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LENINIST CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND TRUTH AS
PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DISSIDENCE

By

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I dedicate this to my great Uncle Norm, I know he would have
ACTUALLY loved to read it.

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ABSTRACT

My thesis starts by looking at Lenin's interpretation of Marxism. The Leninist ideas of a tangible reality, the rejection of social democratic compromise and the importance of social responsibility as well as personal responsibility for political action. These ideas that facilitated the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia can be paralleled to the ideas later used by anti-government activists. I examine the sociopolitical environment of the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in 1953. With Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin a new era began across the Eastern Bloc. Using Václav Havel and his interpretation of Jan Patočka's phenomenology I create a wide schema for what is, and ultimately what creates a political "dissident." Phenomenology examines the way individuals interpret first person experiences, and what meaning they then apply to those experiences. Arguably the tyrannical environment of the Eastern Bloc shaped its own opposition. I then present the work of several Russian "dissidents" to first show the truly Leninist roots of their work, and then illustrate that this "dissidence" is not a national movement, rather it was shaped by oppression. Thus "dissidents" are forced to politically act because they have learned to from their own history. The foundations of the Bolshevik revolution necessitated radical political action because of an overwhelming social responsibility. The concept of a world unified proletariat revolution can be modernized to a concept of a world wide dissident movement against tyranny

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of published dissident memoirs and “ego-documents” has created an individually-centered approach to the study of “dissidence.” The term *dissident* – from the Latin for “sitting apart” – highlights the alienation of these citizens from imposed social norms and cultural mores. Aside from this individual estrangement the study of “dissidence” has been conducted in considerable isolation from the social context from which it developed. Recently, work on this later Soviet period has increasingly called into question what some would call the “binary categories of, oppression and resistance, [...] official culture and counterculture, totalitarian language and counterlanguage, public self and private self, truth and lie.”¹ These “binary categories” can be seen in Leninist theory, and again in the development of anti-Soviet movements. This directional shift in study could facilitate a greater movement to understand dissident as a wide social movement, not focused on national backgrounds, instead cohesive through its philosophical influences.

¹ Nathans, Benjamin “the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol’pin and the Idea of Rights under ‘Developed Socialism.’” *Slavic Review*, Vol 66, No. 4 (Winter 2007), 630-663, 632. *Quoted from: Alexei Yurchak, Everything was Forever, Until it was No More The Last Soviet Generation (Princeton 2006), 5.*

Nathans also suggests, Sergei Oushakine, “The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat,” *Public Culture* 13, no2 (2001): 191-214.

Iurii Aikhenval'd wrote, "Don Quixote was a solitary knight, an army of Don Quixotes is unthinkable."² Similarly a united army of dissidents has always been considered unthinkable; due to their wide range of personal philosophies, and seemingly inbred resistance to hierarchical organizations, or political parties of any kind. Nathans explains: "An eccentric mathematician known to walk the streets of Moscow in his house slippers would in any event have been an unlikely general for such an army."³ This "stereotypical image of dissident" is problematic for characterizing dissidents as – citizens that were deemed subversive, often viewed as artistic, counter culture caricatures. In any later study of "dissidence" one is forced to again categorize a group of citizens based on the definition determined by the government. Thus it is more productive to examine the "dissidents'" concept of "dissidence", and then try to understand the driving forces of these activists.

"Dissident" movements are often examined through individualistic case studies, however these studies usually denote some national distinction between dissident movements. Understandably, open communication between "dissidents" under tyranny was difficult, yet many of these "isolated" dissidents shared core ideals. The question arises, where did these parallels come from? This study of the "binary categories" of "dissidence" brings to light the stark dichotomy in dissident thinking. Much like the Leninist call for radical political action, allowing no concession to 'revolutionary defencism,' dissidents saw no opportunity for compromise with the Communist Party. There is a common decision presented in the work of many "dissidents," either a citizen can accept the lie and continue living under tyranny, or decide to not live passively any longer and be deemed an enemy of communism; there is no middle ground. This idea of making a conscious decision to no longer accept the government in place is reminiscent of early Leninist theory.

² Nathans, Benjamin "the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under 'Developed Socialism.'" *Quoted from: Iurii Aikhenval'd, Don Kikhot na russkoi pochve* (New York, 1982), 1:17.

³ Nathans, Benjamin "the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under 'Developed Socialism.'" *Quoted From: On the Slippers, see Alexeyeva and Goldberg, The Thaw Generation*, 107.

Lenin wanted to introduce a new system to the Russian populace, however he understood that he needed the people to recognize that communism was the only possible direction for the country, much like the realization “dissidents” attempt to facilitate for the masses: the Communist regime is a lie.

In this work I use Václav Havel and his interpretation of Jan Patočka’s phenomenology to create a wide schema for what is, and ultimately what creates a political “dissident.” While Havel is Czech and wrote some of his most notable work on “dissidence” in the later 1970s I utilize his philosophy to interoperate “dissident” movements in the Soviet Union from the 1950s through the 1970s. Václav Havel was extremely influenced by Jan Patočka’s phenomenology. Phenomenology examines the way individuals interpret first person experiences, and what meaning they then apply to those experiences. Thus Havel’s concept of “dissidence” is not as much shaped by his Czech nationality as by his oppression under the Communist Party. Therefore the parallels between the philosophical foundations of Czech “dissidence” and Russian “dissidence” would be inherent in their shared experiences under communist tyranny. Havel asserts the importance of “living in truth,” it is the only way to be a free man regardless of current political situation. This concept of “living in truth” can be seen throughout dissident work in the Soviet Union (as well as Czechoslovakia). I believe a similar concept is even seen in Lenin’s Marxist foundations for the Bolshevik party. A true Leninist makes a conscious decision to no longer live under tyranny and then takes responsibility for his political action. Parallel to this thought, numerous “dissidents” assert that it is the people’s fault the Soviet system became so powerful because the citizens of the Eastern Bloc passively lived under tyranny, and by living this lie allowed the tyrannical Soviet system to maintain power with its facade of stability and structure.

In my work I address Havel’s concept of “dissidence” and the importance of living in truth; I then go back to 1950s Russia to find parallels through the development of the “dissident movement.” I begin with Havel and then step back to trace the development of Soviet “dissidence” to more effectively highlight the development of dissident ideas. I create a schema of “dissidence,” and a

phenomenological "life world" to explain the more final concept of "living in truth," before then going back to illustrate its development over several decades. As a result the growth and development of Havel's ideas over time are easier to visualize. Once again, finding a concrete definition of "dissidence" is a dangerous endeavor; by strictly defining a "dissident" one can be as nearsighted as the Soviet system, attempting to simply categorize a diverse group of individuals. Therefore, I present a schema for "dissidence" that centers on the idea of living in truth. I do not group these "dissidents" together, deem them subversive and then analyze their work, but instead I allow their decision to live in truth to connect them, and their personal identity to define their place within the "dissident movement." By tracing the Soviet "dissident" movement from the show trials of the 1960s through the thaw and into the 1970s I show the growth and development of "dissident" ideas and the government's reaction. It becomes obvious that regime attempts to crush "dissidence" only made the resistance stronger. The anti-Soviet movements not only gained philosophical foundations from original Soviet principals, they gained notoriety from the government's oppression.

In studying "dissidence" it is important to understand the driving force of "subversive" behavior. By looking at the growth of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union, and finding parallels in non-Russian "dissidence," I offer a new way to study "dissidence." As opposed to studying "dissent" in considerable isolation from the social context from which it developed as an internalist and person-centered movement, or even moving forward to address the "binary categories" of "dissent," I look for the foundations of these binary categories. By presenting the work of several Russian "dissidents" to show the Leninist roots of dichotomy, social responsibility and truth I can illustrate that this "dissidence" was shaped by its oppressor. "Dissidents" are compelled to act because their personal histories have taught them to do so, as Havel would assert their phenomenological "life world" demands they act. The foundations of the Bolshevik revolution necessitated radical political action because of an overwhelming social responsibility. This same overwhelming social responsibility drives "dissidents" to live in truth; it is not their

profession, education, or even nationality, it is the shared historical experience that creates a solidarity of those shaken by tyranny, and a far reaching opposition movement.

CHAPTER 2

LENINIST FOUNDATIONS

In this chapter I plan to look at the Leninist foundations of the Soviet Union, concentrating on the Leninist idea of social responsibility and revolutionary action to then address the “binary categories” in Leninist theory. So, why focus on Lenin and not simply Marx? Would it not be more suitable to begin with the origins proper? If examining the influence on the Eastern Bloc it is only logical to begin with Lenin. First, Lenin’s external relationship with Marx; he was not part of his inner circle, and in fact Lenin never met Marx or Engels. Furthermore, he came from the outskirts of western civilization, and as far as Western Europe was concerned, Russia might as well have been another world. This externality is the cornerstone of the western argument against Leninist ideas: he introduced into “Marxism the Russian-Asiatic despotic principle.”⁴ Lenin almost violently displaces Marx, ripping his theory out of its original context and inserting it into an entirely different historical movement, ultimately universalizing it in his attempts to “Russify it.” Secondly, it is only through a violent displacement that original Marxist theory can be put to practice. The first piece that showcased Lenin’s unique voice was his *What is to be Done?* exhibiting his conscious decision to intervene in the political situation. Lenin believed Russia’s socio-political situation demanded radical political action; he could no longer live under the lie of Tsarism. Lenin’s ideas fight the predominant modern dogma of compromise; he refuses to find an easier middle path. He sees a stark dichotomy between passively living under tyranny and acting against an

⁴ Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis, and Slavoj Žižek, “Introduction: Repeating Lenin,” In *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, ed. Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 1-4.

oppressor. Leninist philosophy would be mirrored for decades to come by future “communist” citizens oppressed by the very system he facilitates.

As early as 1902 Lenin began publicly pushing the concept of Russian Revolution while living in Geneva Switzerland. Many Russian Marxists were arguing that the Russian Social Democrats should focus on legal avenues to remedy the plight of the working class. Lenin responded with his lengthy pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, in which he sketched out a new vision of a revolutionary party. Lenin attacked Bernstein’s idea to change the Social Democratic party from one of “social revolution” to a party based in social reforms. Lenin then introduced the alternative idea of “putting socialism on a scientific basis, and demonstrating its necessity and inevitability from the point of view of the materialist conception of history.”⁵ Emphasizing the far-reaching poverty and the ever-increasing “class struggle,” Lenin explained the imperative nature of a new “critical” trend in socialism, “nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*.”⁶ Lenin’s idea of Social Democracy meant a “freedom from criticism,” a freedom to turn socialism into a democracy of reform, yet without “revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” There was no middle ground for Lenin, “to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.” This is the Leninist idea of “binary categories,” he sees no opportunity for compromise, a citizen can make a conscious decision to support socialist ideology or passively accept Tsarist tyranny.

In November 1916, a speech by Miliukov created a stir by punctuating “a list of the government’s shortcomings with the rhetorical question: is this stupidity or treason?”⁷ The speech emphasized the Tsarist government’s totally incompetence, and pro-German tendencies, and was the most notorious address in the history of

⁵ Daniels, Robert Vincent. *A Documentary History of Communism in Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (Hanover, NH: University of Vermont, Published by University Press of New England, 1993), 6.

⁶ Lenin, Vladimir Ilich, “What is to be Done?” In, M.S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, trans., *Lenin Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers: 1964) 347-530, 365. *Written between the autumn of 1901 and February 1902.*

⁷ Acton, Edward. *Rethinking the Russian Revolution*, (London: E. Arnold, 1990), 21.

the Duma. Milukov's speech was seen as a "storm signal of Revolution... transforming the Duma into the tribune of the revolution."⁸ Miliukov's speech epitomized the truly desperate nature of Russia on the eve of revolution. Secret police reports of 1916 pointed out "the movement of acute and profound resentment against the person of the currently reigning emperor, that has intensified to a terrifying degree."⁹ However it was not only the lower classes mobilizing against the government, "strongly attracted to the extreme left," but also the middle to high-class bourgeoisie. Lenin began to capitalize on the crushing burden of war and the crumbling economy to unite Russia in a socialist revolution. While the working class was still a long way from fulfilling the criteria for revolution derived from Marxist theory, which many revolutionaries recognized, Social Democrats called for a true revolution. In March 1917 Lenin accepted that the Russian proletariat was less prepared and even less "conscious" than the proletariat of other nations. Never the less, Lenin called for socialist revolution because of the historical circumstances that "for a certain, perhaps very short time has made the proletariat of Russia the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world."¹⁰

With Lenin's return to Petrograd (from his exile in Switzerland) he issued a series of directives, which became known as the April Theses. Aimed at his fellow Bolsheviks also returning to Russia, Lenin demanded the Soviets take power, denounced his liberal opposition and called for new communist policies. The April Theses were read by Lenin at two meetings of the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on April 4th 1917 and later published in Pravda on April 7th. The eight major ideas presented in Lenin's Theses would lay the

⁸ Lyandres, Semion. "Progressive Bloc Politics on the Eve of the Revolution: Revisiting P.N. Miliukov's 'Stupidity or Treason' Speech of November 1, 1916," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Fall 2004), 78-96.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lenin, Vladimir Ilich, "Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers," In, M.S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, trans., *Lenin Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers: 1964) 367-374. Written on March 26 (April 8), 1917, Published in the magazine *Jugend-Internationale* No. 8, May 1, 1917. Published according to the manuscript.

foundations for the October revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union. He begins by condemning the provisional government as utterly bourgeois and urges no support for it, as “utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear.”¹¹ Lenin asserts the “new government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia’s part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government, not the slightest concession to ‘revolutionary defencism’ is permissible.” In his next point Lenin demands that the bourgeoisie pass their power to the hands of the proletariat and poorest peasants, warranted by the nations shift from the first stage of revolution to the second stage. Thirdly, the falsity of the provisional government is reemphasized, “the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear.” Lenin next recognizes that in most of the Soviets of Worker’s Deputies the Bolsheviks are in the minority, thus the masses “must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies are the *only possible* form of revolutionary government.” Fifth, Lenin is sure to demand progress for “return(ing) to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies would be a retrograde step.” He then begins to address the necessary ideological direction for the Russia of the future, “the salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.” By his sixth point Lenin calls for the confiscation of all landed estates to ensure “nationalization of *all* lands in the country.” He then calls for the immediate amalgamation of all banks into a single national bank to be controlled by the Soviet. However Lenin is sure to remind his followers: “It is not (their) *immediate* task to “introduce” socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the *control* of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.”

Lenin realized that he had to show the masses that the Bolshevik line was the only possible path, however he recognized how important it was for the people to

¹¹ Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich. “The tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution” [a.k.a. The April Theses], Published: April 7, 1917 in *Pravda* No. 26. Signed: *N. Lenin*. Published according to the newspaper text. In, M.S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, trans., *Lenin Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers: 1964), 19-26.

*All the quotes until the next footnote are from Lenin’s April Theses

convince themselves that there were no alternatives to Bolshevik policy. For Lenin's Marxism to be successful the masses had to make a conscious decision to begin living as "communists," this enlightenment would be their choice to live actively and stop passively living their lie. As Slovenian continental philosopher and theorist Slavoj Žižek explained in a 1999 conference announcement:

Lenin's politics is the true counterpoint not only to the center-left pragmatic opportunism, but also to the marginalist... leftist attitude of what Lacan called the 'narcissism of the lost cause' [*le narcissisme de la chose perdue*]. What a true Leninist and a political conservative have in common is the fact that they reject what one could call liberal leftist irresponsibility, that is, advocating grand projects of solidarity, freedom, and so on, yet ducking out when the price to be paid for them is in the guise of concrete and often 'cruel' political measures. Like an authentic conservative, a true Leninist is not afraid to pass to the act, to take responsibility for all the consequences, unpleasant as they may be, or realizing his political project. Kipling (whom Brecht admired very much) despised British liberals who advocated freedom and justice while silently counting on the Conservatives to do the necessary dirty work for them; the same can be said for the liberal leftist's (or 'Democratic Socialist's') relationship toward Leninist Communists: liberal leftists reject Social Democratic compromise; they want a true revolution, yet they shirk the actual price to be paid for it and this prefer to adopt the attitude of a Beautiful Soul and to keep their hands clean. In contrast to this false liberal-leftist position (of those who want true democracy for the people, but without secret police to fight the counterrevolution, and without their academic privileges being threatened...), a Leninist, like a conservative, is authentic in the sense of fully assuming the consequences of his

choices, that is, of being fully aware of what it actually means to take power and to exert it.”¹²

Žižek highlights the inherent emphasis of responsibility in Leninist thought, creating a sort of politics of responsibility. A true Leninist “is not afraid to pass to the act, to take responsibility for all the consequences, unpleasant as they may be, of realizing his political project.”¹³ A true Leninist takes responsibility for his actions, and understands the social progress justifies the means. On the eve of the Bolshevik uprising (24 October) Lenin wrote in his *A Call to Power*, “history will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything.”¹⁴ Lenin recognized that the outcome of the Russian socio-political struggle rested on the actions of the revolutionaries themselves. His vision for the future rested on the people deciding to make a change, a conscious enlightenment of the proletariat.

To maintain power through the Russian Civil War the Leninist platform was forced to adapt. It is undeniable that the methods used by the Bolsheviks materially contributed to the formation of the Stalinist system as it formed through the 1930s. Yet it is also apparent that the Stalinist system that took shape was radically different from the future view of Lenin through the 1920s. The question then arises, was Stalinism an inevitable result of Leninist methods? The debate over this issue began almost simultaneously with the fall of the Provisional Government, and (as historian Alex Callinicos explains) has been recently renewed by Arno Mayer’s

¹² Callinicos, Alex. “Leninism in the Twenty-first Century? Lenin, Weber, and the Politics of Responsibility,” In *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, edited by Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis, and Slavoj Žižek, pp 19- 41, (Duke University Press: Durham and London 2007), 19.

Quoted from: Compare S. Žižek, *The ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), 236, 337.

Callinicos suggests a similar assessment of Leninism is developed in Žižek’s “When the Party Commits Suicide,” *New Left Review* 1: 238 (1999), 26-47 and “Georg Lukacs as the Philosopher of Leninism,” postface to G. Lukacs, *A defense of History and Class Consciousness* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹³ Callinicos, Alex. “Leninism in the Twenty-first Century?,” 20

¹⁴ Lenin, Vladimir Ilich, “A Call to Power,” (1917) In, M.S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, trans., *Lenin Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers: 1964).

major comparative study on the French and Russian Terrors.¹⁵ I agree with Callinicos when he calls Stalinism a “break with Leninism rather than its completion.” The emergence of a Stalinist line was an outcome of the circumstances the Bolsheviks found themselves in. Thus Soviet citizens were given a Leninist image of a grand Russian future and faced the horrors of Stalinism. As Lenin dictated in his “testament” on 25 December 1922

“Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary-General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution... Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest the comrades think about a way of removing Staling from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite, and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split, and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky, it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.”¹⁶

Before his death Lenin recognized the dangerous future Stalin could use the Bolshevik platform to pursue, however in the Party's past efforts to maintain power

¹⁵ A.J. Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). *Quoted from* Callinicos, Alex. “Leninism in the Twenty-first Century? Lenin, Weber, and the Politics of Responsibility,” In *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, 34.

¹⁶ Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich, *Collected Works*, vol. 36 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 594-596.

There is some discrepancy as to the validity of these statements. In an article first published in the newspaper 'Molniya', organ of the Trudovaya Rossiya mass movement, translated by Michael Lucas 'The Lie of the 'Lenin Testament' (Toronto, 1997). Sakharov raises the question of the authorship of this and a few other "Lenin Testament quotes."

the path for Stalin had already been cleared. A bright Soviet future was promised by Lenin, the Russian people endured the horror of Stalinism only to find themselves with nothing after his death. The environment of the Soviet "thaw" allowed for a reevaluation of Stalin, and Soviet ideas, allowing the people to look back at more classic Leninist ideas. Thus these Leninist ideas of social responsibility, consciousness and truth can be seen in the anti-Soviet movements of the "thaw" because of the individual dissidents' past Leninist foundations.

CHAPTER 3

Václav Havel's Phenomenology: Deciding "To Live in Truth"

"Dissidents" in the Soviet Union were citizens who openly disagreed with the actions and policies of the Soviet government. The term "dissident" was first used by the western media, later by the Soviet government, and finally by activists in the USSR who used their new self-designation as a joke. Given the extraordinarily restrictive circumstances in which dissidents lived, it is possible to understand how individuals behaved like activists in the face of extreme odds. However, "dissidence" is shaped by more than an individual; an activist is ultimately molded and inspired by an oppressor. In this chapter I will utilize Vaclav Havel's phenomenological thought process to illustrate how an individual's "natural world" is shaped by personal experience, then demonstrate how the Communist Party bred its own dissent. A wide range of individuals found themselves generally branded as "dissidents" when state officials encountered their opposition; however, by attempting to define and then persecute these individuals, the government created a more unified movement. The Communist party would not compromise, either a citizen could live passively under communist rule or decide to disobey the party lie.¹⁷ The Eastern Bloc "dissident movements" only became "movements" because of the solidarity of those shaken by the tyranny of the Soviet communist party. "Dissident movements" are often studied considered to have nationally specific traits and are studied within the context of individual nations. However the

¹⁷ Much like the Leninist "binary categories" and the later dissident idea of "binary categories." The Communist Party illustrated the same dichotomy in determining subversives that the dissident movement would later use to identify active dissidents.

parallels between dissidents across the Eastern Bloc demand investigation. These movements are based in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and then shaped by an oppressor utilizing the same philosophical foundations. By using Czech philosophy and Russian thought simultaneously to then analyze literature deemed subversive by the Soviet government I plan to illustrate the links of a transnational "dissident" movement, based in shared experience.

As Roy Medvedev, prominent Russian historian and renowned author of *Let History Judge* explained in a series of interviews in 1977:

"If Moscow's bakers stopped baking bread, then certainly home bakeries would sprout up everywhere, or people would begin baking their own. But no less than bread, our people need the truth about our country's past; they must know why they suffered such tragedies. Therefore I had to search for the truth, but using the methods of a craftsman."¹⁸

"Dissidents" utilize their individual skills to illuminate the truth hidden by the Soviet government; while the Party did everything in its power to hide its weakness, vulnerable foundations and ineffectiveness to govern "dissidents" drew attention to these flaws. Their opposition to the established power and their subsequent refusal to keep this opposition to themselves are the factors that typify Soviet "dissidents." The quest for truth and the desire to educate ones' contemporaries is characteristic of all dissidents, regardless of national affiliation. In the case of Russians, who "from ancient times... have seen the government as something foreign and hostile, and so no moral criteria apply to it."¹⁹ This quest for "truth" drove individual artists to become "dissidents" and incorporated the individual into the opposition for their remaining days.

¹⁸ Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich, Piero Ostellino, and George Saunders, *On Soviet Dissent: Roy Medvedev; Interviews with Piero Ostellino*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 30

¹⁹ McDaniel, Tim. *The Agony of the Russian Idea*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 36. Quoted from *K Kas'ianova, O russkom natsional'nom kharaktere*, Moskva: Institut natsional'noi modeli ekonomiki, 1994, 36.

With Stalin's death in March 1953 the Soviet government was forced to make certain policy concessions to maintain control of the Soviet Union. As Nikita Khrushchev gained power his new regime struggled with two outstanding issues: the "ineffectiveness of much of the Soviet economic system and the political apathy and resistance of the people."²⁰ For the Soviet leaders, Stalin's death also generated the dilemma of "how to place Stalin himself in Soviet History."²¹ While Stalin maintained a regime of terror, he nevertheless maintained a perplexing and overwhelming popularity. In his memoir *To Build a Castle*, Vladimir Bukovsky, -an active Soviet dissident of the 1960s - recalls how:

"Enormous unorganized crowds streamed through the streets to the Hall of Columns, where Stalin lay in state. There was something awe-inspiring about these immense, silent, gloomy masses of people. The authorities hesitated to try to curb them and simply blocked off some of the side streets with buses and trucks, while the waves of people rolled endlessly on... This vast procession continues for several days."²²

As a boy of ten Bukovsky mourned Stalin's death as something catastrophic; as life returned to normal he felt utterly bewildered.²³ "Hadn't god died," without whom nothing was supposed to take place?²⁴ The men in power understood how vital a "new course" would be. The necessity to shake up the old centralized authoritarian (Stalinist) bureaucracy and its methods was painfully apparent. The party needed to make changes, find a way to retain power, and somehow maintain public support. However, the party also appreciated that the Soviet people needed to be convinced that these reforms would not serve as "temporary lures for temporary regime

²⁰ Rothberg, Abraham, *The Heirs of Stalin; Dissidence and the Soviet Regime, 1953-1970*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 4-5.

²¹ Rubenstein, Joshua, *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985), 15

²² Bukovsky, Vladimir Konstantinovich. *To Build a Castle: My Life As a Dissenter*, (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 40

²³ Rothberg, Abraham. *The Heirs of Stalin; Dissidence and the Soviet Regime*, 20.

²⁴ Bukovsky, Vladimir Konstantinovich. *To Build a Castle: My Life As a Dissenter*, 48.

purposes, (and) that the initiatives required of them would not be deliberately misconstrued and used against them, as had happened so frequently in the past.”²⁵

The most effective way of reassuring the people was shedding light on some of Stalin’s tyranny, and in doing so, disassociating the current Party leaders from Stalin and his extreme methods. This campaign of “de-Stalinization” commenced with the Twentieth Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in February 1956. On the eve of the Congress of 1956 Khrushchev explained that the paramount issue facing the party was

“Whether it would condemn Stalin’s misrule and reject the methods of the Party and State leadership which had been a brake on progress, or [whether] forces clinging to the old things, resisting everything that was new and creative, would gain the upper hand in the Party.”²⁶

In his five and half hour “secret speech” Khrushchev exposed the crimes of Stalin (not without opposition by some of the ruling elite) in an effort to separate his new government from the crimes of the Stalinist dictatorship. Khrushchev asked what were to be the critical “post-Stalinist era questions: Where were the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee? Why did they not assert themselves against the cult of the individual in time? And why is this being done only now?”²⁷ Khrushchev attributed all these issues to the terror of Stalin: the leaders of the Politburo feared for their lives and thus Stalin committed numerous atrocities without consequence until his death. Nikolai Bulganin remarked, “It has happened sometimes that a man goes to Stalin on invitation as a friend. And when he sits with Stalin, he does not know where he will be sent next, home or jail.”²⁸ A partial version of Khrushchev’s speech was made available by the American State Department four months after it was delivered, although the speech was never published in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev cautioned:

²⁵ Rothberg, Abraham. *The Heirs of Stalin; Dissidence and the Soviet Regime*, 23.

²⁶ Harry Schwartz, editor, *Russia Enters the 1960s; A Documentary Report on the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962, 268.

²⁷ Rothberg, Abraham. *The Heirs of Stalin; Dissidence and the Soviet Regime*.

²⁸ Harry Schwartz, editor, *Russia Enters the 1960s*, 278.

“We cannot let this matter get out of the Party, especially not to the press. It is for this reason that we are considering it here at a closed Congress session. We should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy; we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes.”²⁹

With his speech Khrushchev set in motion events and forces that he could neither anticipate nor control.

After Khrushchev’s speech the Communist party maintained power across the Soviet Union, however the party had shown itself to be fallible, and in turn the ideology of the party faced overt scrutiny. Like all socio-political concepts the word ideology can be utilized in varied and often convenient ways. Across the Soviet Bloc the term “ideology” (or “Marxist-Leninist ideology”) had “taken on a significance altogether different from its original meaning: false consciousness... it [had] become a means of systematizing the teachings of Marx and Engels into rigid dogma.”³⁰ This ridged dogma was not confined to the Soviet Union; the Communist party propagated it across the Eastern Bloc, creating an environment of oppression.

In his essay “Power of the Powerless” Václav Havel explains how Soviet ideology had always been used to create a “bridge of excuses” between the ruling party and the individual, spanning the rift between the system’s aims and the individual’s aims of life. One of the central pillars of the system’s foundation was this ideology; this pillar “[was] built on a very unstable foundation. It [was] built on lies. It work[ed] only as long as people [were] willing to live within the lie.”³¹ Historically, ideology had been incredibly important in the USSR, however so much was dependent upon “how an ideological concept [was] interpreted at any given moment... that’s because only those who command real power over the state and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich, Piero Ostellino, and George Saunders. *On Soviet Dissent*, 89.

³¹ Václav Havel, “Power of powerless.” *Václav Havel on Living in Truth: Twenty-two essays published on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, (Great Britain: London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1987) 36 – 122.

ideological apparatus [could] carry out the function of authentic interpreting.”³² Hence following Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin, the party’s ideology, and in turn power was finally questioned by dissident “enemies of the state”.

When examining Václav Havel it is paramount to first have an understanding of his influences. Although Havel does not write as a “phenomenologist,” his work is strongly influenced by Jan Patočka’s phenomenology. “Therefore without a basic understanding of the phenomenological perspective, the language of Havel and Patočka is likely to confuse rather than enlighten.”³³ There have been a plethora of incompatible interpretations of Patočka and Havel’s work.

“John Keane interpreted Charter 77 as expressing the ideals of democratic socialism (1985). Jan Pavlik (1993) and Barry Smith (1993) interpreted Patočka and Havel as continuing the Austrian libertarian tradition of von Mises and Hayek. Martin Matustik (1993) interpreted Vaclav Havel’s philosophy as expressing a post nationalist synthesis of Habermas’s critical theory and Kierkegaard’s existentialism. Radhakeishnan (1992) suggested that Havel’s ideology is eclectic but tends toward liberal democracy. Bethke-Elshtein (1993) suggested that Havel’s politics transcended the obsolete ideological categories of right and left, which are just self-referring clichés; Havel favored, according to her, concrete reality over holy ideological platitudes. Rorty (1991) and Derrida (1995) interpreted the politics of East European intellectuals such as Havel as reacting against the Machiavellian separation of politics from morality and supporting a pre-Enlightenment, anti-postmodernist politics founded on an ontology of the person and universal morality. Anderson (1996) and Kuczynski (1996), who, in contrast to postmodernists,

³² Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich, Piero Ostellino, and George Saunders. *On Soviet Dissent*, 66.

³³ Edward F. Findlay, “Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique: Political Philosophy in Václav Havel and Jan Patočka,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Summer 1999), 403 – 438.

uphold the existence of universal values, interpreted Havel as a Universalist. Hunt (1994) interpreted Havel as overcoming postmodernist dilemmas of culture. Churchill (1991) interpreted Havel's 'Power of the Powerless' as a pacifist text outlining a nonviolent strategy of resistance in the tradition of Gandhi."³⁴

First, most of these philosophers' findings are incompatible with one another; however more interesting is how each philosopher managed to find himself in the works of Patočka and Havel (with the exception of Radhakrishnan³⁵), which fits seamlessly with phenomenological thought. Phenomenology is a "set of theoretical approaches that attempt to understand the way in which people experience the world they create and inhabit, the study of human experience and consciousness in everyday life."³⁶ More simply phenomenology examines the way individuals interpret first person experiences, and what meaning they then apply to those experiences.

Jan Patočka is credited as the most significant Czech philosopher of the 20th century; his philosophical and political thought was inspirational to the "dissident" movement. His work aimed to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the ruling party's ideological thought and Václav Havel dedicated his essay "The Power of the Powerless" to his memory. Patočka's political philosophy was strongly influenced by the insights revealed by the Platonic dialogues, conversations with Socrates "emphasizing the limitations of human knowledge coupled with an insistence upon a truthful life of moral comportment in the presence of a 'whole' greater than ourselves."³⁷ Yet after the Iron Curtain descended across Europe Patočka was separated from the philosophical trends taking hold in the west. In such a politically

³⁴ Tucker, Aviezer. *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary: A Merriam-Webster*. (Springfield, Mass: G. & C. Merriam Co, 2004)

³⁷ Edward F. Findlay, "Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique: Political Philosophy in Václav Havel and Jan Patočka." *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 403 – 438.

tumultuous environment the fundamental relationship between politics and development of philosophical thought was inevitable. Patočka's thought is "firmly rooted in the soil of human interaction within the real world,"³⁸ his philosophy attempts to directly address the phenomena of human existence without the distortion of ideology or dogma.

Patočka's adherence to the concepts of phenomenology rests on his commitment to philosophy as a means to directly examine the human experience. "Phenomenology" he wrote "is a philosophy that remains (or strives to remain) on the grounds of experience, of what can be expressed as original reality."³⁹ In other words, our opinions must conform to our personal experience of phenomena, never the inverse. Havel explained that in ideology "the significance of phenomena no longer derives from the phenomena themselves but from their locus as concepts in the ideological context. Reality does not shape theory, but rather the reverse."⁴⁰ Havel's analysis of party ideology justifies itself by appealing to Patočka's phenomenological principals; he appeals to a common human experience, rather than any abstract concept, theory or ideology to expose the absurdity of party operations. In his "Power of the Powerless" Havel writes:

"The working class is enslaved in the name of the working class; the complete degradation of the individual is perceived as his or her ultimate liberation; depriving people of information is called making it available; the use of power to manipulate is called the public control of power; and the arbitrary abuse of power is called observing the legal code; the repression of culture is called its development; the expansion of imperial influence is presented as support for the oppressed; the lack of free expression becomes the highest form of freedom; farcical elections become the highest form of democracy; banning independent thought becomes the most scientific of world

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, Trans. Kohak (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1998), 52.

⁴⁰ Havel, Václav, and John Keane. *The Power of the powerless*, 33.

views; military occupation becomes “fraternal assistance.” Because the regime is captive to its own lies, it must falsify everything. It falsifies the past. It falsifies the present, and it falsifies the future. It falsifies statistics. It pretends not possess an omnipotent and unprincipled police apparatus. It pretends to respect human rights. It pretends to persecute no one. It pretends to fear nothing. It pretends to pretend nothing.”⁴¹

While Patočka was a dedicated student of Husserl’s phenomenology he asserted that Husserl’s approach did not adequately address what links individual experiences together. To Husserl experience was subjective and each experience was distinct. As a site for these experiences Husserl proposes a “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) described “as a product of the common achievements of subjectivities.” This concept was ultimately “disappointing” for Patočka inasmuch as it “is nothing but a common link devoid of any genuine substantiality.”⁴² Patočka maintains that “*the natural world*,” his term for Husserl’s ‘life-world,’ should not be an abstract construct, or simply an aggregate set of subjective experiences. This “natural world” is rather the world as the individual experiences it, it is the framework of the human experience and it is ultimately independent of any absolute subjectivity.

“All of our individual experiences, all things appearing before us are in some sense emplaces within the context of a single reality. This framework is anticipates as a whole. It is just hat in this anticipation it is not given as a reality, it does not appear, it is not itself a phenomenon: it is what phenomonologizes.”⁴³

The “natural world” must be conceptualized not as what is given but rather the presupposed, often taken for granted, and seen as the “horizon” of all humanity’s

⁴¹ Václav Havel, “Power of powerless.” *Václav Havel on Living in Truth: Twenty-two essays published on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, 45.

⁴² Kohák, Erazim V, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 233.

⁴³ Tucker, Aviezer. *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 109.

knowledge and actions. It is Patočka's philosophical task to find "a grounding for human rationality not in the sciences and the world as the sciences reconstruct it, but rather in the world as it is perfectly, 'naturally' present in our living;"⁴⁴

Yet Patočka also believed the "natural" world is the context in which humans relate prior to their knowledge of historicity. Within the "natural" world individuals are perennially in contact with others; thus the "natural" world is the most basic determinant of human deportment. While Jan Patočka's "natural world" forms with both philosophical foundations and historical contingencies Václav Havel took this phenomenological concept of a "natural world" and used it throughout his essays in a different way. Havel's "natural world" is less of a philosophical category and more of an "evocative literary symbol."⁴⁵ Patočka's work emphasizes that hope is illogical; it must be re-established "on grounds intrinsic to the person"⁴⁶ when the ontological supports fail. Paradoxically, it is this collapse of confidence in external supports which evokes personal responsibility. "There emerge twin needs to save one's soul in the midst of war's apocalypse and to establish a community of solidarity among those who have been shaken."⁴⁷ This "solidarity of the shaken" provides individuals with asylum and strength, and in turn, becomes the "power of the powerless."⁴⁸ Havel uses the ideas of Patočka throughout his work cementing a foundation for his moral and "apolitical" politics. Both Havel and Patočka assert "freedom implicates the responsibility of man for the care of being." Havel attributes more responsibility to individuals for their actions while Patočka only holds man responsible to a certain degree.⁴⁹ Havel is deemed "refreshing" and a "man for the season" because

⁴⁴ Kohák, Erazim V. *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 25.

⁴⁵ Edward F. Findlay, "Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique: Political Philosophy in Václav Havel and Jan Patočka." *The review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No 3 (Summer, 1999), 403 – 438, 421.

⁴⁶ Walter H Capp, "Interpreting Václav Havel," *Cross Currents*, Special issue on hope *Cross Currents*, Fall 1997, Vol. 47 Issue 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Edward F. Findlay, "Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique: Political Philosophy in Václav Havel and Jan Patočka." 409.

he places himself in "a never-ending contest between tradition and transformation."⁵⁰

Havel attempted to apply the philosophical insights of Patočka to his own understanding of the communist leadership, simultaneously forming an alternative to the alienating ideology of the power structure he criticized. In his "Power of the Powerless" Havel began his criticism of the "post-totalitarian" (post-Stalinist) experience with his example of the greengrocer. Havel questioned the meaning of the grocer's actions when he placed a sign in his shop window calling for the workers of the world to unite. The sign does not truly express the opinions of the grocer, the action is entirely ritualistic. Havel writes:

"I think it can safely be assumed that the overwhelming majority of shopkeepers never think about the slogans they put in their windows, nor do they use them to express their real opinions. That poster was delivered to our greengrocer from the enterprise headquarters along with the onions and carrots. He put them all into the window simply because it has been done that way for years, because everyone does it, and because that is the way it has to be. If he were to refuse, there could be trouble. He could be reproached for not having the proper decoration in his window; someone might even accuse him of disloyalty. He does it because these things must be done if one is to get along in life. It is one of the thousands of details that guarantee him a relatively tranquil life "in harmony with society," as they say"⁵¹

The grocer has no need to even read the sign; he places in the window because he has learned that this is the way it is done. By hanging the sign in the window the grocer shows the government he is obedient, he "know(s) what he must do... (He is) obedient and therefore has the right to be left in peace."⁵² The grocer has learned

⁵⁰ Jean Bethke Eshtain, "A Man for This Season: Václav Havel on Freedom and Responsibility," *Perspectives on Political Science* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1992), 207.

⁵¹ Václav Havel, "Power of powerless." *Václav Havel on Living in Truth: Twenty-two essays published on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, 41.

⁵² *Ibid*, 41-42.

from past experience to simply appease the system, however he is taking no personal responsibility for his destiny. Havel explains what would happen if one day the greengrocer were to “snap” and stop supporting the system he knows is a farce;

“The bill is not long in coming. He will be relieved of his post as manager of the shop and transferred to the warehouse. His pay will be reduced. His hopes for a holiday in Bulgaria will evaporate. His children's access to higher education will be threatened. His superiors will harass him and his fellow workers will wonder about him. Most of those who apply these sanctions, however, will not do so from any authentic inner conviction but simply under pressure from conditions, the same conditions that once pressured the greengrocer to display the official slogans. They will persecute the greengrocer either because it is expected of them, or to demonstrate their loyalty, or simply as part of the general panorama, to which belongs an awareness that this is how situations of this sort are dealt with, that this, in fact, is how things are always done, particularly if one is not to become suspect oneself. The executors, therefore, behave essentially like everyone else, to a greater or lesser degree: as components of the post-totalitarian system, as agents of its automatism, as petty instruments of the social auto-totality.”⁵³

It is “known” by every member of society what will happen to political saboteurs, this known consequence can be easily avoided with tolerant silence; hence the masses remain publicly supportive of an ideology no one believed in.

Behind Havel's critique of communist political ideology there is a criticism of man's adherence to his government inspired principles of reality.

“Behind his exhortation of freedom we find a phenomenological rather than a liberal understanding of the concept; behind his talk of

⁵³ Ibid, 82-83.

sacrifice we find an understanding of man as a being intrinsically
"higher" than a mere cog in a machine."⁵⁴

After the fall of communism in 1989 Václav Havel was elected the first president of the new Czechoslovak nation. In his inauguration speech on the first of January in 1990 Havel expressed his signature ideals in what was deemed the "contaminated moral environment speech." Havel implored the Czech people to take responsibility for their destinies while also taking responsibility for enduring the tyranny of communism for so long. The "contaminated moral environment" was not created by the Czech Communist regime but rather by every Czech citizen who tolerated living under tyranny. The Czech people became "morally ill because (they) became used to saying something different from what (they) thought."⁵⁵ If the Czech people had rejected the lie and lived in truth this "moral illness" would not have infected the nation like an epidemic. Havel explains "we learned to not believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. Concepts such as love, friendship, compassion, humility, or forgiveness, lost their depth and dimensions."⁵⁶ The system demanded compliance, more simply conformity; it was this passivity of the people and tolerance of Party oppression that allowed the Party to maintain power. Simple human empathy lost all meaning because the Party had devalued everything creating this environment of apathy; thus a conscious decision had to be made (by the people) to stop accepting the government's lies.

Two major issues with the overreaching term "dissident" concern the term's tendency to "frequently imply a special profession,"⁵⁷ and ultimately its attempt to definitively define a diverse opposition group. Havel illustrates the constant identification of "dissidents" by the government with an example from his time working in a brewery. His immediate supervisor in the Brewery was a man, Š, who was well versed in the art of making beer and proud of his work. The brewery was

⁵⁴ Edward F. Findlay, "Classical Ethics and Postmodern Critique," 437.

⁵⁵ Václav Havel, "Inauguration speech" 1 January 1990.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Václav Havel, "Power of powerless." *Václav Havel on Living in Truth: Twenty-two essays published on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, 77.

managed by politically influential individuals who were apathetic about their work, work that they did not understand. When Š made suggestions to improve the management of the brewery he lost his job because the manager had “friends in higher places.” Š was labeled a “political saboteur.” By speaking the truth Š “stepped out of line, (had) broken the rules, cast himself out, and ended up a sub-citizen.”⁵⁸ Š had become the “dissident of the Eastern Bohemian Brewery”⁵⁹ not because he decided to take up this new profession; he was labeled “dissident” by the Czech Communist Party because he had decided to “live in truth” and speak the truth. Havel’s main issue with the term dissident is its tendency to over generalize the members of the opposition.

“You do not become a dissident just because you decide to one day take up this most unusual career; you are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society.”⁶⁰

The main goal of “dissidents” is to live in truth, by simply refusing to live within a lie; therefore it is the government that makes these individuals “activists” and in turn “dissidents.” There are no set characteristics for a “dissident.” The government once again was searching for a simple method of grouping all the “opposition” into one neat category. Havel laments this truly “cruel paradox that the more some citizens stand up in defense of other citizens, the more they are labeled with a word that in effect separates them from those ‘other citizens.’”⁶¹ The “dissident” movement grows from the experiences of individuals living under tyranny, this total collapse of confidence in any form of “external supports” creates the need for defense against the those “external supports,” namely the communist government.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 83.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 80.

Dissident opposition was not unified in an effort to find alternatives to Communism; rather many dissidents were "true believers" united in the belief that the party was not perusing the goals of communism. As R.W. Davies explained in his *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era*, "throughout the Stalin years, nearly all dissidents, party and non-party, criticized the regime not because it failed to emulate western capitalism, but because it failed to live up to socialist ideals."⁶² Through the development of the dissident movement it becomes obvious that while the movement grew from the experiences of individuals living under tyranny these individuals' Leninist backgrounds inspired their "anti-government" actions. They were once "true believers" in communism; however their "life worlds" were so wrenched by the Soviet government causing their "belief" to morph into distrust. Leaving these citizens with an outward contempt for the communist party, and an internal (even sub-conscious) belief in Leninism because of their created "life worlds."

⁶² Davies, R. W. *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, in association with Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 1997), 185.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF DISSIDENCE IN THE SOVIET UNION

"Dissidents" within the Soviet Union were deemed "opposition" by their government despite their initial intentions and with little distinction between the severity of their "anti-Soviet" action. In this chapter I will look at the development of the "dissident" movement within the USSR through the 1960s and 70s. By looking at the work of several "dissidents" I will show the wide philosophical range of these widely defined "dissidents," illustrating how willing the communist Party was to brand anything vaguely subversive as "anti-Soviet." I will also highlight the similarities in these "dissidents'" thoughts on activism, social responsibility, and truth, illustrating the development of their successor Havel's philosophy of dissent. While these men have developed unique personal "life worlds" (or natural worlds") their shared experience under tyranny created parallels in the development of their ideas on activism. By beginning with Sinyavsky and then Vol'pin I illustrate the beginnings of the Soviet "dissident movement." I then use Medvedev and Solzhenitsyn's works to demonstrate the wide gambit of dissident thinking. Medvedev was a Marxist and believed in reforming the communist system in place; while Solzhenitsyn was an avid supporter of the church and dreamed of living in a Russia reminiscent of 17th century Peter the Great grandeur. However the two men's shared experiences of oppression under the Soviet regime create similar "natural worlds" and thus the two exhibit parallels in their dissident thought. Havel's thoughts on "what is dissent" can be seen developing through the work of these prominent Soviet dissidents; emphasizing that dissidence was not a strictly

“national” movement, but rather a movement of oppressed citizens looking to understand their similar “natural worlds.”

With the Soviet government’s persecution, Abram Tertz (the pseudonym of Soviet writer Andrei Sinyavsky), passed quickly into literary and early “dissident” legend. Following a trip to the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, American author Alfred Kazin of *The Reporter* pictured Tertz as

“One of those intense sardonic young men in turtle-neck sweaters one meets sometimes in the institutes or the literary cafes and restaurants: Russian rather than Jewish, but quick to pounce on a Jewish pseudonym, seeing in it a proper symbol for what he takes himself to be – a skeptical believer, a stiff-necked prophet, a persecuted cosmopolitan, a scapegoat, a psychic sounding-board of moral catastrophe.”⁶³

This western image of a contemporary Russian intellectual seemed to influence the Soviet regime’s concept of “the opposition.” Tertz cannot find a place in his home or in the west; he is communist however “his” communism seems incompatible with the “communism” of the Soviet Union. In 1962 Sidney Monas of the *Massachusetts Review* doubted if Tertz was even a member of the communist party, “he is clearly no ideologue, his rhetoric glows with his awareness of the horrors of his society.” If he were a member of the Party he would be forced to ignore the “horrors” of Soviet society, or simply live in an optimistic utopian lie. This “awareness” is made more interesting by the fact that Tertz clearly recognizes that the Soviet Union has strayed from communist ideas; he recalls the idealized concept of a truly communist future in his *On Socialist Realism* Tertz explains:

“Words fail us when we try to talk about it. We choke with enthusiasm and we use mostly negative comparisons to describe the splendor that is waiting for us. Then under communism, there will be no rich and no poor, no money, wars, jails, frontiers, diseases – and

⁶³ Sidney Monas, “From Between the Floorboards: The Voice of Abram Tertz” *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Spring, 1962), 592-597, 592.

maybe no death. Everybody will eat and work as much as he likes, and labor will bring joy instead of sorrow. As Lenin promised, we will make toilets of pure gold... But what am I talking about? The modern mind cannot imagine anything more beautiful and splendid than the Communist ideal.⁶⁴

Tertz clearly respects the founding ideals of Marxism, his battle against socialist realism is a push for truth and ultimately a defense of the Soviet man himself. In the introduction to *On Socialist Realism* Czeslaw Milosz cautions readers:

"American readers would be mistaken if they attributed their own values and perspectives to this anonymous Russian writer, and regarded him as a supporter of the Western way of life, for instance. Were this so, the situation would be relatively simple (an internal enemy of the system would have found means to reveal himself), If we are to understand him, we must abandon the division of people into Communists and anti-Communists. If this anonymous Russian were asked whether he is a Communist or an anti-communist, he would almost certainly shrug and answer: 'What does that mean?' Only one kind of reality exists for him: it is that in which he has grown up and which forms his daily environment, the world outside the Soviet Union might just as well not exist, as far as he is concerned. He lives with the problems of his own community, and it is significant that he uses the form 'we' – 'we did this and that,' 'we believed,' 'we ought to'... in conditions of greater freedom, his voice would be regarded as a manifestation of the normal right to criticize."⁶⁵

This line between eastern and western interpretation emerges because there is no possible way for individuals in the west to properly conceptualize the environment of these "dissidents." Many westerners could not begin to understand how these

⁶⁴ Tertz Abram. *On Socialist Realism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 4.

⁶⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, Introduction In, Tertz Abram. *On Socialist Realism*. (New York: Pantheon Books), 8.

subversives could still be “true believers” in communism, after their experiences under the Party’s oppression. The “natural world” of Soviet citizens in the 1960s was unlike anything experienced in the west, this environment created by tyranny across the Eastern Bloc gave birth to a unique movement.

In *The Trial Begins* Sinyavsky dramatizes the themes initially presented in his *On Socialist Realism*. It is “the relation of means to ends, and the wearing-down, the obliteration of the ends by the means; not merely by ‘corrupt’ means but by all.”⁶⁶ The youthful and pure Seryozha sabotages his own purpose as effectively as his bureaucratic father Globov defeats his. Despite everything Seryozha emerges with dignity while his father is crushed in his failure. The question then arises, how does Seryozha, who is deemed an “enemy of the people” maintain his dignity, while Globov is crushed beneath the very system he serves. Seryozha remains true to the communist foundation of the Soviet Union, while his father remains true to the present bureaucracy. After a meeting with his son’s history teacher, Valeryan Valeryanovich, Globov attempts to explain to Seryozha why his “morbid curiosity could prove to be “dangerous.”⁶⁷

“Historically speaking my foot! Study your history but don’t forget the present day. Think of what we’re building! Well, there you are-In the final reckoning, if you see what I mean-ultimately-our ancestors were right. What they did was just.’ Seryozha’s father was right but Seryozha felt sorry for ShamyI. After all how could ShamyI know the Revolution would take place in Russia? All he wanted was to free his own people, it was only afterword that it turned out to be wrong, and even antisocialist as well...

⁶⁶ Sidney Monas, “From Between the Floorboards: The Voice of Abram Tertz, 596.

⁶⁷ Seryozha first explains that he had asked a question about “history... and philosophy; about just and unjust wars, for instance.” Seryozha explained himself without shame, following the teachings of Marx and Lenin. He would not understand how Yermak’s conquest of Siberia was just, and so was the crushing of ShamyI’s rebellion. (Yermak was the explorer who established the Russian claim to Siberia in the 16th century and ShamyI was last Caucasian resistance leader in the 19th century). Globov explains how Siberia and the Caucasus are necessary for Russia, namely the oil in the area. However Seryozha continues on to parallel the Russian actions with the English conquest of India, it is this comparison that is deemed unacceptable.

'Karlinsky now, he explains it differently. He says it all depends on your point of view. One man's justice is another man's injustice. But where d'you get *real* justice then?

'Karlinsky again!' Globov suppressed a curse. 'You leave all of this hair-splitting alone, Seryozha. Karlinsky is a learned man, of course... but you don't have to take everything he says... Now then, let's have it all from the beginning: what other questions have you been pestering your teachers with?'

Seryozha's "morbid curiosity" is simply a legitimate question; his query is logical and well articulated. However in questioning Russian history and in turn Soviet history Seryozha has tread on dangerous ground. Tertz is sure to include the brief note that Seryozha's concept of "just and unjust wars" had originated with Marx and was later developed by Lenin, showing that Seryozha's dangerous logic is inherently Marxist Leninist. As the father son discussion continues Seryozha's position only becomes clearer, it is his father's beliefs that seem to be "un-communist," Globov attacks his son's political stance,

"But honestly, all your doubts and questions aren't worth a kopeck. All these talks you have with your Valeryan Valeryanovich are just childish nonsense. You're not old enough understand State affairs. Take those former prisoners of war, for instance, that you stick up for. Believe me, they're all cowards and traitors, and I know what I'm talking about. And then, what you said about wages. I suppose you'd put a Cabinet Minister on the same footing as a cleaning woman and expect him to run the country for three hundred rubles a month? Do you imagine you and I know better than the people up above? Here you are, still conjugating German verbs and taking down philosophy notes, while they've discovered everything there is to know, they've summed it all up and worked it out to the last detail – including why you need your German verbs and your philosophy and what you'll do with them. Get one thing in your hear. What matters is our Glorious

Aim. And it's by this you have to measure every other thing- everything, from ShamyI to Korea. The aim sanctifies the means; it justifies every sort of sacrifice. Millions of people-just think-millions have died for it. Think of the cost of the last war alone! And now you come along and quibble about details- this is wrong and that's unfair!"⁶⁸

Globov fails to see the hypocrisy in what he says: he claims to be a great communist, however it is only Seryozha (later an accused political saboteur) who holds true to the foundations of communism. Seryozha's "program" (which inevitably gets him arrested) portrays a truly communist society, a Marxist utopia.

"Top wages would be paid to cleaning women. Cabinet Ministers would be kept on short rations to make sure of their disinterested motives. Money, torture, and thievery would be abolished. Perfect liberty would dawn, and it would be so wonderful that no one would put anyone in jail and everybody would receive according to his needs. The slogans in the streets would be mostly by Mayakovski; there would also be some by Seryozha, such as 'Beware! You might hurt the feelings of your fellow man!' This was just as a reminder, in case people got above themselves."⁶⁹

Sinyavsky did not set out to present himself as a dissident or member of the opposition; and it was these Marxist Leninist ideas that got him arrested (along with his contemporary author Yuli Daniel) in 1965. After an extremely flamboyant show trial of the two authors Sinyavsky was sentenced to seven years hard labor for his "anti-Soviet activity". However it was not the "anti-Soviet" activity that mobilized the masses, it was the government's extremely harsh reaction and consequent action that upset the Soviet people. Following the trial, one of France's best-known poets, Central Committee Member Louis Aragon asserted that "to make opinion a crime is something more harmful to the future of socialism than the works of these

⁶⁸ Tertz, Abram. *The Trial Begins*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 20-21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

two writers could ever have been. It leaves a bit of fear in our hearts that one may think this type of trial is inherent in the nature of Communism."⁷⁰ Contemporaries recognized the inevitable significance of not only the two condemned authors but also the Soviet regime's actions against the artists. Historian Fred Coleman writes, "Historians now have no difficulty pinpointing the birth of the modern Soviet dissident movement. It began in February 1966 with the trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, two Russian writers who ridiculed the Communist regime in satires smuggled abroad and published under pen names... Little did they realize at the time that they were starting a movement that would help end Communist rule."⁷¹

Following the incarcerations of Sinyavsky and Daniel there emerged a surge of "other-thinking;" a movement of citizens defending their personal rights and attempting to convince the Soviet government to obey its own laws. As opposed to pursuing a campaign of "civil disobedience" (the most pervasive form of resistance to oppressive power) Soviet dissidents invented a technique of radical "civil obedience." Soviet dissidents simply engaged in practices protected by the written laws of the Soviet Union – "such as freedom of assembly or transparency of judicial proceedings"⁷² – and were more often than not persecuted by the regime. This rights-based strategy of dissent is often credited back to Aleksandr Vol'pin, who was described as "the first to understand that an effective method of opposition might be to demand that the authorities observe their own laws,"⁷³ and had been critical of the Soviet government for some time. Vol'pin felt the greatest issue in the Soviet Union was that no one cared; citizens did not care to know or even understand their rights therefore the citizens were responsible for the regimes blatant disregard of these laws. One of the founders of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group in the 1970s

⁷⁰ Louis Aragon, "A Bit of Fear" *Time magazine*, (Friday, Feb. 25, 1966).

⁷¹ Coleman, Fred. *The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire: Forty Years That Shook the World, from Stalin to Yeltsin*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 95.

⁷² Nathans, Benjamin "the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under 'Developed Socialism.'" *Slavic Review*, Vol 66, No. 4 (Winter 2007), 630-663, 630.

⁷³ *Ibid.* p 631.

recalled a conversation with Vol'pin (in the early 60s) in which he scolded Soviet citizens for acting as if they had no rights:

“He would explain to anyone who cared to listen a simple but unfamiliar idea [...] all laws ought to be understood in exactly the way they are written and not as they are interpreted by the government, and the government ought to fulfill those laws to the letter [...] What would happen if citizens acted on the assumption that they have rights? If one person did it, he would become a martyr; if two people did it, they would be labeled an enemy organization; if thousands of people did it, they would be a hostile movement; but if everyone did it, the state would have to become less oppressive.”⁷⁴

Once again the responsibility is placed on the citizen, the active decision to “live in truth” must be made by an informed and educated population, a decision parallel to the necessity to educate the masses for a “communist revolution.” In his “Free Philosophical Tractate” Vol'pin explores the necessary conditions for truth, and the ultimate meaning of freedom:

“I cannot resist being sarcastic about the definition of “freedom: as: the recognition of necessity.” This definition implies that, if I find myself in prison, I am not free until I have realized that I cannot walk out; but as soon as I become aware of this, I shall immediately discover “freedom.” Need I explain that such terminology is very convenient for the ‘liberators of mankind’? [...] Necessity and especially law are beyond my conception. I simply do not understand

⁷⁴ Ibid. Quoted from: Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, 1985), 275; Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The thaw Generation* (Pittsburgh, 1990), 108 “For additional descriptions of Vol'pin's influence, see Anderi Sakharov *Memoirs* (New York 1990), 273, 314 and Valery Chalidze, *To Defend These rights: Human Rights and the Soviet Union* (New York, 1974), 56.

them. And I shall risk the affirmation that what I do not understand others do not understand either."⁷⁵

He continues on to address Soviet autocracy directly declaring: "Demagogues, you who are merely interested in attaining your ends at the price of confusion in people's minds! You can do nothing but grunt like pigs. We must free ourselves from the influence of people with their stunted [*kurguzyi*] language and find a scientific expression for the concept of freedom. Only when we attain this shall we be able to trust our own thoughts."⁷⁶ Vol'pin recognizes the importance of education, understanding and intellectual freedom without which the Soviet people can never liberate themselves from tyranny.

During early "thaw" years and the development of the Soviet dissident movement Vol'pin attempted to practically use analytical logic and language against the Soviet regime. This concept of practical logic came to fruition through Vol'pin's interactions with KGB officials and psychiatrists at Soviet hospitals. After his return from exile in 1953 and before his final emigration from the Soviet union in 1972 he was incarcerated in "mental hospitals" four times, and subject to numerous KGB questionings. These interrogation games of cat and mouse were the closest many "dissidents" could ever come to expressing their ideas to the Soviet government. Vol'pin took these unpleasant meetings as an opportunity to develop a logical ethical code, determining when to answer an interrogator, when to remain silent, how to avoid a question and ultimately how to avoid incriminating oneself. While many dissidents regarded lying as a legitimate form of defense against the state organization, Vol'pin saw an opportunity for to utilize his practical logic, and take an ethical stance. More than a decade before Solzhenitsyn urged Soviet citizens to "Live not by the Lie" and fifteen years before Havel demanded his fellow citizens to "live in truth" Vol'pin had concluded that "the fundamental task of

⁷⁵ Ibid, p 646. *Quoted from: Vol'pin, A leaf of Spring [Vesennii list], 140 -2, 128 – 30. The phrase "freedom is the recognition of necessity" comes from Friedrich Engels's Anti-Duhring (1878), where it is attributed to Hegel.*

⁷⁶ Ibid

ethics" was the eradication of lying.⁷⁷ After an extensive study of Soviet law Vol'pin launched a formal appeal regarding his arrest and imprisonment in 1949 for "anti-Soviet" activities.⁷⁸ Vol'pin's claim "consisted not of a denial that he committed a crime (an issue he declined to engage), but of a charge that the Soviet government violated its own regulations." Vol'pin felt Soviet citizens would only escape the tyranny of the government when "enough grown men and women learned to take official phraseology seriously, that is, to hold the Soviet government to its own word."⁷⁹ There were no laws in place demanding that all Soviets be communist, build communism, or live by some 'mythical ethos,' as Bukovsky later explained in his memoirs in 1979 "the citizens of the USSR are obligated to observe the written laws, not ideological directives."⁸⁰ The Sinyavsky Daniel trial illustrated the overreaching of the Soviet government. The government seemed almost uncertain about the precise nature of the crime committed; "Soviet law prohibited neither publication abroad nor the use of pseudonyms."⁸¹ Vol'pin, like so many other Soviet citizens, was unfamiliar with the works of Tertz and Arzhak and was "disturbed not only by the rumors, but by the response they evoked among Moscow intellectuals."⁸² Few of Vol'pin's contemporaries knew Soviet law thoroughly enough to even know if their actions were legally punishable, and seemed to show solidarity with the accused as fellow members of the intelligentsia, presenting them as martyrs for the values of creative freedom and art. A widely circulated samizdat essay from the late 1960s by biologist Aleksandr Malinovsky explained:

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Vol'pin had been amnestied in 1953 (for his "anti-Soviet" behavior) after Stalin's death, without the actual charges being renounced (perhaps because they had never been established in a court of law). Vol'pin's claim consisted of no denial that he had committed any crime rather a charge that the Soviet government violated its own laws.

⁷⁹ Nathans, Benjamin "the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under 'Developed Socialism, 662.

⁸⁰ Bukovsky Vladimir Konstantinovich. *To Build a Castle: My Life As a Dissenter*, 238

⁸¹ Nathans, Benjamin "the Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights under 'Developed Socialism, 654.

⁸² Ibid.

"It is strange when grown men and women write open letters to the Central Committee, complaining about injustices committed, as everyone knows, on orders from that very same Central Committee [...Criticizing] the regime's lack of respect for its own laws could of course be a positive step toward unmasking official phraseology if anyone besides Young Pioneers took that phraseology seriously anymore. The majority [of the population] is quite familiar with the regime's hypocrisy and has gotten used to it."⁸³

Vol'pin wanted the populace to not just "be used to" the government's hypocrisy; only by holding the government accountable could the citizens hope to overcome the tyranny of the Soviet regime. This concept of educating the masses is reminiscent of Marxism in that while Vol'pin was an avid anti-Marxist, his logic has some utopian philosophical undertones. These concepts of citizen education, legal comprehension, governmental responsibility and the overwhelming importance of "truth" are seen as connective ideas through the development of "dissident" movements under communism.

Following Vol'pin's concept of civil obedience through the wake of the 1960s "thaw" the Soviet "dissident" movement grew rapidly. Maintaining connections to the founding philosophies of the Soviet Union and adhering to Soviet law seemed to be the most effective course of anti-governmental action through the 1960s and into the 1970s. Roy Medvedev had been fashioning a Marxist critique of the Soviet Union since the early 1960s. Like Vol'pin Medvedev finds the strongest grounding for his Soviet opposition within the foundations of the Soviet Union. Medvedev's utopian vision for the Soviet Union involved a real measure of cultural freedom, diminished censorship, relaxed party controls, meaningful elections, and free expression of criticism. As a Marxist and a historian Medvedev offers a unique view of Soviet society and philosophy of dissent. Pushing for a platform of internal reform, rather

⁸³ Ibid.

then revolution, Medvedev looked to purge the system of its Stalinist corruption. In his 1972 *On Socialist Democracy* Medvedev described the current social composition thusly:

The Party-Democrats are at present almost completely unrepresented in the highest reaches of the party. However, it is likely that at that level there are some who understand contemporary problems better than others ... There are a good many sympathizers among officials of the party and state apparatus at all levels ... [plus] considerable support from the scholarly community – philosophers, sociologists, historians – as well as from a section of the scientific and technical intelligentsia, some writers and other people engaged in cultural activities. There are also certain groups belonging to this trend among the Old Bolsheviks, particularly those who returned from prison and exile after the death of Stalin ... The Party-Democratic movement sees the contemporary Soviet system as socialist in essence – in its foundation - but denies that the USSR is a society of developed socialism as official ideology insists that it is.”⁸⁴

Medvedev argued that for Soviet society to enter a new phase of developed socialism it must address those elements in its foundations “which for various reasons, are outmoded, decayed and even rotten... with alacrity but also with the necessary caution.”⁸⁵ Medvedev hoped developmental changes in education, economics and the authoritative structure of the Soviet Union would allow for the formation of influential groups in support of the Party-Democratic program. A union could then be formed “between the best and the most active party of the intelligentsia supported by the common people and the most forward-facing individuals in the government apparatus.”⁸⁶ Medvedev ends his *On Socialist*

⁸⁴ Medvedev, Roy, *On Socialist Democracy*, (New York: Knopf, 1975) 57.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p 339.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 312-313.

Democracy with a nod to classic utopian ideas, and how vital those founding principles are to the development of a new Soviet Union,

“It is in no way a question of destroying the values of the October Revolution. Rather we must restore and purify them; they must be reinforced and built upon. Only if there is a systematic and consistent democratization of the whole of our political and social life on a socialist basis will our country be able to regain its role and influence among the progressive forces of the world.”⁸⁷

Roy Medvedev and his brother Zhores Medvedev built an influential circle through the 1960s attracting a wide range of Moscow’s intelligentsia. In 1970 several prominent Moscow intellectuals joined Medvedev in his letter to the Soviet leadership, in which they requested a democratization of Soviet society and an adherence to established constitutional norms. Even Solzhenitsyn was included in the Medvedev circle in the 1960s, as shown by his reflections on Christian and ethical socialism in his *The Cancer Ward*. Medvedev’s view appealed to activists beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. As an anti-Stalinist, yet still Marxist, critic and an advocate of détente, Medvedev appealed to other activists within the Eastern Bloc as well as Western Leftists, who joined him in a public dialogue in 1976.⁸⁸ One of Medvedev’s most lasting contributions to the “dissident” movement was his series of rejoinders to Solzhenitsyn, while the two constructed their concept of the future USSR.

As the movement developed Medvedev and Solzhenitsyn’s views for the growth and development of the Soviet Union began to diverge. In his 1974 “Letter to Soviet Leaders” (like Medvedev’s 1970 letter) Solzhenitsyn tried to develop his personal conception of a Soviet future in what Medvedev called “a disappointing document.”⁸⁹ Medvedev continues on to explain that, “the attitude which is expressed in extremely sharp and even grotesque form in Solzhenitsyn’s letter is

⁸⁷ Ibid, 332.

⁸⁸ Roy Medvedev, *Détente and Socialist Democracy*, (New York: Monad), 1976.

⁸⁹ Roy Medvedev, “What lies ahead for us,” *New Left Review* (May, 1974) 61-74, 61.

characteristic of many people in our country, and this fact, in the first instance, compels us to give consideration to certain really difficult problems of the contemporary situation and immediate future."⁹⁰ Solzhenitsyn's nationalism and isolationism received wide criticism; he suggested "there is one way out for us, for the state to switch its attention away from distant continents – and even away from Europe and the south of our country and make the North-East the centre of national activity and settlement and a focus for the aspirations of young people."⁹¹ However as Medvedev addressed in his criticism of Solzhenitsyn's *Letter* "Lenin wrote that the aim of socialism is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them."⁹² Medvedev claims that Solzhenitsyn's *Letter* illustrates how little he actually knows about Marxism, "for he attributes to it proposition and aims which have nothing in common with Marxism." Medvedev explains that Marx has,

"Nowhere alleged that 'the proletariat... would never achieve anything in a bourgeois democracy' Marxist economic theory never proclaimed that 'only the worker creates value, and failed to take into account the contribution of either organizers, engineers, transport of marketing systems' Solzhenitsyn writes that 'Marxism orders us to leave the North-East unexploited and to leave our women with their crowbars and shovels, and instead finance and expedite world revolution.' All this is so lacking in seriousness, that it does not need refutation."⁹³

Solzhenitsyn is looking for a future authoritarian order; he rejects the Soviet Union's prospect for socialism as well as democracy. The greatest divide between Medvedev and Solzhenitsyn (other than their stances on the Russian Orthodox Church) is their schema for the future USSR. Solzhenitsyn looks back at the greatness of seventeenth century Russia and the leadership of Peter the Great, while Medvedev looks forward for a new Social Democracy.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 61- 62.

⁹¹ Solzhenitsyn Aleksandr Isaevich. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 31

⁹² Roy Medvedev, "What lies ahead for us," 62.

⁹³ Ibid. p 69. *With quotes from Solzhenitsyn's Letter to Soviet Leaders, p 42, p. 42 and p. 45.*

“Socialism is a social system in which the free development of every individual is the condition for the development of society as a whole. This is an elementary truth of scientific socialism. Socialist society sets itself the task of securing the greatest possible satisfaction not only of the material but also of the spiritual demands of human beings. This means that in socialist countries there must be secured all the economic and social rights of the working people (in this respect the progress made in the socialist countries is obvious) and also all their political and civil rights.

For me, as for every thinking Marxist, socialist democracy means not only guaranteeing the rights of the majority but also the rights of the minority, including the minority’s right to formulate and assert their own views and beliefs. Socialist democracy means guaranteeing freedom of conscience, speech and publication, freedom to receive and disseminate information, freedom of scientific and artistic creation. In socialist society there must be no persecution of heterodoxy and opposition views, for without the right to opposition no democracy can exist.”

While these two “dissidents” represent two ends of the “anti-Soviet” spectrum they come together on key concepts of their activist philosophy. In his “Live Not by Lies” Solzhenitsyn embodies an almost universal concept of how to act against the government by following the ideas embodied in Soviet socio-political philosophy (and later illustrated by Havel’s concept of “what is a dissident”).

Solzhenitsyn’s essay “Live not by Lies” dated February 12th 1974 (the same day he was arrested) was circulated among his Soviet contemporaries who remained in the USSR following his exile. Although Solzhenitsyn’s ideal concept of Soviet development was on one of the extreme ends of the “dissident” movement his “Live Not by Lies” essay parallels dissident thought across the Eastern Bloc, and was crafted four years before Havel would produce his “Power of the Powerless.” The concepts are timeless for the citizens oppressed by Soviet power; Solzhenitsyn

rallies courage in the name of truth demanding all people make a conscious decision to stop the lies. Solzhenitsyn explains that the Soviet people have almost hit “rock bottom”

“We have been so hopelessly dehumanized that for today’s modest ration of food we are willing to abandon all our principles, our souls, and all the efforts of our predecessors and all opportunities for our descendants – but just don’t disturb our fragile existence. We lack staunchness, pride and enthusiasm. We don’t even fear universal nuclear death, and we don’t fear a third world war. We have already taken refuge in the crevices. We just fear acts of civil courage.”⁹⁴

The system has taught the Soviet citizen what to fear, as opposed to fearing the unknown the average people have learned to fear their own system. Solzhenitsyn explains how “they (the Party) will put on trial anybody they want and they put sane people in asylums – always they, and we are powerless.” There is a stark divide between us and them, the oppressed and the oppressor, with an overwhelming desire to unify the oppressed us. Much like Vol’pin before and Havel after Solzhenitsyn demanded that the Soviet citizens needed to stop their passive role as individual cogs and become an active unified machine. Solzhenitsyn’s conscious decision to stop living the lie (much like the decision to live in truth) is not a decision to become an anti-government activist, but rather a conscious personal decision to stop lying to himself. “And the simplest and most accessible key to our self-neglected liberation lies right here: Personal non-participation in lies. Though lies conceal everything, though lies embrace everything, but not with any help from me.”⁹⁵ In deciding not to lie Solzhenitsyn takes into account cowardice claiming his method is much easier than civil disobedience, yet remains a powerful tool against Soviet ideology.⁹⁶ “Our path is to take away from the gangrenous boundary. If we did not paste together the dead bones and scales of ideology, if we

⁹⁴ Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, “Live Not by Lies,” *The Washington Post*, (Monday February 18, 1974), A26.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

did not sew together the rotting rags, we would be astonished how quickly the lies would be rendered helpless and subside.”⁹⁷ Solzhenitsyn’s contemporary Soviet system was built on lies, the Party was threatened by these “dissidents” because their push for truth would inevitable expose Soviet ideology’s weakness; “that which should be naked would then really appear naked before the whole world.”⁹⁸

Recognizing that this simple decision could be dangerous Solzhenitsyn explains that the choice will be hard for the body but easy for the soul. He believes resistance will be difficult, but is necessary, “a great people of Europe, the Czechoslovaks, whom we betrayed and deceived: Haven’t they shown us how a vulnerable breast can stand up even against tanks if there is a worthy heart within it?”⁹⁹ Four years later Havel looks back at Solzhenitsyn in his “Power of the Powerless” as a figure of inspiration for the Czechoslovaks oppressed by the Communist Party:

“Why was Solzhenitsyn driven out of his own country? Certainly not because he represented a unit of real power, that is, not because any of the regime’s representatives felt he might unseat them and take their place in government. Solzhenitsyn’s expulsion was something else: a desperate attempt to plug up the dreadful wellspring of truth, a truth which might cause incalculable transformations in social consciousness, which in turn might one day produce political debacles unpredictable in their consequences. And so the post-totalitarian system behaved in a characteristic way: it defended the integrity of the world of appearances in order to defend itself. For the crust presented by the life of lies is made of strange stuff. As long as it seals off hermetically the entire society, it appears to be made of stone. But the moment someone breaks through in one place, when one person

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, “Live Not by Lies,” *The Washington Post*.

Solzhenitsyn’s outlook has clearly expanded since his “Letter to Soviet Leaders (in which Medvedev accuses him of having a narrow perspective). Solzhenitsyn’s own “natural world” had been influenced and developed because of his personal experiences under the communist regime.

cries out, 'The emperor is naked!' - when a single person breaks the rules of the game, thus exposing it as a game – everything suddenly appears in another light and the whole crust seems then to be made of a tissue on the point of tearing and disintegrating uncontrollably."¹⁰⁰

Havel recognizes the similar situation for anyone living under the control of the Communist Party; he sees the similarity in dissident philosophy across the Eastern Bloc because he sees the characteristic nature of the post-totalitarian system. The shared experience of oppression under tyranny causes dissidents to look to one another for inspiration and support. Much like his predecessors and his successors Solzhenitsyn holds the citizens responsible for allowing the tyranny to last so long and calls for solidarity,

"So you will not be the first to take this path, but will join those who have already taken it. This path will be easier and shorter for all of us if we take it by mutual efforts and in close rank. If there are thousands of us, they will not be able to do anything with us. If there are tens of thousands of us, then we would not even recognize our country. If we are too frightened, then we should stop complaining that someone is suffocating us. We ourselves are doing it. Let us then bow down even more, let us wail, and our brothers the biologists will help to bring nearer the day when they are able to read our thoughts are worthless and hopeless."¹⁰¹

This call for action is similar to Vol'pin's conversations from the 1960s calling for mass activism, or rather mass truth. The Soviet dissident movement developed and fostered a wide gambit of revolutionary thinkers, representing a wide range of visions for the future Soviet Union. Each "dissident's" experience under the Soviet regime shaped his own dissident philosophy; however there are incredible parallels between "dissidents" who lived in different decades, areas, and experienced varied persecution. Arguably these parallels were inevitable because of the nature of

¹⁰⁰ Václav Havel, "Power of powerless," 59.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

communist tyranny; these activists share ideas on the importance of truth, civil obedience and solidarity of those shaken by the system.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Dissident movements have been studied since they first emerged, however the method for examining them has developed over time. This thesis presents a more universal concept of dissidence, ignoring national borders and examining universal driving forces for “anti-Communist” movements. By using Czech philosophy and dissidence to look back at Russian dissidence I draw parallels between shared experiences. The ties to Leninism illustrate the influence of shared communist experience, and the created “*natural worlds*” of these individuals shape their “dissident” work. In their work “dissidents” do not only develop the ideas of their contemporaries they directly reference one another, Solzhenitsyn in his “Live Not by Lies” looks to the Czech people for inspiration and in Havel’s “Power of the Powerless” Solzhenitsyn’s expulsion from the Soviet Union is used as a direct example of the Party’s “desperate attempt to plug up the dreadful wellspring of truth.” Even while living in different communist countries these “dissidents” experience such similar subjugation that their experiences are inspirational examples to one another for surviving Party oppression. They share the same Leninist promise of a bright future, and experience similar repression under communism.

I am not claiming that all “dissidents” are Marxist, nor am I stating that every citizen living in a nation controlled by the Communist Party had the same experience; I am simply highlighting the shared “*natural world*” of individuals living under tyranny. The parallels in “dissident” work, and the nods to Leninism warrant investigation; these “dissidents” were obviously influenced and shaped by the founding philosophy and actions of their own oppressive governments. They

learned to “live in truth,” “live not by lies,” and the fundamental task of their ethics was the “eradication of lying.” By looking into the foundations of the “binary categories” of dissent and not studying it as a person centered movement I establish a new understanding of the driving force of “dissident” behavior. This new understanding allows for a new non-national view of dissidence. This method of studying “dissidence” could be used to study “dissident” movements around the globe. Examining how an oppressor shapes its own opposition could lead to new understanding of counterculture movements. By looking at the “*natural world*” created for these “dissidents” by their history, society and ultimately their governments, connective bridges can be built between different dissident movements across the globe. With further research, the Marxist idea of a world unified proletariat revolution can be modernized to a concept of a world wide dissident movement against tyranny.

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