Questions for Discussion and Review (VI)


RELEVANT READING: McKay, Chapter 27; Chapter 28, 940-55; Chapter 29, pp. 960-968; Perry, Chapters 10, 11, 12

1. Identifications.
   d. kolkhoz  e. Rasputin  f. Alexander Kerensky
   g. Rosa Luxemburg  h. Friedrich Nietzsche  i. Josephine Baker
   j. kulak  k. id / ego /superego

2. Review Questions
   a. How can one explain the mass enthusiasm for war in early August, 1914?
   b. Why did the war in the west turn into a stalemate, in spite of early expectations of a rapid, decisive victory?
   c. How did industrialization in Russia prior to 1914 differ from that in the west? Did that difference play a significant role in the revolution that broke out in Russia in 1917? Is it appropriate to term the February-March events a “bourgeois” revolution?
   d. What were the principal differences between Lenin’s interpretation of Marxism and that of the Marxists in the west? How did Lenin and Trotsky differ? All claimed to be the true heirs of Marx—which of them had the best argument, in your opinion?
   e. The Peace of Paris in 1919 and the various treaties that emerged from it (Versailles, Trianon, etc.) have been much criticized. How justified are those criticisms? How might the peace settlement have been different and more fair?
   f. How did Bukharin’s vision of industrialization for Russia differ from that of Stalin after 1928? What were the reasons for Stalin’s remarkable shift to the “left” in 1927-8?
   g. World War I has been termed “totalitarian.” What is meant by that? Is there some relationship between the use of the term for the years 1914-19 and its later application to Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany? Relatedly, is it appropriate to say that World War I “prepared” Russia and Germany for Stalinism and Nazism?
h. How would you describe the subjects and themes of interwar mass culture as distinguished from those of high culture? If so few were actually influenced by the high culture (e.g., in modern art, architecture and design) in the 1920s and 1930s, why is it considered so significant? Can you see parallels in science and technology? (For example, in the differences between the so-called “new physics” and the Newtonian world-view—how many people understood these changes?)

i. How did Freud’s view of the human mind differ from that of earlier thinkers? How might his theories be termed “typically twentieth-century”, or appropriate to an “age of anxiety” and “irrationalism”?

3. Discussion Questions

a. “American intervention in World War I was a terrible mistake. Europe and the world would have been better off in the long run if the United States had allowed the Europeans to solve their own problems.” Do you agree? What might have happened in Europe if the United States had not intervened?

b. “Without Nicholas II there would have been no revolution in 1917. The ‘accident’ of his personality—to say nothing of the wife he chose and the son she bore him—might be said to have had more to do with the way things turned out in 1917 than any Great Historical Force.” Discuss critically. Might other “accidents,” such as the personalities of Lenin and Trotsky, also be considered essential to the success of the ensuing Bolshevik Revolution? What were the most important Great Historical Forces moving Russia toward revolution at this time?

c. “Lenin has been elevated into a kind of sainthood, both in Russia and in the West. But his legacy should be evaluated soberly, and in truth Stalinism was merely the logical culmination of Leninism, not its betrayal; it was not ultimately so much Stalin’s personality as the very principles of bolshevism that opened the path to the horrors of 1928-1939.” Discuss critically. How have such opinions shifted since the collapse of the Soviet Union? Do you think Lenin would have made different decisions than Stalin had he lived? Would Trotsky or Bukharin have ruled Russia in a substantially different manner, had either of them won the struggle for power?