

RICHARD PIPES INTERVIEW

In this interview, Richard Pipes discusses Lenin, Mussolini and Mao Zedong, their approaches to socialism and how they implemented it in their respective countries.

How did Lenin come to be a socialist?

I think the first thing you want to take into consideration is this sort of passion which drove him. It was not idealism. Not so much hope for a better future for humanity, the creation of a new human being, it was above all a passionate hatred for the established regime.

And that has a lot to do with personal biography. When he was a teenager, his brother was executed for plotting an assassination attempt on the life of the Czar. That did not, I think, affect him so much because he and his older brother did not get along very well. But what affected him was that after he got to the university, he took part in a demonstration which was not political, it was directed against some regulations of the university. When he was arrested and it was discovered that he was the younger brother of the executed terrorist, he was expelled from the university. And he was a top student. So he had to spend several years in idleness and he developed tremendous hatred for the existing regime and for what he called the bourgeoisie, the people, the middle class people who ostracized his family after this. So that was his driving passion, to destroy. He was never so much concerned with what kind of life he was going to build. But destruction was very much his passion.

What was Lenin's most important contribution to socialism?

Lenin's importance derives from the fact that he created the first one-party totalitarian state that ever existed, and that served as a model for numerous one-party totalitarian states subsequently. I see a very close connection between the Soviet state, which Lenin established and Stalin then built upon, and the Nazi state.

Hitler never quite admitted it but there are hints in his writings, in his speeches and his conversations that he took Marxism very seriously and learned from it a great deal. So that is his importance. Essentially destructive importance, but nonetheless it's important.

How did Lenin respond when it became clear that the working class wasn't ready to rebel against the established order?

To Lenin socialism was mainly an instrument for making a revolution, and revolution was an instrument for destroying the existing order. When someone like Edward Bernstein came out and his Russian disciple Peter Struve, whose biography I have written, who said, "You know Marx was wrong. The working-class are not getting poorer and more dissatisfied. In fact they are getting richer and they're getting pulled into the mainstream of political life, therefore let's forget about revolution and think of evolution." Lenin was livid with rage because to him socialism was a step to revolution.

Therefore when his time of exile was over and he went to Western Europe, he founded a newspaper and founded a party which was committed to making a revolution from above, because he concluded that the working class really was not interested in

revolution, that revolution has to be brought from up above.

How did Lenin's Bolshevik party get its start?

Well Lenin, after he decided that socialism was really accommodating itself to the existing capitalist order, decided to form his own party. And his tactic from then on, almost to his death, was to split the socialist movement; to form a tight organization, minority if you will, it doesn't matter how many there are as long as they are really totally committed people. And he wanted to achieve the same thing as the socialist parties of Western Europe. He didn't have a chance to do that before he came to power in Russia. But once he came to power in Russia, he founded the 3rd International, which consisted entirely of fragments of European socialist party committed to his program. So the idea was to split. Get rid of the reformers and those who believe in evolution and not revolution and have a full time party devoted to revolutionary activity.

What does "Bolshevik" mean?

Well the term Bolshevik is misleading because as you know it comes from the word *bolsh* in Russian, which means more, majority party. And his opponents were labelled Mensheviks, comes from the Russian word *menshe* which means less. He achieved a temporary majority at this conquest because the Jewish organization called Bund walked out. So he achieved a temporary majority and he immediately adopted the name Bolshevik, *Bolshevikee*, meaning the majority party, and he kept it even though he was not the majority at all when the dust settled. His tactics were to create in Russia a highly disciplined party that would obey his orders and get ready for seizing power when the opportunity presented itself.

So what was Lenin doing in the years leading up to 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution?

Now the history of the party from 1903 to 1917 isn't terribly interesting. It's full of intrigues. Lenin was attacking everybody who didn't agree with him as a renegade, as an accommodator, as a liquidator and so on. It's really not very interesting history. But what he did have was cadres of very disciplined followers. No other party had that. And no party on the right, left or middle had that. So when government collapsed in Russia in the middle of 1917 he was the only one who could take power.

How did Lenin govern after the Bolsheviks came to power?

Once he took power basically it was only his followers that manned the government. For a short time he allowed left socialists to join in but only for a very short time. Basically it was a one-party state. Only his people run the state, and they run it in a very peculiar fashion, which nobody had seen before. You had the state organization, but the state organization is ministry so they were called commissars that did the job that ministries do, but they were not really independent in their judgment and their action. Behind them was the party and the party was separate from the state but it controlled the state. So that's an extraneous body, actually controlled the government. That's unique. And Hitler emulated that when he formed the Nazi party, and Mussolini the same thing in Italy.

Just before the February revolution, life was very harsh, because it was war and

the government didn't manage the war very well. There was a breakdown of transport. There was inflation. By our standards it wasn't terrible inflation but prices went up much faster than wages. And in the northern cities, particularly the capital city of St. Petersburg, or Petrograd as it was then called, there were great shortages in food and fuel. So the winter was very, very harsh. And the ministry of the interior, which controlled the police rendered reports in October 1916 in which it said that it was quite possible that it would have major disturbances leading to revolutionary activity because of the hardships.

Now that had nothing to do with the radical agitation. Most of the Bolsheviks were in jail or in exile because they opposed the war. So it's not the Bolsheviks who caused it. It was just very harsh conditions. And the government didn't manage it very well.

So the February revolution broke out because in the middle of February the weather suddenly changed after months of very harsh cold weather. The weather got warm. The sun came out. We have films from that period, documentary films. And suddenly you see people on the streets laughing, smiling, and so on. And the mood was one at first of joy and then of tension which not only the Bolsheviks, but the socialists and other socialists parties exploited. And that is when before long things got out of control.

It was an axiom among other socialists who were Marxists that Russia has to go through a bourgeois phase, a liberal phase before it could go socialist. This is what Marx taught. And they felt one has to give a chance to the bourgeoisie to run Russia and then eventually they would take over. Lenin came back and said, "Nothing doing. We already are bourgeois, Russia is already bourgeois, let's overthrow them -- arm the workers and stage a coup."

Well, the... socialist-Marxist axiom was that before you establish a socialist state you must have a bourgeois state, a capitalist state. And most of the socialists felt that Russia was too primitive. I mean 80% of the population consisted of peasants who lived on the land and engaged in agriculture. So you must have really developed industrial capitalism before you can have socialism.

Therefore they were willing to let this so-called Provisional government run Russia for an indefinite period while they prepare themselves for the revolution. But Lenin came back in April and said, "No. We will seize power right away. Russia already is a bourgeois state. Let's seize power." He tried ineffectively to do that in July of 1917. The government smashed this attempt and he had to flee to Finland where he bided his time.

Why did the Revolution take place when it did?

The point is that it's true that the Bolsheviks were gaining popularity in the Soviets, particularly in September and October. That's largely as a result of their propaganda calling for the end to the war, which was causing tremendous hardships and didn't seem to be getting the Russians anywhere. The army was really quite demoralized. Tens of thousands of soldiers were deserting the front, coming home and so on. But he never proclaimed a one-party regime. He called for all power to the soviets.

Now Soviets were democratic institutions. They were like town-hall meetings

consisting of ordinary working people and soldiers and peasants. And Lenin wanted all power to be transferred to the Soviets and he did not talk about one-party ruling another or even about socialism.

He felt in October, that's by the old Russian calendar -- November by our calendar, that the time had come. It was ripe to seize power. And he had sufficient forces, he thought, to seize power first in Petrograd, the capital, and then in Moscow and the other cities. But he took this power quietly, silently, without much support, simply by taking over. Because the Provisional government was demoralized, the army was neutral sitting on its hands. So he had this apparatus, which he had been creating for fifteen years at his disposal. And he later said that taking power in Russia was as easy as lifting a feather because there was no opposition. It was a coup d'etat, carried out at night, in Petrograd. Nobody really knew what was happening.

How did the Bolsheviks expand their control?

They concerted their power by a variety of means. First they made very quickly, peace with the Germans. So that was popular. The troops could come back. Secondly, they began to use terror, frightening people, shooting people. All of a sudden all over Russia there was a kind of lawlessness, that which people were not accustomed. They allowed peasants to seize land, which did not belong to them. He allowed workers to seize apartments, seize factories. He didn't intend for this to last, but for the time being he did that to gain public support. But even so by spring, his popularity waned a great deal. In elections, to the Soviets where in the fall he had majorities, he now began to get minorities because people voted for the other socialist parties. So what did he do? He called for a re-elections, re-elections, re-elections until he got his majorities. So by these various means he was in such a position of power that by the spring, nobody could dislodge him.

Did Lenin use terror to gain power?

Well Lenin believed in terror. He believed that you have to intimidate people and you have to kill people who are in your way. He had absolutely no qualms about it. He was not a sadist. He was not a man who enjoyed cruelty, but he was totally inured to human suffering. It just didn't mean anything to him at all. And when Gorky, the pro-Bolshevik writer, would come to him and ask for people to be saved, he would say, "Well why do you bother with this trash," more or less, if you want to save them, I'll save them, but really they are of no importance."

What was the "Red Terror"?

Lenin was afraid that Czar Nicholas II could become the rallying point for anticommunist forces, which were gathering strength in the summer of 1918, particularly since there was a rebellion of the Czech, ex-Czech prisoners of war who came out against the Bolsheviks although Nicholas showed no interest in politics at all. Inevitably he and his whole family were executed in the most brutal way, gangsterish way. Him, his wife, their five children, their doctor, their servants were all massacred. Then their bodies were cut up and burned and then what remained was buried in a shaft, which was only discovered a few years ago. Then in August of 1918 a revolutionary who felt that Lenin had betrayed the Russians, took two shots at him --wounded him, almost

fatally, whereupon Lenin and his henchmen agreed to carry out Red Terror. This was a terrible thing.

People were taken out of prison where they were political prisoners, who had never been tried, they'd done nothing against the Bolsheviks and were just similarly shot. This shooting went on, hundreds of people shot at night, by the glare of searchlights in a park near Moscow and in Petersburg and other cities of Russia. Thousands of people were shot in this way. And that cowered the population to a very large extent.

All socialists believed, this goes back actually even to pre-socialist days, to the French Jacobins, to Robespierre, to the notion that people as they exist today are sort of a travesty of human beings as they should be and as they could be. Once you establish a proper social order and you educate people through legislation, through schooling, and so on. You create a new man, who for one thing will not be acquisitive, will not want property, who will share everything with others and who really will be a totally new human being.

Trotsky wrote passages, very eloquent passages of what this human being would be like. Some of the more extreme Bolsheviks believed that human beings would be immortal, they would not be suffering disease, they would not be subject to death and soon. So the people who lived in this time, they were sort of a travesty of human beings. So their liquidating them was nothing. Of course Lenin believed in having to do that because he felt they are a possible source of opposition to his regime. So anybody who opposed him was liable to be shot.

Lenin in general had no sympathy for human beings such as they were. He thought that once you created a new human being, the primary feature of the new human being would be they would not be that acquisitive. They would not want to possess. But that's not his idea, because way back to the 18th century to the French, philosophers wrote about it. The French philosophers in the 18th century, and others, argued that all human sins, human flaws, come from the desire to possess. If you destroy that in people, he believed, as did others, that through education, legislation you can make people not want to own things. You create new human beings. So the existing human race was so rotten and killing them was actually progressive.

Did Lenin intend for communism to spread outside of Russia?

Well, Lenin said more than once that he never believed that the revolution could be confined to Russia. Altogether it could not be confined to one country, particularly Russia which is really a very backward country in many respects. The more he ruled Russia the more he realized how backward Russia was. No, the revolution had to spread. It had to spread to the industrial countries of the west; first of all Germany, Great Britain, ultimately the United States and so on.

And he was quite convinced that the resentment of capitalism as a cause of this horrible World War I, which caused 10 million casualties, was such that it would be very easy to make a revolution elsewhere. And that was the force that drove him to try to spread the revolution to the, to the West. As I mentioned before, he founded the Third International, the Comintern, which was really a branch of the Russian communist party but had all kinds of branches elsewhere in Europe and eventually but 1921-1922, you had little communist parties everywhere. Generally, they were not really effective but

they were as tools for making a revolution in the future. He tried to make a revolution in several countries in Western Europe. He tried it in Germany, in 1919. He tried again 1921, 1923, all of these things failed. But, when he was sick and out of government from 1922-1923 he was very bitter and very disappointed. But the faith was there all along until then.

Did Lenin look to other revolutions in the past for inspiration or to take lessons from?

Well Lenin of course, like all Russian revolutionaries, was a keen student of past revolutions. Now every revolution ultimately failed, every social revolution I mean. Even the French revolution, because it lasted for a few years, then you have Napoleon, then you have the restoration, revolution gone.

In 1848, revolutions all over Europe ended in nothing. Well, not exactly nothing, but not in a socialist system. The Parisian commune in 1870-1871, again. So Lenin asked himself, why was this so? He felt that revolutions were never thorough enough. They tried to reform the existing regime rather than destroy it. So ultimately the existing regime always took over and reinvented itself. So he concluded they were going to completely destroy root and branch, the existing system. And he proceeded to do that, to create a completely new regime.

He felt that he had to get rid of everything because if you don't, it's going to come right back. So he had to get rid of, of course, government, government institutions, personnel, he had to get rid of the whole judiciary system, which in his view as a Marxist was only defended the existing regime. He had to get rid of capitalist institutions capitalist industries. He had to get rid of banks, the whole financial system.

All the institutions which were introduced were amended to be socialist institutions. So, for example, at universities, he abolished tenure for professors and introduced open admissions -- which we copied in this country in the 60's -- so as to obliterate, you know, the class of knowledgeable people. The courts had to abandon all existing law books and the judges had to be people who had no legal education, but had to have a revolutionary spirit or revolutionary conscience as we call it and judge according to that. And in all institutions in the country this was the principal that was injected.

Did the new government govern the nation any better than the old one?

The people who took over Russia -- not only the Russian government but the Russian economy which was the fifth largest in the world -- had absolutely no experience with running anything, either government offices or businesses. They mismanaged things terribly. And before long they had to bring in, they call them specialists, specialists, particularly in the economy. They were under very tight control of the party but they had the know-how. Nevertheless, they messed things up terribly. And Stalin bided his time and ten years later after he came to power he'd aimed to get rid of these people. By get rid of I mean, he had phony trials, short trials in which they were accused of sabotage and espionage and be executed. And he grew up a whole new cadre of Soviet specialists, but they were not as good as the old ones.

Did living conditions and the standard of living get better or worse under Lenin and communism?

It worsened them tremendously. The standard of living of the population in the years immediately following the revolution sank to the lowest levels, levels not seen long under Czarism. The situation improved after 1921 because Lenin chose a new economic policy. He had such rebellions from the population at large that he was afraid he was going to be toppled from power. So he allowed some private property, particularly in agriculture produce, and also in consumer goods. So by 1928 -- this is already four years after his death -- the general standard of living in the country was not worse than had been before the revolution. But then Stalin came in and everything got bad again.

What aspects of Lenin's personality are reflected in the communist system?

Well, it reflects his personality in the sense that he imprinted it with this idea of destructiveness of the existing order and the necessity of establishing a completely different order. That was deeply embedded in him, in his mentality and his psychology, the lack of tolerance for other views, the lack of sympathy. His favorite word was merciless. He used it all the time.

It was a system that knew the truth -- that did not tolerate any other truth. That's very much how Lenin looked at things. He knew, and anybody that disagreed with him as they say was a renegade, liquidator, apostate, what have you. And the system was built that way. The party had the truth at its disposal and if you're not with it you're against it, and therefore your life was worthless. That was very Leninist. That was embedded in the system. There's no such thing as a human right, there are only human duties, total commitment to the system. That also flowed from his psychology -- the intolerance, the lack of empathy, lack of pity. All that reflected in his personality.

When there was a famine in Russia in the late 19th century and people tried to organize famine relief, he was against it. He was the only intellectual in that region where he lived to be against it. He said it's doing something very progressive economically, it's forcing the peasants to move into the cities and so on and industrialize the country. He had no such human feelings at all. The whole system became like that -- totally inhumane.

How did the rest of the world react to the Bolshevik revolution?

At first there was not much reaction to the Russian revolution abroad because the world was in the midst of World War I, which preoccupied people totally. Millions of young men were at the front dying each day. So I was surprised that for example, in the newspaper, in the leading Swiss newspaper of March 1917, from which Lenin learned about the revolution in Russia, the news was on page two. It was a small item.

And that lasted through 1918, 1919. And then of course, when peace settled in Europe, uneasy peace, people began to wonder what's happening in Russia, particularly since the Russians tried to export the revolution. And then a lot of attention was paid. Some people thought that Russians are saviors of the world. But the real influence of communism did not really begin until the 1930s, under the impact of two big events, which was The Depression, which seemed to foreshadow the doom of capitalism, and the rise of Nazism.

Yes the Cold War however was different, because the Cold War we confronted a great military power, a state with great military power. In the 1920s and 1930s, Russia was not a great military power; at least, it wasn't viewed as such. And what people mostly feared was the spread of communism to their countries, which was not so much of a problem in the Cold War.

Revolution sponsored by, particularly in countries like Germany, people really did fear Bolsheviks' coup. But they suppressed it. And on the whole it was the internal concerns that predominated the 1920s and 1930s and it was the external ones that dominated the Cold War.

Did Lenin's successors admire Lenin and his legacy?

Stalin considers himself a pupil of Lenin, and this answers the question of what imprint did he have on the revolution subsequently. Stalin was his pupil. He learned what Lenin taught, particularly the strategy and tactics of revolutionary activity. He gave up the notion, Stalin that is, of exporting revolution abroad because he realized that it was a non-starter, and he began to emphasize the need for another world war -- World War II -- which would spread communism. That actually was Lenin's conclusion, too, by 1921.

The ideals of Lenin persisted with this time period, then they began to somehow to decline. Khrushchev revived the Lenin cult because he wanted to get rid of the legacy of Stalin. Stalin was such a horrid human being that Khrushchev began to idealize Lenin, the human Lenin, the idealist Lenin. So there are many myths about Lenin that come from the Khrushchev period. And that had its effect. I'm astonished that after all the revelations we have about Lenin a few years ago, polls were conducted in Russia and Russians were asked who are their ten greatest men in human history of all countries, all ages, Lenin came out third, all the thousands of years of human history. So it made an impression on the Russian mentality.

Moving to another topic – how does socialism fit into the ideology of Italy's Mussolini?

Mussolini, contrary to prevailing opinion, was not born a fascist; Mussolini was an extreme left-wing socialist. He came from a socialist family, an anarchist family. He was an extreme socialist. And in the early 1900s was really a kind of counterpart of Lenin in the Italian socialist party. He chased out the reformers. He wanted a revolution. He wanted a tight party. Like Lenin, Mussolini lost faith in the working class. He thought the working class consisted of accommodators, appeasers and he wanted to bring revolution from above, a militant party. And when he chased out the reformist from the socialist part of Italy and became editor of the main organ of the Italian socialist party, Lenin congratulated him. Not by name but he wrote an article in which he praised what the Italian revolutionist had done.

Then came the war, World War I in 1914 and Mussolini was stunned to see how much stronger nationalism is than class antagonism, because it was always said among socialists that nationalism is not something that the workers share. According to Marx, the workers have no fatherland. They only know their class. It turned out that was not true at all. And the workers very happily went to massacre each other in World War I. Mussolini very quickly drew the conclusion from this and said all right, the class struggle

is an important thing and it guides history, but it's a class struggle not within nations but between nations. So, he sort of married, combined socialism and nationalism. He said there are "have" nations and "have-not" nations. Italy is a have-not nation. We have to defend our interests. And of course Hitler did the same, although Hitler never had the socialist background.

Was the Fascist Party a "right-wing" party?

Mussolini's party was a right-wing party but only to some extent, just as the Nazi party. These were not conservative parties. They were radical, radical nationalist parties, which in the programs very much maintained the socialist ideals. For example, Mussolini's corporate state workers participated in the decision making in the business enterprises. They had as much say in some respects, as did the owners of factories.

Mussolini did shift to the right gradually because I think he was afraid of the power of the communist and the socialists, and since he was a dictator and wanted dictatorial power he felt that one has to suppress these parties and they were suppressed.

Were the parties really that dangerous?

Well the parties did present a danger. I mean after the fall of Mussolini, the socialists and communists became majority parties in Italy and, for a while, it looked as if, in 1948 if you recall, it looked as if the Communists were going to take power in Italy. And we were very upset by this and prepared even military contingency plans.

Are Communism and Fascism totally different things, completely opposed to one another?

Well, the notion that Communism and fascism are diametrically opposed is something that was fostered by the Communist party, by the Communist International. In the 1920s, basically the International defined fascism as any anti-communist movement. If you were anti-communist, it doesn't matter what platform, you were automatically fascist. So that even the western democracies were called fascist. This is a meaningless term. I use the term Fascism concretely, to apply only to the Italian fascist party and the Nazi to the Nazi party. Later these two movements had a great deal in common. They were one-party states which gave the workers considerable input into the running of the state, that used socialist slogans without giving them really socialist rights. I mean, the same thing was true in the Soviet Union. They bannered about socialist slogans but they came nowhere near fulfilling socialist programs. And they felt a great deal of empathy for each other, all these fascists and communists, because they had a common enemy. The common enemy was liberal, democratic, capitalist state. They hated it, all of it, equally. And they had a great deal of admiration for each other. You know, Hitler, at the height of the war which his troops were waging with the Russians in 1942-1943, spoke freely to his associates about how after having triumphed over Stalin he will make Stalin his governor over Russia. And Mao Zedong, when he was criticized for killing so many of his associates during the Cultural Revolution is quoted as saying, "Look at Hitler. The more cruelty, the more revolutionist zeal." They greatly admired each other and hated equally well the Roosevelt's and the Churchill's and the other democratic leaders in West.

How did Mussolini view human nature? Did he think one could remold a human being into an ideal person?

The difference between Lenin and Mussolini about human nature was the following. Lenin believed, in line with the philosophic tradition which goes back to the eighteenth century, that human nature is perfectly malleable. You can make human beings be anything you want. They followed Locke who said, "Human beings when they are born are *tabula rasa*, they have no personality. The personality is formed by experience, sensory experience." So you can make anything out of human beings you want. And Mussolini was not heir to this tradition, anyway not when he became a fascist leader.

And he once said about Lenin, in the early 1920s that Lenin failed, because Lenin was a sculptor working on human nature and he failed because human nature is harder than any stone or any metal you can refashion. And, he didn't try to.

Unlike Lenin, Mussolini did not believe you could change human nature, that humans are what they are, and he thought that Lenin waged a futile attempt to change human nature. And that's why the dictatorship of Mussolini was much gentler than that of Lenin.

What was Mao Zedong's approach to communism?

Mao's version of communism was very extreme, although Pol Pot's in Cambodia was even more extreme. Mao felt that one has to really, not wait for changes in the social system at all, but change human beings just as they are, at once. That means to educate them and cut them off from all previous culture. Lenin allowed his people to read the classics and had access to the old literature. And Mao cut it all off. And for a while all they could read was the analogies in the so-called Red Book. So he had this idea that if you do that, you completely cut them off from the past and create new human beings that way.

He did not believe in objective conditions, which Lenin did believe as a Marxist. He believed that you can educate people regardless of their objective economic or political conditions.

That kind of policy led to horrible cruelties and inhumanities. I mean I was in China shortly after Mao's death. All the museums were closed. The bookstores were just reopening. The monuments, historic monuments of great antiquity were full of graffiti. So it was a horrible experience.

I went to the university, one of the universities and I talked to the faculty and there were some older professors who were literate, but some of the younger professors were brought in by the Cultural Revolution were illiterates, I mean functionally illiterates. It was a horrible effect. And to do that to a country that is thousands of years of culture is inexcusable.

Did Gorbachev think communism could work in Russia if it were reformed?

Gorbachev abandoned the idea of reforming Russia. I know this from one of his close assistants who told me that they tried to make reforms in 1985, 1986, 1987 and he told me that by 1988 they realized that the system is unreformable. You either take it as it is or demolish it. So he began slowly to demolish it by bringing the population into

the process. By allowing *glasnost*, which is freedom of speech, and having elections. And that destroyed the system. I don't think he wanted it originally but he found that he could do it no other way.

He was at Harvard here last week or was it two weeks ago, he gave a speech in which he said, the *perestroika* which he launched is not in the past, it's in the future. Russia still has not gone through *perestroika* which he wanted for it.

Gorbachev probably believed in socialism, I mean he was raised by it and he could not have gotten where he was, membership in the Politburo and then chairmanship of it, if he hadn't. But he developed very profound doubts and he describes it in his memoirs when he says, when he traveled in Western Europe, he traveled definitely in France, I think also Belgium, and so on, he said he was astonished by what he saw. Not the wealth and the prosperity, but the way people talked and the way people behaved. How free they were. How freely they expressed their opinion. That had a shattering effect on him, in a very positive way. He came back to Russia he was a changed man.

What do you think the future holds for socialism? Is it dead and buried?

Socialism is not dead and even communism is not completely dead because the idea of a truly egalitarian human society where nobody is richer than anybody else, everybody shares everything, is very deeply embedded in the human psyche. It goes back to the eighth century BC. You have it in Plato. Plato is of course later than eighth century, fourth century, but Plato spoke about that, about dissolving our personality in society and so on -- sharing our wives and sharing our children. I think this idea will always exist. Temporarily it has suffered a terrible setback but I wouldn't consider it buried forever.

What is the legacy of socialism, as you see it?

The worst legacy of socialism is the destructiveness, which, if you consider communism part of socialism, the destructiveness which it caused in so many countries, which followed it. I mean, Russia today is far worse off than Russia was in 1913, 1914, before World War I. Cuba is much worse off. North Korea is a disaster area where children are malnourished and raised deformed. This is a horrible thing. Has it left any positive effect? I was at a conference in Switzerland ten years ago right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and it was the first time this was a World Economic Forum, the first time the Russian delegation came and we talked to them, and I said, "Do you see any positive effect of communism, any legacy that it left that is positive?" And they scratched their heads and they talked to each other and then and said, "Yes one positive legacy -- the educational system. We have a better educational system than we've had in the past." That may be granted perhaps.

Why didn't the Soviet Union's social welfare system work?

The social welfare system was not sustainable. Social welfare can only be sustainable where you have a high level of productivity, such as in our societies. You can then spend a lot of money on social welfare. But they couldn't, therefore the social welfare system even as it existed provided the bare, bare minimum. I think something like half the population under communism lived on less than \$10 a month. So if you

want to have a good social welfare system, you first of all have to increase productivity and it cannot be done under socialism or communism.

Can socialism work anywhere today?

I definitely feel the flaw lies embedded in socialism because people have certainly tried to enforce it by peaceful means, such as in Chile, in very violent means as in China or Cambodia, it always has failed, therefore we have to -- just as I write in one of my books -- it's not a good idea that didn't work out, it was a bad idea, and it cannot work.

Do you know any anecdotes about Lenin that you'd like to share?

Russia was hit by a terrible famine, five million people died. And Lenin wrote a letter to the Central Committee which had been published in 1970 but was considered to be spurious, and I found the original and published it in my book, "The Unknown Lenin," in which he says to the Central Committee, "look now that people are dying by the thousands and even resorting to eating human flesh, now is the time we should go after the church and confiscate this wealth. We need this wealth for ourselves." He doesn't say we need it to feed the hungry. We fed the hungry -- we the Americans from the American Relief Administration. He said, "We need it for the state." That's a horrible story. But all the stories about him are of that kind.

I can tell you another anecdote about Lenin. He was so simpleminded. He liked music. He liked Beethoven particularly. And he once said that he doesn't want to hear it anymore. He doesn't want to listen to music because it makes you soft and you want to embrace and hug and kiss people. And what you have to do is hit them over the head. So he stopped listening to music. That's the kind of human being he was.