

## ARTICLE

### **From Race War to Socialist Racism: Foucault's Second Transcription**

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**ABSTRACT:** Since the publication of Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, his position on race and racism has received much attention. The focus of discussion has largely been on his genealogy of biological racism as a feature of modern biopolitics. His account of social racism, by contrast, remains largely unexamined. Thus, the aim of this paper is to reconstruct and substantiate Foucault's cursory remarks of the transcription of the historical discourse of race war into social racism. After contextualizing Foucault's discussion of racism and outlining his account of two transcriptions undergone by the discourse of race war into biological and social racism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I draw on the writings of the social revolutionary Lev Tikhomirov as well as Peter Holquist's analysis of Soviet state violence as a technique of population management to give some substance to Foucault's rather vague outline of a possible genealogy of social racism.

**Keywords:** Foucault, Race war, Social racism, Genealogy, Russia, Soviet state racism

### **Introduction**

Since the publication of Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, his position on race and racism has received much attention.<sup>1</sup> Much of the discussion focuses on his genealogy of bio-

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<sup>1</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez, *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2005); Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) (<https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816672783.001.0001>); Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, eds., *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Durham NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011); Mark Kelly, "Racism, Nationalism and Biopolitics: Foucault's Society Must Be Defended," *Contretemps* 4 (2004): 58–70; David Macey, "Rethinking Biopolitics, Race and Power in the Wake of Foucault," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 186–205 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409349278>); Mary Beth Mader, "Modern Living and Vital Race: Foucault and the Science of Life," *Foucault Studies* 0, no. 12 (September 12, 2011): 97–112 (<https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i12.3336>); Kim Su Rasmussen, "Foucault's Genealogy of

logical racism as a feature of modern biopolitics, which he develops in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, as well as his lectures at the Collège de France, in particular *Abnormal* and “*Society Must Be Defended*.”<sup>2</sup> While Foucault’s analysis is concerned with the emergence of new forms of normalizing power that made racism both possible and necessary in Europe, scholars have also used his account to develop their own genealogies of race and racism in the United States.<sup>3</sup> What remains largely unexamined, however, is Foucault’s account of socialist racism. Foucault argues that the historical discourse of race war not only underwent a biological transcription, by which it became modern, normalizing racism, but also a second transcription in terms of social war. This transformation first gave rise to a revolutionary discourse of class struggle and, second, a discourse of Soviet State racism.

It is my goal in this paper to reconstruct and substantiate Foucault’s account of this second transcription. For this purpose, I will first briefly contextualize Foucault’s discussion of racism and reconstruct his account of the two transcriptions which the historical discourse of race war underwent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I will then turn to the writings of the social revolutionary Lev Tikhomirov as well as Peter Holquist’s analysis of Soviet state violence as a technique of population management to give some substance to Foucault’s rather vague outline of a possible genealogy of social racism.

### Foucault on Race War and Racism

Foucault introduces the notion of racism in the context of his account of the emergence of new forms of power in Western European modernity as a means of picking out the mechanism that made possible the integration of disparate modes of old and new technologies of power in a single regime. As readers of this journal know well, Foucault famously argued that since the seventeenth century, new modes of power evolved in Western Europe that were very different in their aims and mechanisms from the traditional model of sovereignty. While the characteristic privi-

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Racism,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 5 (September 1, 2011): 34–51 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411410448>); Falguni A. Sheth, *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1995); Chloë Taylor, “Race and Racism in Foucault’s Collège de France Lectures,” *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 11 (2011): 746–56 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2011.00443.x>).

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975* (Picador, 2004); Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, trans. David Macey (Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Dilts, *Punishment and Inclusion: Race, Membership, and the Limits of American Liberalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Ellen K. Feder, *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Brady Thomas Heiner, “Foucault and the Black Panthers,” *City* 11, no. 3 (December 1, 2007): 313–56; Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (Indiana University Press, 2009).

lege of sovereignty was the “right to *take* life or *let* live,”<sup>4</sup> these new forms of power were “bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them.”<sup>5</sup> Foucault gives the name bio-power to these new forms of power, which were concerned with administering, optimizing, and fostering life. Foucault further suggests that bio-power has developed in two major forms, which have formed two poles “linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations.”<sup>6</sup> The chronologically first of these poles were the disciplines, an anatomo-politics of the human body, which focused on the individual body to increase and extract its forces. With the emergence of a new concept of life and the concomitant formation of biology as a scientific discipline,<sup>7</sup> the second pole became possible, which “focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes” of reproduction, mortality, health, life expectancy, and so on.<sup>8</sup> Foucault calls this second form of bio-power a biopolitics of the population, which was implemented through regulatory controls and interventions. Because these new forms of power serve not to kill, but “to invest life through and through,” they cannot be understood on the old model of sovereign power.<sup>9</sup> In fact, it would seem that the traditional sovereign right to kill is ultimately irreconcilable with a biopolitical investment in the valorization and management of life. Nevertheless, Foucault argues that “the problem of sovereignty was never more sharply posed than at this moment, precisely because it was no longer a question, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of how to deduce an art of government from theories of sovereignty, but rather, given the existence and deployment of an art of government, what juridical form, what institutional form, and what legal basis could be given to the sovereignty typical of a state.”<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 136. Foucault explains that the classical right of sovereignty is one of seizure, rejoinder, or deduction, and it is exercised when the sovereign's existence is threatened. Consider, for example, Foucault's claim in *Discipline and Punish* that the public spectacle of torture and execution constituted not primarily a juridical procedure, but a political ceremony by which sovereign power is asserted. This is necessary, Foucault argues, because the violation of law “attacks the sovereign: it attacks him personally, since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince” (Foucault 1995, 47). As a consequence, punishment is not only a mechanism of redress, but, more importantly, a ritual by which “a momentarily injured sovereignty is reconstituted” (Ibid., 48). As a “direct reply to the person who has offended him,” punishment appears, on this view, as “an aspect of the sovereign's right to make war on his enemies” (Ibid.). The continuity between the sovereign and the law, as an expression of the sovereign's will, meant that the violation of law was a personal attack on the sovereign. As Foucault notes in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, the violence exercised in punishment was, thus, “conditioned by the defense of the sovereign, and his own survival” (Foucault 1990, 135).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Order of Things,” in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 261–68. See also Mader, “Modern Living and Vital Race.”

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart et al., trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 106.

problem that had to be solved, in other words, was how to reconcile disparate techniques of power and make them function in and for an economy of power concerned with the optimization of life.

Foucault asserts that this problem was not solved on the level of theory, but on the register of practice. The sovereign right to kill, he argues, is reconciled with bio-power not “at the level of a speculative discourse, but in the form of concrete arrangements ... that would go to make up the great technology of power in the nineteenth century: the *dispositif* of sexuality would be one of them, and one of the most important.”<sup>11</sup> Foucault further draws our attention to the fact that where political theory clings to the top-down model of sovereign power, political practice implements various *dispositifs* that facilitate the continuous exercise of power. The *dispositif* of sexuality is one example. What it shares with other arrangements, such as madness or delinquency,<sup>12</sup> is that it has to justify the exercise of the sovereign right to kill in an economy of power concerned with the life and well-being of the population. The principle according to which this justification is achieved is what Foucault identifies, controversially, as racism. What does he mean by that?

Foucault does not understand modern racism as an “ethnic racism,” but rather as a biologizing racism against the abnormal that is quite different from “traditional, historical racism.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 140; translation modified. Foucault defines a *dispositif*, or apparatus, as a set of heterogeneous discursive and non-discursive practices like laws, institutions, architectural forms, etc., whose main function is to respond to an urgency. See Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Random House, 1980), 194–228. While scholars like Giorgio Agamben have criticized Foucault for not making clear where disciplinary and biopolitical mechanisms converge, Foucault here explicitly identifies sexuality as one of the points of intersection of individualizing and massifying forms of power. In addition to Agamben’s unwarranted charge that Foucault fails to explain where “techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures converge,” he also hints that Foucault neglected to analyze the “point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power” (Agamben 1998, 6). As we will see, Foucault’s discussion of racism makes this criticism obsolete.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalifa, trans. Jonathan Murphy (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Abnormal*, 316. I believe that Agamben’s critique of Foucault is based on a number of misreadings of this claim. First, Agamben charges Foucault with failing to explain where the disciplines of the body and a biopolitics of the population as well as the technologies of sovereignty and bio-power intersect. Foucault’s account of racism not only offers an explicit rejoinder to this criticism, but also points to another misunderstanding on Agamben’s part. For while Foucault’s discussion of biological life refers to the notion of life developed by the science of biology, Agamben seems to think that by biological life Foucault simply means the natural fact of existence. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). For critical reflection on Agamben’s account of life as well as his reading of Foucault see, for instance, Laurent Dubreuil, “Leaving Politics: Bios, Zōē, Life,” *Diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 83–98 (<https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.2008.0013>); James Gordon Finlayson, “‘Bare Life’ and Politics in Agamben’s Reading of Aristotle,” *The Review of Politics* 72, no. 01 (2010): 97–126 (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670509990982>); Thomas Lemke, “‘A Zone of Indistinction’ – A Critique of Giorgio Agamben’s Concept of Biopolitics,” *Outlines*.

Contrary to common usage, racism in Foucault's sense is not a mode of oppression directed against other races external to a social body, but a "principle of exclusion and segregation" deployed to protect the health of the population from abnormal elements internal to the social body.<sup>14</sup> Given this unconventional use of the term, it is legitimate to ask why Foucault opts for the term racism – rather than speaking of eugenics, white supremacy, classism, and so forth.<sup>15</sup>

One reason for Foucault's adoption of the term racism is that the form of modern racism typical of biopolitical societies has its conditions of possibility in a modification of a historical discourse of race war.<sup>16</sup> Foucault fleshes out this argument in his 1975/76 lectures "*Society Must Be Defended*," where he offers a detailed genealogy of modern racism. He traces this phenomenon to a historical discourse of race war, whose emergence Foucault locates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in political struggles in England and France as a way to challenge sovereign power. In opposition to the unity and legitimacy of the state justified by the juridical theory of sovereignty, this discourse of race war contended that the state was the product of invasions, conquests, and a war that was preserved and continued in all mechanisms of power. What appeared as right, law, and obedience from the perspective of the victors was domination, violence, and enslavement from the vantage point of the vanquished. This logic was based on an understanding of race that "is not pinned to a stable biological meaning," but rather "designates a certain historico-political divide."<sup>17</sup> On this view, races are groups united by language, religion, geographical origin, or custom. It was possible, as a consequence, to conceive of society as divided by a binary of two races, like Normans and Saxons in England or Franks and Gauls in France.

Foucault argues that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the historical and anti-sovereign discourse of race war underwent two transcriptions, by which he means two distinct series of historical transformation by which the discourse of race war was integrated, in modified form, into newly emerging bio-political rationalities. Foucault identifies a first "openly biological transcription" in terms of the theory of race struggle and a "second transcription based upon the great theme and theory of social war, which emerges in the very first years of the nineteenth century, and which tends to erase every trace of racial conflict in order to define itself as class strug-

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Critical Practice Studies 7, no. 1 (2005): 3–13; Mika Ojakangas, "Impossible Dialogue on Bio-Power: Agamben and Foucault," *Foucault Studies* 0, no. 2 (August 7, 2007): 5–28 (<https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i2.856>); Halit Mustafa Tagma, "Homo Sacer vs. Homo Soccer Mom: Reading Agamben and Foucault in the War on Terror," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 34, no. 4 (2009): 407–35 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540903400403>).

<sup>14</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> See McWhorter's considerations of possible objections to Foucault's use of the term racism in *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America*.

<sup>16</sup> There are, of course, other explanations for his choice of terminology. McWhorter, for instance, argues that the use of the term racism for a mechanism of internal purification highlights that racism is "a set of power relations that produce effects we call anti-Semitism and white supremacy" (McWhorter 2009, 34). Another reason might be the specific meaning and use of the French word *race*, which not only translates into the English word "race" but also means "breed."

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 77.

gle.”<sup>18</sup> Notice that Foucault’s distinction between these two transcriptions refers to contextually specific and historically contingent conditions under which modern, biological racism was articulated. Nevertheless, despite their differences, both transcriptions gave rise to modern, biological racism, understood as a “basic mechanism of power” by which the state becomes able to exercise the sovereign right to kill against some so that others may live.<sup>19</sup> That is, racism, for Foucault, is a mechanism that facilitates the joining together of forms of sovereignty and bio-power in a governmental regime. This explains Foucault’s claim, to be examined shortly, that there is no difference in kind between the racism of the Nazi state and that of the Soviet state, even as there are significant differences in their historical formation.

Foucault dedicates the rest of the lectures to a detailed engagement with the first transcription, which he traces from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and France through the French Revolution and, finally, to the fascist regimes of Franco’s Spain and Nazi Germany. His account of this process, by which the discourse of race war became biological State racism, has also received much attention in the literature. Yet, the second transcription mentioned by Foucault, namely the transformation of the discourse of race war into a discourse of class war and its culmination in socialist State racism, remains largely unexamined.

### **Foucault’s Second Transcription**

Foucault is clear that his genealogy of State racism charted in “*Society Must Be Defended*,” which traces the biological transcription of the discourse of race war, is specific to Western Europe. Nevertheless, he offers a few remarks about the Russian economy of power and Soviet-style racism in his lectures at the Collège de France, which provide a rough outline of what a fuller account of the second transcription of race war into Soviet State racism might look like.

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault hints that the Russian economy of power differs significantly from its Western counterpart because of the presence of a strong religious element in the experience, perception, and organization of political sovereignty. This religious element, he continues, leads to the identification, rather than separation, of divine power and political sovereignty in the figure of the tsar.<sup>20</sup> He further claims that due to the intertwining of sovereign and religious power in Russia, practices and rationalities of bio-power emerge at a different historical moment, develop along a different trajectory, and are championed by a different segment of society compared to France. Nevertheless, he insists that “the play between the sovereign right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower” is “inscribed in the workings of all states” – including socialist

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. For a historical study of the relationship between religious and political power in Russia, which Foucault cites in his lectures, see Alain Besançon, *Le Tsarévitch Immolé: La Symbolique de La Loi Dans La Culture Russe* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1967). See also Alexandre Koyré, *La Philosophie et Le Problème National En Russie Au Début Du XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1929).

states.<sup>21</sup> Since the exercise of the right to kill in the name of the life and health of the population is precisely what Foucault means by modern racism, it follows that “the socialist State, socialism, is as marked by racism as the workings of the modern State, of the capitalist State.”

In addition to the State racism that developed in the conditions I have been telling you about, a social-racism also came into being, and it did not wait for the formation of socialist States before making its appearance. Socialism was a racism from the outset, even in the nineteenth century. No matter whether it is Fourier at the beginning of the century or the anarchists at the end of it, you will always find a racist component in socialism.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Socialist state racism, like the racism of the capitalist state, is a biological racism even if its historical formation does not follow the historical process of transformation described by Foucault as the first, openly biological transcription of the historical discourse of race war. That is to say, the historical specificities of the development of bio-power in Russia suggest that the formation of Soviet-style State racism has a different genealogy and requires its own analysis. Foucault does not offer much in the way of such an analysis, but he suggests that Soviet State racism was made possible by two operations. First, the historical discourse of race war was transformed into a revolutionary discourse of class struggle. Second, this revolutionary discourse was then inscribed into the workings of the Soviet state, thereby making it possible to eliminate “class enemies as though they were racial enemies.”<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the first of these operations, Foucault explains that it was accomplished by way of a “second transcription [of the discourse of race war] based upon the great theme and theory of social war.”<sup>24</sup> This transcription, whose beginning Foucault locates at the start of the nineteenth century, differs from the biological transcription in that it re-articulates the historical war between races in terms of class struggle. That is, rather than transforming the idea of race war into a discourse of a battle between the human race and those who threaten its biological integrity, social racism reworks the historical notion of race, understood as a social group united by language, tradition, custom, and so on, in terms of class, thereby presenting itself as class struggle. As a result, Foucault maintains that socialism itself, by virtue of advancing a discourse of class struggle, is racist even before it becomes state policy. And while this racism is “not a truly ethnic racism,” it is nevertheless “racism of the evolutionist kind, biological racism” to the extent that it justifies the right to kill to protect the life and health of a particular social class.<sup>25</sup> This modern, biological racism, Foucault continues, is “fully operational” in socialism on two registers.<sup>26</sup> First,

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<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 260.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

on the level of political practice, it motivates mechanisms deployed by socialist states to exclude political opponents, criminals, and others considered abnormal or deviant. Second, on the level of theoretical reflection, it underpins “the various forms of socialist analysis, or of the socialist project throughout the nineteenth century,” in particular those projects that tackle head on the question of actual struggle against the class enemy.<sup>27</sup> “Whenever you have these socialisms, these forms of socialism or these moments of socialism that stress the problem of the struggle,” he argues, “you therefore have racism.”<sup>28</sup>

Foucault does not carry out the careful genealogical work necessary to substantiate his cursory remarks about the transcription of the discourse of race war into social racism in his lectures, as “this would be a whole new argument” whose coherent and convincing development “would really take a whole series of lectures.”<sup>29</sup> His remarks about the Russian economy of power rely in large measure on secondary sources by scholars such as the historian Alain Besançon and the writer and literary theorist André Siniavski,<sup>30</sup> and he mentions Charles Fourier and “the anarchists” as providing evidence for his claim that socialism always contains racist elements.<sup>31</sup> Further, in two interviews he gave in 1977, Foucault briefly refers to Karl Marx and Leon Trotsky as proponents of a rather literal understanding of class struggle in terms of revolutionary war and state violence.<sup>32</sup> Yet, nowhere does Foucault offer a detailed analysis of these sources to substantiate his rough outline of the transcription of the historical discourse of race war into socialist racism.

In what follows, I will begin to fill this gap by considering the discourses and practices of the figures Foucault mentions, more or less in passing, without further discussion. In particular, I will examine the writings of Russian social revolutionaries and agents of the Soviet State in the period between 1860 and 1920. While a comprehensive genealogy of the transcription of the discourse of race war into Socialist racism is beyond the scope of this paper, it is nevertheless possible to substantiate Foucault’s remarks and provide a fuller explanation of the transformation of the discourse of race war into a discourse of class struggle and subsequently Soviet State racism by considering the social revolutionaries’ understanding of social relations as class war and Soviet state violence as a technique of biopolitical population management.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 262–263.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>30</sup> See Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, 155–156; 161, in particular fn. 64 and 65.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 261.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, “Non Au Sexe Roi,” in *Dits et Écrits III, 1976-1979* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 256–69; Michel Foucault, “Le Jeu de Michel Foucault,” in *Dits et Écrits III, 1976-1979* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 298–329.

### Towards a Genealogy of Socialist Racism

While Foucault does not engage with the writings of Russian social revolutionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century, they nevertheless constitute a privileged access point for tracing the first step of the transcription of the historical and anti-sovereign discourse of race war into a discourse of class war or social struggle he describes. These texts, many of which were written in French or translated into French and English within a couple of years of their publication, are quite astonishing in their explicit articulation of revolutionary violence against the tsarist regime as a necessary tactic of class war which has its origins in race relations.

Consider as a paradigmatic example the text *Russia, Political and Social* by Lev Tikhomirov, a member of the Executive Committee of the revolutionary organization *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will), who later came to drastically change his political views and became one of Russia's canonical conservative thinkers.<sup>33</sup> Tikhomirov understands contemporary Russian social relations as a class struggle between a government-backed capitalist class and a proletarian class of peasants and working people. These social relations, he argues, are the result of a long history of struggle between various social classes which have their origin in the different races inhabiting the Russian landmass. By races, Tikhomirov means discrete human groups differentiated by a distinct "*modus vivendi*" comprised of language, customs, tales, and songs.<sup>34</sup> His notion of race maps closely onto the notion of race deployed in the historical discourse of race war described by Foucault, according to which races were social groups distinguished from others by their geographical location, language, and history.

Tikhomirov traces the origin of the proletarian class to the Russian race, which is itself divided into the three Russian types of Great Russians, Little Russians, and White Russians. Yet, these types do not constitute distinct races, since they "get on very well together," mix completely in their manners and customs, and have no difficulty understanding each other's language.<sup>35</sup> "Their differences," Tikhomirov observes, "are only family ones," just as "in the faces of three

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<sup>33</sup> Tikhomirov is not the only revolutionary advancing this account. Similar arguments can be found in the writings of Vera Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: International Publishers, 1927); Nicolas Morozov, "The Terroristic Struggle," in *Violence in Politics. Terror and Political Assassination in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Feliks Gross (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972), 110–12; Sergei G. Nechaev, "The Catechism of the Revolutionary, 1968," in *Imperial Russia: A Source Book, 1700-1917*, ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1974), 303–8; Stepniak, *Underground Russia* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1883); G. Tarnovski, "Terrorism and Routine," in *Voices of Terror*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2004), 83–87; The Executive Committee, "Letter Sent by the Revolutionary Executive Committee to Alexander III at His Accession to the Throne," in *Early Writings on Terrorism*, ed. Ruth Kinna, vol. 1, 3 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 61–70.

<sup>34</sup> Tikhomirov, Lev Aleksandrovich, *Russia: Political and Social*, trans. Edward Aveling, vol. 1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1888), 15. The text was originally written in French and published, in 1886, as Tikhomirov, Lev Aleksandrovich, *La Russie Politique et Sociale* (Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie Parisienne, 1886). The French original edition is the basis of modified translations in this paper.

<sup>35</sup> Tikhomirov, Lev Aleksandrovich, *Russia: Political and Social*, 1:82.

brothers you always notice many different characteristics; but if you compare these brothers with strangers, the family characteristics are very noticeable.”<sup>36</sup> The Russian race inhabits “Russia proper,” which is surrounded by a “large belt of three million square kilometers, peopled to the number of at least twenty four millions by subjects of foreign races” such as the Finnish, Lithuanian, and Polish race, as well as a large number of other races some of which are incapable of civilization and destined for extinction.<sup>37</sup> Since racial purity is highest at the center and weakest “in the foreign outer layer that envelops the core,”<sup>38</sup> Tikhomirov insists that it is necessary to distinguish between the Russian Empire, which is a “name in political geography,” and the Russian nation, which is “actually a country” united by “a real inner bond” forged by a shared racial identity.<sup>39</sup> This argument prepares the ground for Tikhomirov’s claim that while the tsarist government rules over the Russian Empire, it does not represent the Russian nation. First, however, he proceeds to offer an explanation of the historical events that brought about the coexistence of various races on the Russian landmass as well as their transformation into social classes.

With regard to the first point, Tikhomirov argues that the multi-racial character of the Russian Empire is a result of a history of conquest and invasion, most notably the Tartar invasions in the thirteenth century and conquests by Sweden and Poland in the seventeenth century. These invasions led to the enslavement of the Russian people, who were henceforth ruled by foreigners until the Muscovite tsars, most importantly Ivan the Great, ended the Tartar Yoke in 1480 and unified Russia with the help of the Russian people. Moreover, this history of conquest provides the explanatory framework for the transcription of the notion of race into one of class. Specifically, Tikhomirov argues that invasion and conquest led to the cultivation of distinct social occupations among different races, which led to the development of social classes along racial lines. First, the Tartar invasions geographically isolated Russia proper, thereby making trade and commerce and, thus, the development of a Russian aristocracy impossible. The Russian race was instead forced into agriculture and became a class of peasants. Simultaneously, the Tartar victory over Russia allowed Lithuanian princes to rise to power and conquer White Russia and Ukraine. With the unification of Poland and Lithuania in 1386, Polish language, customs, and political conventions replaced Russian language, culture, and traditions as the dominant influence among the ruling classes. This substitution had important consequences for social and political relations. Writes Tikhomirov,

The constitution of Poland was absolutely aristocratic; all rights, intelligence, wealth, were concentrated in the ranks of the ... nobility. As a consequence, Poland only attracted the sympathies of the upper classes, but these latter everywhere very rapidly became Polish. This was the highest point of Poland’s political development. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Baltic provinces, of their

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:84.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:15; translation modified.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*; translation modified.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:5; translation modified.

own accord, unite themselves to her. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, Poland comes near to conquering all Muscovite Russia. But the exclusive preponderance of the nobility is hollowing out an abyss doomed to engulf the country.<sup>40</sup>

What is significant about this passage is that it emphasizes the conjunction of class and race. Tikhomirov puts forth a historical argument intended to show that the nobility as a social class has its origins in a foreign race, namely the Polish race, thereby challenging the legitimacy of its power. To be sure, Tikhomirov did not understand the Polish race in terms of ethnicity, but rather in the historical sense of race understood as a social group united by language, history, and customs. On his account, then, as the Tartar invasions turned the Russian race into a class of peasants, they engendered the formation of a nobility that was Polish – that is, not ethnically, but culturally insofar as it adopted the Polish language and Polish customs in order to gain access to the privileges granted by the Polish constitution. On this view, the distribution of social and political privileges and burdens, rather than ethnicity, ultimately determined racial membership, which could henceforth be conceptualized in terms of class. As a consequence, Tikhomirov is able to argue that regardless of ethnic considerations, the nobility is foreign to the Russian people.

Notice that this recoding of the historical notion of race as a social group united by language, custom, geographical origin, etc. in terms of social class results in a modification of the concept of foreignness. Foreignness had hitherto been understood in terms of membership in a social group with a different origin and tradition. With the transcription of race into class, however, individuals who at one point share a language, customs, and geographical origin can become foreigners by virtue of changing their social practices. Now, foreigners are all those who do not participate in the *modus vivendi* of a particular social group. The pursuit of social privileges by means of modification of one's social practices like language and traditions, however, appears as a sort of betrayal of and threat to the interests of one's ancestral group. The concept of class might, thus, be said to emerge as a category for those "race traitors," so to speak, who abandon their social group. The conceptual approximation of foreignness and threat implicit in this development also suggests that both foreignness and danger are no longer exclusively located outside of a certain social group, but may also emerge from within. As we will see in the next section, it is precisely this appearance of the inside as a possible site of emergence of threat as well as the need to eliminate internal enemies that gives rise to Soviet state racism. However, the formation of Soviet state racism not only required the availability of the concept of class, but also depended on a particular understanding of the proletariat as the universal class, whose interests ought to be the basis of political representation.<sup>41</sup>

Tikhomirov supplies a critical piece for tracing the formation of the notion of the proletariat as the universal class. We see in his account not only the transcription of the discourse of race

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1:31–32.

<sup>41</sup> I would like to thank Mary Beth Mader for pressing me on this point.

war into one of class war, which was accomplished through the social transformations engendered by the Tartar invasions, but also the beginning of a discourse that grounds national universality in the peasant class. This is possible precisely because of the transliteration, so to speak, of the language of race into a language of class. Because history reveals the peasant class as the Russian race proper, this class constitutes the Russian people whose interests ought to be the concern of the Russian rulers. For Tikhomirov, in other words, the congruence of race and class in the Russian people determines the country's national character and suggests appropriate forms of political organization. Yet, it is clear from his narrative that Russia's rulers were less concerned with the well-being of the peasants than with securing their own dominance. On this account, politics is not concerned with the representation and protection of the Russian people, but rather appears as a sort of institutionalized continuation of the war between different classes that emerged from invasion.

Tikhomirov's description of Russian politics after the Tartar invasions bears out this understanding of politics as a form of war, in which the classes formed through conquest struggle for political representation and supremacy. In this struggle, the ruling classes entered into alliances with the nobility, which resulted in a particularly noxious combination of aristocratic oppression and autocratic despotism against the peasants. In striking similarity to the famous argument of the Abbé de Sieyès that the only estate able to fulfill all the functions necessary to maintain the nation lacked political representation,<sup>42</sup> Tikhomirov argued that in Russia, the peasants ought to be given the political status of the nation.<sup>43</sup> This is because the peasants harbor the country's productive forces and are the source of the state's wealth. The actions of the tsarist government not only inhibit the development of these forces by supporting and actually creating rival classes, but also display a shocking lack of understanding of the sources of the state's strength. Instead of designing a system adequate for the constitution of the Russian people, the government imported a capitalist economic system from abroad, thereby implementing an inorganic socio-economic order that "leads to an artificial state of things, out of correspondence with the natural development of productive forces."<sup>44</sup> By failing to work within and letting itself be directed by the naturalness of Russia's resources, Tikhomirov argues that the government effectively created a situation in which the rate of production is low despite Russia's natural riches – fertile soil, favorable climate, abundant metallurgic products, etc. "This deplorable economic state," he concludes, "is in great measure the fault of the political government, which for thirty years past had, by its clumsy interference, brought endless confusion into the economic conditions of the country."<sup>45</sup> The government's failure to respect the natural conditions and development of the country and its continu-

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<sup>42</sup> Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

<sup>43</sup> Tikhomirov, Lev Aleksandrovich, *Russia: Political and Social*, 1:251.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:272.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:270.

ous intervention in economic processes, Tikhomirov says, resulted in an "abnormal condition of the productive forces of the country."<sup>46</sup>

Tikhomirov's critique of the tsarist government is thus motivated by biopolitical considerations that were first articulated more or less systematically in what Foucault describes, in *Security, Territory, Population*, as "*raison économique*," which is indicative of an emerging biopolitical rationality.<sup>47</sup> According to Foucault, *raison économique* is articulated in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in response to the problem of scarcity and emphasizes the importance of the naturalness of socio-economic relations. According to this rationality, governmental intervention in economic processes is not only inefficient, but also constitutes a kind of sovereign overreach that refuses to recognize that government is an art that has to serve society if it wants to maximize the state's forces.<sup>48</sup> While Tikhomirov does not explicitly engage with *économistes* like Turgot and Quesnay, he nevertheless echoes their form of thought when he argues that the government jeopardized the well-being of the people by failing to respect the natural conditions of the country. Importantly, however, he does not do so as a representative of a government that seeks to find an art of governing, but as a social revolutionary who invokes a biopolitical rationality in order to criticize a government whose interventionism obstructs the development and well-being of the country and its people. It is this governmental overreach into a sphere that ought to be free from intervention and, in fact, dictate government policy that makes the tsarist government illegitimate. As a consequence, Tikhomirov concludes, the Russian people have the right and, indeed, obligation to resist the government for the sake of national salvation.

The brief discussion of Tikhomirov's discourse shows that it accomplishes the first step in Foucault's rough outline of the transcription of the historical discourse of race war into Soviet State racism. Specifically, in the writings of revolutionaries like Tikhomirov, the history of race war is transformed into a revolutionary discourse of class struggle, in which the peasants represent the true Russian nation that suffers under the oppression of foreign ruling classes. With the rise to power of socialism in the October Revolution of 1917, this revolutionary discourse of class war is integrated into the discourse and practice of the Soviet State and transformed into Soviet State racism. In what follows, I argue that the Soviet justification of state violence as a means of creating a new communist society is indicative of this development.

### Soviet State Racism

Recall that Foucault identifies the integration of the revolutionary discourse of class war into the machinery of the socialist state as the second step in the transcription of the historical discourse of race war into modern socialist racism. To substantiate this claim, it is helpful to consider the use

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1:292.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population. Cours Au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 356.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*.

of state violence after the social revolutionaries' seizure of state power in the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.

In his analysis of Soviet state violence, the historian Peter Holquist interprets state terror under Lenin and Stalin as a carefully reflected practice aimed at the creation of a new society and new communist individuals.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Lenin understands the class struggle against the bourgeoisie as a struggle for the existence of the proletariat; it is a civil war which is "inconceivable without the severest destruction, terror, and the restriction of formal democracy in the interest of this war."<sup>50</sup> As such, the use of proletarian state terror serves to eliminate threats, articulated in terms of the class enemy, who jeopardize the life of the proletariat – not just in its present form, but in its future existence. The aim of Bolshevik state terror thus appears as the creation of communist society purged of all class enemies that threaten it. This attempt to create a new society of communist individuals by means of terror suggests that Bolshevik state terror had a primarily productive, rather than repressive function. This view is shared, for example, by the Bolshevik revolutionary and theorist Nikolai Bukharin, who notes, "proletarian coercion in all its forms, from executions to labour service, is, however paradoxical this may sound, a method of creating a communist mankind from the human material of the capitalist epoch."<sup>51</sup>

In keeping with the creative, rather than merely repressive use of state violence advocated by Lenin and other Bolsheviks, Soviet concentration camps also functioned as spaces of correction, where redeemable individuals were isolated from incorrigible individuals and subject to reform and reeducation through labor. The objection of the head of a Soviet concentration camp,

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," in *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 23–45. For a similar claim see Eric D. Weitz, "Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 1–29 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2696978>). Weitz suggests that like its European counterparts, the Soviet state also relied on mechanisms of disciplinary and regulatory control in order to forge a particular vision of the Soviet nation. To achieve this end, he argues, the Soviet state deployed a historically specific form of racial politics distinct from, say, European or American racism in pursuit of what Trotsky described as a process of "radical reconstruction" by which man "will raise himself to a new level – to create a higher socio-biological type, an *Übermensch*, if you will." Trotsky, cited in Nikolai Kremontsov, *Revolutionary Experiments: The Quest for Immortality in Bolshevik Science and Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 169. For critical engagements with Weitz's argument see Francine Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 30–43 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2696979>); Alaina Lemon, "Without a 'Concept?' Race as Discursive Practice," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 54–61 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2696981>); Amir Weiner, "Nothing but Certainty," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 44–53 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2696980>).

<sup>50</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, "Letter to American Workers," in *Collected Works*, ed. Jim Riordan, vol. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 69.

<sup>51</sup> Nikolai Bukharin, *The Politics and Economics of the Transition Period*, trans. Oliver Field (London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 165.

Rychkov, against calls for the complete physical destruction of the enemy highlights the corrective nature of the camps:

That is an entirely incorrect error, we've heard it repeatedly. It wouldn't take long to shoot them – unlike the bandits, we'd have enough cartridges. But to turn our recent, inveterate enemies into good, strong friends – that's what we need to do. Of course, if any barons or other wealthy sorts ended up there, they'd soon be a head shorter. Also, if a fervent, murdering bandit does not respond to political enlightenment, insists on his own way, his song won't last very long. But we must have an absolutely different approach for those who fell into error and deeply repent. Not for nothing did we, on orders from above, release an entire echelon back to their homes. ... No, we destroy some, others – those who are able – we reeducate, turn to our side. Such are the conclusions we've come to in our camp.<sup>52</sup>

For the Soviet project of creating a new society, in other words, the total physical annihilation of the enemies of the people was unnecessary. To eliminate the enemies of the people, it was enough to “mercilessly eliminate *a portion* of [them] and settle *the remainder* beyond the boundaries of the territory.”<sup>53</sup>

As Holquist argues, Soviet terror was, then, a means of population politics and played a key role in the engineering of a homogeneous socio-political body, whose internal enemies it prophylactically removed to ensure the health and productivity of the population. Policies such as administrative resettlement, de-Cossackification, de-Kulakization, anti-insurgency campaigns, and operations against counterrevolutionaries and anti-Bolshevik agents of the state are ultimately efforts to “foster an idealized image of the politico-social body by excising those elements determined to be harmful.”<sup>54</sup>

This concern with the life and health of the proletariat relied on a creative, rather than repressive use of violence, which was made possible by the emergence of the social as a sphere of political intervention and the formation of specific techniques of intervention. As Holquist argues, state terror not only sought to “ensure society's health and integrity but equally to realize an idealized, fundamentally aesthetic image of society and each individual in it.”<sup>55</sup> In this effort, those perceived as threats to the socio-political body were described in biological and medical terms. For instance, numerous decrees and policies call for the “extermination” and physical destruction of dangerous elements in the name of making the country “healthy” and “cleansing those regions infected by banditry.”<sup>56</sup> By the late 1930s, more than a million individuals were considered enemies of the people, who “had to be removed from the population, isolated because they were

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<sup>52</sup> Rychkov, cited in Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” 29.

<sup>53</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 27; my emphasis.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26.

identified as social parasites or ‘vermin,’ the sources of pollution or filth, harmful to the ‘health’ of the social body.”<sup>57</sup>

By emphasizing the medicalized language used by the Soviets, Holquist seeks to draw our attention to the justificatory logic of state violence expressed in these policies – namely, a logic of protecting the health of the social body by eliminating dangerous elements. He argues that the central feature of justifications of Soviet violence against those perceived as threats to the realization of communist society was its reliance upon “a framework that sought to identify opposition in terms of malignancies to be removed in order to bring about the healthy, pristine, and beautiful society,” a goal that was achieved “through managing and sculpting its human as well as its raw materials.”<sup>58</sup> This concern with the purity and health of the social body, which deploys mechanisms of exclusion against those perceived as abnormal, degenerate, and thus dangerous, is precisely what Foucault identifies as modern, biological racism.

As Mary Beth Mader (2011) explains, Foucault attributes the formation of modern biological racism to the emergence of an ontology of life that classifies living beings not by reference to morphological features, but with regard to vital functions characteristic of a species.<sup>59</sup> That is to say, species membership is determined by functional resemblances in the processes of life. To the extent that human beings share a set of vital functions, they constitute a single species – the human race. Nevertheless, these functions may be present in different forms, so it is possible to make further differentiations within a species based on accordance with or deviation from a norm. Those who deviate from the norm are grouped into various subraces, which are said to represent inferior developmental stages of the species. This inferiority can be located in an individual’s ethnicity, but it can also be tied to mental and physical ability, criminality, sexual orientation, gender presentation, or, as in Soviet Russia, class membership and political affiliation. Because deviation from the norm is perceived to threaten the integrity of the race, abnormal individuals must be eliminated in order to maintain the health and well-being of the population. This internally-directed social control, which aims at the annihilation of dangers within the social body, is what Foucault identifies as modern, biological racism. It is not a traditional ethnic racism against another race external to the social body, but a “principle of exclusion and segregation” that claims to protect the health of the population from abnormal elements within.<sup>60</sup> On this view, Soviet state violence may be described as a function of a self-directed or internal racism against the abnormal that protects the race from deviant elements within it.

That abnormality, which inheres in the social identity of class membership, is nevertheless understood along biological lines is clear from statements of Soviet technicians of state violence. Even though, as we saw, Rychkov criticized demands for the complete physical destruction of

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<sup>57</sup> Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race,” 23.

<sup>58</sup> Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” 26.

<sup>59</sup> Mader, “Modern Living and Vital Race: Foucault and the Science of Life.”

<sup>60</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, 61.

class enemies, he nevertheless considered it unnecessary to subject certain groups to an intricate process of filtration intended to separate redeemable from irredeemable individuals. Nobles and the wealthy, for example, were to be executed promptly upon their arrival at correction camps because their incorrigibility was deemed inherent in their class identity. A secret police periodical from 1918 affirmed Rychkov's point when it declared that "we are not waging war against individual persons."

We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. During investigation, do not look for evidence that the accused acted in deed or word against Soviet power. The first questions that you ought to put are: To what class does he belong? What is his origin? What is his education or profession? And it is these questions that ought to determine the fate of the accused. In this lies the significance and essence of the Red Terror.<sup>61</sup>

The reason why it was unnecessary to inquire into the character of individual members of certain classes was that their social position was thought to have affected their very nature. As the Bolshevik writer and activist Maksim Gorky put it, an individual's biography and social formation were believed to have "eaten into their skin and muscles."<sup>62</sup> Because of the real effects of social formation on the biological constitution of individuals, which the Bolsheviks explained scientifically through the doctrine of inherited acquired traits, it became impossible to clearly distinguish between sociology and biology.<sup>63</sup> As a consequence, the social category of class not only functioned in analogy to the ostensibly biological category of race, but operated as a racial category. We can see this in an observation of the Social Democrat and critic of Soviet terror Karl Kautsky that states "in Soviet Russia a man is not put into the class of workers or bourgeoisie according to

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<sup>61</sup> Cited in George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 114.

<sup>62</sup> Maksim Gorky, Leopold Auerbach, and Semen Firin, *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea*, trans. Amabel Williams-Ellis (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1977), 325.

<sup>63</sup> The scientific basis of these claims was developed by the Bolshevik eugenic movement, a sustained discussion of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. Readers interested in the development of the Soviet eugenic movement may consult Mark B. Adams, "Eugenics in Russia, 1900-1940," in *The Wellborn Science : Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia*, ed. Mark B. Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 153-216; Loren R. Graham, "Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s," *The American Historical Review* 82, no. 5 (December 1, 1977): 1133-64, doi:10.2307/1856342; Loren R. Graham, *Science, Philosophy, and Human Behavior in the Soviet Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Nikolai Krementsov, "Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 413-29; Nikolai Krementsov, "From 'Beastly Philosophy' to Medical Genetics: Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union," *Annals of Science* 68, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 61-92, doi:10.1080/00033790.2010.527162; Diane Paul, "Eugenics and the Left," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 4 (October 1, 1984): 567-90, doi:10.2307/2709374. On Lamarck's theory of inherited traits see Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet de Lamarck, *Zoological Philosophy: An Exposition with Regard to the Natural History of Animals*, trans. Hugh Samuel Roger Elliott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

the occupation that he for the moment has, but according to the occupation that he had before the Revolution.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the bourgeoisie “appears in the Soviet Republic as a special human species, whose characteristics are ineradicable.”

Just like a negro remains a negro, a Mongol a Mongol, wherever he shows up and however he dresses, so the bourgeois remains a bourgeois even if he becomes a pauper or lives off his work.<sup>65</sup>

Kautsky not only establishes an analogy between race and class, but maintains that the Soviets considered class a biological category – a special human species – with indelible traits. This biologization of a social phenomenon makes sense when we understand the Soviets’ notion of class in terms of modern, biological racism in the Foucauldian sense. It is not a racism that is concerned with the oppression or annihilation of the other race, but a racism aimed at the purity and health of a single race, whose ideal is found in the working class – a class that has its historical origins in the Russian race. The well-being of this class is not only threatened by elements that are biologically inferior, but by anyone who dissents from the Soviets’ vision of a perfect socialist society, thereby posing a threat to the national interest of the Russian race.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the self-understanding of Russian social revolutionaries and the justifications of Soviet state violence provide a useful foil against which to consider Foucault’s rather vague treatment of the transcription of the discourse of race war into socialist racism. These cases bear out Foucault’s observation that the discourse of race war is first transformed into a revolutionary discourse of class struggle before it becomes Soviet State racism. They also allow us to fill in some of the gaps in his account by illuminating the discursive operations by which a certain fungibility of race and class is established.

First, we saw that social revolutionaries like Lev Tikhomirov understood their concrete historical situation as the outcome of a history of a war between classes, in which a foreign nobility had established domination over a Russian people of peasants. Against the background of a history of conquest and invasion, Tikhomirov provides a historical account of the process by which Russian and foreign races were forced into distinct occupations, thereby forming social classes who found themselves in conflict with one another. Second, we traced the incorporation of the revolutionary discourse of class struggle into state discourse and practice. The Soviet state regarded the proletariat as the ideal image of human and political development, and took on the task of protecting this class against its enemies. While the often violent protection of the proletari-

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<sup>64</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Terrorism and Communism: A Contribution to the Natural History of Revolution*, trans. W.H. Kerridge (Hyperion Press: Westport, 1973), 171.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*; translation modified; my emphasis.

at was articulated in social terms as the “supreme measure of social defense”<sup>66</sup> in “the final, decisive struggle” against “anti-Soviet elements,”<sup>67</sup> the logic motivating it may usefully be described as modern, biological State racism in Foucault’s sense of the term. That is, it is a form of racism that describes the deployment of the sovereign right to kill for the purpose of protecting and improving life.

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<sup>66</sup> Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.