

P A R T I I I

**war and
imperialism**

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**The Philosophical
Moment in Politics
Determined by War:
Lenin 1914–16**

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I have chosen this complicated—and restrictive—title to mark what is singular about the place of Lenin in this comparison of philosophers in the face of war. Evidently not being himself a professional in philosophy, he was not in a position to discover or assign himself a mission in this field (not even that of “preparing revolution”). And yet he should not be considered as belonging to the category of amateurs. For his relation to war and philosophy shows the very essence of the politics to which he devoted himself. It is this that on reflection struck me as particularly significant: in the strong sense of the term, *there is only one philosophical moment in Lenin, and it is precisely war that determines it*, by its issues at stake and its immediate consequences. This could be important for philosophy, if it is true that its object cannot be isolated from that of politics. It certainly is important in any case for understanding Lenin’s position in history, including the history of the social movement that came to call itself “Leninism.” We can in fact assume right away that this label covers more of a contradiction than an unproblematic continuity.

The difference between Lenin in the years before 1914 and those after 1917–18 is in a certain sense common knowledge. Many people have noted this and described its effects in different ways.¹ And yet it remains difficult to interpret, for the reference points have not stayed fixed on either side of the great divide marked by war and revolution. For contemporaries, however, these two events, between which Lenin

himself proclaimed the existence of a necessary link, immediately went together. The “new Lenin”—the man who appeared as the inspirer of the Third International, hailed by Sorel in the republication of his *Reflections on Violence*, or even the man who inspired the “decisionist” philosophy of Carl Schmitt or Keynes (in the opposite camp)—was the Lenin of October, perceived against the background of the disasters of the war in which a whole world had collapsed, and from which he emerged as a challenge and a prophet. This was the figure around whom “Leninism” would be organized.

But can we not proceed to a closer analysis? For our present concern, the period that is particularly relevant is that from August 1914 to the first months of 1917, from the text “The Collapse of the Second International” to the “April Theses.”² It was during this period that philosophy came into play, yet only to disappear immediately after. We might rather say that everything happened as if, in the context of war and emergency, Lenin had himself run through the stages of an “end of philosophy,” which was realized outside its own field but still had to emerge initially for itself, in a specific work that sought to grasp its essence and practice writing it.

Let us note that before 1914–15, Lenin had already written philosophical books and articles (not counting the use he made of Marxist philosophical concepts throughout his writings). The two most important of these were his study of 1894, *What the “Friends of the People” Are*,³ which developed an epistemology of historical materialism based on the dual critique of “objectivism” and “subjectivism,” and *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* of 1908,⁴ directed against the philosophy of Bogdanov, which is completely honorable in its handling of conceptual techniques and rests on a wide investigation of various philosophers (Berkeley, Diderot, Kant, Mach, and so forth). I shall maintain, however, that in these studies Lenin was not a philosopher in the strong sense of the term. What he produced, in his own way, were ideological arguments in a pre-existing philosophical debate, where he occupied one of the possible positions in the field of variants of “Marxist philosophy” that formed the cement of social democracy. Whereas, in the *Philosophical Notebooks* of 1914–15—simple reading notes, sketches at a definition of the dialectic, drafted for private purposes, at the same time as other notes in preparation for his studies on imperialism—we see

paradoxically (but unequivocally) the question of the “foundations” of Western metaphysics, or the meaning of its constitutive categories, confronted for its own sake. But this exercise in critical reading (Aristotle, Hegel) does not lead to a *philosophical discourse* and was not intended to do so. On the contrary, after 1915 *Lenin never wrote any further philosophical work*.⁵

In reality, by way of this very short experience, it was Lenin’s whole relationship to philosophical discourse that was completely transformed. In this sense, the philosophical moment determined by the conjuncture of the war had no successor, even if it was far from having no effects. This is clearly something that “Leninist” ideology in its different variants has totally misunderstood. To constitute the figure of a “philosophy of Lenin,” this ideology had to have wholesale recourse to his prewar works (in particular *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*). When it referred to the *Philosophical Notebooks*, raising these from the status of private notes to that of fragments of a finished work, or aphoristic writings, it had to offer a selected and biased reading, denying in practice their essentially unstable character.⁶ The same holds, perhaps even more so, for the “dialectical” and “Hegelian” tendency (Deborin, Lukács, Lefebvre) that sought in these *Notebooks*, at the risk of fetishizing them, the instruments for an alternative to official dogma, against the “mechanicism” of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.⁷

It is the very existence of this unique “moment” that should first of all attract our attention. A precise chronology will emphasize its strange character.

1. August 1914. The European war breaks out, and in the different belligerent countries, within a few weeks or even days, a *union sacrée* is established that breaks the unity of European socialism and defeats all its plans to resist “imperialist” war, let alone “use . . . the economic and political crisis created by war . . . to precipitate the fall of capitalist domination,” in conformity with the resolutions of the Stuttgart (1907) and Basle (1912) congresses. With a handful of other dissidents from what struck him as a disastrous renegation, Lenin was at that point totally isolated in Switzerland. The war excluded him: from both itself and from politics.
2. What did Lenin do in these conditions? At the end of 1914 he took

part in some meetings of refugees who were opposed to “social-patriotism,” finished writing an encyclopedia article on Marx, and before anything else, *set himself to reading the metaphysicians*. This was also the moment at which, for the first time, he proposed to abandon the name of “Socialist” for the revolutionary party and return to that of “Communist.”

3. In 1915–16, in contrast, we see him involved in political as well as theoretical activity. The conferences of Zimmerwald (September 1915) and Kienthal (April 1916) were prepared by a series of texts on the “collapse of the Second International” and formulation of the slogan of the “transformation of imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war,” implying not only a polemic against the “social-chauvinists” but also against the pacifist current. This was the period in which he wrote the booklet “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,”⁸ and the period of the debate on “the right of nations to self-determination.”
4. In late 1916 and early 1917, a new series of texts (above all the extraordinary study “A Caricature of Marxism and ‘Imperialist Economism,’” published in 1924 after his death), and “The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution” inflected his analysis of imperialism.⁹ These texts were directed against “left-wing” radicalism, which saw the world war as heralding a definitive effacement of the national problem in favor of class antagonism. Criticizing this idea, and showing the need to distinguish, from the standpoint of both causes and effects, between the democratic nationalism of the oppressed peoples (both outside and inside Europe) and that of the great powers contending with each other for the “division of the world,” Lenin put forward the idea that every revolution is “impure,” combining both class movements and national political demands. This analysis went together with the denunciation of “bourgeois pacifism” à la Wilson: the “imperialist peace” that was looming on the horizon of secret negotiations and would be imposed by the defeat of the Central Powers was denounced in advance as a “continuation of imperialist war by other means.”¹⁰

This chronology enables us to note a fundamental turning point in Lenin’s political thought, but one produced belatedly; economic evolu-

tionism based on an extrapolation of historical “tendencies”—which had dominated socialist thought in the period of the Second International (and would soon make a return in that of the Third), either in a progressive or a catastrophist form (gradual transformation or breakdown of capitalism)—still essentially inspired Lenin’s texts of 1915–16 (including the *Imperialism* booklet), even though this was increasingly out of phase with Lenin’s new “tactics.” With the analyses of late 1916 and early 1917, immediately preceding the revolutionary moment, this evolutionism was profoundly rectified. Not only was all historical development now conceived as “uneven,” but the complexity of the political field appeared definitively irreducible to a logic of “tendencies.” Following Althusser, we can call this the discovery in the theoretical and strategic field of the *overdetermination* intrinsic to class antagonisms.

Comparison with the thought of Rosa Luxemburg is particularly significant here. In 1914, when both Lenin and Luxemburg were faced with the “collapse” of institutional socialism, they shared the view that the war constituted a “vital test,” dissipating the appearance of a peaceful evolution of capitalism and the illusions of parliamentarism, and thus placing socialism against the wall and effecting a practical “self-criticism” of its reformist tendency. Luxemburg’s view was that the situation was back to that described by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*: that of a final crisis with no other issue than revolution, arising from a radical *simplification* of the conditions of class struggle.¹¹ Lenin, however, increasingly distanced himself from this literally apocalyptic vision, to situate the revolutionary perspective in the element of the duration and complexity of conjunctures. Certainly the a priori of a philosophy of history (expressed particularly in the perspective of a world communist revolution that he constantly maintained) never disappeared. But at the price of an extreme tension, this coexisted and sought linkage with a strategic “empiricism,” an “analysis of concrete situations” that assumed incorporating into the concept of the revolutionary process the *plurality of forms* of proletarian political struggle (“peaceful” and “violent”), and the *transition* from one form to another (hence the question of the specific duration and successive contradictions of the revolutionary transition).

It is impossible not to connect this intellectual development immediately with the “philosophical moment” of 1914–15, as the dialectical

themes that emerge here are exactly those insisted on in the *Notebooks*. Certainly there can be no question of “deducing” or “reflecting” one of these aspects on the basis of the other. We must start by simply describing the combination of efforts by which Lenin simultaneously sought to enter into the material of philosophy and that of war, to the profit of a new politics.

It is equally impossible not to emphasize the coincidence between this development and the change in style that in fact characterized the postwar Lenin as compared with his prewar self. Without being a dogmatist, the prewar Lenin was nonetheless marked by a stable doctrine and philosophical position, even after the “lessons of 1905” (which appeared above all as the confirmation of the radical position he had taken in the debates within the Social Democratic Party). There was a fundamental continuity, in this respect, between *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and the “Theses on the National Question” of 1913, or even the analysis of “The Collapse of the Second International,” indicating the proletariat as the homogeneous and potentially hegemonic force that had to assure both the tasks of the “bourgeois revolution” in backward Russia and those of the socialist revolution.¹² After 1915, and still more so in the course of the three successive revolutions (those of February and October 1917, and later that of the NEP) in which he was involved, not to say thrown, we see on the contrary how *Lenin did not cease to change*, not simply his “tactics,” but his definitions and analyses of the role of the proletariat and the party—even concerning their very composition—and consequently, in the last analysis, of the identity of the “revolutionary subject.” This last has remained a constant problem, appearing as the result of a complex political construction instead of constituting an established *socioeconomic presupposition* (including its form of awakening consciousness, the “translation” of the class-in-itself into a class-for-itself). In my view, in fact, we can see this permanent interrogation, which eventually leads (in dramatic fashion) to a “disappearance of the proletariat” in the classical sense,¹³ beginning to enter Lenin’s thought already during the course of the war, under the effect of the questions that the war raised, but also the effect of the philosophical rethinking that the war immediately aroused. In philosophical terms, we would say that the relationship between theory and practice was no longer seen simply as one of *application*, but instead as one of non-predetermined constitution.

A brief reminder of the contents of the *Philosophical Notebooks* is necessary here, all the more so as it raises an interesting question of historiography (or, as we more correctly say nowadays, of “reception”). Those who have read the official edition (*Collected Works*, vol. 38) will be aware what is to be found here: a summary of Hegel’s *Logic*; notes on Hegel’s *History of Philosophy*, limited to the Greeks; a summary of the introduction to Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* (for the rest of the book, Lenin held that it did not contain anything very important, except “the idea of universal history,” which had passed into Marxist science); a summary of Lassalle’s book on Heraclitus (the Hegelian assumptions of which Lenin criticized at length); a brief summary of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (“Clericalism killed what was living in Aristotle and perpetuated what was dead”);¹⁴ a summary of Feuerbach’s book on Leibniz; and *at the end* a five-page sketch titled “On the Question of Dialectics.” The essence of this turns around the question of contradiction, and the historical (or cyclical) relation that connects Hegel’s “logical” formulations (on the identity of opposites, essence and appearance, necessity and change, absolute and relative, universal and singular) with the debates within Greek philosophy (above all, the opposition between Aristotle and Heraclitus, the philosophy of Epicurus as presented by Hegel also being an object of particular interest).

This edition, however, betrays an astonishing lacuna: it does not contain Lenin’s exactly contemporary notes on Clausewitz’s *Vom Kriege* (absent indeed from the *Collected Works* as a whole), even though in his writings of the following period explicit references and allusions to both Hegel and Clausewitz almost always go together. What is the reason for this dissociation, this unequal treatment on the part of the publishers? It may be a case of ideological censorship; there were others as well in the establishment of the Leninist “corpus.” It certainly shows a total incomprehension, both of the meaning of Lenin’s reflections on the “basis of dialectics,” drafted in the wake of his selective reading of the “fundamental” philosophers, and of the use that Lenin subsequently made of this.¹⁵

What was Lenin looking for in his reading of Hegel? Although his immediately contemporary critique of Kautsky’s “ultra-imperialism” and the pacifism that this led to both relate to a refutation of Kantian cosmopolitanism (Kant being the number one target of Lenin’s attacks in the *Notebooks*), the Hegel that particularly mattered to him was not

the Hegel of “Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht.” The place that Hegel himself was able to assign war in history, in relation to his philosophy of the state, did not play the decisive role. This is why, in particular, there is not here even a verbal encounter with the Hegelianism that German historicism appealed to (and that the French critics of “philosophical pan-Germanism,” forerunner of the totalitarianism theory, sought to refute).¹⁶ Nor was it even—as Raymond Aron showed very well in his book on Clausewitz—in the sense of a theory of “total war,” of which class struggle would be a particular form, that Lenin attempted the combination of Hegelian and Clausewitzian formulas.¹⁷ This combination is in fact the essence of the matter (Lenin retrospectively projects it into history, maintaining on several occasions the evidently mistaken view that Clausewitz had been a “disciple of Hegel”).¹⁸ But he did this in the context of a double rectification: of Hegelian speculation (*Vernunft*, reason) by Clausewitzian pragmatism, and of the latter (as an application of *Verstand*, analytical understanding) by the Hegelian dialectic.

What Lenin corrected in Clausewitz was the idea of military strategy or tactics as an instrument of a state “politics” invariable in substance, or which remained autonomous in its appreciation of the conjuncture. War (or rather wars, their characteristics changing with the times) is a form that contains the essence of politics, and thus becomes the very form of its realization, in conformity with the dialectic of the “immanent genesis of differences” and the “objectivity of the appearance.” By continuing politics “by other means,” in the famous formula, war does no more than express it, also transforming its course, conditions, and actors.

What Lenin symmetrically corrected in Hegel was the idea of a dialectical contradiction that permits the location of “the absolute in the relative” *independently of the conjuncture*, and of the “contingent” form that the mobilization of the masses themselves assumes: the *practical* translation of the historical dialectic thus does not simply involve reading Hegel through Marx, but also through Clausewitz.¹⁹ This could be summed up as follows: not only is there a primacy of politics over war within war itself (which means that the class struggle *does not cease* to produce its effects, even if “by other means” and “in other forms”), not only does the complexity of class struggle thus always exceed the

“simplification” imposed by the military moment, but it always also exceeds a simplified representation of the class struggle itself as a simple “duel.” To conceive the conjuncture (in order to intervene in it) is to reject a double simplification of the historical process: that imposed by war (or rather that which war appears to realize) by temporarily “crushing” class politics, and that of the “orthodox” Marxists ideally opposed to it (including those who, like Rosa Luxemburg, did not betray their camp) who proposed simply to *substitute* class struggle once more in place of national war.

We can observe this dialectic at work in the texts of 1914–15. The first “application” that Lenin made of Clausewitz’s formula was to link the split in European socialism determined by the war (between “chauvinists” or champions of the *union sacrée* and internationalists) to the previously existing tendencies in socialist politics: that is, seeing this as a continuation of the conflict between the reformist and revolutionary wings of Marxism (independent of particular individuals).²⁰ This “explanation” was in fact a retrospective rationalization, as if the *union sacrée* had been predictable, and in this sense was still evolutionist. It went together with the idea that this “betrayal” signaled the presence of a “foreign body” in the workers’ movement, in thrall to the bourgeoisie, and with the theory of the “crumbs” from imperialist exploitation that served to corrupt the labor aristocracy. It implicitly presupposed therefore the existence of a “pure” proletarian mass, intrinsically hostile to the war, even though the turnaround of the political and trade-union leaderships and the constraints of mobilization had temporarily atomized this and reduced it to impotence.

With the systematic elaboration of Lenin’s slogan of the “transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war,” a noticeably different argument came to light. Far from this being a second best,²¹ we can see it rather as the rigorous application of the basic idea that *the war was not a catastrophe but a process*, with specific contradictions that had to be analyzed.²² The comparison with Marx and Engels is instructive. Lenin was not interested (as his predecessors had been) in the detail of military operations, but rather in the fact that *the masses were involved in the war*. From the idea of “total war” or “people’s war” he retained only that war is a fact of society and cannot be reduced to a confrontation of states. This enabled him to maintain that the war

had a double character right from the start: a confrontation between the imperialist powers, but also the “use” by each belligerent of the adversary’s forces to tame “its own” proletariat. These forces, however, are themselves made up in the last analysis of proletarians or proletarianized masses. The duration of the war was a decisive factor, bringing not only an aggravation of suffering but the transformation of both the objective and subjective conditions of the conflict. If the conflict stirred up national hatreds, like any other war, it was occurring in a period of “mature” capitalism. The war would thus have a double result: *to involve the masses in the war*, not just as a mere manipulable “object” but as a power that in the long run would be impossible to control. The military constraint and the failure of strategies of rapid annihilation would arouse in reaction a formidable democratic aspiration on the part of the masses, which would make impossible a pure and simple restoration of social and bourgeois “discipline.” At the same time, however, the tendency of imperialism to transform itself into “state capitalism” by the centralization and militarization of production would cross a decisive threshold. We should note that Lenin introduces here two aspects that would constitute the unity of opposites of the dictatorship of the proletariat as he redefined it in the years 1917–23.²³ We should also note that it is in the last instance, this analysis of the historical “productivity” of war in terms of social forces and social conflicts, that justified Lenin’s conviction that it was possible to make war on war in practice, to get a grasp on it (and as far as his personal destiny was concerned, to “enter” it as a factor of disturbance of its purely military logic), whereas pacifist ideology (or the pacifist version of internationalism) had given proof of its impotence.

If we return then to the agonizing question of how war could “produce” socialism, since socialism had been unable to prevent war, we see that the response to it is an open one. Socialization of the economy and latent revolt of the masses at the front and in the rear only determine a *revolutionary situation*, which may or may not develop in the direction of an actual break. What becomes capital here is the fact that war has a history. To know what kind of “class consciousness” war can arouse, starting from its opposite, what is needed is a differential analysis of the internal divisions of the proletariat and the manner in which these are developing. The ambivalent effects of “national feeling” in Europe thus

have also to be taken into account. The principled (democratic) position in favor of the “right of nations to self-determination,” and thus the call to dismantle, at least provisionally, the multinational empires resting on the caste privileges of a dominant nation, appears as a politically inescapable moment of the transformation of the revolutionary situation into an anti-capitalist civil war.²⁴

To determine whether there is anything in Lenin other than a *denial of nationalism* as a mass phenomenon, it is thus not sufficient simply to note his brutally reductive criticism of “patriotism” (presented as the ideological mask of imperialist interests) and his refusal to enter into the casuistry of “aggressors” and “aggrieved.” We must follow the progressive transformation of the concept of imperialism itself, especially in Lenin’s discussions with the supporters of pacifist positions and the projects of disarmament that arose in the course of the war. It seems clear that Lenin’s major objection to these projects rested on their Eurocentric “partiality,” something that was particularly highlighted by Wilson’s slogans. A United States of Europe, Lenin showed, was at the present time “either impossible or reactionary,” that is, it represented the idea of a transformation of the imperialist war into an “imperialist peace,”²⁵ or of a new division of the world: continuation of the process under way, under the appearance (“metaphysical” as Lenin calls it) of an absolute antithesis between peace and war. In actual fact the European war was not purely European, but was determined by a total global structure that irreversibly differentiated nationalisms. Even in Europe itself it was possible from this standpoint to identify situations of a colonial type (witness the Irish uprising of 1916).

It is true all the same that it was only after he had returned to Russia (after the February Revolution) that Lenin actually attempted a “class analysis” of the nationalism of the masses—in particular the peasant nationalism in Russia, that is, the relationship of dependence that existed between the masses and the national state in an emergency situation. And he still did not do so in a “psychological” perspective—doubtless for lack of concepts that would enable him to break the symmetrical standoff between ideologies of “race” or “national character” and those of “class consciousness”—but solely, in a rather doubtful fashion, in terms of the social composition of the peasant or petty bourgeois bloc. This is why the question did not in the end receive any

theoretical solution, but only successive tactical ones, starting with that which Lenin applied in 1917 against the supporters of “revolutionary *jusqu’au-boutisme*” and those of a proletarian “coup d’état.”²⁶

In conclusion, it appears that the war profoundly transformed the very notion of a revolutionary situation. This was no longer a postulate bound up with the idea of a certain “maturity” of capitalism (of which war was the symptom), but rather the result of an analysis of the effects of the war itself on a differentiated global structure, in which the “advanced” and “backward” countries coexisted and interpenetrated (which was especially the case in Russia). This is why, at the same time, Lenin constantly maintained the thesis of a world revolution and conceived the utilization of a “separate peace” unilaterally decreed by the country in which contradictions had reached the breaking point as a means of acting on the balance of forces *as a whole*. Yet he never accepted, for all that, the idea of “socialism in one country.” What is more, he ceased to identify the revolution, in these conditions, with the “establishment of socialism.” The revolution as this resulted from the fact of the war was in one sense *less* than socialism (expression of the democratic revolt of the masses, a national movement, or even the continuation of state capitalism), and in another sense *more* (immediately bound up with the Communist project, even under the form of “war Communism”). In short, it was an overdetermined historical break, and the point of departure of a new dialectic, in agreement with the lesson drawn from a “practical” reading of Hegel and Clausewitz.

We have to admit, however, that this intellectual shift was only a tendency, which was not without its contrary movements. To convince oneself of this it is only necessary, for example, to reread *The State and Revolution*²⁷ in this perspective. This work was an attempt to relocate the singularity of the Russian Revolution in a logic of the universal, of which it was, however, symptomatic only in that it remained *incomplete*, not only because of circumstances and their urgency (“more pleasant to go through the experience of the revolution than to write about it”), but perhaps also as a result of the impossibility of the project itself. From 1914 onward, Lenin the “philosopher” advanced beyond Lenin the revolutionary, but Lenin the “theorist” of the revolution still remained behind his own practice.

Notes

- This text first appeared as “Le moment philosophique déterminé par la guerre dans la politique: Lénine 1914–16,” in *Les philosophes et la guerre de 14*, edited and with an introduction by Philippe Soulez (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1998)—hence the reference to comparing philosophers in the face of war.
- 1 Cf. in particular Moshe Lewin, “Lénine et bolshevisme à l'épreuve de l'histoire et du pouvoir,” in *Les Aventures du marxisme*, ed. René Gallissot (Paris: Syros, 1984). George Haupt's study “Guerre et révolution chez Lénine,” from which I borrow some essential elements, notes at the start that “a cleavage can be seen in Lenin's thought between the periods before and after 1914” (reprinted in G. Haupt, *L'Historien et le mouvement social* [Paris: Maspero, 1980], 237–66).
 - 2 Both “The Collapse of the Second International” and the “April Theses” are reprinted in Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960), vols. 21 and 24 respectively.
 - 3 Lenin, *What the “Friends of the People” Are*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 1.
 - 4 Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 14.
 - 5 I do not consider as such the articles Lenin wrote after the revolution to exhort the study of dialectics and materialism, taking a position in the debates around *Proletkult*, the final somersaults in the Bolshevik-Menshevik conflict, or the first episodes in the discussion on science and technology, all of which went on to play a role in the formation of Soviet philosophy. (Cf. René Zapata, ed., *Luttes philosophiques en U.R.S.S.* [Paris: PUF, 1983].)
 - 6 Cf. the preface by the CPSU Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism to the volume of the *Collected Works* containing the *Philosophical Notebooks*: “It may be presumed that the preparatory material of *Notebooks on Philosophy* is evidence of Lenin's intention to write a special work on materialist dialectics, a task which he had no opportunity to fulfil. . . . The study of the great ideological content of *Philosophical Notebooks* is of tremendous importance for a thorough grasp of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the theoretical foundation of scientific communism” (38:18).
 - 7 Cf. H. Lefebvre and N. Guterman, introduction (dated 1935) to *Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), the themes of this being taken up again by Lefebvre in *Pour connaître la pensée de Lénine* (Paris: Bordas, 1957). It seems that Lefebvre was unaware of Lenin's notes on Clausewitz.
 - 8 Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 22.
 - 9 Lenin, “A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism,” and “The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution,” both in *Collected Works*, vol. 23.
 - 10 Lenin, “On the Disarmament Slogan,” “Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism,” and “A Turn in World Politics,” all in *Collected Works*, vol. 23.
 - 11 Cf. the “Junius Pamphlet,” that is, *The Crisis of Social-Democracy* (1916), abridged translation in P. Hudis and K. Anderson, eds., *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004). Compare it to Lenin, “The Situation and the Tasks of the Socialist International,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 21. Lenin's critique of

- Luxemburg, "On the Junius Pamphlet," can be found in his *Collected Works*, vol. 23.
- 12 Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), in *Collected Works*, vol. 3; "Theses on the National Question" (1913), in *ibid.*, vol. 19; and "The Collapse of the Second International" (1915), in *ibid.*, vol. 21.
 - 13 Cf. my commentary in É. Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (London: NLB, 1977), and especially that of Robert Linhart, *Lénine, les paysans*, Taylor (Paris: Seuil, 1976).
 - 14 Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, in *Collected Works*, 38:365.
 - 15 Lenin's notes on Clausewitz were published in 1930 in *Leninskij sbornik*, vol. 12; the German edition edited by Otto Braun (a former Comintern delegate in China during the Long March) is W. I. Lenin, *Clausewitz' Werk 'Vom Kriege'* (Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für nationale Verteidigung, 1957). Raymond Aron (*Penser la guerre, Clausewitz* [Paris: Gallimard, 1976], 2:61) cites a French translation that I have not been able to consult, in Berthold C. Friedl, *Les fondements théoriques de la guerre et de la paix en U.R.S.S.* (Paris: Médicis, 1945).
 - 16 Cf. Charles Andler, *Le Pangermanisme philosophique* (Paris: Conard, 1913).
 - 17 In his commentary (*Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*, 61ff., 213ff., 330ff.), Raymond Aron noted the close link between Lenin's notes on Clausewitz and his reflection on dialectics, but he restricted the significance of this in considering that the "fusion" of Marxist and Clausewitzian themes that Lenin had effected amounted to making war the *instrument* of revolution, requiring a "flexibility" of tactical utilization. The reading I propose here is different. However, Aron was right to raise the question of the limits of Lenin's analysis of nationalism. And he refutes very clearly any assimilation of Lenin's interpretation of Clausewitz to that of precursors of National-Socialism such as Ludendorff, a ridiculous notion still maintained under more or less scholarly aegis. (Cf. C. Roig, *La Grammaire politique de Lénine* [Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1980].)
 - 18 "With reference to wars, the main thesis of dialectics . . . is that 'war is simply the continuation of politics by other (i.e., violent) means'" (Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," in *Collected Works*, 21:219). Other explicit references to Clausewitz occur in Lenin, "Socialism and War," *Collected Works*, 21:304, and Lenin, "The War and Revolution" (May 1917), *Collected Works*, 24:399 and 402.
 - 19 Cf. Bertolt Brecht, *Mé Ti, Livre des retournement*, translated into French by Bernard Lortholary (Paris: l'Arche, 1979). "Basing ourselves on the *great method* that the masters Hü Yeh and Ka Meh taught, we speak too much of the perishable character of all things,' Mé Ti said with a sigh. 'Many people consider this language already too subversive. This perishable character of things is in their eyes a threat addressed to the rulers. But it is wrong to call it the *great method*. What is needed is to speak of the way in which certain things can be led to perish'" (53).
 - 20 Cf. Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," in *Collected Works*, vol. 21, and "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International," in *ibid.*, 22:438–53.

- 21 This is the interpretation of Marc Ferro among others: “Lenin, unable to oppose the patriotic current, proposed the transformation of the European war into a civil war” (“Première Guerre Mondiale” in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* [Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis]). Preferable is the painstaking analysis of George Haupt (“Guerre et révolution chez Lénine,” 251ff.) on the origin of this slogan based on the double analysis of the conjuncture and the structural transformations of imperialism in the war.
- 22 I summarize here the sense of the analyses contained in vol. 23 of Lenin’s *Collected Works*, in particular 22ff., 77ff., 152ff., 175ff., 229ff., 297ff. What is notable here is how much more Clausewitzian Lenin actually was here, in the “dialectical” use he made of *Vom Kriege*, than the strategists (Foch, Schlieffen) who claimed this ancestry. (Cf. R. Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*, 28ff.)
- 23 Cf. Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*; and Balibar, “Dictature du prolétariat,” in *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, ed. G. Labica and G. Bensussan, 2nd ed. (Paris: PUF, 1985).
- 24 Lenin, “The Discussion on National Self-Determination Summed Up” (1916), in *Collected Works*, 22:320ff.
- 25 Cf. Lenin, “On the Slogan for a United States of Europe,” in *Collected Works*, 21:344ff.), and “Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism,” in *ibid.*, 23:175–94.
- 26 This double critique lay at the heart of his “April Theses,” “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution,” and “Draft Resolution on the War,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 24.
- 27 Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 25.