

THE INTERLOCUTOR

JOURNAL OF THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

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AFTER REVOLUTIONS



A myth is always created about revolution, and the revolution is moved by the dynamic of the myth. The astounding thing is that it is not only the imagination of the masses of the people that creates a myth, scholars create it also.

Nicolas Berdyaev

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AFTER
REVOLUTIONS

THE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

By **JANUSZ DOBIESEWSKI**

The Russian Revolution may be seen in three various ways:

Firstly, as an event in the history of Russia, which was caused by its inherent properties and social and political attributes, particular circumstances, contradictions and obstacles in its historical growth; secondly, as an incident of Russian history which fits into a more general pattern of revolutionary events, but which also may serve as its distinct 'sample,' a lesson, a warning for the rest of the world; the Russian Revolution thus would reveal more general rules, threats and controversies of social development, thereby suggesting to other societies the necessary preventive acts which would allow them to avoid the catastrophe of revolution; thirdly, the Russian Revolution may be seen as a structural element of a wider revolutionary process, an element that may be indispensable and essential; this universal context is not seen (as previously) in terms of an independent, though analogous example of a revolutionary event, but as the decisive environment of the Russian Revolution; in this take, we speak of the socialist, proletarian (and before that, bourgeois) nature of the Russian Revolution, of the way it fulfilled Marxist theory and its vision of history (though with the necessity for Western, universal adjustment), or a cruelly and irrevocably falsified Marxist utopia.

The article is devoted to these three interpretations of the problem.

Key words: Revolution, Russia, *De profundis*, Arendt, Marxism

1.

The Russian Revolution represents a topic particularly resistant to any attempts of reflective formulation and comprehension. This is due, firstly, to the extraordinary accumulation of dynamic and interdependent historical facts. We may arrive at views in direct contrast with each other: starting from a vision of events as the inevitable, fatalistic consequence of certain causes, and ending with a conviction of the absolutely arbitrary coincidence of chance circumstances; we may even attain more comprehensive and far-reaching arbitrariness in correlating and organizing these facts. Secondly, this 'anarchy of events' is combined with the great conceptual, theoretical and ideological potential of the Russian Revolution. Long before it began and long after it was over (whenever we appoint this end), and certainly while it lasted, it was variously described and explained, in multiple attempts to embed it into diverse conceptions, projects, theoretical, political, ideological, axiological, mythological schemes, including the historiosophical patterns which interest us the most at the moment. Each new attempt to conceptualize the Russian Revolution