

## History 344

### Discussion of May 8

1. In his conclusion, Figes endorses Gorky's comment that the people were not betrayed by the revolution—instead of being the revolution's victims, they were protagonists in its tragedy. "To be sure, this was a people's tragedy but it was a tragedy which they helped to make" (808). In what sense? Discuss.
2. In what ways, would you maintain, did Russian and Bolshevik history up until 1917 fundamentally shaped the way the new regime developed between 1918 and the 1920s? In what sense can the Revolution be seen as the "serfs' revenge" of an anarchic peasantry striving for autonomy from the state, which in turn led to the mass terror of the civil war? (Figes, 809).
3. Figes holds that liberals striving for constitutional democracy during the revolution were "naive" and that "Western ideals of democracy" were "quite unsuited to revolutionary Russia" (811). Is this correct? On the other hand, Figes suggests that "a democracy that contained elements of [the] social revolution" from below could have succeeded (812). Was there no democratic outcome possible to the Russian Revolution?
4. What were the main elements of Stalin's "revolution from above" or "second revolution" at the end of the 1920s? (lecture). What is the Stalin revolution's relationship between war communism? How does it end the NEP?
5. How does Figes see the connections between Lenin and Stalin—between what he calls Lenin's drive toward Soviet power in a peasant country and Stalin's "revolution from above" toward a command system of industrialization? (814-15). How does Moshe Lewin (e-reserve) in his "Grappling with Stalinism" see the origins of Stalinism and its relationship with Leninism? Compare.
6. What is the relationship between the "semi-educated" and ex-rural rank and file party members who joined after 1917 (such as Figes's protagonists Kanatchikov and Os'kini, 813) and Stalinism or, put another way, the course the revolution took in the 1920s? (Figes, 813-4; see also Lewin). Can Stalinism, seen as a "drive to overcome backwardness," be blamed on them?
7. According to Moshe Lewin, what is the relationship between the "*muzhik*" (the Russian peasant) and the course the revolution took from Lenin to Stalin? To what extent can this course be explained by the social context in which the new regime found itself? Does this explain away the ideology and politics of the Bolsheviks?
8. According to Steven G. Marks (e-reserve), what are the international consequences of the Russian Revolution? What is the appeal of the Bolshevik one-party model internationally? To whom does it appeal in the West, and why? (282-293). How was it influential in the "Third World" (310-32). How does Marks describe the relationship between the Soviet model, Fascism and Nazism? (299-310).