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V. I. LENIN

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

V. I. LENIN

SELECTED WORKS

VOLUME X

The Communist International



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PREFACE

THE present volume of *Selected Works* coincides with Part II of Vol. V of the Russian six-volume edition of the *Selected Works* of V. I. Lenin prepared by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, Moscow, published in 1936.

Publisher's Note, 1945

The present edition is a reprint of the edition published in 1938, with a few textual emendations taken from revised translations. The explanatory notes have been omitted. Readers will find it helpful to refer to the *History of the C.P.S.U.* (*B*) and to use its index.

PART I

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ZIMMERWALD INTERNATIONAL AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE THIRD, COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT IN OUR REVOLUTION [1]

DRAFT OF A PLATFORM FOR THE PROLETARIAN PARTY

THE SITUATION WITHIN THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

16) The international obligations of the working class of Russia are now coming to the forefront with particular force.

Only the lazy do not swear by internationalism these days. Even the chauvinist-defencists, even Messrs. Plekhanov and Potresov, even Kerensky, call themselves internationalists. All the more urgently, therefore, does it become the duty of the proletarian party to draw a clear, precise and definite distinction between internationalism in deeds and internationalism in words.

Mere appeals to the workers of all countries, empty assurances of devotion to internationalism, direct or indirect attempts to establish a "sequence" of revolutionary proletarian actions in the various belligerent countries, efforts to conclude "agreements" between the Socialists of the belligerent countries on the question of the revolutionary struggle, pother over the summoning of Socialist congresses *for the purpose* of a peace campaign—no matter how sincere the authors of such ideas, efforts, and plans may be—amount, as far as their *objective* significance is concerned, to mere phrase-mongering, and *at best* are innocent and pious wishes, fit only to conceal the *deception* of the masses by the chauvinists. The *French* social-chauvinists, who are the most adroit and best-versed in methods of parliamentary juggling, have long ago broken the record for incredibly loud and resonant pacifist and internationalist phrases *coupled with* the most brazen betrayal of Socialism and the International, the acceptance of posts in governments engaged in the imperialist war, the voting of credits *or loans* (as Chkheidze,

[1] Only two chapters of this draft are given here. For complete draft, see *Selected Works*, Vol. VI.—*Ed.*

Skobelev, Tseretelli, and Steklov have been doing recently in Russia), active opposition to the revolutionary struggle *in their own country*, etc., etc.

Good people often forget the brutal and savage setting of the imperialist World War. This setting does not tolerate phrases, and mocks at innocent and pious wishes.

There is one, and only one kind of internationalism in deed: working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle *in one's own* country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy and material aid) *such, and only such, a struggle* and such a line in *every* country without exception.

Everything else is deception and Manilovism.[1]

In the period of over two years of war the international Socialist and labour movement in *every* country has evolved three trends. Whoever ignores *reality* and refuses to recognise the existence of these three trends, to analyse them, to fight persistently for the trend that is really internationalist, is doomed to impotence, helplessness and error.

The three trends are:

1) The social-chauvinists, *i.e.*, Socialists in words and chauvinists in deeds, people who are in favour of "national defence" in an imperialist war (and particularly in the present imperialist war).

These people are our *class* enemies. They have gone over to the bourgeoisie.

They include the majority of the official leaders of the official Social-Democratic parties in *all* countries—Plekhanov and Co. in Russia, the Scheidemanns in Germany, Renaudel, Guesde and Sembat in France, Bissolati and Co. in Italy, Hyndman, the Fabians and the Labourites (the leaders of the "Labour Party") in England, Branting and Co. in Sweden, Troelstra and his party in Holland, Stauning and his party in Denmark, Victor Berger and the other "defenders of the fatherland" in America, and so forth.

2) The second trend is what is known as the "Centre," consist-

[1] Sentimental day-dreaming, from the name of Manilov, a personage in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

ing of people who vacillate beween the social-chauvinists and the true internationalists.

All those who belong to the "Centre" swear that they are Marxists and internationalists, that they are in favour of peace, of bringing every kind of "pressure" to bear upon the governments, of "demanding" that their own government should "ascertain the will of the people for peace," that they favour all sorts of peace campaigns, that they are for peace without annexations, etc., etc.—*and for peace with the social-chauvinists.* The "Centre" is for "unity," the Centre is opposed to a split.

The "Centre" is a realm of honeyed petty-bourgeois phrases, of internationalism in words and cowardly opportunism and fawning on the social-chauvinists in deeds.

The fact of the matter is that the "Centre" is not convinced of the necessity for a revolution against one's own government; it does not preach revolution; it does not carry on a wholehearted revolutionary struggle; and in order to evade such a struggle it resorts to the tritest ultra-"Marxist" *excuses.*

The social-chauvinists are our *class enemies, bourgeois* within the labour movement. They represent strata, or groups, or sections of the working class which *objectively* have been bribed by the bourgeoisie (by better wages, positions of honour, etc.), and which help *their* bourgeoisie to plunder and oppress small and weak peoples and to fight for the division of the capitalist spoils.

The "Centre" consists of routine-worshippers, slaves to rotten legality, corrupted by the atmosphere of parliamentarism, etc., bureaucrats accustomed to snug positions and soft jobs. Historically and economically speaking, they do not represent a *separate* stratum but are a *transition* from a past phase of the labour movement—the phase between 1871 and 1914, which gave much that is valuable to the proletariat, particularly in the indispensable art of slow, sustained and systematic organisational work on a large and very large scale—to a new *phase,* a phase that became *objectively* essential with the outbreak of the first imperialist World War, which inaugurated *the era of social revolution.*

The chief leader and representative of the "Centre" is Karl Kautsky, the most outstanding authority in the Second International

(1889-1914). Since August 1914, he has presented a picture of utterly bankrupt Marxism, of unheard-of spinelessness, and a series of the most wretched vacillations and betrayals. This "Centrist" trend includes Kautsky, Haase, Ledebour, and the so-called "labour group" (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) in the Reichstag; in France it includes Longuet, Pressemane and the "minoritaires" (Mensheviks) in general; in England, Philip Snowden, Ramsay MacDonald and many other leaders of the Independent Labour Party, and a section of the British Socialist Party; Morris Hillquit and many others in the United States; Turati, Treves, Modigliani and others in Italy; Robert Grimm and others in Switzerland; Victor Adler and Co. in Austria; the party of the Organisation Committee,[1] Axelrod, Martov, Chkheidze, Tseretelli and others in Russia, and so forth.

It goes without saying that at times individual persons unconsciously drift from social-chauvinism to "Centrism," and *vice versa*. Every Marxist knows, however, that classes are distinct, even though individuals may move freely from one class to another; similarly, *currents* in political life are distinct, in spite of the fact that individuals may drift freely from one current to another, and in spite of all attempts and efforts to *amalgamate* currents.

3) The third trend, the true internationalists, is most closely represented by the "Zimmerwald Left." (We reprint as a supplement its manifesto of September 1915, in order that the reader may become acquainted in the original with the inception of this trend.)

It is characterised mainly by its complete rupture with both social-chauvinism and "Centrism," and by its relentless revolutionary war against *its own* imperialist government and against *its own* imperialist bourgeoisie. Its principle is: "Our greatest enemy is at home." It wages a ruthless struggle against honeyed social-pacifist phrases (a social-pacifist is a Socialist in words and a bourgeois pacifist in deeds; bourgeois pacifists dream of an everlasting peace *without* the overthrow of the yoke and domination of capital) and against all *subterfuges* employed to deny the possibility, or the appropriateness, or the timeliness of a proletarian

[1] *I.e.*, the Mensheviks.—*Ed*

revolutionary struggle and of a proletarian Socialist revolution *in connection* with the present war.

The most outstanding representative of this trend in Germany is the Spartacus Group or the Group of the International, to which Karl Liebknecht belongs. Karl Liebknecht is one of the most celebrated representatives of this trend and of the *new* and genuine proletarian International.

Karl Liebknecht called upon the workers and soldiers of Germany to *turn their guns* against *their own* government. Karl Liebknecht did that openly from the parliamentary tribune (the Reichstag). He then went to a demonstration on Potsdamer Platz, one of the largest public squares in Berlin, with illegally printed leaflets proclaiming the slogan "Down with the government." He was arrested and sentenced to *hard labour*. He is now serving his term in a German penal prison, like *hundreds*, if not thousands of other *true* German Socialists who have been imprisoned for opposing the war.

Karl Liebknecht in his speeches and letters mercilessly attacked not only *his own* Plekhanovs and Potresovs (Scheidemann, Legien, David and Co.), *but also his own people of the Centre*, his own Chkheidzes and Tseretellis (Kautsky, Haase, Ledebour and Co.).

Karl Liebknecht and his friend, Otto Rühle, two out of one hundred and ten deputies, violated discipline, destroyed the "unity" with the "Centre" and the chauvinists, and *went against all of them*. Liebknecht *alone* represents Socialism, the proletarian cause, the proletarian revolution. *All* the rest of German Social-Democracy, to quote the apt words of Rosa Luxemburg (also a member and one of the leaders of the Spartacus Group), is a "*stinking corpse*."

Another group of internationalists in deeds in Germany is that gathered around the Bremen paper *Arbeiterpolitik*.

Closest to the internationalists in deeds are: in France, Loriot and his friends (Bourderon and Merrheim have degenerated to social-pacifism), as well as the Frenchman, Henri Guilbeaux, who publishes in Geneva the magazine *Demain*; in England, the *Trade Unionist*, and *some* of the members of the British Socialist Party and of the Independent Labour Party (for instance, Russell

Williams, who openly called for a break with the leaders who have *betrayed* Socialism), the Scottish school teacher and Socialist, *MacLean,* who was sentenced to *hard labour* by the bourgeois government of England for his revolutionary fight against the war, and hundreds of British Socialists who are in jail for the same offence. They, and they alone, are internationalists *in deeds.* In the United States, the Socialist Labour Party and the elements within the opportunist Socialist Party who in January 1917 began the publication of the paper, *The Internationalist;* in Holland, the party of the "Tribunists," which publishes the paper *Tribune* (Pannekoek, Herman Gorter, Wynkoop, and Henrietta Roland-Holst), which, although Centrist at Zimmerwald, has now joined our ranks; in Sweden, the party of the youth, or the Left, led by Lindhagen, Ture Nerman, Carlson, Ström and Z. Höglund, who at Zimmerwald was personally active in the organisation of the "Zimmerwald Left," and who is now in prison for his revolutionary fight against the war; in Denmark, Trier and his friends, who have left the now purely *bourgeois* "Social-Democratic" Party of Denmark, headed by the *Minister* Stauning; in Bulgaria, the "Tesniaki"; in Italy, the nearest are Constantino Lazzari, secretary of the party, and Serrati, editor of the central organ, *Avanti*; in Poland, Radek, Hanecki and other leaders of the Social-Democrats united under the "Regional Administration," and Rosa Luxemburg, Tyszko and other leaders of the Social-Democrats united under the "Chief Administration"; in Switzerland, those Lefts who drew up the argument for the "referendum" (January 1917) directed against the social-chauvinists and the "Centre" of *their own* country, and who at the Zurich Cantonal Socialist Convention, held at Töss on February 11, 1917, moved a consistently revolutionary resolution against the war; in Austria, the young Left-wing friends of Friedrich Adler, who acted partly through the Karl Marx Club in Vienna, now closed by the extremely reactionary Austrian government, which is torturing Adler for his heroic, although ill-considered shooting of a Minister, and so on.

We are dealing here not with shades of opinion, which certainly exist even among the Lefts. We have here a *trend.* The fact is that it is by no means easy to be an internationalist in deeds during a

frightful imperialist war. Such people are few; but it is on such people *alone* that the future of Socialism depends; they *alone* are *the leaders of the masses,* and not corrupters of the masses.

The difference between the reformists and revolutionaries among the Social-Democrats and Socialists generally was objectively bound to undergo a change in the circumstances of an imperialist war. Those who confine themselves to "demanding" that the bourgeois governments should conclude peace or "ascertain the will of the peoples for peace," etc., are *actually* slipping into reforms. *For,* objectively, *the problem of war* can be solved only in a *revolulutionary way.*

There is no possibility of this war ending in a democratic, non-coercive peace and the liberation of the peoples from the burden of paying *billions* in interest to the capitalists, who have grown rich by the war, except by a revolution of the proletariat.

The most varied reforms can be and must be demanded of the bourgeois governments, but without being guilty of Manilovism and reformism one cannot demand that people and classes who are entangled by the thousand threads of imperialist capital should *break* those threads. And unless they are broken, all talk of a war against war is idle and deceitful prattle.

The "Kautskians," the "Centre," are revolutionaries in words and reformists in deeds; they are internationalists in words and accomplices of the social-chauvinists in deeds.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ZIMMERWALD INTERNATIONAL—THE NEED FOR A THIRD INTERNATIONAL

17) From the very outset, the Zimmerwald International adopted a vacillating, "Kautskian," "Centrist" position, which immediately compelled the *Zimmerwald Left* to dissociate itself, to separate itself from the rest, and to issue *its own* manifesto (published in Switzerland in Russian, German and French).

The chief defect of the Zimmerwald International, and the cause of its *collapse* (for from a political and ideological point of view it has already collapsed), was its vacillation and indecision on the extremely important question, one of *crucial* practical

significance, the question of breaking completely with social-chauvinism and the old social-chauvinist International, headed by Vandervelde and Huysmans at The Hague (Holland), etc.

It is not as yet known in Russia that the Zimmerwald majority are *really Kautskians*. Yet this is an important fact, one which cannot be ignored, and which is now generally known in Western Europe. Even that chauvinist, that extreme German chauvinist, Heilmann, editor of the ultra-chauvinist *Chemnitzer Volksstimme* and contributor to the ultra-chauvinist *Glocke* of Parvus (a "Social-Democrat," of course, and an ardent partisan of Social-Democratic "unity"), was compelled to acknowledge in the press that the Centre or "Kautskyism," and the *Zimmerwald majority* are one and the same thing.

This fact was definitely established at the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917. In spite of the fact that social-pacifism was condemned by the Kienthal Manifesto, the *whole* Zimmerwald Right, the *entire* Zimmerwald majority, sank to social-pacifism: Kautsky and Co. in a series of utterances in January and February 1917; Bourderon and Merrheim in France, who cast their votes *in unanimity* with the social-chauvinists for the pacifist resolutions of the Socialist Party (December 1916) and of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (the national organisation of the French trade unions, also in December 1916);[1] Turati and Co. in Italy, where the entire party took up a social-pacifist position, while Turati himself, in a speech delivered on December 17, 1916, "slipped" (not by accident, of course) into *nationalist* phrases tending to present the imperialist war in a favourable light.

In January 1917, the chairman of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences, Robert Grimm, joined hands with the social-chauvinists of *his own* party (Greulich, Pflüger, Gustav Müller and others) *against* the true internationalists.

At two conferences of *Zimmerwaldists* of several countries, in January and February 1917, this equivocal, double-faced behaviour of the Zimmerwald majority was formally stigmatised by

[1] Concerning the resolutions of the Socialist Party of France and of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* of December 1916, see article, "Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism," in *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 256-60.—*Ed.*

the Left internationalists of several countries: by Münzenberg, secretary of the international youth organisation and editor of the excellent internationalist publication, *Die Jugendinternationale*;[1] by Zinoviev, representative of the Central Committee of our Party; by Karl Radek, of the Polish Social-Democratic Party (the "Regional Administration") and by Hartstein, a German Social-Democrat and member of the Spartacus Group.

To the Russian proletariat much has been given. Nowhere on earth has the working class yet succeeded in developing as much revolutionary energy as in Russia. But to whom much has been given, of him much is demanded.

The Zimmerwald bog can no longer be tolerated. We must not, for the sake of the Zimmerwald "Kautskians," continue the semi-alliance with the chauvinist International of the Plekhanovs and Scheidemanns. We must break with this International immediately. We must remain in Zimmerwald *only* for purposes of information.

It is we who must found, and immediately, without delay, a *new*, revolutionary, proletarian International; or rather, we must not fear to acknowledge publicly that this new International is *already established* and working.

This is the International of those "internationalists in deeds" whom I specifically enumerated above. They and they alone are representatives of the revolutionary, internationalist masses, and not corrupters of the masses.

True, there are few Socialists *of that type;* but let every Russian worker ask himself how many really conscious revolutionaries there were in Russia *on the eve* of the February-March Revolution of 1917.

The question is not one of numbers, but of giving correct expression to the ideas and policy of the truly revolutionary proletariat. The essential thing is not to "proclaim" internationalism, but to be an internationalist in deeds, even when times are most trying.

[1] This refers to the militant organ of the International Socialist Youth League published in Zurich, Switzerland, from 1915 to 1918 and illegally distributed in the belligerent countries. Concerning this, see article, "The Youth International" and the explanatory notes thereto in *Selected Works*, Vol. V. —*Ed.*

Let us not deceive ourselves with hopes of agreements and international congresses. As long as the imperialist war lasts, international relations will be held in a vice by the military dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie. If even the "republican" Milyukov, who is obliged to tolerate the "parallel government" of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, *did not allow Fritz Platten*, the Swiss Socialist, secretary of the party, an internationalist and participant in the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences, to enter Russia in April 1917, although Platten is married to a Russian woman and was on a visit to his wife's relatives, and although he had taken part in the Revolution of 1905 in Riga, for which he had been confined in a Russian prison, had given bail to the tsarist government for his release and desired to have that bail returned—if the republican Milyukov *could do such a thing* in April 1917 in Russia, one may judge how much stock may be taken in the promises and offers, phrases and declarations of the bourgeoisie on the subject of peace without annexations, and so on.

And how about the arrest of Trotsky by the British government? How about the refusal to allow Martov to leave Switzerland, and the attempt to lure him to England, where Trotsky's fate awaits him?

Let us harbour no illusions. We must not deceive ourselves.

"To wait" for international congresses or conferences is simply to *betray* internationalism, since it has been shown that even from Stockholm neither Socialists loyal to internationalism *nor even their letters* are allowed to enter here, although this is possible despite rigorous military censorship.

Our Party must not "wait," but must immediately *found* a Third International. Hundreds of Socialists imprisoned in Germany and England will thereupon heave a sigh of relief; thousands and thousands of German workers who are now organising strikes and demonstrations, which are frightening that scoundrel and brigand, Wilhelm, will learn from *illegal* leaflets of our decision, of our fraternal confidence in Karl Liebknecht, and in him alone, of *our* decision to fight "revolutionary defencism" *right away*; they will read and be strengthened in their revolutionary internationalism.

To whom much has been given, of him much is demanded. There is no other land on earth as free as Russia is *now*. Let us make use of this freedom, not to advocate support of the bourgeoisie, or of bourgeois "revolutionary defencism," but, in a bold, honest, proletarian, Liebknecht way, *to form the Third International*, an International uncompromisingly hostile to the social-chauvinist traitors and to the vacillators of the "Centre."

18) After what has been said, one need not waste many words in explaining that the amalgamation of Social-Democrats in Russia is out of the question.

It is better to remain alone, like Liebknecht, and *that means remaining with the revolutionary proletariat*, than to entertain even for a moment any thought of amalgamation with the party of the Organisation Committee, with Chkheidze and Tseretelli, who can tolerate a *bloc* with Potresov in *Rabochaya Gazeta*,[1] who voted for the loan in the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, and who have degenerated to "defencism."

Let the dead bury their dead.

Whoever wants to *help* the vacillating must first stop vacillating himself.

April 23 (10), 1917

[1] A Menshevik daily newspaper, the organ of the Organisation Committee and of the Petrograd organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, published in Petrograd in 1917.—*Ed.*

THE STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE

MANY people are interesting themselves again in the Stockholm Conference. The question of its significance has been discussed at length in the newspapers. This question is inseparably connected with the appraisal of the very principles of the whole of modern Socialism, particularly in regard to its attitude towards the imperialist war. That is why the Stockholm Conference should be dealt with in greater detail.

The revolutionary Social-Democrats, *i.e.*, the Bolsheviks, expressed their opposition to participation in this conference from the very outset. They based this opposition on their fundamental principles. Everyone knows that on the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the war the Socialists all over the world, in all countries, belligerent as well as neutral, split into two large, main divisions. Some took the side of their governments, of their bourgeoisie. These we call social-chauvinists, *i.e.*, Socialists in words and chauvinists in deeds. A chauvinist is one who conceals the defence of the predatory interests of "his own" ruling classes with the concept "defence of the fatherland." In the present war the bourgeoisie of both belligerent coalitions is pursuing predatory aims: the German bourgeoisie is fighting to plunder Belgium, Serbia, etc., the British and French bourgeoisie are fighting to plunder the German colonies, etc., and the Russian bourgeoisie is fighting to plunder Austria (Lemberg), Turkey (Armenia, Constantinople).

Hence, those Socialists who have adopted the point of view of their bourgeoisie in the present war have ceased to be Socialists, have betrayed the working class and have, in fact, deserted to the camp of the bourgeoisie. They have become the class enemies of the proletariat. The history of European and American Socialism, particularly in the epoch of the Second International, *i.e.*, the

period from 1889 to 1914, shows us that this desertion of a section of the Socialists, particularly the majority of the leaders and members of parliament, to the side of the bourgeoisie, is not accidental. In all countries it was precisely the opportunist wing of Socialism that provided the principal cadres of social-chauvinists. Regarded scientifically, *i.e.*, if we do not single out individuals but take the whole international trend in its process of development, the sum total of its social ties, social-chauvinism is opportunism carried to its logical conclusion.

Everywhere we observe among the proletarian masses in a more or less clear and acute form the appreciation of the betrayal of Socialism by the social-chauvinists, a hatred and contempt for the prominent social-chauvinists as are Plekhanov in Russia, Scheidemann in Germany, Guesde, Renaudel and Co. in France, Hyndman and others in England, etc., etc.

In all countries during the war there has been observed—notwithstanding the gagging of mouths and the ruthless persecution by the bourgeoisie—a trend of revolutionary internationalism. This trend has remained loyal to Socialism. It has not yielded to chauvinism; it has not allowed it to be concealed by fraudulent phrases about the defence of the fatherland, but has exposed the fraud of these phrases, exposed the whole criminality of this war, which the bourgeoisie of both coalitions are waging in pursuit of their predatory aims. To this trend belong, for example, MacLean in England, who has been sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour for fighting against the predatory British bourgeoisie, Karl Liebknecht in Germany, who has been condemned to hard labour by the German imperialist pirates for the "crime" of calling for a revolution in Germany and for exposing the predatory character of the war pursued by Germany. To this trend belong the Bolsheviks in Russia, who are persecuted by the agents of Russian republican-democratic imperialism for the same "crime" as that for which MacLean and Karl Liebknecht are being persecuted.

This is the only trend that is loyal to Socialism. This is the only trend that has not betrayed the solemn declaration of convictions, the solemn promise that was unanimously signed by the Socialists of the whole world, of all countries without exception.

in November 1912 in the Basle Manifesto. In this Manifesto reference is made not to war in general—various kinds of wars occur—but precisely to the war which everybody in 1912 clearly saw was being prepared for, and which broke out in 1914, the war between Germany and Great Britain and their allies for world domination. And confronted by such a war, the Basle Manifesto does not contain a word about the duty or the right of Socialists to "defend their fatherland" (*i.e.*, to justify their participation in the war); it does, however, say very definitely that such a war must lead to the "proletarian revolution." The betrayal of Socialism by the social-chauvinists of all countries is vividly seen from the cowardly manner in which all of them now avoid the passage in the Basle Manifesto which speaks of the connection of precisely this war with the proletarian revolution in the same way as a thief avoids the place where he committed his theft.

The impassable gulf that separates the Socialists who have remained loyal to the Basle Manifesto and "responded" to the war by preaching and preparing for the proletarian revolution from the social-chauvinists, who responded to the war by supporting "their" national bourgeoisie, is clear. It is clear, also, how helpless, naïve and hypocritical are the attempts to "reconcile" or to "unite" the two trends.

It is precisely such attempts that are observed in all their wretchedness on the part of the third trend in world Socialism, the so-called "Centre" or "Kautskian" trend (named after the most prominent representative of the "Centre," Karl Kautsky). During the three years of the war, this trend has revealed in all countries its utter lack of principle and its helplessness. In Germany, for example, the progress of events compelled the Kautskians to break away from the German Plekhanovs and to form a separate, so-called "Independent Social-Democratic Party"; and yet this party is afraid of drawing the necessary conclusions, preaches "unity" with the social-chauvinists on an international scale, continues to deceive the masses of the workers with the hope of restoring this unity in Germany, and hinders the only correct proletarian tactics of revolutionary struggle against "one's own" government, a struggle which must be waged even in war time, a struggle which may

and must change in form, but which cannot be postponed, put off.

This is the state of affairs in international Socialism. Without a clear appraisal of this situation, without having an opinion based on principles about all these trends in international Socialism, it is impossible to approach practical questions, for example, the question of the Stockholm Conference. And yet, the Bolshevik Party was the *only* party that gave an appraisal based on principles of *all* the trends in international Socialism in the detailed resolution it adopted at its conference held May 7-12 (April 24-29), 1917, and which was endorsed by the Sixth Congress of our Party in August. To forget about this appraisal based on principle and to discuss Stockholm while ignoring this means taking up a position utterly lacking in principle.

As an example of the lack of principle prevailing among all the petty-bourgeois democrats, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, we may quote the article in *Novaya Zhizn* of August 23 (10). This article is worthy of attention precisely because it collects in a newspaper, which belongs to the extreme Left wing of the petty-bourgeois democrats, the most widespread errors, prejudices and lack of principle concerning Stockholm. In the leading article of *Novaya Zhizn* we read the following:

"It is possible, for one reason or another, to adopt a hostile attitude towards the Stockholm Conference. It is possible on principle to condemn the attempt to bring about agreement among the 'defencist majorities.' But why deny what is strikingly obvious? After the well-known decision of the British workers, which gave rise to a political crisis in the country and caused the first deep fissure in the 'national unity' of Great Britain, the conference has acquired a significance which it has not had hitherto."

This argument is a beautiful example of lack of principle. Indeed, how is it possible to draw from the indisputable fact that in connection with the Stockholm Conference a deep fissure has occurred in the "national unity" of Great Britain, the conclusion that it is our duty to repair this fissure and not to widen it? The question of principle is: rupture with the defencists (social-chauvinists) or agreement with them, and it can be no other. The Stockholm Conference was one of numerous attempts to reach an agreement. It failed. Its failure was due to the fact that the Anglo-French imperialists do not agree to enter into peace negotiations *at present*,

while the German imperialists desire to do so. The British workers have more clearly perceived the deception of their British imperialist bourgeoisie.

The question arises: What use should be made of this? We revolutionary internationalists say: It should be used for the purpose of enlarging the breach between the proletarian masses and their social-chauvinists, for making this breach complete, for removing every obstacle to the development of the revolutionary struggle of the masses against their governments, against their bourgeoisie. Acting in this way, we, and we alone, widen the fissure and bring it to the stage of a rupture.

What is really achieved by those who are going to Stockholm, or rather, by those who are preaching to the masses that it is necessary to go there, now, after life has "squashed" this idea? The only thing they achieve is the patching up of the fissure, for the Stockholm Conference is obviously being convened and supported by people who are supporting *their* governments, by the ministerialist Chernovs and Tseretellis, the Staunings and Brantings, the Troelstras, not to speak of the Scheidemanns.

This is what is "strikingly obvious," this is what the opportunists of *Novaya Zhizn* forget, or gloss over, when they argue absolutely without regard for principles, without a general appreciation of social-chauvinism as a trend. The Stockholm Conference is a conversation between Ministers of imperialist governments. *Novaya Zhizn* cannot evade this fact no matter how much it tries to do so. To call upon the workers to go to Stockholm, to tell the workers to wait for Stockholm, to call upon them to place any hopes whatever in Stockholm is tantamount to saying to the masses: "You can, you must, expect good to come from an agreement between the petty-bourgeois parties and the Ministers of imperialist governments, those who support imperialist governments."

It is precisely this unprincipled and pernicious propaganda that *Novaya Zhizn* is conducting without itself being aware of it.

Owing to the conflict between the Anglo-French social-chauvinists and their governments, it forgets that the Chernovs, Skobelevs, Tseretellis, Avksentievs, Brantings, Staunings and Scheide-

manns still remain social-chauvinists who support their governments as before. Is this not lack of principle?

Instead of saying to the workers: See, the Anglo-French imperialists have refused to allow even their social-chauvinists to go and talk with the German social-chauvinists; that shows that England and France are *also* waging a predatory war and that there is no salvation except by means of a complete rupture with *all* the governments, with *all* the social-chauvinists—instead of saying this, *Novaya Zhizn* consoles the workers with illusions. It writes:

"It is intended in Stockholm to come to an agreement about peace and jointly to draw up a general plan of *struggle*: refusal to vote credits, rupture with 'national unity,' recall of Ministers from the governments, etc."

The only proof contained in this thoroughly fraudulent sentence is that the word "struggle" is printed in heavy type. Excellent proof, indeed!

After three years of war, efforts are still made to stuff the workers with the emptiest promises: "It is intended in Stockholm" to break with national unity. . . .

Who intend to do this? The Scheidemanns, Chernovs, Skobelevs, Avksentievs, Tseretellis, Staunings and Brantings, *i.e.*, the very people (and parties) who for several years and for several months have been pursuing the policy of national unity. No matter how sincere *Novaya Zhizn's* faith in such miracles may be, no matter how conscientiously it may have confessed the conviction that it is possible, we must say, nevertheless, that it is spreading the greatest piece of deception among the masses.

Novaya Zhizn is deceiving the workers by imbuing them with confidence in the social-chauvinists. In effect, it is saying that, although up to now the social-chauvinists have been members of Cabinets and have pursued the policy of national unity, they will meet in Stockholm in the near future and come to an agreement among themselves, they will come to an understanding and cease to act in this way. They will start the struggle for peace, they will refuse to vote credits, etc., etc. . . .

All this is an utter, downright falsehood. All this is reactionary talk to console and soothe the workers, to imbue them with confidence in the social-chauvinists. But the Socialists who "fight for

peace"—not in words, not to deceive themselves, not to deceive the workers—started the struggle long ago without waiting for any international conferences, they started the struggle precisely by breaking with national unity, precisely in the way this was done by MacLean in England, Karl Liebknecht in Germany and the Bolsheviks in Russia. *Novaya Zhizn* writes:

"We quite understand the legitimate and healthy scepticism of the Bolsheviks towards the Renaudels and Scheidemanns, but the publicists on *Rabochi i Soldat*,[1] like doctrinaires, refuse to see the wood for the trees; they do not take into account the changes in the mood of the masses on which Renaudel and Scheidemann have relied."

It is not a matter of scepticism, gentlemen; it is in your midst that intellectual scepticism, which conceals and expresses lack of principle, is the predominating mood. We are not sceptical towards the Renaudels and the Scheidemanns, we are their foes. These are "two very different things." We have broken with them, and we call upon the masses to break with them. It is we, and we alone, who "take into account" the change in the mood of the masses as well as something more, something more important and more profound than moods and changes in moods, *viz.*, the fundamental interests of the masses, the fact that these interests cannot be reconciled with the policy of social-chauvinism represented by the Renaudels and Scheidemanns. In Stockholm, the good little gentlemen of *Novaya Zhizn* and the Ministers of the Russian imperialist government will meet with precisely the Scheidemanns and Renaudels (for there is no serious difference between Stauning and Troelstra—not to speak of Avksentiev and Skobelev—and Renaudel). But we turn away from the Stockholm comedy played between the social-chauvinists, among the social-chauvinists, precisely for the purpose of opening the eyes of the *masses*, for the purpose of expressing their interests, of calling them for revolution, and of utilising their change of mood, not in order to pander to a given mood in an unprincipled manner, but in order to wage a struggle on principle for a complete rupture with social-chauvinism. *Novaya Zhizn* writes:

[1] *The Worker and Soldier*, the central organ of the Bolsheviks published from August 5 (July 23) to August 22 (9), 1917, in place of *Pravda* and *Soldatskaya Pravda*, which were suppressed by the Kerensky government. Altogether fifteen issues were published.—*Ed.*

"The Bolsheviks love to twit the internationalists who are going to Stockholm with having compromised with the Scheidemanns and Hendersons 'without noticing' that in their attitude toward the conference they are marching side by side with the Plekhanovs, Guesdes and Hyndmans, for profoundly different reasons, of course."

It is not true to say that in our attitude toward the conference we are marching together with the Plekhanovs! It is obviously absurd. Our position coincides with that of the Plekhanovs in not desiring to go to a milk-and-water conference with a section of the social-chauvinists. But neither in principle nor in practice is our *attitude* toward the conference the same as that of the Plekhanovs. Meanwhile, you, who call yourselves internationalists, are really going to the conference together with the Scheidemanns, Staunings and Brantings; you are really compromising with them. Is this not a fact? You describe as "the great cause of uniting the international proletariat" what is really a petty, miserable business—very largely an intrigue which is dependent upon the imperialists of one of the coalitions—of *uniting the social-chauvinists*. This is a fact.

You, alleged-internationalists, cannot urge the masses to take part in the Stockholm Conference (it is very probable that things will go no further than urging, for the conference will not take place; but the ideological significance of this remains), you cannot urge the masses to participate in the Stockholm Conference without uttering a heap of untruths, without sowing illusions, without varnishing the social-chauvinists, without rousing hopes among the masses that the Staunings and Brantings, the Skobelevs and Avksentievs are capable of seriously breaking with "national unity."

Meanwhile, in our propaganda against Stockholm, we Bolsheviks tell the masses the whole truth, we continue to expose the social-chauvinists and the policy of compromise with them, we lead the masses toward a complete rupture with them. Since matters have developed in such a way that German imperialism considers this an appropriate moment for participation in the Stockholm Conference and is sending its Scheidemann agents to it, while British imperialism considers the present moment inappropriate and does not even want to talk about peace, we expose British imperialism and take advantage of the conflict between it and the masses of the British proletariat for the purpose of deepening their class-con-

sciousness, of intensifying the propaganda of internationalism, and of explaining to them the need for a complete rupture with social-chauvinism.

The alleged-internationalists of *Novaya Zhizn* are behaving like intellectual impressionists, *i.e.*, like people who spinelessly yield to the moods of the moment and forget the fundamental principles of internationalism. The people on *Novaya Zhizn* argue as follows: since British imperialism is *opposed* to the Stockholm Conference, we must be *for* it; it shows that the conference has acquired a significance that it has not had until now.

To argue in this way is tantamount to abandoning principles: for German imperialism is at present *in favour* of the Stockholm Conference because of its own selfish and predatory imperialist interests. What is the value of the "internationalism" of "internationalists" who are afraid of openly admitting this incontrovertible and obvious fact, who are obliged to hide from it? What guarantee have you, gentlemen, that in taking part in the Stockholm Conference in conjunction with Scheidemann, Stauning and Co. you will not actually become a plaything, a tool in the hands of the secret diplomats of German imperialism? You can have no such guarantee. There is none. Even if it does take place, which is very improbable, the Stockholm Conference will represent an attempt on the part of the German imperialists to explore the possibilities of such and such an exchange of annexations. This will be the real, the actual significance of the eloquent speeches of Scheidemann, Skobelev and Co. And if the conference does not take place, your preaching to the masses, rousing in them false hopes in the social-chauvinists, hopes for their speedy, possible and probable "reformation," will acquire real significance.

In either case, you, desiring to be internationalists, will actually prove to be accomplices of the social-chauvinists, now of one of the coalitions, and now of both coalitions.

We, however, take into account all the chops and changes of politics and remain consistent internationalists, who advocate the fraternal alliance of the workers, rupture with the social-chauvinists and work for the proletarian revolution.

September 1917

THE TASKS OF OUR PARTY IN THE INTERNATIONAL

RE THE THIRD ZIMMERWALD CONFERENCE

No. 22 of *Rabochy Put*[1] of October 11 (September 28) published the manifesto of the Third Zimmerwald Conference. If we are not mistaken, the only other newspaper in which this manifesto was published was the Menshevik, internationalist *Iskra*, No. 1, of October 9 (September 26). The manifesto was published together with a very brief note referring to the composition of the Third Zimmerwald Conference and to the date on which it was held (August 20 to 27, new style). No other newspaper published either the manifesto or [any] at all detailed information about the conference.

We are now in possession of certain materials on this conference consisting of articles published in the organ of the Swedish *Left* Social-Democrats, *Politiken* (a translation of this article appeared in the organ of the Social-Democratic Party of Finland, *Tiömies*), and two written communications, one from a Polish and one from a Russian comrade who took part in the conference. On the basis of this information we will first of all say something about the conference in general and then make our appraisal of it and of the tasks of our Party.

I

The representatives of the following parties and groups were present at the conference: 1) the German "Independent" Social-Democratic Party (the "Kautskians"); 2) the Swiss party; 3) the Swedish *Left* party (which, as is known, has broken off all connection with the opportunist Branting party); 4) the Norwegians and 5) the Danes (there is nothing in our material to indicate

[1] *The Workers' Path.—Ed. Eng. ed.*

whether this refers to the official, opportunist, Danish party headed by the Minister Stauning, or not); 6) the Social-Democratic Party of Finland; 7) the Rumanians; 8) the R.S.D.L.P. Bolsheviks; 9) the R.S.D.L.P. Mensheviks (Panin sent a written statement to the effect that he would not take part in this conference on the grounds that it was not a full conference; Axelrod, however, attended some of the meetings, *but did not sign the manifesto*); 10) the Menshevik internationalists; 11) the American group, calling itself the "Christian Socialist Internationalists" (?); 12) the American Social-Democratic Propaganda Group (evidently this is the group I mentioned in my pamphlet, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution—Draft of a Platform for the Proletarian Party*, page 24,[1] for it is precisely this group that in January 1917 began to publish the newspaper, *The Internationalist*); 13) the Polish Social-Democrats united under the "Regional Administration"; 14) the Austrian Opposition (the Karl Marx Club, which was closed down by the Austrian government after the execution of Stürck by Friedrich Adler; this club is also referred to in the above-mentioned pamphlet, page 25[2]); 15) the Bulgarian "Independent Trade Unions" (which, as the writer of the letter I have in my possession adds, belong not to the "Tesniaki," *i.e.*, not to the Left, internationalist Bulgarian party, but to the "Shiroki" group, *i.e.*, to the opportunist Bulgarian party); this delegate arrived after the conference had closed, as also did the delegates of 16) the Serbian party.

Of these sixteen parties and groups, Nos. 3, 8, 12, 13, and 14 belong to the "third" trend referred to in the resolution of our conference of May 7-12 (April 24-29), 1917 (and in my pamphlet, page 23,[3] in which this trend is called "true internationalist"); closer to this "Left" trend, or between it and the Kautskian "Centre," stand groups 4 and 16, although it is difficult to define their position precisely—perhaps they also belong to the "Centre." Then, group 1, and probably 2, 6 and 7, group 10 and probably 15, belong to the Kautskian "Centre." Groups 5 (if this is Stauning's

[1] In this volume, p. 8.—*Ed.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.—*Ed.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 6.—*Ed.*

party) and 9 are defencists, ministerialists and social-chauvinists. Finally, group 11 obviously got there by accident.

From this it is seen that the composition of the conference was a very mixed one—even absurd, for the people who got together were not in agreement on the *main* thing, and therefore were *incapable* of acting really unanimously, really together; they were people who inevitably disagreed with each other on the *fundamental* trend of their policy. Naturally, the "fruit" of the "collaboration" of such people is either wrangling or "gossip," or elastic, compromise resolutions written for the purpose of concealing the truth. Examples and proof of this we shall see in a moment.[1]

November (October) 1917

[1] The rest of the pages of this manuscript have gone astray.—*Ed.*

SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, MARCH 2, 1919

In the name of the Central Committee of the R.C.P., I declare the first International Communist Congress open. First of all, I will ask all those present to rise in honour of the memory of the best representatives of the Third International: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. (*All rise.*)

Comrades, our meeting has great, world-historical significance. It is evidence of the collapse of all the illusions of bourgeois democracy. Civil war has become a fact, not only in Russia, but also in the most developed capitalist countries of Europe, for example, Germany.

The bourgeoisie is mad with fear in face of the growing revolutionary movement of the proletariat. This will become understandable if we take into consideration the fact that the progress of events since the imperialist war is inevitably facilitating the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, that the international world revolution is beginning and gaining strength in all countries.

The people appreciate the greatness and significance of the struggle that is being waged at the present time. We must be able, however, to find the necessary practical form that will enable the proletariat to achieve its domination. That form is the Soviet system with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dictatorship of the proletariat! Up to now this has been a Latin phrase for the masses. Thanks to the spread of the Soviet system throughout the world, this Latin phrase has been translated into all modern languages; the practical form of the dictatorship has been found by the masses of the workers. It became intelligible to the broad masses of the workers thanks to the Soviet power in Russia, thanks to the Spartacists in Germany and analogous organisations in other countries,

for example, the Shop Stewards' Committees in Great Britain. All this proves that the revolutionary form of the proletarian dictatorship has been found, that the proletariat is now in a position to make practical use of its domination.

Comrades, I think that after the events in Russia, after the January struggle in Germany, it is particularly important to note that in other countries also the latest form of the proletarian movement is coming to life and assuming predominance. For example, today I read a report in an anti-Socialist newspaper that the British government had met the Birmingham Council of Workers' Deputies and had expressed its readiness to recognise the Councils as industrial organisations. The Soviet system has conquered not only in backward Russia but also in the most developed country of Europe—Germany, and in the oldest capitalist country—Great Britain.

Let the bourgeoisie continue to rage, let it slaughter more thousands of workers—victory is ours; the victory of the world Communist revolution is assured.

Comrades, I heartily greet you in the name of the Central Committee of the R.C.P., and I propose that we proceed to elect a presidium. Please make your nominations.

CLOSING SPEECH AT THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, MARCH 6, 1919

THE fact that we have succeeded in gathering together in spite of all police obstacles and persecution, the fact that we have succeeded without serious differences and in a brief space of time in adopting important decisions on all the urgent problems of the present revolutionary epoch, is due to the proletarian masses of the whole world having placed all these problems on the order of the day by their actions, and to their having begun to solve them in a practical manner.

We, here, have merely had to register what the masses have already won in their revolutionary struggle.

The movement in favour of Soviets is spreading wider and wider, not only in the East European, but also in the West European countries, not only in the vanquished, but also in the victorious countries, for example, in Great Britain; and this movement is nothing more nor less than a movement which has for its object the creation of a new, proletarian democracy—it is the most important step towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the complete victory of Communism.

Let the bourgeoisie of the whole world continue to rage, let it deport, imprison and even kill the Spartacists and Bolsheviks—this will help it no longer. It will merely serve to enlighten the masses, to liberate them from the old bourgeois-democratic prejudices, and to harden them in the struggle. The victory of the proletarian revolution all over the world is assured. The foundation of the international Soviet Republic is impending. (*Loud applause.*)

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

THE imperialists of the "Entente" countries are blockading Russia, are striving to cut off the Soviet Republic as a hotbed of infection from the capitalist world. These people, who boast about the "democracy" of their institutions, are so blinded by their hatred for the Soviet Republic that they fail to observe that they are making themselves ridiculous. Just think: the advanced, most civilised and "democratic" countries, armed to the teeth, enjoying unchallenged military sway over the whole world, are mortally afraid of the *ideological* infection coming from a ruined, starving, backward, and, as they assert, even semi-savage country!

This contradiction alone is opening the eyes of the masses of the toilers in all countries and helps to expose the hypocrisy of the imperialists Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson and their governments.

But it is not only the blindness of the capitalists in their hatred for the Soviets that is helping us, but also their mutual quarrels which induce them to put spokes in each other's wheel. They have entered into a veritable conspiracy of silence, for the thing they fear most of all is the spread of true information about the Soviet Republic in general, and its official documents in particular. However, the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, *Le Temps*, has published a report of the foundation in Moscow of the Third, Communist International.

For this we express to the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, to this leader of French chauvinism and imperialism, our most profound gratitude. We are prepared to send to *Le Temps* an illuminated address expressing our appreciation of the effective and able assistance it is giving us.

The manner in which *Le Temps* compiled its report on the

basis of our radio message clearly and fully reveals the motive that prompted this organ of the money-bags. It wanted to have a dig at Wilson, as if to say: Look at the people you want to enter into negotiations with! The wiseacres who write to the order of the money-bags failed to observe that their attempt to frighten Wilson with the bogey of the Bolsheviks is transformed in the eyes of the masses of the toilers into an advertisement for the Bolsheviks. Once again we express our most profound gratitude to the organ of the French millionaires!

The Third International was formed in such a world situation that no prohibitions, no petty and miserable tricks of the "Entente" imperialists, or of the lackeys of capitalism, such as the Scheidemanns in Germany and the Renners in Austria, can hinder news about this International and sympathy toward it from spreading among the working class of the whole world. This situation was created by the proletarian revolution, which daily and hourly is manifestly growing everywhere. This situation was created by the *Soviet* movement among the masses of the toilers, which has already achieved such force that it has become really *international.*

The First International (1864-1872) laid the foundation of the international organisation of the workers in order to prepare for their revolutionary onslaught on capital. The Second International (1889-1914) was the international organisation of the proletarian movement which grew in *breadth*, and this entailed a temporary drop in the revolutionary level, a temporary increase in the strength of opportunism, which, in the end, led to the disgraceful collapse of this International.

The Third International was actually created in 1918, when the long process of struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism, particularly during the war, led to the formation of Communist Parties in a number of countries. Officially, the Third International was formed at its first congress, in March 1919, in Moscow. And the most characteristic feature of this International is its mission to carry out, to put into practice, the behests of Marxism, and to achieve the century-old ideals of Socialism and the working class movement—this very characteristic feature

of the Third International manifested itself immediately in that the new, Third, "International Workingmen's Association" *has already begun to coincide*, to a certain extent, with the *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*.

The First International laid the foundation of the proletarian, international struggle for Socialism.

The Second International marked the epoch in which the soil was prepared for a broad, mass, widespread movement in a number of countries.

The Third International gathered the fruits of the work of the Second International, purged it of its opportunist, social-chauvinist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois dross, and *has begun to effect* the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The international alliance of the Parties which are leading the most revolutionary movement in the world, the movement of the proletariat for the overthrow of the yoke of capital, now has a basis of unprecedented firmness: several *Soviet republics*, which on an international scale are putting into effect the dictatorship of the proletariat, its victory over capitalism.

The world-historical significance of the Third, Communist International lies in that it has begun to put into practice Marx's greatest slogan, the slogan which sums up the century-old development of Socialism and the working class movement, the slogan which is expressed by the term: dictatorship of the proletariat.

This brilliant forecast, this brilliant theory, is becoming a reality.

This Latin phrase has now been translated into the languages of all the peoples of contemporary Europe—more than that, into all the languages of the world.

A new epoch in world history has begun.

Mankind is throwing off the last form of slavery: capitalist, or wage slavery.

Emancipating itself from slavery, mankind is for the first time passing to real liberty.

How is it that the first country to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to organise a Soviet Republic, was one of the most backward of European countries? We shall not

be mistaken if we say that it is precisely this contradiction between the backwardness of Russia and its "leap" to the higher form of democracy, its leap across bourgeois democracy to Soviet, or proletarian democracy, that it was precisely this contradiction that was one of the reasons (apart from the burden of opportunist habits and philistine prejudices that oppressed the majority of the leaders of Socialism) which, in the West, particularly hindered, or retarded, the understanding of the role of the Soviets.

The masses of the workers all over the world instinctively appreciated the significance of the Soviets as a weapon in the struggle of the proletariat and as the form of the proletarian state. But the "leaders" who were corrupted by opportunism continued and now continue to worship bourgeois democracy, calling it "democracy" in general.

Is it surprising that the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat first of all revealed the "contradiction" between the backwardness of Russia and its "leap" *across* bourgeois democracy? It would have been surprising had history granted us the establishment of a *new* form of democracy *without* a number of contradictions.

If any Marxist, in fact if any person who is familiar with modern science were asked whether the even, or harmoniously proportionate transition of different capitalist countries to the dictatorship of the proletariat was probable, he would undoubtedly answer in the negative. Neither evenness, nor harmony, nor proportion ever existed in the world of capitalism; nor could it exist. Each country developed with particular prominence, first one, and then another aspect, or feature, or group of qualities of capitalism and of the working class movement. The process of development was uneven.

When France was making her great bourgeois revolution and rousing the whole continent of Europe to a historically new life, England was at the head of the counter-revolutionary coalition, although she was capitalistically much more developed than France. And the English working class movement of that epoch brilliantly anticipated much of subsequent Marxism.

When England was giving the world the first, broad, really mass,

politically formed, proletarian revolutionary movement, namely, Chartism, bourgeois revolutions, most of them weak ones, were taking place on the continent of Europe; and in France, the first great civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie broke out. The bourgeoisie in the various countries defeated the various national units of the proletariat one by one, and in different ways.

England served as an example of a country in which, as Engels expressed it, the bourgeoisie, side by side with a bourgeois aristocracy, created the most bourgeois upper stratum of the proletariat.[1] For several decades the advanced capitalist country proved to be backward in regard to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. France, as it were, exhausted the strength of the proletariat in two heroic rebellions of the working class against the bourgeoisie, in 1848 and in 1871, which were of unusually great world-historical significance. Then hegemony in the International of the working class movement passed to Germany, in the seventies of the nineteenth century, when Germany was economically behind England and France. And when Germany ultimately surpassed these two countries economically, *i.e.*, in the second decade of the twentieth century, a handful of arch scoundrels, the filthiest blackguards, who had sold themselves to the capitalists—from Scheidemann and Noske to David and Legien—the most revolting executioners from the ranks of the workers in the service of the monarchy and of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, were found to be at the head of the Marxist workers' party of Germany, which had been a model for the whole world.

World history is undeviatingly marching toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is far from marching toward it by smooth, simple and straight paths.

When Karl Kautsky was still a Marxist and not the renegade of Marxism that he became when he began to champion unity with the Scheidemanns and bourgeois democracy in opposition to Soviet or proletarian democracy, he, in the very beginning of the twentieth century, wrote an article entitled "The Slavs and

[1] See *The Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, pp. 115-16.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

Revolution."[1] In this article he enunciated the historical conditions that would make possible the transition of hegemony in the international revolutionary movement to the Slavs.

This is what has happened. For a time—it goes without saying that it is only for a short time—hegemony in the revolutionary, proletarian International has passed to the Russians in the same way as at various periods in the nineteenth century it was enjoyed by the English, then by the French, and then by the Germans.

I have had occasion more than once to say that, compared with the advanced countries, it was easier for the Russians to *start* the great proletarian revolution, but that it will be more difficult for them to *continue* it and carry it to complete victory, in the sense of organising complete Socialist society.

It was easier for us to start, firstly, because the unusual—for Europe of the twentieth century—political backwardness of the tsarist monarchy stimulated a revolutionary attack by the masses of unusual force. Secondly, Russia's backwardness in a peculiar way merged the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landlords. We started with this in November (October) 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then had we not started with this. As long ago as 1856, Marx, in speaking of Prussia, pointed to the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. Since the beginning of 1905, the Bolsheviks have advocated the idea of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Thirdly, the 1905 Revolution did ever so much to assist the political education of the masses of workers and peasants in the sense of making their vanguard familiar with "the last word" in Socialism in the West, as well as in the sense of the revolutionary *action* of the masses. Without the "dress rehearsal" of 1905 the revolutions of 1917—the bourgeois, February Revolution, as well as the proletarian, October Revolution—would have been impossible. Fourthly, the geographical conditions of Russia permitted her to hold out against the superior external

[1] This article was published in *Iskra*, No. 18, March 10, 1902. Lenin deals in greater detail with this article in *"Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, in this volume, pp. 55-59.—*Ed.*

forces of the capitalist, advanced countries longer than other countries. Fifthly, the peculiar relations between the proletariat and the peasantry facilitated the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the Socialist revolution, facilitated the spread of the influence of the urban proletarians over the semi-proletarian, the poorest strata of the toilers in the rural districts. Sixthly, the long schooling in strike struggles and the experience of the European mass working class movement facilitated the rise—in the midst of a profound and rapidly intensified revolutionary situation—of a peculiar form of proletarian revolutionary organisation such as the *Soviets.*

This list is incomplete of course; but for the time being it will suffice.

Soviet or proletarian democracy was born in Russia. The second step of world-historical importance was taken after the Paris Commune. The proletarian-peasant Soviet Republic proved to be the first stable Socialist republic in the world. As *a new type of state* it cannot die now. It no longer stands alone.

For the purpose of continuing the work of building Socialism, for the purpose of completing the work of construction, a very great deal is still required. The Soviet republics of the more cultured countries, in which the proletariat has greater weight and influence, have every chance of overtaking Russia as soon as they take the path of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The bankrupt Second International is now dying and decomposing alive. Actually, it is playing the role of lackey to the international bourgeoisie. It is a really yellow International. Its most prominent ideological leaders, like Kautsky, laud *bourgeois* democracy and call it "democracy" in general, or—what is still more stupid and still more crude—"pure democracy."

Bourgeois democracy is obsolete, and so also is the Second International, which performed historically necessary and useful work when the problem of training the masses of the workers within the framework of this bourgeois democracy was on the order of the day.

The most democratic bourgeois republic was never, nor could it be anything else than a machine with which capital suppressed

the toilers, an instrument of the political rule of capital, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The democratic bourgeois republic promised the rule of the majority, it proclaimed the rule of the majority, but it could never put this into effect as long as the private ownership of the land and other means of production existed.

In the bourgeois-democratic republic "freedom" was really freedom *for the rich.* The proletarians and toiling peasants could and should have utilised it for the purpose of preparing their forces for overthrowing capital, for overcoming bourgeois democracy; *in fact,* however, as a general rule, the masses of the toilers were unable to make use of democracy under capitalism.

For the first time in history Soviet or proletarian democracy created *democracy* for the masses, for the toilers, for the workers and small peasants.

Never before in history has there been a state representing the *majority* of the population, the *actual* rule of the majority, such as is the Soviet state.

It suppresses the "freedom" of the exploiters and their accomplices; it deprives them of the "freedom" to exploit, the "freedom" to make profit out of starvation, the "freedom" to fight for the restoration of the rule of capital, the "freedom" to come to an agreement with the foreign bourgeoisie in opposition to the workers and peasants in their own country.

Let Kautsky champion such freedom. In order to do that one must be a renegade of Marxism, a renegade of Socialism.

Nothing has so strikingly expressed the bankruptcy of the ideological leaders of the Second International like Hilferding and Kautsky as their complete inability to understand the significance of Soviet or proletarian democracy, its relation to the Paris Commune, its place in history, that it is necessary as the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

No. 74 of *Die Freiheit,* the organ of "Independent" (read: philistine, petty-bourgeois) German Social-Democracy, of February 11, 1919, published a "Manifesto to the Revolutionary Proletariat of Germany."

This manifesto is signed by the Executive Committee of the

Party and by its members in the "National Assembly," the German "Constituent."[1]

This manifesto accuses the Scheidemanns of striving to abolish the *Soviets*, and it proposes—don't laugh!—that the Soviets be *combined* with the Constituent, that the Soviets be granted certain state rights, a certain place in the Constitution.

To reconcile, to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat! How simple! What a brilliantly philistine idea!

The only pity is that this has been tried already in Russia, under Kerensky, by the united Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, these petty-bourgeois democrats who imagine that they are Socialists.

Those who have read Marx and have failed to understand that in capitalist society, at every acute moment, at every serious conflict of classes, only the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat is possible have understood nothing about the economic or the political doctrines of Marx.

But the brilliantly philistine idea of Hilferding, Kautsky and Co. of peacefully combining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat must be dealt with separately if the economic and political absurdities heaped up in this very remarkable and comical manifesto of February 11 are to be plumbed to the depths. But this will have to be put off for another article.

April 15, 1919

[1] In Russian "Uchredilka"—a term of derision for the Constituent Assembly.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

PART II

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL AND ITS SECOND CONGRESS

THE TASKS OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

RAMSAY MACDONALD ON THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL[1]

III

WITH the amusing naïveté of a "parlour" Socialist, Ramsay MacDonald throws words to the wind without understanding their serious significance, without giving a thought to the fact that *words commit one to deeds*, and declares: In Berne "a concession was made to the public opinion of non-Socialist circles."

Precisely! We regard the whole of the Berne International as yellow, treacherous and perfidious because the *whole* of its policy is a "*concession*" to the bourgeoisie.

Ramsay MacDonald knows perfectly well that we built the Third International and unreservedly broke with the Second International because we were convinced that it was hopeless and incorrigible in its role of servant to imperialism, as the channel of bourgeois influence, bourgeois lies and bourgeois corruption in the labour movement. If in desiring to discuss the Third International Ramsay MacDonald evades the essence of the question, beats about the bush, utters empty phrases and does not say what should be said, it is his fault and his crime. For the proletariat needs the truth, and there is nothing more harmful to its cause than plausible, respectable, petty-bourgeois lies.

The question of imperialism and of *its connection* with opportunism in the labour movement, with the betrayal of the cause of labour by labour leaders, was raised long ago, very long ago.

For a period of *forty* years, from 1852 to 1892, Marx and Engels constantly pointed to the fact that the upper stratum of the

[1] Parts I and II of this pamphlet have been omitted here.—*Ed.*

working class of England was becoming *bourgeois* as a consequence of the peculiar economic conditions of England (colonies, the monopoly of the world market, etc.). In the seventies of the last century Marx earned for himself the honourable hatred of the despicable heroes of the "Berne" International trend, of the opportunists and reformists of that time, because he branded many of the leaders of the English trade unions as men who had sold themselves to the bourgeoisie, or were in the pay of the latter for services they were rendering to *its* class *within* the labour movement.

During the Anglo-Boer War, the Anglo-Saxon press quite clearly raised the question of imperialism as the latest (*and last*) stage of capitalism. Unless my memory betrays me, it was none other than Ramsay MacDonald who then resigned from the Fabian Society, that prototype of the "Berne" International, that nursery and model of opportunism, which Engels, with the power, clarity and truth of a genius, describes in his correspondence with Sorge. "Fabian imperialism"—such was the common expression employed in English Socialist literature at that time.

If Ramsay MacDonald has forgotten this, all the worse for him.

"Fabian imperialism" and "social-imperialism" are one and the same thing: Socialism in words, imperialism in deeds, *the growth of opportunism into imperialism.* Now, during the war of 1914-18 and after, this phenomenon has become *universal.* The failure to understand it is evidence of the intense blindness of the "Berne," yellow International, and of its greatest crime. Opportunism, or reformism, inevitably had to grow into *socialist imperialism,* or social-chauvinism, which has world-historical significance, because imperialism singled out a handful of very rich, advanced nations, which plundered the whole world and by that enabled the bourgeoisie of these countries, out of their monopolist super-profits (imperialism is monopolist capitalism), *to bribe the upper stratum of the working class* of these countries.

Only utter ignoramuses or hypocrites who deceive the workers by repeating *commonplaces* about capitalism and in this way obscure the bitter truth that a *whole trend in Socialism* deserted to the

side of the imperialist bourgeoisie, can fail to see the economic inevitability of this fact under imperialism.

And from this fact two indisputable conclusions emerge.

First conclusion: the "Berne" International is in fact, by its real historical and political role, irrespective of the good will and innocent desires of this or that member of it, *an organisation of the agents of international imperialism* operating *within* the labour movement, permeating it with bourgeois influences, bourgeois ideas, bourgeois lies and bourgeois corruption.

In those countries where democratic parliamentary culture is of long standing, the bourgeoisie has excellently learned to operate, not only by means of violence, but also by means of deception, bribery and flattery, right up to the most subtle forms of these methods. It is not for nothing that "luncheons" given to English "labour leaders" (*i.e.*, the servants of the bourgeoisie in fooling the workers) have acquired notoriety; even Engels spoke about them. To the same order of facts belongs the "charming" reception given by M. Clemenceau to the social-traitor, Merrheim, the friendly reception given by the Ministers of the Entente to the leaders of the "Berne" International, and so on and so forth. "You will train them and we will buy them," said a very clever capitalist lady to Mr. Social-Imperialist, Hyndman, who related in his memoirs how this lady, who was more shrewd than all the leaders of the "Berne" International put together, appraised the "labours" of the Socialist intellectuals in training workers to become Socialist leaders.

During the war, when the Vandervelde, Brantings and the whole gang of traitors organised "international" conferences, the French bourgeois newspapers were bitingly scornful and rightly so. They said: "These Vandervelde seem to be suffering from a sort of tic. Just as those who suffer from tic cannot utter two phrases without strangely twitching the muscles of the face, so the Vandervelde cannot make a political speech without repeating in a parrot-like way the words: internationalism, socialism, international solidarity of the workers, proletarian revolution, etc. Let them repeat any sacramental formula they like as long as they help to lead the workers by the nose and serve us, the capi-

talists, in pursuing the imperialist war and in enslaving the workers."

Sometimes the English and French bourgeoisie are very clever and excellently appreciate the servile role played by the "Berne" International.

Martov wrote somewhere: "You Bolsheviks hurl abuse at the Berne International but 'your' own friend Loriot is a member of it."

That is the argument of a rogue; for everybody knows that Loriot is openly, honestly and heroically fighting for the Third International. When in 1902, Zubatov organised workers' meetings in Moscow for the purpose of fooling the workers with "police socialism," the worker, Babushkin, whom I had known since 1894, when he attended the workers' circle I conducted in St. Petersburg, who was one of the most loyal and devoted worker *Iskra*-ists, a leader of the revolutionary proletariat, and who was shot in 1906 by Rennenkampf in Siberia, *went to the Zubatov meetings* in order to fight against Zubatovism and to snatch the workers out of its clutches. Babushkin was no more a "Zubatovist" than Loriot is a "Berne-ite."

IV

Second conclusion: the Third, Communist International was formed precisely for the purpose of preventing "Socialists" from getting away with the *verbal* recognition of revolution, an example of which is provided by Ramsay MacDonald in his article. The verbal recognition of revolution, which in fact concealed a thoroughly opportunist, reformist, nationalist and petty-bourgeois policy, was the fundamental sin of the Second International, and against this evil we are waging a war of life and death.

When it is said: The Second International died after suffering shameful bankruptcy—one must be able to understand what this means. It means that opportunism, reformism, petty-bourgeois Socialism became bankrupt and died. For the Second International has rendered historic service, it has achievements to its credit that are εἰς ἀεί (everlasting), that the class-conscious worker will never

renounce, namely: the creation of mass labour organisations—co-operative societies, trade unions and political organisations, the utilisation of bourgeois parliamentarism as well as all the institutions of bourgeois democracy generally, etc.

In order utterly to defeat the opportunism which caused the shameful death of the Second International, in order to render effective aid to the revolution, the approach of which *even* Ramsay MacDonald is obliged to admit, it is necessary:

Firstly, to carry on all propaganda and agitation from the point of view of revolution as opposed to reforms, systematically to explain this difference to the masses theoretically and practically at every step of parliamentary, trade union, co-operative, etc., work. Under no circumstances to refrain (except in special cases, as an exception) from utilising parliamentarism and all the "liberties" of bourgeois democracy; not to reject reforms, but to regard them *only* as a *by-product* of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. Not a single party affiliated to the "Berne" International meets these requirements. Not a single one of them betrays even an inkling of how *all* propaganda and agitation should be conducted while explaining the *difference* between reform and revolution, of how both the party and the masses must be *undeviatingly* trained for *revolution*.

Secondly, legal work must be combined with *illegal* work. The Bolsheviks always taught this, and did so with particular insistence during the war of 1914-18. The heroes of despicable opportunism ridiculed this and smugly extolled the "law," "democracy," "liberty" of the West European countries, republics, etc. Now, however, only out-and-out swindlers who deceive the workers with phrases can deny that the Bolsheviks have been proved to be right. There is not a single country in the world, even the most advanced and "freest" of the bourgeois republics, in which bourgeois terror does not reign, where freedom to carry on agitation for the Socialist revolution, to carry on propaganda and organisational work precisely in this direction, are not prohibited. The party which under the rule of the bourgeoisie has not admitted this to this day and does not carry on systematic, all-sided, *illegal* work in spite of the laws of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois parliaments is a party

of traitors and scoundrels, which deceives the people by the verbal recognition of revolution. The place for such parties is in the yellow "Berne" International. They will find no place in the Communist International.

Thirdly, unswerving and ruthless war must be waged for the complete expulsion from the labour movement of those opportunist leaders who earned their reputations both before the war and particularly during the war, in the sphere of politics as well as, and particularly, in the trade unions and the co-operative societies. The theory of "neutrality"[1] is a false and despicable evasion which helped the bourgeoisie to capture the masses in 1914-18. The parties which stand for revolution in words but which in deeds fail to carry on undeviating work to spread the influence of precisely the revolutionary and only of the revolutionary party in every sort of mass labour organisation are parties of traitors.

Fourthly, there can be no toleration for the condemnation of imperialism in words while in deeds no revolutionary struggle is waged for the liberation of the colonies (and dependent nations) from *one's own* imperialist bourgeoisie. This is hypocrisy. This is the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement (the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class). Those English, French, Dutch, Belgian, etc., parties which are hostile to imperialism in words and in deeds fail to wage a revolutionary struggle within "their own" colonies for the *overthrow* of "their own" bourgeoisie, which do not systematically assist the *revolutionary* work which has already commenced everywhere in the colonies, which do not send arms and literature to the revolutionary parties in the colonies, are parties of scoundrels and traitors.

Fifthly, the following phenomenon, which is typical of the parties of the "Berne" International, is the height of hypocrisy, *viz.*, the verbal recognition of revolution and the flaunting of high-flown phrases before the workers about recognising revolution, but in deeds the adoption of a purely reformist attitude toward those beginnings, off-shoots and manifestations of the growth

[1] *I.e.*, the theory that the trade unions and co-operative societies must be neutral in politics.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

of revolution such as mass actions which break bourgeois laws, which extend beyond the bounds of all legality, as, for example, mass strikes, street demonstrations, protests by soldiers, meetings among the troops, the distribution of leaflets in barracks, camps, etc.

If any hero of the "Berne" International were asked whether his party is carrying on such systematic work he would answer either in evasive phrases to conceal the absence of such work and plead the lack of organisations and an apparatus for carrying on such work, the incapability of his party to carry on such work; or by declamations against "*putsch*-ism," "anarchism," etc. And it is precisely this that comprises the treachery of the Berne International to the working class, its actual desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie.

All the scoundrelly leaders of the Berne International fervently vow their "sympathy" for revolution in general, and for the Russian Revolution in particular. But only hypocrites and simpletons can fail to understand that the particularly rapid successes of the revolution in Russia *are due* to the many years of work conducted by the revolutionary party in the direction indicated: for years a systematic illegal apparatus was built up for the purpose of leading demonstrations and strikes, for conducting work among the troops; methods were studied in detail, illegal literature was issued which summed up experience and trained the whole Party to the idea that revolution was necessary; mass leaders were trained for such events, etc., etc.

The most profound and radical differences, which sum up all that which has been said above and explain the inevitability of an irreconcilable theoretical and practical-political struggle of the revolutionary proletariat against the "Berne" International, centre around the question of transforming the imperialist war into civil war, and the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

That the "Berne" International is captive to bourgeois ideology is most of all revealed by the fact that having failed to understand

(or: not desiring to understand, or: pretending not to understand) the imperialist character of the war of 1914-18, it failed to understand the inevitability of its transformation into civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in all the advanced countries.

When the Bolsheviks, as far back as November 1914, pointed to this inevitability, the philistines of all countries retorted with stupid sneers, and among these philistines were all the leaders of the "Berne" International. Now, the transformation of imperialist war into civil war has become a fact in a number of countries, not only in Russia, but also in Finland, in Hungary, in Germany, and even in neutral Switzerland, and the growth of civil war is observed, is felt, is palpable in all advanced countries without exception.

To ignore this question now (as Ramsay MacDonald does) or to try to *evade* the question of the inevitability of civil war by sentimental conciliatory phrases (as Messrs. Kautsky and Co. do) is equivalent to direct treachery to the proletariat, equivalent to actual desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie. For the real political leaders of the bourgeoisie have long understood the inevitability of civil war and are excellently, thoughtfully and systematically making preparations for it and strengthening their positions for it.

The bourgeoisie of the whole world, with all its might, with enormous energy, intellect and determination, stopping at no crime, condemning whole countries to famine and complete extinction, is preparing to suppress the proletariat in the impending civil war. And the heroes of the "Berne" International, like simpletons, or hypocritical parsons, or pedantic professors, are still chanting their old, worn out, threadbare reformist song! A more revolting and disgusting spectacle cannot be imagined!

The Kautskys and MacDonalds continue to *frighten* the capitalists with the menace of revolution, to *scare* the bourgeoisie with the menace of civil war in order to obtain concessions from them, their consent to pursue the reformist path. This is what all the writings, the whole philosophy, the whole policy of the whole of the "Berne" International amounts to.

We saw this miserable lackey's trick played in Russia in 1905 by the Liberals (Cadets), in 1917-19 by the Mensheviks and "Socialist-Revolutionaries." The lackey souls of the Berne International never think of *imbuing* the masses with the consciousness of the inevitability and necessity of *defeating* the bourgeoisie in civil war, of pursuing the whole policy from the point of view of this aim, of explaining, presenting and solving all problems from this, and only from this point of view. That is why our only aim should be once and for all to push the incorrigible reformists, *i.e.*, nine-tenths of the leaders of the Berne International, into the cesspool of the lackeys of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie *needs* lackeys whom a section of the working class could trust, and who would paint in fine colours, embellish the bourgeoisie with talk about the possibility of the reformist path, who would throw dust in the eyes of the people by this talk, who would *divert* the people from revolution by depicting in glowing colours the charms and the possibilities of the reformist path.

All the writings of the Kautskys, like those of our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, reduce themselves to such painting and to the whining of cowardly philistines who fear revolution.

We are unable here to reiterate in detail the main economic causes which made precisely the revolutionary path, and only the revolutionary path, inevitable, which made any other solution of the problems which history has placed on the order of the day, except that of civil war, impossible. About this volumes must be and will be written. If Messieurs the Kautskys and other leaders of the "Berne" International have not understood this, the only thing that remains to be said is: Ignorance is less remote from truth than prejudice.

For ignorant but sincere men of toil, and supporters of the toilers, now, after the war, understand the inevitability of revolution, of civil war and of the dictatorship of the proletariat far more easily than Messieurs the Kautskys, MacDonalds, Vandervelde, Brantings, Turatis, and *tutti quanti*, who are filled with the most learned reformist prejudices.

As one of the things that most strikingly confirm the mass phenomenon observed everywhere of the growth of revolutionary

consciousness among the masses, we may take the novels of Henri Barbusse: *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*) and *Clarté* (*Light*). The first has already been translated into all languages, and in France 230,000 copies have been sold. The transformation of an absolutely ignorant philistine and rank and filer, utterly crushed by ideas and prejudices, into a revolutionary, precisely by the influence of the war, is depicted with extraordinary power, talent and truthfulness.

The mass of proletarians and semi-proletarians are on our side and are coming over to us, not only daily, but hourly. The "Berne" International is a General Staff without an army, which will collapse like a house of cards if it is utterly exposed to the eyes of the masses.

The name of Karl Liebknecht was used in the whole of the Entente bourgeois press during the war in order to deceive the masses: in order to depict the pirates and plunderers of French and British imperialism as sympathising with this hero, with this "the only honest German," as they said.

Now the heroes of the Berne International belong to the same organisation as the Scheidemanns who organised the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, as the Scheidemanns who fulfilled the role of working class executioners, who rendered executioner's service to the bourgeoisie. In words—hypocritical attempts to "condemn" the Scheidemanns (as if "condemning" makes any difference!), in deeds—belonging to the same organisation that murderers belong to.

In 1907, the late Harry Quelch was deported from Stuttgart by the German government because he described a gathering of European diplomats as a "thieves' kitchen." The leaders of the "Berne" International are not only a gathering of thieves, they are a gathering of despicable murderers.

They will not escape the justice of the revolutionary workers.

VI

Ramsay MacDonald disposes of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a couple of words as if it were a subject for discussion on freedom and democracy.

No. It is time to act. Discussions are belated.

The most dangerous thing that comes from the "Berne" International is the verbal recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These people are capable of recognising everything, of signing everything, only to keep at the head of the labour movement. Kautsky now says that he is not opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat! The French social-chauvinists and "Centrists" put their names to resolutions in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat!

But not a hair's breadth of confidence do they deserve.

It is not verbal recognition that is needed, but a complete rupture *in deeds* with the policy of reformism, with prejudices about bourgeois freedom and bourgeois democracy, the genuine pursuit of the policy of revolutionary class struggle.

Attempts are made to recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat in words in order secretly to drag in alongside of it the "will of the majority," "universal suffrage" (this is exactly what Kautsky does), bourgeois parliamentarism, rejection of the complete destruction, blowing up, complete breaking up of the whole of the bourgeois state apparatus. These new evasions, new loopholes of reformism must be feared more than anything else.

The dictatorship of the proletariat would have been impossible had not the majority of the population consisted of proletarians and semi-proletarians. Kautsky and Co. try to falsify this truth by arguing that "the vote of the majority" is required in order that the dictatorship of the proletariat may be recognised as "correct."

Comical pedants! They failed to understand that voting within the limits, the institutions, the customs of bourgeois parliamentarism is *part* of the bourgeois state apparatus which must be broken and smashed from top to bottom *in order* to effect the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to pass from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy.

They failed to understand that, generally speaking, it is not voting but civil war that decides *all* serious questions of politics when history places the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day.

They failed to understand that the dictatorship of the prole-

tariat is the rule of *one* class, which takes into its hands the *whole* apparatus of the new state, which *vanquishes* the bourgeoisie and *neutralises* the whole of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the lower middle class and the intelligentsia.

The Kautskys and MacDonalds recognise the class struggle in words, in order, in deeds, to forget about it in the most decisive moment in the history of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat: at the moment when, having seized state power, and being supported by the semi-proletariat, the proletariat with the aid of this power *continues* the class struggle until *classes are abolished.*

Like real philistines, the leaders of the "Berne" International repeat bourgeois-democratic catchwords about liberty and equality and democracy, while failing to see that they are repeating the fragments of ideas of the free and equal *commodity owner,* failing to understand that the proletariat needs a state, not for "freedom," but *for the purpose* of *suppressing* its enemy, the exploiter, the capitalist.

The liberty and equality of the *commodity owner* is as dead as capitalism. And the Kautskys and MacDonalds will never revive it.

The proletariat needs the abolition of classes—such is the *real* content of proletarian democracy, of proletarian freedom (freedom *from* the capitalist, from commodity exchange), proletarian equality (not equality of *classes*—that is the banality that the Kautskys, the Vanderveldes and the MacDonalds slip into—but the equality of toilers who *overthrow* capital and capitalism).

As long as classes exist the liberty and equality of classes is a bourgeois deception. The proletariat takes power, becomes the *ruling* class, smashes bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, suppresses the bourgeoisie, suppresses *all* the attempts of *all* other classes to return to capitalism, gives *real* liberty and equality to the toilers (which is made possible only by the *abolition* of the private ownership of the means of production) and gives them, not only the "right to," but the *real* use of what has been *taken from* the bourgeoisie.

He who has failed to understand that *this* is the content of the

dictatorship of the proletariat (or what is the same thing, Soviet power, or proletarian democracy) takes the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat in vain.

I cannot here develop this idea in greater detail; I have done so in *The State and Revolution* and in the pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.*[1] I can conclude by dedicating these remarks to the delegates to the Lucerne Congress of the Berne International, August 10, 1919.

July 14, 1919

[1] See *Selected Works*, Vol. VII.—*Ed.*

"LEFT-WING" COMMUNISM, AN INFANTILE DISORDER

A POPULAR ESSAY IN MARXIAN STRATEGY AND TACTICS

I

IN WHAT SENSE CAN WE SPEAK OF THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION?

THE first months after the conquest of political power by the proletariat in Russia (November 7 [October 25], 1917) might make it appear that the tremendous difference between backward Russia and the advanced countries of Western Europe will cause the proletarian revolution in these latter countries to have very little resemblance to ours. Now we already have very considerable international experience which very definitely establishes the fact that some of the fundamental features of our revolution have a significance which is not local, not peculiarly national, not Russian only, but international. I speak here of international significance not in the broad sense of the term: not some, but all fundamental and many secondary features of our revolution are of international significance in regard to the influence it has upon all countries. I speak of it in the narrowest sense, *i.e.*, by international significance I mean the international validity, or the historical inevitability of a repetition on an international scale of what has taken place here, and it must be admitted that some of the fundamental features of our revolution possess such significance.

Of course, it would be a very great mistake to exaggerate this truth and to apply it to more than a few of the fundamental features of our revolution. It would also be a mistake to lose sight of the fact that after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, things, in all probability, will take a sharp turn, *viz.*, soon after that Russia will cease to be the model country and once again become a backward (in the "Soviet" and in the Socialist sense) country.

But at the present historical moment the situation is precisely

that the Russian model reveals to *all* countries something that is very essential in their near and inevitable future. The advanced workers in every land have long understood this; most often they did not so much understand it as grasp it, sense it, by their revolutionary class instinct. Herein lies the international "significance" (in the narrow sense of the word) of the Soviet power, as well as of the fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics. This the "revolutionary" leaders of the Second International, such as Kautsky in Germany and Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler in Austria, failed to understand, thereby exposing themselves as reactionaries and advocates of the worst kind of opportunism and social treachery. Incidentally, the anonymous pamphlet, *The World Revolution* (*Weltrevolution*), which appeared in 1919 in Vienna (*Sozialistische Bücherei*, Heft 11; Ignaz Brand[1]), reveals particularly clearly their whole process of thought, their circle of ideas or, what is more correct, the whole depth of their stupidity, pedantry, baseness and betrayal of working class interests—and all this under the guise of "defending" the idea of "world revolution."

But we shall have to discuss this pamphlet in greater detail some other time. Here we shall note only one more point: long, long ago, when Kautsky was still a Marxist and not a renegade, he, in approaching the question as a historian, foresaw the possibility of a situation arising in which the revolutionary spirit of the Russian proletariat would serve as a model for Western Europe. This was in 1902, when Kautsky wrote an article entitled "The Slavs and Revolution," for the revolutionary newspaper *Iskra*. In this article he wrote as follows:

"At the present time" (unlike the year 1848) "it may be assumed that not only have the Slavs entered the ranks of the revolutionary peoples, but also that the centre of gravity of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action is shifting ever more and more toward the Slavs. The revolutionary centre is shifting from the West to the East. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was in France, at times in England. In 1848 Germany entered the ranks of revolutionary nations.... The new century opens with events that induce us to think that we are approaching a further shifting of the revolutionary centre, namely, to Russia.... Russia, which has imbibed so much revolutionary initiative from the West, is now perhaps herself ready to serve as a source of

[1] Ignaz Brand, Socialist Publishers, Vol. 11.—*Ed.*

revolutionary energy for the latter. The Russian revolutionary movement, which is now flaring up, will prove, perhaps, to be the most potent means for driving out that spirit of flabby philistinism and sober politics which is beginning to spread in our ranks; it will cause the lust for battle and passionate devotion to our great ideals to flare up in bright flames again. Russia has long ceased to be merely a bulwark of reaction and absolutism in Western Europe. Now, perhaps, the very opposite is the case. Western Europe is becoming the bulwark of reaction and absolutism in Russia. . . . Perhaps the Russian revolutionaries would have settled with the tsar long ago, had they not been compelled to fight simultaneously also against his ally, European capital. Let us hope that this time they will succeed in settling with both enemies, and that the new 'Holy Alliance' will collapse more quickly than its predecessors. But, however the present struggle in Russia may end, the blood and suffering of the martyrs whom it is creating, unfortunately in too great numbers, will not have been in vain. They will nourish the shoots of social upheaval throughout the entire civilised world and cause their more rapid and luxuriant growth. In 1848 the Slavs were a biting frost which blighted the flowers of the peoples' spring. Perhaps now they are destined to be the storm that will break the ice of reaction and will unrestrainedly bring the peoples a new, happy spring." (Karl Kautsky, "The Slavs and Revolution," *Iskra*, Russian Social-Democratic revolutionary newspaper, No. 18, March 10, 1902.)

How well Karl Kautsky wrote eighteen years ago!

If in 1917-20, under unprecedentedly severe difficulties, Bolshevism could build up and successfully maintain the strictest centralisation and iron discipline, it was due simply to a number of historical peculiarities of Russia.

On the one hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on the very firm foundation of the theory of Marxism. And the correctness of this —and only this—revolutionary theory has been proved, not only by the experience of all countries during the entire nineteenth century, but particularly by the experience of the wanderings and vacillations, the mistakes and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For almost half a century—approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last century—advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unprecedented, savage and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for the correct revolutionary theory and followed each and every "last word" in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness. Russia achieved Marxism, the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through *suffering*, by a half century of unprecedented torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, testing in practice, disappointments, checking, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the enforced emigration caused by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, possessed a wealth of international connections and excellent information about world forms and theories of the revolutionary movement such as no other country in the world possessed.

On the other hand, having arisen on this granite theoretical foundation, Bolshevism passed through fifteen years (1903-17) of practical history which, in wealth of experience, has had no equal anywhere else in the world. For no other country during these fifteen years had anything even approximating this revolutionary experience, this rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, small circles and mass movements, parliamentary and terrorist. In no other country was there concentrated during so short a period of time such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle involving *all* classes of modern society, and

moreover, of a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the heavy yoke of tsarism, matured with exceptional rapidity and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the corresponding "last word" of American and European political experience.

III

THE PRINCIPAL STAGES IN THE HISTORY OF BOLSHEVISM

THE years of preparation for the revolution (1903-05): The approach of the great storm is felt everywhere. All classes are in a state of ferment and preparation. Abroad the emigrant press raises theoretically *all* the fundamental problems of the revolution. The representatives of the three main classes, of the three principal political trends, *viz.*, the liberal-bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois democratic (concealed under the labels of "social-democratic" and "social-revolutionary"), and the proletarian-revolutionary trends, anticipate and prepare for the approaching open class struggle by a most bitter fight on questions of programme and tactics. All the questions around which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905-07 and 1917-20 can (and should) be traced in their embryonic form in the press of that time. Between these three main trends, there were, of course, a large number of intermediate, transitional, indefinite forms. To put it more correctly: in the struggle of the press, parties, factions and groups, were crystallised those ideological-political trends which are actually of a class character; the classes forged for themselves the requisite ideological-political weapons for the impending battles.

The years of revolution (1905-07): All classes come out into the open. All views of programme and tactics are tested by the action of the masses. There is a strike movement unprecedented anywhere in the world in extent and acuteness. The economic strike is transformed into a political strike, and the latter is transformed into insurrection. The relations betweeen the proletariat, as the leader, and the vacillating, unstable peasantry, as the led, are tested in practice. The Soviet form of organisation is born in the

spontaneous development of the struggle. The controversies of that time concerning the significance of Soviets anticipate the great struggle of 1917-20. The alternation of parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle, of tactics of boycotting parliamentarism and tactics of participating in parliamentarism, of legal and illegal methods of struggle, and likewise, their interrelations and connections—all this is distinguished by a wonderful richness of content. As regards teaching the masses and leaders, classes and parties the fundamentals of political science, one month of this period was equivalent to a whole year of "peaceful," "constitutional" development. Without the "dress rehearsal" of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution of 1917 would have been impossible.

The years of reaction (1907-10): Tsarism is victorious. All the revolutionary and opposition parties have been defeated. Depression, demoralisation, splits, discord, renegacy and pornography instead of politics. There is an increased drift toward philosophic idealism; mysticism serves as a cloak for counter-revolutionary moods. But at the same time, it is precisely the great defeat that gives the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary class a real and very useful lesson, a lesson in historical dialectics, a lesson in the understanding, in the skill and in the art of carrying on the political struggle. One recognises one's friends in time of misfortune. Defeated armies learn well.

Victorious tsarism is compelled speedily to destroy the remnants of the pre-bourgeois, patriarchal mode of life in Russia. Russia's development along bourgeois lines marches forward with remarkable rapidity. Extra-class and above-class illusions, illusions concerning the possibility of avoiding capitalism, are scattered to the winds. The class struggle manifests itself in a new and more distinct form.

The revolutionary parties must complete their education. They have learned to attack. Now they must understand that it is necessary to supplement this knowledge with the knowledge of how to retreat properly. They must understand—and the revolutionary class by its own bitter experience learns to understand—that victory is impossible without having learned both how to attack and

how to retreat correctly. Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties the Bolsheviks effected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their "army," with its nucleus best preserved, with the fewest splits (in the sense of deep, irremediable splits), with the least demoralisation, and in the best condition to resume work on the broadest scale and in the most correct and energetic manner. The Bolsheviks achieved this only because they ruthlessly exposed and expelled the revolutionary phrasemongers, who refused to understand that it was necessary to retreat, that it was necessary to know how to retreat, that it was absolutely necessary for them to learn how to work legally, in the most reactionary parliaments, in the most reactionary trade unions, cooperative societies, social insurance and similar organisations.

The years of revival (1910-14): At first the revival was incredibly slow; then, after the Lena events in 1912 it became somewhat more rapid. Overcoming unprecedented difficulties, the Bolsheviks pushed aside the Mensheviks, whose role as bourgeois agents in the working class movement was perfectly understood by the whole bourgeoisie after 1905, and who, therefore, were supported in a thousand ways by the whole bourgeoisie against the Bolsheviks. But the latter would never have succeeded in doing this had they not pursued the correct tactics of combining illegal work with the obligatory utilisation of "legal possibilities." In the arch-reactionary Duma the Bolsheviks won all the labour curia.[1]

The first imperialist World War (1914-17): Legal parliamentarism, under conditions of an extremely reactionary "parliament," renders very useful service to the party of the revolutionary proletariat, to the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik deputies are exiled to Siberia. In the emigrant press all shades of social-imperialism, social-chauvinism, social-patriotism, inconsistent and consistent internationalism, pacifism, and the revolutionary repudiation of pacifist illusions find full expression. The learned fools and the old women of the Second International, who had arrogantly and

[1] Electoral colleges. According to the electoral law then in operation the electors were divided into separate, class, electoral colleges, the workers voting in a separate college.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

contemptuously turned up their noses at the abundance of "factions" in Russian Socialism and the sharpness of the struggle among them, were unable—when the war deprived them of their much lauded "legality" in *all* the advanced countries—to organise anything even approximating such a free (illegal) interchange of views and such a free (illegal) working out of correct views as the Russian revolutionaries did in Switzerland and in a number of other countries. Precisely because of this, both the straightforward social-patriots and the "Kautskians" of all countries proved to be the worst traitors to the proletariat. And if Bolshevism was able to attain victory in 1917-20, one of the fundamental reasons for this victory was that Bolshevism, ever since the end of 1914, had been ruthlessly exposing the baseness, loathsomeness and vileness of social-chauvinism and "Kautskyism" (to which Longuetism in France, the views of the leaders of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians in England, of Turati in Italy, etc., correspond), while the masses had become ever more convinced, from their own experience, of the correctness of the views of the Bolsheviks.

The second revolution in Russia (March [February] to November [October] 1917): The incredible decrepitude and obsolescence of tsarism created (with the aid of the blows and burdens of a most torturous war) an incredibly destructive power which was now directed against it. In a few days Russia was transformed into a democratic, bourgeois republic, more free—under war conditions—than any other country in the world. The leaders of the opposition and revolutionary parties began to set up a government, just as is done in the most "strictly parliamentary" republics; and the fact that a man had been a leader of an opposition party, even though in the most reactionary parliament imaginable, *assisted* him in his subsequent role in the revolution.

In a few weeks the Mensheviks and "Socialist-Revolutionaries" had excellently learnt all the methods and manners, arguments and sophistries of the European heroes of the Second International, of the ministerialists and other opportunist rabble. All that we now read about the Scheidemanns and Noskes, about Kautsky and Hilferding, Renner and Austerlitz, Otto Bauer and Fritz Adler,

Turati and Longuet, about the Fabians and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party in England—all this seems to us, and in reality is, a dreary repetition, the singing over and over again of an old, familiar refrain. We have heard all this from our Mensheviks. History played a joke and made the opportunists of a backward country anticipate the opportunists of a number of advanced countries.

All the heroes of the Second International have suffered bankruptcy and have disgraced themselves on the question of the significance and role of the Soviets and the Soviet power; the leaders of three very important parties, which have now left the Second International (namely, the German Independent Social-Democratic Party, the French Longuetists and the British Independent Labour Party), have disgraced themselves and have got mixed up on this question in an exceptionally "striking" way; they have all turned out to be slaves to the prejudices of petty-bourgeois democracy (quite in the spirit of the petty bourgeois of 1848 who called themselves "Social-Democrats")—but the Mensheviks had *already* given us an example of *all this*. History played the following joke: in Russia, in 1905, the Soviets were born; in March (February) to November (October) 1917 they were falsified by the Mensheviks who went bankrupt because of their inability to understand the role and significance of the Soviets; and now the idea of the Soviet power has come to life *all over the world* and is spreading among the proletariat of all countries with unprecedented rapidity; but *everywhere* the old heroes of the Second International are going bankrupt because they, like our Mensheviks, are unable to understand the role and significance of the Soviets. Experience has proved that on some very important questions concerning the proletarian revolution, *all* countries will inevitably have to go through what Russia has gone through.

Contrary to the views now often met with in Europe and America, the Bolsheviks began their victorious struggle against the parliamentary (actually) bourgeois republic and against the Mensheviks very cautiously, and the preparations for it were by no means a simple matter. We did not call for the overthrow of the government at the beginning of the period indicated, but explained

that it was impossible to overthrow it *until* the composition and the mood of the Soviets had been changed. We did not proclaim a boycott of the bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, but declared—after the April (1917) Conference of our Party—officially declared in the name of the Party, that a bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly is better than one without a Constituent Assembly, but that a "workers' and peasants'" republic, a Soviet republic, is better than any bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary republic. Without such careful, thorough, circumspect and prolonged preparations we could not have obtained victory in November (October) 1917, nor have maintained this victory.

IV

IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WHAT ENEMIES WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT DID BOLSHEVISM GROW, GAIN STRENGTH AND BECOME HARDENED?

FIRST of all, and principally, in the struggle against opportunism, which, in 1914, definitely grew into social-chauvinism and definitely went over to the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Naturally, this was the principal enemy of Bolshevism in the working class movement. This enemy remains the principal enemy also on an international scale. This enemy has claimed, and still claims, most of the attention of the Bolsheviks. This side of the activities of the Bolsheviks is now also fairly well known abroad.

Something different, however, must be said of the other enemy of Bolshevism in the working class movement. It is not yet sufficiently known abroad that Bolshevism grew, took shape, and became hardened in long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionariness*, which smacks of, or borrows something from anarchism, and which in all essentials falls short of the conditions and requirements of the sustained proletarian class struggle. For Marxists it is well established theoretically—and the experience of all European revolutions and revolutionary movements has fully confirmed it—that the small proprietor, the small master (a social type that is represented in many European countries on a wide, mass scale), who, under capitalism, suffers constant oppression and very often an incredibly sharp and rapid worsening of conditions of life and ruin, easily becomes extremely revolutionary, but is incapable of displaying perseverance, ability to organise, discipline and staunchness. The petty bourgeois, in a "frenzy" over the horrors of capitalism, is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The instabil-

ity of such revolutionariness, its barrenness, its liability to become swiftly transformed into submission, apathy, something fantastic, and even into a "mad" infatuation with one or another bourgeois "fad"—all this is a matter of common knowledge. But a theoretical, abstract recognition of these truths does not at all free revolutionary parties from old mistakes, which always crop up at unexpected moments, in a somewhat new form, in new vestments or surroundings, in peculiar—more or less peculiar—circumstances.

Anarchism was often a sort of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working class movement. Both monstrosities mutually supplemented each other. And if in Russia, notwithstanding the fact that its population is more petty-bourgeois than that in European countries, anarchism exercised comparatively insignificant influence during both revolutions (1905 and 1917) and during the preparatory periods of these revolutions, this fact must undoubtedly be partly placed to the credit of Bolshevism, which always carried on a most ruthless and uncompromising struggle against opportunism. I say "partly," for a still more important role in weakening the influence of anarchism in Russia was played by the fact that it had had the opportunity in the past (in the seventies of the nineteenth century) to develop with exceptional luxuriance and to reveal its utter fallaciousness and unfitness as a guiding theory for the revolutionary class.

At its inception in 1903, Bolshevism adopted the tradition of ruthless struggle against petty-bourgeois, semi-anarchist (or dilettante-anarchist) revolutionariness. This tradition has always existed in revolutionary Social-Democracy, and became particularly deep-rooted in Russia in 1900-03, when the foundations for a mass party of the revolutionary proletariat were being laid. Bolshevism took over and continued the struggle against the party which, more than any other, expressed tendencies of petty-bourgeois revolutionariness, namely, the "Socialist-Revolutionary" Party, and waged this struggle on three main points. First, this party, rejecting Marxism, stubbornly refused to (or perhaps it would be more correct to say could not) understand the need for a strictly objective estimate of the class forces and their interrelations before every political action. Secondly, this party considered itself to be partl-

cularly "revolutionary," or "Left," on account of its recognition of individual terror and attempts at assassination—tactics which we Marxists emphatically rejected. Of course, we rejected individual terror only out of considerations of expediency; upon those who "on principle" were capable of condemning the terror of the Great French Revolution, or the terror in general employed by a victorious revolutionary party which is besieged by the bourgeoisie of the whole world—upon such people even Plekhanov in 1900-03, when he was a Marxist and a revolutionary, heaped ridicule and scorn. Thirdly, the "Socialist-Revolutionaries" thought it was very "Left" to sneer at the comparatively insignificant opportunist sins of German Social-Democracy, while they themselves imitated the extreme opportunists of that party, as, for example, on the agrarian question, or on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

History, by the way, has now, on a large, world-historical scale, confirmed the opinion that we have always advocated, *viz.*, that *revolutionary* German Social-Democracy (note that as far back as 1900-03 Plekhanov demanded the expulsion of Bernstein from the party, and in 1913 the Bolsheviks, always continuing this tradition, exposed the baseness, vileness and treachery of Legien)—that revolutionary German Social-Democracy *came closest* to being the party which the revolutionary proletariat required to enable it to attain victory. Now, in 1920, after all the ignominious failures and crises that have occurred during the war and the first years after the war, it can plainly be seen that of all the Western parties it was German revolutionary Social-Democracy which produced the best leaders and which restored itself, recuperated, and gained new strength more rapidly than the others. This may be seen both in the party of the Spartacists and in the Left proletarian wing of the "Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany," which is waging an incessant struggle against the opportunism and spinelessness of the Kautskys, Hilferdings, Ledebours and Crispiens. If we cast a general glance over the historical period which is now quite closed, *i.e.*, the period from the Paris Commune to the first Socialist Soviet Republic, we will find that, in general, the attitude of Marxism to anarchism as-

sumes most definite and incontestable outlines. In the final analysis, Marxism proved to be correct, and, although the anarchists rightly pointed to the opportunist character of the conceptions of the state that prevailed among the majority of the Socialist parties, it must be stated, in the first place, that this opportunism was based upon the distortion and even deliberate suppression of Marx's views on the state (in my book, *The State and Revolution*, I called attention to the fact that for thirty-six years, from 1875 to 1911, Bebel kept secret a letter by Engels which very vividly, sharply, directly and clearly exposed the opportunism of the stock Social-Democratic conceptions of the state); and, secondly, that the rectification of these opportunist views, the recognition of the Soviet power and of its superiority over bourgeois parliamentary democracy, that all this has been proceeding most rapidly and broadly precisely out of the depth of the most truly Marxian trends in the European and American Socialist parties.

On two occasions the struggle that Bolshevism waged against "Left" deviations within its own party assumed particularly large proportions: in 1908, on the question of whether or not to participate in the most reactionary "parliament" and in the legal workers' societies which were restricted by the most reactionary laws; and again in 1918 (the Brest-Litovsk Peace), on the question of whether this or that "compromise" is admissible.

In 1908 the "Left" Bolsheviks were expelled from our Party for stubbornly refusing to understand the necessity of participating in the most reactionary "parliament." The "Lefts"—among whom were many excellent revolutionaries, who subsequently bore (and still bear) the title of member of the Communist Party with honour—based themselves particularly on the successful experiment of the boycott of 1905. When in August 1905 the tsar proclaimed the convocation of an advisory "parliament," the Bolsheviks declared a boycott against it—unlike all the opposition parties and the Mensheviks—and the October revolution of 1905 actually swept away that "parliament." At that time the boycott proved correct, not because non-participation in reactionary parliaments is correct as a general principle, but because we correctly estimated

the objective situation that was leading to the rapid transformation of the mass strikes into political strikes, then into revolutionary strikes, and after that into insurrection. Moreover, the struggle then centred upon the question of whether to leave the convocation of the first representative assembly to the tsar, or to attempt to wrest this convocation out of the hands of the old government. Inasmuch as there was not, nor could there have been any certainty that an analogous objective situation existed, any certainty of an equal trend and rate of development, the boycott ceased to be the correct policy.

The Bolshevik boycott of "parliament" in 1905 enriched the revolutionary proletariat with extraordinarily valuable political experience and showed that in combining legal with illegal, parliamentary with non-parliamentary forms of struggle, it is sometimes useful, and even essential, to be able to reject parliamentary forms. But it is a very great mistake to apply this experience blindly, imitatively and uncritically to *other* conditions and to *other* circumstances. The boycott of the "Duma" by the Bolsheviks in 1906 was a mistake, although a small and easily remediable one.[1] A boycott of the Duma in 1907, 1908 and subsequent years would have been a serious mistake and one very difficult to remedy, because, on the one hand, a very rapid rise of the revolutionary tide and its transformation into insurrection could not be expected, and, on the other hand, the whole historical situation of the renovated bourgeois monarchy called for the combining of legal with illegal work. Now, in looking back on this historical period, which is now quite closed and whose connection with the subsequent periods has been fully revealed, it becomes particularly clear that the Bolsheviks *could not have* preserved (let alone strengthened, developed and reinforced) the sound core of the revolutionary party of the proletariat in 1908-14, had they not strenuously fought for and preserved the viewpoint that it is *obligatory* to combine legal with illegal

[1] What is said of individuals is applicable—with necessary modifications—to politics and parties. It is not the one who makes no mistakes who is wise. There are no such men, nor can there be. He is wise who makes not very important mistakes and knows how to rectify them easily and quickly.

forms of struggle, that it is *obligatory* to participate even in the most reactionary parliament and in a number of other institutions that are restricted by reactionary laws (social insurance organisations, etc.).[1]

In 1918 things did not go to the lengths of a split. The "Left" Communists at that time formed only a separate group or "faction" within our Party, and even this was short-lived. In the same year the most prominent representatives of "Left-wing Communism," for example, Comrades Radek and Bukharin, openly admitted their mistake. It had seemed to them that the Brest-Litovsk Peace was a compromise with the imperialists that was inadmissible on principle and harmful to the party of the revolutionary proletariat. It was indeed a compromise with the imperialists, but it was a compromise which, under the given circumstances, was *obligatory*.[2]

Today, when I hear our tactics in signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty assailed by the "Socialist-Revolutionaries," for instance, or when I hear a remark such as that made by Comrade Lansbury in conversation with me: "Our British trade union leaders say that if it is permissible for the Bolsheviks to compromise then it is permissible for them too," I usually reply first of all by giving a simple and "popular" example:

Imagine that your automobile is held up by armed bandits. You hand them over your money, passport, revolver, automobile. In return you are spared the pleasant company of the bandits. That is a compromise beyond all doubt. "*Do ut des*" ("I give" you money, firearms, automobile, "so that you give" me the opportunity to depart in peace). But it would be difficult to find a sane man who would declare such a compromise to be "inadmissible on principle," or would proclaim the compromiser an accomplice of the bandits (even though the bandits, having got into the automobile, might

[1] For further details concerning the boycott of the Duma and the fight against the "Left Bolsheviks" at that time, see articles "Should We Boycott the State Duma?" and "The Boycott" in *Selected Works*, Vol. III.—*Ed.*

[2] For further details concerning the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty and the controversy in the Party over it, see Lenin's "Report on War and Peace and Speech in Reply to Debate at the Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)," in *Selected Works*, Vol. VII.—*Ed.*

use it and the firearms for new robberies). Our compromise with the bandits of German imperialism was such a compromise.

But when the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia, the Scheidemannists (and, to a large extent, the Kautskians) in Germany, Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler (not to speak of Renner and Co.) in Austria, the Renaudels and Longuet and Co. in France, the Fabians, the "Independents" and the "Labourites" in England, in 1914-18 and in 1918-20 entered into *'compromises* with the bandits of their own, and sometimes of the "Allied," bourgeoisie, *against* the revolutionary proletariat of their own country, all these gentlemen acted as *accomplices of banditry.*

The conclusion to be drawn is clear: To reject compromises "on principle," to reject the admissibility of compromises in general, no matter of what kind, is childishness which is difficult even to take seriously. A political leader, desirous of being useful to the revolutionary proletariat, must know how to single out *concrete* cases of precisely such compromises as are inadmissible, as express opportunism and *treachery*, and direct all the force of his criticism, the spearhead of merciless exposure and of relentless war, against *those concrete* compromises; he must prevent the very experienced "practical" Socialists and parliamentary Jesuits from dodging and wriggling out of responsibility by resorting to arguments about "compromises in general." It is precisely in this way that Messieurs the "leaders" of the British trade unions, as well as of the Fabian Society and the "Independent" Labour Party, dodge responsibility *for the treachery they perpetrated*, for committing *such* a compromise which really expresses the worst kind of opportunism, treachery and betrayal.

There are compromises and compromises. One must be able to analyse the situation and the concrete conditions of each compromise, or of each form of compromise. One must learn to distinguish between the man who gave the bandits money and firearms in order to lessen the evil they had committed and to facilitate the task of capturing and shooting them, and the man who gives bandits money and firearms in order to share in the loot. In politics it is not always possible to do this so easily as in this childishly simple little

example. But anyone who wanted to invent a recipe for the workers that would provide ready-made solutions for all cases that occur in life, or who promised that the politics of the revolutionary proletariat would never encounter difficult or intricate situations, would simply be a charlatan.

So as to leave no room for misinterpretation, I shall attempt to outline very briefly a few fundamental rules for analysing concrete compromises.

The party which committed the compromise of signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the German imperialists had been working out its internationalism in action since the end of 1914. It was not afraid to call for the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and to condemn "defence of the fatherland" in a war between two imperialist robbers. The members of this party in the Duma took the road of exile to Siberia rather than the road leading to ministerial portfolios in a bourgeois government. The revolution, which overthrew tsarism and established a democratic republic, put this party to a new and tremendous test; this party did not enter into any agreements with "its own" imperialists, but prepared their overthrow and did overthrow them. After taking political power, this party did not leave a vestige either of landlord or capitalist property. Having published and repudiated the secret treaties of the imperialists, this party proposed peace to *all* countries, and yielded to the violence of the Brest-Litovsk robbers only after the Anglo-French imperialists had prevented peace, and after the Bolsheviks had done everything humanly possible to hasten the revolution in Germany and other countries. The complete correctness of such a compromise entered into by such a party, under such circumstances, becomes clearer and more evident to everyone every day.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia (like all the leaders of the Second International throughout the world in 1914-20) began with treachery by directly or indirectly justifying the "defence of the fatherland," that is, the defence of *their own* predatory bourgeoisie. They continued their treachery by entering into a coalition with the bourgeoisie of *their own* country and fighting together with *their own* bourgeoisie against the revolu-

tionary proletariat of their own country. Their *bloc*, first with Kerensky and the Cadets, then with Kolchak and Denikin, in Russia, like the *bloc* of their *confrères* abroad with the bourgeoisie of *their* respective countries, was desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. From beginning to end *their* compromise with the bandits of imperialism lay in the fact that they made themselves *accomplices* of imperialist banditry.[1]

[1] For further details of the role of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in the period of the Civil War, see *Selected Works*, Vol. VII, and for their role in the period of the imperialist war, see *Selected Works*, Vol. V. —*Ed.*

V

"LEFT-WING" COMMUNISM IN GERMANY: LEADERS—PARTY—CLASS—MASSES

THE German Communists, of whom we must now speak, call themselves, not "Left," but, if I am not mistaken, the "opposition on principle." That they exhibit all the symptoms of the "infantile disorder of Leftism" will be seen from what follows.

A pamphlet, written from the standpoint of this opposition and entitled *The Split in the Communist Party of Germany* (*The Spartacus League*), issued by "the local group in Frankfurt-on-Main," sets forth concisely, clearly, briefly and in highest relief the substance of the views of this opposition. A few quotations will suffice to acquaint the reader with the essential points:

"The Communist Party is the party of the most determined class struggle. . . .

". . . Politically, this transition period" (between capitalism and Socialism) "is the period of the proletarian dictatorship. . . .

"The question arises: Who should be the vehicle of this dictatorship: the *Communist Party or the proletarian class?* . . . Should we, *on principle*, strive toward the dictatorship of the Communist Party, or toward the dictatorship of the proletarian class?!! . . ." (All italics in the original.)

Further, the author of the pamphlet accuses the "C.C." of the Communist Party of Germany of seeking a way to a *coalition* with the *Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*, of raising "*the question of recognising in principle all political means*" of struggle, including parliamentarism, only for the purpose of concealing its real and main striving toward coalition with the Independents. And he goes on to say:

"The opposition has chosen another road. It is of the opinion that the question of the rule of the Communist Party and of its dictatorship is only a question of tactics. At all events, the rule of the Communist Party is the final form of all party rule. *On principle*, we must strive toward the dictator-

ship of the proletarian class. And all Party measures, its organisation, methods of struggle, its strategy and tactics should be adapted to this end. Accordingly, it is necessary to reject most emphatically all compromise with other parties, all reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete, all policy of manœuvring and compromise.... Specifically proletarian methods of revolutionary struggle must be strongly emphasised. In order to embrace the widest proletarian circles and strata, which will have to take part in the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party, there must be created new forms of organisation upon the broadest foundations and within the widest limits. The rallying point for all revolutionary elements is the *Workers' Union*, which is built up on the basis of factory organisations. All workers who followed the slogan: 'Leave the trade unions!' must unite in this union. Here the fighting proletariat is being lined up in the broadest battle ranks. Recognition of the class struggle, the Soviet system and the dictatorship is sufficient for admittance. All further political training of the fighting masses and political orientation in the struggle is the task of the Communist Party, which is outside the Workers' Union....

"Consequently, two Communist Parties are arrayed one against the other.

"*One, a party of leaders*, which strives to organise the revolutionary struggle and direct it *from above*, which resorts to compromises and parliamentarism in order to create a situation that would enable it to enter a coalition government in whose hands the dictatorship would rest.

"*The other is a mass party*, which relies upon the upsurge of the revolutionary struggle *from below*, which knows and employs but a single method in the struggle, a method which leads clearly to the goal, and which rejects all parliamentary and opportunist methods. This single method is the method of the ruthless *overthrow of the bourgeoisie*, for the purpose of establishing the proletarian class dictatorship, for the realisation of Socialism....

"... There, the dictatorship of leaders; here, the dictatorship of the masses! This is our slogan."

Such are the most essential postulates that characterise the views of the opposition in the German Communist Party.

Any Bolshevik who has consciously participated in, or has closely observed, the development of Bolshevism since 1903 will at once say after reading these arguments, "What old and familiar rubbish! What 'Left' childishness!"

But let us look at these arguments a little more closely.

The mere presentation of the question—"dictatorship of the Party *or* the dictatorship of the class, the dictatorship (Party) of the leaders or the dictatorship (Party) of the masses?"—is evidence of the most incredible and hopeless confusion of mind. People try very hard to *invent* something out of the ordinary, and in their effort to be wise they become ridiculous. Everyone knows

that the masses are divided into classes; that masses can be contrasted to classes only by contrasting the overwhelming majority in general, without dividing it according to position in the social system of production, to categories occupying a definite position in the social system of production; that usually, and in the majority of cases, in the modern civilised countries, at least, classes are led by political parties; that political parties, as a general rule, are directed by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions and are called leaders. All this is ABC. All this is simple and clear. Why, instead of this, do we get all this rigmarole, this new Volapük? Apparently, on the one hand, these people got confused and fell into a serious situation in which, the party having been abruptly reduced from a legal to an illegal status, the usual, normal and simple relations between leaders, parties and classes have been disturbed. In Germany, as in other European countries, people had become too accustomed to legality, to the free and regular election of "leaders" at regular party congresses, to convenient methods of testing the class composition of the party by parliamentary elections, meetings, the press, the mood of the trade unions and other organisations, etc. When, instead of this customary procedure, it became necessary, in consequence of the extremely rapid advance of the revolution and the spread of civil war, to change quickly from legality to illegality, to combine the two, and adopt "inconvenient" and "undemocratic" methods of singling out, or forming, or preserving "groups of leaders"—people lost their heads and began to invent supernatural nonsense. Probably several members of the Dutch Communist Party—who had the misfortune to be born in a small country with traditions and under conditions of particularly privileged and stable legality, who had never experienced the change from legality to illegality—became confused, lost their heads, and helped to create these absurd inventions.

On the other hand, we note here simply a thoughtless and incoherent use of the now "fashionable" terms "masses" and "leaders." People heard a great deal about and became accustomed to attacks on "leaders," to their being contrasted to "the masses";

but they were not able to think and explain to themselves what it was all about.

The divergence between "leaders" and "masses" revealed itself particularly clearly and sharply in all countries at the end of and after the imperialist war. The principal cause of this phenomenon was many times explained by Marx and Engels in 1852-92 by the example of England. The monopoly position of England caused a semi-petty-bourgeois opportunist "labour aristocracy" to be singled out from among the "masses." The leaders of this labour aristocracy constantly deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly in its pay. Marx, to his honour, roused the hatred of these scoundrels by openly branding them as traitors. Modern (twentieth century) imperialism created a privileged, monopoly position for a few advanced countries, and this gave rise everywhere in the Second International to a certain type of leader-traitors, opportunists, social-chauvinists, who look after their own craft interests, the interests of their own stratum of the labour aristocracy. This caused the opportunist parties to become isolated from the "masses," that is, from the broadest strata of the toilers, from the majority, from the lowest-paid workers. The victory of the revolutionary proletariat is impossible unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social-traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled. This is the policy that was pursued by the Third International.

To go so far in this matter as to draw a contrast in general between the dictatorship of the masses and the dictatorship of the leaders is ridiculously absurd and stupid. What is particularly funny is that actually, in place of the old leaders, who hold ordinary human views on ordinary matters, *new leaders* are put forth (under cover of the slogan: "Down with the leaders!") who talk supernatural nonsense and confusion. Such are Lauffenberg, Wolfheim, Horner, Karl Schröder, Friedrich Wendel and Karl Erler[1] in Germany. The attempts of the latter to make the ques-

[1] Karl Erler, *"Die Auflösung der Partei," Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung*, Hamburg, February 7, 1920, No. 32: "The working class cannot destroy the bourgeois state without destroying bourgeois democracy, and it cannot destroy bourgeois democracy without destroying parties."

The most muddle-headed among the syndicalists and anarchists of the

tion "more profound" and to proclaim that political parties in general are unnecessary and "bourgeois" are such Herculean pillars of absurdity that one can only shrug one's shoulders. In truth, a small mistake can always be transformed into a monstrously big one, if the small mistake is persisted in, if profound reasons are given for it and if it is carried to its "logical conclusion."

Repudiation of the Party principle and of Party discipline—this is what the opposition *leads* to. And this is tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat *for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.* It is the equivalent to precisely that petty-bourgeois diffuseness, instability, incapacity for sustained effort, unity and organised action, which, if indulged in, must inevitably destroy every proletarian revolutionary movement. The repudiation of the Party principle from the standpoint of Communism means leaping from the eve of the collapse of capitalism (in Germany), not to the lowest, or intermediate, but to the highest phase of Communism. We in Russia (in the third year after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie) are taking the first steps in the transition from capitalism to Socialism, or the lowest stage of Communism. Classes have remained, and everywhere they will remain *for years after* the conquest of power by the proletariat. Perhaps in England, where there is no peasantry (but where, nevertheless, there are small proprietors!), the period will be shorter. The abolition of classes not only means driving out the landlords and capitalists—that we accomplished with comparative ease—it means also abolishing *the small commodity producers,* and they *cannot be driven out,* or crushed; we must live *in harmony* with them; they can (and must) be remoulded and re-educated, but this can be done only by very prolonged, slow, cautious organisational work.

Latin countries may enjoy a certain amount of "satisfaction": serious Germans, who evidently consider themselves Marxists (K. Erler and K. Horner, in their articles in the above-mentioned paper, very seriously maintain that they are serious Marxists, but talk incredible nonsense in a particularly ridiculous manner and reveal their lack of understanding of the ABC of Marxism), go so far as to make entirely inept statements. The mere acceptance of Marxism does not save one from mistakes. We Russians know this particularly well, because, in our country, Marxism was most frequently "in fashion."

They encircle the proletariat on every side with a petty-bourgeois atmosphere, which permeates and corrupts the proletariat and causes constant relapses among the proletariat into petty-bourgeois spinelessness, disintegration, individualism, and alternate moods of exaltation and dejection. The strictest centralisation and discipline are required in the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract this, in order that the *organisational* role of the proletariat (and this is its *principal* role) may be fulfilled correctly, successfully, victoriously. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a persistent struggle—sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative —against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit of millions and of tens of millions is a very terrible force. Without an iron party steeled in the struggle, without a party enjoying the confidence of all that is honest in the given class, without a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of the masses, it is impossible to conduct such a struggle successfully. It is a thousand times easier to vanquish the centralised big bourgeoisie than to "vanquish" millions and millions of small proprietors, who by their everyday, imperceptible, elusive, demoralising activity achieve the *very* results desired by the bourgeoisie and which *restore* the bourgeoisie. Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) actually aids the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

Side by side with the question of leaders—Party—class—masses, it is necessary to raise the question of the "reactionary" trade unions. But first I shall take the liberty of making a few concluding remarks based upon the experience of our Party. There *have always been* attacks upon the "dictatorship of leaders" in our Party. The first time I remember hearing such attacks was in 1895, when, officially, no party existed as yet, and when a central group began to be formed in St. Petersburg which had to undertake the leadership over the district groups. At the Ninth Congress of our Party (April 1920) there was a small opposition, which also spoke against the "dictatorship of leaders," against the "oligarchy," and so on. Therefore, there is nothing

surprising, nothing new, nothing terrible in the "infantile disorder" of "Left-wing Communism" among the Germans. It is not a dangerous illness and after it the constitution becomes stronger than ever. On the other hand, in our case the rapid change from legal to illegal work, which made it particularly necessary to "conceal," to cloak in particular secrecy precisely the General Staff, precisely the leaders, sometimes gave rise to extremely dangerous phenomena. The worst was in 1912, when an *agent-provocateur*, Malinovsky, got into the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks. He betrayed scores and scores of the best and most loyal comrades, caused them to be sent to penal servitude and hastened the death of many of them. If he did not cause even more harm than he did it was because we had established proper co-ordination between our legal and illegal work. As a member of the Central Committee of the Party and a deputy in the Duma, Malinovsky was forced, in order to gain our confidence, to aid us in establishing legal daily papers, which even under tsarism were able to carry on the struggle against the opportunism of the Mensheviks and to preach the fundamentals of Bolshevism in a properly disguised form. While with one hand Malinovsky sent scores and scores of the best Bolsheviks to penal servitude and to death, with the other he was compelled to assist in the education of scores and scores of thousands of new Bolsheviks through the medium of the legal press.[1] It will not harm those German (as well as English, American, French and Italian) comrades who are confronted with the task of learning how to carry on revolutionary work inside the reactionary trade unions to consider this fact seriously.

[1] Malinovsky was a prisoner-of-war in Germany. When he returned to Russia, which was under the rule of the Bolsheviks, he was instantly put on trial and shot by our workers. The Mensheviks attacked us most bitterly for our mistake in allowing an *agent-provocateur* to become a member of the Central Committee of our Party. But when, under Kerensky, we demanded the arrest and trial of Rodzyanko, the Speaker of the Duma—because he had known even before the war that Malinovsky was an *agent-provocateur* and *had not informed* the "Trudoviki" and the workers in the Duma of this fact —the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who were in Kerensky's cabinet did not support our demand, and Rodzyanko retained his freedom and went off without hindrance to Denikin.

In many countries, including the most advanced, the bourgeoisie is undoubtedly now sending, and will continue to send, *agents-provocateurs* into the Communist Parties. One method of combating this peril is the skilful co-ordination of legal with illegal work.

VI

SHOULD REVOLUTIONARIES WORK IN REACTIONARY TRADE UNIONS?

THE German "Lefts" consider the reply to this question to be decidedly in the negative so far as they are concerned. In their opinion, declamations and angry ejaculations (as uttered by K. Horner in a particularly "weighty" and particularly stupid manner) against "reactionary" and "counter-revolutionary" trade unions are sufficient to "prove" that it is unnecessary and even impermissible for revolutionaries and Communists to work in yellow, social-chauvinist, compromising, Legien, counter-revolutionary trade unions.

But however strongly the German "Lefts" may be convinced of the revolutionariness of such tactics, these tactics are in fact fundamentally wrong, and contain nothing but empty phrases.

In order to make this clear, I shall begin with our own experience—in conformity with the general plan of the present essay, the object of which is to apply to Western Europe whatever is of general application, general validity and is generally binding in the history and the present tactics of Bolshevism.

The correlation: leaders—Party—class—masses, as well as the relation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its Party to the trade unions, now present themselves concretely in Russia in the following form: the dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat, which is organised in the Soviets and is led by the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which, according to the data of the last Party Congress (April 1920), has 611,000 members. Membership fluctuated considerably both before and after the October Revolution, and even in 1918 and 1919 it was considerably less than it is now. We are afraid of an excessive growth of the Party, as

careerists and charlatans, who deserve only to be shot, inevitably strive to attach themselves to the ruling party. The last time we opened wide the doors of the Party—for workers and peasants only—was in the days (winter 1919) when Yudenich was a few versts from Petrograd, and Denikin was in Orel (about 350 versts from Moscow), that is, when the Soviet Republic was in desperate, mortal danger, and when adventurers, careerists, charlatans and unreliable persons in general could not possibly count on making a profitable career (they had more reason to expect the gallows and torture) by joining the Communists. The Party, which holds annual congresses (the last on the basis of one delegate for each 1,000 members), is directed by a Central Committee of nineteen elected at the congress, while the current work in Moscow has to be carried on by still smaller bodies, *viz.*, the so-called "Orgburo" (Organisation Bureau) and "Politburo" (Political Bureau), which are elected at plenary sessions of the Central Committee, five members of the Central Committee in each bureau. This, then, looks like a real "oligarchy." Not a single important political or organisational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guiding instructions of the Central Committee of the Party.

In its work the Party relies directly on the *trade unions*, which, at present, according to the data of the last Congress (April 1920), have over 4,000,000 members, and which, formally, are *non-Party*. Actually, all the controlling bodies of the overwhelming majority of the unions, and primarily, of course, the all-Russian general trade union centre or bureau (All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions) consist of Communists and carry out all the instructions of the Party. Thus, on the whole, we have a formally non-Communist, flexible, relatively wide, and very powerful proletarian apparatus, by means of which the Party is closely linked up with the *class* and with the *masses*, and by means of which, under the leadership of the Party, the *dictatorship of the class* is effected. Without close contact with the trade unions, without their hearty support and self-sacrificing work, not only in economic, *but also in military* construction, it would, of course, have been impossible for us to govern the country and to maintain the dictator-

ship for two months, let alone two years. Of course, in practice, this close contact calls for very complicated and diversified work in the form of propaganda, agitation, timely and frequent conferences, not only with the leading, but also with influential trade union workers generally; it calls for a determined struggle against the Mensheviks, who still have a certain, though very small, number of adherents, whom they teach all possible counter-revolutionary tricks, from the ideological defence of (*bourgeois*) democracy and the preaching of the "independence" of the trade unions (independent of the proletarian state!) to the sabotaging of proletarian discipline, etc., etc.

We consider that contact with the "masses" through trade unions is not enough. Our practical experience during the course of the revolution has given rise to *non-Party workers' and peasants' conferences*, and we strive by every means to support, develop and extend these institutions in order to be able to watch the mood of the masses, to come closer to them, to respond to their requirements, to promote the best of their workers to state posts, etc. In a recent decree on the transformation of the People's Commissariat for State Control into the "Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," non-Party conferences of this kind are granted the right to elect members to the State Control to undertake various investigations, etc.

Then, of course, all the work of the Party is carried on through the Soviets, which unite the toiling masses irrespective of occupation. The *uyezd* congresses of Soviets are institutions that are *more democratic* than any in the best democratic republics of the bourgeois world; and through these congresses (the proceedings of which are followed by the Party with the closest attention) as well as by continuously sending class-conscious workers to various posts in the rural districts, the role of the proletariat as leader of the peasantry is fulfilled, the dictatorship of the urban proletariat is effected and a systematic struggle against the rich, bourgeois, exploiting and profiteering peasantry is waged.

Such is the general mechanism of the proletarian state power viewed "from above," from the standpoint of the practical carrying out of the dictatorship. It is to be hoped that the reader

will understand why, to a Russian Bolshevik well acquainted with this mechanism and who for twenty-five years has watched its growth from small, illegal, underground circles, all talk about "from above" *or* "from below," about the dictatorship of leaders *or* the dictatorship of the masses, cannot but appear to be ridiculous, childish nonsense, something like discussing whether the left leg or the right arm is more useful to a man.

And we cannot but consider the ponderous, very learned, and frightfully revolutionary disquisitions of the German Lefts on why Communists cannot and should not work in reactionary trade unions, why it is permissible to refuse to do such work, why it is necessary to leave the trade unions and to create in their stead brand-new, clean little "workers' unions," invented by exceedingly nice (and, for the most part, probably, very youthful) Communists, etc., etc., to be equally ridiculous and childish nonsense.

Capitalism inevitably leaves to Socialism a heritage of old trade and craft distinctions among the workers, distinctions created in the course of centuries; and it leaves trade unions which only very slowly and in the course of years can, and will, develop into broader, industrial unions, which will have much less of the craft union about them (they will embrace whole industries and not merely crafts, trades and occupations). Later, these industrial unions will, in their turn, lead to the abolition of division of labour among people, to the education, training and preparation of people who will have *versatile development, and versatile* training, people who *will be able to do everything.* Communism is marching, must march, towards this goal; and *it will reach it,* but only after very many years. To attempt in practice, today, to anticipate this future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and formed, fully expanded and mature Communism would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a four-year-old child.

We can (and must) begin to build Socialism, not with the fantastic human material especially created by our imagination, but with the material bequeathed to us by capitalism. This, no doubt, is very "difficult," but no other approach to this task is serious enough to deserve discussion.

Trade unions represented enormous progress for the working

class at the beginning of the development of capitalism as the transition from the disunity and helplessness of the workers to the *rudiments* of class organisation. When the *highest* form of proletarian class organisation began to arise, *viz.*, the *revolutionary party of the proletariat* (which does not deserve the name until it learns to bind the leaders with the class and with the masses into one single indissoluble whole), the trade unions inevitably began to reveal *certain* reactionary traits, a certain craft narrowness, a certain tendency toward becoming non-political, a certain inertness, etc. But the development of the proletariat did not, and could not, anywhere in the world, proceed otherwise than through the trade unions, through their interaction with the party of the working class. The conquest of political power by the proletariat is a gigantic step forward for the proletariat as a class, and the Party must more than ever, and in a new way, not merely in the old way, educate and guide the trade unions; at the same time it must not forget that they are and will long remain a necessary "school of Communism," a preparatory school for training the proletarians to exercise their dictatorship, an indispensable organisation of the workers for gradually transferring the management of the whole economy of the country to the hands of the working *class* (and not of the separate trades), and later to the hands of all the working people.

A *certain* amount of "reactionariness" in the trade unions, in the sense mentioned, is *inevitable* under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not to understand this means utterly failing to understand the fundamental conditions of the *transition* from capitalism to Socialism. To fear *this* "reactionariness," to try to *avoid* it, or skip it, is the greatest folly, for it means fearing to assume the role of proletarian vanguard, which implies training, educating, enlightening and drawing into the new life the most backward strata and masses of the working class and the peasantry. On the other hand, to postpone the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat until such time as not a single worker with narrow craft interests, not a single worker with craft and craft-union prejudices is left, would be a still greater mistake. The art of politics (and the Communist's correct understanding of his tasks) lies in correctly

gauging the conditions and the moment when the vanguard of the proletariat can successfully seize power, when it will be able, during and after this seizure of power, to obtain adequate support from sufficiently broad strata of the working class and of the non-proletarian toiling masses, and when, thereafter, it will be able to maintain, consolidate and extend its rule, educating, training and attracting ever broader masses of the working people.

Further: In countries which are more advanced than Russia, a certain amount of reactionariness in the trade unions has been revealed, and was undoubtedly bound to be revealed much more strongly than in our country. Our Mensheviks found (and in a very few trade unions still find to some extent) support in the trade unions precisely because of the latter's craft narrowness, craft selfishness and opportunism. In the West, the Mensheviks have acquired a much firmer "footing" in the trade unions. There, the *craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, hard-hearted, covetous and petty-bourgeois "labour aristocracy," imperialistically-minded, bribed and corrupted by imperialism,* represents a much stronger stratum than in our country. This is incontestable. The struggle against the Gompersęs, against Messrs. Jouhaux, Henderson, Merrheim, Legien and Co. in Western Europe is much more difficult than the struggle against our Mensheviks, who represent an *absolutely homogeneous* social and political type. This struggle must be waged ruthlessly to the very end, as we have waged it, until all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism have been completely discredited and expelled from the trade unions. It is impossible to capture political power (and the attempt to capture it should not be made) until this struggle has reached a *certain* stage. Moreover, this "certain stage" *will be different* in different countries and in different circumstances; it can be correctly gauged only by thoughtful, experienced and well-informed political leaders of the proletariat in each separate country. (In Russia, the measure of success in the struggle was gauged, among other things, by the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, a few days after the proletarian revolution of November 7 [October 25], 1917. In these elections the Mensheviks were utterly defeated; they obtained 700,000 votes—1,400,000 if

the vote of Transcaucasia be added—as against 9,000,000 votes obtained by the Bolsheviks. See my article, "The Elections to the Constituent Assembly and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in No. 7-8 of *The Communist International.*)[1]

But we wage the struggle against the "labour aristocracy" in the name of the masses of the workers and in order to attract them to our side; we wage the struggle against the opportunist and social-chauvinist leaders in order to attract the working class to our side. To forget this most elementary and self-evident truth would be stupid. But the German "Left" Communists are guilty of just this stupidity when, *because* of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the *heads* of the trade unions, they jump to the conclusion that . . . it is necessary to leave the trade unions!! to refuse to work in them!! to create new, *artificial* forms of labour organisations!! This is an unpardonable blunder equivalent to the greatest service the Communists could render the bourgeoisie. Our Mensheviks, like all opportunist, social-chauvinist, Kautskian trade union leaders, are nothing more nor less than "agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement" (as we have always characterised the Mensheviks), or "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class" (to use the excellent and profoundly true expression of the followers of Daniel DeLeon in America). To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of the workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or the "completely bourgeois workers." (See Engels' letter to Marx, written in 1852, concerning the British workers.)[2]

It is just this absurd "theory" that Communists must not belong to reactionary trade unions that demonstrates most clearly how frivolously the "Left" Communists regard the question of influencing "the masses," how they misuse their outcries about "the masses." In order to be able to help "the masses" and to win the sympathy, confidence and support of "the masses," it is necessary to brave all difficulties and to be unafraid of the pin-

[1] See *Selected Works*, Vol. VI.—*Ed.*
[2] *The Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, p. 60.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

pricks, obstacles, insults and persecution of the "leaders" (who, being opportunists and social-chauvinists, are, in most cases, directly or indirectly connected with the bourgeoisie and the police); and it is imperatively necessary to *work wherever the masses are to be found.* Every sacrifice must be made, the greatest obstacles must be overcome, in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently, precisely in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—to which proletarian or semi-proletarian masses belong. And the trade unions and workers' co-operatives (the latter, at least sometimes) are precisely the organisations in which the masses are to be found. In England, according to figures quoted in the Swedish paper, *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* of March 10, 1920, the membership of the trade unions increased from 5,500,000 at the end of 1917 to 6,600,000 at the end of 1918, *i.e.,* an increase of 19 per cent. At the end of 1919 the membership was estimated at 7,500,000. I have not at hand the corresponding figures for France and Germany, but the facts testifying to the rapid growth in membership of the trade unions in these countries as well are absolutely incontestable and generally known.

These facts very clearly indicate what is confirmed by thousands of other symptoms: the growth of class-consciousness and of the desire for organisation precisely among the proletarian masses, among the "rank and file," among the backward elements. Millions of workers in England, France and Germany are *for the first time* passing from complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, most simple, and (for those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily accessible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions. And the revolutionary, but foolish, Left Communists stand by, shouting "the masses, the masses!"—and *refuse to work within the trade unions!!* refuse on the pretext that they are "reactionary"!! and invent a brand-new, clean little "workers' union," guiltless of bourgeois-democratic prejudices, innocent of craft or narrow craft-union sins, and which they claim will be (will be!) a wide organisation, and the only (only!) condition of membership of which will be

"recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship"!! (See passage quoted above.)

Greater stupidity and greater damage to the revolution than that caused by the "Left" revolutionaries cannot be imagined! If in Russia today, after two and a half years of unprecedented victories over the bourgeoisie of Russia and the Entente, we were to make the "recognition of the dictatorship" a condition of membership of the trade unions, we should be doing a stupid thing, we would damage our influence over the masses, we would be helping the Mensheviks. For the whole task of the Communists is to be able to *convince* the backward elements, to be able to work *among* them, and not to *fence themselves off* from them by artificial and childishly "Left" slogans.

There can be no doubt that Messieurs the Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux, and Legiens are very grateful to such "Left" revolutionaries, who, like the German opposition "on principle" (heaven preserve us from such "principles"!) or like some revolutionaries in the American Industrial Workers of the World, advocate leaving the reactionary trade unions and refusing to work in them. Undoubtedly, Messieurs the "leaders" of opportunism will resort to every trick of bourgeois diplomacy, to the aid of bourgeois governments, the priests, the police and the courts, in order to prevent Communists from getting into the trade unions, to force them out by every means, to make their work in the trade unions as unpleasant as possible, to insult, to bait and to persecute them. It is necessary to be able to withstand all this, to agree to any and every sacrifice, and even—if need be—to resort to all sorts of stratagems, manœuvres and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuges in order to penetrate the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work in them at all costs. Under tsarism, until 1905, we had no "legal possibilities"; but when Zubatov, the secret service agent, organised Black Hundred workers' assemblies and workingmen's societies for the purpose of trapping revolutionaries and combating them, we sent members of our Party to these assemblies and into these societies. (I personally remember one such comrade, Babushkin, a prominent St. Petersburg workingman, who was shot by the tsar's gener-

als in 1906.) They established contacts with the masses, managed to carry on their agitation, and succeeded in wresting the workers from the influence of Zubatov's agents.[1] Of course, in Western Europe, which is particularly saturated with inveterate legalist, constitutionalist, bourgeois-democratic prejudices, it is more difficult to carry on such work. But it can and must be carried on, and carried on systematically.

The Executive Committee of the Third International must, in my opinion, positively condemn, and call upon the next congress of the Communist International to condemn, the policy of refusing to join reactionary trade unions in general (stating in detail why this refusal to join is unreasonable, and pointing out the extreme harm it does to the cause of the proletarian revolution) and, in particular, the line of conduct of several members of the Dutch Communist Party, who either directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, wholly or partly, supported this erroneous policy. The Third International must break with the tactics of the Second International; it must not evade or cover up sore points, but put them bluntly. The whole truth has been put squarely to the "Independents" (Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany); the whole truth must likewise be put squarely to the "Left" Communists.

[1] The Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux and Legiens are nothing but Zubatovs, differing from our Zubatov only in their European dress, in their outer polish, in their civilised, refined, democratically sleek manner of conducting their despicable policy.

VII

SHOULD WE PARTICIPATE IN BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENTS?

THE German "Left" Communists, very contemptuously, and very frivolously, reply to this question in the negative. Their arguments? In the passage quoted above we read:

". . . To reject most emphatically . . . all reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete . . . ."

This is said with absurd pretentiousness, and is obviously incorrect. "Reversion" to parliamentarism! Perhaps a Soviet republic already exists in Germany? It does not look like it! How, then, is it possible to speak of "reversion"? Is this not an empty phrase?

Parliamentarism has become "historically obsolete." This is true as regards propaganda. But everyone knows that it is still very far from the *practical* overcoming of parliamentarism. Capitalism could have been rightly declared to be "historically obsolete" many decades ago, but this does not in the least remove the need for a very long and very persistent struggle *on the soil* of capitalism. Parliamentarism is "historically obsolete" from the standpoint of *world history*, that is to say, the *epoch* of bourgeois parliamentarism has come to an end and the *epoch* of the proletarian dictatorship has *begun*. This is incontestable. But in dealing with world *history* one counts in decades. Ten or twenty years sooner or later makes no difference when measured by the scale of world history; from the point of view of world history it is a trifle that cannot be calculated even approximately. But this is precisely why it is a crying theoretical mistake to measure questions of practical politics with the scale of world history.

Is parliamentarism "politically obsolete"? That is quite anoth-

er matter. If this were true, the position of the "Lefts" would be a strong one. But it has got to be proved by the most searching analysis, and the "Lefts" do not even know how to set to work to do this. In the "Theses on Parliamentarism," published in No. 1 of the *Bulletin of the Provisional Bureau in Amsterdam of the Communist International*, February 1920, which obviously expresses Dutch-Left or Left-Dutch strivings, the analysis, as we shall see, is also very bad.

In the first place, as is known, contrary to the opinion of such prominent political leaders as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the German "Lefts" considered parliamentarism to be "politically obsolete" as far back as January 1919. It is well known that the "Lefts" were mistaken. This alone at one stroke utterly destroys the proposition that parliamentarism is "politically obsolete." The obligation falls upon the "Lefts" to prove why their indisputable error of that time has now ceased to be an error. They do not, and cannot, produce even the shadow of proof. The attitude of a political party toward its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party and of how it fulfils *in practice* its obligations toward its *class* and toward the toiling *masses*. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyse the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party; this means the performance of its duties, this means educating and training the *class*, and then the *masses*. By their failure to fulfil this duty, by failing to give the utmost care, attention and consideration to the study of their obvious mistake, the "Lefts" in Germany (and in Holland) have proved that they are not a *party of the class*, but a circle, not a *party of the masses*, but a group of intellectuals and a few workers who imitate the worst features of intellectualism.

Secondly, in the same pamphlet of the Frankfurt group of "Lefts" that we have already cited in detail, we read:

". . . The millions of workers who still follow the policy of the Centre" (the Catholic "Centre" Party) "are counter-revolutionary. The rural proletarians provide legions of counter-revolutionary troops." (Page 3 of the above-mentioned pamphlet.)

It is evident from all this that this statement is too sweeping and exaggerated. But the basic fact set forth is incontrovertible, and its acknowledgement by the "Lefts" very clearly testifies to their mistake. How can one say that "parliamentarism is politically obsolete," when "millions" and "legions" of *proletarians* are not only still in favour of parliamentarism in general, but are downright "counter-revolutionary"!? Clearly, parliamentarism in Germany is *not yet* politically obsolete. Clearly, the "Lefts" in Germany have mistaken *their desire*, their ideological-political attitude, for objective reality. This is the most dangerous mistake revolutionaries can make. In Russia—where the extremely fierce and savage yoke of tsarism, for a particularly long period, and in particularly varied forms, produced revolutionaries of diverse shades, revolutionaries who displayed astonishing devotion, enthusiasm, heroism and will power—we watched this mistake of the revolutionaries particularly closely, we studied it with particular attention, became particularly familiar with it, and hence, we can see it with particular clearness in others. For the Communists in Germany parliamentarism is, of course, "politically obsolete"; but—and this is the whole point—we must *not* regard what is obsolete *for us* as being obsolete *for the class*, as being obsolete *for the masses*. It is precisely here that we see that the "Lefts" do not know how to reason, do not know how to conduct themselves as a party of the *class*, as a party of the *masses*. You must not sink to the level of the masses, to the level of the backward strata of the class. This is incontestable. You must tell them the bitter truth. You must call their bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices—prejudices. But, at the same time, you must *soberly* observe the *actual* state of class consciousness and preparedness of the whole class (not only of the Communist vanguard), of all the toiling *masses* (not only of its advanced elements).

Even if not "millions" and "legions" but a fairly significant *minority* of industrial workers follow the Catholic priests, and a like number of rural workers follow the landlords and kulaks (*Grossbauern*),[1] it *undoubtedly* follows that parliamentarism in

[1] Capitalist farmers.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

Germany is *not yet* politically obsolete, that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle in parliament is *obligatory* for the party of the revolutionary proletariat *precisely* for the purpose of educating the backward strata of *its own class*, precisely for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden, ignorant peasant masses. As long as you are unable to disperse the bourgeois parliament and every other type of reactionary institution, you *must* work inside them, *precisely* because in them there are still workers who are stupefied by the priests and by the dreariness of village life; otherwise you run the risk of becoming mere babblers.

Thirdly, the "Left" Communists have a great deal to say in praise of us Bolsheviks. One sometimes feels like telling them that it would be better if they praised us less and tried more thoroughly to understand the tactics of the Bolsheviks, to make themselves more familiar with these tactics! We took part in the elections to the Russian bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, in September-November 1917. Were our tactics correct or not? If not, then it should be clearly stated and proved; this is essential for working out the correct tactics for international Communism. If they were correct, certain conclusions must be drawn. Of course, there can be no question of drawing a parallel between conditions in Russia and the conditions in Western Europe. But as regards the special question of the meaning of the concept "parliamentarism has become politically obsolete," it is absolutely necessary to take exact account of our experience, because unless definite experience is taken into account such concepts are very easily transformed into empty phrases. Did not we Russian Bolsheviks, in September-November 1917, have more right than any Western Communists to consider that parliamentarism was politically obsolete in Russia? Undoubtedly we had, for the point is not whether bourgeois parliaments have existed for a long or a short period, but to what extent the broad masses of the toilers are *prepared* (ideologically, politically and practically) to accept the Soviet system and to disperse the bourgeois-democratic parliament (or allow it to be dispersed). That owing to a number of special conditions the urban working class

and the soldiers and peasants in Russia in September-November 1917 were exceptionally well prepared for the acceptance of the Soviet system and for the dispersion of the most democratic bourgeois parliament is an absolutely incontestable and fully established historical fact. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did *not* boycott the Constituent Assembly, but took part in the elections both before and *after* the conquest of political power by the proletariat. That these elections gave exceedingly valuable (and for the proletariat, highly useful) political results I hope I have proved in the above-mentioned article, which analyses in detail the figures of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Russia.

The conclusion which follows from this is absolutely incontrovertible: it has been proved that participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic, and even *after* that victory, not only does no harm to the revolutionary proletariat, but actually makes it easier for it to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be dispersed; it *facilitates* success in dispersing them, and *facilitates* the process whereby bourgeois parliamentarism becomes "politically obsolete." To refuse to take this experience into account and at the same time to claim affiliation to the Communist *International*, which must work out its tactics *internationally* (not narrow or one-sided national tactics, but international tactics), is to commit the greatest blunder and actually to retreat from internationalism in deeds while accepting it in words.

Now let us examine the "Dutch-Left" arguments in favour of non-participation in parliaments. The following is the text of the most important of the above-mentioned "Dutch" theses, Thesis No. 4:

"When the capitalist system of production has broken down and society is in a state of revolution, parliamentary activity gradually loses its significance compared with the action of the masses themselves. When, under these conditions, parliament becomes a centre and an organ of counter-revolution, while on the other hand the working class is creating the instruments of its power in the form of Soviets, it may even become necessary to abstain from all participation in parliamentary activity."

The first sentence is obviously wrong, since the action of the masses—a big strike, for instance—is more important than par-

liamentary activity at *all* times, and not only during a revolution or in a revolutionary situation. This obviously untenable and historically and politically incorrect argument only shows in a particularly striking manner that the authors absolutely ignore both the general European experience (the French experience before the Revolutions of 1848 and 1870; the German experience from 1878 to 1890, etc.) and the Russian experience (see above) of the importance of *combining* the legal with the illegal struggle. This question is of immense importance in general, and it is of particular importance because in *all* civilised and advanced countries the time is rapidly approaching when such a combination will become—and partly, has already become—more and more obligatory for the party of the revolutionary proletariat, owing to the fact that civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is maturing and approaching, owing to the fierce persecution of the Communists by republican governments and bourgeois governments generally, which are prepared to resort to all sorts of violations of legality (how much is the American example alone worth?), etc. The Dutch, and the Lefts in general, have utterly failed to understand this very important question.

As for the second sentence, in the first place it is wrong historically. We Bolsheviks took part in the most counter-revolutionary parliaments, and experience has shown that such participation was not only useful but necessary for the party of the revolutionary proletariat, precisely after the first bourgeois revolution in Russia (1905), for the purpose of preparing the way for the second bourgeois revolution (March [February] 1917), and then for the Socialist revolution (November [October] 1917). In the second place, this sentence is amazingly illogical. If parliament becomes an organ and a "centre" (in reality it never has been and never can be a "centre," but that by the way) of counter-revolution, and the workers are creating the instruments of their power in the form of Soviets, it logically follows that the workers must prepare—ideologically, politically and technically—for the struggle of the Soviets against parliament, for the dispersion of parliament by the Soviets. But it does not at all follow that such dispersion is hindered, or is not facilitated, by the pres-

ence of a Soviet opposition *within* the counter-revolutionary parliament. During the course of our victorious struggle against Denikin and Kolchak we never found the existence of a Soviet, proletarian opposition in their midst to be immaterial to our victories. We know perfectly well that we were not hindered but assisted in dispersing the Constituent Assembly on January 18 (5), 1918, by the fact that within the counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly which was being dispersed there was a consistent, Bolshevik, as well as an inconsistent, Left Socialist-Revolutionary, Soviet opposition. The authors of the theses have become utterly confused and they have forgotten the experience of many, if not all, revolutions, which proves how particularly useful during a revolution is the combination of mass action outside a reactionary parliament with an opposition inside this parliament, which sympathises with (or better still, directly supports) the revolution. The Dutch, and the "Lefts" in general, argue like doctrinaire revolutionaries who have never taken part in a real revolution, or have never deeply pondered over the history of revolutions, or naïvely mistake the subjective "rejection" of a certain reactionary institution for its actual destruction by the united forces of a whole series of objective factors.

The surest way of discrediting a new political (and not only political) idea, and of damaging it, is to reduce it to absurdity while ostensibly defending it. For every truth, if "exorbitant" (as Dietzgen senior said), if it is exaggerated, if it is carried beyond the limits in which it can be actually applied, can be reduced to absurdity, and, under the conditions mentioned, is even inevitably converted into an absurdity. This is just the kind of back-handed service the Dutch and German Lefts are rendering the new truth about the superiority of the Soviet form of government over bourgeois-democratic parliaments. Of course, anyone who would say in the old way, and in general, that refusal to participate in bourgeois parliaments can under no circumstances be permissible would be wrong. I cannot attempt to formulate here the conditions under which a boycott is useful, for the object of this essay is far more modest, namely, to study Russian experience in connection with certain topical questions of international Communist tactics. Rus-

sian experience has given us one successful and correct (1905) and one incorrect (1906) example of the application of the boycott by the Bolsheviks. Analysing the first case, we see that we succeeded in *preventing the convocation* of a reactionary parliament by a reactionary government in a situation in which extra-parliamentary, revolutionary mass action (strikes in particular) was growing with exceptional rapidity, when not a single stratum of the proletariat and of the peasantry could support the reactionary government, when the revolutionary proletariat was acquiring influence over the broad, backward masses by means of the strike struggle and the agrarian movement. It is quite obvious that *this* experience is not applicable to present-day European conditions. It is also quite obvious, on the strength of the foregoing arguments, that even a conditional defence of the refusal to participate in parliaments by the Dutch and other "Lefts" is fundamentally wrong and harmful to the cause of the revolutionary proletariat.

In Western Europe and America parliament has become an object of special hatred to the advanced revolutionaries of the working class. This is incontestable; it is quite comprehensible, for it is difficult to imagine anything more vile, abominable and treacherous than the behaviour of the overwhelming majority of Socialist and Social-Democratic deputies in parliament during and after the war. But it would be not only unreasonable but actually criminal to yield to this mood when deciding the question of *how* to fight against this generally recognised evil. In many countries of Western Europe the revolutionary mood is at present, we might say, a "novelty," or a "rarity," for which we have been vainly and impatiently waiting for a long time, and perhaps that is why we so easily give way to moods. Of course, without a revolutionary mood among the masses and without conditions favouring the growth of this mood, revolutionary tactics will never be converted into action; but we in Russia have been convinced by long, painful and bloody experience of the truth that revolutionary tactics cannot be built up on revolutionary moods alone. Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective estimation of *all* the class

forces in a given state (in neighbouring states and in all states, *i.e.*, on a world scale), as well as on an estimation of the experience of revolutionary movements. To express one's "revolutionariness" solely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism, solely by repudiating participation in parliaments, is very easy; but, just because it is too easy, it is not the solution for a difficult, a very difficult, problem. It is much more difficult to create a really revolutionary parliamentary group in a European parliament than it was in Russia. Of course. But this is only a particular expression of the general truth that it was easy for Russia in the definite, historically very unique situation of 1917 to *start* a Socialist revolution, but that it will be more difficult for Russia to *continue* and bring it to its consummation than for the European countries. I had occasion to point this out even in the beginning of 1918,[1] and our experience of the last two years has entirely confirmed the correctness of this argument. Certain specific conditions, *viz.*, 1) The possibility of linking up the Soviet revolution with the ending (as a consequence of this revolution) of the imperialist war which had exhausted the workers and peasants to an incredible degree; 2) The possibility of taking advantage for a certain time of the mortal conflict between two world-powerful groups of imperialist robbers, who were unable to unite against their Soviet enemy; 3) The possibility of holding out in a comparatively lengthy civil war, partly owing to the enormous size of the country and to the poor means of communication; 4) The existence of such a profound bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movement among the peasantry that the party of the proletariat was able to adopt the revolutionary demands of the peasant party (the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the majority of the members of which were very hostile to Bolshevism) and at once realise them, thanks to the conquest of political power by the proletariat—these specific conditions do not exist in Western Europe at present; and a repetition of such or similar conditions will not come about easily. That is why, apart from a number of other causes, it will be more difficult to *start* a Socialist revolution in Western Europe than it was for us. To attempt to "circum-

[1] See *Selected Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 281-82.—*Ed.*

vent" this difficulty by "skipping" the difficult task of utilising reactionary parliaments for revolutionary purposes is absolutely childish. You wish to create a new society, and yet you fear the difficulties involved in forming a good parliamentary fraction, consisting of convinced, devoted, heroic Communists, in a reactionary parliament! Is not this childish? If Karl Liebknecht in Germany and Z. Höglund in Sweden were able, even without mass support from below, to set examples of the truly revolutionary utilisation of reactionary parliaments, why, then, should a rapidly growing, revolutionary, mass party, under the conditions of the post-war disillusionment and exasperation of the masses, be unable to *forge* for itself a Communist fraction in the worst of parliaments?! It is just because the backward masses of the workers and, to a still greater degree, of the small peasants in Western Europe are much more strongly imbued with bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices than they were in Russia that it is *only* within such institutions as bourgeois parliaments that Communists can (and must) wage a long and persistent struggle—undaunted by difficulties—to expose, dispel and overcome these prejudices.

The German "Lefts" complain about the bad "leaders" in their party, give way to despair, and go to the length of ridiculously "repudiating" "leaders." But when conditions are such that it is often necessary to hide "leaders" underground, the *development* of good, reliable, experienced and authoritative "leaders" is an especially hard task, and these difficulties *cannot* be successfully overcome without combining legal with illegal work, *without testing the "leaders," among other ways,* on the parliamentary arena *also.* Criticism—the sharpest, most ruthless, uncompromising criticism—must be directed, not against parliamentarism or parliamentary action, but against those leaders who are unable—and still more against those who are *unwilling*—to utilise parliamentary elections and the parliamentary tribune in a revolutionary manner, in a Communist manner. Only such criticism—combined, of course, with the expulsion of worthless leaders and their replacement by capable ones—will constitute useful and fruitful revolutionary work that will simultaneously train the "leaders" themselves to become worthy of the working class and of the toiling

masses, and will train the masses to be able properly to understand the political situation and the often very complicated and intricate tasks that spring from that situation.[1]

[1] I have had very little opportunity to make myself familiar with "Left-wing" Communism in Italy. Comrade Bordiga and his faction of "Communist-Boycottists" (*Comunista astensionista*) are certainly wrong in defending non-participation in parliament. But on one point, it seems to me, Comrade Bordiga is right—as far as can be judged from two issues of his paper, *Il Soviet* (Nos. 3 and 4, January 18 and February 1, 1920), from four issues of Comrade Serrati's excellent periodical, *Comunismo* (Nos. 1-4, October 1-November 30, 1919), and from isolated numbers of Italian bourgeois papers which I have come across. Comrade Bordiga and his faction are right in attacking Turati and his followers, who remain in a party which has recognised the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but who at the same time continue their former pernicious and opportunist policy as members of parliament. Of course, in tolerating this, Comrade Serrati and the whole Italian Socialist Party are committing a mistake which threatens to do as much harm and give rise to the same dangers as it did in Hungary, where the Hungarian Turatis sabotaged both the Party and the Soviet government from within. Such a mistaken, inconsistent, or spineless attitude toward the opportunist parliamentarians creates "Left-wing" Communism on the one hand and justifies its existence, to a certain extent, on the other. Comrade Serrati is obviously wrong when he accuses Deputy Turati of being "inconsistent" (*Comunismo*, No. 3), for it is really the Italian Socialist Party itself which is inconsistent, since it tolerates such opportunist parliamentarians as Turati and Co.

VIII

NO COMPROMISES?

In the quotation from the Frankfurt pamphlet we saw how emphatically the "Lefts" advance this slogan. It is sad to see that men who doubtless consider themselves to be Marxists, and who want to be Marxists, have forgotten the fundamental truths of Marxism. Let us cite what Engels—who, like Marx, was one of those rare and very rare authors whose every sentence in every one of their great works was of remarkably profound content—wrote in 1874, in opposition to the manifesto of the thirty-three Communard-Blanquists:

> " 'We are Communists' (wrote the Communard-Blanquists in their manifesto) 'because we wish to attain our goal without stopping at intermediate stations, without any compromises, which only postpone the day of victory and prolong the period of slavery.'
>
> "The German Communists are Communists because at all the intermediate stations and in all compromises, which are created, not by them, but by historical development, they clearly perceive and constantly pursue the final aim, *viz.*, the abolition of classes and the creation of a society in which there will be no private ownership of land or of the means of production. The thirty-three Blanquists are Communists because they imagine that merely because *they* want to skip the intermediate stations and compromises, that settles the matter, and if 'it begins' in the next few days—as has been definitely settled—and they once come to the helm, 'Communism will be introduced' the day after tomorrow. If that is not immediately possible, they are not Communists. What childish innocence it is to present impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!" [1]

In the same article Engels expresses his profound esteem for Vaillant, and speaks of the "undeniable merit" of the latter (who, like Guesde, was one of the most prominent leaders of international Socialism up to August 1914, when they both turned traitor to the cause of Socialism). But Engels does not allow an obvious

[1] Frederick Engels, in *Volksstaat*, 1874. No. 73, *"Programm der blanquistischen Kommune-Flüchtlinge."*

mistake to go by without a detailed analysis. Of course, to very young and inexperienced revolutionaries, as well as to petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, even though very experienced and of a very respectable age, it seems exceedingly "dangerous," incomprehensible and incorrect to "allow compromises." And many sophists (being super or excessively "experienced" politicians) reason precisely in the same way as the British leaders of opportunism mentioned by Comrade Lansbury: "If it is permissible for the Bolsheviks to compromise, then why should we not be allowed to compromise?" But proletarians schooled in numerous strikes (to take only this manifestation of the class struggle) usually understand very well the very profound (philosophical, historical, political and psychological) truth expounded by Engels. Every proletarian has gone through strikes and has experienced "compromises" with the hated oppressors and exploiters, when the workers had to go back to work without having achieved anything, or after consenting to a partial satisfaction of their demands. Every proletarian—owing to the conditions of the mass struggle and of the sharp intensification of class antagonisms in which he lives—notices the difference between a compromise which one is compelled to enter into by objective conditions (such as lack of strike funds, no outside support, extreme hunger and exhaustion), a compromise which in no way lessens the revolutionary devotion and readiness for further struggle of the workers who agree to such a compromise, and a compromise by traitors who ascribe to objective reasons their own selfishness (strikebreakers also effect a "compromise"!), their cowardice, their desire to fawn upon the capitalists and their readiness to yield to threats, sometimes to persuasion, sometimes to sops, and sometimes to flattery on the part of the capitalists. (Such cases of traitors' compromises by trade union leaders are particularly plentiful in the history of the British labour movement; but in one form or another nearly all workers in all countries have witnessed similar things.) 106539

Of course, individual cases of exceptional difficulty and intricacy occur, when it is possible to determine correctly the real character of this or that "compromise" only with the greatest effort; just as cases of homicide occur when it is very difficult to

decide whether the homicide was fully justified and even necessary (as, for example, legitimate self-defence), or unpardonable negligence, or even a cunningly executed plan. Of course, in politics, in which, sometimes, extremely complicated—national and international—relationships between classes and parties have to be dealt with, very many cases will arise that will be much more difficult than the question concerning legitimate "compromise" during a strike, or the treacherous "compromise" of a strikebreaker, or of a treacherous leader, etc. It would be absurd to concoct a recipe or general rule ("No Compromise!") to serve all cases. One must have the brains to analyse the situation in each separate case. Incidentally, the significance of a party organisation and of party leaders worthy of the name lies precisely in the fact that with the prolonged, persistent, varied and all-sided efforts of all the thinking representatives of the given class,[1] the necessary knowledge, the necessary experience and—apart from all knowledge and experience—the necessary political instinct for the speedy and correct solution of intricate political problems may be acquired.

Naïve and utterly inexperienced people imagine that it is sufficient to admit the permissibility of compromises *in general* in order to obliterate the dividing line between opportunism, against which we wage and must wage an irreconcilable struggle, and revolutionary Marxism, or Communism. But if such people do not yet know that *all* dividing lines in nature and in society are mutable and, to a certain extent, conventional—they cannot be assisted in any other way than by a long process of training, education, enlightenment, and by political and every-day experience. In the practical questions of the politics of a given or specific historical moment, it is important to single out those questions which reveal the principal type of impermissible, treacherous compro-

[1] In every class, even in the most enlightened countries, even in the case of the most advanced class, placed by the circumstances of the moment in a state of an exceptionally high upsurge of all spiritual forces, there always are—and, as long as classes exist, as long as classless society has not fully entrenched and consolidated itself, has not developed on its own foundation, there inevitably *will be*—class representatives, who do *not* think and are incapable of thinking. Were this not so, capitalism would not be the oppressor of the masses that it is.

mises embodying the opportunism that is fatal to the revolutionary class, and to exert all efforts to explain them and combat them. During the imperialist war of 1914-18 between two groups of equally predatory and rapacious countries, the principal, fundamental type of opportunism was social-chauvinism, that is, the support of "defence of the fatherland," which, in *such* a war, was really equivalent to defence of the predatory interests of "one's own" bourgeoisie. After the war, the defence of the robber "League of Nations," the defence of direct or indirect alliances with the bourgeoisie of one's own country against the revolutionary proletariat and the "Soviet" movement, and the defence of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliamentarism against the "Soviet power" became the principal manifestations of those impermissible and treacherous compromises, the sum total of which represented the opportunism that is fatal to the revolutionary proletariat and its cause.

"... To reject most emphatically all compromises with other parties ... all policy of manœuvring and compromise,"

write the German Lefts in the Frankfurt pamphlet.

It is a wonder, that, holding such views, these Lefts do not emphatically condemn Bolshevism! Surely, the German Lefts cannot but know that the whole history of Bolshevism, both before and after the October Revolution, is *full* of instances of manœuvring, temporising and compromising with other parties, bourgeois parties included!

To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, a war which is a hundred times more difficult, prolonged and complicated than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states, and to refuse beforehand to manœuvre, to utilise the conflict of interests (even though temporary) among one's enemies, to refuse to temporise and compromise with possible (even though transient, unstable, vacillating and conditional) allies—is not this ridiculous in the extreme? Is it not as though, in the difficult ascent of an unexplored and heretofore inaccessible mountain, we were to renounce beforehand the idea that at times we might have to go in zigzags, sometimes retracing our steps, sometimes abandoning the course once selected and trying various others? And yet, several

members of the Dutch Communist Party found it possible to support—it matters not whether directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, wholly or partially—people who are so ignorant and inexperienced!! (It will not be so bad if this ignorance and inexperience are due to their youth; God himself ordains that young persons should talk such nonsense for a certain period.)

After the first Socialist revolution of the proletariat, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in one country, the proletariat of that country *for a long time* remains *weaker* than the bourgeoisie, simply because of the latter's extensive international connections, and also because the small-commodity producers in the land which has overthrown the bourgeoisie restore and regenerate capitalism and the bourgeoisie spontaneously and continuously. It is possible to conquer the more powerful enemy only by exerting the utmost effort, and by *necessarily*, thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully taking advantage of every, even the smallest "fissure" among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries, among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie in the various countries; by taking advantage of every, even the smallest opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this fail to understand even a grain of Marxism and of scientific, modern Socialism *in general*. Those who have not proved by *deeds* over a considerable period of time, and in sufficiently varied political situations, their ability to apply this truth in practice have not yet learned to assist the revolutionary class in its struggle for the emancipation of the whole of toiling humanity from the exploiters. And this applies equally to the period before and the period after the conquest of political power by the proletariat.

Our theory is not a dogma but a *guide to action*, said Marx and Engels; and the greatest mistake, the greatest crime such "patented" Marxists as Karl Kautsky, Otto Bauer, etc., commit is that they have not understood this, that they have been unable to apply it in the most important moments of the proletarian revolution. N. G. Chernyshevsky, the great Russian Socialist of the pre-Marxian period, used to say: "Political activity is not the pavement of the

Nevsky Prospect" (the clean, broad, smooth pavement of the perfectly straight, principal street of St. Petersburg). Since Chernyshevsky's time the Russian revolutionaries have paid very dearly for ignoring, or forgetting, this truth. Every effort must be made to avert at all costs the possibility of the Left Communists and the West European and American revolutionaries who are devoted to the working class having to pay as *dearly* for the assimilation of this truth as the backward Russians paid.

Before the downfall of tsarism the Russian revolutionary Social-Democrats repeatedly utilised the services of the bourgeois liberals, *i.e.*, concluded numerous practical compromises with them. In 1901-02, prior to the rise of Bolshevism, the old Editorial Board of *Iskra* (consisting of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, Martov, Potresov and myself) concluded—not for long it is true—a formal political alliance with Struve, the political leader of bourgeois liberalism, while it was able at the same time to carry on an unceasing and merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence in the working class movement. The Bolsheviks always adhered to this policy. From 1905 onward they systematically advocated the alliance between the working class and the peasantry against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism, never, however, refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instance, during the second stage of elections, or second ballot) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the bourgeois-revolutionary peasant party, the "Socialist-Revolutionaries," exposing them as petty-bourgeois democrats falsely masquerading as Socialists. During the Duma elections in 1907, the Bolsheviks, for a brief period, entered into a formal political *bloc* with the "Socialist-Revolutionaries." Between 1903 and 1912, there were periods of several years in which we were formally united with the Mensheviks in the same Social-Democratic Party; but we *never* ceased our ideological and political struggle against them as opportunists and channels of bourgeois influence among the proletariat. During the war we compromised to a certain extent with the "Kautskians," with the Left Mensheviks (Martov), and with a section of the "Socialist-Revolutionaries" (Chernov

and Natanson), we were at Zimmerwald and Kienthal together and issued joint manifestoes; but we never ceased and never relaxed our ideological-political struggle against the "Kautskians," against Martov and Chernov. (Natanson died in 1919; he had become a "Revolutionary Communist" Narodnik—very close to us, and almost in agreement with us.) At the very outbreak of the October Revolution we entered into an informal, but very important (and highly successful) political *bloc* with the petty-bourgeois peasantry and adopted the *Socialist-Revolutionary* agrarian programme in its *entirety* without a single alteration—that is, we entered into what was undoubtedly a compromise in order to prove to the peasants that we did not want to "steam-roller" them, but to come to an agreement with them. At the same time, we proposed (and soon after effected) a formal political *bloc*, including participation in the government, with the "Left Socialist-Revolutionaries," who dissolved this *bloc* after the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Peace, and then, in July 1918, went to the lengths of armed rebellion, and subsequently of armed warfare, against us.

It can be understood, therefore, why the attacks of the German Lefts on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany for entertaining the idea of a *bloc* with the "Independents" (Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Kautskians) seem to us to be frivolous, and to prove clearly that the "Lefts" are *wrong*. We in Russia also had Right Mensheviks (who participated in the Kerensky Government) who corresponded to the German Scheidemanns, and Left Mensheviks (Martov) who were in opposition to the Right Mensheviks and who corresponded to the German Kautskians. In 1917, the gradual passing of the masses of the workers from the Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks was clearly observed: at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in June 1917, we had only 13 per cent of the votes; the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were in the majority. At the Second Congress of Soviets (November 7 [October 25], 1917), we had 51 per cent of the votes. Why did not an absolutely *identical* movement of the workers from Right to Left in Germany immediately strengthen the Communists, but first strengthened the intermediate

"Independent" Party, although this party never had independent political ideas, or an independent policy, but only wavered between the Scheidemanns and the Communists?

Obviously, one of the reasons was the *mistaken* tactics of the German Communists, who must fearlessly and honestly admit this mistake and learn to rectify it. The mistake was that they repudiated the necessity of participating in reactionary bourgeois parliaments and in reactionary trade unions; the mistake lay in numerous manifestations of that "Left" infantile disorder which has now broken out on the surface, and will therefore be cured more thoroughly, more quickly and more beneficially.

The German "Independent Social-Democratic Party" is obviously not homogeneous. Alongside the old opportunist leaders (Kautsky, Hilferding and, to a considerable extent, apparently, Crispien, Ledebour and others)—who have shown that they are unable to understand the significance of the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, that they are unable to lead the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle—there has arisen in this party a Left proletarian wing which is growing with remarkable rapidity. Hundreds of thousands of members of this party, proletarians (and it has, I think, about three-quarters of a million members), are leaving Scheidemann and are rapidly going over to Communism. This proletarian wing has already proposed—at the Leipzig (1919) Congress of the Independents—immediate and unconditional affiliation with the Third International. To fear a "compromise" with this wing of the party is positively ridiculous. On the contrary, it is *the duty* of the Communists to seek *and to find* an appropriate form of compromise with them, such a compromise as, on the one hand, will facilitate and accelerate the necessary complete fusion with this wing and, on the other, will not in any way hamper the Communists in their ideological-political struggle against the opportunist Right wing of the "Independents." Probably it will not be easy to devise the appropriate form of compromise, but only a charlatan could promise the German workers and German Communists an "easy" road to victory.

Capitalism would not be capitalism if the "pure" proletariat

were not surrounded by a large number of very mixed transitional types, from the proletarian to the semi-proletarian (who earns half his livelihood by the sale of his labour power), from the semi-proletarian to the small peasant (and petty artisan, handicraft worker and small proprietor in general), from the small peasant to the middle peasant, and so on, and if the proletariat itself were not divided into more or less developed strata, divided according to territorial origin, according to trade, sometimes according to religion, and so on. And all this makes it necessary—absolutely necessary—for the vanguard of the proletariat, for its class-conscious section, the Communist Party, to resort to manœuvres and compromises with the various groups of proletarians, with the various parties of the workers and small proprietors. The whole point lies in *knowing how* to apply these tactics in such a way as to *raise* and not lower the *general* level of proletarian class consciousness, revolutionary spirit, and ability to fight and to conquer. Incidentally, it should be noted that the victory of the Bolsheviks over the Menšheviks demanded the application of tactics of manœuvring and compromise not only before the October Revolution of 1917, *but also after it;* but these were of such a character, of course, as would facilitate, accelerate, consolidate and strengthen the Bolsheviks at the expense of the Mensheviks. The petty-bourgeois democrats (including the Mensheviks) invariably vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and the Soviet system, between reformism and revolutionariness, between love for the workers and fear of the proletarian dictatorship, etc. The proper tactics for the Communists to adopt is to *utilise* these vacillations and not to ignore them; and utilising them calls for concessions to those elements which are turning towards the proletariat in accordance with the time and the extent they turn towards the proletariat—while simultaneously fighting those who turn towards the bourgeoisie. As a result of the application of correct tactics, Menshevism in our country became and is becoming more and more disintegrated, the stubbornly opportunist leaders are becoming isolated, and the best workers, the best elements among the petty-bourgeois democrats, are being brought

into our camp. This is a long process, and the hasty "decision," "no compromise, no manœuvres," can only hinder the strengthening of the influence of the revolutionary proletariat and the growth of its forces.

Finally, one of the undoubted mistakes of the "Lefts" in Germany is their stubborn insistence on non-recognition of the Versailles Peace. The more "weightily" and "ponderously," the more "emphatically" and dogmatically this viewpoint is formulated (by K. Horner, for instance), the less sensible does it appear. It is not enough to repudiate the crying absurdities of "National Bolshevism" (Lauffenberg and others), which has gone to the length of advocating a *bloc* with the German bourgeoisie for war against the Entente, under the present conditions of the international proletarian revolution. One must understand that the tactics which do not concede that it is essential for a Soviet Germany (if a German Soviet republic were established soon) to recognise the Versailles Peace for a time and to submit to it are fundamentally wrong. From this it does not follow that the "Independents" were right in putting forward—at a time when the Scheidemanns were in the government, when the Soviet government in Hungary had not yet been overthrown, and when the possibility of a Soviet revolution in Vienna in support of Soviet Hungary was not yet precluded—in putting forward, *under these circumstances*, the demand that the Versailles Peace be signed. At that time the "Independents" tacked and manœuvred very clumsily, for they more or less accepted responsibility for the Scheidemann traitors, they more or less slipped from the viewpoint of the merciless (and most cold-blooded) class war against the Scheidemanns to the "classless" or "above-class" viewpoint.

At present, however, the position is obviously such that the German Communists should not tie their hands and promise, positively and without fail, to repudiate the Versailles Peace in the event of the victory of Communism. That would be foolish. They must say: The Scheidemanns and the Kautskians have perpetrated a series of treacheries which hindered (and partly prevented) an alliance with Soviet Russia and with Soviet Hungary. We Communists will do all we can to *facilitate* and *pave the way* for such

an alliance; at the same time we are not in the least obliged to repudiate the Versailles Peace, and certainly not immediately. The possibility of repudiating it successfully will depend not only on the German but also on the international successes of the Soviet movement. This movement has been hampered by the Scheidemanns and Kautskians; we shall further it. Therein lies the crux of the matter; that is where the fundamental difference lies. And if our class enemies, the exploiters, and their lackeys, the Scheidemanns and Kautskians, missed a number of opportunities to strengthen both the German and the international Soviet movement. to strengthen the German and international Soviet revolution, the blame falls upon them. The Soviet revolution in Germany will strengthen the international Soviet movement, which is the strongest bulwark—and the only reliable, invincible, omnipotent bulwark —against the Versailles Peace and against international imperialism in general. To put liberation from the Versailles Peace absolutely, unconditionally and immediately in the forefront, *before the question* of liberating other countries which are oppressed by imperialism from the yoke of imperialism, is petty-bourgeois nationalism (worthy of Kautsky, Hilferding, Otto Bauer and Co.) and not revolutionary internationalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie in any of the large European countries, including Germany, would be such a gain to the international revolution that for its sake one can, and must, if necessary, tolerate a *more prolonged existence of the Versailles Peace.* If Russia, by herself, could endure the Brest-Litovsk Peace for several months to the advantage of the revolution, it is not impossible for a Soviet Germany, in alliance with Soviet Russia, to endure an even longer existence of the Versailles Peace to the advantage of the revolution.

The imperialists of France, England, etc., are trying to provoke the German Communists, they are laying a trap for them: "Say that you will not sign the Versailles Peace!" And the Left Communists childishly fall into the trap laid for them, instead of manœuvring skilfully against the crafty and, *at the present moment,* stronger enemy, instead of telling him: "Today we shall sign the Versailles Peace." To tie one's hands beforehand, openly to tell the enemy, who is at present better armed than we are, whether and when we

shall fight him, is stupidity and not revolutionariness. To accept battle at a time when it is obviously advantageous to the enemy and not to us is a crime; and those political leaders of the revolutionary class who are unable "to tack, to manœuvre, to compromise," in order to avoid an obviously disadvantageous battle, are good for nothing.

IX

"LEFT-WING" COMMUNISM IN ENGLAND

In England there is not yet a Communist Party, but there is a fresh, broad, powerful and rapidly growing Communist movement among the workers which justifies the brightest hopes. There are several political parties and organisations (the British Socialist Party, the Socialist Labour Party, the South Wales Socialist Society, the Workers' Socialist Federation) which desire to form a Communist Party and are already carrying on negotiations towards this end. *The Workers' Dreadnought*, the weekly organ of the last-mentioned organisation, in its issue No. 48, Vol. VI, of February 21, 1920, contains an article by the editor, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst, entitled "Towards a Communist Party." In this article she outlines the progress of the negotiations that are proceeding between the four organisations mentioned for the formation of a united Communist Party, on the basis of affiliation to the Third International, the recognition of the Soviet system instead of parliamentarism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It appears that one of the greatest obstacles to the immediate formation of a united Communist Party is disagreement on the question of parliamentary action and on the question of whether the new Communist Party should affiliate to the old, trade unionist (consisting mostly of affiliated trade unions), opportunist and social-chauvinist Labour Party. The Workers' Socialist Federation and the Socialist Labour Party[1] are opposed to taking part in parliamentary elections and in Parliament, are opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party, and in this disagree with all, or with the majority, of the members of the British Socialist Party, which they regard as the "Right wing

[1] I believe this party is opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party, but is not altogether opposed to parliamentary action.

of the Communist parties" in England. (Page 5, Sylvia Pankhurst's article.)

Thus, the main division is the same as in Germany notwithstanding the enormous difference in the form in which the disagreement manifests itself (in Germany the form is more analogous to the "Russian" than it is in England) and in a number of other things. Let us examine the arguments of the "Lefts."

On the question of parliamentary action, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst refers to an article in the same issue of her paper by Comrade W. Gallacher, who, in the name of the Scottish Workers' Council in Glasgow, writes:

"The above council is definitely anti-parliamentarian, and has behind it the Left wing of the various political bodies.

"We represent the revolutionary movement in Scotland, striving continually to build up a revolutionary organisation within the industries, and a Communist Party, based on social committees, throughout the country. For a considerable time we have been sparring with the official parliamentarians. We have not considered it necessary to declare open warfare on them, *and they are afraid* to open attacks on us.

"But this state of affairs cannot long continue. We are winning all along the line.

"The rank and file of the I.L.P. in Scotland is becoming more and more disgusted with the thought of parliament, and Soviets" (the Russian word transliterated into English is used) "or workers' councils are being supported by almost every branch.

"This is very serious, of course, for the gentlemen who look to politics for a profession, and they are using any and every means to persuade their members to come back into the parliamentary fold.

"Revolutionary comrades *must not*" (all italics the author's) "give any support to this gang. Our fight here is going to be a difficult one. One of the worst features of it will be the treachery of those whose personal ambition is a more impelling force than their regard for the revolution.

"Any support given to parliamentarism is simply assisting to put power into the hands of our British Scheidemanns and Noskes. Henderson, Clynes and Co. are hopelessly reactionary. The official I.L.P. is more and more coming under the control of middle-class Liberals, who, since the rout of the Liberal Party, have found their spiritual home in the camp of Messrs. MacDonald, Snowden and Co. The official I.L.P. is bitterly hostile to the Third International, the rank and file is for it. Any support to the parliamentary opportunists is simply playing into the hands of the former.

"The B.S.P. doesn't count at all here.... What is wanted here is a sound, revolutionary, industrial organisation and Communist Party working along clear, well-defined, scientific lines. If our comrades can assist us in building these, we will take their help gladly; if they cannot, for god's sake let them keep out altogether, lest they betray the revolution by lending their support to the reactionaries, who are so eagerly clamouring for parliamentary

honours (?)" (the query belongs to the writer of the letter) "and who are anxious to prove they *can rule* as effectively as the boss class politicians themselves."

In my opinion this letter excellently expresses the temper and point of view of the young Communists, or rank-and-file workers, who are only just coming over to Communism. This temper is very gratifying and valuable; we must learn to prize it and to support it, because without it, it is hopeless to expect the victory of the proletarian revolution in England, or in any other country for that matter. People who can give expression to this temper of the masses, who can rouse such temper (very often dormant, not realised, not roused) among the masses, must be prized and every assistance must be given them. At the same time we must openly and frankly tell them that temper *alone* is not sufficient to lead the masses in the great revolutionary struggle, and that the mistakes that these very loyal adherents of the cause of the revolution are about to commit, or are committing, can damage the cause of the revolution. Comrade Gallacher's letter undoubtedly betrays the embryos of *all* the mistakes that are committed by the German "Left" Communists and that were committed by the "Left" Bolsheviks in 1908 and 1918.

The writer of the letter is imbued with noble, proletarian (intelligible and near not only to the proletarian but also to all toilers, to all "small men," to use a German expression) hatred for the bourgeois "class politicians." The hatred felt by this representative of the oppressed and exploited masses is in truth the "beginning of all wisdom," the very basis of every Socialist and Communist movement, and of its success. But the writer apparently fails to take into account the fact that politics is a science and an art that does not drop from the skies, that it is not obtained gratis, and that if it wants to conquer the bourgeoisie the proletariat must train *its own* proletarian "class politicians" who shall be as skilled as the bourgeois politicians.

The writer of the letter excellently understands that it is not parliament but workers' Soviets that alone can serve as instruments for achieving the aims of the proletariat, and, of course, those who have failed to understand this up to now are hopeless reactionaries,

no matter whether they are the most highly educated people in the world, the most experienced politicians, the most sincere Socialists, the most erudite Marxists, the most honest citizens and fathers of families. But the writer of the letter does not raise the question, does not think of raising the question as to whether it is possible to bring about the victory of the Soviets over parliament without getting our "Soviet" politicians *into* parliament, without disrupting parliamentarism from *within*, without preparing the ground within parliament for the success of the Soviets' forthcoming task of dispersing parliament. And yet the writer of the letter expresses the absolutely correct idea that the Communist Party in England must operate on the basis of *scientific* principles. Science demands, first, taking account of the experience of other countries, especially if these other countries, also capitalist countries, are undergoing, or have recently undergone, a very similar experience; secondly, science demands taking account of *all* the forces, groups, parties, classes and masses operating in the given country, and it does not demand that policy be determined by mere desires and views, degree of class consciousness and readiness for battle of only one group or party.

It is true that the Hendersons, the Clynes, the MacDonalds and Snowdens are hopelessly reactionary. It is also true that they want to take power in their own hands (although they prefer a coalition with the bourgeoisie), that they want "to govern" according to the old bourgeois rules and, when they do get into power, they will certainly act in the same way as the Scheidemanns and Noskes. All this is true. But the logical conclusion to be drawn from this is not that to support them is treachery to the revolution, but that in the interests of the revolution, the revolutionaries in the working class should give these gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support. In order to explain this idea I will take two contemporary English political documents: 1) the speech delivered by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, on March 18, 1920 (reported in the *Manchester Guardian* of March 19, 1920), and 2) the arguments of the "Left" Communist, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst, in the article mentioned above.

Arguing against Asquith (who was especially invited to attend

this meeting but declined) and against those Liberals who do not want a coalition with the Conservatives but a *rapprochement* with the Labour Party (Comrade Gallacher, in his letter, also points to the fact that Liberals have joined the Independent Labour Party), Lloyd George said that a coalition, and a *close* coalition, between the Liberals and Conservatives was essential because otherwise there would be a victory of the Labour Party, which Lloyd George "prefers to call" the Socialist Party and which is striving to "collectivise" the means of production. "In France this is called Communism," the leader of the British bourgeoisie explained to his auditors (Liberal members of Parliament who probably up to that time had been unaware of it), "in Germany it is called Socialism, and in Russia it is called Bolshevism." This is opposed to Liberal principles, explained Lloyd George, because, in principle, Liberalism stands for private property. "Civilisation is in danger," declared the speaker, and, therefore, the Liberals and the Conservatives must unite. . . .

". . . If you go to the agricultural areas," said Lloyd George, "I agree that you have the old party divisions as strong as ever. They are removed from the danger. It does not walk their lanes. But when they see it, they will be as strong as some of these industrial constituencies are now. Four-fifths of this country is industrial and commercial; hardly one-fifth is agricultural. It is one of the things I have constantly in my mind when I think of the dangers of the future here. In France the population is agricultural and you have a solid body of opinion which does not move very rapidly, and which is not very easily excited by revolutionary movements. That is not the case here. This country is more top-heavy than any country in the world and if it begins to rock, the crash here, for that reason, will be greater than in any land."

From this the reader will see that Mr. Lloyd George is not only a very clever man, but that he has also learned a great deal from the Marxists. It would not be a sin even for us to learn from Lloyd George.

It is interesting also to note the following episode that occurred in the course of the discussion that followed Lloyd George's speech:

Mr. Wallace, M.P.: "I should like to ask what the Prime Minister considers the effect might be in the industrial constituencies upon the industrial workers, so many of whom are Liberals at the present time and from whom we get so much support. Would not a possible result be to cause an imme-

diate overwhelming accession of strength to the Labour Party from men who are at present our cordial supporters?"

The Prime Minister: "I take a totally different view. The fact that Liberals are fighting among themselves undoubtedly drives a considerable number of Liberals in despair to the Labour Party, where you get a considerable body of Liberals, very able men, whose business it is to discredit the government. The result is undoubtedly to bring a good accession of public sentiment to the Labour Party. It does not go to the Liberals who are outside, it goes to the Labour Party, the by-elections show that."

Incidentally, I would like to say that this argument shows especially how even the cleverest people among the bourgeoisie have got themselves entangled and cannot avoid committing irreparable acts of stupidity. This will bring about its downfall. But our people may do stupid things (provided they are not very serious and are rectified in time) and yet, in the last resort, they will prove the victors.

The second political document is the following argument advanced by the "Left" Communist, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst:

". . . Comrade Inkpin (the Secretary of the British Socialist Party) refers to the Labour Party as the main body of the working class movement. Another comrade of the British Socialist Party, at the conference of the Third International just held, put the British Socialist Party view more strongly. He said: 'We regard the Labour Party as the organised working class.'

"But we do not take this view of the Labour Party. The Labour Party is very large numerically, though its membership is to a great extent quiescent and apathetic, consisting of many workers who have joined the trade unions because their workmates are trade unionists, and to share the friendly benefits.

"But we recognise that the great size of the Labour Party is also due to the fact that it is the creation of a school of thought beyond which the majority of the British working class has not yet emerged, though great changes are at work in the mind of the people which will presently alter this state of affairs. . . ."

"The British Labour Party, like the social-patriotic organisations of other countries, will, in the natural development of society, inevitably come into power. It is for the Communists to build up the forces which will overthrow the social-patriots, and in this country we must not delay or falter in that work.

"We must not dissipate our energy in adding to the strength of the Labour Party; its rise to power is inevitable. We must concentrate on making a Communist movement that will vanquish it.

"The Labour Party will soon be forming a government; the revolutionary opposition must make ready to attack it."

Thus, the Liberal bourgeoisie is abandoning the historical "two-party" (exploiters') system which has been sanctified by age-long experience and which has been extremely advantageous to the exploiters, and considers it necessary to unite their forces to fight the Labour Party. A section of the Liberals are deserting the Liberal Party, like rats leaving a sinking ship, and are joining the Labour Party. The Left Communists are of the opinion that the Labour Party's rise to power is inevitable and they admit that at present it has the support of the majority of the workers. From this they draw the strange conclusion which Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst formulates as follows:

"The Communist Party must not enter into any compromises.... The Communist Party must keep its doctrine pure, and its independence of reformism inviolate; its mission is to lead the way, without stopping or turning, by the direct road to the Communist revolution."

On the contrary, from the fact that the majority of the workers in England still follow the lead of the English Kerenskys or Scheidemanns and that they have not yet had the experience of a government composed of these people, which experience was necessary in Russia and in Germany in order to secure the mass transition of the workers to Communism, from this fact it undoubtedly follows that the British Communists *should* participate in parliamentary action, should from *within* Parliament help the masses of the workers to see the results of a Henderson and Snowden government, should help the Hendersons and Snowdens to defeat the combined Lloyd Georges and Churchills. To act otherwise would mean placing difficulties in the way of the cause of the revolution, because revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses; never is it brought about by propaganda alone. "To march forward without compromise, without turning from the path"—if this is said by an obviously impotent minority of the workers who know (or at all events should know) that very soon, when Henderson and Snowden will have gained the victory over Lloyd George and Churchill, the majority will be disappointed in their leaders and will begin to support Communism (or at all events will adopt an attitude of neutrality, and largely an

attitude of benevolent neutrality, towards the Communists), then this slogan is obviously mistaken. It is like 10,000 soldiers going into battle against 50,000 enemy soldiers—when it would be wise to "stop," to "turn from the road," and even enter into a "compromise" in order to gain time until the arrival of the reinforcements of 100,000 which are bound to come but which cannot go into action immediately. This is intellectual childishness and not the serious tactics of a revolutionary class.

The fundamental law of revolution, confirmed by all revolutions and particularly by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows: it is not sufficient for revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; for revolution, it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. Only when the *"lower classes" do not want* the old and when the "upper classes" *cannot continue in the old way*, then only can revolution conquer. This truth may be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters. It follows that for revolution it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking, politically active workers) should fully understand that revolution is necessary and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; secondly, that the ruling classes be in a state of governmental crisis which draws even the most backward masses into politics (a symptom of every real revolution is: the rapid, tenfold and even hundredfold increase in the number of representatives of the toiling and oppressed masses—who hitherto have been apathetic—capable of waging the political struggle), weakens the government and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to overthrow it rapidly.

In England, as can be seen, among other things, from Lloyd George's speech, both conditions for the successful proletarian revolution are obviously maturing. And the mistakes the Left Communists are committing are particularly dangerous at the present time precisely because certain revolutionaries are not displaying a sufficiently thoughtful, attentive, intelligent and shrewd attitude towards either of these conditions. If we are not a revolutionary

group but the party of the revolutionary *class*, if we want the *masses* to follow us (and unless they do, we stand the risk of remaining mere talkers), we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or to be more correct: to compel the former to beat the latter, because the former are *afraid to win*!); secondly, help the majority of the working class to become convinced by their own experience that we are right, *i.e.*, that the Hendersons and Snowdens are utterly worthless, that they are petty bourgeois and treacherous and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; thirdly, bring nearer the moment when, *on the basis* of the disappointment of the majority of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible with serious chances of success to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once, because if the very clever and weighty, not petty-bourgeois but big-bourgeois Lloyd George betrays utter consternation and weakens himself (and the whole of the bourgeoisie) more and more by his "friction" with Churchill one day and his "friction" with Asquith the next day, how much more so will this be the case with the Henderson government!

I will speak more concretely. In my opinion, the British Communists should unite their four (all very weak and some, very, very weak) parties and groups into a single Communist Party on the basis of the principles of the Third International and of the *obligatory* participation in Parliament. The Communist Party should propose to the Hendersons and Snowdens that they enter into a "compromise," an election agreement, *viz.*, to march together against the alliance of Lloyd George and the Conservatives, to divide the seats in Parliament in proportion to the number of votes cast for the Labour Party and Communist Party respectively (not at Parliamentary elections, but in a special ballot), while the Communist Party retains *complete liberty* to carry on agitation, propaganda and political activity. Without the latter condition, of course, no such *bloc* could be concluded, for that would be an act of betrayal; the British Communists must insist on and secure complete liberty to expose the Hendersons and the Snowdens in the same way as (*for fifteen years*, 1903-17) the Russian Bolsheviks insisted on and secured it in relation to the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens, *i.e.*, the Mensheviks.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens accept the *bloc* on these terms, we gain, because the number of seats in Parliament is not a matter of importance to us, we are not chasing after seats, we can yield on this point (the Hendersons and particularly their new friends—or new masters—the Liberals, who have joined the Independent Labour Party, are particularly eager to get seats). We will gain, because we will carry *our* agitation among the *masses* at a moment when Lloyd George *himself* has "incensed" them, and we will not only help the Labour Party to establish its government more quickly, but also help the masses to understand more quickly the Communist propaganda that we will carry on against the Hendersons without curtailment and without evasions.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject the *bloc* with us on these terms we will gain still more, because we will have at once shown the *masses* (note that even in the purely Menshevik and utterly opportunist Independent Labour Party the *rank and file* is in favour of Soviets) that the Hendersons prefer *their* closeness to the capitalists to the unity of all the workers. We will immediately gain in the eyes of the *masses* who, particularly after the brilliant, very correct and very useful (for Communism) explanations given by Lloyd George, will sympathise with the idea of uniting all the workers against the Lloyd George-Conservative alliance. We will gain immediately because we will demonstrate to the masses that the Hendersons and the Snowdens are afraid to beat Lloyd George, afraid to take power alone and are *secretly* striving to get the support of Lloyd George, who is *openly* stretching out his hand to the Conservatives against the Labour Party. It should be noted that in Russia, after the Revolution of March 12 (February 27), 1917, the propaganda of the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (*i.e.*, the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens) gained a great deal precisely because of a circumstance like this. We said to the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries: Take complete power without the bourgeoisie, because you have the majority in the Soviets (at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June 1917, the Bolsheviks had only 13 per cent of the votes). But the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens feared to take power without the bourgeoisie, and when the

bourgeoisie delayed the elections to the Constituent Assembly because they knew perfectly well that the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries would have the majority in it [1] (the latter had entered into a close political *bloc* and both really represented *nothing but* petty-bourgeois democracy), the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were unable to wage an energetic and consistent struggle against these delays.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject the *bloc* with the Communists, the Communists will gain immediately by winning the sympathy of the masses and discrediting the Hendersons and Snowdens, and if as a result we do lose a few parliamentary seats, it is not a matter of importance. We would put candidates in a very few but absolutely safe constituencies, *i.e.*, where our candidate would not let the Liberal in, in opposition to the Labour candidate. We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets advocating Communism, and in *all* constituencies where we have no candidates we would urge the electors *to vote for the Labour candidate against the bourgeois candidate*. Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallacher are mistaken in thinking that this is betrayal of Communism, or the abandonment of the struggle against the social-traitors. On the contrary, the Communist revolution undoubtedly stands to gain by it.

Very often the British Communists find it hard to approach the masses at the present time and even to get them to listen to them. If I as a Communist come out and call upon the workers to vote for Henderson against Lloyd George, they will certainly listen to me. And I will be able to explain in a popular manner not only why Soviets are better than Parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (which is concealed behind the signboard of bourgeois "democracy"), but also that I wanted to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports the hanged—that the im-

[1] The elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917 resulted in the following (based on returns covering over 36,000,000 votes): the Bolsheviks obtained 25 per cent of the votes cast; the various parties of the landlords and capitalists obtained 13 per cent and the petty-bourgeois democratic parties, *i.e.*, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and a number of small, kindred groups, obtained 62 per cent.

pending establishment of a Henderson government will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will accelerate the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdens as was the case with their friends in Russia and Germany.

And if the objection is raised: These tactics are too "subtle," or too complicated, the masses will not understand them, they will split up and scatter our forces, will prevent us from concentrating our forces on the Soviet revolution, etc., I will reply to the "Lefts" who raise this objection: Don't ascribe your dogmatism to the masses! In all probability the masses in Russia are not more educated than the masses in England; if anything they are less so. And yet the masses understood the Bolsheviks; and the fact that *on the eve* of the Soviet revolution, in September 1917, the Bolsheviks put up their candidates for a bourgeois parliament (the Constituent Assembly) and *on the morrow* of the Soviet revolution, in November (October) 1917, took part in the election of this Constituent Assembly which they dispersed on January 18 (5), 1918—this fact did not hamper the Bolsheviks, but on the contrary, helped them.

I cannot deal here with the second point of disagreement among the British Communists, *viz.*, the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. I have too little material at my disposal on this question, which is a particularly complicated one in view of the quite unique character of the British Labour Party, the very structure of which is so unlike the ordinary political party on the Continent. It is beyond doubt, however, first, that on this question also, those who think of deducing the tactics of the revolutionary proletariat from principles like: "The Communist Party must keep its doctrine pure and its independence of reformism inviolate; its mission is to lead the way, without stopping or turning, by the direct road to the Communist revolution"—will fall into error. For such principles are merely a repetition of the mistakes committed by the French Communard-Blanquists, who, in 1874, "repudiated" all compromises and all the intermediate stations. Secondly, it is beyond doubt that in this question, too, the task is to learn to apply the general and main principles of Communism to the *peculiar* relations between classes and parties, to the *peculiar features* of the objective de-

velopment towards Communism which are characteristic of every country and which should be studied, found, divined.

But this must be discussed, not in connection with British Communism alone, but in connection with the general conclusions concerning the development of Communism in all capitalist countries. We shall now proceed to deal with this theme.

X

SOME CONCLUSIONS

THE Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905 revealed a very peculiar turn in world history: in one of the most backward capitalist countries the strike movement attained a breadth and power unprecedented in the world. In the *first month of 1905 alone* the number of strikers was more than ten times the average *yearly* number for the previous ten years (1895-1904); and from January to October 1905, strikes grew continuously and on an enormous scale. Under the influence of a number of entirely unique historical conditions, backward Russia was the first to show to the world, not only a spasmodic growth of independent activity on the part of the oppressed masses during revolution (this happened in all great revolutions), but also a proletariat whose significance was infinitely greater than its numerical proportion to the total population, the combination of the economic and political strike, the transformation of the latter into armed insurrection, and the birth of a new form of mass struggle and mass organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism, *viz.*, the Soviets.

The February and October Revolutions of 1917 resulted in the all-round development of the Soviets on a national scale, and in their victory in the proletarian, Socialist revolution. And in less than two years, the international character of the Soviets, the spread of this method of struggle and form of organisation to the working class movement of the whole world, and the historical mission of the Soviets to be the grave-digger, the heir, and the successor of bourgeois parliamentarism, of bourgeois democracy in general, became revealed.

More than that, the history of the working class movement now shows that in all countries it is about to experience (and it has

already begun to experience) the struggle between nascent Communism—which is becoming strong and marching toward victory—and, first and foremost, *its own* (of each particular country) "Menshevism," *i.e.*, opportunism and social-chauvinism, and, secondly—as a sort of supplement—"Left-wing" Communism. The former struggle has developed in all countries, apparently without a single exception, as a struggle between the Second International (already virtually dead) and the Third International. The latter struggle can be observed in Germany, in England, in Italy, in America (at least a certain *section* of the Industrial Workers of the World and the anarcho-syndicalist trends in America defend the errors of "Left-wing" Communism, while simultaneously there is an almost universal, almost unanimous acceptance of the Soviet system) and in France (the attitude of a section of the former syndicalists towards political parties and parliamentarism, and here too, side by side with accepting the Soviet system), *i.e.*, the struggle, undoubtedly, is not only being waged on a national but also on a world scale.

But, while the working class movement is everywhere passing through what is practically the same kind of preparatory school for victory over the bourgeoisie, it is in each country achieving this development in *its own way*. The big, advanced, capitalist countries are marching along this road *much more rapidly* than did Bolshevism, which history granted a period of fifteen years to prepare itself, as an organised political trend, for victory. The Third International has already scored a decisive victory in the short space of one year; it has defeated the Second, yellow, social-chauvinist International, which only a few months ago was incomparably stronger than the Third International and seemed to be firm and strong and enjoyed the all-round support—direct and indirect, material (ministerial posts, passports, the press) and ideological—of the world bourgeoisie.

The whole thing now is that the Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account the main fundamental tasks of the struggle against opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism as well as the *definite peculiar features* which this struggle assumes and inevitably must assume in each separate country in accordance

with the peculiar features of its economics, politics, culture, national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions, etc. Everywhere we observe wider and growing dissatisfaction with the Second International because of its opportunism, its inability, or incapacity, to create a really centralised, really leading centre that would be capable of guiding the international tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for the world Soviet republic. We must clearly realise that such a leading centre cannot under any circumstances be built up on stereotyped, mechanically equalised, identical tactical rules of struggle. As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries—and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale—the unity of international tactics of the Communist, working class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (this is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the *fundamental* principles of Communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will *correctly modify* these principles in *certain particulars*, will properly adapt, apply them to the national and national-state differences. To investigate, study, seek out, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national in the *concrete manner* in which each country *approaches* the fulfilment of the single international task, the victory over opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism in the working class movement, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship—this is the main task of the historical period through which all the advanced (and not only the advanced) countries are now passing. The main thing—of course, not everything, by a very long way, but the main thing—has already been achieved in that the vanguard of the working class has been won over, in that it has gone over to the side of the Soviet power against parliamentarism, to the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat against bourgeois democracy. Now all efforts, all attention, must be concentrated on the *next* step—which seems, and from a certain standpoint really is, less fundamental, but which in fact is much closer to the practical carrying out of

the task—namely, on seeking out the forms of *transition* or *approach* to the proletarian revolution.

The proletarian vanguard has been ideologically won over. This is the main thing. Without this, we cannot take even the first step towards victory; but it is still a fairly long way from victory. With the vanguard alone victory is impossible. To throw the vanguard alone into the decisive battle before the whole class, before the broad masses have taken up a position either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality toward it and one in which they cannot possibly support the enemy, would not merely be folly, but a crime. And in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of toilers and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position, propaganda and agitation alone are not sufficient. For this the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, confirmed now with astonishing force and vividness not only in Russia but also in Germany. It has been necessary, not only for the uncultured, often illiterate masses of Russia, but for the highly cultured, entirely literate masses of Germany, to realise through their own painful experience the absolute impotence and characterlessness, the absolute helplessness and servility before the bourgeoisie, the utter vileness of the government of the knights of the Second International, the absolute inevitability of a dictatorship of the extreme reactionaries (Kornilov in Russia, Kapp and Co. in Germany) as the only alternative to a dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to turn them resolutely toward Communism.

The immediate task that confronts the class-conscious vanguard of the international labour movement, *i.e.*, the Communist Parties, groups and trends, is to be able to *lead* the broad masses (now, for the most part, slumbering, apathetic, hidebound, inert and dormant) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead, *not only* their own party, but also the masses, during the course of their approach, their transition to the new position. While the first historical task (*viz.*, that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not be accomplished without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-

chauvinism, the second task, which now becomes the immediate task, and which is to be able to lead *the masses* to the new position that will ensure the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, this immediate task cannot be accomplished without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism, without completely overcoming and getting rid of its mistakes.

As long as the question was, and in so far as it still is, one of winning over the vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Communism, so long, and to that extent, propaganda took first place; even propaganda circles, with all the imperfections that circles suffer from, are useful under these conditions and produce fruitful results. But when it is a question of the practical activities of the masses, a question of the disposition, if one may so express it, of vast armies, of the alignment of *all* the class forces of the given society *for the final and decisive battle*, then propaganda habits alone, the mere repetition of the truths of "pure" Communism, is of no avail. In these circumstances one must count, not up to a thousand, as the propagandist who belongs to a small group that has not yet led masses really does; in these circumstances one must count in millions and tens of millions. In these circumstances we must not only ask ourselves whether the vanguard of the revolutionary class has been convinced, but also whether the historically effective forces of *all* classes—positively of all the classes in the given society without exception—are aligned in such a way that the decisive battle has fully matured, in such a way that 1) all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently confused, are sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle beyond their strength; that 2) all the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements—the petty bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois democrats as distinct from the bourgeoisie—have sufficiently exposed themselves before the people, and have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy; and that 3) among the proletariat a mass mood in favour of supporting the most determined, unreservedly bold, revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has arisen and begins to grow powerfully. Then indeed, revolution is ripe; then indeed, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions indicated above, briefly outlined

above, and if we have chosen the moment rightly, our victory is assured.

The divergences between the Churchills and the Lloyd Georges—with insignificant national differences these types exist in *all* countries—on the one hand, and between the Hendersons and the Lloyd Georges on the other, are quite unimportant and petty from the point of view of pure, *i.e.*, abstract Communism, *i.e.*, Communism that has not yet matured to the stage of practical, mass, political action. But from the point of view of this practical mass action, these differences are very, very important. The whole point, the whole task of the Communist who wants to be not merely a class-conscious, convinced and ideological propagandist but a practical leader of the *masses* in the revolution, is to take them into account, to determine the moment when the inevitable conflicts between these "friends," which will weaken all *the "friends" taken together* and render them impotent, will have completely matured. The strictest loyalty to the ideas of Communism must be combined with the ability to make all the necessary practical compromises, to "tack," to make agreements, zigzags, retreats and so on, in order to accelerate the coming into and subsequent loss of political power of the Hendersons (the heroes of the Second International, if we are not to mention the names of individuals; the representatives of petty-bourgeois democracy who call themselves Socialists); to accelerate their inevitable bankruptcy in practice which will enlighten the masses in the spirit of our ideas, in the direction of Communism; to accelerate the inevitable friction, quarrels, conflicts and complete disintegration among the Hendersons, the Lloyd Georges and Churchills (Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, Constitutional-Democrats, Monarchists; Scheidemanns, the bourgeoisie, the Kappists, etc.) and properly to select the moment when the disintegration among these "pillars of the sacred right of private property" is at its highest, in order, by a determined attack of the proletariat, to defeat them all and capture political power.

History generally, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more many-sided, more lively and "subtle" than the best parties and the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes imagine. This is under-

standable, because the best vanguards express the class consciousness, the will, the passion, the fantasy of tens of thousands, while the revolution is made, at the moment of its climax and of the exertion of all human capabilities, by the class consciousness, the will, the passion and the imagination of tens of millions who are spurred on by the most acute class struggle. From this follow two very important practical conclusions: first, that in order to fulfil its task the revolutionary class must be able to master *all* forms or sides of social activity without exception (and complete, after the capture of political power, sometimes at great risk and very great danger, what it did not complete before the capture of power); second, that the revolutionary class must be ready to pass from one form to another in the quickest and most unexpected manner.

Everyone will agree that an army which does not train itself to wield all arms, all means and methods of warfare that the enemy possesses or may possess is behaving in an unwise or even in a criminal manner. This applies to politics to a greater degree than it does to war. In politics it is harder to forecast what methods of warfare will be applied and be useful for us under certain future conditions. Unless we are able to master all means of warfare, we stand the risk of suffering great and sometimes decisive defeat if the changes in the position of the other classes, which we cannot determine, will bring to the front forms of activity in which we are particularly weak. If, however, we are able to master all means of warfare, we shall certainly be victorious, because we represent the interests of the really advanced, of the really revolutionary class, even if circumstances do not permit us to use weapons that are most dangerous for the enemy, weapons that are most quickly death-dealing. Inexperienced revolutionaries often think that legal methods of struggle are opportunist because in this field the bourgeoisie most frequently (especially in "peaceful," non-revolutionary times) deceived and fooled the workers, and they think that illegal methods of struggle are revolutionary. But this is not true. What is true is that the opportunists and the traitors to the working class are those parties and leaders who are not able or who do not want to (don't say: you cannot; say: you won't) apply illegal methods of struggle in conditions such as those which prevailed, for

example, during the imperialist war of 1914-18, when the bourgeoisie of the freest democratic countries deceived the workers in the most impudent and brutal manner and prohibited everyone from speaking the truth about the predatory character of the war. But revolutionaries who are unable to combine illegal forms of struggle with *every* form of legal struggle are very poor revolutionaries. It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when the revolution has already flared up and is raging, when everybody joins the revolution simply because he is carried away by it, because it is the fashion, and sometimes even because it might open the way for a career. After the victory, the proletariat has to exert extreme effort, to suffer pain and one might say martyrdom to "liberate" itself from such sorry revolutionaries. It is much more difficult—and much more useful—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle *do not yet* exist, to be able to defend the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organisation) in non-revolutionary bodies and even in downright reactionary bodies, in non-revolutionary circumstances, among the masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. The main task of contemporary Communism in Western Europe and America is to acquire the ability to seek, to find, to determine correctly the concrete path or the particular turn of events that will *bring* the masses *right up* to the real, decisive, last, great revolutionary struggle.

Take England, for example. We cannot say, and no one is in a position to say beforehand, how soon the real proletarian revolution will flare up there, and *what* will most of all serve as the *cause* to rouse it, to kindle it, and to push into the struggle very wide masses who are at present dormant. Hence, it is our duty to carry on our preparatory work in such a manner as to be "well shod on all four feet," as the late Plekhanov was fond of saying when he was a Marxist and revolutionary. It is possible that a parliamentary crisis will cause the "breach," will "break the ice"; perhaps it will be a crisis caused by colonial and imperialist contradictions becoming hopelessly entangled and increasingly painful and acute; perhaps some third cause, etc. We are not discussing

the kind of struggle that *will determine* the fate of the proletarian revolution in England (not a single Communist has any doubts on that score; as far as we are concerned, this question is settled, and definitely settled). What we are discussing is the *immediate cause* that will rouse the at present dormant proletarian masses and bring them right up to the revolution. Let us not forget that in the bourgeois French republic, for example, in a situation which, from both the international and national aspect, was a hundred times less revolutionary than the present one, one of the thousands and thousands of dishonest tricks the reactionary military caste play (the Dreyfus case) was enough to serve as the "unexpected" and "petty" cause which brought the people to the verge of civil war!

In England the Communists should steadily, unfalteringly and undeviatingly utilise the parliamentary elections and all the vicissitudes of the Irish, colonial and world imperialist policy of the British government, and all other spheres and sides of social life, and work in all of them in a new way, in a Communist way, in the spirit, not of the Second, but of the Third International. I have neither the time nor the space here to describe the methods of "Russian" "Bolshevik" participation in parliamentary elections and in the parliamentary struggle; but I can assure the foreign Communists that this was totally unlike the usual West European parliamentary campaign. From this the conclusion is often drawn: "Well, that was in Russia; in our country parliamentarism is something different." This conclusion is wrong. The very purpose of the existence of Communists in the world, adherents to the Third International in all countries, is to *change* all along the line, in all spheres of life, the old Socialist, craft-unionist, syndicalist parliamentary work into *new*, Communist work. In Russia, too, we had a very great deal of opportunist and purely bourgeois commercialism and capitalist swindling during elections. The Communists in Western Europe and America must learn to create a new, unusual, non-opportunist, non-careerist parliamentarism; the Communist Parties must issue their slogans; real proletarians, with the help of the unorganised and very poorest people, should scatter and distribute leaflets, canvass the workers' houses and the cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages (fortunately there

are not nearly so many remote villages in Europe as there are in Russia, and in England there are very few); they should go into the most common taverns, penetrate into the unions, societies and casual meetings where the common people gather, and talk to the people, not in scientific (and not very parliamentary) language, not in the least to strive to "get seats" in parliament, but everywhere to rouse the thoughts of the masses and draw them into the struggle, to take the bourgeoisie at their word, to utilise the apparatus they have set up, the elections they have called for, the appeal to the country that they have made, and to tell the people what Bolshevism is in a way that has not been possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (not counting, of course, times of big strikes, when in Russia a *similar* apparatus for widespread popular agitation worked even more intensively). It is very difficult to do this in Western Europe and America, very, very difficult; but it can and must be done, because the tasks of Communism cannot be fulfilled without effort; and every effort must be made to fulfil the *practical* tasks, ever more varied, ever more connected with all branches of social life, *winning* branch after branch, sphere after sphere, *from the bourgeoisie.*

In England, also, it is necessary to organise in a new way (not in a Socialist manner but in a Communist manner, not in a reformist manner but in a revolutionary manner) the work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the armed forces and among the oppressed and disfranchised nationalities in "one's own" state (Ireland, the colonies). Because all these spheres of social life, in the epoch of imperialism generally, and particularly now, after the war, which tortured the people and quickly opened their eyes to the truth (*viz.*, tens of millions killed and maimed only for the purpose of deciding whether the British or German pirates shall plunder the largest number of countries)—all these spheres of social life are particularly becoming filled with inflammable material and create numerous causes of conflict, crises and the intensification of the class struggle. We do not know and we cannot know which spark—out of the innumerable sparks that are flying around in all countries as a result of the economic and political world crisis—will kindle the conflagration, in the sense of specially rous-

ing the masses, and we must, therefore, with the aid of our new, Communist principles, set to work to "stir up" all, even the oldest, mustiest and seemingly hopeless spheres, for otherwise we shall not be able to cope with our tasks, we shall not be all-sided, we shall not be able to master all arms and we shall not be prepared either for victory over the bourgeoisie (which ordered all sides of social life, and has now disturbed all sides of social life in a bourgeois way) or for the forthcoming Communist reorganisation of the whole of social life after the victory.

After the proletarian revolution in Russia and the international victories of this revolution, which the bourgeoisie and the philistines did not expect, the whole world has changed and everywhere the bourgeoisie has also changed. It is terrified by "Bolshevism," it is enraged against it almost to madness, and precisely for that reason it, on the one hand, is accelerating the progress of events, and on the other, it is concentrating attention on the suppression of Bolshevism by force, and by that it is weakening its position in a number of other fields. The Communists in all advanced countries should take both these circumstances into consideration in their tactics.

When the Russian Cadets and Kerensky raised a mad hue-and-cry against the Bolsheviks—especially after April 1917, and more particularly in June and July 1917—they "overdid" it. Millions of copies of bourgeois papers, shouting in all keys against the Bolsheviks, helped to induce the masses to appraise Bolshevism; and, apart from the newspapers, the whole of public life was permeated with discussions about Bolshevism precisely because of the "zeal" of the bourgeoisie. At present, the millionaires of all countries are behaving, on an international scale, in such a manner as to deserve our heartiest thanks. They are hunting down Bolshevism with the same zeal as did Kerensky and Co.; they are "overdoing" it and *helping* us quite as much as did Kerensky. When the French bourgeoisie makes Bolshevism the central point of the election campaign, abusing the comparatively moderate or vacillating Socialists for being Bolsheviks; when the American bourgeoisie, having completely lost its head, seizes thousands and thousands of people on suspicion of Bolshevism and creates an atmosphere of panic,

spreading broadcast alarming stories about Bolshevik plots; when the British bourgeoisie—the most "solid" in the world—in spite of all its wisdom and experience, commits acts of incredible stupidity, founds the most richly endowed "societies to combat Bolshevism," creates a special literature on Bolshevism, and engages for the struggle against it an extra number of scientists, agitators and parsons—we must bow and thank Messieurs the capitalists. They are working for us. They are helping us to get the masses interested in the question of the nature and significance of Bolshevism. And they cannot act otherwise; for they have *already* failed to stifle Bolshevism by "silence."

But at the same time, the bourgeoisie sees practically only one side of Bolshevism, *viz.*, insurrection, violence, terror; it therefore strives to prepare itself especially for resistance and opposition in *this* field. It is possible that in single cases, in individual countries, and for more or less brief periods, it will succeed in this. We must reckon with such a possibility, and there will be absolutely nothing terrible for us if it does succeed. Communism "springs up" from positively all sides of social life. Its shoots are to be seen literally everywhere; the "contagion" (to use the favourite metaphor of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois police, the one that "pleases" them most) has very thoroughly permeated its organism and completely impregnated it. If one of the outlets is "stopped up" with special care, the "contagion" will find another, sometimes a very unexpected one. Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, overdo things, commit acts of stupidity, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance and endeavour to kill off (in India, Hungary, Germany, etc.) hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands more of yesterday's and tomorrow's Bolsheviks. Acting thus, the bourgeoisie acts as all classes doomed by history have acted. Communists should know that at all events the future belongs to them; therefore, we can, and must, combine the most intense passion in the great revolutionary struggle with the coolest and most sober estimation of the mad ravings of the bourgeoisie. The Russian Revolution was cruelly defeated in 1905; the Russian Bolsheviks were defeated in July

1917;[1] by means of the artful provocations and cunning manœuvres of Scheidemann and Noske, in conjunction with the bourgeoisie and monarchist generals, over 15,000 German Communists were slaughtered; white terror is raging in Finland and Hungary. But in all cases and in all countries Communism is becoming steeled and is growing; its roots are so deep that persecution does not weaken, does not debilitate it; rather does it strengthen it. Only one thing is lacking to enable us to march forward more surely and more firmly to victory, namely, the full and completely thought out appreciation by all Communists in all countries of the necessity of displaying the utmost *flexibility* in their tactics. Magnificently developing Communism, particularly in the advanced countries, now lacks this appreciation and the ability to apply it in practice.

What happened to leaders of the Second International, highly erudite Marxists who were devoted to Socialism, such as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others could (and should) serve as a useful lesson. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they learned and taught Marxian dialectics (and much of what they have done in this respect will forever remain a valuable contribution to Socialist literature); but *in the application* of these dialectics they committed such a mistake, or, rather, proved in practice to be so *un*dialectical, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid filling of old forms with new content, that their fate is not much more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov. The main reason for their bankruptcy was that they "concentrated their gaze" on one definite form of growth of the working class and Socialist movement, they forgot all about the one-sidedness of this form, they were afraid of seeing the sharp break which, by virtue of objective conditions, became inevitable, and continued to repeat the simple, routine, and at first glance, incontestable truths, such as: "three is more than two." But politics is more like algebra than arithmetic; it is more like higher than lower mathematics. In reality, all the old forms of the Socialist movement have been filled with a new content, and, consequently, a new sign, the "minus" sign, appeared in front of all figures; but our wiseacres

[1] For further particulars about the July days see, *Selected Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 183-89.—*Ed.*

stubbornly continued (and continue) to persuade themselves and others that "minus three" is more than "minus two"!

We must see to it that the Communists do not repeat the same mistake, only the other way round; or rather, we must see to it that the *same mistake* only the other way round that is committed by the "Left" Communists is corrected as soon as possible and is overcome as quickly and as painlessly as possible. It is not only Right doctrinairism that is a mistake; Left doctrinairism is also a mistake. Of course, at the present moment, the mistake of Left doctrinairism in Communism is a thousand times less dangerous and less significant than the mistake of Right doctrinairism (*i.e.*, social-chauvinism and Kautskyism); but after all, this is only due to the fact that Left Communism is a very young trend, and that it is only just coming into being. It is only for this reason that, given certain conditions, the disease can be easily cured; and it is necessary to set to work to cure it with the utmost energy.

The old forms have burst, for it turned out that their new content—anti-proletarian and reactionary—had obtained inordinate development. We now have what from the standpoint of the development of international Communism is such a lasting, strong and powerful content of work (for the Soviet power, for the dictatorship of the proletariat) that it can *and must* manifest itself in every form, both new and old; that it can and must regenerate, conquer and subjugate all forms, not only the new, but also the old—not for the purpose of reconciling itself with the old, but for the purpose of converting all and sundry forms, new and old, into a weapon for the complete, final, decisive and irrevocable victory of Communism.

The Communists must exert every effort to direct the working class movement, and social development in general, along the straightest and quickest way to the universal victory of the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is an incontestable truth. But it is enough to take one little step further—a step that seems to be in the same direction—and truth is transformed into error! To say, as the German and British Left Communists say, that we recognise only one road, only the straight road, that we do not agree with tacking, manœuvring, compromises—would

be a mistake, which may cause, and which, in part, has caused, and is causing, very serious harm to Communism. Right doctrinairism persisted in recognising only old forms, and became totally bankrupt, for it did not perceive the new content. Left doctrinairism persists in the unconditional repudiation of certain old forms and fails to see that the new content is forcing its way through all and sundry forms, that it is our duty as Communists to master all forms, to learn how to supplement with the maximum rapidity one form with another, to substitute one for another, and to adapt our tactics to every change that is called forth by something other than our class, or our efforts.

World revolution has received such a powerful impetus and acceleration from the horrors, atrocities and abominations of the world imperialist war and from the hopelessness of the situation created thereby, this revolution is spreading widely and deeply with such supreme rapidity, with such a splendid variety of changing forms, with such an instructive, practical refutation of all doctrinairism, that there is every ground for hoping for the rapid and complete recovery of the international Communist movement from the infantile disorder of "Left-wing" Communism.

April 27, 1920

APPENDIX

BEFORE the publishers in our country—which has been plundered by the imperialists of the whole world in revenge for the proletarian revolution, and is still being plundered and blockaded by them regardless of all promises to their own workers—had succeeded in getting out my pamphlet, additional material arrived from abroad. By no means laying claim to presenting in my pamphlet anything more than the hasty notes of a publicist, I shall briefly touch upon a few points.

I

THE SPLIT AMONG THE GERMAN COMMUNISTS

The split among the Communists in Germany has become an accomplished fact. The "Lefts," or "opposition on principle," have formed a separate Communist Labour Party as distinct from the Communist Party. Apparently, in Italy matters are also leading up to a split—I say apparently as I have only two additional numbers (Nos. 7 and 8) of the Left newspaper, *Il Soviet*, in which the possibility and inevitability of a split is openly discussed, and mention is also made of a congress of the "Abstentionist" or boycottist faction, *i.e.*, the opponents of participation in parliament. This faction is still a part of the Italian Socialist Party.

There is reason to apprehend that the split with the "Lefts," the anti-parliamentarians (in part also anti-politicals, opposed to a political party and to work in the trade unions), will become an international phenomenon, like the split with the "Centrists" (*i.e.*, the Kautskians, Longuetists, "Independents," etc.). Be it so. At all events a split is preferable to confusion which impedes the ideological, theoretical and revolutionary growth and maturing of the Party and prevents harmonious, really organised practical work that really paves the way for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let the "Lefts" put themselves to a practical test on a national and international scale; let them try to prepare for (and then to achieve) the dictatorship of the proletariat without a strictly centralised party with an iron discipline, without the ability to master every sphere, every branch, every variety of political and cultural work. Practical experience will soon make them wiser.

But every effort must be made to prevent the split with the "Lefts" from impeding (or to see that it impedes as little as possible) the necessary amalgamation into a single party—which is inevitable in the near future—of all those in the working class movement who sincerely and conscientiously stand for the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Russia the Bolsheviks had the particular good fortune to have fifteen years in which to wage a systematic and decisive struggle against the Mensheviks (that is to say, the opportunists and "Centrists") and also against the "Lefts," long before the direct mass struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat broke out. In Europe and America the same work has now to be performed by means of "forced marches." Individuals, especially those belonging to the category of unsuccessful pretenders to leadership, may (if lacking in proletarian discipline, and if they are not "honest with themselves") persist in their mistakes for a long time, but when the time is ripe, the masses of the workers will easily and quickly unite themselves and unite all sincere Communists in a single party that will be capable of establishing the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat.[1]

[1] With regard to the question of the future amalgamation of the "Left" Communists, anti-parliamentarians and Communists in general, I shall make the following additional remarks: as far as I have been able to make myself familiar with the newspapers of the "Left" Communists and those of the Communists in general in Germany, I find that the former are superior to the latter in that they are better agitators among the masses. I have repeatedly observed something analogous in the history of the Bolshevik Party, though on a smaller scale, in individual local organisations, and never on a national scale. For instance, in 1907-08, the "Left" Bolsheviks on certain occasions and in certain places carried on more successful agitation among the masses than we did. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that in a revolutionary moment, or at a time when revolutionary recollections are still fresh, it is easier to approach the masses with tactics of "mere" negation. This, however, can hardly serve as an argument for the correctness of such tactics. At all

II

The Communists and the Independents in Germany

In this pamphlet I have expressed the opinion that a compromise between the Communists and the Left wing of the Independents was necessary and useful to Communism, but that it would not be easy to effect it. The newspapers which I have subsequently received have confirmed this opinion on both points. In No. 32 of *The Red Flag*, the organ of the C.C. of the Communist Party of Germany (*Die Rote Fahne*, Zentralorgan der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands—Spartakusbund—of March 26, 1920), there appeared a "statement" of this Central Committee on the question of the Kapp and Lüttwitz military "putsch" (conspiracy, adventure) and on the "Socialist government." The basic premise and the practical conclusions of this statement are quite correct. Its basic premise is that there is no "objective basis" at the present moment for the dictatorship of the proletariat, in view of the fact that "the majority of the urban workers" support the Independents. The conclusion is: the promise to be a "loyal opposition" (*i.e.*, renunciation of preparations for a "violent overthrow") to a "Socialist government if it excludes bourgeois-capitalist parties."

Undoubtedly, these tactics, in the main, are correct. But, although it is not worth while dwelling on trifling inexactitudes of formulation, we cannot refrain from saying that we cannot (in an official statement of the Communist Party) describe a government of social-traitors as a "Socialist" government; that it is impermissible to speak of the exclusion of "bourgeois-capitalist parties," when the parties of both Scheidemann and Messrs. Kautsky and Crispien are petty-bourgeois-democratic parties; that it is impermissible to write such things as we read in paragraph 4 of the statement, which declares:

> events, there is not the least doubt that the Communist *Party*—which actually wishes to be the vanguard of the revolutionary *class*, of the proletariat, and which, in addition, wishes to learn to lead the broad *masses*, not only the proletarian, but also the *non*-proletarian masses of toilers and exploited—must necessarily know how to organise, how to carry on propaganda and agitation in the most comprehensible, most clear and vivid manner, not only in the factory districts of the towns, but also in the rural districts.

"... For the further winning of the proletarian masses for Communism, a state of things where political freedom could be enjoyed without restraint, where bourgeois democracy could not manifest itself as a dictatorship of capital, is of the greatest importance from the point of view of development toward the proletarian dictatorship."

Such a state of things is an impossibility. Petty-bourgeois leaders, the German Hendersons (the Scheidemanns) and Snowdens (the Crispiens), do not and cannot go beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy, which, in its turn, cannot but be the dictatorship of capital. From the point of view of the attainment of the practical results for which the Central Committee of the Communist Party has been quite rightly striving, there was no need at all to write statements that are wrong in principle and politically harmful. For this purpose it would have been sufficient to say (if one wished to indulge in parliamentary amenities): As long as the majority of the urban workers follow the Independents, we Communists must place no obstacles in the way of these workers overcoming their last philistine-democratic (consequently, also "bourgeois-capitalist") illusions, by going through the experience of having "their own" government. This is sufficient ground for a compromise, which is really necessary, and which means that for a certain period all attempts at a violent overthrow of a government which enjoys the confidence of a majority of the urban workers must be abandoned. But in everyday mass agitation, in which we are not bound by official parliamentary amenities, it is, of course, possible to add: Let knaves like the Scheidemanns, and philistines like the Kautsky-Crispiens actually reveal the full extent to which they have been fooled themselves and are fooling the workers; their "clean" government will itself do the "cleanest" job of "cleansing" the Augean stables of Socialism, Social-Democracy and other forms of social-treachery.

The real nature of the present leaders of the "Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany" (of those leaders about whom it is wrongly said that they have already lost all influence, whereas, in reality, they are even more dangerous to the proletariat than the Hungarian Social-Democrats who styled themselves Communists and promised to "support" the dictatorship of the proletariat) was revealed again and again during the German Kornilov

period—*i.e.*, during the Kapp-Lüttwitz "putsch."[1] A small but striking illustration is afforded by two brief articles—one by Karl Kautsky entitled "Entscheidende Stunden" ("Decisive Hours") in *Freiheit*, the organ of the Independents, of March 30, 1920, and one by Arthur Crispien entitled "On the Political Situation" (*ibid.*, April 14, 1920). These gentlemen are absolutely incapable of thinking and reasoning like revolutionaries. They are sniveling philistine democrats, who are a thousand times more dangerous to the proletariat than ever when they proclaim themselves to be adherents of the Soviet power and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, because, in fact, in every difficult and dangerous situation they are sure to commit treachery . . ., while "sincerely" convinced that they are helping the proletariat! Did not the Hungarian Social-Democrats, after becoming "converted" to Communism, also claim that they wanted to "help" the proletariat when, owing to their cowardice and spinelessness, they considered the situation of the Soviet power in Hungary to be hopeless and began to snivel before the agents of the Entente capitalists and of the Entente hangmen?

III

Turati and Co. in Italy

The issues of the Italian newspaper, *Il Soviet*, referred to above, fully confirm what I have said in this pamphlet regarding the error committed by the Italian Socialist Party, which tolerates in its ranks such members and even such a group of parliamentarians as I have mentioned. It is still further confirmed by such an impartial observer as the Rome correspondent of the English, bourgeois-liberal newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, whose interview with Turati is published in that paper on March 12, 1920. This correspondent wrote:

"Signor Turati's opinion is that the revolutionary peril is not such as to cause undue anxiety in Italy. The Maximalists are playing with the fire of Soviet theories only to keep the masses roused and in a state of excitement.

[1] Incidentally, this has been elucidated in an exceptionally clear, concise, exact and Marxian manner in the excellent organ of the Austrian Communist Party. (*Die Rote Fahne*, Vienna, Nos. 266 and 267, of March 28 and 30, 1920; L. L.: "Ein neuer Abschnitt der deutschen Revolution.") ("A New Stage of the German Revolution."—*Ed.*)

These theories are, however, merely legendary notions, unripe programmes unfit for practical use. They can only serve to keep the working classes in a state of expectation. The very men who use them as a lure to dazzle proletarian eyes find themselves compelled to fight a daily battle for the extortion of some, often trifling, economic improvements, so as to put off the day when the working classes will shed their illusions and faith in their favourite myths. Hence a long string of strikes of all dimensions, called on any pretext, p to the very latest ones in the mail and railway services—strikes which make the already hard conditions of the country still worse. The country is irritated owing to the difficulties connected with its Adriatic problem, it is weighed down by its foreign debt and by the excessive issue of paper currency, and yet it is still far from realising the necessity of adopting that discipline of work which alone can restore order and prosperity."

It is clear as daylight that this English correspondent has blurted out the truth, which, in all probability, is concealed and glossed over by Turati himself and by his bourgeois defenders, accomplices and inspirers in Italy. For the truth is that the ideas and the political activities of Messrs. Turati, Treves, Modigliani, Dugoni and Co. are really and precisely such as are described by the English correspondent. It is all social-treachery. The advocacy of order and discipline among the workers, who are wage slaves toiling to enrich the capitalist, is precious! And how familiar all these Menshevik speeches are to us Russians! What a valuable admission that the masses are *in favour* of the Soviet power! What a stupid and vulgarly bourgeois lack of understanding of the revolutionary role of spontaneously spreading strikes! Yes, yes, the English correspondent of the bourgeois-liberal newspaper has rendered a bad service to Messrs. Turati and Co., and has well confirmed the correctness of the demand of Comrade Bordiga and his friends of *Il Soviet*, who are insisting on the Italian Socialist Party, if it really wants to be *in favour* of the Third International, expelling Messrs. Turati and Co. from its ranks with all the ignominy they deserve, and on it becoming a Communist Party both in name and deed.

IV

Incorrect Conclusions from Correct Premises

But Comrade Bordiga and his "Left" friends draw from their correct criticism of Messrs. Turati and Co. the wrong conclusion that participation in parliament, in general, is harmful. The Italian

"Lefts" cannot advance even a shadow of serious argument in support of this view. They simply do not know (or they are trying to forget) the international examples of really revolutionary and Communist utilisation of bourgeois parliaments, a utilisation which has been of unquestionable value in preparing for the proletarian revolution. They simply cannot conceive of a "new" form of utilising parliament, but shout and endlessly repeat themselves about the "old," non-Bolshevik method of utilising parliamentarism.

This is precisely where their fundamental mistake lies. Not only in the parliamentary field, but in *all* fields of activity, Communism *must introduce* (and without long, persistent, stubborn effort it *will be unable* to introduce) something new in principle that represents a radical break from the traditions of the Second International (while retaining and developing that which was good in the latter).

Let us take, say, journalistic work. Newspapers, pamphlets and manifestoes perform the necessary work of propaganda, agitation and organisation. Not a single mass movement can dispense with a journalistic apparatus in any country that is at all civilised. No outcries against "leaders," no solemn vows to preserve the purity of the masses from the influence of leaders, will relieve one of the necessity of utilising bourgeois intellectuals for this work, will relieve one of the bourgeois-democratic, "private property" atmosphere and environment in which this work is carried on under capitalism. Even two and a half years after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, after the conquest of political power by the proletariat, we still have this atmosphere around us, this mass (peasant, artisan) environment of bourgeois-democratic property relations.

Parliamentarism is one form of activity, journalism is another. The content of both can be Communist, and should be Communist, if those engaged in either sphere are really Communists, are really members of a proletarian mass party. Yet, neither in one nor the other sphere—nor *in any sphere of activity* under capitalism, or during the period of transition from capitalism to Socialism—is it possible to avoid those difficulties which the proletariat must overcome, those special problems which the proletariat must solve, in order to utilise for its own purposes the services of those who have come from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, in order to gain a victory

over bourgeois intellectual prejudices and influences, in order to weaken the resistance of (and, ultimately, completely to transform) the petty-bourgeois environment.

Did we not, before the war of 1914-18, witness in all countries an extraordinary abundance of instances of extreme "Left" anarchists, syndicalists and others renouncing parliamentarism, deriding parliamentary Socialists who had degenerated into bourgeois, castigating their careerism and so forth, and yet themselves making the same kind of bourgeois career *through* journalism and *through* work in the syndicates (trade unions)? To limit oneself to France, are not the examples of Messrs. Jouhaux and Merrheim typical?

The childishness of those who "repudiate" participation in parliament lies precisely in the fact that they think it is possible by such a "simple," "easy," alleged revolutionary method to "solve" the difficult problem of combating bourgeois-democratic influences *inside* the working class movement. In reality, they are only fleeing from their own shadow, only closing their eyes to difficulties, only trying to brush them aside with mere words. Shameless careerism, bourgeois utilisation of parliamentary posts, glaring reformist perversion of parliamentary activity, vulgar, petty-bourgeois routine are all, undoubtedly, the usual and prevalent features which capitalism engenders everywhere, not only outside but also inside the working class movement. But this capitalism and the bourgeois environment created by it (which disappears very slowly even after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, because the peasantry is constantly regenerating the bourgeoisie) give rise to what is essentially bourgeois careerism, national chauvinism, petty-bourgeois vulgarity, etc., in positively every sphere of activity and life, differing only in insignificant variations in form.

You, dear boycottists and anti-parliamentarians, think that you are "terribly revolutionary," but in reality *you are frightened* by the comparatively small difficulties of the struggle against bourgeois influences in the working class movement, whereas your victory—*i.e.*, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of political power by the proletariat—will create *these very* difficulties on a still larger, on an infinitely larger scale. Like children, you are frightened by a small difficulty which confronts you today,

and you fail to understand that tomorrow and the day after you will have to learn, finish learning, to overcome the same difficulties, only on an immeasurably greater scale.

Under the Soviet power, your and our proletarian party will be invaded by a still larger number of bourgeois intellectuals. They will worm their way into the Soviets, into the courts, and into the administration, for it is only possible to build up Communism with the aid of the human material created by capitalism. It is impossible to expel and to destroy the bourgeois intelligentsia, it is necessary to vanquish this intelligentsia, to remould, to assimilate and to re-educate it, just as it is necessary to re-educate—in a protracted struggle, on the soil of the dictatorship of the proletariat —the proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty-bourgeois prejudices at one stroke, by a miracle, at the behest of the Virgin Mary, at the behest of a slogan, resolution or decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty-bourgeois influence. Under the Soviet power the same problems which at the present time the anti-parliamentarians so proudly, so haughtily, so lightly and so childishly brush aside with a wave of the hand—*these very same* problems are arising anew *within* the Soviets, within the Soviet administration, among the Soviet "attorneys." (In Russia we abolished, and rightly abolished the bourgeois legal Bar, but it is reviving in the guise of "Soviet" "attorneys.") Among the Soviet engineers, the Soviet school teachers and the privileged, *i.e.*, the most highly skilled and best situated *workers* in the Soviet factories, we observe a constant revival of absolutely *all* the bad traits peculiar to bourgeois parliamentarism, and only by constant, tireless, prolonged and persistent struggle, by proletarian organisation and discipline will we gradually conquer this evil.

Of course, under the rule of the bourgeoisie it is very "difficult" to conquer bourgeois habits in our own Party, *i.e.*, the workers' party; it is "difficult" to expel from the Party the ordinary parliamentary leaders who are hopelessly corrupted by bourgeois prejudices; it is "difficult" to subject to proletarian discipline the absolutely necessary number (even if very limited) of bourgeois intellectuals; it is "difficult" to form in a bourgeois parliament

a Communist group worthy of the working class; it is "difficult" to ensure that the Communist parliamentarians do not play at the bourgeois parliamentary game of skittles, but take up the very urgent work of propaganda, agitation and organisation of the masses. All this is very "difficult," there is no doubt about it; it was difficult in Russia, and it is incomparably more difficult in Western Europe and in America, where the bourgeoisie is far stronger, where bourgeois-democratic traditions, etc., are far stronger.

Yet all these "difficulties" are mere child's play compared with *precisely the same* sort of problems which the proletariat will in any event inevitably be obliged to solve in order to achieve victory, during the proletarian revolution, and after the seizure of power by the proletariat. Compared with *these* truly gigantic tasks of re-educating, under the proletarian dictatorship, millions of peasants and small proprietors, hundreds of thousands of office employees, officials and bourgeois intellectuals, of subordinating all these to the proletarian state and to proletarian leadership, of overcoming their bourgeois habits and traditions—compared with these gigantic tasks it is a childishly easy matter to establish, under the rule of the bourgeoisie, a really Communist group of a real proletarian party in a bourgeois parliament.

If our "Left" and anti-parliamentarian comrades do not now learn to overcome even such a small difficulty, we may assert with confidence that, either they will prove incapable of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat, will be unable to subordinate and remould the bourgeois intellectuals and bourgeois institutions on a wide scale, or they will have to *complete their education in a hurry*, and in consequence of such haste they will do a great deal of harm to the cause of the proletariat, they will commit more errors than usual, will manifest more than the average weakness and inefficiency, and so on and so forth.

As long as the bourgeoisie is in power, as long as small-scale economy and small-commodity production exist, the bourgeois atmosphere, proprietary habits and petty-bourgeois traditions will impede proletarian work both outside and inside the working class movement, not only in the sphere of parliamentary activity, but

inevitably in each and every sphere of social activity, in all cultural and political spheres without exception. The attempt to brush aside, to fence oneself off from *one* of the "unpleasant" problems or difficulties in one sphere of activity is a profound mistake and one which later will certainly have to be paid for dearly. It is necessary to learn how to master every sphere of activity and work without exception, to overcome, everywhere, all difficulties and all bourgeois habits, customs and traditions. Any other method of presenting the question is mere trifling, mere childishness.

May 12, 1920

THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE Second Congress of the Communist International came to a close on August 7. A little over a year has passed since the Communist International was formed, but during this short period, enormous, decisive successes have been achieved.

At the First Congress, held a year ago, the flag of Communism, around which the forces of the revolutionary proletariat were to rally, was only unfurled; war was declared against the Second, yellow, International, which unites the social-traitors who have deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, and who are allied with the capitalists against the workers' revolution.

The enormous success that has been achieved during the past year can be seen, among other things, from the fact that the growing sympathy of the masses of the workers for Communism has compelled some of the most important European and American parties affiliated to the Second International, such as the Socialist Party of France, the German and British "Independent" Parties, the American Independent Party, to withdraw from that body.

In all countries in the world the best representatives of the revolutionary workers have already come over to the side of Communism, are in favour of Soviet power, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In all the advanced countries of Europe and America, Communist Parties, or numerous Communist groups, already exist. And at the congress which closed on August 7 it was not only advanced heralds of the proletarian revolution who rallied, but delegates of strong and powerful organisations which are connected with the proletarian masses. It is the world army of the revolutionary proletariat that now stands for Communism; it was this army that was given organisation and a clear, precise and detailed programme of action at the congress which has just closed.

The congress refused immediately to accept into the ranks of the Communist International those parties which still retain in their ranks influential representatives of "Menshevism," of social-treachery and of opportunism, such as the above-mentioned parties which have withdrawn from the Second, yellow, International.

In a number of very definite resolutions the congress closed all openings by which opportunism could gain access, and demanded a complete rupture with it. And the unquestionable data communicated to the congress showed that the masses of the workers are with us, that the opportunists will now be utterly defeated.

The congress rectified the mistakes committed in several countries by Communists who wanted to go to the "Left" at all costs and who denied that it was necessary to work in bourgeois parliaments, in reactionary trade unions, everywhere where there are millions of workers who are still fooled by the capitalists and by their lackeys in the ranks of the workers, *i.e.*, the members of the Second, yellow, International.

The congress created a solidarity and discipline of Communist Parties the world over such as has never existed before, and which will enable the vanguard of the workers' revolution to march forward to its great goal, the overthrow of the yoke of capital, with seven-league strides.

The congress served to strengthen the ties with the women's Communist movement as a result of the International Conference of Working Women that was held simultaneously with it.

Communist groups and Parties of the East, of colonial and backward countries which are so brutally plundered, violated and enslaved by the "civilised" alliance of predatory nations, were also represented at the congress. The revolutionary movement in the advanced countries would indeed be a mere deception if complete and close unity did not exist between the workers fighting against capital in Europe and America and the hundreds and hundreds of millions of "colonial" slaves who are oppressed by that capital.

Great are the military victories of the Soviet Republic of workers and peasants over the landlords and capitalists, over the Yudeniches, Kolchaks, Denikins, the White Poles and their accomplices—France, Great Britain, America and Japan.

But still greater is our victory over the minds and hearts of the workers, the toilers, the masses who are oppressed by capital, the victory of Communist ideas and of the Communist organisations all over the world.

The proletarian revolution, the overthrow of the yoke of capitalism, is advancing and will be achieved in all countries of the world.

August-September, 1920

THESES ON THE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS OF THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

1. THE present moment in the development of the international Communist movement is characterised by the fact that in all capitalist countries the best representatives of the revolutionary proletariat have fully understood the fundamental principles of the Communist International, *viz.*, the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power, and with unbounded enthusiasm have come over to the side of the Communist International. A bigger and still more important step forward is the fact that everywhere among the broadest masses, not only of the urban proletariat, but also of the advanced section of the rural workers, unreserved sympathy for these fundamental principles has become fully defined.

On the other hand, two errors, or weaknesses, of the very rapidly growing international Communist movement have been revealed. One, a very serious one, and representing a very serious, immediate danger to the success of the cause of emancipation of the proletariat, is that a section of the old leaders and of the old parties of the Second International—some semi-consciously yielding to the desires and pressure of the masses, and some deliberately deceiving the masses in order to retain their role of agents and coadjutors of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement—declare that they adhere to the Third International, with reservations or even without reservations, while actually, in all their practical party and political work, remaining on the level of the Second International. Such a state of affairs is absolutely intolerable because it introduces downright corruption among the masses, diminishes respect for the Third International and threatens a repetition of the treacheries that were perpetrated by the Hungarian Social-Democrats who became so hastily converted to Communism. The other error, much less important, which is more in the nature of the growing pains of the

movement, lies in a striving toward "Leftism," which leads to a wrong appraisal of the role and tasks of the Party in relation to the class and to the masses, and of the duty of all revolutionary Communists to work in bourgeois parliaments and reactionary trade unions.

The duty of the Communists is not to hush up the weaknesses of their movement, but to criticise them openly in order to get rid of them the more speedily and radically. For this purpose it is necessary: 1. To define more concretely, particularly on the basis of already acquired practical experience, the content of the terms "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "Soviet power"; 2. To indicate what the immediate and systematic preparatory work which is to give effect to these slogans can and should consist of in all countries; and 3. To indicate the ways and means of ridding our movement of its defects.

I

The Quintessence of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and of Soviet Power

2. The victory of Socialism (as the first stage of Communism) over capitalism requires that the proletariat, as the only really revolutionary class, shall fulfil the three following tasks. First, —overthrow the exploiters, primarily the bourgeoisie as the principal economic and political representatives of the latter; utterly rout them; suppress their resistance; make it utterly impossible for them to attempt to restore the yoke of capital and wage slavery. Second—win over and bring under the leadership of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, of its Communist Party, not only the whole of the proletariat, or the overwhelming, the enormous majority of the latter, but also the whole mass of toilers and those exploited by capital; educate, organise, train and discipline them in the very process of the supremely bold and ruthlessly firm struggle against the exploiters; tear this overwhelming majority of the population in all capitalist countries from its dependence on the bourgeoisie; imbue it by means of its practical experience with confidence in the leading role of the proletariat and of its

revolutionary vanguard. Third—neutralise, or render harmless, the inevitable vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and Soviet power, of the class of small proprietors in agriculture, industry and commerce—which is still fairly numerous in nearly all advanced countries, although it comprises the minority of the population—as well as the stratum of intellectuals, office employees, etc., which corresponds to this class.

The first and second tasks are independent tasks, each requiring its own special methods of action toward the exploiters and toward the exploited. The third task emerges from the first two and merely requires the skilful, timely and flexible combination of the first and second types of method in accordance with the concrete circumstances in each separate case of vacillation.

3. In the concrete situation which has been created by militarism, imperialism, all over the world, and most of all in the most advanced, powerful, most enlightened and free capitalist countries, the strangulation of colonies and weak countries, the world imperialist butchery and the Versailles "Peace"—the very thought of peacefully subordinating the capitalists to the will of the majority of the exploited, of the peaceful, reformist transition to Socialism is not only extreme philistine stupidity, but also downright deception of the workers, the embellishment of capitalist wage slavery, concealment of the truth. The truth is that the bourgeoisie, even the most educated and democratic, now no longer hesitates to resort to any fraud or crime, to massacre millions of workers and peasants in order to save the private ownership of the means of production. Only the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the whole of the bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom—parliamentary, judicial, military, bureaucratic, administrative, municipal, etc., right up to the very wholesale deportation or internment of the most dangerous and stubborn exploiters—putting them under strict surveillance in order to combat inevitable attempts to resist and to restore capitalist slavery—only such measures can ensure the real subordination of the whole class of exploiters.

On the other hand, the common idea prevailing among the old

parties and the old leaders of the Second International that the majority of the toilers and the exploited can acquire complete clarity of Socialist consciousness and firm Socialist convictions and character under the conditions of capitalist slavery, under the yoke of the bourgeoisie (which assumes an infinite variety of forms, the more subtle and also more fierce and ruthless the more cultured the given country is) is also the embellishment of capitalism and bourgeois democracy, is also the deception of the workers. As a matter of fact, only after the vanguard of the proletariat, supported by the whole of this, the only revolutionary, class, or the majority of it, overthrows the exploiters, suppresses them, emancipates the exploited from their state of slavery, improves their conditions of life immediately at the expense of the expropriated capitalists, only after this, and in the very process of the acute class struggle, is it possible to educate, train and organise the broadest masses of the toilers and the exploited around the proletariat, and under its influence and guidance, to rid them of the selfishness, disunity, the vices and weaknesses engendered by private property, and to transform them into a free union of free workers.

4. The victory over capitalism requires a proper correlation between the leading, Communist, Party, the revolutionary class—the proletariat—and the masses, *i.e.*, all the toilers and exploited. The Communist Party alone, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class, if it really contains all its best representatives, if it consists of fully conscious and loyal Communists who have been educated and hardened by the experience of the persistent revolutionary struggle, if this Party has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class, and through it, with the whole mass of exploited, and if it has succeeded in completely winning the confidence of this class and this mass—such a Party alone is capable of leading the proletariat in the most ruthless, decisive and final struggle against all the forces of capitalism. On the other hand, only under the leadership of such a Party can the proletariat display the full force of its revolutionary onslaught and neutralise the inevitable apathy and sometimes resistance of the small minority of the aristocracy of labour, the old trade union and co-operative leaders, etc., who have been cor-

rupted by capitalism—only then will it be able to display its whole might, which is immeasurably greater than the proportion of the population it represents owing to the very economic structure of capitalist society. Finally, only after they have been actually emancipated from the yoke of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois state apparatus, only after they have obtained the opportunity of organising in their Soviets in a really free (from the exploiters) manner, can the masses, *i.e.*, all the toilers and the exploited, for the first time in history, display all the initiative and energy of tens of millions of people who had been crushed by capitalism. Only when the Soviets have become the sole state apparatus is it possible really to secure the participation in the work of administration of the whole mass of exploited, ninety-nine hundredths of whom even under the most enlightened and free bourgeois democracy were actually debarred from taking part in the work of administration. Only in the Soviets do the masses of exploited really begin to learn, not from booklets, but from their own practical experience, the work of Socialist construction, of creating a new social discipline, a free union of free workers.

II

What Should the Immediate and Universal Preparations for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat Consist of?

5. The present moment in the development of the international Communist movement is characterised by the fact that in the overwhelming majority of capitalist countries the preparation of the proletariat for the establishment of its dictatorship is not complete—in many cases has not yet even begun in a systematic manner. It does not follow from this, however, that the proletarian revolution cannot break out in the very immediate future; it is quite possible for it to break out, for the whole economic and political situation is unusually replete with inflammable material and causes for its unexpected ignition; the other condition for revolution, apart from the state of preparedness of the proletariat, *viz.*, the general state of crisis in all the commanding and in all bourgeois parties, also exists. But it does follow from what has been said that the task

of the moment for the Communist Parties is not to accelerate revolution, but to accelerate the work of preparing the proletariat. On the other hand, the cases in the history of many Socialist parties mentioned above compel us to see to it that "recognition" of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not remain mere verbal recognition.

Hence, from the point of view of the international proletarian movement, the principal task of the Communist Parties at the present moment is to unite the scattered Communist forces, to form in every country a united Communist Party (or to reinforce, or revive, already existing Parties) in order to increase tenfold the work of preparing the proletariat for the conquest of political power, the conquest of power precisely in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The ordinary Socialist work as pursued by groups and parties which recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat has been far from adequately subjected to that fundamental reorganisation, to that fundamental renovation that is necessary before this work can be admitted to be Communist work and work corresponding to the tasks of the eve of the proletarian dictatorship.

6. The conquest of political power by the proletariat does not put a stop to its class struggle against the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, it makes this struggle particularly wide, sharp and ruthless. All the groups, parties and leading men in the labour movement who wholly or partly adhere to the point of view of reformism, the "Centre," etc., inevitably, owing to the extreme intensification of the struggle, either go over to the side of the bourgeoisie or join the waverers, or (what is most dangerous of all) drop into the ranks of the unreliable friends of the victorious proletariat. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat not only calls for the intensification of the struggle against the reformist and "Centrist" trends, but also for a change in the character of this struggle. This struggle cannot be limited to explaining the errors of these trends; it must unswervingly and ruthlessly expose every leading man in the working class movement who reveals these trends, otherwise the proletariat cannot know with whom it will march to the most decisive struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle is such that at any moment it may—and does, as experience

has already shown—substitute criticism with weapons for the weapon of criticism. Any inconsistency or weakness in exposing those who reveal themselves as reformists or "Centrists" means increasing the danger of the power of the proletariat being overthrown by the bourgeoisie, which tomorrow will utilise for the counter-revolution what today appears to shortsighted people to be merely "theoretical disagreements."

7. In particular, it is impossible to restrict oneself to the ordinary repudiation on principle of all collaboration between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of all "collaborationism." The mere defence of "freedom" and "equality," while the private ownership of means of production is preserved, is transformed—amidst the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat which will never be in a position to abolish private property completely at one stroke—becomes transformed into "collaboration" with the bourgeoisie, which directly undermines the power of the working class. For dictatorship of the proletariat means fixing and defending by the state, by the whole apparatus of state power, of "non-freedom" for the exploiters to continue their work of oppression and exploitation, "inequality" between the property owner (*i.e.*, one who has appropriated for himself certain means of production created by social labour) and the propertyless. What before the victory of the proletariat seems to be merely a theoretical disagreement on the question of "democracy," on the morrow of victory inevitably becomes a question which is settled by force of arms. Consequently, without a radical change in the whole character of the struggle against the "Centrists" and "champions of democracy," even the preliminary work of preparing the masses for effecting the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible.

8. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most determined and revolutionary form of the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Such a struggle may be successful only when the most revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat is backed by the overwhelming majority of the latter. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat not only requires that the bourgeois character of all reformism, of all defence of democracy, while the private ownership of the means of production is pre-

served, shall be explained, it not only requires the exposure of trends which, in fact, imply defence of the bourgeoisie within the labour movement, but it also requires that the old leaders be replaced by Communists in proletarian organisations of absolutely all types, not only political, but also industrial, co-operative, educational, etc. The more prolonged, complete and firmly established the rule of bourgeois democracy has been in a given country, the more has the bourgeoisie succeeded in securing the appointment to such leading posts of people whom it has trained, who are saturated with its views and prejudices and whom, very often, it has bought, directly or indirectly. It is necessary, a hundred times more boldly than has been done hitherto, to eliminate these representatives of the labour aristocracy, or bourgeoisified workers, from all their posts and replace them by even the least experienced workers, as long as they are connected with the exploited masses and enjoy their confidence in the struggle against the exploiters. The dictatorship of the proletariat will make necessary the appointment of such inexperienced workers to the most responsible posts in the state, otherwise the workers' government will be impotent, and will not be supported by the masses.

9. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the exercise of the fullest leadership of all the toilers and exploited, who are oppressed, downtrodden, crushed, intimidated, disunited and deceived by the capitalist class, by the only class that has been trained by the whole history of capitalism for such a leading role. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat must be started everywhere and immediately with the following method among others:

In all organisations without exception—unions and associations, primarily proletarian, and also organisations of the non-proletarian, toiling and exploited masses (political, industrial, military, co-operative, educational, sports, etc., etc.), groups or nuclei of Communists should be formed—mainly open groups, but also secret groups, which should be obligatory in every case when their suppression, or the arrest or deportation of their members by the bourgeoisie may be expected—and these nuclei, closely connected with each other and with the Party centre, interchanging

their experiences, carrying on work of agitation, propaganda and organisation, adapting themselves to absolutely all spheres of public life, absolutely to all varieties and subdivisions of the toiling masses, must systematically train themselves, and the Party, and the class, and the masses, by means of this diversified work.

In this it is extremely important to work out in a practical manner the various necessary methods of work, on the one hand, in relation to the "leaders" or to the "responsible representatives," who, very often, are hopelessly corrupted by petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices; these "leaders" must be ruthlessly exposed and driven out of the working class movement; and on the other hand, in relation to the masses, who, particularly after the imperialist slaughter, are for the most part inclined to pay heed to and assimilate the doctrine that the leadership of the proletariat is necessary as the only way out of capitalist slavery; we must learn to approach the masses with special patience and caution in order to be able to understand the specific and peculiar features of the psychology of every stratum, profession, etc., of these masses.

10. One group or nucleus of Communists in particular deserves the exceptional attention and care of the Party, *viz.*, the parliamentary fraction, *i.e.*, the groups of Party members who are deputies in bourgeois representative institutions (primarily the national representative institution, and then the local, municipal, etc., institutions). On the one hand, precisely this tribune is of particular importance in the eyes of the broadest strata of the backward, toiling masses, or those who are saturated with petty-bourgeois prejudices; hence, it is absolutely necessary for the Communists, from precisely this tribune, to carry on work of propaganda, agitation, organisation, and of explaining to the masses why the dispersion of the bourgeois parliament by the national congress of Soviets was legitimate in Russia (and at the proper time will be legitimate in any country). On the other hand, the whole history of bourgeois democracy, particularly in the advanced countries, has transformed the parliamentary tribune into the principal, or one of the principal, arenas of unprecedented fraud, of the financial and political deception of the people, careerism, hypocrisy and the oppression of the

toilers. Hence, the burning hatred towards parliaments entertained by the best representatives of the revolutionary proletariat is quite legitimate. That is why the Communist Parties and all parties which are affiliated to the Third International—particularly in those cases when they have arisen, not as a result of a split from the old parties and of a prolonged and persistent struggle against them, but as a result of the transition (often nominal) of the old parties to the new position—must adopt an exceptionally strict attitude toward their parliamentary fractions: the latter must be completely subordinated to the control and guidance of the Central Committees of the Parties; they must consist mainly of revolutionary workers; the speeches of deputies must be subjected to careful analysis in the Party press and at Party meetings from the point of view of Communist consistency; deputies must be commissioned to carry on agitational work among the masses, members of these fractions who betray Second International trends must be expelled, etc.

11. One of the chief causes which retard the revolutionary working class movement in the developed capitalist countries is that, owing to the colonial possessions and the super-profits of finance capital, etc., capital has succeeded in these countries in singling out a relatively broader and more stable stratum, a small minority, a labour aristocracy. The latter enjoys better terms of employment and is most imbued with the narrow craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. This is the real social "bulwark" of the Second International, of the reformists and "Centrists," and at the present time it is almost the principal social bulwark of the bourgeoisie. No preparation, even preliminary, of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is possible without an immediate, systematic, extensive and open struggle against this stratum, which undoubtedly—as experience has fully shown already—will provide not a few elements for the bourgeois White Guards after the victory of the proletariat. All parties affiliated to the Third International must at all costs put into practice the slogan: "Deeper among the masses," "closer connections with the masses"—meaning by masses all the toilers and all those exploited by capital, particularly the least organised and least educated, the most oppressed and least amenable to organisation.

The proletariat becomes revolutionary only to the extent that it refrains from enclosing itself within narrow craft limits, to the extent that it acts in response to all manifestations and in all fields of public life as the leader of all the toiling and exploited masses; and it is impossible for it to effect its dictatorship unless it is prepared, and is able to make the greatest sacrifices for the sake of securing victory over the bourgeoisie. In this respect the experience of Russia—where the proletariat could not have effected its dictatorship, could not have won for itself the universally admitted respect and confidence of all the toiling masses, had it not made most sacrifices, had it not starved more than all the other strata of these masses in the very difficult times of stress, of war and blockade by the world bourgeoisie—is of significance in principle and in practice.

In particular, the all-sided and self-sacrificing support of the Communist Party and of the whole of the advanced proletariat is especially necessary for the broad, spontaneous, mass strike movement, which alone is capable, under the yoke of capital, of really rousing, setting into motion, educating and organising the masses, of imbuing them with complete confidence in the leading role of the revolutionary proletariat. Without such preparation no dictatorship of the proletariat is possible, and those who, like Kautsky in Germany and Turati in Italy, are capable of publicly opposing strikes, cannot possibly be tolerated in the ranks of the parties affiliated to the Third International. Of course, this applies still more to those trade union and parliamentary leaders who often betray the workers by utilising the experience of strikes to teach them reformism and not revolution (for example, in England and in France in recent years).

12. In all countries even the freest, "legal" and "peaceful" in the sense that the class struggle is least acute in them, the time has fully matured when it is absolutely necessary for every Communist Party systematically to combine legal with illegal work, legal with illegal organisation. For in the most enlightened and free countries, those with the most "stable" bourgeois-democratic system, the governments already, notwithstanding their false and hypocritical declarations, systematically resort to secret blacklists

of Communists, to endless violations of their own constitutions in order to render semi-secret and secret support to the White Guards and to assassinations of Communists in all countries, to secret preparations for the arrest of Communists, to placing provocateurs among the Communists, etc., etc. Only the most reactionary philistinism, no matter what beautiful, "democratic" and pacifist phrases it may be cloaked in, can deny this fact, or the imperative conclusion that follows from it, *viz.*, that it is necessary, immediately, for all legal Communist Parties to form illegal organisations for the purpose of systematically carrying on illegal work, and of fully preparing for the moment when the bourgeoisie resorts to persecution. Illegal work is particularly necessary in the army, the navy and police; for after the great imperialist butchery all the governments in the world began to fear a people's army which is open to the workers and peasants, and began secretly to resort to all possible methods of forming military units especially picked from the ranks of the bourgeoisie and especially supplied with all technical improvements.

On the other hand, it is also necessary, in all cases without exception, not to restrict oneself to illegal work, but also to carry on legal work, overcoming all obstacles that stand in the way of this, forming legal organs of the press and legal organisations under the most varied titles, which may often be changed in the event of necessity. This is what is now being done by the illegal Communist Parties in Finland, in Hungary, partly in Germany, in Poland, in Latvia, etc. This is what the Industrial Workers of the World in America should do, and this should also be done by all the at present legal Communist Parties when the public prosecutors see fit to take proceedings against them on the basis of the resolutions of the congresses of the Communist International, etc.

The absolute necessity in principle of combining illegal with legal work is determined, not only by the sum total of the specific features of the present period, the period of the eve of the proletarian dictatorship, but also by the necessity of proving to the bourgeoisie that there is not, nor can there be, a sphere or field of work that cannot be won by the Communists; and above all it is determined by the fact that everywhere there are broad strata of

the proletariat, and still broader non-proletarian toiling and exploited masses, who still believe in bourgeois-democratic legality and whose awakening is a matter of extreme importance for us.

13. In particular, the state of the labour press in the most advanced capitalist countries particularly vividly illustrates the utterly fraudulent nature of liberty and equality under bourgeois democracy, as well as the necessity of systematically combining legal with illegal work. In vanquished Germany, as well as in victorious America, the whole force of the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie and all the tricks of its kings of finance are brought into action for the purpose of depriving the workers of their press: legal prosecution and the arrest (or murder by hired assassins) of editors, refusal of the mails, cutting off the supply of paper, etc., etc. In addition to this, the news services essential for conducting daily newspapers are in the hands of bourgeois telegraph agencies, and advertisements, without which a large newspaper cannot pay, are given out at the "free" discretion of the capitalists. To sum up, the bourgeoisie is depriving the revolutionary proletariat of its press by means of deceit and the pressure of capital and the bourgeois state.

In order to combat this the Communist Parties must create a new type of periodical press for mass distribution among the workers: first, legal publications, which must learn, without calling themselves Communist, and without announcing their affiliation with the Party, to utilise every scrap of legality in the same way as the Bolsheviks did under the tsar in 1905; secondly, illegal leaflets, even of the smallest size, and issued at irregular intervals, but printed in a large number of printing offices by the workers (secretly, or if the movement has become strong, by the revolutionary seizure of printing plants), which shall give the proletariat free, revolutionary information and revolutionary slogans.

Without a revolutionary struggle for the freedom of the Communist press that will enlist all the masses, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat will be impossible.

III

The Rectification of the Line—and Partly Also the Composition—of the Parties Affiliated to and Desiring to Affiliate to the Communist International

14. The degree of preparedness of the proletariat in the countries most important from the point of view of world economy and world politics for establishing their dictatorship can be characterised with greatest objectivity and precision by the fact that the most influential parties of the Second International, *viz.*, the Socialist Party of France, the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of America, have withdrawn from this yellow International, and have decided—the first three conditionally, and the latter even unconditionally—to affiliate to the Third International. This proves that not only the vanguard but the majority of the revolutionary proletariat, convinced by the whole progress of events, has begun to come over to our side. The main thing now is to be able to consummate this transition and firmly to consolidate what has been achieved organisationally in order to advance along the whole line without the slightest wavering.

15. The whole of the activities of the parties mentioned (to which should be added the Socialist Party of Switzerland, if the telegraphic report of its decision to affiliate to the Third International is true) show—and any of the periodical publications of these parties strikingly confirms this—that they are not yet communistic, and not infrequently run directly counter to the fundamental principles of the Third International, *viz.*, the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power instead of bourgeois democracy.

For that reason the Second Congress of the Communist International must resolve that it cannot immediately accept the affiliation of these parties; that it endorses the reply given by the Executive Committee of the Third International to the German "Independents"; that it confirms its readiness to conduct negotiations with any party that withdraws from the Second International and desires to come close to the Third International; that it grants

the delegates of such parties a voice but no vote at all its congresses and conferences; that it puts forward the following conditions for the complete amalgamation of these (and similar) parties with the Communist International:

1. The publication of all the decisions of all the congresses of the Communist International and of its Executive Committee in all the periodical publications of the respective Parties.

2. The discussion of all these decisions at special meetings of all sections or local organisations of the respective Parties.

3. The convocation, after such discussion, of special congresses of the respective Parties for the purpose of summing up and of

4. Purging the respective Parties of elements which continue to act in the spirit of the Second International.

5. The transference of all the periodical organs of the respective Parties to exclusively Communist editorial boards.

The Second Congress of the Third International should instruct its Executive Committee formally to accept the affiliation of these and similar parties to the Third International after ascertaining that all these conditions have been actually met and that the character of the activities of these parties has become Communist.

16. On the question of what should be the conduct of the Communists who now hold a minority of the responsible positions in the parties mentioned and those like them, the Second Congress of the Communist International should resolve that in view of the obvious growth of the sincerest sympathy toward Communism among the workers belonging to these parties it would be undesirable for the Communists to leave these parties as long as it is possible for them to carry on work in them in the spirit of the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of Soviet power, and as long as it is possible to criticise the opportunists and Centrists who still remain in these parties.

At the same time, the Second Congress of the Third International should express itself in favour of Communist groups, or groups and organisations sympathising with Communism in England, affiliating to the Labour Party, notwithstanding the fact that the latter is affiliated to the Second International. For as long as this party permits the organisations affiliated to it to enjoy their

present freedom of criticism and freedom to carry on propagandist, agitational and organisational activity for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet form of government, as long as that party preserves its character as a federation of all trade union organisations of the working class, the Communists should without fail take all measures and agree to certain compromises in order to have the opportunity of influencing the broadest masses of the workers, of exposing the opportunist leaders from a platform that is higher and more visible to the masses, and of accelerating the transition of political power from the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie to the "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class" in order that the masses may be more quickly weaned from their last illusions on this score.

17. In regard to the Socialist Party of Italy, the Second Congress of the Third International considers that the criticism of that party and the practical proposals submitted to the National Council of the Socialist Party of Italy in the *name* of the Turin section of that party, which were formulated in *L'Ordine Nuovo*[1] of May 8, 1920, and which fully correspond to all the fundamental principles of the Third International, are in the main correct.

For that reason the Second Congress of the Third International requests the Socialist Party of Italy to convene a special congress of the party to discuss these proposals as well as all the decisions of both congresses of the Communist International for the purpose of rectifying the line of the party and of purging it, and particularly its parliamentary group, of non-Communist elements.

18. The Second Congress of the Third International regards as incorrect those views on the Party's relation to the class and to the masses, and the view that it is not obligatory for the Communist Parties to participate in bourgeois parliaments and in reactionary trade unions, which have been refuted in detail in the special decisions of the present congress after being most fully de-

[1] *The New Order*, the weekly organ of the Left wing of the Socialist Party of Italy founded in Turin in 1920. On January 1, 1921, became the daily organ of the Communist Party of Italy. Was suppressed by the fascist government.—*Ed.*

fended by the Communist Labour Party of Germany, partly by the Communist Party of Switzerland, by *Kommunismus*, the organ of the East European Secretariat of the Communist International in Vienna, by the now dissolved secretariat in Amsterdam, by several Dutch Communists, by several Communist organisations in England, for example, the Workers' Socialist Federation, etc., and also by the Industrial Workers of the World of America and the Shop Stewards' Committees in England, etc.

Nevertheless, the Second Congress of the Third International considers possible and desirable the immediate affiliation to the Communist International of those of the above-mentioned organisations which are not yet affiliated officially, because, in the present case, particularly in regard to the Industrial Workers of the World of America and of Australia, as well as in regard to the Shop Stewards' Committees in England, we are dealing with a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which, in the main, practically stands on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Communist International. The erroneous views held by these organisations in regard to participation in bourgeois parliaments are to be explained not so much by the role played by the representatives of the bourgeoisie who have joined the movement—and who introduce what are, in fact, their petty-bourgeois views, as the views of the anarchists often are—as by the political inexperience of proletarians who are quite revolutionary and connected with the masses.

For this reason the Second Congress of the Third International requests all Communist organisations and groups in Anglo-Saxon countries, even in the event of the immediate affiliation of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Shop Stewards' Committees to the Third International not taking place, to pursue a very friendly policy towards these organisations, to come close to them and to the masses which sympathise with them, and to explain to them in a friendly manner, from the point of view of the experience of all revolutions, and of the three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century particularly, the fallacy of the above-mentioned views and not to refrain from making repeated attempts to amalgamate with these organisations in a united Communist Party.

19. In this connection, the congress draws the attention of all comrades, particularly in the Latin and Anglo-Saxon countries, to the fact that since the war a profound ideological division has been taking place among the anarchists all over the world on the question of the attitude to be adopted toward the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power. Moreover, it is precisely among the proletarian elements who are often impelled towards anarchism by an absolutely legitimate hatred of the opportunism and reformism of the parties of the Second International that the proper understanding of these principles is particularly observed, and that it is the more widespread among them the more they are familiar with the experience of Russia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Germany.

The congress therefore considers it to be the duty of all comrades to do everything to assist the transition of all the mass proletarian elements from anarchism to the side of the Third International. The congress points out that success in the work of genuinely Communist Parties should be measured, among other things, by the extent to which they succeed in winning away from anarchism to their own side, not intellectual, not petty-bourgeois, but mass proletarian elements.

July 4, 1920

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Report Delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 19, 1920

COMRADES, the theses on the questions of the fundamental tasks of the Communist International [1] have been published in all languages and (particularly for the Russian comrades) represent nothing materially new; for, to a large extent, they apply several of the main features of our revolutionary experience and the lessons of our revolutionary movement to a number of Western countries, to Western Europe. Therefore, in my report I will deal at greater length, although in brief outline, with the first part of the subject that has been allocated to me, namely, the international situation.

The core of the whole international situation that has now arisen lies in the economic relations of imperialism. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, this new, higher, and last stage of capitalism has become fully defined. Of course, you know that the most characteristic, the most essential feature of imperialism has been the fact that capital has achieved enormous dimensions. Free competition has been superseded by monopoly of gigantic dimensions. An insignificant number of capitalists have been able to concentrate in their hands, sometimes, whole branches of industry; these have passed into the hands of combines, cartels, syndicates and trusts, which, not infrequently, are of an international character. Thus, whole branches of industry, not only in single countries, but all over the world, were found to have been captured by monopolists in regard to finance, in regard to right of ownership, and partly, in regard to production. On this soil there

[1] See preceding item.—*Ed.*

has developed the unprecedented domination of an insignificant number of very big banks, of kings of finance, of financial magnates who have, in fact, transformed even the freest republics into financial monarchies. Before the war this was openly admitted by writers who were by no means revolutionary, such as Lyzis, in France, for example.

This domination of a handful of capitalists reached its complete development when the whole world was found to have been divided up, not only in the sense that the various sources of raw materials and means of production had been captured by the biggest capitalists, but also in the sense that the preliminary distribution of the colonies had been completed. Forty years ago the population of the colonies was calculated at a little over a quarter of a milliard, and this population was subjected to six capitalist states. Before the war of 1914 the population of the colonies was already calculated at about 600,000,000, and if countries like Persia, Turkey, and China, which already at that time were in the position of semi-colonies, were added, we would get in round numbers a population of a milliard oppressed by the richest, most civilised and freest countries which forced them into a position of colonial dependence. And you know that, apart from direct state, juridical dependence, colonial dependence presupposes a number of relations of financial and economic dependence, presupposes a number of wars, which were not regarded as wars because very often they amounted to sheer massacres, when European and American imperialist troops, armed with the most perfect weapons of destruction, massacred the unarmed and defenceless inhabitants of colonial countries.

Out of this partition of the whole world, out of this domination of capitalist monopoly, out of this omnipotence of an insignificant number of very big banks—two, three, four or five in a country, not more—inevitably arose the first imperialist war of 1914-18. This war was waged in order to bring about a repartition of the whole world. This war was waged in order to decide which of the insignificant groups of the biggest states—the British or the German—was to secure the opportunity and the right to rob, strangle and exploit the whole world. You know that the war decided this question in favour of the British group. And as a result of this

war all capitalist contradictions have become immeasurably more acute. The war at one stroke threw back about a quarter of a milliard inhabitants of the world to what is equivalent to a colonial position. It threw back Russia—the population of which we must calculate at about 130,000,000—Austro-Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria—the total population of which is not less than 120,000,000; a quarter of a milliard people living in countries, some of which, like Germany, are the most advanced, most enlightened, most cultured, and which, in regard to technique, are on the level of modern progress. By means of the Versailles Treaty, it imposed upon these countries such terms, that advanced peoples find themselves in a position of colonial dependence, poverty, starvation, ruin, and without rights; for they have been bound by this treaty for many generations, and have been put into conditions that no civilised nation has ever lived in. You have the following picture of the world: after the war, at one stroke, not less than a milliard and a quarter of the inhabitants of the world are subjected to colonial oppression, are subjected to the exploitation of brutal capitalism, which boasted about its love of peace, and which had some right to boast about this fifty years ago, when the world had not yet been divided up, when monopoly did not yet rule, when capitalism could still develop comparatively peacefully, without colossal military conflicts.

Now, after this peaceful epoch has come to an end, we see a monstrous intensification of oppression, we see a reversion to colonial and military oppression far worse than that which existed before. The Versailles Treaty has put Germany and a number of other vanquished countries in conditions in which economic existence is materially impossible, in conditions of utter lack of rights and degradation.

How many nations have benefited by this? In order to reply to this question we must recall that the population of the United States—which alone fully profited by the war, and which has been entirely transformed from a country very much in debt into a country to which all are in debt—is not more than 100,000,000; that the population of Japan—which profited a great deal by remaining outside of the European-American conflict and by seizing an enormous Asiatic continent—is equal to 50,000,000; that the

population of Great Britain—which next to the above-mentioned countries profited most—is 50,000,000. And if we add the neutral countries with very small populations—countries which became enriched during the war—we will get in round numbers a quarter of a milliard.

Thus we get the main outlines of the picture of the world as it appeared after the imperialist war. A billion and a quarter oppressed in the colonies—countries which are being cut up alive, like Persia, Turkey and China; and countries which have been vanquished and flung into the position of colonies. Not more than a quarter of a milliard inhabit countries which have retained their old positions, but have fallen into economic dependence upon America, and all of them, during the war, were in a state of military dependence, for the war affected the whole world and did not permit a single state to remain really neutral. And finally, we have not more than a quarter of a milliard inhabitants of countries in which only the upper stratum, of course, only the capitalists, benefited by the partition of the world. We thus get a total of about one and three-quarters of a milliard comprising the whole population of the world. I would like you to memorise this picture of the world, for all the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, of imperialism, which are leading to revolution, all the fundamental contradictions in the working class movement which have led to the furious struggle against the Second International, to which our chairman referred, are all connected with this division of the population of the world.

Of course, these figures illustrate the economic position of the world only roughly, in main outline. And naturally, comrades, with the population of the whole world divided in this way, exploitation by finance capital, capitalist monopoly, has increased ever so much more.

Not only have the colonial and the vanquished countries fallen into a state of dependence, but within each victor country contradictions have become more acute, all capitalist contradictions have become more acute. I will briefly illustrate this with a few examples.

Take the national debts. We know that the debts of the prin-

cipal European states have increased more than seven-fold in the period from 1914 to 1920. I will quote another economic source which assumes particularly great significance, the British diplomat Keynes, the author of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, who, on the instructions of his government, took part in the Versailles peace negotiations, watched them directly from the purely bourgeois point of view, studied the subject step by step, and took part in the conferences as an economist. He arrived at conclusions which are stronger, more striking and more instructive than any a Communist revolutionary could advance, because they are conclusions drawn by an acknowledged bourgeois, a ruthless opponent of Bolshevism, which he, like an English philistine, pictures to himself in a monstrous, savage and brutal form. Keynes arrived at the conclusion that Europe and the whole world, with the Versailles Peace, is heading for bankruptcy. Keynes resigned; he threw his book in the face of the government and said: You are committing acts of madness. I will quote his figures, which, in the main, can be summed up as follows.

What shape have the debt relations between the principal powers assumed? I will quote pounds sterling in terms of gold rubles, counting ten gold rubles to the pound. We get the following results: the United States has assets amounting to nineteen milliard, liabilities—nil. Before the war the United States was a debtor to Great Britain. At the last congress of the Communist Party of Germany, Comrade Levi, in his report to the congress on April 14, 1920, quite rightly pointed out that two powers were left who now act independently in the world, *viz.*, Great Britain and America. America alone has proved to have an absolutely independent financial position. Before the war she was a debtor, now she is exclusively a creditor. All the other powers in the world are in debt. Great Britain has fallen into the position where her assets amount to seventeen milliards and her liabilities to eight milliards. She has already fallen halfway into the position of a debtor country. Moreover, her assets include six milliards which Russia owes her. The military stores, which Russia accumulated during the war, are included in her debt. Recently, when Krassin, as the representative of the Russian Soviet government, had occasion to

converse with Lloyd George on the question of the debt agreements, he very clearly explained to the economists and politicians, to the leaders of the British government, that if they were counting on getting these debts they were labouring under a strange delusion. And the British diplomat Keynes has already revealed this delusion.

Of course, it is not only, or not even, a question of the Russian revolutionary government refusing to pay the debts. No government could pay, because these debts are a usurious imposition that has been paid twenty times over; and this very bourgeois Keynes, who does not in the least sympathise with the Russian revolutionary movement, says: "Of course, these debts cannot be taken into account."

In regard to France, Keynes quoted figures of the following order: her assets amount to three and a half milliards and her liabilities amount to nine and a half milliards! And this is a country which the French themselves say is the usurer of the whole world, because her "savings," comprising her gigantic capital, were the proceeds of colossal colonial and financial robbery which enabled her to grant milliards and milliards in loans, particularly to Russia. These loans brought in a gigantic income. In spite of that, in spite of victory, France has fallen into the position of a debtor.

A bourgeois American source quoted by Comrade Braun, a Communist, in his book *Who Must Pay the War Debts?* (Leipzig, 1920), defines the proportion of debts to national wealth as follows: In the victor countries, Great Britain and France, debts constitute more than 50 per cent of the total national wealth. In Italy they constitute 60 to 70 per cent, and in Russia 90 per cent. As you know, however, these debts do not disturb us, because we followed Keynes' excellent advice a little while before his book appeared—we have annulled all our debts.

In this, however, Keynes betrays the ordinary philistine queerness: he advises that all debts be annulled and says that, of course, France only stands to gain by it, that, of course, Great Britain will not lose very much as in any case it will be impossible to get anything out of Russia; America will lose a fair amount, but Keynes counts on American "generosity"! On this point our views differ from those of Keynes and of other philistine pacifists. We think that

they will have to wait for something else to happen, and to work in another direction, not in the direction of counting on the "generosity" of Messieurs the capitalists, in order to get the debts annulled.

From these few figures it is evident that the imperialist war has created an impossible situation for the victor countries also. This is also shown by the enormous disparity between wages and the rise in prices. On March 8, this year, the Supreme Economic Council, an institution which is protecting the bourgeois system all over the world from the growing revolution, adopted a resolution which ended with an appeal for order, industry and thrift on the condition, of course, that the workers remain the slaves of capital. This Supreme Economic Council, the organ of the Entente, the organ of the capitalists of the whole world, made the following summary.

In the United States of America the price of food products rose, on the average, 120 per cent, whereas wages rose only 100 per cent. In Great Britain the price of food products rose 170 per cent and wages 130 per cent. In France the price of food products rose 300 per cent and wages 200 per cent. In Japan the price of food products rose 130 per cent and wages 60 per cent (I have compared the figures quoted by Comrade Braun in the above-mentioned pamphlet with the figures of the Supreme Economic Council quoted in the *Times* of March 10, 1920).

Clearly, under such circumstances, the growth of indignation among the workers, the growth of revolutionary temper and ideas, the growth of spontaneous mass strikes, are inevitable; for the position of the workers is becoming intolerable. The workers are becoming convinced by their own experience that the capitalists who have enriched themselves enormously by the war are throwing the burden of the cost of war and the debts upon their shoulders. Recently, a cable was received to the effect that America wanted to deport to Russia another 500 Communists in order to get rid of "pernicious agitators."

Even if America deports to Russia not 500 but 500,000 Russian, American, Japanese and French "agitators" it will make no difference, because the disparity between prices and wages, which they can do nothing to prevent, will continue. And they can do nothing

to prevent it because private property is strictly preserved in that country; they regard it as "sacred." This must not be forgotten, because it is only in Russia that private ownership by the exploiters has been destroyed. The capitalists can do nothing to remove the disparity between prices and wages; the workers cannot live on their old wages. The old methods, separate strikes, the parliamentary struggle, or voting, are useless in combating this disaster, because "private property is sacred" and the capitalists have accumulated such huge debts that the whole world is in bondage to a handful of people. Meanwhile the conditions of life of the workers are becoming more and more unbearable. There is no way out except by the abolition of the "private property" of the exploiters.

Comrade Lapinsky in his pamphlet, *England and the World Revolution,* from which our *Bulletin of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs,* of February 1920, published valuable extracts, points out that in England the export price of coal proved to be twice as high as official industrial circles supposed.

In Lancashire, things went so far that the increase in the value of shares was calculated at 400 per cent. The dividends of the banks amount to 40-50 per cent, at a minimum, and moreover, it should be observed in determining bank dividends that all the bankers are able to conceal the lion's share of their dividends in such a way that they are not called dividends, but are concealed in the form of bonuses, commissions, etc. So that here, too, indisputable economic facts prove that the wealth of a small clique has grown incredibly, that unparalleled luxury is exceeding all bounds, while at the same time the poverty of the working class is continuously increasing. We must particularly note the circumstance which Comrade Levi emphasised in an extremely striking manner in the report I have just referred to, namely, the change in the value of money. Everywhere money has depreciated as a consequence of the debts, the issue of paper currency, etc. The same bourgeois source which I have already mentioned, namely, the statement of the Supreme Economic Council of March 10, 1920, calculates that in England the depreciation of the value of money compared with dollars is approximately one-third; in France and Italy two-thirds and in Germany it reaches 96 per cent.

This fact shows that the mechanism of world capitalist economy is falling to pieces entirely. The commercial relations on which the acquisition of raw materials and the sale of products rest under capitalism cannot be continued; they cannot be continued precisely because of the subordination of many countries to one country —owing to the change in the value of money. Not a single rich country is able to exist, or is able to trade, because it cannot sell its products and cannot obtain raw materials.

Thus we get the position that America, a very rich country, to which all countries are subordinated, cannot buy and sell. And Keynes, who has passed through the fire and water of the Versailles negotiations, is compelled to admit this in spite of his indomitable determination to defend capitalism, in spite of his hatred for Bolshevism. Incidentally, I do not think a single Communist manifesto, or any revolutionary manifesto, could be compared with those pages in Keynes' book in which he depicts Wilson and "Wilsonism" in practice. Wilson was the idol of philistines and pacifists like Keynes and a number of heroes of the Second International, and even of the "Two-and-a-Half" International. who prayed to the "Fourteen Points" and even wrote "scientific" books about the "roots" of Wilson's policy in the hope that Wilson would save "social peace," reconcile the exploiters with the exploited and bring about social reforms. Keynes vividly exposed the fact that Wilson proved to be a fool, and all these illusions were scattered to the winds at the first contact with the shrewd, commercial merchant's policy of capital personified by Messieurs Clemenceau and Lloyd George. The masses of the workers now see more clearly than ever from the experience of their own lives—and the learned pedants might have seen it even from Keynes' book—that the "roots" of Wilson's policy amounted only to the piffle of parsons, petty-bourgeois phrases, and the utter failure to understand the class struggle.

As a consequence of all this, two conditions, two fundamental situations, inevitably and naturally emerge. On the one hand, the poverty and ruin of the masses have increased to an incredible degree, primarily among one and a quarter billion people, *i.e.*. 70 per cent of the population of the world. These are the colonial

and dependent countries with populations juridically deprived of rights, countries for which "mandates" have been granted to financial pirates. And besides, the slavery of the vanquished countries has been riveted on them by the Versailles Treaty, and by those secret treaties which exist in regard to Russia, the validity of which, it is true, is about as real as that of the scraps of paper on which it is written that we owe so many billions. For the first time in world history we have a case of robbery, slavery, dependence, poverty and starvation imposed upon a milliard and a quarter people by a juridical act.

On the other hand, in every country which has found itself in the position of creditor, the workers have found themselves in an intolerable position. The war has caused an unprecedented intensification of all capitalist contradictions; this is the source of the profound revolutionary ferment that is spreading, for during the war the people were placed under the conditions of military discipline, were driven into the jaws of death, or were under the threat of immediate military punishment. The conditions of war did not give people the opportunity of looking into the face of economic reality. Writers, poets and parsons, the whole press, concentrated on lauding war, and nothing else. Now that the war has come to an end, exposure has begun: the exposure of German imperialism and its Brest-Litovsk Peace; the exposure of the Versailles Peace, which was to have been the victory of imperialism, but turned out to be its defeat. The case of Keynes shows, incidentally, that scores and hundreds of thousands of the petty bourgeoisie, of intellectuals, of simply more or less intelligent and educated people in Europe and America had to traverse the path taken by Keynes who resigned and threw his book in the face of the government which that book exposed. Keynes showed what is taking place and will take place in the minds of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people when they realise that all the speeches about "war for liberty," etc., were utterly false, that, in the end, only an insignificant number of people enriched themselves, while the remainder were ruined and fell into bondage. The bourgeois Keynes says that in order to save their lives, in order to save British economy, the English must secure the resumption of free com-

mercial intercourse between Germany and Russia! How can this be secured? By annulling all the debts, as Keynes proposes! This is not merely the idea of one learned economist, Keynes. Millions are adopting, and will adopt it. And millions of people are hearing that bourgeois economists say: There is no way out except by annulling the debts, therefore "damn the Bolsheviks" (who have annulled the debts), let us appeal to America's "generosity"!! I think that we should in the name of the Congress of the Communist International send an address of gratitude to these economist agitators for Bolshevism.

If, on the one hand, the economic position of the masses has proved to be unbearable, and if, on the other hand, disintegration is beginning and growing in the insignificant minority of all-powerful victor countries, as is illustrated by Keynes, it is evident that both conditions for the world revolution are maturing.

We now have before us a fuller picture of the whole world. We know the significance of this dependence upon a handful of wealthy people of a milliard and a quarter people who have been placed under impossible conditions of existence. On the other hand, when the people were presented with the Covenant of the League of Nations, according to which the League of Nations undertakes to put an end to war and henceforth not to permit anyone to disturb the peace, and when this Covenant, which was the last hope of the masses of the toilers all over the world, came into force, it turned out to be a great victory for us. Before it came into force people said: You cannot avoid subjecting a country like Germany to special conditions; when the Covenant is drawn up you will see that everything will be all right. But when the Covenant was published the ardent opponents of Bolshevism were obliged to repudiate it! When the Covenant began to be put into force it turned out that an insignificant group of the richest countries, the "big four"[1] —Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Orlando and Wilson—were put on the job of creating new relations! When the machinery of the Covenant was started it caused complete collapse!

[1] Lenin here refers to the imperialist countries: France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States, whose Prime Ministers, and President in the case of the United States, he calls the "big four."—*Ed.*

We saw this in connection with the wars against Russia. Weak, ruined, crushed Russia, the most backward country among all the nations, weaker than any of the nations in the alliance of rich, powerful states which rule the whole world, turned out to be the victor. We could not put up a force anywhere nearly equal to theirs, but we proved to be the victors. Why? Because there was not a trace of unity among them, because one power worked against the other. France wanted Russia to pay her debts and to serve as a threatening force against Germany; Great Britain wanted to partition Russia; she tried to seize the Baku oil regions and to conclude a treaty with the border states of Russia. Among British official documents there is a book in which is very carefully enumerated all the states (there were fourteen of them) which six months ago, in December 1919, had pledged themselves to take Moscow and Petrograd. It was on the basis of these states that Great Britain built up her policy and granted them millions and millions in loans. But now all these calculations have collapsed, and all the loans have collapsed.

This is the situation which the League of Nations has created. Every day of existence of this Covenant is the best agitation for Bolshevism; for the most powerful adherents of capitalist "order" show that on every question they put spokes in each other's wheel. Furious wrangling is going on between Japan, Great Britain, America and France over the partition of Turkey, Persia, Mesopotamia and China. The bourgeois press in these countries is full of the most furious attacks and the most angry pronouncements against their "colleagues" because each is trying to snatch the booty from under the other's nose. We see complete disintegration among the upper classes of this most insignificant handful of very rich countries. A milliard and a quarter of people cannot live under the conditions into which "advanced" and civilised capitalism wishes to force them; they represent 70 per cent of the population of the world. An insignificant handful of the richest states, Great Britain, America, Japan (Japan was able to plunder the Eastern, Asiatic countries, but she cannot be an independent, financial and military power without the assistance of another country), these two or three countries cannot restore economic intercourse and are directing

their policy toward disrupting the policy of their colleagues and partners in the League of Nations. It is this that gives rise to the world crisis. And these economic roots of the crisis are the main reason why the Communist International is achieving brilliant successes.

Comrades, we have now come to the question of the revolutionary crisis as the basis of our revolutionary action. And here we must first of all note two widespread errors. On the one hand, the bourgeois economists depict this crisis simply as "unrest," to use the elegant expression of the English. On the other hand, revolutionaries sometimes try to prove that there is absolutely no way out of the crisis.

This is a mistake. There is no such thing as absolutely inextricable positions. The bourgeoisie behaves like an arrogant brigand who has lost his head; it commits blunder after blunder, thus making the position more acute and hastening its own doom. All this is true. But it cannot be "proved" that it is absolutely impossible for it to lull a certain minority of the exploited with certain concessions, for it to suppress a certain movement, or uprising, of a certain section of the oppressed and exploited. To try to "prove" beforehand that a position is "absolutely" inextricable would be sheer pedantry, or playing with concepts and catchwords. Practice alone can serve as real "proof" in this and similar questions. The bourgeois system all over the world is experiencing a great revolutionary crisis. And the revolutionary parties must now "prove" by their practical deeds that they are sufficiently intelligent and organised, have sufficient contacts with the exploited masses, are sufficiently determined and skilful to utilise this crisis for a successful and victorious revolution.

It was mainly in order to prepare this "proof" that we have gathered at this congress of the Communist International.

As an example of the degree to which opportunism still prevails among the parties which desire to affiliate to the Third International and of the degree to which the work of some parties is still removed from the work of training the revolutionary class for utilising the revolutionary crisis, I will quote the leader of the British Independent Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald. In his

book, *Parliament and Revolution*, which deals with the very fundamental questions that are now engaging our attention, MacDonald depicts the state of affairs approximately in the spirit of the bourgeois pacifists. He admits that there is a revolutionary crisis and that revolutionary temper is rising, that the masses are sympathetic toward the Soviet government and the dictatorship of the proletariat (note that we are speaking of Great Britain), that the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the present dictatorship of the British bourgeoisie.

But MacDonald remains a thorough bourgeois pacifist and compromiser, a petty bourgeois who dreams of a non-class government. MacDonald recognises the class struggle merely as a "descriptive fact," like all the liars, sophists and pedants of the bourgeoisie. MacDonald ignores the experience of Kerensky, the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia, and the analogous experience of Hungary, Germany, etc., in regard to creating a "democratic" and alleged non-class government. MacDonald lulls his party and all the workers who have the misfortune to regard this bourgeois as a Socialist, and this philistine as a leader, with the words: "We know that this (*i.e.*, the revolutionary crisis, the revolutionary ferment) will pass away, will die down." The war, he says, inevitably caused the crisis, but after the war it will "die down," although not all at once!

And this is written by a man who is the leader of a party which desires to affiliate to the Third International! This is an exposure —uttered with rare frankness and therefore the more valuable—of what is observed no less frequently among the leaders of the French Socialist Party and German Independent Social-Democratic Party, namely, not only inability, but also unwillingness to take advantage of the revolutionary crisis in a revolutionary sense, or in other words, inability and unwillingness to really prepare the party and the class in a revolutionary manner for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is the main evil in very many parties which are now leaving the Second International. And this is precisely why I dwell most of all on the theses which I submit to the present congress, why I stop to define the tasks in preparing for the dic-

tatorship of the proletariat in the most concrete and precise manner.

Here is another example. Recently a new book was published in opposition to Bolshevism. An unusually large number of books of this kind are now being published in Europe and America, and the larger the number of anti-Bolshevik books that are published, the stronger and more rapidly is the sympathy of the masses for Bolshevism growing. I have in mind Otto Bauer's *Bolshevism or Social-Democracy?* In this book it is clearly explained for the benefit of the Germans what the Mensheviks are, whose shameful role in the Russian Revolution is sufficiently clear to the workers of all countries. Otto Bauer has produced a thoroughly Menshevik pamphlet, although he has concealed his own sympathy for Menshevism. In Europe and America, however, it is now necessary to spread more precise information about Menshevism, for the latter is a kindred concept for all alleged Socialist, Social-Democratic, etc., trends which are hostile to Bolshevism. It would be tedious for us Russians to write explaining what Menshevism is for the benefit of Europeans. Otto Bauer has given a practical proof of this in his book; and we, in anticipation, thank the bourgeois and opportunist publishers who will publish it and translate it into various languages. Bauer's book will be a useful, although a peculiar, supplement to the text books on Communism. Take any paragraph, any one of the arguments in Otto Bauer's book and point to the Menshevism in it, to the root of the views which lead to the practices of the traitors to Socialism, of the friends of Kerensky, Scheidemann, etc.—this is a problem that could be very usefully put in "examinations" for testing whether Communism has been assimilated. If the examinee cannot solve this problem he is not yet a Communist and had better not join the Communist Party.

Otto Bauer excellently expressed the quintessence of the views of world opportunism in a single phrase for which—if we could do as we liked in Vienna—we ought to raise a monument to him while he is still alive. The application of violence in the class struggle in modern democracies—quoth Otto Bauer—would be "violence against the social factor of force."

Probably you will think that this sounds queer and unintelligi-

ble. But this is an example of what Marxism has been reduced to, of the degree of banality and defence of the exploiters the most revolutionary theory can be reduced to. The German variety of philistinism is required, and you get the "theory" that the "social factors of force" are—number, state of organisation, place in the process of production and distribution, activity, education. If an agricultural labourer in the country, or a working man in the town, commits revolutionary violence against the landlord and capitalist, it is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is not violence against the exploiters and the oppressors of the people. Oh, no! It is "violence against the social factors of force."

Perhaps my example sounds somewhat jocular. But the nature of modern opportunism is such that its struggle against Bolshevism becomes transformed into a joke. The task of drawing the working class, all the thinking elements of it, into the struggle between international Menshevism (MacDonald, Otto Bauer and Co.) and Bolshevism is a very useful and imperative one for Europe and America!

Here we must ask: How is the firmness of such trends in Europe to be explained? And why is this opportunism stronger in Western Europe than it is in our country? Because the advanced countries have been creating their culture by the opportunity they have of living at the expense of billions of oppressed people. Because the capitalists of these countries obtain a great deal more than they would have been able to obtain in the shape of profits resulting from the robbery of the workers in their own countries.

Before the war it was calculated that the three richest countries —Great Britain, France and Germany—obtained from the export of capital alone, apart from other incomes, from eight to ten billion francs per annum.

It goes without saying that out of this tidy sum it is possible to throw at least a half a billion as a sop to the labour leaders, to the labour aristocracy, in order to bribe them in various ways. The whole thing reduces itself precisely to bribery. This is done in a thousand different ways: by raising culture in the largest centres, by creating educational institutions, creating thousands of soft jobs for the leaders of the co-operative societies, for the trade union

leaders and parliamentary leaders. This is done wherever modern, civilised, capitalist relations exist. And these billions of super-profits serve as the economic basis upon which opportunism in the working class movement rests. In America, Great Britain and France we witness the immeasurably stronger persistence of the opportunist leaders, of the upper stratum of the working class, of the aristocracy of labour; they put up stronger resistance to the Communist movement. And that is why we must be prepared to find it harder to cure the American and European workers' parties of this disease than was the case in our country. We know that great successes have been achieved in curing this disease since the Third International was formed; but we have not yet achieved a complete cure: the purging of the workers' parties, the revolutionary parties of the proletariat all over the world, of bourgeois influences, of the opportunists in their ranks, is very far from complete.

I will not dwell on the concrete manner in which we must do this: this is dealt with in my theses, which have been published. My task is to point to the deep economic roots of this phenomenon. The disease is a protracted one; the cure is even more protracted than optimists hoped it would be. Opportunism is our principal enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working class movement is not proletarian Socialism, but bourgeois Socialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie, than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not have remained in power. This is not only proved by the history of the Kerensky regime in Russia; it is also proved by the democratic republic in Germany, headed by its Social-Democratic government; it is proved by Albert Thomas' attitude toward his bourgeois government. It is proved by the analogous experience in Great Britain and the United States. This is where our principal enemy is; and we must conquer this enemy. We must leave this congress with the firm determination to carry this struggle on to the very end in all parties. This is our main task.

Compared with this task, the rectification of the errors of the "Left" trend in Communism will be an easy task. In a number of

countries we observe anti-parliamentarism, which is not so much brought in by those who come from the petty bourgeoisie as fostered by certain advanced detachments of the proletariat because of their hatred for the old parliamentarism, because of a legitimate, proper and necessary hatred for the conduct of the members of parliament in Great Britain, France, Italy and in all countries. The Communist International must give guiding instructions, the comrades must be made more closely familiar with the experience of Russia, with the significance of a real proletarian political party. It will be our work to fulfil this task. And the fight against these errors of the proletarian movement, against these shortcomings, will be a thousand times easier than fighting against those bourgeois who in the guise of reformists belong to the old parties of the Second International and carry on the whole of their work in a bourgeois, and not in a proletarian, spirit.

Comrades, in conclusion I will deal with one other aspect of the subject. Our chairman has said that our congress deserves the title of World Congress. I think he is right, particularly because we have here quite a number of representatives of the revolutionary movement in colonial, backward countries. This is only a small beginning; but the important thing is that a start has been made. The amalgamation of the revolutionary proletarians of capitalist, advanced countries with the revolutionary masses of those countries where there is no proletariat, or hardly any, with the oppressed masses of colonial, Eastern countries, is taking place at this congress. The riveting of the bonds of unity depends upon us, and I am sure that we shall do that. World imperialism must fall when the revolutionary onslaught of the exploited and oppressed workers in each country, overcoming the resistance of the petty-bourgeois elements and the influence of the small upper stratum of the labour aristocracy, will unite with the revolutionary onslaught of hundreds of millions of people who up to now have stood outside of history and have been regarded merely as the object of history.

The imperialist war has helped the revolution; the bourgeoisie tore soldiers out of the colonies, out of backward countries, out of isolation, in order to take part in this imperialist war. The British bourgeoisie dinned into the minds of the soldiers of India that

it was the business of the Indian peasants to defend Great Britain against Germany; the French bourgeoisie dinned into the minds of the soldiers of the French colonies that it was the business of the coloured people to defend France. They taught them the use of arms. This is very useful knowledge, and we could express our deep gratitude to the bourgeoisie for imparting this knowledge—we could express our gratitude on behalf of all the Russian workers and peasants, and on behalf of the whole of the Russian Red Army, in particular. The imperialist war has drawn the dependent peoples into world history. And one of the most important tasks that confronts us now is to ponder over how the foundation-stone of the organisation of the Soviet movement can be laid in the non-capitalist countries. Soviets are possible in those countries; they will not be Workers' Soviets, but Peasants' Soviets, or Soviets of Toilers.

Much work will have to be done; mistakes will be inevitable; many difficulties will be encountered on this path. The main task of the Second Congress is to work out, or indicate, the practical principles to enable the work which until now has been carried on among hundreds of millions of people in an unorganised manner to be carried on in an organised, compact and systematic manner.

Now, a year, or a little more, after the First Congress of the Communist International, we come out as the victors over the Second International; the Soviet idea has now spread, not only among the workers of the civilised countries, it is not only intelligible and known to them; the workers of all countries laugh to scorn the wiseacres, among whom there are not a few who call themselves Socialists and who argue in a scientific, or quasi-scientific manner about the Soviet "system," as the systematic Germans are fond of calling it, or the Soviet "idea," as the English Guild "Socialists" call it. Not infrequently, these arguments about the Soviet "system," or Soviet "idea," are as dust in the eyes of the workers, and they clog their brains. But the workers are brushing aside this pedantic rubbish and are taking up the weapon which the Soviets have provided. The appreciation of the role and significance of Soviets has now also spread to the lands of the East.

The foundation of the Soviet movement has been laid all over the East, all over Asia, among all the colonial peoples.

The proposition that the exploited must rise against the exploiters and set up their Soviets is not a very complicated one. After our experience, after two and a half years of existence of the Soviet Republic in Russia, after the First Congress of the Third International, it is becoming intelligible to hundreds of millions of exploited people all over the world; and if we in Russia are sometimes obliged to compromise, to play for time, for we are weaker than the international imperialists, we know that we are the defenders of the interests of masses numbering a milliard and a quarter. For the time being we are hampered by obstacles, prejudices and ignorance which are passing away hour by hour; but more and more we are representing, and are really defending, this seventy per cent of the population of the world, this mass of toilers and exploited. We can proudly say: At the First Congress we were really only propagandists, we only sowed among the proletariat of the whole world the main idea, we only issued the call for the struggle, we only asked—where are the people who are capable of taking this path? Now, however; we have an advanced proletariat everywhere. Everywhere we have a proletarian army, although sometimes badly organised, needing reorganisation; and if our international comrades now help us to organise a united army, no shortcomings will hinder us in the pursuit of our cause. And this cause is the world proletarian revolution, the cause of creating a worldwide Soviet Republic.

THE CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION TO THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE First, Inaugural Congress of the Communist International did not draw up definite conditions of affiliation for individual parties to the Third International. At the time the First Congress was convened only Communist *trends* and *groups* existed in the majority of countries.

The Second World Congress of the Communist International is meeting under different conditions. Now, in the majority of countries, there exist not only Communist trends and groups but Communist *Parties* and *organisations*.

More and more frequently parties and groups which only recently were affiliated to the Second International, but which have not yet really become Communist, are applying for affiliation to the Third International. The Second International is completely smashed. The intermediate parties and groups of the "Centre," realising that the Second International is hopeless, are trying to lean on the Communist International, which is becoming stronger and stronger, hoping, however, to retain such "autonomy" as will enable them to pursue their former opportunist or "Centrist" policy. To a certain degree, the Communist International is becoming the fashion.

The desire of certain leading groups of the "Centre" to join the Third International at the present time is indirect confirmation of the fact that the Communist International has won the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the class-conscious workers all over the world and day by day is more and more becoming a force.

Under certain circumstances, the Communist International may be faced with the danger of becoming diluted with wavering and half-hearted groups which have not yet abandoned the ideology of the Second International.

Moreover, certain big parties (Italy, Sweden), the majority of which adopt the point of view of Communism, still have a fairly large reformist and social-pacifist wing which is only waiting for the opportune moment to raise its head again, to start actively sabotaging the proletarian revolution and thereby assist the bourgeoisie and the Second International.

Not a single Communist must forget the lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The Hungarian proletariat had to pay dearly for the amalgamation of the Hungarian Communists with the reformists.

In view of this, the Second World Congress deems it necessary to lay down very definite conditions of affiliation for new parties and also to point out to those parties which have already been received into the Communist International the obligations that rest upon them.

The Second Congress of the Communist International resolves: that the conditions of affiliation to the Communist International be as follows:

* * *

1. Everyday propaganda and agitation must bear a genuinely Communist character. All organs of the press belonging to the party must be edited by reliable Communists who have proved their loyalty to the cause of the proletarian revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat must not be discussed simply as if it were a fashionable formula learned by rote; propaganda for it must be carried on in such a way that every rank-and-file working man and working woman, every soldier and peasant, shall see that the necessity for it arises from the vital facts which are systematically reported in our press day after day. In the columns of newspapers, at mass meetings, in the trade unions and co-operative societies—wherever the adherents of the Third International have access—it is necessary systematically and ruthlessly to denounce not only the bourgeoisie but their assistants, the reformists of all shades.

2. Every organisation that wishes to affiliate to the Communist International must in a planned and systematic manner *remove* from all positions in the working class movement that are at all

responsible (in the party organisation, editorial board, trade unions, parliamentary fraction, co-operative societies, municipalities, etc.) reformists and adherents of the "Centre" and put in their place reliable Communists—and they must not be disturbed by the fact that in some cases it may, at first, be necessary to substitute rank-and-file workers for "experienced" leaders.

3. In all countries where as a consequence of the prevalence of a state of siege or of emergency laws the Communists are unable to carry on all their work legally, it is absolutely necessary to combine legal with illegal work. In nearly all countries in Europe and America the class struggle is entering the stage of civil war. Under these circumstances, the Communists can have no confidence in bourgeois legality. They must *everywhere* create a duplicate illegal apparatus, which, at the decisive moment, could help the Party to perform its duty to the revolution.

4. Persistent and systematic propaganda and agitation must be carried on among the armed forces, and Communist nuclei must be formed in every military unit. Mainly, the Communists will have to carry on this work illegally; but abstention from such work would be equivalent to betrayal of revolutionary duty, and would be incompatible with membership of the Third International.

5. Systematic and planned agitation must be carried on in the rural districts. The working class cannot consolidate its victory unless it has behind it at least a section of the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants, and unless it has by its policy neutralised a section of the rest of the rural population. In the present epoch, Communist work in the rural districts assumes first-class importance. This work must be carried on mainly through the medium of revolutionary *worker*-Communists who have contacts with the rural districts. Abstention from this work, or allowing it to pass into unreliable, semi-reformist hands, is equivalent to repudiation of the proletarian revolution.

6. Every party that wishes to affiliate to the Third International must not only expose avowed social-patriotism, but must also expose the falsehood and hypocrisy of social-pacifism; it must systematically point out to the workers that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no international courts of arbitration,

no talk about reducing armaments, no "democratic" reorganisation of the League of Nations will save mankind from new imperialist wars.

7. Parties desiring to affiliate to the Communist International must recognise the necessity of a complete and absolute rupture with reformism and the policy of the "Centre"; and they must carry on propaganda in favour of this rupture among the broadest circles of party members. Without this it is impossible to pursue a consistent Communist policy.

The Communist International imperatively, and as an ultimatum, demands that this rupture be brought about at the earliest date. The Communist International cannot permit known reformists, such as Turati, Modigliani and others, to have the right to claim membership of the Third International. Such a state of affairs would lead to the Third International becoming, to a large degree, like the wrecked Second International.

8. On the question of colonies and oppressed nationalities, the parties in those countries where the bourgeoisie possesses such colonies and oppresses other nations must have a particularly distinct and clear line. Every party that wishes to affiliate to the Third International must ruthlessly expose the tricks of "their" imperialists in the colonies; they must support not merely in words but by deeds, every liberation movement in the colonies, demand the expulsion of their imperialists from these colonies, imbue the hearts of the workers of their respective countries with a truly fraternal attitude toward the toiling population of the colonies and of oppressed nationalities, and carry on systematic agitation among the armed forces of their own country against all oppression of colonial peoples.

9. Every party that desires to affiliate to the Communist International must carry on systematic and persistent Communist work in the trade unions, the co-operative societies and other mass workers' organisations. In the trade unions it is necessary to form Communist nuclei which, by means of prolonged and persistent work, must win the trade unions for the cause of Communism. These nuclei must at every step in their everyday work expose the treachery of the social-patriots and the vacillation of the "Centre." These

Communist nuclei must be entirely subordinated to the party as a whole.

10. The party that is affiliated to the Communist International must wage a persistent struggle against the Amsterdam "International" of yellow trade unions. It must persistently carry on propaganda among the industrially organised workers, urging the necessity of a rupture with the yellow Amsterdam International. It must by every available means support the nascent international federation of the Red trade unions which adhere to the Communist International.

11. The parties which desire to affiliate to the Third International must overhaul the personnel of their parliamentary fractions, remove the unreliable elements from them, subordinate these fractions, not merely in words but in deeds, to the Central Committee of the party, and call upon every Communist member of parliament to subordinate all his work to the interests of genuine revolutionary propaganda and agitation.

12. Similarly, the periodical and non-periodical press, and all publishing enterprises, must be entirely subordinated to the Central Committee of the party, irrespective of whether the party as a whole is legal or illegal at the given moment; publishing enterprises must not be permitted to abuse their autonomy by pursuing a policy that is not entirely the party policy.

13. The parties affiliated to the Communist International must be built up on the principle of democratic *centralism*. In the present epoch of acute civil war the Communist Party will be able to perform its duty only if it is organised in the most centralised manner, only if iron discipline bordering on military discipline prevails in it, and if its party centre is a powerful organ of authority, enjoying wide powers and the general confidence of the members of the party.

14. The Communist Parties of all countries in which the Communists are carrying on their work legally must periodically purge (re-register) the membership of the party organisations so that the party may be systematically purged of petty-bourgeois elements which inevitably attach themselves to it.

15. Every party that wishes to affiliate to the Communist In-

ternational must render selflessly devoted assistance to every Soviet republic in its struggle against counter-revolutionary forces. The Communist Parties must carry on persistent propaganda urging upon the workers to refuse to transport war materials for the enemies of the Soviet republics; and they must carry on legal or illegal propaganda among the armed forces that are sent to strangle the workers' republics, etc.

16. The parties which still adhere to the old Social-Democratic programmes must revise these programmes as speedily as possible and draw up a new Communist programme applicable to the special conditions prevailing in their respective countries in the spirit of the decisions of the Communist International. According to rule, the programme of every party that is affiliated to the Communist International must be endorsed by the ensuing Congress of the Communist International, or by its Executive Committee. In the event of the Executive Committee of the Communist International failing to endorse the programme of any party, the latter has the right to appeal to the Congress of the Communist International.

17. All the decisions of the congresses of the Communist International, as well as the decisions of its Executive Committee, are binding upon all parties affiliated to the Communist International. The Communist International, which is operating amidst the conditions of acute civil war, must be built up on more centralised principles than was the case with the Second International. Needless to say, in all their work the Communist International and its Executive Committee must take into account the great diversity of conditions under which the various parties have to fight and operate, and they should adopt universally binding decisions only on questions on which such decisions can be adopted.

18. In view of all this, all parties which desire to affiliate to the Communist International must change their name. Every party desiring to affiliate to the Communist International must bear the name: *Communist* Party of such and such a country (Section of the Third, Communist International). The question of name is not merely a formal question, but one of great political importance. The Communist International has declared resolute war against the whole bourgeois world and against all yellow, Social-Democratic parties.

The difference between the Communist Parties and the old, official "Social-Democratic," or "Socialist," parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be made absolutely clear to every rank-and-file toiler.

19. After the Second World Congress of the Communist International has concluded its labours, all the parties desiring to affiliate to the Communist International must at the earliest date convene a special congress of their respective parties which shall officially endorse the above-mentioned obligations on behalf of the whole party.

July 1920

SPEECH ON THE CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION TO THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 30, 1920

COMRADES, Serrati said that we have not yet invented a sincerometer—this is a new French name for an instrument for measuring sincerity—that such an instrument has not yet been invented. We do not need even such a word, but we already possess an instrument for defining trends. Comrade Serrati's mistake, which I will deal with later on, is that he has neglected this instrument, which has been known to exist for a long time.

I will say only a few words about Comrade Crispien. I am very sorry that he is not present. [Dittman: "He is sick."] I am very sorry to hear it. His speech serves as one of the documents, and it is in strict conformity with the political trend of the Right wing of the Independent Party. I will not speak about personal circumstances and individual cases; I will deal only with the ideas that were clearly expressed in Crispien's speech. I think that I shall be able to prove that, in general, this speech was decisively in the Kautskian spirit, and that Comrade Crispien holds the same views about the dictatorship of the proletariat as those held by Kautsky. In reply to what was said to him, Crispien said: "Dictatorship is not a new thing; it was mentioned in the Erfurt Programme." There is nothing in the Erfurt Programme about the dictatorship of the proletariat, and history has shown that this was not an accident. When we were drawing up the first programme of our Party in 1902-03 we always had the example of the Erfurt Programme before us; and Plekhanov particularly emphasised the point that the absence of any reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Erfurt Programme was wrong in theory and a cowardly concession to the opportunists in practice. The dictatorship of the proletariat has

been included in our programme since 1903. Plekhanov quite rightly said at the time: "Either Bernstein will bury Social-Democracy or Social-Democracy will bury him."

If Comrade Crispien now says that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a new thing and adds: "We have always stood for the capture of political power," it shows that he is evading the main issue. The capture of political power is recognised, but dictatorship is not. All literature—not only German, but French and English—proves that the leaders of the opportunist parties (for example, MacDonald in England) stand for the capture of political power. They are all sincere Socialists—I am not jesting—but they are opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat! Since we have a good, Communist, revolutionary party worthy of attention, it should carry on propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat to distinguish it from the old views of the Second International. This is what Comrade Crispien glossed over and obscured, and thereby committed the fundamental mistake that is characteristic of all Kautsky's adherents.

"We are the leaders, elected by the masses," continues Comrade Crispien. This is a formal and wrong point of view, for at the party meeting of the German Independents we clearly saw a struggle between trends. There is no need to seek for an instrument to measure sincerity and to wax humorous about it, as Comrade Serrati does, in order to establish the simple fact that the struggle between trends must and does exist: one trend is supported by the revolutionary workers who have just adhered to us, the opponents of the labour aristocracy, while the other trend is supported by the labour aristocracy, which in all civilised countries is headed by the old leaders. Does Crispien belong to the trend of the old leaders and the labour aristocracy, or does he belong to the new revolutionary workers, to the masses? This is the question that Comrade Crispien has failed to clear up.

In what tone does Comrade Crispien talk about a split? He said that a split is a bitter necessity, which he had deplored for a long time. This is quite in the Kautskian spirit. Split from whom? From Scheidemann? Oh yes, Crispien said: "We have brought about a split." But in the first place, the split was brought about

too late. Since we are discussing it, I must say this. Secondly, the Independents should not deplore this, but should say: The international working class is still under the yoke of the labour aristocracy and of the opportunists. This is the position in France and in Great Britain. Comrade Crispien does not conceive the split in a Communist manner, but entirely in the Kautskian spirit; and yet it is claimed that Kautsky has no influence.

Then Crispien talked about high wages. In Germany, he said, the situation is that the workers live fairly well compared with the Russian workers and the workers in the rest of Europe. According to Crispien, a revolution can be brought about only if it does not worsen the conditions of the workers "too much." I ask myself: Is it permissible to talk in such a tone in a Communist Party? It is counter-revolutionary. Undoubtedly, the standard of living in Russia is lower than in Germany; and when we introduced the dictatorship the workers began to starve more than before and their conditions became even worse. The victory of the workers cannot be achieved without sacrifice, without a temporary deterioration of their conditions. We must tell the workers the very opposite of what Crispien said. If in desiring to prepare the workers for the dictatorship one talks to them about not worsening their conditions "too much," one forgets the main thing, namely: that the labour aristocracy arose precisely by helping "its" bourgeoisie to conquer by imperialistic means and to strangle the whole world in order to ensure better pay for itself. If, today, the German workers want to work for the benefit of the revolution they must make sacrifices, and not be afraid to do so.

It is true in the general, world-historical sense, that in a backward country, the Chinese coolie, say, cannot bring about the revolution; but in the few, richer countries, where, thanks to imperialist robbery, life is easier, it would be counter-revolutionary to tell the workers that they must shrink from becoming "too" poor. They should be told the very opposite. A labour aristocracy that is afraid to make sacrifices, that is afraid of becoming "too" poor in the course of the revolutionary struggle, cannot be associated with the Party. The dictatorship is impossible in any other way, particularly in West European countries.

What did Crispien say about terror and violence? He said that these were two different things. Perhaps such a distinction may be drawn in text-books on sociology, but it cannot be done in practical politics, particularly in the circumstances prevailing in Germany. Whether one likes it or not, violence and terror will be employed against people who behave like the German officers who murdered Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, against people who, like Stinnes and Krupp, and their like, bribe the press. It goes without saying that we need not declare beforehand that we shall resort to terror under any circumstances; but if German officers and the Kappists remain what they are now, if Krupp and Stinnes undergo no change, the employment of terror will be inevitable. Not only Kautsky, but Ledebour and Crispien talk about violence and terror in an absolutely counter-revolutionary spirit. A party which subsists on such ideas cannot participate in the dictatorship. That is clear.

Then comes the agrarian question. Here Crispien became particularly heated and wanted to expose us as being petty-bourgeois. According to him, to do something for the small peasant at the expense of the big landlords is being petty-bourgeois. He says the big landlords should be expropriated and their land handed over to communes. This is a pedantic argument. Even in highly developed countries, including Germany, there are sufficient excessively large latifundia; and there are plots of land which are not cultivated by large-scale capitalist methods but by semi-feudal methods. Some part of these lands may be cut up for the benefit of the small peasants without injury to agriculture. It is possible to preserve large-scale cultivation and yet give the small peasants something that is very material to them. Unfortunately, no thought is given to this; in practice, however, it must be done, otherwise errors will be committed. This is proved, for example, by Varga (former People's Commissar of the Hungarian Soviet Republic), who, in his book, writes that the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship caused hardly any change in the rural districts of Hungary, that the day labourers did not notice any change, and that the small peasants got nothing. In Hungary there are large latifundia; in Hungary large tracts of land are cultivated by semi-feudal

methods. It is always possible to find parts of large estates that could be granted to the small peasantry, not as their property, perhaps, but rented to them, so that even the smallest peasant may get something out of the confiscated land. Otherwise, the small peasant will not see the difference between the former government and the dictatorship of the Soviets. If the proletarian state power does not act in this way, it will not be able to maintain itself.

Although Crispien did say: "You cannot deny that we have revolutionary convictions," I reply: "I do deny it." By that I do not wish to imply that you do not want to act in a revolutionary way; I wish to imply that you cannot think in a revolutionary way. I lay a wager that we could elect any sort of commission consisting of educated people, give them ten books by Kautsky to compare with Crispien's speech, and this commission will say: "This speech is thoroughly permeated with the views of Kautsky; the whole line of reasoning is similar to Kautsky's." And Crispien comes along and says: "Kautsky has no influence whatever on our party." Perhaps this applies to the revolutionary workers who joined later; but the fact that Kautsky has exercised, and now exercises, enormous influence upon Crispien, upon his whole line of reasoning, upon all his ideas, must be taken as absolutely proved. It is proved by the latter's speech. Therefore, we can say without inventing sincerometers, or instruments for measuring sincerity: Crispien's trend does not correspond to that of the Communist International. In saying this, we define the trend of the whole Communist International.

Comrades Wynkoop and Münzenberg have expressed dissatisfaction at our having invited the Independent Socialist Party to this congress and at our conversations with its representatives. I think they are wrong. When Kautsky writes books opposing us we enter into controversy with him as with an enemy of our class. But when the Independent Socialist Party, which grew up as the result of the influx of revolutionary workers, comes here to negotiate, we must speak with its representatives, for they represent a section of the revolutionary workers. We cannot come to an agreement about the International with the German Independents, with the French and the English, at one stroke. In every speech he de-

livers Comrade Wynkoop reveals that he labours under nearly all the errors that Comrade Pannekoek labours under. Wynkoop declared that he does not share Pannekoek's views; but all his speeches prove the opposite. This is the fundamental mistake this Left Party commits. But it is a mistake that is committed by the growing proletarian movement. The speeches of Comrades Crispien and Dittman are thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois spirit with which it is impossible to prepare for the dictatorship of the proletariat. If Comrades Wynkoop and Münzenberg go further on the question of the Independent Socialist Party, we do not agree with them.

Of course, we have no instrument for measuring sincerity, as Serrati expressed it, for testing a man's conscience, and we quite agree that it is not a matter of judging men, but of appraising the situation. I regret that although Serrati spoke, he did not say anything new. His was the sort of speech we used to hear at the Second International.

Serrati was wrong when he said: "In France, the situation was not revolutionary, in Germany it was revolutionary, in Italy it was revolutionary."

Although the situation was not revolutionary, the whole history of the Bolshevik Party proves that the Second International is mistaken and lays itself open to severe blame if, indeed, it will not and cannot organise revolutionary propaganda and agitation even in a situation that is not revolutionary. The difference between the Socialists and the Communists is precisely that we do not want to behave in this way.

Serrati merely repeated what Crispien said. We do not want to say that we are absolutely obliged to expel Turati on such and such a date. This question was dealt with by the Executive Committee and Serrati said to us: "No expulsions, but purge the party." We must simply tell the Italian comrades that the trend of the Communist International corresponds to the trend of the members of the *Ordine Nuovo* and not to the present majority of the leaders of the Socialist Party and their parliamentary fraction. They say that they want to protect the proletariat from reaction. Chernov,

the Mensheviks and many others in Russia are also protecting the proletariat from reaction, but this, however, is no excuse for accepting them in our midst.

That is why we must say to the Italian comrades and to all parties which have a Right wing: This reformist trend has nothing in common with Communism.

We ask you, Italian comrades, to convene your congress and read our theses there. I am sure that the Italian workers will want to remain in the Communist International.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Speech Delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 23, 1920

COMRADES, I would like to make a few remarks on the speeches delivered by Comrades Tanner and McLaine. Tanner says that he stands for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but that he conceives the dictatorship of the proletariat to be something different from what we do. He says that by the dictatorship of the proletariat we, in essence, mean the dictatorship of the organised and class-conscious minority of the proletariat.

As a matter of fact, in the epoch of capitalism, when the masses of the workers are constantly subjected to exploitation and cannot develop their human faculties, the most characteristic feature of working class political parties is that they can embrace only a minority of their class. Political parties can organise only a minority of the class in the same way as the really class-conscious workers in capitalist society can constitute only a minority of all the workers. That is why we must admit that only this class-conscious minority can lead the broad masses of the workers. And if Comrade Tanner says that he is opposed to parties and at the same time is in favour of the minority, which represents the best organised and the most revolutionary workers, showing the way to the whole of the proletariat, then I say that there is really no difference between us. What is the organised minority? If this minority is truly class conscious, if it is able to lead the masses, if it is able to answer every question that comes up on the order of the day, then, in substance, it is a party. And if comrades like Comrade Tanner, for whom we have special regard as representatives of a mass movement—which cannot without some exaggeration be said of the representatives of the British Socialist Party—if these comrades are in favour of a minority existing that would fight in an organised manner for the dictatorship and that would train the masses of the

workers in this direction, then, actually, such a minority is nothing more nor less than a party. Comrade Tanner says that this minority should organise and lead all the masses of the workers. If Comrade Tanner and the other comrades of the Shop Stewards' group and of the Industrial Workers of the World admit this—and in the conversations we have with them every day we see that they do admit it—if they approve the position in which the class-conscious, Communist minority of the working class leads the proletariat, then they should agree that this is the sense of all our resolutions. The only difference that exists between us is the sort of mistrust which the British comrades entertain towards political parties. They cannot conceive of political parties being anything else than the parties of Gompers and Henderson, or a party of parliamentary fakers and traitors to the working class. And if they imagine parliamentarism to be what parliamentarism actually is in England and America today, then we too are opposed to such parliamentarism and such political parties. What we want are new parties, different parties. We want parties that will be in constant and real contact with the masses and that will be able to lead these masses.

I come to the third question that I would like to touch upon here in connection with Comrade McLaine's speech. He is in favour of the British Communist Party affiliating with the Labour Party. I have already expressed my opinion on this in my theses on affiliation to the Third International.[1] I left that question open, but having discussed this with many comrades I have become convinced that the decision to remain in the ranks of the Labour Party is really a correct decision. And when Comrade McLaine says to us: "Don't be too dogmatic," I think his remark is very apt. Comrade Ramsay says: "Permit us British Communists to decide this question ourselves." What would the International be if every little faction came and said: Some of us are in favour of one thing and some of us are opposed; let us decide the question ourselves? What would be the use, then, of having an International, a congress and all this discussion? Comrade McLaine only spoke about the

[1] See "The Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International," in this volume, pp. 200-06.—*Ed.*

role of a political party. But the same thing applies to trade unions and to parliamentarism. It is quite true that a large section of the best revolutionaries are opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party because they are opposed to parliamentarism as a means of struggle. That is why it would be better to transfer this question to the commission where, in any case, it should be discussed and decided at this very congress of the Third International. We cannot agree that it concerns only the English Communists. We must say in general which are the right tactics to pursue.

Now I will deal with several of the arguments advanced by Comrade McLaine in connection with the question of the British Labour Party. We must say frankly that the Communist Party can join the Labour Party only on the condition that it can preserve complete freedom of criticism and can pursue its own policy. This is an extremely important condition: when Comrade Serrati speaks of class collaboration in this connection I declare that there will be no class collaboration in this. If the Italian comrades allow opportunists like Turati and Co., *i.e.*, bourgeois elements, to remain in their party, that is indeed class collaboration. But in this case, in regard to the British Labour Party, it is only a matter of the advanced minority of the British working class collaborating with the overwhelming majority. The members of the Labour Party are all members of trade unions. The structure of this party is a very peculiar one and is unlike that in any other country. This organisation embraces from six to seven million workers belonging to all trade unions. The members are not asked what political convictions they adhere to. Let Comrade Serrati prove to me that anyone will hinder us from exercising our right of criticism. Only when you prove that, will you prove that Comrade McLaine is mistaken. The British Socialist Party can quite freely say that Henderson is a traitor and yet remain affiliated to the Labour Party. What we get here is collaboration between the vanguard of the working class and the backward workers—the rearguard. This collaboration is so important for the whole movement that we categorically demand that the British Communists should serve as a connecting link between the Party, *i.e.*, the minority of the working class, and all the rest of the workers. If the minority is unable

to lead the masses, to link up closely with them, then it is not a party and is worthless, no matter whether it calls itself a party or the National Committee of Shop Stewards' Committees—as far as I know the Shop Stewards' Committees in England have their National Committee. Until the opposite is proved we can say that the British Labour Party consists of proletarians and that by being in its ranks we can secure collaboration between the vanguard of the working class and the backward workers. If this collaboration is not carried out systematically, then the Communist Party will be worthless and then there can be no talk of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And if our Italian comrades cannot advance more convincing arguments, then later on, we must finally settle the question here on the basis of what we know and come to the conclusion that affiliation is the correct tactic.

Comrades Tanner and Ramsay tell us that the majority of the British Communists do not agree to unite; but must we always agree with the majority? Not at all. If it has not yet understood which tactics are right, then perhaps it would be better to wait. Even the parallel existence of two parties for a time would be better than refusal to reply to the question as to which tactics are correct. Of course, on the basis of the experience of all the members of the congress, on the basis of the arguments that have been brought forward here, you will not insist that we here pass a resolution calling for the immediate formation of a single Communist Party in all countries. That is impossible. But we can frankly express our opinion and give directives. We must study the question raised by the British delegation in a special commission and after that say: The correct tactics are affiliation to the Labour Party. If the majority are opposed to that, then we should organise the minority separately. This will have educational importance. If the masses of the British workers still believe in the former tactics we will overhaul our conclusions at the next congress. But we cannot say that this question concerns only England—that would be copying the worst habits of the Second International. We must openly express our opinion. If the British Communists do not reach an agreement and a mass party is not formed, then a split is inevitable in any case.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF THESES ON THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

For the Second Congress of the Communist International

COMRADE MARKHLEVSKY, in his article,[1] excellently elucidated the reasons why the Second International, now a yellow International, not only failed to determine the tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in the agrarian question, but also failed to present this question properly. Comrade Markhlevsky also gave us the theoretical principles of the Communist agrarian programme of the Third International.

On the basis of these principles, the Congress of the Communist International, which is to open July 15, 1920, can (and I think, should) draw up a general resolution on the agrarian question.

The following is a preliminary draft of such a resolution.

1. Only the urban and industrial proletariat, led by the Communist Party, can liberate the masses of the rural toilers from the yoke of capital and big landlordism, from ruin and imperialist wars, which must inevitably break out again and again if the capitalist system is preserved. There is no salvation for the masses of rural toilers except an alliance with the Communist proletariat, except by giving the latter selflessly devoted support in its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the yoke of the landlords (big landowners) and the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the industrial workers cannot fulfil their world-historical mission of emancipating mankind from the yoke of capital and from wars if these workers concern themselves exclusively with their narrow craft, narrow trade interests, and smugly

[1] Lenin refers to an article by J. Markhlevsky entitled "The Agrarian Question and the World Revolution," in *The Communist International*, No. 12, July 1920.—*Ed.*

confine themselves to care and concern for improving their own, sometimes tolerable, petty-bourgeois, conditions.

This is exactly what happens in many advanced countries to the "labour aristocracy," which serves as the base of the alleged Socialist parties of the Second International—which are in fact the worst enemies of Socialism, its betrayers, petty-bourgeois chauvinists, agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement. The proletariat is a really revolutionary class, it acts in a really Socialist manner only when it comes out and acts as the vanguard of all the toilers and the exploited, as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the exploiters; but this cannot be done unless the class struggle is carried into the rural districts, unless the masses of the rural toilers are united around the Communist Party of the urban proletariat, and unless the former are trained by the latter.

2. The masses of the rural toilers and exploited, whom the urban proletariat must lead into the struggle, or, at all events, win over to its side, are represented in all capitalist countries by the following classes:

First, the agricultural proletariat, wage workers (by the year, season or day), who obtain their livelihood by working for wages in capitalist agricultural enterprises. The organisation of this class (political, military, trade union, co-operative, cultural and educational, etc.) independently and separately from other groups of the rural population, the conduct of intense propaganda and agitation among this class, winning it over to the side of the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, is the *fundamental* task of the Communist Parties in all countries.

Second, the semi-proletarian or parcelised peasants, *i.e.*, those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage labourers in agricultural and industrial capitalist enterprises and partly by toiling on their own, or rented, plots of land, which are barely sufficient to provide them with some part of the means of subsistence for their families. This group of rural toilers is very numerous in all capitalist countries; its existence and special position are obscured by the representatives of the bourgeoisie and the yellow "Socialists" who belong to the Second International, some deliberately deceiving the workers and some blindly submitting to routine, petty-

bourgeois views, and confusing this group with the general mass of the "peasantry" as a whole. This bourgeois deception of the workers is most observed in Germany and in France; but it is also observed in America and other countries. If the work of the Communist Party is properly organised, this group will become its assured adherents; for the conditions of the semi-proletarians are very hard and they stand to gain enormously and immediately from the Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Third, the small peasantry, *i.e.*, the small tillers of the soil who possess, either as their own property, or rent, small plots of land which enable them to meet the requirements of their families and their farms without hiring outside labour. This stratum, as such, undoubtedly stands to gain from the victory of the proletariat, which will immediately and fully give it: a) relief from the payment of rent or share of the crop (for example, the *métayers*, share-croppers in France, Italy and other countries) to the big landlords; b) relief from mortgages; c) relief from the numerous forms of oppression by and dependence upon the big landlords (use of forest lands, etc.); d) immediate assistance for their farms from the proletarian state (facilities for using agricultural implements and some of the buildings on the big capitalist farms expropriated by the proletariat, the immediate transformation by the proletarian state of the village co-operatives and agricultural co-operative societies from organisations which under capitalism mostly serve the rich and middle peasants into organisations that will primarily assist the poor, *i.e.*, the proletarians, the semi-proletarians, small peasants, etc.), and many other forms of assistance.

At the same time the Communist Party must clearly realise that in the period of transition from capitalism to Communism, *i.e.*, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, this stratum, or at all events, part of it, will inevitably incline towards unrestricted free trade and the free enjoyment of the rights of private property; for, being already (although in a small degree) sellers of articles of consumption, this stratum has been corrupted by profiteering and proprietary habits. However, if a firm proletarian policy is pursued, and if the victorious proletariat thoroughly and resolutely settles accounts with the big landlords and the big peas-

ants, the vacillation of this stratum cannot be considerable and cannot alter the fact that, on the whole, it will be on the side of the proletarian revolution.

3. Taken together, the three groups of the rural population enumerated above constitute the majority of this population in all capitalist countries. Therefore, the success of the proletarian revolution is fully assured, not only in the towns, but also in the rural districts. There is a widespread opposite view; but this view only persists, firstly, because of the deception systematically practised by bourgeois science and statistics, which do everything to obscure the wide gulf that separates the above-mentioned classes in the rural districts from the exploiters, the landlords and capitalists, and which also separates the semi-proletarians and small peasants from the big peasants; and secondly, it persists because of the inability and unwillingness of the heroes of the yellow, Second International, and the "labour aristocracy" in the advanced countries, which has been corrupted by imperialist privileges, to conduct genuine, proletarian, revolutionary propaganda, agitation and organisation among the rural poor; all the attention of the opportunists has been concentrated on inventing theoretical and practical compromises with the bourgeoisie, including the big and middle peasants (concerning whom see lower down) and not on the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois government and the bourgeoisie by the proletariat; thirdly, this view persists because of the obstinate failure to understand—so obstinate as to be equivalent to a prejudice (connected with all other bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices)—the truth which has been fully proved in theory by Marxism and fully confirmed by the experience of the proletarian revolution in Russia, *viz.*, that although all the three above-enumerated categories of the rural population—which are incredibly downtrodden, disunited, crushed, and doomed to exist in semi-barbarous conditions in all, even the most advanced countries—are economically, socially, and culturally interested in the victory of Socialism, they are capable of resolutely supporting the revolutionary proletariat only *after* the latter has won political power, only *after* it has resolutely settled accounts with the big landlords and capitalists, only *after* these downtrodden people see

in practice that they have an organised leader and defender sufficiently strong and firm to assist and lead them, to show them the sure path.

4. By "middle peasants," in the economic sense, is meant small tillers of the soil who also possess as their private property, or lease, small plots of land, which, though small, as a general rule under capitalism, firstly, not only provide a meagre subsistence for their families, but also a certain surplus, which in good years, at any rate, may be transformed into capital; and secondly, fairly frequently (for example, one farm out of two or three) hire outside labour. A concrete example of the middle peasants in an advanced capitalist country is provided by the group of farms of 5 to 10 hectares in Germany, where, according to the census of 1907, the number of farms employing hired labourers is equal to about one-third of the total number of farms in this group.[1] In France, where the cultivation of special crops—for example, vine-growing, which requires the application of a particularly large amount of labour to the soil—is more developed, this group probably employs outside hired labour to a somewhat wider extent.

The revolutionary proletariat cannot set itself the task—at least not in the immediate future and in the initial period of the dictatorship of the proletariat—of winning this stratum to its side, but must confine itself to the task of neutralising it, *i.e.*, to make it neutral in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Vacillations of this stratum between the one force and the other are inevitable, and in the beginning of the new epoch in developed capitalist countries its main trend will be towards the bourgeoisie. For among this stratum the world outlook and mood of property-owners predominate; interest in profiteering, in "free" trade and property is direct; antagonism towards the wage workers is direct.

[1] Here are the exact figures: number of farms from 5 to 10 hectares—652,798 (out of a total of 5,736,082); these employ 487,704 hired workers of various kinds while the number of members of families (*Familienangehörige*) working on the farms was 2,003,633. In Austria, according to the census of 1902, this group comprised 383,331 farms, of which 126,136 employed hired labour; hired workers numbered 146,044 and members of families numbered 1,265,969. The total number of farms in Austria was 2,856,349.

The victorious proletariat will directly improve the position of this stratum by abolishing rent and mortgages. In the majority of capitalist countries the proletarian state need not immediately abolish all private property; at all events, it not only guarantees the small and middle peasantry the preservation of their plots of land, but also an increase of their area to that of the amount of land they usually rented (abolition of rent).

The combination of measures of this sort with the ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie fully guarantees the success of the neutralisation policy. The proletarian state must pass to collective agriculture only with extreme caution and gradually, by the force of example, without any coercion of the middle peasant.

5. The big peasants (*Grossbauern*) are the capitalist *entrepreneurs* in agriculture who as a rule employ several wage workers and are connected with the "peasantry" only by their low cultural level, habits of life and the manual labour they themselves perform on their farms. These constitute the largest of the bourgeois strata, and they are the direct and determined enemies of the revolutionary proletariat. In the whole of the work of the Communist Parties in the rural districts attention must be mainly concentrated on the struggle against this stratum, on liberating the toiling and exploited majority of the rural population from the ideological and political influence of these exploiters, etc.

After the victory of the proletariat in the towns, all sorts of manifestations of resistance, sabotage and direct armed actions of a counter-revolutionary character on the part of this stratum are absolutely inevitable. Therefore, the revolutionary proletariat must immediately set to work ideologically and organisationally to prepare the necessary forces for the purpose of completely disarming this stratum; and, simultaneously with the overthrow of the capitalists in industry, it must strike a determined, ruthless and smashing blow at it at the very first signs of resistance. For this purpose it must arm the rural proletariat and organise village Soviets in which the exploiters must have no place, and in which the proletarians and semi-proletarians must predominate.

However, the expropriation of even the biggest peasants cannot under any circumstances be the immediate task of the victorious

proletariat, for the material, and in particular, the technical, and also the social conditions for the socialisation of such farms, are still lacking. In individual, and probaly exceptional, cases, those parts of their land which are leased in small plots, or which are particularly necessary for the surrounding small peasant population, will be confiscated; the small peasants will also be guaranteed, on certain terms, the free use of part of the agricultural machines belonging to the big peasants, etc. As a general rule, however, the proletarian state must allow the big peasants to retain their land and to confiscate it only in the event of their resisting the government of the toilers and the exploited. The experience of the Russian proletarian revolution, in which, owing to a number of special conditions, the fight against the big peasantry became complicated and long drawn out, showed, nevertheless, that, having been taught a severe lesson for the slightest attempt at resistance, this stratum is capable of loyally fulfilling the orders of the proletarian state, and is even beginning to become imbued, although very slowly, with respect for the government which protects all toilers and which is ruthless towards the idle rich.

The special conditions which complicated and retarded the struggle of the proletariat, which had conquered the bourgeoisie, against the big peasants in Russia were mainly the following: after the revolution of November 7 (October 25), 1917, the Russian revolution passed through the "general-democratic" stage, that is, basically, the bourgeois-democratic stage, of the struggle of the peasantry as a whole against the landlords; the cultural and numerical weakness of the urban proletariat; and finally, the enormous distances and extremely bad means of communication. In so far as these retarding conditions do not exist in the advanced countries, the revolutionary proletariat of Europe and America must more energetically prepare for and much more quickly, much more determinedly and much more successfully achieve complete victory over the resistance of the big peasantry and completely deprive it of the slightest possibility of resisting. This is imperatively necessary, because, until such an absolutely complete victory is achieved, the masses of the rural proletarians, semi-proletarians and small

peasants cannot regard the proletarian state power as being quite stable.

6. The revolutionary proletariat must immediately and unreservedly confiscate all the land of the landlords, of the big landowners, *i.e.*, of those persons who, in capitalist countries, directly, or through their farmers, systematically exploit wage labour and the surrounding small (and not infrequently, part of the middle) peasantry, perform no manual labour themselves and are largely the descendants of the feudal lords (the nobility in Russia, Germany and Hungary, the restored *seigneurs* in France, the lords in England, the ex-slaveowners in America) or are very rich financial magnates, or a mixture of both these categories of exploiters and idlers.

Under no circumstances must propaganda in favour of, or the practice of paying, compensation to the big landowners for the lands expropriated from them be permitted in the ranks of the Communist Parties, for in the conditions at present prevailing in Europe and America this would be equivalent to the betrayal of Socialism and the imposition of new tributes upon the masses of toilers and exploited who have suffered most from the war which has multiplied the number of millionaires and enriched them.

As for the question of the method by which the land that the victorious proletariat confiscates from the big landlords is to be cultivated, in Russia, owing to her economic backwardness, the predominating method was the distribution of this land among the peasantry for their use, and only in relatively rare and exceptional cases were so-called "Soviet farms"[1] organised, which the proletarian state manages on its own account by transforming the former wage labourers into state employees and into members of Soviets which administer the state. The Communist International is of the opinion that in the case of the advanced capitalist countries it will be correct to keep *most* of the big agricultural enterprises intact, and to conduct them on the lines of the "Soviet farms" in Russia.

It would be a great mistake, however, to exaggerate or to stereotype this rule and not to permit the free distribution of part of the

[1] *I.e.*, state farms.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

land expropriated from the expropriators to the surrounding small, and sometimes, middle peasantry.

Firstly, the objection usually raised against this, *viz.*, that large-scale production is technically superior to small production, very often amounts to the substitution of the worst opportunism and the betrayal of the revolution for an indisputable theoretical truth. For the sake of ensuring the success of the revolution, the proletariat must not shrink from a temporary decline in production, any more than the bourgeois enemies of slavery in North America shrank from a temporary reduction in the cotton crop as a consequence of the Civil War of 1863-65. For the bourgeois, production is important for the sake of production; the most important thing for the toiling and exploited population is the overthrow of the exploiters and the creation of conditions that will permit the toilers to work for themselves and not for the capitalists. The primary and fundamental task of the proletariat is to ensure the proletarian victory and its stability. And the stability of the proletarian power cannot be ensured without the neutralisation of the middle peasantry and the assured support of a considerable section, if not the whole, of the small peasantry.

Secondly, not merely the raising, but even the preservation of existing large-scale production in agriculture presupposes a fully developed revolutionary consciousness on the part of the rural proletariat after it has undergone a serious trade-union and political-organisational training. Where those conditions do not yet exist, or where it is not possible to entrust this work expediently to intelligent and competent workers, attempts at a hasty transition to the introduction of large state farms may only serve to discredit the proletarian power. Under such conditions the utmost caution must be exercised, and the most careful preparations must be made for the creation of "Soviet farms."

Thirdly, in all capitalist countries, even the most advanced, survivals of mediævalism still exist in the form of the semi-feudal exploitation of the surrounding small peasants by the big landowners, as for example, the *Instleute* in Germany, the *métayers* in France, the share-croppers in the United States (not only Negroes, who in the majority of cases are exploited in the Southern States

precisely by this method, but sometimes also whites). In such cases it is the duty of the proletarian state to grant the free use of the lands usually rented by small peasants to their former tenants, because no other economic or technical basis exists, nor can it be created at one stroke.

The implements and machinery of the big farms must be confiscated without any reservation and transformed into state property with the absolute proviso, that *after* the requirements of the big state farms in these implements have been met, they be used gratis by the surrounding small peasants on terms to be drawn up by the proletarian state.

In the first period after the proletarian revolution it is absolutely necessary, not only immediately to confiscate the estates of the big landlords, but also to deport, or intern, all the big landlords as the leaders of counter-revolution and the ruthless exploiters of the whole of the rural population. To the extent that the proletarian power becomes consolidated, not only in the cities but also in the countryside, systematic efforts must be made to utilise (under the special control of the most reliable Communist workers) the forces in this class which have valuable experience, knowledge and organising ability for the purpose of creating large-scale Socialist agriculture.

7. The victory of Socialism over capitalism, the consolidation of Socialism, can be regarded as ensured only when the proletarian state power, having utterly suppressed all resistance of the exploiters and having secured complete stability for itself and complete subordination to itself, reorganises the whole of industry on the basis of large-scale collective production and on a modern (based on the electrification of the whole of national economy) technical basis. This alone will enable the towns to render such radical technical and social assistance to the backward and scattered rural districts as will help to create the material basis for enormously raising the productivity of agriculture, and of agricultural labour in general, and thereby stimulate the small tillers of the soil by the force of example and their own interests to adopt large-scale collective machine agriculture. This indisputable theoretical truth, which was nominally admitted by all Socialists, was

in fact distorted by the opportunism which prevailed in the yellow, Second International, among the leaders of the German and British "Independents," and also among the French Longuetists, etc. This distortion lies in that attention is directed towards the relatively remote, beautiful and rosy future; attention is deflected from the immediate tasks of the difficult, concrete transition and approach to this future. In practice, it lies in preaching compromise with the bourgeoisie and "social peace," *i.e.*, the utter betrayal of the proletariat, which is now fighting amidst conditions of unprecedented ruin and impoverishment created everywhere by the war, amidst conditions of unprecedented enrichment and arrogance of a handful of millionaires, precisely as a result of this war.

It is precisely in the rural districts that the creation of real possibilities for the successful struggle for Socialism makes it necessary, firstly, for all Communist Parties to imbue the industrial proletariat with the consciousness of the need to make sacrifices, and to be prepared to make sacrifices, for the sake of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and of consolidating the proletarian power; for the dictatorship of the proletariat implies the ability of the proletariat to organise and lead all the masses of toilers and exploited, as well as the ability of the vanguard to make the utmost sacrifice and to display the utmost heroism for this cause; and secondly, in order to achieve success, the toilers and the most exploited masses in the rural districts must obtain as a result of the victory of the workers an immediate and considerable improvement in their conditions at the expense of the exploiters; for unless this takes place, the industrial proletariat cannot be sure of the support of the rural districts, and, in particular, it will not be able to ensure food supplies for the towns.

8. The enormous difficulty of organising and training for the revolutionary struggle the masses of the agricultural toilers whom capitalism has placed in conditions of special wretchedness, disunity, and often, of mediæval dependence, makes it necessary for the Communist Parties to devote special attention to strike struggles in the rural districts, to rendering increased support and all-sidedly developing mass strikes among the agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians. The experience of the Russian Revolutions of

1905 and of 1917, now confirmed and enlarged by the experience of Germany and other advanced countries, shows that the developing mass strike struggle (into which, under certain conditions, the small peasants can and should be drawn) is alone capable of rousing the countryside from its lethargy, of rousing the class consciousness of the exploited masses in the rural districts, of making them realise the need for class organisation, and of revealing to them in a vivid and practical manner the significance of their alliance with the urban workers.

This Congress of the Communist International brands as traitors those Socialists—unfortunately to be found, not only in the yellow, Second International, but also in the three particularly important parties in Europe which have withdrawn from this International—who are not only capable of remaining indifferent to the strike struggle in the rural districts, but also (like K. Kautsky) of opposing it on the ground that it creates the danger of reducing the production of articles of consumption. No programmes and solemn declarations are of any value whatever if it is not proved in practice, by deeds, that the Communists and workers' leaders are able to put the development of the proletarian revolution and its victory above everything else in the world, are able to make the greatest sacrifices for it; for there is no other way out, no other salvation from starvation, ruin and new imperialist wars.

In particular, it is necessary to point out that the leaders of old Socialism and the representatives of the "labour aristocracy," who now often make verbal concessions to Communism and even nominally come over to its side in order to preserve their prestige among the masses who are rapidly becoming revolutionary, must be tested for their loyalty to the cause of the proletariat and ability to occupy responsible positions precisely in spheres of work in which the development of revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary struggle is proceeding most sharply, in which the resistance of the landlords and the bourgeoisie (the big peasants, the kulaks) is becoming more and more fierce, in which the difference between the Socialist compromiser and the Communist revolutionary reveals itself most sharply.

9. The Communist Parties must exert every effort to form in

the rural districts as speedily as possible Soviets of Deputies to consist primarily of wage workers and semi-proletarians. Only by being connected with the mass strike struggle and with the most oppressed class can the Soviets fulfil their functions and become sufficiently consolidated to be able to influence (and later to incorporate) the small peasants. If, however, the strike struggle is not yet developed, and the ability of the agricultural proletariat to organise is still negligible, owing to the weight of oppression of the landlords and of the big peasants, as well as to the lack of support of industrial workers and their unions, the formation of Soviets of Deputies in the rural districts requires long preparation which entails the creation of even small Communist nuclei, intensified agitation—in which the demands of Communism are enunciated in the simplest manner and illustrated by the most glaring examples of exploitation and oppression—the organisation of systematic visits of industrial workers to the rural districts, etc.

June 1920

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF THESES ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS

For the Second Congress of the Communist International

IN submitting for their consideration the following draft of theses on the colonial and national questions for the Second Congress of the Communist International, I ask all comrades, particularly those who have definite information on any of these very complicated questions, to express their opinion, and make suggestions for amendments or additions, or very brief comments (not more than two pages), particularly on the following points:

The Experience of Austria
The Experience of the Polish Jews and the Ukrainians
Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium
Ireland
Danish-German Relations
Italian-French and Italian-Slav Relations
The Experience of the Balkans
The Eastern Peoples
The Fight Against Pan-Islamism
Relations in the Caucasus
The Bashkir and Tatar Republics
Kirghizistan
Turkestan—Its Experience
The Negroes in America
The Colonies
China—Korea—Japan

N. LENIN

June 5, 1920

1. Bourgeois democracy, because of its very nature, usually presents the question of equality, including the question of national equality, in an abstract or formal manner. In the guise of equality of persons generally, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal, or juridical equality between the property-owner and the proletarian, between the exploiter and the exploited, and thereby greatly deceives the oppressed classes. The bourgeoisie transforms

the idea of equality, which is itself the reflection of commodity production relations, into a weapon in the struggle against the abolition of classes on the plea of alleged absolute equality between individual persons. The real meaning of the demand for equality lies exclusively in the demand for the abolition of classes.

2. In conformity with its fundamental tasks of fighting against bourgeois democracy and of exposing its falsity and hypocrisy, the Communist Party, as the conscious expression of the struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of the yoke of the bourgeoisie, must put as the corner-stone in the national question not abstract and not formal principles, but, firstly, an exact estimation of the historically concrete situation and, primarily, the economic situation; secondly, it must distinctly single out the interests of the oppressed classes, of the toilers, of the exploited, from the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; thirdly, it must make a similarly distinct division between oppressed, dependent and subject nations and oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations, in order to counter-balance the bourgeois-democratic lies which obscure the colonial and financial enslavement of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by an insignificant minority of the richest advanced capitalist countries that is characteristic of the epoch of finance capital and imperialism.

3. The imperialist war of 1914-18 revealed the falsity of bourgeois-democratic phrases to all nations and to all the oppressed classes of the whole world with particular clarity, and proved that the Versailles Treaty of the notorious "Western democracies" is a more brutal and despicable act of violence against weak nations than was the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of the German Junkers and the Kaiser. The League of Nations and the whole of the post-war policy of the Entente reveal this truth more clearly and sharply than ever; everywhere they are intensifying the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat in the advanced countries as well as that of the masses of the toilers in the colonial and dependent countries, and are accelerating the collapse of petty-bourgeois national illusions about

the possibility of peaceful co-habitation and of equality of nations under capitalism.

4. From the above-enunciated fundamental propositions it follows that the cornerstone of the whole policy of the Communist International in the national and colonial question must be to bring together the proletarians and the masses of the toilers of all nations and countries for the joint revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landlords and the bourgeoisie; for this alone guarantees victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

5. The world political situation has now placed on the order of the day the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all events in world politics are inevitably concentrating around one central point, *viz.*, the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, which is inevitably grouping around itself the Soviet movement of the advanced workers of all countries, as well as all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities which have become convinced by their bitter experience that there is no salvation for them except the victory of the Soviet power over world imperialism.

6. Consequently, one must not confine oneself at the present time to the bare recognition, or proclamation, of the need for bringing together the toilers of the various nations; it is necessary to pursue a policy that will bring about the closest alliance of all the national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia; the form of this alliance is to be determined by the degree of development of the Communist movement among the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

7. Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the toilers of the various nations. Practice has already proved that federation is expedient by the relations that exist between the R.S.F.S.R. and other Soviet Republics (the Hungarian, Finnish, and Latvian in the past, and the Azerbaidjan and the Ukrainian at the present time), as well as by the relations that exist within the

R.S.F.S.R. among the nationalities which formerly enjoyed neither state sovereignty nor autonomy (*e.g.*, the Bashkir and Tatar Autonomous Republics in the R.S.F.S.R., formed in 1919 and 1920).[1]

8. The task of the Communist International in this respect is further to enlarge and also to study and to test the experience of these new federations which have arisen on the basis of the Soviet system and of the Soviet movement. In recognising federation as the transitional form to complete unity, it is necessary to strive for closer federal union, bearing in mind, firstly, that it will be impossible to preserve the existence of the Soviet Republics which are surrounded by the imperialist powers of the whole world—which in military power are immeasurably stronger than they are—without the closest alliance of the Soviet Republics; and secondly, the necessity of a close economic alliance of the Soviet Republics, for without this it will be impossible to restore the productive forces that have been destroyed by imperialism and to ensure the well-being of the toilers; and thirdly, the tendency toward the creation of a single world economy regulated by the proletariat of all nations according to a common plan, which tendency is already clearly and fully revealed under capitalism, and should certainly be further developed and fully consummated under Socialism.

9. In the sphere of internal state relations, the national policy of the Communist International cannot limit itself to the bare, formal, purely rhetorical and non-committal recognition of the equality of nations to which the bourgeois democrats confine themselves—no matter whether they frankly call themselves democrats or whether they go under the cloak of Socialism, as for example, the Socialists of the Second International.[2]

Not only must the constant violation of the equality of nations and of the guaranteed rights of the national minorities that takes place in all capitalist countries in spite of their "democratic" constitutions be steadily exposed in the whole of the propaganda

[1] The proof-sheets of these theses bear the following inscription by Lenin: "7.+Confederation? (Stalin)."—*Ed.*

[2] The proof-sheets of these theses bear the following inscription by Lenin: "9.+The significance of the dictatorship of the proletariat in removing national squabbles (Rafess)." - *Ed.*

and agitation of the Communist Parties—in parliament and out of it—but it is necessary also, first, to explain constantly that the Soviet system alone is capable of granting real equality of nations by uniting first the proletariat and then the whole mass of the toilers in the struggle against the bourgeoisie; second, it is necessary for the Communist Parties to render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, the Negroes in America, etc.) and in the colonies.

Without the latter particularly important condition, the struggle against the oppression of the dependent nations and colonies and also the recognition of their rights to state separation remains a false sign-board, as we see in the case of the parties affiliated to the Second International.

10. The recognition of internationalism in words, and substituting for it in deeds, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, is a common occurrence, not only among the parties affiliated to the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from that International, and not infrequently, even among those which now call themselves Communist Parties. The struggle against this evil, against these most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, comes more and more to the forefront in proportion as the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one (*i.e.*, existing in one country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (*i.e.*, the dictatorship of the proletariat covering at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising decisive influence upon the whole of world politics) becomes the question of the day. Petty-bourgeois nationalism declares the recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing else, to be internationalism, while preserving intact national egoism (quite apart from the purely verbal character of this recognition), whereas proletarian internationalism demands, firstly, the subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; and secondly, it calls for the ability and readiness on the part of the nations which are achieving victory over the bourgeoisie to make

the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of overthrowing international capital.

Thus, in states which are already fully capitalistic, which have workers' parties that are really the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against the opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and very important task.

11. In regard to more backward states and nations in which feudal or patriarchal, or patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

First, that all the Communist Parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the primary duty of rendering the most active assistance rests upon the workers in those countries upon which the backward nation is dependent as a colony or financially;

Second, that it is necessary to fight against the clergy and other influential reactionary and mediæval elements in backward countries;

Third, that it is necessary to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with the strengthening of the positions of the Khans, the landlords, the mullahs, etc.;[1]

Fourth, that it is necessary to render special assistance to the peasant movement in the backward countries against the landlords, against large landownership, against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism; to strive to give the peasant movement the most revolutionary character and to establish the closest possible alliance between the West European Communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies and in the backward countries, generally;[2]

Fifth, that it is necessary to wage a determined struggle against painting the bourgeois-democratic liberation trend in backward

[1] The proof-sheets of these theses bear the following note by Lenin: "Combine 2 and 3."—*Ed.*

[2] The proof-sheets of these theses bear the following addition by Lenin: "4.+particularly necessary to exert all efforts to apply the fundamental principles of the Soviet system to countries in which pre-capitalist relations predominate by creating 'Toilers' Soviets' etc."—*Ed.*

countries in Communist colours; the Communist International must support the bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on the condition that the elements of future proletarian parties existing in all backward countries, which are not merely Communist in name, shall be grouped together and trained to appreciate their special tasks, *viz.*, the tasks of fighting the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations; the Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form;

Sixth, that it is necessary steadily to explain to and expose among the broadest masses of the toilers of all countries, and particularly of backward countries, the deception which the imperialist powers systematically practice by creating, in the guise of politically independent states, states which are absolutely dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily; in the present international situation there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet republics.

12. The age-long oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has imbued the toiling masses of the oppressed countries, not only with anger, but also with distrust toward the oppressing nations in general, including the proletariat of those nations. The despicable betrayal of Socialism by the majority of the official leaders of this proletariat in 1914-19, when "defence of the fatherland" was used as a social-chauvinist cloak to conceal the defence of the "right" of "their" bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and rob financially dependent countries, could not but increase this quite legitimate distrust. On the other hand, the more backward a country is the stronger in it are small agricultural production, patriarchalism and ignorance, which inevitably cause the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, *viz.*, the prejudices of national egoism and national narrowness, to become particularly strong and tenacious. In view of the fact that these prejudices can disappear only after the disappearance of imperialism and capitalism in the advanced countries, and after a radical change

has taken place in the whole foundation of the economic life of the backward countries, the process of extinction of these prejudices cannot but be very slow. Hence, it is the duty of the class-conscious Communist proletariat of all countries to treat the survivals of national sentiments among the countries and nationalities which have been oppressed for the longest periods with special caution and special attention, and it is also necessary to make certain concessions with the view to rapidly removing the aforementioned distrust and the aforementioned prejudices. Unless the proletariat, and also all the toiling masses, of all countries and nations, all over the world, voluntarily strive for an alliance, for unity, the victory over capitalism cannot be successfully achieved.

June 1920

THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS AT THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

July 26, 1920

COMRADES, I will confine myself to a brief introduction, and later, Comrade Maring, who acted as secretary of our commission, will submit to you a detailed report on the changes which we have made in the theses. After him, Comrade Roy, who formulated supplementary theses, will speak. Our commission unanimously adopted the preliminary theses, with amendments, and also the supplementary theses. Thus, we succeeded in achieving complete unanimity on all the important questions. I will now make a few brief remarks.

Firstly, what is the most important, the fundamental idea contained in our theses? The distinction between oppressed nations and oppressing nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasise this distinction. It is particularly important in the epoch of imperialism for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish concrete economic facts and, in solving all colonial and national problems, to take as our starting point, not abstract postulates, but the phenomena of concrete reality.

The characteristic feature of imperialism is that the whole world, as we see, is at present divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressing nations possessing colossal wealth and powerful military forces. The overwhelming majority of the population of the world, numbering more than a billion, in all probability a billion and a quarter, if we take the total population of the world at one and three-quarter billion, *i.e.*, about 70 per cent of the population of the world, belongs to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct

colonial dependence or belong to the outlying colonial states such as Persia, Turkey and China, or else, after being conquered by the armies of a big imperialist power, have been forced into dependence upon it by treaties. This distinction, the idea of dividing the nations into oppressing and oppressed nations, runs like a thread through all the theses, not only the first theses which appeared over my name [1] and which were published earlier, but also through Comrade Roy's theses. The latter were written mainly from the point of view of the situation in India and among other large nationalities which are oppressed by Great Britain, and this is what makes them very important for us.

The second leading idea in our theses is that in the present world situation, after the imperialist war, the mutual relations between the nations, the whole world system of states, are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states, at the head of which stands Soviet Russia. If we lose sight of this we shall not be able to present correctly a single national or colonial question, even if it concerns the most remote corner of the earth. Only by adopting this point of view can the Communist Parties correctly present any political question concerning civilised or backward countries and give a reply to this question.

Thirdly, I would like particularly to emphasise the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. It was this question that gave rise to some disagreement. We argued about whether it would be correct, in principle and in theory, to declare that the Communist International and the Communist Parties should support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of this discussion we unanimously decided to speak of the nationalist-revolutionary movement instead of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. There is not the slightest doubt that every nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, for the bulk of the population in backward countries are peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relations. It would be utopian to think that proletarian parties, if indeed they can arise

[1] See preceding item.—*Ed.*

in such countries, could pursue Communist tactics and a Communist policy in these backward countries without having definite relations with the peasant movement and without effectively supporting it. But it was argued that if we speak about the bourgeois-democratic movement all distinction between reformist and revolutionary movements will be obliterated; whereas in recent times this distinction has been fully and clearly revealed in the backward and colonial countries, for the imperialist bourgeoisie is trying with all its might to implant the reformist movement also among the oppressed nations. A certain rapprochement has been brought about between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and those of the colonial countries, so that very often, even in the majority of cases, perhaps, where the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries does support the national movement, it simultaneously works in harmony with the imperialist bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, it joins the latter in fighting against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. In the commission this was proved irrefutably, and we came to the conclusion that the only correct thing to do was to take this distinction into consideration and nearly everywhere to substitute the term "nationalist-revolutionary" for the term "bourgeois-democratic." The meaning of this change is that we Communists should, and will, support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonial countries only when these movements are really revolutionary, when the representatives of these movements do not hinder us in training and organising the peasants and the broad masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. Even if these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must fight against the reformist bourgeoisie, among which we include the heroes of the Second International. Reformist parties already exist in colonial countries, and sometimes their representatives call themselves Social-Democrats and Socialists. The above-mentioned distinction has now been drawn in all the theses, and I think that, thanks to this, our point of view has been formulated much more precisely.

I would like next to make a few remarks concerning Peasants' Soviets. The practical work carried on by the Russian Communists in the colonies which formerly belonged to tsarism, in backward countries like Turkestan and others, confronted us with the question

of how to apply Communist tactics and policy amidst pre-capitalist conditions; for the most important characteristic feature of these countries is that pre-capitalist relations still predominate in them, and, therefore, a purely proletarian movement is out of the question in them. In those countries there is almost no industrial proletariat. Nevertheless, even there we have undertaken and had to undertake the role of leader. Our work revealed to us that in those countries we have to overcome colossal difficulties; but the practical results of our work also revealed to us that, notwithstanding these difficulties, it is possible to rouse among the masses a striving for independent political thought and independent political activity, even where there is almost no proletariat. This work was more difficult for us than for the comrades in West European countries, because the proletariat in Russia is overwhelmed with state work. It is quite understandable that peasants who are in a state of semi-feudal dependence can fully appreciate the idea of Soviet organisation and put it into practice. It is also clear that the oppressed masses, who are not only exploited by merchant capital, but also by feudal rulers, and by the state, on a feudal basis, can wield this weapon, this form of organisation, even in the conditions under which they live. The idea of Soviet organisation is a simple one and can be applied, not only to proletarian, but also to peasant, feudal and semi-feudal relations. Our experience in this sphere is not yet very considerable; but the debates which took place in the commission, in which several representatives of colonial countries participated, proved irrefutably that it is necessary to indicate in the theses of the Communist International that Peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a useful weapon, not only for capitalist countries, but also for countries in which pre-capitalist relations exist; and we must say that it is the bounden duty of the Communist Parties, and of those elements which are associated with them, to carry on propaganda in favour of the idea of Peasants' Soviets, of Toilers' Soviets everywhere, in backward countries and in colonies; in those countries, also, they must strive to create Soviets of the Toiling People as far as conditions will allow.

This opens up for us a very interesting and important sphere of practical work. Our general experience in this respect is not

particularly large as yet; but little by little we shall accumulate an increasing amount of material. There can be no argument about the fact that the proletariat of the advanced countries can and must assist the backward toiling masses, and that the development of the backward countries can emerge from its present stage when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet republics stretches out a helping hand to these masses.

A rather lively debate on this question took place in the commission, not only in connection with the theses which I signed, but still more in connection with Comrade Roy's theses, which Comrade Roy will defend here, and which, with certain amendments, were adopted unanimously.

The question was presented in the following way: can we recognise as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of development of national economy is inevitable for those backward nations which are now liberating themselves and among which a movement along the road of progress is now, after the war, observed? We reply to this question in the negative. If the revolutionary, victorious proletariat carries on systematic propaganda among them, and if the Soviet governments render them all the assistance they possibly can, it will be wrong to assume that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for the backward nationalities. We must not only form independent cadres of fighters, of Party organisations, in all colonies and backward countries, we must not only carry on propaganda in favour of organising Peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to pre-capitalist conditions; the Communist International must lay down, and give the theoretical grounds for, the proposition that, with the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet system and, after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development.

It is impossible to say beforehand by what means this can be done. Practical experience will suggest this to us. But it is definitely established that all the toiling masses of the most remote nations appreciate the idea of Soviets, that these organisations, the Soviets, must be adapted to the conditions of the pre-capitalist

social system, and that the Communist Parties must immediately start work in this direction all over the world.

I would also like to mention the importance of the revolutionary work of the Communist Parties, not only in their own countries but also among the troops which the exploiting nations employ to hold the peoples of their colonies in subjection.

Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke of this in our commission. He stated that the rank-and-file English worker would consider it treachery to help the enslaved peoples in their revolt against British rule. It is true that the jingo and chauvinist-minded labour aristocracy in England and America represents a very great danger to Socialism, that it is the strongest support of the Second International, and that here we have to deal with the worst treachery of those leaders and workers who belong to the bourgeois International. The Second International also discussed the colonial question. The Basle Manifesto also spoke of it quite plainly. The parties of the Second International promised to behave in a revolutionary way, but we see no real revolutionary work and help for the exploited and oppressed peoples in their revolts against the oppressors from the parties of the Second International, nor, I believe, from the majority of the parties which have left the Second International and wish to join the Third International. We must declare this publicly, and it cannot be refuted. We shall see if any attempt is made to refute it.

All these considerations lay at the basis of our resolutions which are certainly too long, but which, I believe, will nevertheless be useful, and will assist the development and organisation of really revolutionary work in connection with the national and colonial questions, which is our principal task.

SPEECH ON PARLIAMENTARISM

Delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist International, August 2, 1920

EVIDENTLY Comrade Bordiga wanted to defend the point of view of the Italian Marxists, nevertheless he has not replied to a single one of the arguments advanced by other Marxists in favour of parliamentary action.

Comrade Bordiga admitted that historical experience is not created artificially. He has only just told us that the struggle must be carried to other spheres. Does he not know that every revolutionary crisis was accompanied by a parliamentary crisis? True, he said that the struggle must be carried into other spheres, into the Soviets; but he has himself admitted that the Soviets cannot be created artificially. The example of Russia shows that Soviets may be organised either during the revolution, or immediately before the revolution. Even during the Kerensky period the Soviets (Menshevik Soviets) were organised in such a way that they could not possibly be transformed into a proletarian government. Parliament is the product of historical development, which we cannot obliterate from life until we are strong enough to disperse the bourgeois parliament. Only by being a member of a bourgeois parliament is it possible, on the basis of the given historical conditions, to fight against bourgeois society and parliamentarism. The proletariat must use the same weapons in the struggle as are used by the bourgeoisie—for altogether different aims, of course. You cannot deny that this is so; and if you want to challenge it you must wipe out the experience of all the revolutionary events in the world.

You said that the trade unions are also opportunistically minded, that they, too, are a danger. On the other hand, you said

that an exception must be made in the case of the trade unions because they are workers' organisations. This is true only to a certain extent. In the trade unions, too, there are very backward elements: a section of the proletarianised petty bourgeoisie, backward workers and small peasants. All these elements really think that their interests are represented in parliament. This must be combated by work in parliament, and the truth must be proved to the masses by means of facts. You will not convince the backward masses with theory; they need practical experience.

We saw this in Russia. We were obliged to convene the Constituent Assembly even after the victory of the proletariat in order to prove to the backward proletariat that it had nothing to gain from that Assembly. In order to enable them to see the difference between the two we had to contrast the real Soviets with the real Constituent Assembly, and to show that the Soviets alone provided a way out.

Comrade Souchi, a revolutionary syndicalist, defended the same theory, but logic is not on his side. He said that he was not a Marxist, so that can be understood. But you, Comrade Bordiga, assert that you are a Marxist, so we must demand more logic from you. We must know how to break up parliament. If you can do this by means of an armed rebellion in all countries, all very well. You know that we in Russia have proved our determination to destroy the bourgeois parliament, not only in theory, but in practice. But you have lost sight of the fact that it is impossible to do this without fairly prolonged preparations, and that in the majority of countries it is still impossible to destroy parliament at one stroke. We are also obliged to carry on the struggle in parliament in order to destroy parliament. You substitute your revolutionary will for the conditions which determine the political line of all classes in modern society; and that is why you forget that in order to destroy the bourgeois parliament in Russia we were first of all obliged to convene the Constituent Assembly even after we had achieved victory. You said: "It is true that the Russian Revolution is an example that cannot be applied to the conditions of Western Europe." But you advanced a very frivolous argument in order to prove this to us. We have passed through the period of the dictatorship of bourgeois democracy. We passed through it quickly at a time when

we had to agitate in favour of elections for the Constituent Assembly. And later, when the working class had already obtained the opportunity of capturing power, the peasants still believed that a bourgeois parliament was necessary.

Reckoning with these backward elements we had to call for elections and to show the masses by example, by facts, that this Constituent Assembly, which was elected in a period of great universal want, did not express the aspirations and demands of the exploited classes. In this way the conflict between the Soviet and bourgeois systems of government became quite clear, not only to us, the vanguard of the working class, but also to the overwhelming majority of the peasantry, to the minor office employees, the petty bourgeoisie, etc. There are backward elements of the working class in all capitalist countries, and these elements are convinced that parliament is the true representative of the people; they do not see that dishonest methods are used in it. It is said that parliament is an instrument with which the bourgeoisie deceives the masses. This argument should be turned against you, and it is turned against your theses. How will you reveal to the really backward masses who are deceived by the bourgeoisie the real character of parliament? How will you expose any particular parliamentary manœuvre, or the position of any particular party, if you are not in parliament, if you remain outside of parliament? If you are Marxists you must admit that there is a close connection between the relations of classes in capitalist society and the relations of parties. I repeat: How will you prove all this if you are not members of parliament, if you repudiate parliamentary action? The history of the Russian revolution has proved that the broad masses of the working class, of the peasantry, and of the minor office employees, cannot be convinced by arguments if they are not convinced by their own experience.

It was said here that when we take part in the parliamentary struggle we waste a lot of time. Can we conceive of another institution in which all classes are as interested as they are in parliament? This cannot be created artificially. If all classes are drawn into the parliamentary struggle it is because interests and conflicts do really find their expression in parliament. If it were possible

everywhere, at one stroke, to call forth at first, let us say, a general strike, in order to overthrow capitalism at one blow, we should have had the revolution in a number of countries by now. But we must reckon with facts; and for the time being parliament is an arena of the class struggle. Comrade Bordiga, and those who share his point of view, must tell the masses the truth. Germany provides the best proof that it is possible to have a Communist group in parliament. That is why you should have openly said to the masses: "We are too weak to create a party with a strong organisation." That would have been the truth, and that is what you ought to have said. But if you admitted to the masses that you were weak, they would become not your adherents but your opponents, they would become adherents of parliamentarism.

If you say: "Comrades, workers, we are so weak that we are unable to form a sufficiently disciplined party that would be able to compel its members of parliament to submit to the party," the workers would desert you, for they would ask themselves: "How shall we build up the dictatorship of the proletariat with such weaklings?"

You are very naïve if you think that on the day of victory of the proletariat, the intelligentsia, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie will become Communistic.

If you are not suffering from this illusion you ought now to begin to prepare the proletariat for the task of overhauling its own ranks. You will find no exception to this rule in any sphere of state work. Everywhere you will see advocates of opportunism who call themselves Communists, petty bourgeois who refuse to recognise either discipline, the Communist Party, or the proletarian state. Unless you prepare the workers for the creation of a really disciplined party which will compel all its members to submit to its discipline, you will never prepare for the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is why, I think, you do not want to admit that it is precisely the weakness of very many of the new Communist Parties that compels them to repudiate parliamentary action. I am convinced that the overwhelming majority of the really revolutionary workers will follow us and oppose your anti-parliamentary theses.

A LETTER TO THE GERMAN AND FRENCH WORKERS

Re The Discussion About the Second Congress of the Communist International

COMRADES, the bourgeois press of Germany and France is devoting considerable attention to the discussion that is proceeding in the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany and the Socialist Party of France on the question of affiliating to the Communist International. The bourgeois press is very energetically championing the view of the Right opportunist sections of these parties.

This is quite understandable, for, in essence, these Right elements are petty-bourgeois democrats, who, like Dittman and Crispien, are unable to think in a revolutionary manner, are incapable of helping the working class to prepare for revolution and to bring about the revolution. A split from these Right opportunist elements is necessary; it is the only way of rallying all the really revolutionary and really proletarian masses.

Shouting about the "dictatorship" of Moscow, etc., is mere eyewash. As a matter of fact, the Executive Committee of the Communist International consists of twenty members of whom only five are members of the Russian Communist Party. All this talk about "dictatorship," etc., is self-deception, or deception of the workers. This talk also serves to conceal the bankruptcy of a certain number of opportunist leaders in the same way as similar talk in the K.A.P.D. (Communist Labour Party of Germany) served to conceal the bankruptcy of several of its leaders who deserted the path of proletarian revolution. And shouting about the "Moscow dictators" persecuting certain persons by imposing the conditions of affiliation to the Communist International, is also self-deception, or deception. Point 20 of the Conditions of Affiliation clearly says in black and white that *"exceptions" (Ausnahmen) to this strict*

rule in regard to the leaders of the Right wing and in regard to members of central bodies *are permissible with the consent of the Executive Committee of the Third International.*

Since exceptions are openly declared to be permissible, it follows that there can be no thought of the absolute exclusion of this or that individual; it follows that there is full recognition of the necessity of taking into account, not the past, but the present, of taking into account the change of views and conduct of individual persons, of individual leaders. Since exceptions are declared to be permissible, provided the consent of the Executive Committee of the Communist International is obtained—and the Russians constitute only one-fourth of this Executive Committee—it follows that all the shouting about "dictatorship," etc., is just sheer nonsense and absolutely false.

All this shouting is mere eye-wash. As a matter of fact, a fight is going on between the revolutionary, *proletarian* elements and the opportunist, *petty-bourgeois* elements. To the latter now belong, and have belonged in the past, the Hilferdings, the Dittmans, the Crispiens, the numerous members of the parliamentary fractions in Germany and France, etc. The fight between these two political trends is going on in all countries of the world without exception. This struggle has a long history; it became very acute everywhere during the imperialist war and after it. Opportunism is represented by elements of the "labour aristocracy," by the old bureaucracy of the trade unions, co-operative societies, etc., by the intellectual petty-bourgeois strata, etc. Unless the ranks are purged of this trend—which, in fact, by its vacillation, its "Menshevism" (the Dittmans and Crispiens are quite like our Mensheviks) exercises bourgeois influence on the proletariat *within* the working class movement, *within* the Socialist parties—without a split from it, without expelling all its prominent representatives, the revolutionary proletariat cannot be united.

By their constant vacillations in the direction of reformism and Menshevism, by their inability to think and act in a revolutionary manner, Dittman, Crispien and the others, without realising it, exert the influence of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat within the proletarian party—they *subordinate the proletariat to bour-*

geois reformism. Only a split from such people and those like them brings about the international unity of the revolutionary proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the overthrow of the latter.

Events in Italy ought to open the eyes of even the most stubborn of those who fail to see the harmfulness of "unity" and "peace" with the Crispiens and Dittmans. The Italian Crispiens and Dittmans (Turati, Prampolini and D'Aragona) began to *hinder* the revolution in Italy immediately things *reached the stage of a real revolution.* And it is reaching that stage, more or less quickly, more or less arduously and painfully, all over Europe, all over the world.

It is time to abandon completely all these harmful illusions about the possibility of "unity" or "peace" with the Dittmans and Crispiens, with the Right wing of the German "Independent Social-Democratic Party," the "British Independent Labour Party," the French Socialist Party, etc. It is time all the revolutionary workers purged their parties of these and formed really united Communist Parties of the proletariat.

September 24, 1920

FALSE SPEECHES ABOUT FREEDOM

I

"PRAVDA," No. 213, of September 25, 1920, published a short letter of mine entitled: "A Letter to the German and French Workers—*Re* The Discussion About the Second Congress of the Communist International."[1] *Avanti,* the central organ of the Socialist Party of Italy, in its issue of October 5, reproduced this letter and furnished it with comments of its own which are worth dealing with, for they strikingly illustrate the wrong position occupied by Comrade Serrati, the editor of *Avanti.*

"Lenin's explanation," we read, "to some extent mitigates the draconic conditions dictated to the comrades who are not fully in a position correctly to appraise men and circumstances at such a distance and in such a different situation...."

"...Lenin spared one of his victims: Modigliani...."

"...Now Lenin says—we do not know whether on his own behalf or on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Communist International—that 'exceptions' (to the general rule, with the consent of the Executive Committee) are permissible."

The ironical remark about the "victim," which Modigliani, one of the reformists, is alleged to be, is pointless. In spite of what Serrati thinks, my failure to mention the name of Modigliani (and of Longuet) was not deliberate. I took this or that name as an example, in order to characterise the *trend,* but I left, and now leave aside the question of this or that *individual person*; for I do not undertake to decide it, as I consider it a secondary question and point to the possibility of exceptions. Serrati's statement notwithstanding, he knows perfectly well (for he makes precise reference to my article in *Pravda*) that I speak, and can *only* speak, on my own behalf and under no circumstances on behalf of the Executive Committee.

[1] See preceding item.—*Ed.*

By his remarks Serrati diverts the attention of the readers of *Avanti* from the principal, main, material question, *i.e.*, the question as to whether it is now permissible to allow reformists to remain in the ranks of the Italian party of the revolutionary proletariat. Serrati conceals the fallacy of the position he occupies by trying to divert attention from what is material to what is secondary and wrong.

This must be combated. Essentials must be explained.

In the comment here dealt with, and in other articles, Serrati talks about the Moscow Congress (the Second Congress of the Communist International) not being sufficiently well informed about Italian affairs; as if the essence of the matter is not the struggle between two fundamental trends, not the settlement of the fundamental question of whether "unity" with the reformists is permissible or not, but disagreements about the things that "Moscow" is not precisely informed about!

The glaring fallacy of this view—and of this attempt to divert attention from the main thing—is best of all exposed in the *official report* of the debate *on the Central Committee* of the Socialist Party of Italy. This debate took place in Milan only a few days before the publication of the above-mentioned issue of *Avanti*, *viz.*, September 28, 29 and 30 and October 1.

The debate closed with a vote that was taken on two resolutions, one of which may be called a Communist resolution, and the other a "Centrist," or an evasive resolution, or a resolution which in a concealed form defended an alliance ("unity"!) with the reformists. The first resolution was carried, seven voting for (Terracini, Gennari, Rogent, Tuntar, Casucci, Marxiale, and Bellone); the second resolution was rejected (five voting for: Baratono, Zanarini, Bacci, Giacomini, and Serrati).

The first resolution is distinguished for its remarkable clarity and precision. It starts with a reference to the fact that the "present conditions" of the Italian revolutionary struggle call for "greater homogeneity" in the party. Then it goes on to say that everybody was allowed to remain in the party on the condition that they submitted to discipline, but that this condition has not been adhered to.

It would be a mistake to expect submission to discipline on the part of those whose convictions are opposed to the principles and tactics of the Third International. Therefore, it goes on to say, having adopted the twenty-one points of the Moscow conditions it is necessary to make a "radical purge" of the party in order to *eliminate* all reformist and opportunist elements from it.

Here there are no names or private matters, but a clear political line. The grounds for adopting the decision are precisely indicated, *viz.*, concrete facts in the history of the party in Italy, the concrete features of her revolutionary situation.

The second resolution is a model of evasiveness and bad diplomacy: We adopt the twenty-one points, but we recognise that "these conditions leave a loophole for doubtful interpretations," that it is "necessary to adapt the political criteria of each section of the Third, Communist International to the historical conditions and the concrete and actual specific features of each country, these criteria to be submitted for approval to this International." The resolution emphasises "the necessity of preserving the unity of the Socialist Party of Italy on the basis of the twenty-one points"; cases of breach of discipline must be sternly punished by the Central Committee of the Party.

The Communist resolution says: The revolutionary situation calls for greater homogeneity in the party. This is incontrovertible. The resolution of the advocates of "unity" with the reformists tries to evade this incontrovertible truth, not daring to dispute it.

The Communist resolution says: The specific feature of Italy is that the condition that the reformists submit to the decisions of the party *has not been adhered to.* That is the whole point. That being the case, to allow reformists to remain in the party when the general revolutionary situation is *becoming more acute*, when the country may even be on the eve of decisive revolutionary battles, is not only a mistake, *it is a crime.*

Is this a fact or not? Have the reformists carried out the decisions of the party; have they actually submitted to the party; have they pursued its policy? The resolution of the defenders of the reformists cannot reply in the affirmative; it cannot challenge the negative reply of the Communists; it avoids giving a reply; it

twists and turns and refers in general to the difference in the concrete specific features of the various countries; it refers to this *in order* to evade and put in a false light the very important "concrete specific features" of *Italy* at precisely the present moment. For the concrete specific feature of Italy is precisely the fact that the reformists have already proved to be utterly incapable of effectively carrying out the decisions of the party, of actually pursuing its policy. Being evasive on this fundamental question, the resolution of the adherents of unity with the reformists entirely defeats itself.

Serrati, Baratono, Zanarini, Bacci and Giacomini have *thus* absolutely clearly and irrefutably shown that they are *fundamentally* wrong, that their political line is *fundamentally wrong.*

And the debate on the Central Committee of the Italian party has revealed still more clearly that Serrati's line is utterly wrong. The Communists pointed out that, remaining what they are, the reformists could not but sabotage the revolution, as in fact they did sabotage it during the recent revolutionary movement of the Italian workers who seized the factories.

This is the crux of the question! How is it possible to prepare for revolution, to march toward decisive battles if those who sabotage the revolution remain in the party? This is not only a mistake, it is a crime.

And if, as he openly declared in his letter to *l'Humanité* of October 14, Serrati counted on expelling Turati alone,[1] here too Serrati's mistake is already exposed by *facts*; for the Italian reformists not only held a factional congress of their own (in Reggio Emilia, on October 11, 1920), they not only repeated at this congress all the most important of their reformist views, they not only gave a triumphant reception at the congress to Philipo Turati, but also declared through the mouth of Treves: "Either we remain in the party, or we all leave it." In passing we shall note that the

[1] This is the main passage in this letter: "We all stand for the Moscow conditions. *The only point is their application.* I assert that the party must be *purged* of harmful elements and I proposed that Turati be expelled; but we must not lose the masses who belong to the syndicates" (trade unions) "and co-operative societies. Others want a *radical split.* This is where we differ." (*l'Humanité,* October 14, Serrati's italics.)

bourgeois press and the reformists themselves did their utmost to boost the significance of their factional congress. But *Avanti* of October 13 (Milan edition) openly says that the reformists managed to get representatives from only two hundred sections of the party, whereas the party has *thousands* of sections!

But we shall deal in greater detail with Serrati's main argument concerning the essence of the question. Serrati fears a split which will weaken the party and particularly the trade unions, the co-operative societies and the municipalities. His main idea is: do not destroy these institutions which are necessary for the purpose of building up Socialism. He says in *Avanti*, October 2, 1920 (Milan edition):

"Where shall we find so many 'Communists,' even extremely passionate ones who became Communists yesterday, to fill the public posts from which we shall expel people on Terracini's proposal?"

And the same idea is expressed in the magazine *Comunismo*, edited by Serrati, in an article by Serrati on the Second Congress of the Third International, in issue No. 24, page 1627:

"Picture to yourselves the Milan commune" (*i.e.*, the municipality of Milan) "administered not by competent people but by novices who only yesterday declared themselves ardent Communists."

Serrati is afraid that the trade unions, co-operative societies and municipalities will be wrecked by the clumsiness and mistakes of the novices.

The Communists, however, are afraid that the reformists will sabotage the revolution.

This contrast shows the mistake in principle that Serrati makes. He is continuously repeating one idea: the need for flexible tactics. This idea is incontrovertible. But what is the use of that if Serrati *bends to the Right* when, under the conditions now prevailing in Italy, it is necessary to bend to the *Left*. In order to accomplish the revolution successfully and to repel attacks upon it, the Italian party must take *a certain step to the Left* (without in the least tying its hands, without forgetting that subsequently circumstances may very well call for certain steps to the Right).

It will be *impossible* to achieve victory in the proletarian revo-

lution, it will be *impossible* to repel attacks upon it, if reformists, Mensheviks, are retained in our ranks. This is obvious in principle. It is strikingly confirmed by experience in Russia and Hungary. This argument is decisive. It is simply ridiculous to compare this danger with the danger of "losing," or of failures, mistakes, the collapse of the trade unions, co-operative societies, municipalities, etc.; and not only ridiculous, but criminal. To risk the fate of the revolution for the sake of arguments about whether the municipal affairs of Milan, and so forth, would be conducted properly or not is equivalent to losing one's head, to totally failing to understand the fundamental tasks of the revolution, to being totally incapable of preparing for its victory.

We in Russia committed thousands of mistakes and suffered thousands of collapses, losses, etc., as a consequence of the clumsiness of novices and incompetent people in the co-operative societies, municipalities, trade unions, etc. We have no doubt that other people, more civilised than we are, will commit *fewer* mistakes of this kind. But in spite of these mistakes we achieved the main thing, *viz.*, the conquest of power by the proletariat. And we have held on to this power for three years.

The mistakes mentioned by Comrade Serrati are minor ones which are a million times easier to rectify than the "mistake" of allowing the Mensheviks in the ranks of the revolution to sabotage the revolution. This is self-evident. It has been strikingly demonstrated by Hungary. It has also been confirmed by our experience; for during the three years the proletarian power has been in existence in Russia, difficult situations have arisen *many times* and the Soviet regime would *certainly* have been overthrown had the Mensheviks, the reformists and the petty-bourgeois democrats remained in our Party, or had they been in any considerable number on the central Soviet bodies such as the Central Executive Committee.

Serrati failed to understand the specific features of the transitional situation that exists in Italy, where, as every one admits, things are moving towards decisive battles between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for the possession of political power. At such a moment, it is not only absolutely necessary to remove the Mensheviks, reformists, the Turati-ists from the party, but it may even

be useful to remove excellent Communists who are capable of wavering, or who reveal a tendency to waver, toward "unity" with the reformists, to remove them from all responsible posts.

I will quote a striking example. Immediately before the October Revolution in Russia, and soon after it, a number of excellent Communists in Russia committed a mistake which everyone is loth to mention now. Why are they loth to do so? Because, unless it is particularly necessary to do so, it is wrong to recall mistakes which are entirely rectified. It would be useful, however, to recall this mistake for the benefit of the Italian workers. During the period I have mentioned, prominent Bolsheviks and Communists like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Nogin, and Milyutin wavered and expressed the fear that the Bolsheviks were isolating themselves too much, were taking too much risk in heading for insurrection, and were not compliant enough in their attitude toward a certain section of the "Mensheviks" and "Socialist-Revolutionaries." The conflict became so acute that the comrades mentioned demonstratively resigned from all responsible posts in Party and Soviet work, to the great joy of the enemies of the Soviet revolution. It developed into a very fierce controversy in the press conducted by the Central Committee of our Party against the comrades who had resigned. But a few weeks later—at most a few months—all these comrades saw the mistake they had made and resumed their places in the most responsible Party and Soviet posts.

The reason why this occurred is not difficult to understand. On the eve of the revolution, and at the moment when the fiercest struggle is being waged for its victory, the slightest wavering in the ranks of the Party may *wreck everything*, wreck the revolution, wrest power from the hands of the proletariat; for this power is not yet consolidated, the attack upon it is still very strong. The resignation of wavering leaders at such a time does not weaken but strengthens the Party, the working class movement and the revolution.

Precisely *such a time* has now arrived in Italy. Everyone sees and admits that the revolutionary crisis is maturing on a nation-wide scale. The proletariat has proved by its deeds that it is capable of rising spontaneously, of rousing the masses for a mighty revolu-

tionary movement. The poor peasants, or semi-proletarians (it is a pity that Comrade Serrati has dropped into the bad habit of putting a question mark after this word when he uses it: it is a correct Marxian term; it expresses a correct idea which has been confirmed by facts in Russia and in Italy, *viz.*, that the poor peasants are half property-owners and half proletarians)—the poor peasants in Italy have shown by their deeds that they are capable of rising for the revolutionary struggle in the wake of the proletariat. What is most necessary and absolutely necessary for the victory of the revolution in Italy today is that a fully Communist Party, one that is *incapable* of wavering and displaying weakness at the decisive moment—a party that would concentrate in itself the maximum of fanaticism, loyalty to the revolution, energy, boundless audacity and determination—shall become the real vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat in Italy. Victory has to be achieved in an extremely hard, severe struggle entailing great sacrifice; the power that has been captured has to be held in the midst of incredibly fierce attacks, intrigues, mischief-making, calumny, exhortation and violence on the part of the bourgeoisie of the *whole world*, amidst the most dangerous wavering of every petty-bourgeois democrat, of every Turati-ist, of every "Centrist," of every Social-Democrat, Socialist and anarchist. At such a moment, in such a situation, the party must be a hundred times firmer, more determined, bolder, impetuous and ruthless than in ordinary or less difficult times. At such a moment and in such a situation the party will become a hundred times stronger and not weaker if Mensheviks like those who gathered in Reggio Emilia on October 11, 1920, leave it entirely; even if excellent Communists—as the present members of the Central Committee of the party: Baratono, Zanarini, Bacci, Giacomini and Serrati, probably are—leave it.

Even if the people in the latter category resigned now, the majority of them would undoubtedly admit their mistake very soon and return to the party after the victory of the proletariat, after its victory has been consolidated. And in all probability, a section of the Italian Mensheviks, the Turati-ists, would also return and be received into the party when the period of greatest difficulties has passed, in the same way as a section of the Mensheviks and Social-

ist-Revolutionaries who were on the other side of the barricades in 1917-18 have now come over to us (we lived through three difficult years after the revolution).

The Italian revolutionary proletariat will now have to pass through a series, not only of extremely difficult, as I have said, but of the most difficult battles. The greatest difficulties still lie ahead. I think it would be frivolous and criminal to brush these difficulties aside. I am surprised that Comrade Serrati published without comment in his *Comunismo* (No. 24 of September 15-30, 1920), such a frivolous article as that of G. C. entitled "Will We Be Blockaded?"[1] Notwithstanding the author of this article, I, personally, think that if the proletariat is victorious in Italy, she may and probably will be blockaded by Great Britain, France and America. I think that Comrade Graziadei, in his speech at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Italian party (*Avanti*, October 1, 1920, Milan edition), presented the question of a blockade much more correctly. He admitted that the question of the possibility of a blockade was a "very grave" ("*problema gravissima*") one. He pointed out that Russia was able to hold out in spite of the blockade partly because of the sparseness of her population and her enormous territory; that the revolution in Italy "could not maintain its resistance (*resistere*) for long if the revolution did not become co-ordinated with that in some other country in Central Europe," that "such co-ordination is difficult, but not impossible," because the whole of the continent of Europe is passing through a revolutionary period.

This is a very cautious statement, but a true one. I would merely add that Italy is *assured* of a certain amount of co-ordination, although not yet adequate, not complete, and that we will have to *fight* for *complete* co-ordination. The reformists point to the possibility of a blockade in order to sabotage the revolution, in order to frighten people away from the revolution, in order to imbue the masses with *their own* panic, fear, irresoluteness, wavering and vacillation. The revolutionaries and Communists must point to the dangers and difficulties of the struggle in order to imbue the masses

[1] Lenin here refers to an article by G. C., "*Saremo bloccati*" in *Comunismo*, No. 24, September 1920.—*Ed.*

with *greater* firmness—in order to *purge* the party of weak, wavering and infirm elements—in order to imbue the whole movement with greater enthusiasm, with more internationalism, with greater readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of the great aim of accelerating the revolution in Great Britain, France and America *if* these countries dare blockade the proletarian and Soviet Italian republic.

The question of replacing experienced reformist or "Centrist" leaders by novices is not a private question that concerns one country in some special case. It is a general question that arises in every proletarian revolution, and precisely as such it is correctly presented and answered in the resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International on "The Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International."[1] In point 8 we read:

"Preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat not only requires that the bourgeois character of all reformism . . . be explained . . . but it also requires that the old leaders be replaced by Communists in proletarian organisations of absolutely all forms, not only political, but also industrial, co-operative, educational, etc. . . . It is necessary, a hundred times more boldly than has been done hitherto, to eliminate these representatives of the labour aristocracy, or bourgeoisified workers, from all their posts and replace them by even the least experienced workers, as long as they are connected with the exploited masses and enjoy their confidence in the struggle against the exploiters. The dictatorship of the proletariat will make necessary the appointment of such inexperienced workers to the most responsible posts in the state, otherwise the workers' government will be impotent, and will not be supported by the masses."

It is useless, therefore, for Serrati to say that "everyone" in the Italian party agrees to accept the decisions of the Communist Congress. Actually, we see the opposite.

In the above-mentioned letter to *l'Humanité*, Serrati writes, *inter alia*:

". . . As for recent events, it must be stated that the leaders of the General Confederation of Labour proposed that the leadership of the movement be placed in the hands of those who wanted to expand it to the stage of revolution. Our comrades of the General Confederation of Labour declared that they were agreed to remain disciplined soldiers if the extremists assumed the leadership of the insurrection. But the extremists did not assume the leadership of the movement. . . ."

[1] In this volume, pp. 168-69.—*Ed.*

It would be extremely naïve on Serrati's part to accept such a statement from the reformists in the General Confederation of Labour at its face value. As a matter of fact, one species of sabotage of the revolution is threatening to resign at the decisive moment. This is not a question of loyalty. The point is that the victory of the revolution *cannot* be achieved if at every difficult turn of events the leaders have to encounter wavering, vacillation and resignations in "their own" ranks, among those on top, among the "leaders." It may be useful for Comrade Serrati to know that at the beginning of October (end of September) 1917, when the coalition of Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries with the bourgeoisie had obviously suffered political bankruptcy, none other than our Socialist-Revolutionaries, the party of Chernov, wrote in their newspaper the following:

"*The Bolsheviks will be obliged to form a cabinet....* And let them not make futile attempts to take refuge in hastily concocted theories as to the impossibility of their assuming power. The democracy will accept no such theories. At the same time, the advocates of coalition must guarantee them full support." (The Socialist-Revolutionary newspaper, the organ of their party, Chernov's organ—*Dyelo Naroda*, October 4 [September 21], 1917, quoted in my pamphlet *Can The Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*, Petrograd, 1917, p. 4.) [1]

It would be as fatal a mistake for the revolutionary workers to believe in the loyalty of such statements as it was to believe the Hungarian Turati-ists who promised Bela Kun their assistance, who joined the Communist Party, but, who, nevertheless, turned out to be *saboteurs* of the revolution and wrecked it by their vacillations.

* * *

I will now sum up.

1) The party of the revolutionary proletariat in Italy must display the greatest restraint, circumspection and coolness in order properly to appraise the conditions in general, and the appropriate moment in particular, in the impending decisive battles for political power between the Italian working class and the bourgeoisie.

2) At the same time, all the propaganda and agitation of this party must be imbued with the firmest determination to wage this struggle to a victorious conclusion, come what may, unitedly,

[1] See *Selected Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 251-52. *Ed.*

in a centralised manner, and with boundless heroism; and it must ruthlessly eliminate the vacillation, irresoluteness and wavering with which the Turati-ists are thoroughly imbued.

3) The propaganda which the Milan edition of *Avanti*, edited by Serrati, is now carrying on does not train the proletariat for the struggle, but causes disintegration in its ranks. At such a moment as the present, the Central Committee of the party must lead the workers, prepare them for the revolution, and challenge wrong views. This can (and must) be done while giving all shades an opportunity of expressing their opinions. Serrati is leading, but he is leading in the wrong direction.

4) The expulsion from the party of all those who attended the Reggio Emilia congress on October 11, 1920, will not weaken, but strengthen the party; for such "leaders" are only capable of wrecking the revolution "in the Hungarian manner" *even if they remain loyal.* The Whiteguards and the bourgeoisie will succeed in utilising the vacillation, wavering, doubts, uncertainty, etc., of even quite "loyal" Socialists, Social-Democrats, etc.

5) If people like Baratono, Zanarini, Bacci, Giacomini and Serrati waver and resign, they must not be pleaded with to remain; their resignations should be accepted immediately. They will return when the period of decisive battles has passed and will then be more useful to the proletariat.

6) Comrades, Italian workers! Do not forget the lessons of the history of all revolutions, the lessons of Russia and Hungary in 1917 and 1920! The proletariat of Italy is on the eve of great battles, of great difficulties, of great sacrifices. The outcome of these battles, the solidarity, discipline and boundless devotion of the masses of the workers will determine the victory over the bourgeoisie, the transfer of power to the proletariat and the consolidation of the Soviet Republic in Italy. The bourgeoisie of Italy and of all countries in the world will do all they possibly can, will resort to every crime and brutality in order to prevent the proletariat from taking power and in order to overthrow its power. The wavering, vacillation and irresoluteness of the reformists and of all those who attended the Reggio Emilia congress of October 11, 1920, are inevitable; for such people, even though many of them are quite

honest, have always, in all countries, wrecked the cause of revolution by their wavering. Such people wrecked the revolution (the first revolution, for there will be another . .) in Hungary, and they would have wrecked the revolution in Russia had they not been removed from all responsible posts and surrounded by a wall of proletarian distrust, vigilance and surveillance.

The toiling and exploited masses of Italy will follow the lead of the revolutionary proletariat. In the end the latter will achieve victory, for its cause is the cause of the workers of the whole world, for there is no other way of salvation from the continuation of the present imperialist wars, from new imperialist wars for which preparations are already being made, from the horrors of capitalist slavery and oppression, except the Soviet Workers' Republic.

November 4, 1920

II

Comrade Nobbs, the editor of the Swiss Left Socialist newspaper *Volksrecht* of Zurich, recently published a letter by Zinoviev urging the necessity of a rupture with the opportunists; and he also published his own lengthy reply to this letter. In this reply Nobbs, in effect, emphatically rejects the twenty-one conditions of affiliation to the Communist International in the name of "freedom," of course, freedom to criticise, freedom from the extremely exacting demands, or the dictatorship, of Moscow (I have not kept Nobbs' article and am therefore obliged to quote from memory; I can vouch for the idea, but not for the exact terms in which it was expressed).

Incidentally, Comrade Nobbs enlists himself as an ally of Comrade Serrati, who, as is well known, is also displeased with "Moscow," *i.e.*, in particular, with the Russian members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and who also complains that Moscow violates the "freedom" of the constituent parts, the individual parties and individual members of the Communist International. It will not be superfluous, therefore, to say a few words about freedom.

Having gone through three years of the dictatorship of the proletariat we have a right to say that all over the world the most common and popular objection to this dictatorship is its alleged violation of freedom and equality. The whole bourgeois press in all countries, right down to the press of the petty-bourgeois democrats, *i.e.*, of the Social-Democrats and Socialists, including Kautsky, Hilferding, Martov, Chernov, Longuet, etc., etc., is railing against the Bolsheviks for their alleged violation of freedom and equality. From the theoretical point of view this is quite understandable. Let the reader recall the celebrated and sarcastic words of Marx in *Capital*:

"The sphere . . . within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour power goes on is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham." [1]

These words of sarcasm have a profound historico-philosophical content. They ought to be juxtaposed to the popular explanation of the same question given by Engels in his *Anti-Dühring*, particularly with what Engels said about equality being a prejudice, or stupidity, if by this term is not meant the abolition of classes. The abolition of feudalism and of its traces, the introduction of the principles of the bourgeois (we may quite rightly say: bourgeois-democratic) system took up a whole epoch of world history. And the slogans of this world-historical epoch were inevitably freedom, equality, property and Bentham. The abolition of capitalism and its traces, the introduction of the principles of the Communist system is the content of the new epoch of world history that has now begun. And the slogans of our epoch inevitably are and should be: the abolition of classes; the dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of achieving this aim; the ruthless exposure of petty-bourgeois democratic prejudices concerning freedom and equality, ruthless opposition to these prejudices. Those who have not understood this have understood nothing about the questions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of Soviet power, of the fundamental principles of the Communist International.

[1] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 195, Charles H. Kerr edition.—*Ed.*

As long as classes exist all talk about freedom and equality in general is self-deception, or deception of the workers, and also of all the toilers and those who are exploited by capital; at all events it is defence of the interests of the bourgeoisie. As long as classes exist, all arguments about freedom and equality should be accompanied by the question: Freedom for which class? and for what purpose? the equality of which class with which? and in what relation? The direct or indirect, the deliberate or unconscious evasion of these questions are inevitably defence of the interests of the bourgeoisie, the interests of capital, the interests of the exploiters. If these questions are hushed up, if the private ownership of the means of production is hushed up, the slogan freedom and equality is a lie and hypocrisy of bourgeois society, which by the formal recognition of freedom and equality conceals the actual economic lack of freedom and the inequality of the workers, of all the toilers and those exploited by capital, *i.e.*, of the overwhelming majority of the population in all capitalist countries.

Today, in Russia, owing to the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat has presented the fundamental, the last questions of capitalism in a practical manner, it is particularly clear *whose interests are served* (*cui prodest*? "who benefits?") by talk about freedom and equality in general. When the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, the Chernovs and Martovs, present us with arguments about freedom and equality *within the limits of toiler democracy*—for, if you please, they never argue about freedom and equality in general! they never forget Marx!—we ask them: What about the distinction between the class of wage workers and the class of small property-owners in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat?

Freedom and equality *within the limits of toiler democracy* is freedom for the small landowner (even if he farms nationalised land) to sell his surplus grain at profiteering prices, *i.e.*, *to exploit the workers*. Anyone who talks about freedom and equality within the limits of toiler democracy, *i.e.*, conditions under which the capitalists are overthrown while private property and free trade remain—is a defender of the exploiters. And in exercising its dictatorship, the proletariat must treat these defenders as exploit-

ers, even if they call themselves Social-Democrats and Socialists, or even if they admit that the Second International is putrid, and so on and so forth.

As long as the private ownership of the means of production (*e.g.*, agricultural implements and cattle, even if the private ownership of land is abolished) and free trade exist, the economic basis of capitalism will exist. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the only means of victoriously combating this basis, the only way to the abolition of classes (without which there can be no thought of real freedom for the individual—*and not for the property-owner* —of real equality, in social-political relations, between man and man—*and not the hypocritical equality between the property-owner and the propertyless*, between the well-fed and the hungry, between the exploiter and the exploited). On the one hand, the dictatorship of the proletariat leads to the abolition of classes, leads to it through the overthrow of the exploiters and the suppression of their resistance; on the other hand, it leads to it by neutralising, rendering harmless the small property-owner's vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The falsity of the speeches of Comrades Nobbs and Serrati does not of course lie in that they were false, insincere. Nothing of the kind. They are quite sincere, and there is nothing subjectively false in their speeches. But objectively, in content, their speeches are false, for they defend the prejudices of petty-bourgeois democracy, they amount to the defence of the bourgeoisie.

The Comintern cannot under any circumstances recognise freedom and equality for all who wish to sign certain statements irrespective of their political conduct. This would be theoretical and practical-political suicide for the Communists no less than the recognition of freedom and equality "within the limits of toiler democracy," etc. To anyone who can read and *wants* to understand what he has read, it cannot but be clear that *not one* of the decisions, theses, resolutions, orders and conditions of the Communist International recognises the *absolute* "freedom and equality" of those who desire to affiliate to the Communist International.

What are the conditions for our recognition of "freedom and

equality," the freedom and equality of the members of the Communist International?

They are that no opportunists and "Centrists" such as the well-known representatives of the Right wing of the Socialist Parties of Switzerland and Italy shall be able to become members; for however much these opportunists and "Centrists" declare that they recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat, they remain in fact advocates and defenders of the prejudices, the weaknesses and the vacillations of petty-bourgeois democracy.

First of all there must be a rupture with these prejudices, weaknesses and vacillations, with people who preach, defend and are the embodiment of these views and qualities. Then, and only on this condition, can there be "freedom" to join the Communist International, "equality" between Communists in deeds (and not those who are Communists merely in words) and all other Communist members of the Communist International.

Comrade Nobbs, you are "free" to defend the views you hold. But we, too, are "free" to declare that these views are petty-bourgeois prejudices which are harmful to the cause of the proletariat and useful to capital; we, too, are "free" to refrain from joining an alliance, or a society, with people who defend these views or a policy which corresponds to them. And we have already condemned this policy and these views on behalf of the whole of the Second Congress of the Communist International. We have already said that we demand an absolute rupture with the opportunists as a preliminary.

Do not speak about freedom and equality in general, Comrade Nobbs and Comrade Serrati! Speak about freedom *not to carry out* the decisions of the Communist International concerning the absolute duty of breaking with the opportunists and the "Centrists" (who cannot but undermine, who cannot but sabotage the dictatorship of the proletariat). Speak about equality between the opportunists and "Centrists" and the Communists. We cannot recognise such freedom and such equality on behalf of the Communist International; as for any other kind of freedom and equality, you may have as much as you like of that.

The principal and fundamental condition of success on the eve of the proletarian revolution is the liberation, the freedom, of the party of the revolutionary proletariat from opportunists and "Centrists," from their influence, from their prejudices, weaknesses and vacillations.

December 11, 1920

PART III

THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONGRESSES OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE ITALIAN QUESTION

Speech Delivered at the Third Congress of the Communist International, June 28, 1921

COMRADES, I would like to reply mainly to Comrade Lazzari. He said: "Quote concrete facts, not words." Excellent. But if we trace the development of the reformist-opportunist trend in Italy, what will that be, words or facts? In all your speeches and in the whole of your policy you lose sight of the fact, which is so important for the Socialist movement in Italy, that it is not only this trend, but an opportunist-reformist group that has existed for quite a long time. I still very well remember the time when Bernstein started his opportunist propaganda which ended in social-patriotism, in the treachery and bankruptcy of the Second International. Turati is still known to us, not only in name, but for his propaganda in the Italian party and in the Italian working class movement, of which he has been a disrupter for the past twenty years. Lack of time prevents me from closely studying the material concerning the Italian party; but I think that one of the most important documents on this subject is a report, published in a bourgeois Italian newspaper—I don't remember which, the *Stampa*[1] or the *Corriere della Sera*[2]—of the conference convened by Turati and his friends in Reggio Emilia. I compared that report with the one published in *Avanti.* Is this not proof enough? After the Second Congress of the Communist International, we, in our controversy with Serrati and his friends, openly and definitely told them what, in our opinion, the situation was. We told them that the Italian party could not become a Communist party as long as it tolerated people like Turati in its ranks.

[1] *The Press.* a bourgeois newspaper published in Turin.—*Ed.*

[2] *The Evening Courier,* published in Milan; one of the most widely circulated bourgeois newspapers in Italy.—*Ed.*

What is this, political facts, or just words? After the Second Congress of the Communist International we openly said to the Italian proletariat: "Don't unite with the reformists, with Turati"; and Serrati, in the Italian press, began to publish a series of articles in opposition to the Communist International and convened a special conference of reformists. Is all this mere words? This was something more than a split, it was the creation of a new party. One must have been blind not to have seen this. This document is of decisive importance for the question. All those who attended the Reggio Emilia conference must be expelled from the party; they are Mensheviks—not Russian, but Italian Mensheviks. Lazzari said: "We know the psychology of the Italian people." I myself would not dare to make an assertion like that about the Russian people, but that is not important. "Italian Socialists understand the spirit of the Italian people very well," said Lazzari. Perhaps they do, I will not argue about that. But they do not know Italian Menshevism, that is, if we have any regard for concrete facts and the persistent refusal to eradicate Menshevism. Deplorable though it be, we are obliged to say: The resolution of our Executive Committee must be endorsed. A party which tolerates opportunists and reformists like Turati in its ranks cannot join the Communist International.

"Why should we change the name of the party?" asks Comrade Lazzari. "The present one is quite satisfactory." But we cannot share this view. We know the history of the Second International, its fall and bankruptcy. Do we not know the history of the German party? And do we not know that the great misfortune of the working class movement in Germany is that the rupture was not brought about before the war? This cost the lives of twenty thousand workers, whom the Scheidemannists and the Centrists betrayed to the German government by their polemics with and complaints against the German Communists.

And do we not now see the same thing in Italy? The Italian party was never a truly revolutionary party. The great misfortune is that it did not break with the Mensheviks and reformists before the war, and that the latter continued to remain in the party. Comrade Lazzari says: "We fully recognise the necessity of a rupture with the reformists; our only disagreement is that we did not think it

necessary to bring it about at the Leghorn Congress." But the facts tell us something different. This is not the first time that we are discussing Italian reformism. In arguing about this with Serrati last year we asked him: "Excuse the question, but why cannot the split in the Italian party be brought about immediately, why must it be postponed?" What did Serrati say in reply to that? Nothing. He quoted an article by Frossard in which the latter said: "We must be adroit and clever." Evidently Comrade Lazzari thinks that is an argument in his favour and against us. I think he is mistaken. On the contrary, it is an excellent argument in our favour and against Comrade Lazzari. What will the Italian workers say when you will be obliged to explain your conduct, your departure. What will you say to them if they declare that our tactics are clever and adroit compared with the zigzags of the pseudo-Communist Left—the Left which is not even always simply Communist and most often puts one in mind of anarchism?

What is the meaning of the tales told by Serrati and his party about the Russians only wanting everybody to imitate them? We demand the very opposite. It is not enough to have learned Communist resolutions by heart and to use revolutionary phrases on every possible occasion. That is not enough, and we are opposed beforehand to Communists who know this or that resolution by heart. The first condition of true Communism is rupture with opportunism. We shall speak quite freely and openly with those Communists who subscribe to this and with perfect right and courage we shall say to them: "Don't do anything stupid; be clever and skilful." But we shall speak in this way only to Communists who have broken with the opportunists, and this cannot be said about you. And, therefore, I repeat: I hope the congress will endorse the resolution of the Executive Committee. Comrade Lazzari said: "We are in the preparatory period." This is absolutely true. You are in the preparatory period. The first stage of this period is a rupture with the Mensheviks similar to the one we brought about with our Mensheviks in 1903. The sufferings the whole of the German working class has had to endure during the long and weary post-war period in the history of the German revolution are due to the fact that the German party did not break with the Mensheviks.

Comrade Lazzari said that the Italian party is passing through the preparatory period. This I fully admit. And the first stage is a serious, final, unambiguous and determined rupture with reformism. When that is brought about the masses will come over entirely to Communism. The second stage is not by any means the repetition of revolutionary slogans. It will be the adoption of our wise and skilful decisions, which will always be such, and which will always say: Fundamental revolutionary principles must be adapted to the specific conditions in the various countries.

The revolution in Italy will proceed differently from the way it proceeded in Russia. It will start in a different way. How? Neither you nor we know. The Italian Communists are not always Communists to a sufficient degree. Did a single Communist show his mettle when the workers seized the factories in Italy? No. Communism did not yet exist in Italy at that time; there was a certain amount of anarchism, but not Marxian Communism. The latter has still to be created and the masses of the workers must be imbued with it by means of the experience of the revolutionary struggle. And the first step along this road is the final rupture with the Mensheviks who for more than twenty years have been collaborating and working with the bourgeois government. It is quite probable that Modigliani, whom I was able to watch to some extent at the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences, is sufficiently skilful as a politician to keep out of the bourgeois government and to keep in the Centre of the Socialist Party where he can be far more useful to the bourgeoisie. But the whole theoretical position, all the propaganda and all the agitation of the group of Turati and his friends are that of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Is this not proved by the numerous quotations in Gennari's speech? Yes, this is the sort of united front which Turati has already prepared. That is why I must say to Comrade Lazzari: Speeches like yours and like the one which Comrade Serrati made here do not help to prepare for the revolution, they disorganise it. (*"Bravo!" Applause.*)

You had a considerable majority at Leghorn.[1] You had 98,000

[1] This refers to the Leghorn Congress of the Socialist Party of Italy in January 1921 at which the group led by Serrati preferred a split from 58,000 Communists to a split from 14,000 reformists.—*Ed.*

votes against 14,000 reformist and 58,000 Communist votes. This is a considerable achievement for the Communists as the beginning of a purely Communist movement in a country like Italy, with its well-known traditions, and where the ground had not been sufficiently prepared for a split.

This is a great victory and palpable proof of the fact that the working class movement in Italy will develop faster than our movement developed in Russia, because, if you know the figures concerning our movement, you will know that in March (February) 1917, after the fall of tsarism and during the bourgeois republic, we were still a minority compared with the Mensheviks. Such was the position after fifteen years of fierce fighting and splits. Our Right wing did not develop—and it was not as easy to prevent it from doing so as you seem to think when you speak so slightingly about Russia. Undoubtedly, development in Italy will proceed quite differently. After fifteen years of struggle against the Mensheviks, and after the fall of tsarism, we started work with a much smaller number of adherents. You have 58,000 Communistically-minded workers against 98,000 united Centrists who occupy an indefinite position. This is proof, this is a fact, which should certainly convince all those who do not want to close their eyes to the mass movement of the Italian workers. Everything does not come all at once. But it already proves that the masses of the workers—not the old leaders, not the bureaucrats, not the professors, not the journalists—but actually the exploited class, the vanguard of the exploited, are behind us. And it proves what a great mistake you committed at Leghorn. This is a fact. You controlled 98,000 votes, but you preferred to go with 14,000 reformists against 58,000 Communists. Even if these Communists were not genuine Communists, even if they were only adherents of Bordiga—which is not true, for after the Second Congress Bordiga quite honestly declared that he had abandoned all anarchism and anti-parliamentarism—you should have gone with them. But what did you do? You preferred to unite with 14,000 reformists and to break with 58,000 Communists. And this is the best proof that Serrati's policy has been disastrous for Italy. We never wanted Serrati to imitate the Russian revolution in Italy. That would have been stupid. We are sufficiently wise and

flexible to avoid such stupidity. But Serrati has proved that his policy in Italy was wrong. Perhaps he should have manœuvred. This is the expression that he repeated most often when he was here last year. He said: "We can manœuvre, we do not want slavish imitation. That would be idiocy. We must manœuvre in order to stimulate separation from opportunism. You Russians are unable to do that. We Italians are more skilful at this sort of thing. We will see." And what did we see? Serrati manœuvred magnificently. He broke away from 58,000 Communists. And now these comrades come here and say: "If you reject us the masses will not understand." No, comrades, you are mistaken. The masses of the workers in Italy are confused now, and it will be useful if we say to them: "Comrades, choose; Italian workers, choose between the Communist International, which will never call upon you slavishly to imitate the Russians, and the Mensheviks, whom we have known for twenty years, and whom we shall never tolerate as neighbours in a genuinely revolutionary Communist International." This is what we shall say to the Italian workers. There can be no doubt about what the result will be. The masses of the workers will follow us.

IN SUPPORT OF THE TACTICS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Speech Delivered at the Third Congress of the Communist International, July 1, 1921

COMRADES, I regret very much that I must confine myself to a position of self-defence. I say that I regret it very much, because, after having read Comrade Terracini's speech and the amendments moved by the three delegations,[1] I would have liked very much to have taken up the offensive, for, properly speaking, offensive action ought to be taken against the views advocated by Terracini and these three delegations. If the congress does not launch a determined offensive against such mistakes, against such "Left" absurdities, the whole movement will be doomed. This is my profound conviction. But we are organised and disciplined Marxists. We cannot rest content with speeches in opposition to individual comrades. We Russians are heartily sick of these Left phrases. We are organised. In drawing up our plans we must proceed in an organised manner and try to find the correct line. It is no secret, of course, that our theses are a compromise. But why not? Among Communists who have already convened their third congress and have worked out definite fundamental principles, compromises are necessary under certain circumstances. Our theses, the theses proposed by the Russian delegation, were studied and prepared in the most careful manner, and were the result of long reflection and conferences with various delegations. Their object is to lay down the fundamental line of the Communist International, and they are particularly necessary now, after we have not only formally condemned the real Centrists but have expelled them from the Party. Such are

[1] The amendments were moved by the German, Austrian and Italian delegations.—*Ed.*

the facts. I must take these theses under my protection. And now that Terracini comes along and says that we must continue the fight against the Centrists and then relates what preparations are being made to wage this struggle, I say that if these amendments indicate a certain trend, then it is necessary to wage a ruthless struggle against it, for otherwise, there will be no Communism and no Communist International. I am surprised that the C.L.P.G.[1] did not put its signature to these amendments. Just listen to what Terracini advocates and what these amendments say. They start as follows: "Page 1, column 1, line 19, delete: 'of the majority. . . .' " The majority! This is extremely dangerous! Further on we read: "Delete the word 'principles,' and substitute 'aims.' " Principles and aims are two different things. Even the anarchists will agree with us about aims, for they too stand for the abolition of exploitation and class distinctions.

I have met and talked with only a few anarchists in the course of my life; nevertheless I have seen enough of them. Sometimes I succeeded in coming to an agreement with them about aims, but never about principles. Principles are not an aim, not a programme, not tactics and not theory. Tactics and theory are not principles. What distinguishes us from the anarchists in regard to principles? The principles of Communism are the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the employment of state coercion in the transition period. Such are the principles of Communism, but not its aim. And the comrades who have made this proposal have committed a mistake.

Secondly, the amendments say: "Delete the words, 'of the majority.' " Read the whole passage:

> "The Third Congress of the Communist International is proceeding to re-examine the questions of tactics under the circumstances that in a number of countries the situation has become acute in a revolutionary sense and that a number of Communist mass parties have been organised, none of which, however, has actually acquired the leadership of the majority of the working class in its genuinely revolutionary struggle."

And they want to delete the words "of the majority." If we cannot agree about such simple things I fail to understand how we can

[1] The Communist Labour Party of Germany.—*Ed.*

work together and lead the proletariat to victory. That being so, it is not surprising that we cannot come to an agreement on the question of principles. Show me a party which is already leading the masses of the working class. It did not even occur to Terracini to quote an example. Indeed, he could not quote an example, for there is none.

Thus, substitute "aims" for "principles" and delete the words "of the majority." Thank you very much! We shall not agree to that. Even the German party, which is one of the best, has not the majority of the working class behind it. That is a fact. We who have a most difficult struggle before us are not afraid to utter this truth; but here are three delegations who want to start with an untruth; for if the congress deletes the words "of the majority," it will show that it wants an untruth. This is absolutely clear.

Then comes the following amendment: "Page 4, column 1, line 10: delete the words 'Open Letter,'" etc. I have already heard a speech today in which this idea is expressed. But in that speech it was quite in order. It was the speech made by Comrade Hempel, a member of the C.L.P.G. He said: "The Open Letter was an act of opportunism." I was deeply chagrined and ashamed to hear views like these expressed in private conversation; but I think it is a shame and a disgrace to hear it said at the congress, after such a long debate, that the "Open Letter" was opportunistic! And Comrade Terracini comes along and on behalf of three delegations wants to delete the words "Open Letter." What, then, was the use of our fighting against the C.L.P.G.? The "Open Letter" was an exemplary political step. This is what we say in our theses. And this is what we must absolutely insist upon. It was an exemplary step, for it was the first practical step in the direction of winning over the majority of the working class. He who fails to understand that in Europe—where nearly all the proletarians are organised—we must win over the majority of the working class is lost to the Communist movement. If such a person has not yet learned this in the course of the three years of a great revolution, he will never learn anything.

Terracini says that we achieved victory in Russia in spite of the fact that the Party was very small. He is dissatisfied with what is

said in the theses about Czecho-Slovakia. There are twenty-seven amendments to this, and if I took it into my head to criticise them I would have to speak like some of the speakers, for not less than three hours. . . . It was said here that the Communist Party in Czecho-Slovakia has between 300,000 and 400,000 members, that it is necessary to win over the majority, to create an invincible force and continue to win over new masses of workers. Terracini is already prepared for an attack. He says: If the Party already has 400,000 workers, what more do we require? Delete! He is afraid of the word "masses" and wants to expunge it. Comrade Terracini does not understand very much about the Russian revolution.

We in Russia were a small party, but in addition to that, we had on our side the majority of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies all over the country. (A voice: "Quite true!") Have *you* got that? We had almost half the army, which numbered at least 10,000,000. Have you got the majority of the army? Show me the country where this is the case! If Comrade Terracini's views are shared by three delegations, then there is something wrong in the International! Then we must say: "Stop! We must wage a determined struggle! Otherwise the Communist International will be doomed."

Because of the experience I have had I must say—although I am taking up a defensive position—that the aim and principle of my speech is to support the resolution and theses proposed by our delegation. Of course, it would be pedantry to say that not a single letter in them should be altered. I have had occasion to read numerous resolutions and I know very well that excellent amendments could be made to every line. But that would be pedantry. If, nevertheless, I declare that, in the political sense, not a single letter can be altered, it is because, as I see it, the amendments bear a very definite political character, because they lead to a path that is harmful and dangerous to the Communist International. That is why I, all of us, and the Russian delegation, must insist that not a single letter be altered in the theses. We have not only condemned our Right elements, we have expelled them. But if you convert the fight against them into a pastime, as Terracini does, we must say: "Enough! Otherwise the danger will become too serious!"

Terracini advocated the theory of offensive struggle. In this connection the notorious amendments propose a formula two to three pages long. There is no need for us to read them. We know what they contain. Terracini told us quite plainly what the argument is about. He spoke in support of the offensive theory and pointed to "dynamic tendencies" and to "transition from passivity to activity." We in Russia have quite enough political experience in fighting against the Centrists. We fought against our opportunists and Centrists, and also against the Mensheviks, fifteen years ago, and we not only achieved victory over the Mensheviks but also over the semi-anarchists.

Had we not done that we would not have been able to hold power three and a half weeks, let alone three and a half years, and we would not have been able to convene Communist congresses here. "Dynamic tendencies," "transition from passivity to activity," are phrases which the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries hurled at us. Now they are in jail, where they are supporting the "aims of Communism" and reflecting on the "transition from passivity to activity." It is wrong to argue in the way the proposed amendments do, for they contain neither Marxism, nor political experience, nor argument. Have we in our theses developed the revolutionary offensive theory in general? Has Radek or anybody else among us committed such folly? We speak about the offensive theory in relation to a very definite country and to a very definite period.

We can quote cases in our struggle against the Mensheviks which show that even before the first revolution there were people who had doubts about whether the revolutionary party should lead the offensive. If any Social-Democrat—that is what we all called ourselves at that time—expressed such doubts we fought him and said that he was an opportunist, that he did not understand anything about Marxism and about the dialectics of a revolutionary party. Can the Party argue about whether a revolutionary offensive is permissible or not, in general? In order to find examples of this in Russia we would have to go back fifteen years or so. Are there any avowed or tacit Centrists who would dispute the offensive theory on principle? This question cannot give rise to any argument. But the fact that now, after the Communist International has

existed for three years, we are still arguing about "dynamic tendencies" and about "transition from passivity to activity" is a shame and disgrace.

We have no dispute about this with Comrade Radek, who drew up these theses jointly with us. Perhaps it was not altogether right to have begun talking in Germany about the *theory* of the revolutionary offensive, since no preparations had been made for a real offensive. Nevertheless, the March action was a big step forward in spite of the mistakes committed by its leaders. But that is nothing. Hundreds of thousands of workers fought like heroes. But however bravely the C.L.P.G. fought against the bourgeoisie we must say what Comrade Radek said in a Russian article he wrote about Hölz. It is a great thing, of course, when anybody, even an anarchist, fights heroically against the bourgeoisie; but when hundreds of thousands fight against the despicable acts of provocation of the social-traitors and the bourgeoisie, it is a real step forward.

It is very important to be critical toward one's own mistakes. This is what we started with. If, after a struggle in which hundreds of thousands have taken part, someone comes along and speaks in opposition to this struggle and behaves as Levi did, he must be expelled. This was done. But from this we must learn a lesson. Did we prepare for the offensive? (*Radek*: "*We did not even prepare for defence.*") Yes, there was talk about an offensive only in newspaper articles. It was wrong to apply this theory to the action in Germany in March 1921; we must admit this. But in general the revolutionary offensive theory is not a false one.

We achieved victory in Russia, and achieved it so easily, because we prepared for our revolution during the imperialist war. That was the first condition. Ten million workers and peasants were armed, and our slogan was: Immediate peace at all costs. We achieved victory because the broad masses of the peasants were in a mood of revolutionary opposition to the big landlords. In November 1917, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the supporters of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, were a big peasant party. They demanded revolutionary methods, but, like real heroes of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, they did not have the courage to act in a revolutionary way. In August and September

1917 we said in effect: "Theoretically we fight against the Socialist-Revolutionaries as hitherto; but practically, we are prepared to accept their theory, because we alone can carry out this programme."[1] This is what we said, and this is what we did. The peasantry, which was opposed to us in November 1917, after our victory, and which elected a majority of Socialist-Revolutionaries to the Constituent Assembly, were won over to our side, if not in a few days—as I mistakenly anticipated and foretold—at all events, in a few weeks. The difference was not very great. Show me a country in Western Europe where you could win over the majority of the peasantry in a few weeks. When it is said that we achieved victory in Russia notwithstanding the fact that we had a small party, it only goes to prove that the Russian revolution is not understood, and that people utterly fail to understand how to prepare for revolution.

Our first step was to create a real Communist Party in order that we might know with whom we were speaking and in whom we should have complete confidence. The slogan of the First and Second Congresses was: "Down with the Centrists!" Unless we—all along the line and all over the world—settle accounts with the Centrists and semi-Centrists, whom we in Russia call Mensheviks, we shall not understand even the ABC of Communism. Our first task is to create a truly revolutionary party and to break with the Mensheviks. But this is only the preparatory school. This is the third congress we are holding, and Comrade Terracini still keeps on repeating that the task of the preparatory school is to expel, to pursue and expose the Centrists and semi-Centrists. Thank you very much! We have had quite enough of that sort of thing. We said that the Centrists are our enemies at the Second Congress. But we must go forward. The second step will be, after having organised in a party, to learn to prepare for revolution. In many countries we have not even learned how to obtain the leadership. We achieved victory in Russia, not only because we had the undoubted majority of the working class on our side (during the elections in 1917 the overwhelming majority of the workers voted for us and against the

[1] See article, "Peasants and Workers," *Selected Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 380-88.—*Ed.*

Mensheviks), but also because half the army—immediately after we seized power—and nine-tenths of the masses of the peasantry—within the course of a few weeks—came over to our side. We achieved victory because we adopted, not our own agrarian programme, but that of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and actually put it into practice. Our victory lay in the fact that we carried out the programme of the Socialist-Revolutionaries; that is why it was achieved so easily. Can we have any illusions about anything like this happening in the West? It is ridiculous! Compare the concrete economic conditions, Comrade Terracini, and all of you who signed the amendments! Notwithstanding the fact that the majority came over to our side so quickly, the difficulties that confronted us after the victory were enormous. Nevertheless, we pulled through because we forgot neither our aims nor our principles, and because we did not tolerate in our Party people who said nothing about principles, but talked about aims, "dynamic tendencies" and "transition from passivity to activity." Perhaps we shall be accused of preferring to keep these gentlemen in jail. But if we did not do that the dictatorship would be impossible. We must prepare for the dictatorship; and preparing means fighting against such phrases and amendments. Throughout our theses we speak of the masses. But, comrades, we must understand what is meant by masses. The C.L.P.G., the comrades of the Left, misuse this word too often. But neither do Comrade Terracini and those who put their signatures to these amendments know what is meant by the word "masses."

I have already been speaking too long. Hence, I would like to say just a few words about the meaning of the term "masses." The meaning of the term "masses" changes in accordance with the changes in the character of the struggle. At the beginning of the war several thousand real revolutionary workers were sufficient to be called masses. If the Party succeeds in enlisting others besides its own members for the struggle, if it succeeds in rousing non-Party workers as well, it is the beginning of the process of winning the masses. During our revolution there were occasions when several thousand workers represented the masses. You will find many cases in the history of our movement, in the history of our fight against the Mensheviks, when in a particular town several

thousand workers were sufficient to give the movement an obviously mass character. When several thousand non-Party workers who usually live a humdrum life and eke out a miserable existence, who have never heard about politics, begin to act in a revolutionary manner, you have masses before you. If the movement spreads and becomes stronger, it gradually grows into a real revolution. We saw this in 1905 and in 1917, during three revolutions; and you, too, will be convinced of this. When the revolution has been sufficiently prepared, the term "masses" acquires a different meaning. Then, several thousand workers can no longer be called masses. This word begins to acquire a different meaning. The term masses then means the majority: not merely the majority of workers, but the majority of all the exploited. No other meaning can be accepted by a revolutionary; if any other meaning were attached to this word it would be unintelligible. It is possible that a small party, for example, the British or American, after having carefully studied the process of political development and having made itself familiar with the lives and habits of the non-Party masses, will, in a favourable moment, call forth a revolutionary movement (Comrade Radek quoted the good example of the miners' strike). If at such a moment such a party comes forward with its slogans and succeeds in getting a million workers to follow it, you will have a mass movement. I do not categorically deny that a revolution may be started by a very small party and carried to victory. But we must know what methods to use to win the masses to our side. In order to achieve this, thorough preparations must be made for the revolution. But comrades come here and declare that we must immediately drop the demand for "large" masses. We must declare war on these comrades. Unless you make thorough preparations you will not achieve victory in any country. A very small party is sufficient to lead the masses. At certain times large organisations are not essential.

But in order to achieve victory you must have the sympathy of the masses. An absolute majority is not always essential, but in order to achieve victory, in order to retain power, it is not only necessary to have the majority of the working class—I use the term "working class" here in the West European sense, meaning the

industrial proletariat—but also the majority of the exploited and the toiling rural population. Have you ever pondered over that? Is there even a hint of this in Comrade Terracini's speech? All he spoke about was "dynamic tendency," "transition from passivity to activity." Did he say even a single word about the food question? And yet the workers demand food, although they are willing to put up with much suffering and starvation, as we saw, to a certain extent, in Russia. That is why we must not only win over the majority of the working class to our side, but also the majority of the toiling and exploited rural population. Have you made preparations for this? Hardly anywhere.

And so I repeat: I must unreservedly support our theses, I think it is my bounden duty to do so. We not only condemned the Centrists, we also expelled them from the Party. Now we must turn against the other side, which in our opinion is also dangerous. We must tell the comrades the truth as politely as possible (and in our theses this is done very politely and respectfully) so that no one is offended. We must say that we are now confronted with problems that are more important than hunting Centrists. We have had quite enough of the latter; we are sick and tired of it. Instead of that, the comrades ought to be learning to wage a real revolutionary struggle. The German comrades have already started to do so. Hundreds of thousands of proletarians fought heroically in that country. Anyone who says anything in opposition to this struggle must be immediately expelled. But after that we must drop all empty phrase-mongering and immediately set to work to learn, to learn from mistakes, how best to organise the struggle. We must not conceal our mistakes from the enemy. Whoever is afraid of talking openly about mistakes is not a revolutionary. If, however, we openly say to the workers: "Yes, we have made mistakes," it will prevent us from repeating those mistakes in the future, and we shall be better able to choose the proper time. If during the struggle itself we shall have the masses—not only the majority of the workers, but the majority of all the exploited and oppressed—on our side, then victory will certainly be ours.

A LETTER TO THE GERMAN COMMUNISTS

Dear Comrades,

I intended to expound my view on the lessons of the Third Congress of the Communist International in a long article. Unfortunately, sickness has prevented me from starting on this work up to now. The fact that the congress of your Party, the United Communist Party of Germany (V.K.P.D.) has been called for August 22, compels me to hasten with this letter, which I have to finish within a few hours in order not to miss the mail for Germany.

As far as I can judge, the position of the Communist Party in Germany is particularly difficult. This is understandable.

Firstly, and mainly, since the end of 1918, the international position of Germany has very quickly and sharply intensified the internal revolutionary crisis and is impelling the vanguard of the proletariat toward the immediate capture of power. At the same time, the German and the whole of the international bourgeoisie, excellently armed and organised, and trained by "Russian experience," has hurled itself upon the revolutionary proletariat of Germany with furious hatred. Tens of thousands of the best people of Germany, her revolutionary workers, have been killed and tortured by the bourgeoisie, by its heroes, Noske and Co., its direct servants, the Scheidemanns, etc., its indirect and "subtle" (and therefore particularly valuable) accomplices, the knights of the "Two-and-a-Half International" with its despicable spinelessness, vacillations, pedantry and philistinism. The armed bourgeoisie set a trap for the unarmed workers; it killed vast numbers of them; it killed their leaders one after another, systematically lying in wait for them, and in doing so it made excellent use of the counter-revolutionary howling of the Social-Democrats of both the Scheidemann and Kautsky shades. At the time of the crisis the German workers lacked a genuinely revolutionary party owing to the fact

that the split was brought about too late, and owing to the burden of the accursed tradition of "unity" with the venal (Scheidemann, Legien, David and Co.) and spineless (Kautsky, Hilferding and Co.) gang of lackeys of capital. The heart of every honest and class-conscious worker who accepted the Basle Manifesto of 1912 at its face value and not as a "flourish" on the part of the scoundrels of the "Second" and "Two-and-a-Half" categories, was filled with incredibly bitter hatred toward the opportunism of the old German Social-Democracy, and this hatred—the most noble and greatest sentiment of the best people among the oppressed and exploited masses—blinded people, prevented them from reasoning calmly, and from choosing the correct strategy with which to reply to the excellent strategy of the Entente capitalists who were armed, organised and trained by "Russian experience," and supported by France, Great Britain and America; this hatred impelled these people toward a premature insurrection.

That is why the development of the revolutionary working class movement in Germany since the end of 1918 has proceeded along a particularly hard and painful road. But it has marched and is marching steadily forward. The gradual swing to the Left of the masses of the workers, of the real majority of the toilers and exploited in Germany, those organised in the old, Menshevik (*i.e.*, those serving the bourgeoisie) trade unions, as well as the entirely, or almost entirely, unorganised, is an incontrovertible fact. Retain calmness and restraint; systematically rectify the mistakes of the past; steadily win over the bulk of the masses of the workers in the trade unions and outside of them; patiently build up a strong and wise Communist Party capable of actually leading the masses at every turn of events; work out a strategy equal to the best international strategy of the most "enlightened" (by age-long experience in general, and by "Russian experience" in particular), advanced bourgeoisie—this is what the German proletariat must and will do; this is what will guarantee it victory.

On the other hand, at the present moment, the already difficult position of the Communist Party of Germany has been made still more difficult by the desertion of the bad Communists of the

Left (the Communist Labour Party of Germany, K.A.P.D.) and of the Right (Paul Levi and his sheet *Unser Weg* or *Soviet*).

Beginning with the Second Congress of the Communist International, the "Lefts" or "K.A.P.-ists" have received sufficient warning from us in the international arena. Until sufficiently strong, experienced and influential Communist Parties have been built, at least in the principal countries, we shall have to tolerate semi-anarchist elements at our international congresses, and to a certain extent it is even useful to do so. It is useful in so far as these elements serve as a "bad example" for inexperienced Communists, and also in so far as they themselves are still capable of learning something. All over the world anarchism is splitting up—not since yesterday, but since the imperialist war of 1914-18—into two trends: one, a Soviet trend, and the other, an anti-Soviet trend; one, in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the other, opposed to it. We must allow this process of disintegration among the anarchists to mature and become ripe. In Western Europe there are hardly any people who have experienced anything like a big revolution; the experience of great revolutions has been almost entirely forgotten there; and the transition from the desire to be revolutionary and from talk (and resolutions) about revolution to real revolutionary work is a very difficult, slow and painful one.

It goes without saying, however, that the semi-anarchist elements can and should be tolerated only within certain limits. In Germany we tolerated them for quite a long time. The Third Congress of the Communist International submitted an ultimatum to them and fixed a definite date. If now they have voluntarily resigned from the Communist International, all the better. Firstly, they have saved us the trouble of expelling them. Secondly, it has now been most strikingly demonstrated and proved with precise facts to all the vacillating workers, to all those who were inclined toward anarchism because of their hatred for the opportunism of the old Social-Democracy, that the Communist International was patient, that it did not immediately and unconditionally expel the anarchists, that it listened to them attentively and helped them to learn.

We must now pay less attention to the K.A.P.-ists. In entering into controversy with them we only advertise them. They are very stupid; it is wrong to take them seriously; and it is not worth while getting angry with them. They have no influence among the masses and will not acquire any if we do not make mistakes. We will allow this trendlet to die a natural death; the workers themselves will realise that it is worthless. We shall carry on wider propaganda for, and actually apply, the organisational and tactical decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International and refrain from advertising them by arguing with them. The infantile disorder of "Leftism" is passing and will pass away with the growth of the movement.

Similarly in the case of Paul Levi; we are now helping him, giving him a free advertisement by entering into controversy with him. This is exactly what he wants. Now, after the decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International, we must forget about him and devote all attention, all efforts, to peaceful (without squabbling, without polemics, without bringing up the quarrels of yesterday), practical and positive work in the spirit of the decisions of our Third Congress. It is my firm opinion that Comrade K. Radek's article "The Third World Congress on the March Uprising and Future Tactics" (in *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the United Communist Party of Germany, Nos. 14 and 15, July 1921), does not deal fairly with this general and unanimously adopted decision of the Third Congress. This article, a copy of which was sent me by a comrade who moves in Polish Communist circles, is unnecessarily—and in a way that is positively harmful for the cause—directed very sharply, not only against Paul Levi (that would be very unimportant), but also against Clara Zetkin. And yet, during the Third Congress in Moscow, Clara Zetkin signed a "peace treaty" with the C. C. (the "*Centrale*") of the United Communist Party of Germany, providing for harmonious and non-factional work! And we all approved of this treaty. In his misplaced, polemical zeal Comrade K. Radek went to the length of saying what was positively untrue by attributing to Zetkin the desire to "postpone" (*verlegt*) "every general action by the Party" (*jede allgemeine Aktion der Partei*) "to the day when large masses rise"

(*auf den Tag, wo die grossen Massen aufstehen werden*). It goes without saying that by such methods Karl Radek is rendering Paul Levi better service than the latter himself could desire. There is nothing that Paul Levi desires so much as the endless continuation of the controversy, the involving of as large a number of people as possible in this controversy, and efforts to repel Zetkin from the Party by polemical violations of the "peace treaty" which she herself signed, and of which the whole Communist International approved. Comrade K. Radek's article serves as an excellent example of how Paul Levi is assisted from the "Left."

Here I must explain to the German comrades why I defended Paul Levi so long at the Third Congress. Firstly, Radek introduced me to Levi in Switzerland in 1915 or 1916. At that time Levi was already a Bolshevik. I cannot help entertaining a certain amount of distrust towards those who came to Bolshevism *only after* its victory in Russia, and after it had achieved a number of victories in the international arena. But, of course, this reason is relatively unimportant, for, after all, I know Paul Levi personally very little. Incomparably more important was the second reason, *viz., in essence*, much of Levi's criticism of the March uprising in Germany in 1921 was *right* (not, of course, when he said that the uprising was a "putsch"; that assertion was absurd).

It is true that Levi did all he possibly could to weaken and spoil his criticism, to make it difficult for himself and others to understand the *essence* of the matter by introducing a mass of trivialities in which he was obviously wrong. Levi clothed his criticism in an impermissible and harmful form. While urging others to pursue a cautious and thought-out strategy, Levi himself behaved like a thoughtless boy by rushing into battle so prematurely, so unprepared, so stupidly and wildly that loss of the "battle" was certain (and so disrupted and hindered his work for many years), although this "battle" could and should have been won. Levi behaved like an "anarchist-intellectual" (if I am not mistaken, the German term is *Edelanarchist*) instead of behaving like an organised member of the proletarian, Communist International. Levi committed a breach of discipline.

By this series of incredibly stupid blunders Levi hindered the

concentration of attention on the essence of the matter. And the essence of the matter, *i.e.*, the appraisal *and rectification* of the innumerable mistakes committed by the United Communist Party of Germany during the March uprising of 1921, was, and is now, of enormous importance. In order to explain and to rectify these mistakes (which some people claim to be gems of Marxian tactics) *it was necessary* to be in the *Right* wing during the Third Congress of the Communist International. Otherwise the *line* of the Communist International would have been *wrong.*

I defended and had to defend Levi, in so far as I saw before me opponents of his who merely shouted about "Menshevism" and "Centrism" and who refused to see the mistake committed during the March uprising and the necessity of explaining and rectifying them. These people transformed revolutionary Marxism into a caricature, and the struggle against "Centrism" into an amusing pastime. These people might have caused the greatest harm to the whole cause, for "no one in the world can compromise the revolutionary Marxists if they do not compromise themselves."

I said to these people: Let us assume that Levi has become a Menshevik. Not knowing him very well, I will not persist if this is proved to me. But it has not been proved yet. All that has been proved up to now is that *he has lost his head.* It would be childishly stupid to declare a man to be a Menshevik merely on these grounds. The training of experienced and influential Party leaders is a long and difficult task. And without them the dictatorship of the proletariat, its "unity of will," will remain a phrase. In Russia it took us fifteen years (1903-1917) to train a group of leaders, fifteen years of fighting Menshevism, fifteen years of tsarist persecution, fifteen years, among which were the years of the first revolution (1905), of a great and mighty revolution. And even then we had sad cases of even excellent comrades "losing their heads." If the West European comrades imagine that they are insured against such "sad cases" it is childish, and we cannot but combat such childishness.

Levi had to be expelled for breach of discipline. Tactics ought to have been determined *on the basis* of a most detailed explanation and rectification of the mistakes committed during the March

uprising of 1921. If, *after* this, Levi wants to behave in the old way, he will prove that we were right in expelling him; then the absolute correctness of the decisions of the Third Congress concerning Paul Levi will be proved with greater force and conviction for the wavering or uncertain workers.

And precisely because I approached the appraisal of Levi's mistakes at the congress so cautiously I can say now with greater assurance that Levi hastened to confirm the worst assumptions. I have before me No. 6 of his magazine *Unser Weg* (of July 15, 1921). Judging by the editorial note printed at the head of the magazine, the decisions of the Third Congress are known to Paul Levi. What is his reply to them? Menshevik catch-words such as "a great excommunication" (*grosser Bann*), "canonical law" (*kanonisches Recht*), and that he will "quite freely" (*in vollständiger Freiheit*) "discuss" these decisions. What greater freedom can there be than that a man has been freed from the title of member of the Party and member of the Communist International?! And, if you please, members of the Party will write for him, Levi, anonymously!

First—playing a dirty trick on the Party, hitting from behind, sabotaging the work of the Party..

Then—discussing the essence of the decisions of the congress.

This is magnificent.

But by this Levi puts an end to himself entirely.

Paul Levi wants to continue the fight.

It would be a great strategical error to satisfy his desire. I would advise the German comrades to prohibit all controversy with Levi and his magazine in the columns of the daily Party press. There is no need to advertise him. He must not be permitted to divert the fighting Party's attention from the important to the unimportant. In cases of extreme necessity the controversy could be conducted in weekly or monthly magazines, or in pamphlets, and as far as possible care must be taken not to afford the K.A.P.-ists and Paul Levi the pleasure they feel when they are mentioned by name; they should be simply referred to as "certain not very clever critics who at all costs desire to regard themselves as Communists."

I am informed that at the last meeting of the enlarged C.C. (*Ausschuss*) even the Left-winger Friesland was compelled sharply

to attack Maslow, who is playing at Leftism, and who wishes to play at "hunting Centrists." Maslow displayed his unwise (to put it mildly) conduct here in Moscow. It would be a good thing if the German Party sent Maslow, and two or three of his over-zealous supporters and comrades-in-arms who obviously do not wish to observe the "peace treaty," to Soviet Russia for a year or two. We would find useful work for them. We would make men of them. And the international and German movement would gain a great deal by it.

The German Communists must at all costs put a stop to the internal conflict; they must curb the quarrelsome elements on both sides, forget about Paul Levi and the K.A.P.-ists, and engage in real work.

There is plenty of real work to be done.

In my opinion, the tactical and organisational resolutions of the Third Congress of the Communist International mark a great step forward. All efforts must be exerted to put both resolutions into effect. This is a difficult matter; but it can and must be done.

At first, the Communists had to proclaim their principles to the world. That was done at the First Congress. That was the first step.

The second step was to give the Communist International organisational form and to draw up the conditions of affiliation to it—the condition of actually separating from the Centrists, from the direct and indirect agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement. That was done at the Second Congress.

At the Third Congress it was necessary to start practical, positive work, to determine concretely, while taking into account the practical experience of the Communist struggle already started, to determine *how* the work was to be carried on in the future in regard to tactics and in regard to organisation. We took this third step. We have an army of Communists all over the world. It is still badly trained and badly organised. It would be extremely harmful to forget this truth or to be afraid of admitting it. This army must be trained in a practical manner with the greatest caution, strictly

testing ourselves, studying the experience of our own movement; this army must be properly trained, properly organised, tested in all sorts of manœuvres, in a variety of engagements, in offensive operations and retreats. Without this long and stern training, victory will be impossible.

The "crux" of the situation in the international Communist movement in the summer of 1921 was that some of the best and most influential sections of the Communist International did not quite properly understand this task, *slightly exaggerated* the "struggle against Centrism," went *slightly beyond* the borderline at which this struggle becomes transformed into a pastime, at which revolutionary Marxism begins to be compromised.

This was the "crux" of the Third Congress.

The exaggeration was only slight; but the danger of it was enormous. It was difficult to combat it, because the exaggeration was committed by really the best and most loyal elements without which the formation of the Communist International would, perhaps, have been impossible. In the tactical amendments published in *Moscow* [1] in German, French and English, signed by the German, Hungarian and Italian delegations, this exaggeration was definitely revealed—the more so for the reason that these amendments were proposed to a final (after long and all-sided preparatory work) draft resolution. The rejection of these amendments was the *straightening* of the line of the Communist International; it was a victory over the danger of exaggeration.

Exaggeration, if it is not corrected, would kill the Communist International for certain. For "no one in the world can compromise the revolutionary Marxists if they do not compromise themselves." No one in the world can prevent the victory of the Communists over the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals (and under the conditions prevailing in Western Europe and America in the twentieth century, after the first imperialist war, this means victory over the bourgeoisie) *if* the Communists themselves do not prevent it.

[1] The title of a daily newspaper published during the Third Congress of the Communist International in English, French and German.—*Ed.*

Exaggeration, even in the slightest degree, means preventing victory.

Exaggeration of the struggle against Centrism means *saving* Centrism, means *strengthening* its position, its influence over the workers.

In the period between the Second and the Third Congresses we learned to wage a victorious struggle against Centrism on an international scale. This is proved by facts. We will continue to wage this struggle (expulsion of Levi and Serrati's party) to the end.

We have *not yet* learned, however, to combat on an international scale, wrong exaggerations in the struggle against Centrism. But we have become cognisant of this defect, as has been proved by the progress and outcome of the Third Congress. And by the very fact that we have become cognisant of our defect *we will rid ourselves of it.*

And so we shall be invincible, because without footholds among the proletariat (through the medium of the bourgeois agents of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals) the bourgeoisie in Western Europe and America *cannot* retain power.

More careful, more thorough preparation for the new, more decisive battles, both defensive and offensive—this is the fundamental and principal thing in the decisions of the Third Congress.

". . . Communism will become an active mass force in Italy if the Italian Communist Party unceasingly and steadily fights against the opportunist policy of Serrati and at the same time maintains close contact with the proletarian masses in the trade unions, during strikes, during the struggle against the counter-revolutionary fascist movement, if it unites the mass action of the working class and transforms its spontaneous outbreaks into carefully prepared battles. . . ."

". . . The United Communist Party of Germany will be the more able successfully to carry out mass actions the more it adapts its fighting slogans to the actual situation, the more carefully it studies the situation, and the more co-ordinated are its actions. . . . "

Such are the material passages in the tactical resolutions of the Third Congress.

The winning of the majority of the proletariat to our side—such is the "principal task" (the heading of point 3 of the tactical resolution).

Of course, we do not give the winning of the majority a formal

interpretation as do the knights of philistine "democracy" of the Two-and-a-Half International. When in Rome, in July 1921, the whole proletariat—the reformist proletariat belonging to the trade unions, and the Centrists belonging to Serrati's party—*followed* the Communists against the fascists, this was *winning the majority* of the working class to our side.

This was far, very far, from decisive; it was only partial, only momentary, only local winning over. But it was winning over the majority. Such a winning over is possible even if, formally, the proletariat follows bourgeois leaders, or leaders who pursue a bourgeois policy (as do all the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals); or if the majority of the proletariat is wavering. Such a winning over is steadily making progress all over the world. Let us make more thorough and careful preparations for it; let us not allow a single serious opportunity to slip by when the bourgeoisie compels the proletariat to rise for the struggle; let us learn correctly to determine the moment when the *masses* of the proletariat *cannot but* rise together with us.

Then victory will be assured no matter how severe individual defeats and individual marches in our great campaign may be.

Our tactical and strategical methods still lag behind (if we take them on an international scale) the excellent strategy of the bourgeoisie, which has learned something from the example of Russia, and does not allow itself to be "taken by surprise." But our forces are superior, immeasurably superior; we are learning tactics and strategy; we have already made progress in these "studies" as a result of the lessons and the mistakes of the March uprising of 1921. We shall completely master this "science."

In the overwhelming majority of countries our Parties are still very far from being what real Communist Parties, real vanguards of the genuinely revolutionary and only revolutionary class, Parties in which all the members take part in the struggle, in the movement, in the everyday life of the masses, should be. But we are aware of this defect, we brought it out most strikingly in the resolution of the Third Congress on the work of the Parties. And we shall remove this defect.

Comrades, German Communists, permit me to conclude by ex-

pressing the wish that your Party Congress on August 22 will firmly put a stop, once and for all, to the trivial struggle against the Left and Right schismatics. Enough of internal Party struggle! Down with everyone who wants to continue it, directly or indirectly. We now appreciate our tasks more clearly, more concretely and more vividly than we did yesterday; we are not afraid of pointing openly to our mistakes in order to rectify them. We shall now devote all the efforts of the Party to improving its organisation, to improving the quality and content of its work, to creating closer contacts with the masses, and to working out more and more correct and precise working class tactics and strategy.

With Communist greetings,

N. LENIN

August 14, 1921

WE HAVE PAID TOO MUCH

IMAGINE that a representative of the Communists has to enter premises in which agents of the bourgeoisie are carrying on their propaganda at a fairly large meeting of workers. Imagine also that the bourgeoisie demands from us a high price of admission to these premises. If the price has not been agreed to beforehand we must bargain, of course, in order not to impose too heavy a burden upon our Party's budget. If we pay too much for admission to these premises we shall undoubtedly commit an error. But it is better to pay a high price—at all events until we have learned to bargain properly—than to reject an opportunity of speaking to workers who hitherto have been in the exclusive "possession," so to speak, of the reformists, *i.e.*, of the most loyal friends of the bourgeoisie.

This comparison came into my mind when, in today's *Pravda*, I read a report from Berlin stating the terms on which agreement has been reached between the representatives of the three Internationals.

In my opinion our representatives were wrong in agreeing to the following two conditions: first, that the Soviet government does not apply the death penalty in the case of the forty-seven Socialist-Revolutionaries; second, that the Soviet government permits representatives of the three Internationals to be present at the trial.

These two conditions are nothing more nor less than a political concession on the part of the revolutionary proletariat to the reactionary bourgeoisie. If anyone has any doubt about the correctness of this definition then, in order to reveal the political naïveté of such a person it is sufficient to put the following questions: Would the British or any other modern government permit representatives of the three Internationals to attend the trial of Irish workers charged with rebellion? or the trial of the workers implicated in the recent rebellion in South Africa? Would the British or any other govern-

ment; in such, or similar, circumstances, agree to promise that they will not apply the death penalty to its political opponents? A little reflection over these questions will be sufficient to enable one to understand the following simple truth: All over the world a struggle is going on between the reactionary bourgeoisie and the revolutionary proletariat. In the present case the Communist International, which represents one side in this struggle, makes a political concession to the other side, *i.e.*, the reactionary bourgeoisie; for everybody in the world knows (except those who want to conceal the obvious truth) that the Socialist-Revolutionaries shot at Communists and organised rebellion against them, and they did this actually, and sometimes officially, in a united front with the whole of the international, reactionary bourgeoisie.

The question arises: What concession has the international bourgeoisie made to us in return? There can only be one reply to this question, *viz.*, it has made no concession to us whatever.

Only arguments which obscure this simple and clear truth of the class struggle, only arguments which throw dust in the eyes of the masses of workers and toilers, can strive to obscure this obvious truth. By the agreement signed in Berlin by the representatives of the Third International we have already made two political concessions to the international bourgeoisie. We obtained no concession whatever from it in return.

The representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals acted as blackmailers in order to extort a political concession from the proletariat for the benefit of the bourgeoisie while refusing, or at any rate making no attempt, to induce the international bourgeoisie to make some concession to the revolutionary proletariat. Of course, this incontrovertible political fact was obscured by the skilful representatives of bourgeois diplomacy (for many centuries the bourgeoisie taught the representatives of its class to be good diplomats), but the attempt to obscure the fact does not alter it in the least. Whether the various representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals were connected with the bourgeoisie directly or indirectly is a matter of tenth-rate importance in the present case. We do not accuse them of being directly connected. The question of whether there was direct con-

nection or fairly involved, indirect connection, has nothing to do with the case. The only point that has anything to do with the case is that the Comintern has made a political concession to the international bourgeoisie under pressure of the representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals and that it has obtained no concession in return.

What is the conclusion to be drawn from this?

First of all, the conclusion that Comrades Radek, Bukharin, and the others who represented the Communist International acted wrongly.

Further. Does it follow from this that we must tear up the agreement that has been signed? No. I think that it would be wrong to draw such a conclusion, and that we ought not to tear up the agreement. All we have to do is to draw the conclusion that on this occasion the bourgeois diplomats proved to be more skilful than ours, and that next time, if the price of admission is not fixed beforehand, we must bargain and manœuvre more skilfully. We must make it a rule not to make political concessions to the international bourgeoisie (no matter how skilfully these concessions may be concealed by intermediaries, no matter of what sort) unless we receive in return more or less equivalent concessions from the international bourgeoisie to Soviet Russia, or to the other units of the international proletariat which is fighting against capitalism.

Perhaps the Italian Communists and a section of the French Communists and Syndicalists who were opposed to the united front tactics will draw from the above argument the conclusion that the united front tactics are wrong. But such a conclusion will obviously be wrong. If the Communist representatives paid too much for admission to premises in which they have some, even if small, opportunity of addressing workers who hitherto have been in the exclusive "possession" of the reformists, such a mistake must be rectified next time. But it would be an incomparably greater mistake to reject all terms, or all payment for admission to these fairly well guarded and barred premises. The mistake that Comrades Radek, Bukharin and the others made is not a serious one, the more so that the greatest risk we run is that the enemies of Soviet Russia who have been encouraged by the result of the Berlin Conference will

make two or three, perhaps successful, attempts on the lives of certain persons; for they know beforehand that they can shoot at Communists, taking the chance that conferences like the Berlin Conference will hinder the Communists from shooting at them.

At all events we have made some breach in the premises that were closed to us. At all events Comrade Radek succeeded in exposing, at least to a section of the workers, the fact that the Second International refused to include among the slogans of the demonstration a demand for the annulment of the Versailles Treaty. The great mistake the Italian Communists and a section of the French Communists and Syndicalists make is that they are content with the knowledge they already have. They are content with the fact that they know very well that the representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, and also Messrs. Paul Levi, Serrati and others, are very skilful representatives of the bourgeoisie and channels of its influence. But the people and the workers who know this really well and who really understand the significance of this are undoubtedly in the minority in Italy, in England, in America and in France. Communists must not stew in their own juice but learn how to penetrate into prohibited premises where the representatives of the bourgeoisie exercise influence over the workers; and in this they must not hesitate to make certain sacrifices and not be afraid to make mistakes, which are inevitable, at first, in every new and difficult undertaking. The Communists who do not want to understand this and who do not want to learn how to do this cannot hope to win the majority among the workers; at all events, they hinder and retard the work of winning this majority. And for Communists, and all genuine adherents of the workers' revolution, this is absolutely unpardonable.

Once again, the bourgeoisie, in the persons of their diplomats, proved to be more skilful than the representatives of the Communist International. Such is the lesson of the Berlin Conference. We will not forget this lesson. We shall draw all the necessary conclusions from it. The representatives of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals need a united front, for they hope to weaken us by inducing us to make excessive concessions; they hope to penetrate into our Communist premises without any payment; they

hope to utilise the united front tactics for the purpose of convincing the workers that the reformist tactics are correct and that revolutionary tactics are wrong. We need a united front because we hope to convince the workers of the opposite. We shall put the blame for the mistakes on our Communist representatives who committed them, and on those parties which commit them, while we shall try to learn from these mistakes and to prevent a repetition of them in the future. But under no circumstances shall we put the blame for the mistakes of our Communists on the masses of the proletariat who all over the world are facing the onslaught of capital which is advancing against them. We adopted the united front tactics in order to help these masses to fight against capital, to help them understand the "cunning mechanism" of the two fronts in the whole of international economics and in the whole of international politics; and we shall pursue these tactics to the end.

April 9, 1922

NOTES OF A PUBLICIST

On Ascending a High Mountain; the Harm of Despondency; the Utility of Trade; Attitude Towards the Mensheviks, etc.

I

By Way of Example

Picture to yourself a man ascending a very high, steep and hitherto unexplored mountain. Let us assume that after overcoming unprecedented difficulties and dangers, he has succeeded in rising higher than any of his predecessors, but that he has not yet reached the summit. He is in the position where it is not only difficult and dangerous to proceed in the direction and along the path he selected, but positively impossible. He has to turn back, descend, seek another path, longer, perhaps, but one which will enable him to reach the summit. The descent from this height, unreached by any one before, proves to be more dangerous and difficult for our imaginary traveller than the ascent: it is easier to slip; it is not so easy to choose the spot on which to get a footing; there is not that elevation of spirit that one feels in going upwards, straight to the goal, etc. One has to tie a rope round oneself, spend hours with a mountaineer's pick in cutting footholds, or a projection, to which the rope could be tied tightly; one has to move at a tortoise pace, and move downwards, descend, away from the goal; and still one does not know whether this extremely dangerous and painful descent is coming to an end, or whether a fairly safe detour can be made by which one can ascend more boldly, more quickly and more directly to the summit.

It would be almost unnatural to suppose that, notwithstanding the fact that he had risen to such an unprecedented height, a man who finds himself in such a position does not feel moments of

despondency. And in all probability these moments would be more numerous, frequent and harder to bear if he could hear the voices from below of those who, through a telescope, and from a safe distance, are watching this dangerous descent, which cannot even be called what the "Smenovekh-ists" call "descending with the brakes on";[1] for brakes presuppose a well-planned road, one that had already been traversed by some vehicle, a road prepared beforehand, already tested by some mechanism. In this case, however, there is no vehicle, no road, absolutely nothing that had been tested before!

The voices from below are gloating voices. They gloat openly, chuckle gleefully, shout: "You'll fall in a minute! Serve him right, the madman!" Others try to conceal their malicious glee and behave mainly like Judas Golovlev.[2] They moan and raise their eyes to heaven in sorrow, as if to say: "It grieves us sorely to see that our worst fears are being justified! But did not we, who all our lives have been engaged in drawing up a reasonable plan for ascending this mountain, demand that the ascent be postponed until our plan was complete? And if we so passionately opposed the path from which this madman is now retreating—Look! Look! He has gone back! He is descending! He is spending hours in preparing the possibility of moving forward a mere yard! And yet we were treated with frightful abuse when we systematically demanded moderation and accuracy!—if we so fervently censured the madman and warned everybody against imitating and helping him, we did it entirely because of our devotion to the great plan of ascending this mountain, and in order to prevent this great plan from being discredited!"

Happily, in the conditions we have described, our imaginary traveller cannot hear the voices of these "true friends" of the idea

[1] From the Russian phrase "smena vekh," meaning change of landmarks. This was the name applied to a group of Russian bourgeois émigrés, headed by Ustryalov and others, who changed their attitude toward Soviet Russia in the belief that with the introduction of the New Economic Policy the Soviet government was gradually reverting to capitalism. They described the measures then taken by the Soviet government as "descending with the brakes on."—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

[2] The chief character in Schedrin's *The Golovlev Family;* a pious and avaricious hypocrite.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

of ascent; if he did they would probably nauseate him. And nausea, it is said, does not help one to keep a clear head and a firm step, particularly at very great heights.

II

Without Metaphor

An example is not proof. Every comparison is lame. These are incontrovertible and universally known truisms, but it would do no harm to recall them in order the more clearly to see the limits of every comparison.

The Russian proletariat rose to a gigantic height in its revolution, not only compared with 1789 and 1793, but also compared with 1871. We must as soberly, clearly and vividly as possible appraise what it is we have "finished" and what we have not finished. If we do that we shall be able to keep clear heads. We shall not suffer from nausea, illusions, or despondency.

We "finished" the bourgeois-democratic revolution more "cleanly" than has ever been done before anywhere in the world. This is a great gain of which no power on earth can deprive us.

We finished the task of extricating ourselves from the most reactionary imperialist war in a revolutionary way. This, too, is a gain that no power on earth can deprive us of, a gain which is all the more valuable for the reason that reactionary imperialist massacres are inevitable in the not distant future if capitalism is preserved; and the people of the twentieth century will not be easily satisfied with a second edition of the "Basle Manifesto" with which in 1912 and in 1914-18 the renegades, the heroes of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals, fooled themselves and the workers.

We created a Soviet type of state and by that ushered in a new epoch in world history, the epoch of the political rule of the proletariat, which has come to take the place of the epoch of the political rule of the bourgeoisie. This, too, we cannot be deprived of, although the Soviet type of state will be "finished" only with the aid of the practical experience of the working class of several countries.

But we have not even finished the foundations of Socialist

economy. The powers of moribund capitalism which are hostile to us can still deprive us of that. We must clearly appreciate this and openly admit it; for there is nothing more dangerous than illusions (and giddiness, particularly at great heights). And there is absolutely nothing "terrible," nothing that would give legitimate grounds for the slightest despondency, in admitting this bitter truth; for we have always preached and repeated the elementary truth of Marxism, *viz.*, that the joint efforts of the workers of several advanced countries are needed for the victory of Socialism. And we, still standing alone, in a backward country, a country that was ruined more than others, have done an incredible amount of work. More than that: we preserved intact the "army" of the revolutionary proletarian forces, we preserved its "manœuvring ability," we preserved clear heads which enabled us soberly to calculate where, when and how much to retreat (in order to leap further forward); where, when and how to set to work to alter what has remained unfinished. Those Communists who imagine that it is possible to finish such a world-historical "undertaking" as completing the foundations of Socialist economy (particularly in a small-peasant country) without making mistakes, without retreats, without numerous alterations to what is unfinished, or wrongly done, must be regarded as doomed for certain. Those Communists who do not allow themselves to become captives to illusions or despondency, and who preserve their strength and flexibility of body in order "to begin from the beginning" over and over again in approaching a very difficult task, are not doomed (and in all probability will not perish).

And still less permissible is it for us to fall into the slightest despondency, still less grounds are there for this, because in some things, in spite of the state of ruin, poverty, backwardness and starvation that we are in, we have *begun to move forward* in the sphere of *economy* preparatory to Socialism, whereas side by side with us, all over the world, countries more advanced, a thousand times wealthier and stronger in military power than we are, are *continuing to go back* in the sphere of *"their"* much-lauded, familiar, capitalist economy, which has been tried for hundreds of years.

III

Fox-Hunting, Levi and Serrati

It is said that the following is the most reliable method of hunting foxes: the fox that is being tracked is surrounded at a certain distance with a rope to which small red flags are attached at a little height from the snow-covered ground. Fearing this obviously artificial "human" device, the fox will emerge only if and where an opening is allowed in this "fence" of flags; and the huntsman waits for him at this opening. One would think that caution would be the most positive trait of an animal that is hunted by everybody. But here it turns out that "virtue prolonged" is a fault. The fox is caught precisely because of its excessive caution.

I must confess to a mistake I made at the Third Congress of the Communist International also as a result of excessive caution. At that congress I was on the extreme Right flank. I am convinced that this was the only correct position, for a very large (and "influential") group of delegates headed by many German, Hungarian and Italian comrades, occupied an immoderately "Left" and incorrectly Left position, and too frequently, in place of a sober calculation of the situation which was not very favourable for immediate and direct revolutionary action, substituted the vigorous waving of small red flags. Out of caution and a desire to prevent this undoubtedly wrong deviation towards Leftism from giving a false direction to the whole of the tactics of the Communist International, I did all I could to defend Levi and expressed the assumption that perhaps he had lost his head (I did not deny that he had lost his head) because he was frightened by the mistakes of the Lefts; and I argued that there were cases when Communists who had lost their heads had "found" them again afterwards. Admitting even—under pressure of the "Lefts"—that Levi was a Menshevik, I argued that even such an admission did not settle the question. For example, the whole history of the fifteen years of struggle between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks in Russia (1903-1917) proves, as the three Russian revolutions also prove, that, in general, the Mensheviks were absolutely wrong, and that they were, in fact, agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement. This fact

is incontrovertible. But this incontrovertible fact does not eliminate the fact that in *single* cases the Mensheviks were right as against the Bolsheviks, for example, on the question of boycotting the Stolypin Duma in 1907.[1]

Eight months have passed since the Third Congress of the Communist International. Evidently our controversy with the "Lefts" is now out of date; life has settled it. I was proved to have been wrong about Levi, because he managed to prove that he had stepped on to the Menshevik path, not accidentally, not temporarily, not by "going too far" in combating the very dangerous mistakes of the "Lefts," but for a long time, permanently, because of his very nature. Instead of honestly admitting the necessity of appealing for readmission to the Party after the Third Congress of the Communist International, as every person who had temporarily lost his head when irritated by some mistakes committed by the Lefts should have done, Levi began in a sneaking manner to play tricks on the Party, to put a spoke in its wheel, *i.e.*, actually began to serve the agents of the bourgeoisie belonging to the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals. Of course, the German Communists were quite right when recently they retaliated to this by expelling from their Party several more gentlemen who were found to be secretly helping Paul Levi in his noble occupation.

The development of the German and Italian Communist Parties since the Third Congress of the Comintern has shown that the mistakes committed by the Lefts at that congress were taken note of and are being rectified—little by little, slowly, but steadily; the decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International are being loyally carried out. The transformation of the old type of European parliamentary party, which in fact is reformist and only slightly tinted with revolutionary colours, into a *new type* of party, into a genuinely revolutionary, genuinely Communist Party, is an extremely difficult matter. The example of France demonstrates this difficulty most clearly. To transform the *type* of Party work in everyday life, to transform humdrum everyday work,

[1] Concerning the tactics adopted in the elections to the Stolypin, *i.e.*, the Third, State Duma, see article "Against the Boycott," *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 414-27.—*Ed.*

to transform the Party into the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat without allowing it to become separated from the masses, but, on the contrary, linking it more and more closely with them and imbuing them with revolutionary consciousness and rousing them for the revolutionary struggle, is a very difficult but very important task. If the European Communists do not take advantage of the intervals (probably very short ones) between the periods of particularly acute revolutionary battles, such as took place in many capitalist countries of Europe and America in 1921 and in the beginning of 1922, for the purpose of bringing about this fundamental, internal, profound reconstruction of the whole structure and the whole of the work of their Parties, they will be committing a heinous crime. Fortunately, there is no reason to apprehend this. The quiet, subdued, calm, not very rapid, but profound work of creating in Europe and America genuine Communist Parties, genuine revolutionary vanguards of the proletariat, has begun and is proceeding.

Political lessons taken even from the observation of such a trivial thing as fox-hunting prove to be useful: on the one hand excessive caution leads to mistakes. On the other hand it must not be forgotten that if mere "sentiment" or the waving of small red flags is substituted for a sober calculation of the situation, it may lead to irremediable mistakes. Under such circumstances one may succumb where defeat is not by any means inevitable, even if the difficulties are great.

Paul Levi now wants to get into the good graces of the bourgeoisie—and, *consequently*, of its agents, the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals—by republishing precisely those works of Rosa Luxemburg in which she was wrong. We shall reply to this by quoting two lines from a well-known Russian fable: Sometimes eagles may fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles. Rosa Luxemburg was mistaken on the question of the independence of Poland; she was mistaken in 1903 in her appraisal of Menshevism; she was mistaken on the theory of the accumulation of capital; she was mistaken in July 1914, when side by side with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others, she advocated unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks; she was

mistaken in the works she wrote while in prison in 1918 (she corrected most of these mistakes at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 after she was released). But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle. And not only will the memory of her always remain precious for Communists all over the world, but her biography and her *complete* works (the publication of which the German Communists are inordinately delaying, which can only be excused by the tremendous losses they are suffering in their severe struggle) will serve as a useful lesson in the training of many generations of Communists all over the world. "After August 4, 1914, German Social-Democracy is a stinking corpse"—this is the utterance which will make Rosa Luxemburg's name live forever in the history of the world working class movement. And, of course, in the backyard of the working class movement, among the dung heaps, hens like Paul Levi, Scheidemann, Kautsky and the whole of that fraternity will cackle over the mistakes committed by that great Communist. Everyone to his own.

As for Serrati, he must be compared with a bad egg, which bursts with a loud noise and with a particularly . . . piquant aroma. To get a resolution carried at "his" congress declaring readiness to submit to the decisions of the Congress of the Communist International, then to send old Lazzari to the congress, and finally, to cheat the workers as crudely as a horse-dealer—is a gem. The Italian Communists who are training a real party of the revolutionary proletariat in Italy will now have an object lesson in political chicanery and Menshevism to give to the masses of the workers. The useful, *repelling* effect of this lesson will not be felt immediately, not without numerous repetitions, but it will be felt. If the Italian Communists do not allow themselves to become isolated from the masses, do not lose patience in the hard work of exposing to the rank-and-file workers all Serrati's chicanery in a practical way, if they do not yield to the very easy and very dangerous decision to say "minus *a*" whenever Serrati says "*a*," if they steadily train the masses to adopt a revolutionary world outlook and for revolutionary action, if they also take practical advantage of the practical and magnificent (although costly) object lessons of fascism—the victory of Italian Communism is assured.

Levi and Serrati are not characteristic in themselves; they are characteristic of the modern type of the extreme Left wing of petty-bourgeois democracy, of "their" camp, the camp of the international capitalists, against our camp. The whole of "their" camp, from Gompers to Serrati, are gloating, rejoicing, or shedding crocodile tears over our retreat, our "descent," our New Economic Policy. Let them gloat, let them perform their clownish antics. Everyone to his own. But we shall not give way to illusions or despondency. If we are not afraid of admitting our mistakes, not afraid of making repeated efforts to rectify them—we shall reach the very summit. The cause of the international *bloc* from Gompers to Serrati is doomed.

March 1922

THE QUESTION OF COMBATING WAR

To Comrades Bukharin, Zinoviev and Molotov

(For Members of the Political Bureau)

IN connection with the news received from Hanover yesterday to the effect that the International Metal Workers' Union was putting on the agenda the question of combating war and has adopted a resolution proposing a strike in retaliation to war, I propose the following:

1) That a series of articles be published in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* recalling the fate of the Basle Manifesto and explaining in detail the childish stupidity, or downright social-treachery, that is being repeated by the metal workers.

2) That the question of combating war be brought up at the next Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and that a comprehensive resolution be adopted explaining that only a revolutionary party which has been built up beforehand, is well tried and has a good illegal apparatus can successfully wage a struggle against war, and also that the means of combating war are not a strike against war, but the formation of revolutionary nuclei in the combatant armies, their training for the purpose of bringing about revolution.

LENIN

February 4, 1922

NOTES ON THE QUESTION OF THE TASKS OF OUR DELEGATION AT THE HAGUE

On the question of combating the danger of war in connection with the conference at The Hague, I think that the greatest difficulty lies in overcoming the prejudice that this question is a simple, clear and comparatively easy one.

"We shall retaliate to war with a strike or revolution"—that is what all the prominent reformist leaders usually say to the working class. And very often the seeming radicalness of these replies satisfies and calms the workers, co-operators and peasants.

Perhaps the most correct thing to do would be to start by refuting this opinion in the sharpest manner; to declare that particularly now, after the recent war, only the most stupid, or hopelessly false people can assert that such a reply to the question of combating war is of any use; to declare that it is impossible to "retaliate" to war by a strike, just as it is impossible to "retaliate" to war by revolution in the simple and literal sense of these terms.

It must be explained to the people how great is the secrecy with which war arises, and how helpless the ordinary workers' organisations are in the face of war that is really impending, even if these organisations call themselves revolutionary.

Again and again it must be explained to the people in the most concrete manner how matters stood in the last war, and why they could not be different.

Particularly must it be explained that "defence of the fatherland" becomes an inevitable question which the overwhelming majority of the toilers will inevitably settle in favour of their bourgeoisie.

Therefore, first, explanation of the question of "defence of the fatherland." Second, in connection with the latter, explanation of the question of "defeatism." And finally, explanation of the

only possible method of combating war, *viz.*, the preservation and formation of illegal organisations in which all revolutionaries taking part in the war shall carry on *prolonged* work against war—all this must be brought into the forefront.

Boycott war—is a stupid phrase. Communists must take part even in the most reactionary war.

It is desirable to illustrate with special concreteness, with the aid of examples from, say, pre-war German literature, and in particular, the examples of the Basle Congress of 1912, that the theoretical admission that war is criminal, that war is impermissible for a Socialist, etc., turns out to be empty phrases, because such a presentation of the question lacks all concreteness; we give the masses no really vivid idea of how war may approach and break out. On the contrary, every day the dominating press, in an infinite number of copies, obscures this question and spreads such lies about it that the weak Socialist press is absolutely impotent against it, the more so that in peace times the latter adheres to fundamentally wrong views on this point. In all probability, the Communist press in the majority of countries will also disgrace itself.

I think that our delegates at the International Congress of Co-operators and Trade Unionists should distribute their functions among themselves and examine in the most detailed manner all the sophistries by which war is justified at the present time.

Perhaps the principal means of enlisting the masses for war are precisely the sophistries to which the bourgeois press resorts; and the most important reason for our impotence in the face of war is either that we do not examine these sophistries beforehand, or still more, that, in the spirit of the Basle Manifesto of 1912, we brush them aside with the cheap, boastful and utterly empty phrase that we shall not tolerate war, that we understand that war is a crime, etc.

I think that if we have several people at the Hague Conference who are capable of delivering speeches against war in various languages, the most important thing to do would be to refute the opinion that those present at the conference are opponents of war, that they understand that war may and will come upon them at

the most unexpected moment, that they, to any extent, understand what methods should be adopted to combat war, that they are, to any extent, in a position to adopt reasonable and effective measures to combat war.

In connection with the recent experience of war we must explain what a number of theoretical and mundane questions will arise on the morrow of the declaration of war, which will deprive the overwhelming majority of those who are called up for military service of the opportunity of approaching these questions with anything like a clear head, or in anything like a conscientiously unprejudiced manner.

I think that this question must be explained in extraordinary detail, and in a twofold manner:

First, by relating and analysing what happened during the last war and declaring to all present that they do not know this, or that they pretend that they know it, whereas, in fact, they shut their eyes to the very crux of the question which, if not understood, puts all effort to combat war utterly out of the question. On this point I think it is necessary to examine all shades, all opinions which arose among Russian Socialists on the last war. It must be proved that these shades did not arise accidentally but as a consequence of the very nature of modern wars in general. It must be proved that unless these opinions are analysed, and unless it is explained how they inevitably arise and that they are of decisive significance in the question of combating war, unless this analysis is made, preparations for the war, or even an intelligent attitude towards it, are entirely out of the question.

Secondly, present conflicts, even the most insignificant, must be taken as an example in explaining that war may break out any day as a consequence of the dispute between Great Britain and France over some detail of the treaty with Turkey, or between America and Japan over some trivial disagreement on any Pacific question, or between any of the big powers over colonies, tariff policy, or trade policy generally, etc., etc. It seems to me that if there is any doubt about being able at The Hague to say all one wants to say against war with the utmost freedom, it will be necessary to consider various stratagems in order to be able to say at

least the most important things and to publish what it was not possible to say in pamphlet form. We must take the risk of our speaker being stopped by the chairman.

I think that for this purpose the delegation, in addition to speakers who are able, and whose duty it shall be, to make speeches against war as a whole, *i.e.*, to enlarge on all the main arguments and all the conditions for combating war, should consist of people who know all the three principal foreign languages, whose business it would be to enter into conversation with the delegates and to ascertain to what extent they understand the main arguments and to what extent it is necessary to raise this or that argument, or to quote examples.

Perhaps on a number of questions the mere quoting of practical examples of the last war will be sufficient to have serious effect. Perhaps on a number of other questions serious effect can be produced only by explaining the present-day conflicts between the various states and their connection with possible armed collisions.

On the question of combating war, I recall that a number of declarations were made by our Communist deputies, in parliament as well as outside, which contained monstrously incorrect and monstrously frivolous statements about this subject. I think these declarations, particularly if they have been made since the war, must be subjected to determined and ruthless criticism, and the name of each person who made them should be mentioned. One's opinion concerning these speakers may be expressed in the mildest terms, particularly if circumstances require it, but not a single case of this kind must be hushed up, for a frivolous attitude toward this question is an evil which outweighs all others, and which cannot be treated leniently.

A number of decisions have been adopted by workers' congresses which are unpardonably stupid and frivolous.

All material must be immediately collected and all the separate parts and particles of the subject, and the whole "strategy" to be pursued at the congress, must be thoroughly discussed.

On such a question, not only a mistake, but even incompleteness on any essential matter, will be intolerable.

December 4, 1922

FIVE YEARS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE PROSPECTS OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

Report Delivered at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, November 13, 1922

COMRADES, in the list of speakers I am down as the principal reporter, but you will understand that after my long illness I am unable to make a long report. I can only make an introduction to the most important questions. My subject will be a very limited one. The subject, "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution," is too broad for one speaker to exhaust in a single speech. That is why I shall take only a small part of this subject, namely, the question of the "New Economic Policy." I have deliberately taken only this small part in order to make you familiar with what is now a very important question, at all events, very important for me, because I am now working on it.

And so I will tell you how we started the New Economic Policy, and what results we have achieved with the aid of this policy. If I confine myself to this question I may be able to give you a general review and a general idea of it.

To begin with the question of how we arrived at the New Economic Policy I must quote an article I wrote in 1918. At the beginning of 1918, in a brief controversy, I touched precisely on the question of the attitude we should adopt towards state capitalism. I then wrote:

". . . State capitalism would be *an advance* on the present state of affairs" (*i.e.*, the state of affairs that existed at that time) "in our Soviet Republic. If we introduced state capitalism in approximately six months' time, we would achieve a great success and a sure guarantee that within a year Socialism will have gained a permanently firm hold and will have become invincible in our country." [1]

[1] See article "'Left'-Wing Childishness and Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," *Selected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 360.—*Ed.*

Of course this was said at a time when we were more stupid than we are now, but not so stupid as not to be able to examine such questions.

Thus, in 1918, I was of the opinion that in relation to the economic condition of the Soviet Republic at that time, state capitalism was an advance. This sounds very queer and perhaps even absurd, for already at that time our republic was a Socialist republic; at that time, every day, we hurriedly—perhaps too hurriedly—adopted various new economic measures which cannot be otherwise described than Socialist measures. Nevertheless, I then held the view that compared with the economic position of the Soviet Republic as it was at that time, state capitalism was an advance, and I explained my idea simply by enumerating the main elements of the economic system of Russia. In my opinion these elements were the following: "1) patriarchal, *i.e.*, the most primitive form of agriculture; 2) small commodity production (this includes the majority of the peasants who trade in grain); 3) private capitalism; 4) state capitalism and 5) Socialism." All these economic elements were represented in Russia at that time. I set myself the task of explaining the relation in which these elements stood to each other and whether one of these non-Socialist elements, namely state capitalism, should not be appraised higher than Socialism. I repeat: It seems very strange to everyone that a non-Socialist element should be appraised higher than, should be regarded as superior to, Socialism in a republic which declares that it is a Socialist republic. But it will become intelligible if you remember that we did not regard the economic system of Russia as something homogeneous and highly developed; we fully appreciated the fact that we had in Russia patriarchal agriculture, *i.e.*, the most primitive form of agriculture, side by side with the Socialist form. What role could state capitalism play under such circumstances?

Then I go on to ask: Which of these elements is the predominant one? Clearly, in a petty-bourgeois environment the petty-bourgeois element predominates. I then admitted that the petty-bourgeois element predominated; it was impossible to think otherwise. The question which I then put to myself—it was in a separate controversy having nothing to do with the present question—was: What is

our attitude toward state capitalism? And I replied: Although it is not a Socialist form, state capitalism would be for us, and for Russia, a more favourable form than the existing one. What does that mean? It means that we did not overestimate the rudiments, or the principle, of Socialist economy, although we had already accomplished the social revolution; on the contrary, already at that time we realised to a certain degree that it would be better if we first arrived at state capitalism and then at Socialism.

I must particularly emphasise this part because I assume that only by taking this as our starting point can we, firstly, explain what the present economic policy is, and secondly, what important practical conclusions can be drawn from this for the Communist International. I do not want to say that we already had a previously worked out plan of retreat. That was not the case. Those brief controversial lines were not by any means a plan of retreat. There was not a word in them about one very important point, *e.g.*, free trade, which is of fundamental significance for state capitalism. Nevertheless, the general, indefinite idea of a retreat was expressed in them. I think that we must pay attention to this not only from the point of view of a country whose economic system was, and is to this day, very backward, but also from the point of view of the Communist International, and of the advanced West European countries. For example, just now we are engaged in drawing up a programme. I, personally, think that the best thing we can do now is to discuss all the programmes in general, to take the first reading, as it were, get them printed, but not take a final decision now, this year. Why? First of all, of course, because I do not think we have all thought over them thoroughly. And also because we have hardly thought over the question of the possibility of having to retreat, and of ensuring this retreat. In view of the fundamental changes that have taken place all over the world, such as the overthrow of capitalism and the building of Socialism, with all the enormous difficulties accompanying it, this is a question to which we must unfailingly pay attention. We must not only know how to act when we are directly passing to the offensive and are victorious. In revolutionary times this is not so difficult, nor is it so important, at least it is not the most decisive. Moments always occur

in times of revolution when the enemy loses his head, and if we make our onslaught upon him at such a moment we may achieve an easy victory. But this is not decisive; for if the enemy has sufficient endurance, he can rally his forces, etc., beforehand, he can easily provoke us to attack him, and then throw us back for many years. That is why I think that the idea that we must prepare for ourselves the possibility of retreat is very important, and not only from the theoretical point of view; even from the practical point of view all the parties which are preparing to pass to the direct onslaught upon capitalism in the near future must now also think of ensuring the possibility of retreat for themselves. I think that if we learn this lesson, together with all the other lessons of our revolution, it will not only cause us no harm but very probably will be useful in many cases.

Having emphasised the fact that already in 1918 we regarded state capitalism as a possible line of retreat, I will now deal with the results of our New Economic Policy. I repeat: At that time it was still a very vague idea, but in 1921, after we had passed through the most important stage of the civil war, and passed through it victoriously, we encountered a great—I think it was the greatest—internal political crisis of Soviet Russia, which caused discontent among a considerable section, not only of the peasantry, but also of the workers. This was the first and I hope the last time in the history of Soviet Russia that large masses of peasants were hostile towards us, not consciously, but instinctively. What gave rise to this peculiar, and for us, of course, very unpleasant, situation? The fact that we had advanced too far in our economic offensive, the fact that we had not created an adequate base, that the masses sensed what we ourselves were not yet able consciously to formulate, but what we, soon after, a few weeks later, admitted, namely: that the direct transition to purely Socialist forms, to purely Socialist distribution, was beyond our strength, and that if we were not able to retreat, to confine ourselves to easier tasks, we were doomed. The crisis began, I think, in February 1921. In the spring of that year we already decided unanimously—I did not notice any great disagreements among us on this question—to adopt the New Economic Policy. Now, after eighteen months, at the end of 1922,

we are able to make certain comparisons. What happened? How have we fared during this period of over eighteen months? What is the result? Has this retreat been of any benefit to us? Has it really saved us, or is the result still indefinite? This is the principal question that I put to myself and I think that this principal question is also of first-rate importance for all the Communist Parties; for if the reply were in the negative we would all be doomed. I think that we can with a clear conscience reply to this question in the affirmative, namely in the sense that the past eighteen months have been favourable, and that they prove absolutely that we have passed our examination.

I will now try to prove this. In order to do that I must briefly enumerate all the constituent parts of our economy.

First of all I will deal with our financial system and our celebrated Russian ruble. I think we can say that the Russian ruble is celebrated if only for the reason that the number of these rubles now exceeds a quadrillion. That's something. It is an astronomical figure. I am quite sure that not even everyone here realises what this figure signifies. But we do not regard this figure to be so very important even from the point of view of economic science, for the noughts can always be struck out: In this art, which is also unimportant from the economic point of view, we have achieved something; and I am sure that in the further progress of events we shall achieve much more. What is really important is the question of the stabilisation of the ruble. We, our best forces, are working on this problem, and we attach decisive importance to it. If we succeed in stabilising the ruble for a long period, and then permanently, we shall have won. In that case, all these astronomical figures, these trillions and quadrillions will not have mattered in the least. We shall then be able to place our economy on a firm basis and develop it further on a firm basis. On this question I think I can quote you fairly important and decisive facts. In 1921, the period in which the rate of the paper ruble remained stable was less than three months. This year, 1922, although it has not come to an end yet, this period lasted more than five months. I think that this is sufficient proof. Of course it is not sufficient if you demand scientific proof that we shall fully solve this problem

in the future. In my opinion I do not think it is possible to prove this wholly and entirely. The data quoted show that during the period from last year, when we started the New Economic Policy, to the present day, we have learned to make progress. Since we have learned this I am sure we shall learn to achieve further successes on this road, if only we do not do anything particularly stupid. The most important thing, however, is trade, namely, the circulation of commodities, which is essential for us. And since we have successfully grappled with this problem for two years, in spite of the fact that we were in a state of war (for, as you know, we occupied Vladivostok only a few weeks ago), in spite of the fact that we are only just able to start our economic activities systematically—since we have succeeded in extending the period of stability of the paper ruble from three months to five, I think I can say that we can be pleased. After all, we are standing alone. We have not received and are not now receiving any loans. Not one of the mighty capitalist states, which are organising their capitalist economy so "brilliantly" that to this day they do not know whither they are going, has helped us. By the Versailles Peace they created a financial system that they themselves do not understand. If these great capitalist states are managing in this way, I think that we who are backward and uneducated may be pleased with the fact that we have achieved the most important thing, *viz.*, the conditions for the stabilisation of the ruble. This is proved, not by a theoretical analysis, but by practical experience which, I think, is more important than all the theoretical discussions in the world. Practice shows that here we have achieved decisive results, namely, we are beginning to push our economy in the direction of the stabilisation of the ruble, which is of supreme importance for trade, for the free circulation of commodities, for the peasants and the vast masses of small producers.

Now I come to our social aims. The most important thing, of course, is the peasantry. In 1921, we undoubtedly had discontent among an enormous section of the peasantry. Then came the famine. And this was the greatest trial for the peasants. Naturally, all our enemies abroad shouted: "There, that's the result of Socialist economy!" Quite naturally, of course, they said nothing about the fact

that actually the famine was the monstrous result of the Civil War. All the landlords and capitalists who started their attack upon us in 1918 tried to make it appear that the famine was the result of Socialist economy. The famine was indeed a great and serious disaster, a disaster that threatened to nullify the whole of our organisational and revolutionary work.

And so, I now ask: After this unprecedented and unexpected disaster, what is the position now, after we have introduced the New Economic Policy, after we have granted the peasants freedom to trade? The reply is clear to everyone, namely: in the course of one year the peasants have not only overcome the famine, but have paid their food tax on such a scale that we have now received hundreds of millions of poods of grain, and that almost without employing any measures of coercion. Peasant uprisings, which previously, before 1921, determined the general scene in Russia, so to speak, have almost completely disappeared. The peasants are contented with their present position. We can honestly assert that. We think that this evidence is more important than any amount of statistical proof. No one has any doubt about the fact that the peasantry in our country is the decisive factor. And the condition of the peasantry is such now that we have no reason to fear any movement against us from that side. We say that quite deliberately, without exaggeration. This we have already achieved. The peasantry may be dissatisfied with this or that aspect of the work of our government; they may complain. This, of course, is possible and inevitable, for our apparatus and our state administration are still too inefficient to avert this; but serious dissatisfaction with us on the part of the peasantry as a whole is at all events quite excluded. This was achieved in the course of one year. I think it is a great achievement.

Now I come to our light industry. In industry we must draw a distinction between heavy industry and light industry, because the situation in each is different. In regard to light industry I can honestly say that here there is a general revival. I will not go into detail. Quoting statistics does not come within the scope of my task. But this general impression is based on facts, and I can assure you that it is not based on anything untrue or inexact. We observe

a general revival in light industry, and, in connection with it, a definite improvement in the conditions of the workers in Petrograd and in Moscow. In other districts this is observed to a smaller degree, because heavy industry predominates in those districts, and therefore this must not be generalised. Nevertheless, I repeat, light industry is undoubtedly in a state of revival, and the conditions of the workers in Petrograd and Moscow have undoubtedly improved. In the spring of 1921 discontent prevailed among the workers in both cities. This is not the case now. We who watch the conditions and the mood of the workers day after day are not mistaken on this score.

The third question is that of heavy industry. Here I must say that the situation is still grave. A certain turn in the situation occurred in 1921, so that we may hope that the situation will improve in the near future. We have already collected part of the necessary resources for this. In capitalist countries a loan of hundreds of millions would be required to improve the situation in heavy industry. Without this, improvement would be impossible. The economic history of capitalist countries shows that in backward countries long-term loans of hundreds of millions of dollars, or gold rubles, can alone serve to revive heavy industry. We did not get such loans, and we have not received any up to now. All that is now being written about concessions and so forth is of no greater value than the paper it is written on. We have written a great deal about this lately, particularly about the Urquhart concession. However, I think our concessions policy is a good one. Nevertheless, we have not yet concluded a tolerable concessions agreement. I ask you not to forget this. Thus the situation in heavy industry is really a very grave problem for our backward country, for we could not count on obtaining loans from the wealthy countries. In spite of that we already observe a marked improvement, and we also see that our trading activity has already brought us a certain amount of capital. Only a very modest sum as yet, it is true; a little over twenty million gold rubles. At any rate, it is a beginning: our trade provides us with funds which we can employ for the purpose of improving the situation in heavy industry. Be that as it may, at the present moment our heavy industry is still in a very difficult position. But

I think that we are already in a position to save a little. This we shall continue to do in the future. We must economise now, though often at the expense of the population. We are now striving to cut down the state budget, to reduce our state apparatus. Later on I will say a few words about our state apparatus. At all events, we must reduce our state apparatus, we must economise as much as possible. We are economising in all things, even in schools. This must be so, because we know that unless we save heavy industry, unless we restore it, we shall not be able to build up any industry; and without that we shall be doomed as an independent country. This we fully realise.

The salvation of Russia does not lie only in a good harvest on the peasant farms—that is not enough—and not only in the good condition of light industry, which provides the peasantry with consumers' goods—this, too, is not enough—we also need *heavy* industry. And in order to put that in good condition, many years of work will be required.

Heavy industry needs state subsidies. If we cannot provide them, then, as a civilised state—let alone as a Socialist state—we are doomed. In this respect we have taken a determined step. We have found the resources necessary for putting heavy industry on its feet. True, the sum we have been able to obtain up to now barely exceeds twenty million gold rubles; but at any rate we have this sum and it is intended exclusively for the purpose of reviving our heavy industry.

I think that on the whole I have briefly outlined, as I promised, the principal elements of our national economy, and I think that from all this we may draw the conclusion that the New Economic Policy has already proved beneficial. We already have proof that, as a state, we are able to carry on trade, maintain firm positions in agriculture and industry, and make progress. Practical activity has proved this. I think that this is sufficient for us for the time being. We still have many things to learn, and we realise that we still have to sit down and learn. We have been holding power for five years, and during these five years we have been in a state of war. Hence we can say that we have been successful.

Of course, this is because the peasantry has been on our side. It is difficult for anyone to be on our side more than the peasantry has been. They realised that behind the Whites stood the landlords whom they hate more than anything in the world. That is why the peasantry enthusiastically and loyally supported us. It was not difficult to get the peasants to defend us against the Whites. The peasants who had hated war before, did all they possibly could in the war against the Whites, in the civil war against the landlords. But this was not all, because, essentially, the only point in question here was whether power was to remain in the hands of the landlords or of the peasants. This was not enough for us. The peasants realise that we captured power for the workers and that our aim is to create a Socialist system with the aid of this power. Therefore, the economic preparation for Socialist economy was most important for us. We could not do this in a direct way. We had to do it in a roundabout way. The form of state capitalism we have established in our country is a peculiar form of state capitalism. It does not resemble state capitalism as it is usually conceived. We are in command of all the key positions, we own the land; the land belongs to the state. This is very important, although our opponents try to make it appear that it is of no significance. This is wrong. The fact that the land belongs to the state is extremely important, and it is also of great practical economic importance. This we have achieved, and I must say that the whole of our future activities must develop only within these limits. We have already succeeded in making the peasantry contented and in reviving both industry and trade. I have already said that our state capitalism differs from state capitalism in the literal sense, in that the proletarian state not only owns the land but also all the important sections of industry. First of all we leased a certain part of small and medium industry; but all the rest has remained in our hands. In regard to trade I want to emphasise also that we are striving to form mixed companies, that we are already forming them, *i.e.*, companies in which part of the capital belongs to private capitalists, and foreign capitalists at that, and part belongs to us. Firstly, in this way we shall learn how to trade, and this is what we need. Secondly, we shall always have the opportunity to dissolve these companies if we deem it necessary, so

that we run no risk. We shall learn from the private capitalists and look round to see how we can rise to a higher level and what mistakes we are making. I think I can limit myself to this.

I would like to deal with several minor points.

Undoubtedly, we have done and will do in the future, an enormous number of absurd things. No one can judge or see this better than I can.

Why do we do these absurd things? The reason is clear: firstly, because ours is a backward country; secondly, education in our country is at the lowest level; and thirdly, because we are receiving no assistance. Not a single civilised state is helping us. On the contrary, they are all working against us. Fourthly, owing to our state apparatus. We took over the old state apparatus, and this was unfortunate for us. Very often the state apparatus works against us. In 1917, after we captured power, the situation was that the apparatus sabotaged us. This frightened us very much and we pleaded with the state officials: "Please come back." They all came back, but this was unfortunate for us. We now have a vast number of state employees, but we lack sufficiently educated forces who could really control them. Actually, it often happens that at the top, as it were, where we have state power, the apparatus functions somehow; but down below, where these state officials function, they function in such a way that very often they counteract our measures. At the top, we have, I don't know how many, but at all events, I think, several thousand, at the utmost several tens of thousands, of our own people. Down below, however, there are hundreds of thousands of old officials who came over to us from the tsar and from bourgeois society and who, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, work against us. Certainly nothing can be done here in a short period of time. Here we must work many years in order to improve the apparatus, to change it and to enlist new forces. We are doing this fairly quickly, perhaps too quickly. Soviet schools and Workers' Faculties [1] have been formed; several hundreds of thousands of young people are studying, studying too fast perhaps, but at all events, the work has been started, and I think it will bear fruit. If we do not work too hurriedly we shall within a few years have a

[1] Special preparatory schools for adult workers.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

large number of young people who will be capable of radically changing our apparatus.

I said that we have done an enormous number of absurd things, but I must also say something about our enemies in this respect. If our enemies reproach us and say that Lenin himself admits that the Bolsheviks have done an enormous number of absurd things, I want to reply by saying: Yes, but do you know that the absurd things that we did are quite different from those you did? We have only just begun to learn; but we are learning so systematically that we are certain that we shall achieve good results. But when our enemies, *i.e.*, the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, emphasise the absurd things we have done, I would like, for the purpose of comparison, to paraphrase the words of a celebrated Russian author. The comparison will therefore run as follows: When the Bolsheviks do silly things, it is like saying: "Twice two are five"; but when their enemies, *i.e.*, the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International do silly things, it is like saying: "Twice two are a tallow candle." It is not difficult to prove this. Let us take as an example the agreement concluded by America, Great Britain, France and Japan with Kolchak. I ask you, are there more enlightened and more powerful states in the world than these? But what was the upshot of this? They promised to help Kolchak without calculating, without reflecting, and without observation. It proved to be such a fiasco that, in my opinion, it is difficult for the human mind to grasp.

Or take another example, a closer and more important one, *viz.*, the Versailles Peace. I ask you, what did the "Great" Powers which have "covered themselves with glory" do here? Can they find a way out of this chaos and senselessness? I think it will not be an exaggeration to say that the absurd things we did are nothing compared with the absurd things that are done by the capitalist states, by the capitalist world and the Second International put together. That is why I think that the prospects of the world revolution—a subject which I must touch on briefly—are favourable; and given a certain definite condition, I think they will even improve. I would like to say a few words about this condition.

At the Third Congress in 1921 we adopted a resolution on the organisational structure of the Communist Parties and on the methods and content of their work. The resolution is an excellent one, but it is almost thoroughly Russian, that is to say, everything is taken from Russian conditions. This is the good side of the resolution, but it is also its bad side. It is its bad side because I am sure that hardly a single foreigner is able to read it—I read the resolution over again before deciding to say this. In the first place it is too long; it has fifty or more points. Usually, foreigners are unable to read things of this length. Secondly, even if they will read it, no foreigner will understand it precisely because it is too Russian. Not that it is written in Russian—it has been excellently translated in all languages—but it is thoroughly permeated with the Russian spirit. And thirdly, if as an exception some foreigner is able to understand it, he cannot carry it out. This is its third defect. I have talked with several delegates who have arrived here, and I hope during the congress, although I shall not take part in its work—unfortunately it is impossible for me to do that—to be able to discuss matters in detail with a large number of delegates from various countries. I have the impression that we made a big mistake with this resolution, namely, that we ourselves have blocked our own road to further success. As I have said already, the resolution is excellently drafted; I subscribe to every one of its fifty or more points. But we have not understood how to present our Russian experience to foreigners. All that has been said in the resolution has remained a dead letter. If we do not realise this we shall make no progress. I think that the most important thing for all of us, Russian and foreign comrades, is to sit down and study things after five years of the Russian Revolution. We have only just obtained the opportunity of studying. I do not know how long this opportunity will last. I do not know how long the capitalist powers will permit us to enjoy the opportunity of studying peacefully. But we must take advantage of every moment in which we are free from fighting, from war, in order to study, to start learning from the beginning.

The whole Party and all strata in Russia prove this by their thirst for knowledge. The striving to learn shows that the most im-

portant task that confronts us today is to study and study, but the foreign comrades must also learn, not, however, to read and write and to understand what has been read, as we still have to do. There is a dispute as to whether this belongs to proletarian or bourgeois culture. I will not enter into this dispute. But one thing is certain: we must first of all learn to read and write and to understand what we read. The foreign comrades need not learn that. They need something higher: this includes first of all the ability to understand what we have written about the organisational structure of the Communist Parties, and which they have signed without reading and understanding. This must become their first task. The resolution must be carried out. It cannot be done overnight; that is absolutely impossible. The resolution is too Russian; it reflects Russian experience. That is why it is quite unintelligible to foreigners. But they cannot be content with hanging it in a corner like an icon and praying to it. Nothing will be achieved that way. They must digest a good piece of Russian experience. How they will do this I do not know. Perhaps the fascists in Italy, for example, will render us a great service by explaining to the Italians that they are not yet sufficiently enlightened and that their country is not yet insured against the Black Hundreds. Perhaps this will be very useful. We Russians must also seek the ways and means of explaining the principles of this resolution to the foreigners. Unless we do that, it will be absolutely impossible for them to carry it out. I am sure that in this connection we must not only tell the Russian, but also the foreign comrades, that the most important thing in the ensuing period is study. We are studying in the general sense. They, however, must study in the special sense in order that they may really understand the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work. If they do that I am sure the prospects of the world revolution will not only be good, but excellent.

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