348-353 and on the Bolshevik "coup" pp. 501-504.

¹⁴ François Furet, *Le Passé D'une Illusion, Essai Sur L'idée Communiste Au 20e Siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995).

¹⁵ See the 2015 Fall edition (16:4) of *Kritika* for the various ways in which authors have understood this silence.

we undoubtedly know more today than we ever have about the Russian Revolution, we are less capable than ever of *understanding* it.¹⁶

Motivation and Historiographic Context

Before delving into the details of this work it is necessary to complicate one step further the historiographical tradition of comparative study of the French and Russian Revolutions. The tendency to compare the revolutions has remained almost a constant for a century while the analyses and insights drawn have changed with the times. But which specific actors and sub-periods have generally been the precise subject? Of course, the corpus of a hundred years is enormous and can only be superficially treated here, but the following broad categories can be issued.¹⁷

First, the sympathetic case presenting an optimistic and virtuous revolutionary period gradually co-opted and put to end by a dictator; 1789-1794 encompassing various pre-Thermidorian figures of Abbé Sieyès, Georges Danton and Maximillien Robespierre in the French case corresponding to 1917-1924 and Lenin and his circle in the Russian case. The figures of Napoleon and Stalin represent the end of revolutionary idealism and utopian goals.

Second, the antipathic case wherein the revolutionary impulse is in itself negative and violent and is to be contrasted with the stable, comparatively happy times before and after the revolutionary period. The French case may be considered from 1789 until 1815 with the fall of Napoleon, or as Furet does, until 1989 with the apparent death of the socialist spirit, the

¹⁶ Stephen A. Smith, "The Historiography of the Russian Revolution 100 Years On," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 4 (2015). 733.

¹⁷ For a contemporary discussion of the state of affairs, see : Sheila Fitzpatrick, "What's Left?," *London Review of Books* 39, no. 7 (2017).

compromises of François Mitterand, etc.¹⁸ The Russian case is generally clearer cut; 1917-1989/1991.¹⁹ Variations within include the structuralist tendency to dismiss the revolutionary periods as not having actually brought with them any *real* revolutionary change. There is also the habit of tracing the commonalities between the cabal of bloodthirsty dictators in history, linking Robespierre, Napoleon, Lenin, and Stalin all together, sometimes alongside figures like Hitler or Genghis Khan. Again, these periodizations are quite general, but they serve to situate the present thesis within the existing trends of Franco-Russian comparative studies.²⁰

A survey of recent literature sees the state of economic historical literature of France in a better state than the Soviet Union. Partially, this is a result of Pierre Branda's diligent work as independent author and as the compiler of edited volumes. Of course, the fact that the First French Republic & Empire have been historical entities for over two hundred years alongside constant and complete archival access has allotted more time and space for thorough studies. Indeed, François Crouzet's 1958 thesis on the Continental System is still considered by most to be the gold standard of economic analysis of Napoleonic France.²¹ Nevertheless, a number of recent works have served to add more pieces to the mosaic. While more economic analysis of this period of history is certainly merited, as Pierre Branda has stated, contemporary authors like Silvia

¹⁸ Furet, *Le Passé D'une Illusion, Essai Sur L'idée Communiste Au 20e Siècle*. Particularly Chapter's 11, 12 and the Epilogue.

¹⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Fitzpatrick explores the question of periodizing the Russian Revolution in her introduction, the introduction to the upcoming 4th edition explores the question even further. Generally speaking, there is a tendency among historians to perpetually date the Russian Revolution's beginning ever further in the past.

²⁰ For further reading, there are two interesting essay collections exploring this topic. A. J. P. Taylor, *From Napoleon to Lenin* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966). & Edward Hallett Carr, *From Napoleon to Stalin, and Other Essays* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

²¹ François Crouzet, *L'économie Britannique Et Le Blocus Continental, 1806-1813* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1958).

Marzagalli, Katherine Aaslestad, and Johan Joor are ensuring that the subject is not neglected entirely.²²

The state of affairs in Soviet economic historiography is less encouraging. Like most fields of history, studies of a cultural nature have dominated the field going on decades. Doubtless, dozens of remarkable works under this aegis have been produced. However, a side effect has been to leave the field of study quite uneven. The most important works covering this specific period of the Soviet economy are thirty years old at their youngest. Silvana Malle²³ and Alec Nove²⁴ have produced hallmark works that will remain an important reference for anyone interested in the subject of War Communism, but they are becoming dated. That the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of Soviet archives did not produce more interest in thoroughly studying and revisiting the history of the Soviet economy is somewhat perplexing and is now a missed opportunity as access to the archives is becoming more and more restricted.²⁵

Economic analysis of the Soviet Union has been largely left to the discipline of formal economics whose take has been, broadly speaking, ahistorical, and highly politicized. Such analyses inevitably begin with the *a priori* assertion that the Soviet economy was an empirical disaster and basically doomed to failure because of its theoretical foundations. This has become the generally accepted popular narrative, following in the vein of Fukuyama and Malia's

²² Silvia Marzagalli, *Les Boulevards De La Fraude. Le Négoce Maritime Et Le Blocus Continental, 1806-1813*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2000). Katherine Aaslestad, "Paying for War: Experiences of Napoleonic Rule in the Hanseatic Cities," *Central European History* 39, no. 4 (2006). Johan Joor, "Les Pays-Bas Contre L'impérialisme Napoléonien. Les Soulèvements Anti-Français Entre 1806 Et 1813.," *Annales historiques de la révolution Française*, no. 326 (2001).

²³ Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁴ Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the Ussr, 1917-1991*, New and Final ed. (London, England: Penguin Books, 1992).

²⁵ Sloin and Sanchez-Sibony. "Economy and Power." 7-8.

critiques. This thesis will attempt to look at the Soviet economic project, and revolutionary economies in general, without such a pejorative and teleological lens.

Methodology and Purpose

A comparative work, more than monographic historical works, requires a thorough explanation of its methodology as the tool of comparison may be used with the same cases to fulfill similar purposes. Comparative history remains a relatively niche endeavor in the broad scope of history writing but it has been enjoying a resurgence in popularity, thanks in large part to the efforts of *Sozialgeschichte*.

Comparative history has been practiced since antiquity. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* is the earliest and probably best-known exemplar; dueling biographies of important figures of Ancient Greece and Rome. Broad, sweeping historical comparison colours the works of important figures in the history of social sciences including Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Marx, and Weber. The interest in accounting for social change has been important even to authors like Leopold von Ranke who emphasized the rigorous study of a single subject without recourse to *a priori* theories.²⁶ Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the French *Annale* school of historiography that emphasized structural forces and *longue durée* periodization, saw accounting for social change as the principal purpose of history and the tool of comparison could be useful in doing so.²⁷

Bloch's conception of historical comparison was quite circumscribed. He disavowed diachronic comparison for example. The use of comparison in history would grow in the first half

²⁶ For a historical overview of important figures and methods, see: Thomas Welskopp, "Comparative History," (2010), <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/welskoppt-2010-en>.

²⁷ William H. Sewell, "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History," *History and Theory* 6, no. 2 (1967). 208-218. Bloch's principal interest in comparison being hypothesis testing. A given phenomenon and its causes can be subjected to testing against another historical case that may prove or disprove the hypothesis' validity.

of the 20th century. Arnold Toynbee's sweeping international histories characteristic of this period and its style.²⁸ Historical sociology was the last great movement in comparative history, showcased by the comparative works of Barrington Moore²⁹ and Theda Skocpol.³⁰ Comparative history focusing on large-scale phenomena, macroeconomic subjects of course included, fell out of the limelight by the 1980's.

Two methodological works form the basis of the comparative effort made in this thesis. The first is Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt's edited volume *Comparative and Transnational History* provides a thorough and up-to-date survey of the different historical articulations of comparative theory.³¹ This work was chosen as it reflects the most recent scholarly consensus on the possibilities of historical comparison. The authors' co-written introductory chapter outlines the framework and virtues of modern comparative historical study. Comparative history writing today, according to the authors, can take on a multitude of forms. No comparison is immediately invalidated by its choice of subject. The objective must be clearly stated and the parameters be logically chosen and convincing.³²

According to Kocka and Haupt, comparison is a worthwhile pursuit for four principal reasons. Heuristically, it opens the field of study and allows historians to find new problems. Descriptively, it serves the rhetorical purpose of adding clarity, providing reference and analogy,

²⁸ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957). The history of the world is dominated by large, structural forces that operate in a cyclical manner and shift power dynamics of civilizations over time.

²⁹ Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy : Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 1991). Moore sees three paths to modernity, Capitalism, Fascism, and Communism. Revolution is an interior force that can lead to any result and conditions the nature and violence of a given society.

³⁰ Skocpol. *States and Social Revolutions*. The French, Russian, and Chinese Revolutions all functioned similarly due to the structural nature of revolutionary behavior.

³¹ Jürgen Kocka and Heinz Haupt, eds., *Comparative and Transnational History : Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

³² Kocka and Haupt, "Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History," in *Comparative and Transnational History : Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Heinz Haupt (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009). 20.

as well as additional context for a given study. Analytically, comparison serves to challenge traditional narratives, verisimilitudes, and clichés by subjecting existing arguments and understandings to new material. Paradigmatically, it helps to “de-familiarize the familiar.” Further, they claim, diachronic comparison is particularly useful to demonstrate how different societies have approached a similar problem or engaged with a certain phenomenon; while often neglected, even by historians who engage with historical comparison, Kocka and Haupt see diachronic comparison as very promising and encourage historians to pursue it further as it provides a whole new array of subjects for hypothesis testing, to return to the language of Bloch.³³

This approach allows two key axioms to be challenged. First, to avoid reading the Soviet economic project as *sui generis* Soviet; unique by virtue of being the first attempt to make socialist ideas manifest. Rather, the focus will be on the Soviet project as simply a revolutionary regime, thus allowing comparison with historical antecedents. Second, to challenge the conventional characterization of the Napoleonic period and the Lenin period as conservative and progressive moments, respectively. Abstracting from the ideological distance of the two regimes will allow greater focus on environmental and structural similarities.

The diachronic comparison of this thesis, the Continental System of Napoleonic France with the War Communism of the Soviet Union has two aims. First, drawing on one purpose of comparison outlined by Kocka and Haupt, the diachronic comparison will be used to subject the early Soviet economic experience to new light. The Soviet case is generally assumed to be a thoroughly novel and unique case at its time. Through diachronic comparison with a historic case that displayed certain similarities but also major differences, particularly at an ideological level, the nature of Soviet uniqueness will be questioned. The French and Russian Revolutions,

³³ Ibid. 3-4, 17.

alongside the figures of Napoleon and Lenin, are subjects that practically everyone knows and has a certain opinion about, both in factual and in normative terms.³⁴ It is important to defamiliarize them if they are to be recategorized or reconceptualized.

The second aim, which betrays to a certain degree the conclusion of the first, takes on another of Kocka's postulates for comparison: comparing the interaction of two distinct societies to a similar problem. In this case, examining the Continental System and War Communism, a challenge to the dominant international economic order and an attempt to construct not only an alternative, but a replacement to it under the pressures of a wartime environment.

The second work that has informed the methodology of this thesis is Charles Tilly's 1989 publication *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. Tilly, who was a student of Barrington Moore Jr. and an important author of historical sociology echoes the sentiment that historical studies must account for social change. Tilly's work was chosen for its explicit interest in dealing with expansive comparisons and for the clarity with which distinguishes different comparative goals. While convinced that comparative studies are integral to fulfilling this purpose, he is acutely aware of the problematic tendencies that have plagued comparative studies of the 19th and 20th centuries and driven many historians away. He lists a number of "pernicious postulates," which, broadly speaking, reflect tendencies to create simple binaries, tackle a subject with too much *a priori* baggage, and to be generally too dogmatic.³⁵

Tilly categorizes four categories of comparative studies, though he accepts the idea that they necessarily interact. First are individualizing comparisons which compare different units in

³⁴ Furet once claimed that it was *impossible* for the historian to even engage in either subject without first declaring oneself a Jacobin or a Royalist, a Bolshevik or a Menshevik, a Red or a White.

³⁵ Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, Russell Sage Foundation 75th Anniversary Series (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984). 11.

order to highlight their differences and uniqueness. Tilly cites the works of Reinhard Bendix on industrial society and government structures as an exemplar of this type of comparison.

Second are universalizing comparisons which compare different units with a unifying category or categories that highlight their similarities. Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* is the prototypical example of this comparison; a clear methodological framework and definition of "social revolution" is laid out and the three cases of France, Russia, and China are examined as examples with certain variations of this general phenomenon.

Third are variation-finding comparisons which have much in common with universalizing comparisons but partially invert the cart and the horse. A broad category or process is established, case studies are examined, and fractured variations of the original theme are codified after the analysis. Barrington Moore's *Democracy and Dictatorship* is the chief oeuvre in this vein. Moore investigates the process of modernization from feudalism. In looking at the cases of England, France, the United States, China, Japan, and India, Moore crystallizes the three forms of possible transition to modernity; Capitalism, Fascism, and Communism.

Fourth, there are encompassing comparisons that establish categories of analysis and situate different cases as component pieces of a whole. Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory represents this style; global capitalism is described as a system wherein the cases of various countries and regions of the world fit into the system as primary, secondary, or tertiary members based on their wealth, industrial base, military power, and other categories. The four categories may blend and intersect of course.³⁶

This thesis has elements of universalizing and variation-finding comparison. The comparison is universalizing insofar as the Napoleonic Continental System and Soviet War

³⁶ Ibid. 40-68.

Communism represent a similar phenomenon; revolutionary economic regimes at war. The comparison is also variation-finding as it postulates the two regimes as, respectively, the last Mercantilist challenge to Capitalism with the first Socialist one, and compares them along these lines.

This thesis will comprise three principal chapters. The first will outline the intellectual and ideological atmosphere of the respective periods with special attention given to the conception and understanding of economic theory at the time. The thesis begins by charting the understanding of economic issues of the two leaders of the respective periods, Napoleon and Lenin, so that the nature of their behavior once in power can be more coherently grasped and explained. In the second chapter, the specific historic periods will be entered and the political and military contexts established before describing the formulation and specific content of the economic regimes, as the geopolitical context informed the economic decision-making and vice-versa. In the third, the actual implementation and lived experience of the regimes will be explored, the successes and failures weighed, and their ultimate collapses treated. The cases will be presented independently, as parallel lives, for the descriptive historical treatment and the chapters will conclude with preliminary attempts at comparative conclusions before the final, summative conclusions are presented.

As a comparative work, there are several limitations to the conclusions that can be reached. Indeed, these limitations form part of the reason Kocka and Haupt believe historians have generally eschewed engaging in comparative studies; greater abstraction is required, certain elements need to be neglected in favour of others, and there is a necessarily greater reliance on secondary literature.³⁷ In this thesis, the variety and richness of thought amongst Napoleon and

³⁷ Kocka and Haupt, *Comparative and Transnational History : Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*. 15-17.

his counselors and within the Bolshevik party cannot be explored in depth and a more unified picture of the regimes decision making is presented. Additionally, the national question, which would nuance the imperial picture of each period has been generally abstracted from for space reasons. There is also a wide variety of theoretical literature in political economy that could expand the sociological character of this thesis, but this too would require more space than is presently available.

Nevertheless, the following conclusions may be ventured. First that the early Soviet regime's economic efforts displayed remarkable structural similarity to the mercantilist effort of the First French Empire. Second, while certain successes were known and cooperation not necessarily uncommon, despite the way in which each regime presented their economic agenda as a moral mission to the ultimate benefit of the economic actors it targeted, coercion became the fundamental means by which the programs were enforced. Third, and even in light of the preceding conclusion, while both regimes knew considerable economic difficulties, neither was doomed inherently but rather overthrown from forces without, meaning that it is possible to imagine a timeline wherein these systems perpetuated. This thesis will hopefully highlight some of the historic challenges and unanticipated outcomes that have arisen in two of the most notable attempts to carry out such a project.

1 **Chapter One: Preceding Regimes & Economic Theory, 1600-1798, 1815-1917**

Before entering in to the details of concrete political activity, of practical concerns, the forming of bureaus, committees, and agencies, it is essential to understand what the broad social understanding (at least amongst those in the position to articulate and implement policy) was about the nature of economic organization and of “economic theory.” We will begin by looking at the general world of ideas before looking at the ideas and conceptions of our principal actors: Napoleon and Lenin. Such a reduction is obviously overly simple, particularly in the Bolshevik case where diversity of ideas and genuine debate was commonplace is the late 1910’s and early 1920’s. Nevertheless, it was very rare during their time in power that their policy preferences were sidelined in favour of others’. Thus, this abstracted perspective does not fundamentally mischaracterize either period.

1.1 **France**

Speaking about the state of economic theory in the Napoleonic period is a more daunting task than the early Soviet period. While economists have retroactively anointed the publication of Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* the dawn of modern economic theory³⁸, its contemporary impact was not so immediate, nor rapid in its global expansion. Ironically unified, economic theorists and Marxists would both look at 18th century France and the events of the French Revolution as milestones in the development of modern capitalism. While the term “bourgeois revolution” may capture some of the transformative processes brought by the French Revolution, it is of critical importance to recall the analyses of Alexis de Tocqueville and of Barrington Moore Jr. and note that capitalist economic practices were slow to take root in France and did not erupt

³⁸ For a classic example, see : Robert L. Heilbroner, *Worldly Philosophers : The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*, 6th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991). 13-18.

suddenly with the French Revolution and subsequent transformations under Napoleon; even at the end of the 19th century largely unreformed practices from the 18th and 17th centuries were widespread in France.^{39 40}

But of course, there was a period that came before. France of the 18th century was in a period of debate and upheaval in the world of economic theory. Though Great Britain would become the centre of economic thought by the end of the 18th century and would come to dominate international commerce after Waterloo, France had been an important site for economic thinking in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴¹ The French Physiocrats, François Quesnay and Robert Turgot emphasized the importance of productive work, specifically that of agriculture, in creating a strong, national economy and were referred to in their day as *les économistes*, such was their sway in the budding field.⁴² Contemporaneously on the European Continent, notably in the German states and Scandinavia, Cameralism (*Kameralwissenschaft*), emerged as a parallel effort to formalize a discipline charged with the management of state finances and the national economy.

Feudalism is the catch all term preferred by many commentators to describe pre-capitalist economic organization in Europe. The term, like most catch all terms, especially ones for which Marxists have an affinity, has been subject to a high degree of scrutiny in recent years leading many to question whether or not feudalism really existed.⁴³ The term is still useful but works best

³⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien Régime Et La Révolution*, Revised ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1996). Tocqueville's famous study basically suggests that the French Revolution did little to change the structure of France. Economic and social patterns continued in the 19th century roughly how they had in the 18th. His analysis would prove influential in the later structural histories furnished by the *Annales* school.

⁴⁰ Moore Jr. *Social Origins*. Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Jean-Marc Daniel, «Mutations de la pensée économique sous le consulat et l'empire » in : Pierre Branda, ed. *L'économie Selon Napoléon: Monnaie, Banque, Crises, Et Commerce Sous Le Premier Empire* (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016). 17-34.

⁴² R.E. Baxter George Bannock, and Evan Davis, *The Penguin Dictionary of Economics*, 5th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1992). 329.

⁴³ For example, see : Michael H. Gelting Sverre Bagge, Thomas Lindkvist, ed. *Feudalism : New Landscapes of Debate* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

to describe local and regional economic relations where institutions like seigneurial dues and the *corvée* represented the principal forms of exchange and guilds controlled the movement and allocation of labour. However, the term fails to adequately explain the economic role of the state which is especially problematic by the 17th century as European states began to centralize and pursue singular economic goals.⁴⁴

The term that will serve us best in creating a picture of the world of economic ideas at the level of state and international trade during this period is mercantilism. The term has assumed a very derogatory connotation, basically denoting a false understanding of value. In Adam Smith's definition, mercantilism is the formula "money is wealth."⁴⁵ The term was coined in 1763 by the Comte de Mirabeau in the *Philosophie Rurale*⁴⁶ but only vaguely resembles the modern connotation of the word.

Adam Smith had made comments about mercantilism as a "rent-seeking society" and Marx made some superficial comments about mercantilism representing an erroneous, pre-analytical mode of economic thinking. But Eli Heckscher, a Swedish economic commentator, who also wrote the first major tract examining the Continental System of the Napoleonic Empire, was the first to fully articulate a general theory of mercantilism as an economic system.

Despite his proclivity towards history generally speaking (he wrote many historical works,) he officially disavowed viewing mercantilism through a historical prism. He was

⁴⁴ A process for which Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister of France under Louis XIV is an exemplar. Apocryphal and unverifiable as they may be, Colbert's own remarks on the economic objectives and general atmosphere of the Ministry of Finance under Louis XIV paint an illustrative picture of the worldview of the time. See: Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Testament Politique De Messire Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Ministre Et Secrétaire D'état, Où L'on Voit Tout Ce Qui S'est Passé Sous Le Règne De Louis Le Grand Jusqu'en L'année 1684 ; Avec Des Remarques Sur Le Gouvernement Du Royaume* (The Hague: H. Van Bulderen, 1694).

⁴⁵ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Book I, Chapter XI, Part II.

⁴⁶ Victor Riquet Mirabeau, *Philosophie Rurale, Ou Économie Générale Et Pratique De L'agriculture*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Chez les librairies associés, 1763).

explicitly against the idea of economic history as he believed there was a historical turning point when men began to understand economics; mercantilism was from a period when men were simply confused.⁴⁷ His approach earned his analysis the criticism of eminent thinkers including Marc Bloch and the classical economist Alfred Marshall.⁴⁸ Heckscher's encompassing description of mercantilism has been summed as follows

Practically all mercantilists...would have subscribed to all of the following propositions: (1) wealth is an absolutely essential means to power, whether for security or for aggression; (2) power is essential or valuable as a means for the acquisition or retention of wealth; (3) wealth and power are each proper ultimate ends of national policy; (4) there is a long run harmony between these ends.⁴⁹

John Maynard Keynes would challenge Heckscher's approach while generally accepting his systematic definitions. Keynes analysis was inspired, ironically, by the same motivation that would inspire E.P. Thompson half a century later: to rescue the economic thinkers of the past from the judgement of posterity. Keynes was of course a committed and dedicated capitalist, despite the accusations he faced as a "fellow traveler" with Marxists,⁵⁰ but he was not ready to condemn pre-capitalist thinkers as simple cranks.

In defining mercantilism, Keynes emphasized the following:

[M]easures to increase the favourable balance of trade were the only *direct* means at their disposal for increasing foreign investments; and at the same time, the effect of a favourable balance of trade on the influx of the domestic rate of interest and so increasing the inducement to home investment.⁵¹

In effect, Keynes was approaching two fundamental characteristics. First, that a key element of mercantilist thinking was to spur domestic investment. Basically, state-building by economic

⁴⁷ Eli F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1994). Heckscher's language is deeply polemic and he makes his disdain for pre-Capitalist thinkers clear from the introduction onward.

⁴⁸ Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism : The Shaping of an Economic Language* (London: Routledge, 1994). 23-37.

⁴⁹ Jacob Viner on the thought of Eli Heckscher, cited in: *ibid.* 24.

⁵⁰ Heilbroner. *The Worldly Philosophers*. 249.

⁵¹ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London: Macmillan, Cambridge University Press for the Royal Economic Society, 1973). Chapter 23.

means. Second, that international trade and investment was a zero-sum game, the gains of one state necessarily came at the expense of another. Economics as understood at the time, was inseparable from politics and by extension, war.

Joseph Schumpeter, one of the most penetrating economic thinkers, tackled the mercantilist question. Schumpeter, unlike most of his contemporaries, distinguished between economic analysis, the task of formal economic sciences, and economic vision, the broader understanding of the economic goals of a given society subjected to study. Based on this distinction, Schumpeter considered it foolish to reduce mercantilism to its economic dimensions as Keynes and especially Heckscher had done to avoid reading history backwards.⁵²

Schumpeter also emphasized the fact that not only was mercantilism an incomplete and incoherent theory in the 17th and 18th centuries but consequently it was fluid, unlike the static definitions provided by the two aforementioned authors. Rather, Schumpeter argued, mercantilism was a medley of theory and practice that responded to practical problems, and was often sensibly done given the historical context of heated international competition and frequent war.⁵³

Lars Magnusson is the principal modern commentator on mercantilism. Magnusson holds Schumpeter in high esteem though he is less willing to accept that non-capitalist economic organizations could have correctly and logically understood economic questions. Magnusson emphasizes the fractured nature of economic thinking in the 16th and 17th centuries referring to mercantilism as a complex web of discourses that gradually gained coherence by the 18th century.⁵⁴ No singular definition perfectly captures all aspects of mercantilist thinking, but it

⁵² Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1994). 361.

⁵³ Ibid. 143.

⁵⁴ Magnusson. *Mercantilism*. 9.

suffices to note that economic thinking in 18th century France was strongly influenced by the rationales explored above.

Returning to the immediate context of 18th century France, we see a period of contested ideas and transforming understanding. Though incomplete and nebulous as Schumpeter and Magnusson have articulated, a conception of national economics existed in France by the mid-18th century embodying the mercantilist spirit outlined above. By the reign of Louis XV however, nascent English conceptions of liberal economics were challenging previously held conceptions and became gradually popular amongst certain policy makers. This early thrust would culminate in 1768 with the establishment of a formal free trade agreement between France and Great Britain, coming on the heels of the Seven Years' War and the loss of New France.⁵⁵

Though largely celebrated initially, the treaty would become rapidly unpopular in France. It was clear to virtually all observers that the deal was not only creating an unbalanced level of trade that favoured England, still viewed by many as problematic in and of itself at the time, but also for privileging the development of English industry while France was being pushed into the role of a low value-added exporter.⁵⁶ This atmosphere stoked anti-English sentiment, integrating its financial caprice into the hostile narrative, but also provoked the formation of alternative economic schemas which broadly reflected a desire to create a properly national economic system wherein political control could be exerted and thus circumvent English domination.⁵⁷ The outbreak of the French Revolution and the rapid political and economic isolation from the rest of Europe would make the formulation of such a system a question of life and death.

⁵⁵ Jean-Marc Daniel, "Mutations De La Pensée Économique Sous Le Consulat Et L'empire," in *L'économie Selon Napoléon*, ed. Pierre Branda (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016). 17-34.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Francis Démier, "Finance Napoléonienne Et Capitalisme Anglais, L'impossible Compromis," in *L'économie Selon Napoléon*, ed. Pierre Branda (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016). 139-156.

Despite the dire circumstances in which the First French Republic was born, a tenuous level of international stability would be found after surprising military victories over Austria and Prussia in the fall of 1792. International stability would contrast starkly with the domestic political situation, the execution of the king, the great terror, and the fall of Robespierre. While the political chaos of the Revolution is well known, a commensurate level of economic chaos accompanied it and is often overlooked.

Trade with England had not completely ceased but a significant tariff barrier established by both countries and an official state of hostilities significantly reduced the flow of trade between the two nations. Additionally, English naval supremacy and the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue reduced French colonial imports to almost nothing.⁵⁸

International trade had become problematic but domestic production was sufficient to avoid full-fledged crisis in the hexagon. The real killer was financial and monetary policy under the revolutionary regimes. Prior to the Revolution, money in France was denoted and minted in gold and silver. In 1789, the National Assembly elected to replace, as much as it could, gold and silver currency with a fiat currency called the *assignat*. The currency's value was tenuously backed with land guarantees and rapidly saw popular confidence in the currency decline.⁵⁹ The currency reached a state of hyperinflation by 1796. The Directory, a five-man executive panel that replaced the Committee of Public Safety after Thermidor and the fall of Robespierre, attempted to stabilize the currency by replacing it with a consolidated currency called the *mandat*. Within a year, it would also suffer hyperinflation. By 1797, French finances were in a state of ruin; state coffers were basically empty and surviving on loans, popular savings were basically

⁵⁸ Branda, *Le Prix De La Gloire : Napoléon Et L'argent*. Part Three, Chapter XVII, Section 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Part Two, Chapter XII, Section 3.

annihilated, and the armies generally went unpaid.⁶⁰ Francois Furet provides an illustrative picture. “Despite the terror, despite the crackdown on criminals, the business of directing the national economy by the state, all across various requisitions and controls, gradually moved towards a generalization of fraud among all classes of the population.”⁶¹

This was the environment that shaped Napoleon. In the words of Pierre Branda “the public finances of the *Ancien Regime* and the Revolution were not only an inheritance for Napoleon but also, examples to avoid, and above all, one of the keys to his destiny.”⁶² Though no great economic theorist like Lenin would be, economics fascinated with Napoleon and, according to some, was the subject to which Napoleon gave the most attention after military affairs.⁶³

The disastrous financial and monetary policies of the Committee of Public Safety and especially the Directory left a substantial mark on Napoleon’s thinking. Perhaps to his detriment, the basic units and approaches of the French Republic became phobias to Napoleon.⁶⁴ Napoleon’s memoirs and correspondence are dubious sources; his aphorisms stand out like false gold to the historian who can find some statement somewhere to prove Napoleon felt one way or another about a certain subject.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that he viewed fiat currencies as inherently problematic before he became a statesman from his words as well as his actions. He increased the organization of his military command in Italy by paying them in gold and silver and acted

⁶⁰ Alain Pigeard, “Des Soldes De Misère?,” in *L’économie Selon Napoléon*, ed. Pierre Branda (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016). 101-108.

⁶¹ Furet, *Penser La Révolution Française*. Cited in Branda, *Le Prix de la Gloire*. 125. « Malgré la terreur, malgré la chasse aux accapteurs, l’entreprise de direction de l’économie nationale par l’État, à travers diverses réquisitions et contrôles, se heurte à peu près partout à une généralisation de la fraude dans toutes les classes de la population. »

⁶² Branda, *Le Prix De La Gloire : Napoléon Et L’argent*. 103. « Les finances publiques de l’Ancien Régime et de la Révolution ne furent donc pas seulement pour Napoléon un héritage, mais également des exemples à ne pas suivre et, surtout, une des clefs de sa destinée. »

⁶³ François Villeroy de Galhau, “Introduction” to *L’économie Selon Napoléon: Monnaie, Banque, Crises, Et Commerce Sous Le Premier Empire*. 1-15.

⁶⁴ Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (New York: New American Library, 1963). 156-157.

⁶⁵ This analogy is used frequently in discussing Napoleon’s memoirs in Anglo-American literature. To my knowledge it was coined by: Stuart J. Woolf, *Napoleon’s Integration of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1991).

aggressively after becoming First Consul to replace the *assignat* and *mandat* with gold-backed currency. Beyond currency, Napoleon was deeply skeptical of contemporary financial tools, especially loans and of merchants as a social class.⁶⁶ In this way, he was a classic mercantilist, gold, a favourable balance of trade, and minimal state debt were economic issues of key importance.

Beyond money and financial instruments, Napoleon did not consider economics in isolation. Rather, economics was inseparable from military and political affairs. Perhaps this reflects a lack of understanding or interest. On the other hand, Napoleon's attitude clearly contains elements of practicality informed by the present situation, any practicable economic regime would be necessarily informed by the wartime atmosphere and built, at least in part, to serve that need.

Following his successful command of the army of Italy in 1797, Napoleon returned to the Directory with a new proposition. He suggested a full-fledged military invasion of Egypt. As a purely military affair, the suggestion was absurd. France was engaged in another massive war on the continent against Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and was in a state of financial desperation to boot. The selling point for the Directory, and Napoleon's motivation was that a successful invasion and establishment of a French military colony in Egypt would provide a viable launch site for a later invasion of India, understood by France and Great Britain alike as the lifeline of British international trade.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Markham. *Napoleon*. 158-159. See also the memoirs of Jean-Antoine Chaptal, minister of the interior under Napoleon and tasked with much of the economic organization of the state. In his recollections he recounts several instances of Napoleon railing against merchants and moneylenders as the scourge of society, somewhat echoing Bolshevik attitudes towards kulaks and the like.

⁶⁷ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966). 206-209.

The invasion met with initial success but ground to a halt as the French army moved into the Levant and was halted entirely when a British fleet under Horatio Nelson destroyed its French counterpart harboured at Aboukir Bay in August 1798. About a year later, having stayed abreast of events in Europe while marooned in Egypt, Napoleon would return to France, hounded all the way by Nelson's fleet, and use his reputation as a man who could bring order and stability to stage the famous coup d'état of 18 Brumaire on November 9th, 1799.⁶⁸ The invasion would ultimately end in failure and British trade in India would remain unthreatened, but it highlighted the fundamental importance Napoleon and others placed on disrupting British trade as early as the 1790's.

The general state of economic theory in France was contentious from the mid-18th century onward. Nascent concepts of free-trade and liberal economics largely originating in Great Britain entered French society and mingled with the web of discourses of the country's mercantilist past. The result was to inspire the formulation of alternative modes of economic organization that became pressing following the revolution and the disastrous policy decisions of the 1790's. Napoleon was very much a child of these times; *à la fois* an old-school thinker who prized many mercantilist traditions and an adaptive synthesizer who incorporated new economic thinking into a broader schema of zero-sum international conflict with Britain as the adversary that was now approaching a winner-takes-all rationale.

1.2 The Soviet Union

The early 20th century presents a much clearer picture than the early 19th century as far as the coherence of economic thought is concerned. Generations of economic thinkers took up

⁶⁸ Ibid. 263.

Adam Smith's writings, expanded upon them and challenged them. By the end of the nineteenth century, in slightly varying forms, Europe and the United States had fully embraced capitalist modes of economic organization. The fusion of industrial production with capitalist organization begot a period of economic dynamism at the state level but widespread discontent at a popular level as traditional forms of social organization were annihilated and black smokestacks blotted the countryside.⁶⁹

Capitalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries possessed a number of specific features beyond the general model which does not require a detailed explanation here. First among these characteristics was part and parcel of the political developments of the period. International free trade had given way in large part, at least among European powers, to a reassertion of colonial interests and proprietary zones of economic and political influence across the globe. Second, capitalist enterprises were beginning to centralize and expand rapidly. Individual firms were merging and forming cartels at a rapid pace, and vertical integration was expanding the size enormously of factories.⁷⁰ Third, and largely in response to the second development, new management sciences were reformulating and honing labour organization. Henry Ford's assembly line innovations at the same time atomized the task of the individual worker and improved the efficiency of the factory. Frederick Winslow Taylor endeavored to apply scientific rationalism to labour organization. In brief, domestic economies under capitalism were becoming increasingly centralized and rationalized while the international scene was characterized by widespread competition and protectionism.

⁶⁹ Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966). Is the classic text on the manner in which traditional rural societies were transformed in the process of capitalist development.

⁷⁰ Malle. *Economic Organization of War Communism*. 38. Malle notes that at the turn of the 20th century, there was practically a consensus in Capitalist theory and in the minds of most Bolsheviks that the centralization of production was a key to efficiency, rather than the promoting of small and medium enterprise.

The Russian economy was notoriously absent from the rapid industrial development that would spread across Europe throughout the 19th century. Towards the end of the century however, beginning under Alexander III and continuing under Nicolas II and directed by Sergei Witte and Piotr Stolypin, a process of rapid economic and industrial development took hold. Factories sprung up in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and the Volga region to process industrial materials that were being produced and extracted at a quickening pace; huge amounts of rail were laid across European Russia to facilitate the requisite flows.⁷¹ A popular trend in contemporary historiography looks at this development through the lens of monarchical nostalgia to show the desirability of Tsarist rule to that of the subsequent revolutionaries,⁷² though it seems evident that the First World War had more to do with Russia's aborted economic development than anything else.

Though such developments may have presented, in embryo, long-term benefit to Russia, the immediate impact, especially given the onset of war in 1914, was more mixed. First, as Russia had incredibly limited financial infrastructure and very little in the way of domestic wealth or savings, practically all of the industrial projects were financed by foreign loans, especially from France.⁷³ Loans that would add to the pressures that would face the revolutionary regimes in 1917.

No less important was the impact the industrialization drive had on the peasant populations of Russia. Russian peasant communities displayed a remarkable resistance to outside

⁷¹ Victoria Bonnell, *The Russian Worker: Life and Labour under the Tsarist Regime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). 1-19.

⁷² Smith. "The Historiography of the Russian Revolution." 744. Perhaps the earliest scholarly work in this vein is: Mikhail Geller and A. M. Nekrich, *Utopia in Power : The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present* (London: Hutchinson, 1986).

⁷³ Smith. Stephen A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). 93.

authority and centralizing initiatives.⁷⁴ The onset of urban industrial life exacerbated the rural urban tension in Russia at the end of the 19th century. While something of a proletarian urban class would develop in Russia, there is also much evidence to suggest that the isolationist tendency of the *mir* grew stronger amidst these developments. Indeed, this was echoed in practice in 1917 as peasant communities across the former Russian Empire withdrew from participation in central government operations altogether, refusing taxes and grain requisitions on a mass scale.⁷⁵

But of course, these structural flaws were of small import compared to the impact the First World War would have on the deterioration of the Russian economy. The Russian Army was the largest mobilized force in the war by number of men.⁷⁶ The Russian army would know certain successes, mostly against Austria and the Ottomans, but was in general outmatched, badly managed, and suffered numerous staggering defeats from the Battle of Tannenberg onwards.

By 1916, the army could scarcely be fed, supplied, or paid and mutinies became widespread. The Provisional Government pledged to maintain the war after the February Revolution and even launched a new offensive at great cost, both financial and flesh. The combination of wartime expenditure, a wrecked industrial base, and, as mentioned above, an increasing resistance from the rural sector to contribute to the national economy left the state's coffers in absolute ruin.⁷⁷ Such was the inheritance of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in October. The important question here is what concrete ideas did they have in mind to address this situation?

⁷⁴ Vladimir L. Tyelitsin, *"Bessmislennii I Besposhadnii?" Fenomen Krest'yanskogo Buntarsva, 1917-1921 Godov.* (Moscow: PIT'Y, 2003). 99-147.

⁷⁵ Christopher Read, *War and Revolution in Russia, 1914-1922* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2013). Read has gone so far as to call the peasant resistance a veritable revolution in its own right; one of a "kaleidoscope of revolutions" that would hit Russia in 1917.

⁷⁶ John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999).

⁷⁷ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 96-100.

Lenin was, of course, an important and prolific socialist theorist and commentator. Speaking about capitalism, Lenin's most important theoretical text was *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Continuing in the Marxist tradition that Capitalism would undermine itself as a result of its own internal contradictions ultimately setting the stage for a proletarian revolution and the establishment of Socialism. Lenin, reacting to the international developments early 20th century capitalism and the onset of the First World War, understood international imperial conflicts to be the culmination of this process.⁷⁸

Lenin also built his theories by taking on his socialist adversaries. Lenin practically made a cottage industry writing tracts and articles criticizing Social Democrats, Mensheviks, and the like for their misunderstanding of Marx and Engels. In his theoretical texts prior to the October Revolution, Lenin makes his position fairly clear his attitude on the question of seizing power and, consequently to a certain degree, the question of political organization.⁷⁹ Largely absent from Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings are comments of an economic nature. How can this be explained given the primacy of economic matters to Bolshevik motivations?

Responding to this question forces us further back in time to the writings of Marx and Engels themselves. Conspicuously, the famous duo wrote very little in the vein of *communist* economic organization. In reading *Capital*, one could attempt to infer a system of economic organization through Marx's criticism of capitalism but such an endeavor would require significant personal interpretation and leave a high degree of flexibility for the organization of any given management method or institution.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

⁷⁹ The most notable text in this regard is of course *What is to be done?* The correspondence between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg which began before the October Revolution but continued in the months following is also very illustrative. Lenin makes his position very clear on the concept of the Vanguard Party and why, in his mind, a Communist takeover of power is incompatible with popular democracy, and indeed, incompatible while the threat of a Capitalist counterrevolution exists.

In some lesser known writings, Marx and Engels do provide some insight on what they imagine Communist society would look like, or should look like. In his commentary on the Paris Commune, Marx, while generally laudatory of the *Communards* efforts, he is critical of their refusal to seize the gold reserves of the Parisian banks and for a few other acts of leniency that were not appropriate for the situation.⁸⁰ In a somewhat similar vein, Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* and Engels' *Anti-Duhring* provide a certain insight towards a communist program insofar as they are both criticisms of concrete socialist programs proposed by other authors. However, this is essentially where any recourse to concrete proposals of Marx and Engels terminates.

Lenin had much to criticize and tear down but little basis from pre-existing literature to build up in its place. Some authors have challenged this notion. Looking at the steadfastness of the Bolsheviks in pursuing their policies throughout the Civil War as retroactive confirmation that Lenin and authors knew full well what they implement once they came to power.⁸¹ This position seems difficult to defend in terms of specific policy. Undoubtedly there were certain principles to which the Bolsheviks held firm. Bourgeois firms and large landowners were certain to be expropriated for instance. But to claim that they had a coherent program of specific policies in mind is impossible to defend. There was precious little in Marx and Engels nor in the writings of Lenin, Trotsky, or Bukharin, outlining a specific plan of action in the economic realm should the Bolsheviks come to power.

⁸⁰ Karl Marx, *The Paris Commune*, (Socialist Labor Party of America, 1871), http://www.slp.org/pdf/marx/paris_com.pdf.

⁸¹ Paul Craig Roberts, "'War Communism': A Re-Examination," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 2 (1970). & Peter J. Boettke, "The Political Economy of Utopia: Communism in Soviet Russia, 1918–1921," in *The Political Economy of Soviet Socialism: The Formative Years, 1918–1928* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1990).

Interestingly, though perhaps unsurprisingly, Lenin was intrigued and interested to apply certain novel capitalist practices in the process of building Socialism, which he would write both before and after coming to power.⁸² In theorizing what he and Bukharin would come to call the “transition period,” Lenin delineated the desirability of integrating certain elements of Capitalist labour organization:

The Russian is a bad worker compared with people in advanced countries. It could not be otherwise under the tsarist regime and in view of the persistence of the hangover from serfdom. The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope is—learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organisation of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organise in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our own ends. At the same time, in working to raise the productivity of labour, we must take into account the specific features of the transition period from capitalism to socialism, which, on the one hand, require that the foundations be laid of the socialist organisation of competition, and, on the other hand, require the use of compulsion, so that the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not be desecrated by the practice of a lily-livered proletarian government.⁸³

Lenin came to power in an environment of absolute chaos. He was an ardent revolutionary to be sure, advocating nothing less than a total revolution in social organization in all of its aspects. His personal popularity and that of the Bolshevik party was buoyed enormously, as were the other Socialist parties in Russia, by the offer of an economic alternative.⁸⁴ There is no reason to doubt Lenin’s sincerity in attacking the existing modes of capitalist economic organization but

⁸² *State and Revolution* prior, *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* after.

⁸³ Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," *Pravda* No. 83 (1918), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/x03.htm#fw1>.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 148.

a thorough reading of his writings, and indeed those of the other Bolsheviks, display a clear lack of concrete proposals for a new economic order. Those that he did propose predominantly articulating how to put existing capitalist practices to the service of Communism.

1.3 Comparison

The intellectual atmospheres of the two periods clearly display immense differences. In the context of the First French Republic & Empire, economics was a fairly underdeveloped discipline. Nascent trends and theories were arising and in the process of formulation by the mid-18th century but it would be too far to suggest anything more. At the start of the 20th century, not only had Capitalism become completely formalized but fifty years of Socialist (and other) criticisms of Capitalism had come as well.

Beyond this, while there were certainly some elements of economic antagonism that provoked Anglo-French hostilities after the French Revolution it is clear that the rift was predominantly political and this would remain true after the accession of Napoleon. The cornerstone of the Soviet Union, its *raison d'être*, was the replacement of Capitalism with Socialism. Summed, in the French case, economics followed politics, in the Soviet case, politics followed economics.

Nevertheless, in investigating the immediately preceding periods of both cases, certain structures were in place that present more than superficial similarities. First, despite the less coherent state of economic thought in the French case, both regimes and both leaders were inspired by economic thinking that demonized the dominant form of economic organization both at the general level of global capitalism and in the immediate domestic context of their home countries.

Second, related to the final element of the first point and certainly the most important similarity, both Napoleon and Lenin came to power as the second act of a revolutionary period. Despite strikingly different rhetoric, both men built the legitimacy of their claim to power on restoring order and prosperity to a beleaguered population who were brutally taxed by a ruined economy and the pressures of a losing war.

In essence. We are presented with two regimes acceding to power following a coup d'état style seizure of power that were backed by a significant level of popular support. Both inherited an economic infrastructure in dire straits taxed by the pressures of maintaining a large standing army and fighting an international war, while the men who led the incoming governments came from an intellectual background that stressed existing economic structures as one of the reasons for their nation's hardships. Finally, neither regime proposed a return to the *status quo antebellum* as a panacea; both proposed further revolution, some of the economic content of which, was the integration of tried and true practices.

Though the aesthetic and ideological atmosphere was highly different in the two cases, the circumstances upon which they undertook their initial endeavors forced a response to similar phenomena and constrained their room for action in equal measure. Burdened by the necessity to respond to war but also driven to reorient the national and international economic order in such a way as to produce further conflict, the two regimes had a like inheritance and outlook that was to give them a similar logic and colour their early initiatives.

2 **Chapter Two: Taking Power & Forming Economic Systems, 1798-1807, 1917-1918**

In this chapter, we will enter into the specific historical periods that are germane to the present work. With the regimes in power, similar problems and concerns faced the new governments. Their countries were embroiled in international war with declining fortunes, and economic affairs were in similarly dire straits. Coming to power with a mandate for order and stability, the two regimes were able to extricate themselves from life and death crises and achieved a certain amount of freedom for action. Having attained such a position, both regimes undertook the formulation of a new economic systems, though the pressure of war was never far away. In comparing at this stage, we are principally interested in the similar situations the regimes found themselves in, how they responded, and the similar logic that began to inform their behavior.

2.1 **France**

Despite the fact that the coup of 18 Brumaire came very near to failure (the intervention of Napoleon's brother Joseph averted disaster),⁸⁵ Napoleon faced effectively no domestic opposition after acceding to power. He was appointed First Consul to a new three-man executive body that would be staffed with important figures like the Abbé Sieyès but it was clear from the outset that they would merely be there to rubberstamp Napoleon's decrees.⁸⁶ Dictatorial power was his effectively from day one.

The pressing issue for France, and the issue that had above all convinced Napoleon to stage a coup, was to redress its fortunes in the War of the Second Coalition, which saw Russia, Austria, Great Britain, and Spain arrayed against France, though the death of the Russian Tsar

⁸⁵ David Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan) 253-258.

⁸⁶ Georges Lefebvre, *Napoléon* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012). 110.

Paul would see Russia prematurely exit the coalition.⁸⁷ Napoleon raised a new army at Dijon to move against Austria via Switzerland and Italy and commanded General Jean Moreau to lead an army into Germany against Austria and Prussia. Both offensives would bring victories. Napoleon's famous crossing of the Alps enabled his army to take the Austrians in the rear at the Battle of Marengo which resulted in a major French victory. Moreau's army then defeated the Austrians and Bavarians at the Battle of Hohenlinden, effectively ending the war.

The Austrians sued for peace and signed the Treaty of Lunéville, and the British followed suit, signing the Peace of Amiens in the Spring of 1802. The content of the treaties basically recognized French territorial gains that had been achieved after the War of the First Coalition and ushered in the longest period of peace that would be known until 1815, a mere fourteen months.⁸⁸

The intervening peace would do much to stabilize the French economy. Revenues from occupied territories, especially Italy were a boon to nearly empty coffers and allowed, in part, the financial reforms that Napoleon felt were so necessary. The French National Bank was founded in 1800 but now began to operate more actively and was fully staffed. It was tasked with the project of replacing the *assignat* and the *mandat* with a gold and silver backed currency. An official decree to this effect was issued on April 14th, 1803. A more formal and diligent tax collection service was also established at this time to ensure a more consistent flow of public revenue.⁸⁹

These reforms, along with the constitutional reforms of the Napoleonic Code, would be known as the "pillars of granite" of Napoleon's regime for the relief and stability they provided to a beleaguered France.⁹⁰ Another important development in this period was the

⁸⁷ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 264-270.

⁸⁸ Lefebvre. *Napoléon*. 187-188.

⁸⁹ Branda, *Le Prix De La Gloire : Napoléon Et L'argent*. Part Three, Chapter XIV, Sections 1 & 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

recommencement of trade with Great Britain. True or not, the perception emerged, even more rapidly than with the treaty of 1768, that Britain's goal in the peacetime period was to establish English financial and industrial dominance over France.⁹¹ But such suspicions would not have time to amount to anything, beyond the damage they did to kill the thought of long term rapprochement with Great Britain.

Rival factions in Switzerland came into open conflict over the subject of remaining neutral or siding with France as the federation had a strong base of republican support dating back to the 1780's.⁹² Napoleon decided to intervene and tilt the scales in favour of the Swiss Republicans who reconstituted the Old Swiss Federation into the Helvetic Republic, which became a client state of France. Great Britain took the French action in Switzerland as a provocation, an attempt to clandestinely alter the balance of power. Thus, they broke the Treaty of Amiens, declared war on France and courted the other continental powers to form another coalition.⁹³

As the financial and organizational force behind every coalition to date, Great Britain was the principal military target. *L'Armée d'Angleterre* was formed at Boulogne as an invasion force while a second force was massed to advance into Germany though its actions were originally intended to be defensive and allow for the invasion of England.⁹⁴ As it was, the opposite occurred. Concurrently, Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France and King of Italy in December 1804. These actions, along with the diplomatic crisis spurred by the execution of the Duc d'Enghien coalesced the Third Coalition.⁹⁵

⁹¹ D mier. « Finance Napol onienne » 139-156.

⁹² Markham. *Napoleon*. 69-70.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 264-270.

⁹⁵ Aur lien Lignereux, *L'empire Des Fran ais: 1799-1815*, Histoire De La France Contemporaine (Paris:  ditions du Seuil, 2012). 59.

Twin battles would define the war and establish the geopolitical situation for the French Empire going forward. In the Summer of 1805, the French army would advance into Germany, capturing an entire Austrian army at the Battle of Ulm. After weeks of posturing, the French army would meet the combined armies of Austria and Russia in early December at the Battle of Austerlitz. The French victory was one of the most decisive in the history of warfare, annihilating the coalition forces despite superior numbers, and forcing Austria and Russia into a shocked peace.⁹⁶ A few weeks earlier, at the end of October the French experienced an equally shocking reversal at sea. The combined French and Spanish navies (Spain had switched alliances between the Second and Third Coalitions) harboured at Cadiz under Admiral Villeneuve made the rash decision to engage the British fleet under Admiral Horatio Nelson. The French and Spanish fleets were almost entirely destroyed with almost no British losses. Villeneuve returned to France but committed suicide rather than face court-martial.⁹⁷

Austerlitz and Trafalgar represented the apogee and nadir of French military fortunes. Supreme on the continent, powerless at sea. Previously, Napoleon had been interested in going toe to toe with Britain in the international sphere. Extensive and expensive efforts were made to reestablish control over Saint-Domingue, which had been in the throes of an armed slave revolt since the early 1790's. Despite the failure of the Egyptian expedition, there had still been extensive plans for an expansion of a French colonial project. Additional settlers were to be allocated to Louisiana and Mexico was to become a French India.⁹⁸

Trafalgar made such projects impossible, and to Napoleon's credit, he was quick to realize this. The Navy was effectively removed as a line item from the state budget and Louisiana was

⁹⁶ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 413-433.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Branda, *Le Prix De La Gloire : Napoléon Et L'argent*. Part Three, Chapter XVII, Section 1.

sold to the United States for a quick budgetary boost and kept valuable territory out of British hands.⁹⁹ Continental peace was once again interrupted in the summer of 1806 when Prussia decided rashly to declare war on France alone (Russia joined the war as well but was unable to mobilize in time to aid Prussia) and suffered a rapid and ignominious defeat. Russia and France would fight some close fought battles to close out the war and entered into a formal alliance following the Peace of Tilsit.¹⁰⁰

The European Continent was largely under French control or influence. Only Russia remained a major independent power, and following Tilsit she was formally allied to France. The nature of this conquest remains one of the principal historiographic questions surrounding the period. The conventional view, particularly dominant in Anglo-American histories, is that the conquest was motivated by the megalomaniacal impulses of the French dictator, which reflected the contemporary attitude of English commentators.¹⁰¹ This perspective struggles to deal with the fact that, to this point in 1807, the French wars had been defensive, reacting to the provocations of hostile coalition powers. The principal support comes from Napoleon's aggressive demands in the treaties that followed French victories. By the start of the War of the Third Coalition, Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor of France and King of Italy, which required the subjugation of the Pope; the Netherlands (now the Batavian Republic), Switzerland (now the Helvetic Republic), and Spain were all client states of the French Empire.

By the end of the War of the Fourth Coalition, at the beginning of 1807, French conquests had fundamentally reshaped the map of Europe. The Holy Roman Empire, which had existed for almost a thousand years, was destroyed. A French client state encompassing most of modern

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 585-593.

¹⁰¹ Though dated, the most comprehensive and compelling analysis of the various biographical interpretations of Napoleon is: Pieter Geyl, *Napoleon, for and Against* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).

West Germany, the Confederation of the Rhine, was established, while the rest remained attached to the rump, renamed, Austrian Empire. Prussia was reduced to half of its former size and a new Polish state, under French protection, was formed from its territory in a reverse partition in what was perhaps the most provocative decision in the process of French imperial expansion.¹⁰²

The motivations for dramatic French expansion will remain largely unclear in perpetuity, driven as they were by the motivations of a single man. Certainly, there is much to support the claim that French expansion was driven by the wild ambition of a despot. He had done away with the Republic and established a Monarchy, for one. The *Grande Armée* was a self-sustaining fighting force that survived on requisitions and pillaging in the territories it marched through. French demands on its allies and occupied countries were severe both in wealth and conscripted troops.¹⁰³ Above all there is Napoleon's famous exchange with his nephew, Eugène de Beauharnais, who was also the Viceroy of Italy, when he described French imperial policy as "*la France avant tout.*"¹⁰⁴

But this picture has not gone unchallenged. There was widespread public support for the French project in several client territories like the Netherlands and Switzerland but particularly in liberated territories. The prime example is of course Poland, who regained her independence thanks to French arms. Poles comprised the highest proportional foreign fighting group in the French army and largely joined on a volunteer basis.¹⁰⁵ The decision to create an independent Poland clashes with a portrait of Napoleon as a *realpolitik* conqueror. French occupation also

¹⁰² Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (New York: Scribner, 2004). 293-294.

¹⁰³ Geoffrey James Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1991). 54-73.

¹⁰⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte, 1805. Lettre à Eugène. Archives nationales, AF IV 866, prairial an XIII, n° 88-2

¹⁰⁵ Christopher A. Blackburn, *Napoleon and the Szlachta* (Boulder, Colo.; New York: East European Monographs ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1998). Conclusion.

enjoyed a high degree of support in Denmark, the Illyrian Provinces¹⁰⁶, and even in bastions of anti-French sentiment like Spain, large pro-French factions formed in opposition to the traditions of the *ancien regime*. Stuart Wolf has gone so far as to claim that the Napoleonic project was one of European integration, and would have represented something of a proto European Union had Napoleon emerged victorious.¹⁰⁷ Stephen Englund's characterization of Napoleonic Europe as Janus faced seems an apt metaphor.¹⁰⁸ While the French Empire was largely oriented to feed and pay the French war machine, it also brought numerous reforms that proved to be both popular and occasionally durable.

Such was the geopolitical picture when Napoleon, on November 6th 1806 in occupied Berlin, pronounced the Berlin Decree which established the Continental System.¹⁰⁹ The decree was ratified in December 1807 in Milan.¹¹⁰

The decree is brief, comprising a brief preamble with eight points, and eleven articles. The decree officially imposes a blockade on British goods (though really more of a mass boycott) throughout the entire European coastline. Any and all British citizens found on the continent are to be prisoners of war if captured and all British goods are contraband. Though legal in character, the document is quite politically charged. The blockade is described as responding to British aggression (Great Britain had placed an embargo on France earlier in the year) and that these measures were taken in the interest of protecting European traders and merchants from capricious British interests. Though, as Napoleon had confided to Talleyrand and others throughout the year,

¹⁰⁶ For a literary but intriguing picture of the enduring impact of French administrations in the Balkans see: Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon : A Journey through Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1982). Chapters on Croatia and Dalmatia.

¹⁰⁷ Woolf. *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*. 238-245.

¹⁰⁸ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 332.

¹⁰⁹ Napoleon Bonaparte, "Décret De Berlin," (<https://www.napoleon.org/histoire-des-2-empires/articles/decret-du-blocus-continental-du-21-novembre-1806/>: Fondation Napoléon, 1806).

¹¹⁰ "Décret De Milan," (<https://www.napoleon.org/histoire-des-2-empires/articles/2eme-decret-de-milan-17-decembre-1807/>: Fondation Napoléon, 1807).

the Blockade was a means of conducting economic warfare against Great Britain whose economic and financial collapse was the only means of achieving a favourable peace in Europe.¹¹¹

The decrees also formalized the domestic economic organization of French-dominated Europe. Quotas were established for the furnishing of funds, goods, and troops to the French army and state. In the case of formally annexed regions, monetary policy was harmonized with that of the French Empire. Additionally, as a consequence of the ban on British goods, a license system was established giving monopoly rights to certain firms, mostly French, to replace the supply of these goods. Controls were also established throughout Europe to ensure that these supply-links replaced the old ones. Several interesting import-substitutions resulted from this economic reworking, beet sugar generally came to replace cane sugar on the Continent for instance. As a general picture, the economy of Continental Europe was in the process of reorientation towards France and away from Great Britain but also towards an entirely new axis of trade and around a new *gamme* of industrial and consumer products in a throwback to the days before colonial imports became widespread.¹¹²

Beyond targeting Great Britain through economic warfare and stabilizing the French army, there was an important social and even revolutionary basis to the Napoleonic economic project that scholars have emphasized:

The Continental System also had constructive, not just aggressive and destructive consequences, although from the viewpoint of the old order, it portended disaster. Georges Lefebvre is right to say, '[T]he *Ancien Régime* aristocracy [knew] that it was doomed for certain if the Continental System was successful.' Lefebvre's student François Crouzet, for his part, considers there are 'valid reasons to include the Continental System as a precursor' of the European Union, though saying so is very much *not* in fashion these days.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 294-297.

¹¹² For a picture of how Napoleon himself conceived of and understood this, see: Louis-Philippe May, "Une Version Inédite D'une Allocution De Napoléon Au Sujet Du Blocus Continental," *Revue Historique* 186, no. 2 (1939).

¹¹³ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 325.

There remains one more important semantic and historiographic question. Scholars are divided on what terms to use to describe Napoleonic political economy. The terms *Blocus Continental* and *Système Continental* are generally used interchangeably; both were used at the time. Some authors prefer Continental Blockade as they see it as the bedrock of Napoleon's economic policy or because they find "system" too vague a term. Others prefer Continental System because they see the actual blockade as one amongst many important characteristics, comprising customs and border police, systems of taxation and conscription etc.¹¹⁴ In this work, Continental System will be used to refer to Napoleonic economic policy broadly after 1806, while Continental Blockade will be used to refer to port and border control specifically.

To recap the situation by the end of 1807. The French navy had been destroyed and the colonial project was abandoned but the continent had come under French military and political control; Great Britain remained the only country at war with France. Economically, French finances had been put in order by a combination of remittances, looting, and the return of stable currency. National financial infrastructure, including a National Bank, had been established, issuing currency and collecting taxes throughout the Empire. French allies were subjected to the joint pressures of supplying *matériel* and soldiers, a burden that was borne with varying degrees of compliance but uniformly enforced. Economic, military, and political aims all came together with the implantation of the Continental System that had the primary goal of forcing Great Britain to accept peace, but also represented a fundamental change in the axis of industry and trade towards the continent and portended important social consequences as a result. The implementation of this project would form the basis of the drama of the coming five years.

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey James Ellis, "The Continental System Revisited," in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional, and European Experiences*, ed. Katherine & Johan Joor Aaslestad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 27-28.

2.2 The Soviet Union

The Bolsheviks faced an unstable situation following the October Revolution. Scattered conflicts in Petrograd and Moscow with Provisional Government forces continued for weeks afterwards but Bolshevik control was maintained.¹¹⁵ The more pressing challenge came from the other Socialist parties and from institutional inertia. Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks maintained control over various governmental institutions and it took sometimes weeks of prodding and coercion to convince them to actively participate in government activities. A more fundamental problem was that the Bolsheviks forced themselves into a paradoxical situation. They wanted to fundamentally alter political and economic relations but did not have a clear plan in mind nor did they have many members or allies who knew how to operate the country's financial infrastructure or even what the national bank actually did.¹¹⁶ In many ways, the Bolsheviks had put the cart before the horse.

The confusion of the period is mirrored in the historiography. How to classify the first half year of Soviet power and specifically their economic program? One line of argumentation describes the first half-year of Soviet economics as a period of peaceful breathing room that was interrupted by the full outbreak of civil war which ushered in War Communism.¹¹⁷ Others see no hard break and contend that the Bolsheviks came in with a plan and executed it; civil war or no civil war, their measures were extreme and would have been regardless of the situation that confronted them.¹¹⁸ Roy Medvedev posed the unique thesis that the extreme nature of early

¹¹⁵ Figs. *A People's Tragedy*. 497-499.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 501-504.

¹¹⁷For instance: Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923*, Pelican Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966). Volume 3. 57-58.

¹¹⁸ Pipes. *The Russian Revolution* & Roberts. "Re-examining War Communism."

Bolshevik economic measures alienated their potential allies and pushed the country to civil war.¹¹⁹

Ultimately, the question of whether or not the Bolsheviks acted with a plan in mind or not is basically irrelevant since any plan they had existed only in fairly vague notions and ideological disposition, so while their actions were of course influenced and presented in an ideological manner, they were necessarily *ad hoc* in nature.¹²⁰

But while the Bolsheviks engaged in economic reorganization in their early tenure, the decree on land, which officially nationalized all agricultural land and leased it in perpetuity to the peasants that worked it, was one of the earliest Bolshevik decrees. The primary issues facing the Bolsheviks were political in nature; some kind of settlement needed to be reached with the other Socialist parties and the First World War still needed addressing.

The Bolsheviks, under Lenin's directive, closed the Constituent Assembly, which some had hoped would form the basis of a coalition parliament, and decided to rule alone (the left wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries would remain as well).¹²¹ While this decision was contentious, what to do about the war with Germany was even more contentious. Lenin had always advocated peace and continued to do so. Bukharin and the left wing of the party supported revolutionary war. Trotsky proposed the slogan "neither peace nor war;" no treaty would be signed with the Central Powers but military action would not be pursued, the hope being that the optics of a defenseless peaceful nation being invaded would spur the Entente into action and stir revolution abroad.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *The October Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

¹²⁰ This argument is also that of László Szamuely, "Major Features of the Economy and Ideology of War Communism," *Acta Oeconomica* 7, no. 2 (1971). Probably the best short description of early Bolshevik economic efforts. 143-160.

¹²¹ Figs. *A People's Tragedy*. 512.

¹²² *Ibid.* 543-544.

Trotsky's line won out, in perhaps the only major instance of Lenin's will not becoming policy, and brought disaster. German troops poured through Russia, occupying Poland, the Ukraine, the Baltics, and much of Western Russia, with seemingly no intent of stopping before Petrograd (which provided the incentive to move the capital to Moscow).¹²³ Trotsky's proposition plainly needed to be abandoned. Lenin's position was affirmed and a peace treaty was signed under very unfavourable circumstances. The war was over but Russia ceded its most productive agricultural land, a large population base, the most industrialized part of its territory, and almost all of its exploited coal and iron reserves.¹²⁴ The immediate political future of the Bolsheviks was secured and they gained a certain cachet having delivered on the promise of peace, but they had paid a heavy price and severely limited their economic base; more peace, less bread and land.

The White movement had begun to form almost the moment the Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd. Popular violence drove much of the extant bourgeoisie away, many of whom went south. Novocherkassk became the *de facto* White capital for a time and it was there that Generals Denikin, Kornilov, and Alexeev, formed the Volunteer Army. Civil War had loomed from the very beginning and conflicts began between Reds and Whites as early as December 1917.¹²⁵ Early action went decisively in favour of the Bolsheviks. The Whites seemed on the verge of defeat in the Spring of 1918 after the Siege of Yekaterinodar. Kornilov was killed in action, but the Whites regrouped under Alexeev and Denikin. The Czech legion, a unit of Czech prisoners of war from the Austrian army who were reequipped by Russia to turn against Austria, revolted in Siberia in May, and Admiral Kolchak raised his army in the East.¹²⁶ By summer, the stage for the Civil War was set.

¹²³ Ibid. 548-549.

¹²⁴ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 157-158.

¹²⁵ Figs. *A People's Tragedy*. 558.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 575-578.

As mentioned before, one of the earliest major Soviet decrees was the Decree on Land. The actual impact of the decree was limited. Peasant communities throughout Russia had effectively opted out of the national economy.¹²⁷ The Bolshevik's early strategy for feeding the army and major cities was a mix of two somewhat contradictory policies. They had inherited a policy of "grain monopoly" from the Provisional Government which officially enabled national authorities to forcibly purchase grain from peasants at a rate the government itself fixed.¹²⁸ The Bolsheviks maintained this policy and enforced it sporadically. In other instances, particularly where Soviet military and political authority was less present, local Soviets simply bartered with peasant communities to acquire as much grain as possible.¹²⁹

In the urban setting the Bolsheviks maintained an even more cautious line before the Summer of 1918. Cognizant of the importance of urban workers and factories to their power base, and beyond that, ideologically interested in promoting this economic sector and class of society, there was significant vacillation within the party on how to manage this question.¹³⁰ A certain degree of politically motivated violence made its way into the economic sector as former bosses were made to do basic manual labour and members of the nobility were forced into the old tasks of servants, but none of this altered profoundly the economic workings of firms.¹³¹ Fundamentally, the question of factory management divided the Bolsheviks; whether to adopt a diffuse system where trade unions and cooperative horizontal management did the bulk of the organizational work while a loose national apparatus would help coordinate, or, to adopt a top-heavy system where central directives would be issued and fulfilled across the whole country

¹²⁷ Tyelitsin. *Bessmislennii i besposhadnii?* 99-103.

¹²⁸ Lars T. Lih, "Bolshevik Razverstka and War Communism," *Slavic Review* 45, no. 4 (1986). 673.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 674.

¹³⁰ Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 89-94, 202-205

¹³¹ Figes. *A People's Tragedy*. 521-524.

with Bolshevik appointed managers to ensure it. In the chaotic early months, the former option characterized the industrial picture, though the Bolsheviks exerted strong control over enterprises important to the military, notably the Pusilov works in Petrograd.¹³²

At the level of international trade, the situation had changed dramatically. The Bolsheviks continued to receive support from the entente since they were still technically at war with Germany but by the end of 1917 all aid ceased and instead a blockade was imposed by the Western powers and Japan.¹³³ The combination of international blockade and the loss of precious agricultural territory following the treaty of Brest-Litovsk created a dire situation particularly as the Bolsheviks struggled to find a coherent policy of grain procurement. However, while the blockade put the Soviet economy under immense pressure, it was a situation the Bolsheviks generally welcomed. Lenin, Bukharin, and Trotsky all advocated separation from the international economy so it is not unlikely that the Bolsheviks would have imposed an international boycott themselves. While this attitude would culminate in state-sponsored autarky under Stalin with “Socialism in one country” and was the *de facto* situation in the Soviet Union throughout the civil war, the Bolsheviks in the early twenties conceived of this differently.

In the field of diplomacy and international trade alike, the Bolsheviks were basically uninterested in cooperating with other powers; Trotsky’s flippant attitude towards his role as Commissar of Foreign Affairs encapsulates this well: “What sort of diplomatic work will we be doing anyway? I shall issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples and then shut up shop.”¹³⁴ The Bolsheviks wanted to make an international revolution and as such were interested in supporting revolutionaries abroad which they felt had a good chance (or perhaps was

¹³² Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 128-135.

¹³³ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 173.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Figes. *A People’s Tragedy*. 537.

guaranteed) to spread across the world fairly quickly. This disposition was also motivated by some more concrete concerns. Lenin was acutely aware, as were most, of Russia's poor economic position. Russia had little to no chance of providing a bountiful socialism alone; more developed countries, especially Germany, would need to be brought into the Socialist camp for the system to work.¹³⁵ The Bolsheviks intended to be proactive in this regard. So, while the Bolshevik program was audacious in the domestic reforms it hoped to implement, it was especially so in the international sphere.¹³⁶

The biggest structural change the Bolsheviks brought early on to the economic scene was in founding the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy, known generally by its acronym *VSNKh* and pronounced *Vesenkha*. Again, it was unclear early on what exactly this institution would do, or even what the Bolsheviks wanted it to do. Bukharin imagined it as largely a consultative body, Lenin hoped it would become the ultimate economic authority, issuing directives, quotas, prices, and all other economic signals from Moscow.¹³⁷ Despite its unclear responsibilities, *VSNKh* became involved in interesting activities from its immediate foundation, especially as a think tank of alternative modes of economic accounting. It was here that Bolshevik thinkers started to think about how they would replace the market, money, and private property, as these mechanisms were to be replaced as soon as possible.¹³⁸

When exactly did War Communism begin? The title is effectively artificial. It was coined in 1922 at the 10th Party Congress by the Bolsheviks themselves.¹³⁹ Between 1917 and 1921 the Bolsheviks simply called their program "Socialism," "Communism," or sometimes "the

¹³⁵ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, "State and Revolution", 45 vols., vol. 25, *Collected Works* (1999), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/>. Chapter 5.

¹³⁶ For a comprehensive overview of Soviet diplomacy at this time, see: Alastair Kocho-Williams, *Russian and Soviet Diplomacy, 1900-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹³⁷ Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 203-204.

¹³⁸ Szamuely, "Major Features of War Communism." 152.

¹³⁹ Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 8-10.

transition period.”¹⁴⁰ So, there are no explicit indicators from the period to go on. The chronological marker that seems most appropriate is the decision to replace the grain monopoly by the policy of *razverstka*; the forced requisition of grain from peasants in exchange for goods in kind, though often nothing was given in exchange. The policy actually began as a local initiative, undertaken by frustrated Soviets who could not convince the peasants to supply grain to their towns but became official Soviet policy by the middle of 1918.¹⁴¹ At this time the Bolsheviks began to step up their centralizing initiatives in all sectors and seems a logical time to date the end of the period of “peaceful breathing room” and the start of War Communism.

By the Summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks had concluded the international war with the Central Powers but was clearly embroiled in a full-fledged civil war. The immediate threat to Bolshevik power from the leftovers of the Provisional Government seemed safely averted. The Constituent Assembly had been closed amidst major outcry but no rebellion presented itself. An international blockade, widespread peasant boycott from the national economy, and the loss of important agricultural territory provoked a food crisis that came to a head in the Summer of 1918 as the policy of grain monopoly was abandoned in favour of outright military requisitioning. Industrial production remained largely untouched, important factories were under strict Bolshevik control while others began to self-manage in various ways. Finally, a central economic institution, *VSNKh*, had been established. While its exact purpose was unclear, Lenin wanted it to become an all-powerful economic organ, and as the civil war put more pressure on the government to allocate important resources, *VSNKh*’s powers grew.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Lih. “Bolshevik Razverstka.” 675-676.

2.3 Comparison

The situations that confronted the regimes and the responses they took to them show striking similarities. A losing international war was the principal issue facing both regimes and both moved to tackle it. Both wars were brought to a conclusion relatively quickly though in very different ways. Napoleon was doubly advantaged with dictatorial power and military prowess and was able to be aggressive and force a favourable peace on his opponents. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had neither advantage. They had gained dictatorial power as a party but internally dissented on the question of the war with Germany. Their vacillation and limited military power forced them into a thoroughly unfavourable peace, but they achieved a peace nevertheless.

Having achieved a brief period of peace, both regimes gained freedom of action to begin implementing the political and economic reforms they had advocated before taking power. Ironically, and contrary to popular understanding, it was Napoleon who had more conviction and concrete ideas in mind than Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Quickly after stabilizing the international situation, an entirely new constitution was implemented, a national bank and other national financial infrastructure was established along with a streamlining of the tax service, the Republic was converted into an Empire, and the currency was changed. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were much more cautious and indecisive, though of course, their freedom of action was more limited than in the French case given their weaker position of authority. Industrial organization was left largely to its own devices and the agricultural policy of the Provisional Government was maintained.¹⁴²

¹⁴²There was also an important process of “catch-up” going on in the provincial areas of the Soviet Union as local Soviets attempted to adapt and react to planned changes from the centre and spontaneous activity in the countryside. For a mosaic of this period and process, see: C. J. Storella, *The Voice of the People : Letters from the Soviet Village, 1918-1932* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

Both regimes were largely antipathic to the dominant economic order of the day and this coloured many of the reforms they chose to implement. Napoleon did create a national bank, seen often as an imitation of the English model, but it never operated in the same way. It had the exclusive right to issue currency but it never gained the independent authority to issue large loans or to issue fiat currency. Napoleon appointed the bank directors and explicitly kept its leverage low, reflecting his mercantilist disposition. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were of course, adamantly hostile to Capitalism, though as we observed in the first chapter, Lenin was interested in coopting certain novel capitalist practices to build socialism. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks actively considered how to remove traditional methods of accounting and market signals, and were not averse to issuing decrees inaugurating massive changes to the economic order, even if they had little to no ability to enforce them.

After shared periods of breathing room and experimentation similar situations and processes took place. One war was ended and a fresh war, or in the French case, several successive wars, started up. The major difference of course being the fact that the French were fighting an international war while the Soviets fought a civil war. While this difference seems major at first glance, it seems to pose principally a superficial distinction, at least at the outset. Despite the question of language (but even this was shared when we consider the diverse collection of nationalities and languages within the former Russian Empire), both regimes were attempting to assert their will and program on new populations, some of which were incredibly hostile, others tepid or friendly, and operated from a relatively small center where they faced little to no resistance; Old France and the Moscow-Petrograd axis. Summed more briefly, this could be described as a centre-periphery dynamic that characterized both the military action and the implementation of new political and economic systems. The nature of this dynamic and its consequences will be treated more thoroughly in the following chapter

Most importantly, both regimes reached similar conclusions on how to proceed. For France, this decision was informed more by the situation that confronted them, for the Soviet Union, more by ideological impetus, though both processes were active in both cases. In brief, the economic and political revolution that both Napoleon and Lenin imagined was incompatible with the contemporary order which correspondingly needed to be overthrown and replaced; war and economics became inseparable. With this conviction in mind, both regimes began to centralize, became more exigent on the populations they controlled, and understood that their projects were zero-sum games. The Continental System could not exist alongside British dominated free-trade and the Soviet Union could not survive as long as global capitalism continued.

It is important to note that the nature of the economic reorganization postulated and promulgated by the two regimes differed substantially. Lenin and the Bolsheviks wanted to reorganize the economic order of Russia from the top down, expropriating and marginalizing large sections of the population, “naturalizing” methods of exchange and units of accounting, and explicitly repudiating at a theoretical level the system of the day. The French case does not display such a radical departure from existing modes and little of what was proposed had not existed in some form before. Nevertheless, the Napoleonic experiment, in wanting to overthrow and usurp the international economic system of the day, became equally revolutionary in its structural character.

3 **Chapter Three: Progression, Adaptation, Collapse, 1807-1815, 1918-1922**

It was clear almost immediately for both regimes that issuing decrees and pronouncing changes was not adequate for reorienting the economic order or to ensure the compliance of the constituent populations. A combination of persuasion and coercion was applied to smooth the implementation of the new systems. Both systems were presented as beneficial to workers, traders, and peasants and presented the necessary sacrifices as part of moral mission. Despite these efforts, *douaniers* and commissars needed to be sent across controlled territory in ever increasing numbers to maintain requisitions and to keep the system functioning. The economic systems, as we have seen, were intrinsically linked to war but ironically, were applied more rigorously when the pressures of war were less strenuous. Both Napoleon and Lenin felt that, despite the clear difficulties that faced them, they were on the verge of success in fully implementing a new economic order but ultimately, both systems were forcibly reversed, and there was a return to the old order.

3.1 **France**

It would of course take time to implement the Continental Blockade in practice; agents had to be dispatched from France to as far flung locations as Cadiz, Hamburg, Danzig, Genoa, Antwerp, and Dubrovnik.¹⁴³ However, the decree had immediate impact. Though British commentators in Parliament would deride the Continental Blockade as a meaningless gesture,¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Katherine Aaslestad, "Introduction: Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Consequences of Economic Warfare," in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional, and European Experiences*, ed. Katherine & Johan Joor Aaslestad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 16.

¹⁴⁴ Francis d'Ivernois, *Effets Du Blocus Continental Sur Le Commerce, Les Finances, Le Crédit Et La Prospérité Des Isles Britanniques* (Londres: L'Imprimerie de Vogel et Schulze, 1810). d'Ivernois was a Swiss-born, French Royalist who fled to Great Britain after the French Revolution and was commissioned by British Parliament to assess the utility of the Continental Blockade on the British economy. The account he presents is largely a sycophantic condemnation of Napoleonic France but his analysis was used as proof that British commerce and credit would continue unabated.

their actions spoke differently. British trade into the European continent passed primarily through two points, Portugal and Hanseatic ports. Denmark had been neutral throughout the Napoleonic wars to this point and was frequently courted by both France and Britain. Judging Danish ports as fundamental to the maintenance of British trade, an ultimatum was issued to Denmark demanding that Denmark officially reject the Continental System and to formally join the British trading sphere. Denmark did not immediately provide Britain with an affirmative reply. As a result, a British fleet sailed for Copenhagen in August 1806, shelled the city, destroyed the Danish navy and seized its trading vessels, and forced the tiny nation into compliance.¹⁴⁵ Scandinavia became an important sight of British trade and smuggling throughout the Napoleonic period, especially the islands of Heligoland and Gothenburg.¹⁴⁶

Britain's punitive action on a neutral power gave immediate credence to the French claim that Britain's economic interests were predatory and French propagandists wasted no time in exploiting this fact.¹⁴⁷ Napoleon also benefitted from the fact that there was, at this time, a significant base of support for the French project, buoyed by pan-European anti-British sentiment. As Steven Englund has noted:

It should be said that the British were perceived as adversaries by many on the Continent, for the Royal Navy's manner of enforcement had ever been *sans politesse* (just ask the Americans). The islanders' insufferable sense of their own superiority is nicely illustrated in propaganda that His Majesty's Government disseminated, which readily conceded British ascendancy in commerce, credit, and navy, and cheerfully advised other countries that there was nothing they could do except copy the British example and pull up their own economies and administrations by their bootstraps. Both England and France did their best to transfer the economic cost of the war onto other countries but until 1811 or 1812, the French were not perceived as the main 'bad guys' in this conflict. 'The enemy

¹⁴⁵ Roland Ruppenthal, "Denmark and the Continental System," *The Journal of Modern History* 15, no. 1 (1943). 7-23.

¹⁴⁶ Silvia Marzagalli, "The Continental System: A View from the Sea," in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional, and European Experiences*, ed. Katherine & Johan Joor Aaslestad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 90-91.

¹⁴⁷ Robert B. Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950). 246. Holtman describes Napoleon and the French Empire as the first modern propagandists utilizing the full machinery of the state and press to advance specific political lines and aims.

of the world,' as Napoleon called Britain, found itself at war with nearly every other power in Europe, at some point or other, between 1799 and 1815...Napoleon would continue to portray himself, not as the assaulter on the freedom of peoples, but as 'the long-awaited leader of the revolt against England's maritime domination.' He periodically reiterated that the current state of affairs would endure only until Britain backed off from these practices and subscribed to a more humane law.¹⁴⁸

France, however, also needed to consolidate their economic sphere for the Continental System to be effective. Portugal, which had become a *de facto* British colony, was the issue of primary concern; it was fully open to British trade and French control in Spain was weak.¹⁴⁹ A combined Franco-Spanish army invaded Portugal in November 1807 and forced an ultimatum on Portugal to join the Continental System, which it accepted, though the Portuguese royal family fled to Brazil.¹⁵⁰

Tepid support from Spain, which was officially allied with France, and its fundamental role in the operation of the Continental Blockade convinced Napoleon that increased French control in Spain was required.¹⁵¹ An attempt was first made to change the Spanish king within the existing Spanish Bourbon dynasty, but the action sparked widespread riots in Madrid and elsewhere. In the end, Napoleon elected to pass the crown to his brother Joseph, a tactic he had applied elsewhere with his other brothers in regions that he felt were especially important to French interests.¹⁵² Louis Bonaparte was already King of Holland, Jérôme was king in Westphalia, and his son-in-law Eugène was Viceroy of Italy. The decision completely failed to bring stability to Spain. An opposition government formed in Asturias and *guerrilla* armies formed all across the peninsula.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 295-296.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 340-341.

¹⁵⁰ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 593-601.

¹⁵¹ Markham. 164-165.

¹⁵² Napoleon and Bonaparte Joseph, *The Confidential Correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte with His Brother Joseph, Sometime King of Spain : Selected and Translated, with Explanatory Notes, from the Memoires Du Roi Joseph* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1856).

¹⁵³ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 601-612.

Joseph was entrusted to settle the situation, which Napoleon did not feel merited his personal attention. The Continental Blockade was being vigorously enforced and Napoleon was busy in Paris overseeing its implementation. Thousands of *douaniers* were sent to Hamburg alone, with similar numbers arriving in Antwerp and Genoa.¹⁵⁴ Joseph proved an incapable commander and the rebellion persisted throughout 1808, culminating in the Battle of Bailén, where the French army in Spain was defeated by the rebel Spanish army; the first defeat of the French Empire. David Chandler has noted the significance of the event.

This was an historic occasion; news of it spread like wildfire throughout Spain and then all Europe. It was the first time since 1801 that a sizable French force had laid down its arms, and the legend of French invincibility underwent a severe shaking. Everywhere anti-French elements drew fresh inspiration from the tidings. The Pope published an open denunciation of Napoleon; Prussian patriots were heartened; and, most of all, the Austrian war party began to secure the support of the Emperor Francis for a renewed challenge to the French Empire.¹⁵⁵

Napoleon was incensed with the news and roused the *Grande Armée* for a fresh campaign and issued a boastful pronouncement ahead of his personal invasion of Spain. His bravado was not empty words; the French army would pour into Spain throughout the latter half of 1808 and rout the Spanish rebels with ease; a conflict that would see Polish units contribute in an important way for the first time.¹⁵⁶ The resistance was plunged into disorder and Joseph was returned to the throne in Madrid. Equipped with a larger army of his own, the blockade was, for a time, enforced thoroughly, and Spain was fully integrated into the Continental System, supplying taxes and troops.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the Spanish rebels had succeeded in securing British support, which would maintain the Peninsular War in perpetuity.

¹⁵⁴ Aaslestad, "Introduction: Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Consequences of Economic Warfare." 11-12.

¹⁵⁵ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 617.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 625-643.

¹⁵⁷ Markham. 166-167.

Fresh from this victory however, Austria renewed hostilities with France. The *Grande Armée* was forced into a rapid mobilization from Spain to Germany to meet the Austrian armies who were engaged with French client states in Germany. The war began in April and was concluded by early October but Austria fought harder than they had before, and the decisive Battle at Wagram was only a narrow French victory.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, a harsh peace was imposed on Austria. Galicia was added to the Duchy of Warsaw and the Adriatic ports were formally annexed to France, becoming the Illyrian Provinces. Austria was significantly reduced in size, lost access to the sea, and forced into alliance with France, which was cemented by the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise, the daughter of Emperor Francis.¹⁵⁹

It was within these years, 1808-1810, that the Continental System and the Continental Blockade were most effective.¹⁶⁰ Though British commentators would never officially acknowledge the impact the blockade was having, its efficacy was undeniable. Britain desperately negotiated with the United States for exclusive trading rights, negotiations that became so hostile, they culminated in war between Britain and the United States in 1812. British credit took a massive hit after the War of the Fifth Coalition as it looked as unlikely as ever that its continental allies would ever be able to repay their war loans. Most importantly, British crops had been so poor in 1808 and 1809 that they threatened to provoke a famine.¹⁶¹

The Blockade was effective enough at the time that it looked as though no illicit grain deliveries would arrive from the continent. In a surprising turn, Napoleon temporarily lifted the embargo and supplied Britain with all the grain they needed, at a relatively steep price.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 738.

¹⁵⁹ Markham. 183-184.

¹⁶⁰ Crouzet. *Le Blocus Continental*. 804.

¹⁶¹ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 366-368.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Historians have looked at this moment as a potentially decisive one, had Napoleon maintained the embargo, he may have prompted the decisive crisis in the British economy the Continental Blockade had been designed to inflict.¹⁶³ However, Stephen Englund, in consulting Napoleon's letters and correspondence from the time, shows that Napoleon never considered starving the British population into submission, the goal was to ruin British finances, not to kill civilians.¹⁶⁴ This contention is corroborated by an incident between a British merchant fleet and Russia. Russia had been part of the Continental System since the Peace of Tilsit but was known to accept smugglers, particularly in the Baltic ports. Amidst the economic crisis of 1810, a British merchant fleet attempted to convince the Tsar to accept their shipments lest Britain's economy collapse. Playing on Alexander's concern of French hegemony in Europe, the ports were opened, and the goods received.¹⁶⁵

The Continental System, at its best, was clearly capable of approaching its objectives. The French military machine was consistently supplied with fresh troops and *matériel* from allied states, and the British war effort and economy came under very serious threat. The French economy was strong enough to finance an ever-growing corps of *douaniers* to implement the system throughout French administered Europe and to enforce good practice in port cities.¹⁶⁶

The fact that such a corps needed to be created and consistently expanded reflects a deeper problem however. The Continental System and especially the Blockade almost only operated well when French policy or military force was present. Despite propaganda efforts to convince

¹⁶³ Lefebvre. *Napoléon*. 426-427.

¹⁶⁴ Englund. *Napoleon: A Political Life*. 366-368.

¹⁶⁵ J. Holland Rose, "A Document Relating to the Continental System," *The English Historical Review* 18, no. 69 (1903). 122-124.

¹⁶⁶ Aurélien Lignereux, *Servir Napoléon: Policiers Et Gendarmes Dans Les Départements Annexés, 1796-1814*, Epoques, (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2012). 1-12.

local populations to participate willingly, coercion was the ultimate means by which compliance was secured.

Recent literature has focused on regional experiences under the Continental System and a similar situation presents itself in almost all regions. Reports emerged that a certain port city was participated in smuggling and *douaniers* would be dispatched to crack down and confiscate illicit goods. Generally, these goods were items the population wanted like sugar, dyes, or tobacco, and their confiscation engendered resentment towards to the French regime as did the loss of income. Security would gradually loosen or *douaniers* would be redeployed elsewhere.¹⁶⁷ An important consequence was that smuggling and illicit trading never became moral taboos like theft. Even honest merchants, many of whom actively supported the French regime, felt no compulsion to avoid trading in illicit goods, often because they simply needed the money and had no other recourse.¹⁶⁸ French economic reforms ultimately failed to produce the culture change required for natural participation, which French propagandists and lawmakers endeavored to accomplish.¹⁶⁹ With the exception of France, Belgium, and the Rhineland, the economic changes had hurt the local economies of French allies.¹⁷⁰ Barring exceptional cases like Poland, the French cause was not enough to inspire cooperation on its own, in the absence of economic benefit.

The result was a gradual deterioration in French authority everywhere and prompted Napoleon to further centralize the Continental System in general. The French National Bank lost

¹⁶⁷ Marzagalli, *Les Boulevards De La Fraude. Le Négoce Maritime Et Le Blocus Continental, 1806-1813*. See especially Chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Rowe, "Economic Warfare, Organized Crime and the Collapse of Napoleon's Empire," in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional, and European Experiences*, ed. Katherine & Johan Joor Aaslestad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 191-194.

¹⁶⁹ Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration*. 124-133.

¹⁷⁰ Geoffrey James Ellis, *Napoleon's Continental Blockade : The Case of Alsace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). Ellis describes this as the "empirical case against integration. 32-33.

its independent authority and was personally directed by Napoleon himself.¹⁷¹ Crackdowns on regions that resisted requisitions became more common, especially in Italy where Eugène de Beauharnais continued to vigorously enforce the System and Blockade while many of Napoleon's other appointees actively participated in corrupt activities.¹⁷² In the case of Louis, Napoleon's brother who he had made King of Holland, he was deposed by Napoleon for being too lenient in enforcing the System as he found it placed too much of an economic burden on his subjects. Holland was formally integrated into France itself and came under the personal control of Napoleon.¹⁷³

This process became a defining feature. As it became evident that the Continental Blockade needed to be enforced everywhere at all times to have meaningful impact in harming Great Britain, annexation became increasingly common. A certain country, region, or city would be identified as a weak point and annexed to France proper so that it could be more easily supervised and regulated. Successively, the Illyrian Provinces, Holland, Hamburg, Livorno, and the Hanseatic Towns were all annexed for their failure to prevent the import of British goods.¹⁷⁴

Perhaps the most intriguing effort to coax populations into enforcing the blockade came following the Decree of Fontainebleau. The decree required the *douaniers* to stage periodic mass burnings of confiscated British goods in public squares, with the hope that the conflagration would somehow convince the locals to disavow smuggling. In the end, it likely bred more resentment as they watched valuable goods burned by the customs officers who they already despised.

¹⁷¹ Arnaud Manas, "Le Mythe Des Trentes Derniers Du 18 Brumaire," in *L'économie Selon Napoléon*, ed. Pierre Branda (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016). 79-94.

¹⁷² Alexander Grab, "The Kingdom of Italy and the Continental System," in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional, and European Experiences*, ed. Katherine & Johan Joor Aaslestad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 98-113.

¹⁷³ Lefebvre. 317-320.

¹⁷⁴ Marzagalli, "The Continental System: A View from the Sea." 94.

The ultimate crisis of the Continental System came in 1810 when Russia announced that it would permit neutral shipping. While not officially a renouncement of the Continental System, it was obvious to France, Britain, and Russia that it was in practice, as neutral Scandinavian vessels would simply transport British goods from the entrepôts established after the subjugation of Denmark.¹⁷⁵ Russia's rejection of the terms of Tilsit prompted Napoleon to plan an invasion of Russia which he would execute in 1812.¹⁷⁶

Russia was the last important country on the Continent with an intact army and the resources to supply it. Were Russia to be defeated, there would be no independent nation in Europe and the resources expended to maintain the *Grande Armée* could have, and likely would have, been directed towards consolidating French control over European coastlines and ending the ongoing conflict on the Iberian Peninsula. Had Britain managed to maintain a state of hostilities, there would be little to prevent the credible threat of invasion. The axis of international trade would have decisively shifted towards France under an economic system that was heavily influenced by many mercantilist principles treated in the first chapter.

As it was, the invasion ended in disaster. The French army of over a million men, drawn from all over Europe, was almost entirely destroyed by lack of reliable supply and exposure over a long winter campaign. Austria and Prussia broke their formal alliances and mobilized against France, popular risings sporadically grew across the continent, and some of Napoleon's most trusted Marshalls betrayed him to save their own skin.¹⁷⁷ The decisive Battle of Leipzig ended in

¹⁷⁵ August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Sur Le Système Continental Et Sur Ses Rapports Avec La Suède* (Londres: De l'imprimerie de Schulze et Dean, 1813). 55-64.

¹⁷⁶ Englund. 373-374.

¹⁷⁷ The case of Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte is an incredible story of betrayal. One of the original members of the marshalate, he owed his meteoric rise to Napoleon. Despite his insubordinate nature which led to a number of near disasters, notably at the Battle of Friedland, he never faced discipline or court martial. Through a complicated dynastic connection, he was nominated to succeed the childless king of Sweden. Napoleon granted him leave of the French army to assume the throne where he assumed the name Carl. After the coronation, he almost

victory for the Allies, and forced the *Grande Armée* back to the borders of Old France. After a brilliant defense in the face of long odds, Napoleon's remaining Marshalls convinced him to surrender and renounce his throne.¹⁷⁸ He would famously return from exile, regain control of France and fight one last stand. But even if the French had been victorious at Waterloo, the prospects of altering the political and economic order in Europe died after the failed invasion of Russia.

3.2 The Soviet Union

After the consolidation of the White armies who were buttressed by allied expeditionary forces in Crimea, Archangelsk, Finland, and the Far East as well as the Czech Legion in Siberia, the Bolshevik regime was surrounded on all sides. It was in this environment that the decision was taken to execute the Romanov family for fear that they would provide a rallying point for the forces arrayed against them.¹⁷⁹ In a related decision, a confidential decree issued by Lenin implored local Soviets to burn and destroy all records of previous land and property ownership so that even in the event of a White takeover, it would be difficult to turn back the clock on the reorganization that had taken place.¹⁸⁰

Immediately following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Trotsky began a reorganization of the Red Army. Traditional military hierarchies were reestablished, replacing the early efforts to organize the army as a cooperative, horizontal entity. The Reds were outnumbered by the Whites but benefited from the possession of a consolidated territory with better developed infrastructure,

immediately began negotiations with Great Britain, repudiated the Continental System, and joined the war against France after the invasion of Russia.

¹⁷⁸ Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. 994-1007.

¹⁷⁹ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 169.

¹⁸⁰ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, 1918. Perepiska s D.I. Kurskim, Moscow, Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii. F. 2. Op. 1. D. 7310.

while the Whites were spread across multiple fronts with limited potential for cooperation and communication.¹⁸¹ Additionally, though both sides generally struggled to gain the cooperation of local peasants, when the choice was clear between supporting the Reds or the Whites, peasants universally supported the Reds.¹⁸²

The action was punctuated and the fortunes of both sides ebbed and flowed between the Summer of 1918 and the end of 1919, the period when the Civil War was fought most fiercely. Japanese forces occupied Sakhalin, Vladivostok, and other cities of the Far East, and would retain them until 1922. Between August and September of 1918 numerous Siberian cities fell to White/Czech control including Saratov, Kazan, and Ufa where an official White government and military council was established. A complicated process unfolded in the Crimea. Denikin's army consolidated control over much of Ukraine and secured the services of many local Cossack groups, though others, notably Filip Mironov, supported the Bolsheviks. Meanwhile, Anarchist forces under Nestor Makhno fought against both sides at different times. Nikolai Yudenich consolidated an army in the Baltics with the support of the British.¹⁸³

The Bolsheviks were generally pushed back on all fronts throughout the second half of 1918, White forces stood poised to threaten Moscow and Petrograd. Had the Whites attacked in unison, it seems highly unlikely that the Reds would have managed to hold out. As it was, the White offensives were uncoordinated and the Red Army was able to beat them back successively. Kolchak, Yudenich, and Denikin launched full offensives against Petrograd in succession

¹⁸¹ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 179.

¹⁸² Orlando Figes, "The Red Army and Mass Mobilization During the Russian Civil War 1918-1920," *Past & Present*, no. 129 (1990). 168-211.

¹⁸³ Figes, *A People's Tragedy : The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*. 670-675.

throughout 1919 and all ultimately met with failure, though Yudenich's siege of Petrograd came within a hair's breadth of success.¹⁸⁴

The Siberian cities were rapidly reconquered by the Red Army, culminating in the capture and execution of Admiral Kolchak in Kazan by the local Soviet. Peace was secured in the Baltics, and Denikin was deposed from his own army by Pyotr Wrangel who reconsolidated control of the Crimea, the Caucasus and part of Ukraine. His army would ultimately be defeated in November 1920. Altogether the conflict had decisively shifted in favour of the Reds by the end of 1919.¹⁸⁵

Concurrently, the Bolsheviks had reoriented the economic apparatus of the territory that they controlled. Alec Nove describes the picture succinctly and clearly.

- (1) An attempt to ban private manufactures, the nationalization of nearly all industry, the allocation of nearly all material stocks, and of what little output there was, by the state, especially for war purposes.
- (2) A ban on private trade, never quite effective anywhere, but spasmodically enforced.
- (3) Seizure of peasant surpluses (*razverstka*)
- (4) The partial elimination of money from the state's dealings with its own organizations and the citizens. Free rations, when there was anything to ration.
- (5) All these factors combined with terror and arbitrariness, expropriations, requisitions. Efforts to establish discipline, with party control over trade unions. A siege economy with a communist ideology. A partly organized chaos. Sleepless, leather-jacketed commissars working around the clock in a vain effort to replace the free market.¹⁸⁶

Nove presents this as a catch-all description of the period, which fails to capture the evolution of thought and practice that occurred at the time, but it fairly accurately describes the situation from mid-1918 through 1919.

The Bolsheviks economic program at this time was influenced by the demands of the situation and environment as well as ideological interest. The Bolsheviks were generally

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 175.

¹⁸⁶ Nove. *Economic History of the USSR*. 68.

interested in eliminating market relations and replacing them with something like the *razverstka* where goods were traded in kind (a process also referred to as economic rationalization) but they also needed to feed and supply a large army relative to the resources it controlled and lacked the money to pay peasants for their goods, making consensual market transactions impossible.¹⁸⁷

General economic organization mirrored this situation. The tension between independent trade unions and workers cooperatives against *VSNKh* decisively shifted in favour of the latter as the Civil War progressed. Independent trade unions were effectively outlawed and one-man management with Bolshevik appointees became the norm for industrial organization. The most important development was *Glavkism*. *VSNKh* was the supreme economic body but the actual authority to set quotas and issue requisition orders to local soviets lay with the specific *glavki*, departments responsible for a specific resource like chemicals or munitions.¹⁸⁸ This organization reflected the conviction that centralization equaled efficiency, though it betrayed the Bolshevik distaste for bureaucracy.¹⁸⁹

In the end, *Glavkism* proved to be a doubly ineffective system. The specific bureaus often struggled to communicate with each other and their areas of authority often overlapped in inconvenient and inefficient ways. More importantly, it created tensions between the centre and the periphery. *VSNKh* would demand resources from a given region without knowledge of local conditions and imposed a difficult bureaucratic apparatus for periphery regions to get supplies from the centre.¹⁹⁰ The fiercest critics were often the local Soviets and commissars themselves

¹⁸⁷ Lih. "Bolshevik Razverstka." 686-687.

¹⁸⁸ Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 216-217.

¹⁸⁹ The Bolshevik dislike of bureaucracy is a complicated issue to be sure, there was certainly little hesitation in establishing administrative organs built to serve Socialism like *VSNKh* or the Cheka. Nevertheless, even during the period of War Communism grew disillusioned with the bureaucratization of economic life compared to the hoped-for democratic flowering of workers' initiatives. See especially the recollections of Lev Kritsman, cited in: Nove. *Economic History of the USSR*. 75.

¹⁹⁰ Malle. *The Economic Organization of War Communism*. 228-230.

who drew the ire of both the centre and locals for their middle man role. A letter from the Commissar charged to Smirnov reflects this tense relationship.

The Gubernia is starving. A huge number of peasants eat moss and other rubbish; From the autumn they stored up bark, grass, moss, etc., and the village is starving for three years. The mood is absolutely certain, the only one a starving village can have.

Moreover, it was only in the summer and autumn of last year that the centre first drew attention and sent one responsible comrade from St. Petersburg to do the party work. Only in the autumn did the Party committees and organizations begin to implement the line of the Eighth Congress on the middle peasants. Until the summer, the attitude towards the peasant was fierce; From this spring, last year there were strong uprisings, which were brutally suppressed.

I could only continue to work to calm the peasantry, insist on a careful - according to the program - attitude towards the village. Judging by several congresses, it seems to me that we will achieve this result: The hammered, frightened peasant begins to move, begins to talk, complain, comes to the realization that he also has his rights, that the era of ferocious "pistol-type commissars" is passing.

We strengthen the party in the most intensive way, get rid of strangers, attached, predatory elements. Everywhere and everywhere we try to strengthen Soviet power in the countryside. Now hunger and immediate necessity prevents anything else.¹⁹¹

The other major consequence was a widespread black market. As the official mechanism for trade generally provided the producers with next to nothing, black market dealings proved

¹⁹¹ "Bol'she togo, tol'ko s leta-oseni proshlogo goda v pervyye tsentr obratil vnimaniye i poslal odnogo otvetstvennogo tovarishcha iz Pitera na partiynuyu rabotu. Tol'ko s oseni Komitety i organizatsii partii nachali usvaivat' liniyu VIII s"yezda o serednyake. Do leta otnosheniye k muzhiku bylo svirepo-kombedovskoye; ot etogo vesnoy proshlogo goda byli sil'nyye vosstaniya, kotoryye zhestoko podavlyalis'.

Mne ostavalos' lish' prodolzhat' rabotu po uspokoyeniyu krest'yanstva, nastaiivat' na bereznom — po programme — otnoshenii k derevne. Sudya po neskol'kim s"yezdam, mne kazhetsya, chto my dob'yemsa rezul'tata; zabityy, zapuganny muzhik nachinayet shevelit'sya, nachinayet govorit', zhalovat'sya, prikhodit k ponimaniyu, chto u nego tozhe yest' svoi prava, chto epokha svirepykh "komissarov pistoletnogo vida" prokhodit.

My usilenneyshim obrazom chistim partiyu, izbavlyayemsa ot chuzhikh, primazavshikhsya, khishchnykh elementov. Vезде i vsyudu pytayemsa ukrepit' sovetскую vlast' v derevne. Meshayet seychas bol'she golod i beztovar'ye, chem chto-to drugoye."

The letter is structured responding to specific criticisms Sovnarkom made towards the local Soviet in Smirnov. The entire original can be found at:

Vladimir Mesheryakov, "Letter to Sovnarkom," in *Golos naroda: pis'ma i otkliki ryadovykh sovetsskikh grazhdan o sobytiyakh 1918-1932 gg*, ed. ROSSPEN (Moscow: Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv ekonomiki, 1920). F. 1943. Op.1. D. 693. 73-74

incredibly desirable and profitable. Producers would underreport their actual production to the Soviet authorities and sell the rest of their output on the side. Of course, the Bolsheviks were aware of this and they were often informed of such behavior by local sympathizers who were dismayed by those who to them, were undermining socialism. A letter from a Bolshevik supporter in Sumy highlights this.

To survive, we submit ourselves to the mercy of fate and join the queue at 4 o'clock in the morning. Especially this crisis is felt in Sumy, where there is absolutely nothing [in the government stores,] and there is everything at crazy prices at bazaars, and merchants, using the ban on free sale, exploit us for the goods we need. The poor working proletarian goes hungry to the market, stands, looks and goes further into the food department, maybe I'll get something there, but alas! - there is nothing, and he painfully goes home, where he meets a hungry and cold family, consisting of 6-7 souls of his children and his wife. A rich man - he does not go to the food department to stand in line, but goes to the market and buys everything. Then what? He has money, and he is still engaged in speculation, and his family is greeted by a cheerful and joyful family, because it is full. What kind of struggle is this dear comrade Lenin for the proletariat, when the working people die of hunger, cold and typhus? What should the poor proletariat do? To go honestly for Soviet power or to go on speculating, against which the Soviet government is fighting, but it is necessary to speculate, because there is a desire. Of course, we must buy at one price, and sell on another, that is, rip off, as they say, a skin from another poor person who also wants to. I understand that free sale is not allowed in Soviet Russia, but you can wait, because the people have not yet adjusted, and when he understands what the Soviet government means, then you can also forbid free sale.¹⁹²

¹⁹² "Osobenno etot krizis oshchushchayetsya v g. Sumakh, gde absolyutno nichego net, a na bazarakh po sumasshedshim dorigim tsenam yest' vse, i torgovtsy, pol'zuyas' zapretom vol'noy prodazhi, berut za produkty, chto khotyat. Bednyy trudyashchiysya proletariy idet golodnyy na bazar, postoit, posmotrit i idet dal'she v prodovol'stvennyy otdel, avos' tam chto-nibud' poluchu, no uvy! — tam net nichego, i on s bol'yu na dushe idet domoy, gde yego vstrechayet golodnaya i kholodnaya sem'ya, sostoyashchaya iz 6-7 dush detey i zheny. A bogatyy chelovek — on ne idet v prodovol'stvennyy otdel stoyat' v ochered', a idet na bazar i pokupayet vse. Yemu to chto? U nego yest' den'gi, i on yeshche zanimayetsya spekulyatsiyey, i yego doma vstrechayet sem'ya veselaya i radostnaya, potomu chto ona syta. Kakaya zhe eto bor'ba uvazhayemyy tovarishch Lenin za proletariat, kogda trudyashchiyesya umirayut ot goloda, kholoda i tifa? Chto zhe delat' bednomu proletariyu? Ili itti chestno za Sovetskuyu vlast' ili itti spekulirovat', protiv chego boretsya Sovetskaya vlast', a spekul'nut' nado, potomu chto yest' khochetsya. Konechno, nado itti kupit' po odnoy tsene, a prodat' po drugoy, t. ye. sodrat', kak govoryat, shkuru s drugogo bednyaka, kotoromu tozhe yest' khochetsya. Konechno, nado itti kupit' po odnoy tsene, a prodat' po drugoy, t. ye. sodrat', kak govoryat, shkuru s drugogo bednyaka, kotoromu tozhe yest' khochetsya. YA ponimayu, chto v Sovetskoy Rossii vol'naya prodazha ne dopustima, no eto ved' mozžno obozhdat', potomu chto narod yeshche ne prispobilsya, a kogda on poymet, chto znachit Sovetskaya vlast', togda mozžno i vol'nuyu prodazhu zapretit'."

For the entire document, consult: Anonymous, "Letter from O.M. To Lenin, 25 March 1920," *ibid.* Moscow: Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv ekonomiki. F. 1943, Op. 1. D. 693. 26-27.

Reports would arrive that a certain town or region was failing to adequately supply goods to the official authorities and commissars would be dispatched to requisition what was needed. Coercion was the lynchpin of War Communism, and it was only ever really effective where strong Bolshevik forces were present, despite widespread support for Socialist ideas throughout Russia. Many Bolsheviks recognized the scale of the black market, perhaps equally large as the official economy and engaged with it themselves to satisfy the demands of the centre. Even Trotsky supplied the army with black market resources in spite of his active role in theorizing and implementing the Bolshevik economic model.¹⁹³

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks were able to overcome the White threat in 1919 and this filled Lenin and others with a renewed confidence in effectiveness of their organizational techniques and in the providence of their mission.¹⁹⁴ This inspired two principal policy decisions. First, to escalate the conflict with Poland that had officially began in February 1919. Lenin and Tukhachevsky, one of the ablest Soviet army commanders, agreed that the defeat and occupation of Poland would provide both immediate economic respite to the beleaguered Soviet Union but that it would also provoke socialist revolution in Germany, and subsequently, the world.¹⁹⁵

A new force was assembled for the invasion of Poland. Many of the troops came from Central Asia and Siberia, where the Soviets had also generally reestablished control. A fact that would cause some Polish commentators to liken the Soviet invasion to that of the Mongol horde.¹⁹⁶ The Poles had occupied much of western and northern Ukraine in early 1919 so the decision was made by Tukhachevsky to advance westward along two fronts, one directly into Poland towards Warsaw, the other through Ukraine which would meet the other force at Warsaw

¹⁹³ Szamuely. "Major Features of War Communism." 158.

¹⁹⁴ Figes, *A People's Tragedy : The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*. 700-702.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Adam Zamoyski, *Warsaw 1920 : Lenin's Failed Conquest of Europe* (London: HarperPress, 2008). 65.

from the South. The invasion pushed the Poles back inexorably throughout 1919 and early 1920. The Soviets were outside Warsaw in the Summer of 1920 and attacked the city in August. The Soviet attack was uncoordinated, owing to the insubordination of Stalin and the Poles under Józef Piłsudski defeated the Soviet army. A peace treaty was signed in March of the following year establishing the Polish border at the Curzon line while recognizing Soviet control of the Ukraine.¹⁹⁷

In the meantime, the *razverstka* and other requisitions were stepped up, despite the gradually receding military necessity.¹⁹⁸ Attempts to rationalize economics at *VSNKh* also increased. An increasingly detailed network of bureaucratic agencies responsible for the central management of every imaginable economic entity was drawn up, even windmills had their own agency.¹⁹⁹ This policy decision undermines the theory that the Bolsheviks responded primarily to external necessity and would have preferred a gradual approach to economic transformation had there been no war. Efforts to eliminate money and all market mechanisms proceeded with high intensity in 1919 and 1920 owing largely to the fact that Lenin believed that Russian workers and peasants were on the verge of becoming socialized and that a final push was all that would be required to institute the necessary cultural change for a Communist society and complete the transition period.²⁰⁰

This perception differed dramatically with reality. With the immediate threat of White reprisals diminishing, the Russian peasantry renewed its struggle against central authority. Grain requisitions increased in their demands and severity while the agricultural capacity of the country

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 108-112.

¹⁹⁸ Lih. "Bolshevik Razverstka." 679.

¹⁹⁹ Nove. *Economic History of the USSR*. 70-71.

²⁰⁰ M. Patenaude Bertrand, "Peasants into Russians: The Utopian Essence of War Communism," *The Russian Review* 54, no. 4 (1995). 552-570.

steadily decreased due to the devastation of war.²⁰¹ The result was a severe famine that began in 1920 and became severe in 1921. Coupled with the economic hardship that War Communism and the *razverstka* placed upon peripheral populations, peasant rebellions became widespread all across the Soviet Union. In the end, even some of the Bolsheviks strongest supporters in the early years rebelled, namely the Kronstadt sailors. Efforts were made by the centre with the army and commissars alike to suppress these rebellions. Kronstadt was, as were some peasant movements, but Lenin recognized that the Bolsheviks had insufficient force to maintain the offensive.²⁰²

War Communism was formally disavowed and abandoned by *Sovnarkom* and replaced by the New Economic Policy. The Soviet regime persisted but its lofty goals for thorough economic reorganization were halted by the double disappointment of the failure to provoke international revolution or to gain the general compliance of its domestic population, especially the peasantry. Lenin's disposition tempered, believing now that it would take generations to create a socialist economy and culture.²⁰³ However, Stalin would later show that massive economic reorganization could be accomplished if sufficient coercive means were presented a decade later, though of course, at great cost.

3.3 Comparison

In these two periods, the dynamic relationship between war, or perhaps more accurately, violence, and revolutionary economics became most pronounced. The two systems were formulated and conditioned by the desire to challenge and replace the international economic order but needed to respond to the immediate challenges of a wartime environment. To their

²⁰¹ Tyelitsin. 147-167.

²⁰² Smith, *Russia in Revolution : An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. 264-265.

²⁰³ Lars T. Lih, "Political Testament of Lenin and Bukharin and the Meaning of Nep," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (1991). 241-252.

credit, an increased rationalization of the economics permitted both regimes to prioritize the production, allocation, and distribution of important materials, which at least partially enabled their success in war.

At the domestic level, both systems struggled immensely with popular compliance and required coercive means to maintain themselves. It seems that both Napoleon and Lenin anticipated much greater popular support and compliance to their new economic measures as a result of their decrees and agitating propaganda. In reality, the average person was unwilling to accept heavy personal sacrifice for the good of the central authority, even if they did believe in its goal in many cases. The economic incentive was too low or simply did not exist and prompted the creation of an enormous black market in each case.²⁰⁴ An ever-expanding base of internal police, the *douaniers* and the commissars were required to enforce compliance.

At the international level, which was arguably more important for both Napoleon and Lenin, the difficulties were enormous. The goals of each regime were lofty, Napoleon sought to reorganize the European, and consequently global economy, away from British dominated free-trade and towards a French dominated economic sphere. Lenin wanted to provoke world revolution and upend global capitalism. These goals forced a similar logic on both regimes, international expansion and annexation.

As it was, Napoleon came much closer to realizing this goal than the Lenin and the Bolsheviks ever did. Britain was very nearly brought to economic ruin on at least two occasions, and had Russia been defeated, total victory seemed a real possibility. The Bolsheviks acted more out of idealism given their relatively weak international position. Though, it is certain that a Soviet victory in Poland would have agitated the international environment in a fundamental way.

²⁰⁴ For the French case, see: Marzagalli, "The Continental System: A View from the Sea." 86-87. For the Soviet case, see: Nove. 55.

Both leaders felt at one point that they were on the verge of victory. Again, Napoleon had more reason to believe so than Lenin and a final effort to consolidate their regime and system was launched. Their efforts overstretched their resources and prompted widespread rebellion. The Bolsheviks were able to salvage their political authority in an absence of external pressure while sacrificing their revolutionary economic project. Napoleon, confronted by popular risings and a renewed international coalition, lost everything.

A key failure was the inability to build enough goodwill and to adequately incentivize. As it was, significant preexisting goodwill was eroded over the course of their efforts. Both leaders clearly overestimated the power of decrees and propaganda efforts to maintain the enthusiasm of their subject populations. An ironic development in the French case, as Napoleon had built his success on securing the loyalty of the army with payment in gold rather than the paper currency of previous regimes, but failed to see the same logic at work with the peasants and merchants of Europe. The simple absence of coercion was enough to undermine their official economic restructuring, and corruption became widespread even within official channels. Nevertheless, the later success of the Soviet Union, and even the successful periods of the Continental System highlight the potential for these systems to succeed, despite their structural flaws.

4 Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to juxtapose two periods, two regimes, two leaders, and two economic systems that had not hitherto been compared. In doing so, this comparison sought to accomplish two tasks. First, to look at the Soviet economic experiment of the Lenin years in a new light through novel comparison with the Continental System of Napoleonic France. The Soviet experiment, being the first important Socialist movement in world history, is generally assumed to have been entirely novel. In many respects, it certainly was. The hope was, however, that a comparison with a historical antecedent with which it shared some outward similarities, but many important differences would present a novel perspective to look at Soviet War Communism.

In examining the two periods in parallel, there is strikingly much in common. In broad terms, the following process occurred. A revolutionary regime change occurred whose leaders were largely motivated to challenge and replace the contemporary economic order as part of their revolutionary program, which was deeply linked with international war. The regimes consolidated their political authority and the immediate military situation while cautiously addressing the economic situation. Having gained the upper hand in military matters, and reflecting on the nature of the conflict they were engaged in, both regimes intensified the centralization and rationalization of their economic policies and crossed a threshold wherein total victory or total defeat seemed to be the only possible outcomes.

The similarity in the progression of thought and policy, alongside the reception and resistance of the general populations challenges the notion that the Soviet economic experiment and the challenges it faced were not entirely governed by the unique elements of Bolshevism and Socialism but were strongly informed by the confluence of revolutionary politics and war.

This similarity allows for the exploratory formulation of a typology of revolutionary economic regimes, of which these two cases here studied are prominent examples. That war strongly conditioned the manner in which the two regimes conducted themselves is clear. However, the fact that both regimes intensified the implementation of their economic systems domestically and internationally when the pressures of war lightened demands explanation, and brings again to the fore the importance of ideas and ideology. What seems clear is that at a certain point, the two regimes crossed a certain threshold, whether in response to the wartime dynamic and the environmental context or simply in the minds of the leaders (more likely, a confluence of both) and refused to accept a compromised position with the existing order. Indeed, the existing order mirrored this sentiment and also came to reject compromise, particularly in the French case. This understanding helps to explain some of the more difficult facts of both periods and supplies a logic to Napoleon's invasion of Russia despite France's dominating position and to the Bolshevik decision to invade Poland and antagonize an already hostile peasantry despite their weakened military position and successful maintenance of political power by framing them within the rationale of the regimes' respective economic projects, rather than as purely military or political events. From this perspective, the logic of such moves is more clearly understood.

This comparison and the conclusions drawn from it would greatly benefit from the integration of additional case studies that would serve to further support or to complicate and challenge the arguments made here. Indeed, even within these two cases there are a number of elements that have been neglected for reasons of space. A more thorough characterization of the respective international situations, particularly through an examination of the status-quo powers would help paint a more complete and balanced picture, rather than simply focusing on the revolutionary regimes and their perspective. More detailed study of the conflicting viewpoints and debates within the two revolutionary regimes would also serve to nuance this picture.

Clearly however, any novel revolutionary economic regime would do well to look back on these periods, regimes, and systems if they wish to provide an alternative model that is actually desirable and benefits its citizens. However, they must equally bear in mind that any truly revolutionary effort will become a zero-sum game with the present order if and when such a project ceases to limit itself to a process of contained, domestic change, and becomes aggressively international in character. In both the French and Soviet case, the international community fought tooth and nail to maintain its position and to stymie the revolutionary efforts with embargo, blockade, and full-fledged war. There is little reason to doubt that a new challenge would be perceived any differently and this poses an immense challenge, if not quite a totally insurmountable one.

To return to the original aims of this thesis. The first was to challenge the notion of the uniqueness of the Soviet economic project by comparing with the historical antecedent of Napoleonic France with whom it has not heretofore been linked. In tracing the environment in which both regimes and leaders were formed and influenced as well as the context in which they assumed power, in exploring the dialectic relationship between revolutionary war and revolutionary economic projects, and in exploring the similar manner through which the projects were resisted and ultimately ruined, the marked similarity between these two periods and systems has been demonstrated. The key conclusion is to refocus on the structural factors that influenced the course of events, regardless of the avowed political aims or ideological orientation.

The second principal aim was to work towards a typology of revolutionary economic regimes with a broader reach than the typical categories of “planned economies” or “State-socialism,” and to challenge the notion that such regimes are doomed to failure due to their un-economic nature. The present examination has demonstrated that the preordained failure

hypothesis is a highly dogmatic one; the failure of both projects was highly contingent on political, and especially military factors. Of course, a complete typology cannot be achieved within the span of such a short work. Nevertheless, a number of important criteria seem to present themselves, though it might be a step too far to propose a tentative, enumerative list. Rather, the hope is that the present comparison has been compelling and convincing enough to justify further investigation along this line through the development of a more rigorous theoretical framework and through the addition of additional historical cases. With this approbation, the modest goal of this work would be achieved.

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