

# Joseph Stalin

On October  
Revolution

*Workers of All Countries, Unite !*

**JOSEPH STALIN**

**ON OCTOBER  
REVOLUTION**

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## THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The national question must not be regarded as something self-contained and fixed for all time. Being only part of the general question of the transformation of the existing order, the national question is wholly determined by the conditions of the social environment, by the kind of power in the country and by the whole course of social development in general. This is being strikingly borne out in the period of revolution in Russia, when the national question and the national movement in the border regions of Russia are rapidly and obviously changing their character in accordance with the course and outcome of the revolution.

### I

## THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In the period of the bourgeois revolution in Russia (February 1917) the national movement in the border regions bore the character of a bourgeois liberation movement. The nationalities of Russia, which for ages had been oppressed and exploited by the "old regime," for the first time felt their strength and rushed into the fight with their oppressors. "Abolish national oppression"—such was the slogan of the movement. "All-national" institutions sprang up overnight throughout the border regions of Russia. The movement was headed by the national, bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia. "National Councils" in

Latvia, the Estonian region, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus, Kirghizia and the Middle Volga region ; the "Rada" in the Ukraine and in Byelorussia ; the "Sfatul Tsarii" in Bessarabia ; the "Kurultai" in the Crimea and in Bashkiria ; the "Autonomous Government" in Turkestan—such were the "all-national" institutions around which the national bourgeoisie rallied its forces. It was a question of emancipation from tsarism—the "fundamental cause" of national oppression—and of the formation of national bourgeois states. The right of nations to self-determination was interpreted as the right of the national bourgeoisies in the border regions to take power into their own hands and to take advantage of the February Revolution for forming "their own" national states. The further development of the revolution did not, and could not, come within the calculations of the above-mentioned bourgeois institutions. And the fact was overlooked that tsarism was being replaced by naked and barefaced imperialism, and that this imperialism was a stronger and more dangerous foe of the nationalities and the basis of a new national oppression.

The abolition of tsarism and the accession to power of the bourgeoisie did not, however, lead to the abolition of national oppression. The old, crude form of national oppression was replaced by a new, refined, but all the more dangerous, form of oppression. Far from abandoning the policy of national oppression, the Lvov-Milyukov-Kerensky Government organized a new campaign against Finland (dispersal of the Diet in the summer of 1917) and the Ukraine (suppression of Ukrainian cultural institutions). What is more, that Government, which was imperialist by its very nature, called upon the population to continue the war in order to subjugate new lands, new colonies and nationalities. It was compelled to this not only because of the intrinsic nature of imperialism, but also because of the existence of the old imperialist states in the West, which

were irresistibly striving to subjugate new lands and nationalities and threatening to narrow its sphere of influence. A struggle of the imperialist states for the subjugation of small nationalities as a condition for the existence of these states—such was the picture which was revealed in the course of the imperialist war. This unsightly picture was in no way improved by the abolition of tsarism and the appearance of the Milyukov-Kerensky Government on the scene. Since the "all-national" institutions in the border regions displayed a tendency to political independence, naturally they encountered the insuperable hostility of the imperialist government of Russia. Since, on the other hand, while establishing the power of the national bourgeoisie, they remained deaf to the vital interests of "their own" workers and peasants, they evoked grumbling and discontent among those. What were known as the "national regiments" only added fuel to the flames : they were impotent against the danger from above and only intensified and aggravated the danger from below. The "all-national" institutions were left defenceless against blows from without and explosions from within. The incipient bourgeois national states began to fade before they could blossom.

Thus, the old bourgeois-democratic interpretation of the principle of self-determination became a fiction and lost its revolutionary significance. It was clear that under such circumstances there could be no question of the abolition of national oppression and establishing the independence of the small national states. It became obvious that the emancipation of the labouring masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with imperialism, without the labouring masses overthrowing "their own" national bourgeoisie and taking power themselves.

That was strikingly borne out after the October Revolution.

## II

### THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The February Revolution harboured irreconcilable inner contradictions. The revolution was accomplished by the efforts of the workers and the peasants (soldiers), but as a result of the revolution power passed not to the workers and peasants, but to the bourgeoisie. In making the revolution the workers and peasants wanted to put an end to the war and to secure peace. But the bourgeoisie, on coming to power, strove to use the revolutionary ardour of the masses for a continuation of the war and against peace. The economic disruption of the country and the food crisis demanded the expropriation of capital and industrial establishments for the benefit of the workers, and the confiscation of the landlords' land for the benefit of the peasants, but the bourgeois Milyukov-Kerensky Government stood guard over the interests of the landlords and capitalists, resolutely protecting them against all encroachments on the part of the workers and peasants. It was a bourgeois revolution, accomplished by the agency of the workers and peasants for the benefit of the exploiters.

Meanwhile, the country continued to groan under the burden of the imperialist war, economic disintegration and the breakdown of the food supply. The front was falling to pieces and melting away. Factories and mills were coming to a standstill. Famine was spreading through the country. The February Revolution, with its inner contradictions, was obviously not enough for "the salvation of the country." The Milyukov-Kerensky Government was obviously incapable of solving the basic problems of the revolution.

A new, *socialist* revolution was required to lead the country out of the blind alley of imperialist war and economic disintegration.

That revolution came as a result of the October uprising.

By overthrowing the power of the landlords and the bourgeoisie and replacing it by a government of workers and peasants, the October Revolution resolved the contradictions of the February Revolution at one stroke. The abolition of the omnipotence of the landlords and kulaks and the handing over of the land for the use of the labouring masses of the countryside ; the expropriation of the mills and factories and their transfer to control by the workers ; the break with imperialism and the ending of the predatory war ; the publication of the secret treaties and the exposure of the policy of annexations ; lastly, the proclamation of self-determination for the labouring masses of the oppressed peoples and the recognition of the independence of Finland—such were the basic measures carried into effect by the Soviet power in the early period of the Soviet revolution.

That was a genuinely *socialist* revolution.

The revolution, which started in the centre, could not long be confined to that narrow territory. Once having triumphed in the centre, it was bound to spread to the border regions. And, indeed, from the very first days of the revolution, the revolutionary tide spread from the North all over Russia, sweeping one border region after another. But here it encountered a dam in the shape of the "National Councils" and regional "governments" (Don, Kuban, Siberia) which had been formed prior to the October Revolution. The point is that these "national governments" would not hear of a socialist revolution. Bourgeois by nature, they had not the slightest wish to destroy the old, bourgeois order ; on the contrary, they considered it their duty to preserve and consolidate it by every means in their power. Essentially imperialist, they had not the slightest wish to break with imperialism ; on the contrary, they had never been averse to seizing and subjugating bits and morsels of the territory of

“foreign” nationalities whenever opportunity offered. No wonder that the “national governments” in the border regions declared war on the socialist government in the centre. And, once they had declared war, they naturally became hotbeds of reaction, which attracted all that was counter-revolutionary in Russia. Everyone knows that all the counter-revolutionaries thrown out of Russia rushed to these hotbeds, and there, around them, formed themselves into whiteguard “national” regiments.

But, in addition to “national governments,” there are in the border regions national workers and peasants. Organized even before the October Revolution in their revolutionary Soviets patterned on the Soviets in the centre of Russia, they had never severed connections with their brothers in the North. They too were striving to defeat the bourgeoisie; they too were fighting for the triumph of socialism. No wonder that their conflict with “their own” national governments grew daily more acute. The October Revolution only strengthened the alliance between the workers and peasants of the border regions and the workers and peasants of Russia, and inspired them with faith in the triumph of socialism. And the war of the “national governments” against the Soviet power brought the conflict of the national masses with these “governments” to the point of a complete rupture, to open rebellion against them.

Thus was formed a socialist alliance of the workers and peasants of all Russia against the counter-revolutionary alliance of the bourgeois national “governments” of the border regions of Russia.

The fight of the border “governments” is depicted by some as a fight for national emancipation against the “soulless centralism” of the Soviet regime. But that is quite untrue. No regime in the world has permitted such extensive decentralization, no government in the world has ever granted to the peoples such complete national free-

dom as the Soviet power in Russia. The fight of the border “governments” was, and is, a fight of bourgeois counter-revolution against socialism. The national flag is tacked on to the cause only to deceive the masses, as a popular flag which conveniently conceals the counter-revolutionary designs of the national bourgeoisie.

But the fight of the “national” and regional “governments” proved an unequal one. Attacked from two sides—from without by the Soviet power of Russia, and from within by “their own” workers and peasants—the “national governments” were obliged to retreat after the very first engagements. The uprising of the Finnish workers and torppari\* and the flight of the bourgeois “Senate”; the uprising of the Ukrainian workers and peasants and the flight of the bourgeois “Rada”; the uprising of the workers and peasants in the Don, Kuban and Siberia, and the collapse of Kaledin, Kornilov and the Siberian “government”; the uprising of the poor peasants of Turkestan and the flight of the “autonomous government”; the agrarian revolution in the Caucasus and the utter impotence of the “National Councils” of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—all these are generally known facts which demonstrated the complete isolation of the border “governments” from “their own” labouring masses. Utterly defeated, the “national governments” were “obliged” to appeal for aid against “their own” workers and peasants to the imperialists of the West, to the age-long oppressors and exploiters of the nationalities of the world.

Thus began the period of foreign intervention and occupation of the border regions—a period which once more revealed the counter-revolutionary character of the “national” and regional “governments.”

Only now did it become obvious to all that the national

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\* Torppari—landless peasants in Finland, who were forced to rent land from the big proprietors on extortionate terms.—Ed.

bourgeoisie was striving not for the liberation of "its own people" from national oppression, but for liberty to squeeze profits out of them, for liberty to retain its privileges and capital.

Only now did it become clear that the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities was inconceivable without a rupture with imperialism, without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities, without the transfer of power of the labouring masses of these nationalities.

Thus, the old, bourgeois conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan "All power to the national bourgeoisie," was exposed and cast aside by the very course of the revolution. The socialist conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan "All power to the labouring masses of the oppressed nationalities," entered into its own and it became possible to apply it.

Thus, the October Revolution, having put an end to the old, bourgeois movement for national emancipation, inaugurated the era of a new, socialist movement of the workers and peasants of the oppressed nationalities, directed against all oppression—including, therefore, national oppression—against the power of the bourgeoisie, "their own" and foreign, and against imperialism in general.

### III

#### THE WORLD-WIDE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Having triumphed in the centre of Russia and embraced a number of the border regions, the October Revolution could not stop short at the territorial borders of Russia. In the atmosphere of the imperialist world war and the general discontent among the masses, it could not but

spread to neighbouring countries. Russia's break with imperialism and its escape from the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the solemn renunciation of the policy of annexations; the proclamation of the national freedom and recognition of the independence of Finland; the declaring of Russia a "federation of Soviet national republics" and the battle cry of a determined struggle against imperialism issued to the world by the Soviet Government—all this could not but deeply affect the enslaved East and the bleeding West.

And, indeed, the October Revolution is the first revolution in world history to break the age-long sleep of the labouring masses of the oppressed peoples of the East and to draw them into the fight against world imperialism. The formation of workers' and peasants' Soviets in Persia, China and India, modelled on the Soviets in Russia, is sufficiently convincing evidence of this.

The October Revolution is the first revolution in world history to provide the workers and soldiers of the West with a living, salvation-bringing example and to impel them on to the path of real emancipation from the yoke of war and imperialism. The uprising of the workers and soldiers in Austria-Hungary and Germany, the formation of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the revolutionary struggle of the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary against national oppression is sufficiently eloquent evidence of this.

The chief point is not at all that the struggle in the East and even in the West has not yet succeeded in shedding its bourgeois-nationalist features; the point is that the struggle against imperialism *has begun*, that it is continuing and is inevitably bound to arrive at its logical goal.

Foreign intervention and the occupation policy of the "external" imperialists merely sharpen the revolutionary crisis, by drawing new peoples into the struggle and exten-



ding the area of the revolutionary battles with imperialism.

Thus, the October Revolution, by establishing a tie between the peoples of the backward East and of the advanced West, is ranging them in a common camp of struggle against imperialism.

Thus, from the particular question of combating national oppression, the national question is evolving into the general question of emancipating the nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism.

The mortal sin of the Second International and its leader, Kautsky, consists, incidentally, in the fact that they have always gone over to the bourgeois conception of national self-determination, that they have never understood the revolutionary meaning of the latter, that they were unable or unwilling to put the national question on the revolutionary footing of an open fight against imperialism, that they were unable or unwilling to link the national question with the question of the emancipation of the colonies.

The obtuseness of the Austrian Social-Democrats of the type of Bauer and Renner consists in the fact that they have not understood the inseparable connection between the national question and the question of power, that they tried to separate the national question from politics and to confine it to cultural and educational questions, forgetting the existence of such "trifles" as imperialism and the colonies enslaved by imperialism.

It is asserted that the principles of self-determination and "defence of the fatherland" have been abrogated by the very course of events under the conditions of a rising socialist revolution. Actually, it is not the principles of self-determination and "defence of the fatherland" that have been abrogated, but the bourgeois interpretation of these principles. One has only to glance at the occupied regions, which are languishing under the yoke of imperialism and are yearning for liberation; one has only to glance at

Russia, which is waging a revolutionary war for the defence of the socialist fatherland from the imperialist robbers; one has only to reflect on the present events in Austria-Hungary; one has only to glance at the enslaved colonies and semi-colonies, which have already organized their own Soviets (India, Persia, China)—one has only to glance at all this to realize the whole revolutionary significance of the principle of self-determination in its socialist interpretation.

The great world-wide significance of the October Revolution chiefly consists in the fact that:

1) It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism;

2) It has opened up wide possibilities for their emancipation and the right paths towards it, has thereby greatly facilitated the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the West and the East, and has drawn them into the common current of the victorious struggle against imperialism;

3) *It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East*, having created a new front of revolutions *against* world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed peoples of the East.

This in fact explains the indescribable enthusiasm which is now being displayed for the Russian proletariat by the toiling and exploited masses of the East and the West.

And this mainly explains the frenzy with which the imperialist robbers of the whole world have now flung themselves upon Soviet Russia.

*Pravda*, Nos. 241 and 250,  
November 6 and 19, 1918  
Signed: *J. Stalin*

Translated from  
*J. V. Stalin's Works*,  
Vol. V, pp. 155-167

## THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNISTS

The strength of the October Revolution lies, among other things, in that, unlike the revolutions in the West, it rallied around the Russian proletariat the many millions of the petty bourgeoisie, and, above all, its most numerous and powerful strata—the peasantry. As a result, the Russian bourgeoisie was isolated and left without an army, while the Russian proletariat became the arbiter of the destiny of the country. But for that the Russian workers would not have retained power.

Peace, the agrarian revolution and freedom for the nationalities—these were the three principal factors which served to rally the peasants of more than twenty nationalities in the vast expanse of Russia around the Red Flag of the Russian proletariat.

There is no need to speak here of the first two factors. Enough has been said about them in the literature on the subject, and indeed they speak for themselves. As for the third factor—the national policy of the Russian Communists—apparently, its importance has not yet been fully realized. It will therefore not be superfluous to say a few words on this subject.

To begin with, of the 140,000,000 of the population of the R.S.F.S.R. (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland excluded), the Great Russians do not number more than 75,000,000. The remaining 65,000,000 belong to nations other than the Great-Russian.

Furthermore, these nations mainly inhabit the border regions, which are the most vulnerable from the military

point of view ; and these border regions abound in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs.

Lastly, in industrial and military respects these border regions are less developed than central Russia (or are not developed at all), and, as a consequence, they are not in a position to maintain their independent existence without the military and economic assistance of central Russia, just as central Russia is not in a position to maintain its military and economic power without assistance in fuel, raw materials and food from the border regions.

These circumstances, coupled with certain provisions of the national programme of communism, determined the character of the national policy of the Russian Communists.

The essence of this policy can be expressed in a few words : renunciation of all "claims" and "rights" to regions inhabited by non-Russian nations ; recognition (not in words but in deeds) of the right of these nations to exist as independent states ; a voluntary military and economic union of these nations with central Russia ; assistance to the backward nations in their cultural and economic development, without which what is known as "national equality of rights" becomes an empty sound ; all this based on the complete emancipation of the peasants and the concentration of all power in the hands of the labouring elements of the border nations—such is the national policy of the Russian Communists.

Needless to say, the Russian workers who came to power would not have been able to win the sympathy and confidence of their comrades of other nations, and above all of the oppressed masses of the unequal nations, had they not proved in practice their willingness to carry out such a national policy, had they not renounced their "right" to Finland, had they not withdrawn their troops from Northern Persia, had they not renounced the claims of the Russian imperialists to certain regions of Mongolia and China, and had they not assisted the backward nations of the former

Russian Empire to develop their culture and statehood in their own languages.

That confidence alone could serve as the basis for that indestructible union of the peoples of the R.S.F.S.R., against which all "diplomatic" machinations and carefully executed "blockades" have proved impotent.

More than that. The Russian workers could not have defeated Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel had they not enjoyed the sympathy and confidence of the oppressed masses of the border regions of former Russia. It must not be forgotten that the field of action of these mutinous generals was limited to border regions inhabited mainly by non-Russian nations, and the latter could not but hate Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel for their imperialist policy and policy of Russification. The Entente, which intervened and supported these generals, could rely only on those elements in the border regions which were the vehicles of Russification. That served only to inflame the hatred of the people of the border regions for the mutinous generals and increased their sympathy for the Soviet power.

This circumstance accounted for the internal weakness of the Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel rears, and therefore for the weakness of their fronts, that is, in the long run, for their defeat.

But the beneficial results of the national policy of the Russian Communists are not confined to the territory of the R.S.F.S.R. and the Soviet republics associated with it. They are also seen, indirectly, it is true, in the attitude of the neighbouring countries towards the R.S.F.S.R. The radical improvement in the attitude of Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, India and other Eastern countries towards Russia, which was formerly a bogey to these countries, is a *fact* which even so valiant a politician as Lord Curzon does not now venture to dispute. It scarcely needs proof that if the national policy outlined above had not been systematically carried out in the R.S.F.S.R. during the four years of the

existence of Soviet power, this radical change in the attitude of the neighbouring countries towards Russia would have been inconceivable.

Such, in the main, are the results of the national policy of the Russian Communists. And these results are especially clear today, on the fourth anniversary of Soviet power, when the hard war is over, when extensive construction work has begun, and when one involuntarily looks back along the path travelled in order to take it in at a single glance.

*Pravda*, No. 251,  
November 6-7, 1921  
Signed : *J. Stalin*

Translated from  
*J. V. Stalin's Works*,  
Vol. V, pp. 113-116

## THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE QUESTION OF THE MIDDLE STRATA

The question of the middle strata is undoubtedly one of the basic questions of the workers' revolution. The middle strata are the peasantry and the small urban working people. The oppressed nationalities, nine-tenths of whom consist of middle strata, should also be put in this category. As you see, these are the strata whose economic status puts them midway between the proletariat and the capitalist class. The relative importance of these strata is determined by two circumstances: firstly, these strata constitute the majority, or, at any rate, a large minority of the population of the existing states; secondly, they constitute the important reserves from which the capitalist class recruits its army against the proletariat. The proletariat cannot retain power unless it enjoys the sympathy and support of the middle strata, primarily of the peasantry, especially in a country like our Union of Republics. The proletariat cannot even seriously contemplate seizing power if these strata have not been at least neutralized, if they have not yet managed to break away from the capitalist class, and if the bulk of them still serve as the army of capital. Hence the fight for the middle strata, the fight for the peasantry, which was a conspicuous feature of the whole of our revolution from 1905 to 1917, a fight which is still far from ended, and which will continue to be waged in the future.

One of the reasons for the defeat of the 1848 Revolution in France was that it failed to evoke a sympathetic response among the French peasantry. One of the reasons

for the fall of the Paris Commune was that it encountered the opposition of the middle strata, especially of the peasantry. The same must be said of the Russian revolution of 1905.

Basing themselves on the experience of the European revolutions, certain vulgar Marxists, headed by Kautsky, came to the conclusion that the middle strata, especially the peasantry, are almost the born enemies of the workers' revolution, that, therefore, we must reckon with a lengthier period of development, as a result of which the proletariat will become the majority of the nation and the proper conditions for the victory of the workers' revolution will thereby be created. On the basis of that conclusion, they, these vulgar Marxists, warned the proletariat against "premature" revolution. On the basis of that conclusion, they, from "motives of principle," left the middle strata entirely at the disposal of capital. On the basis of that conclusion, they prophesied the doom of the Russian October Revolution, on the grounds that the proletariat in Russia constituted a minority, that Russia was a peasant country, and, therefore, a victorious workers' revolution in Russia was impossible.

It is noteworthy that Marx himself had an entirely different appraisal of the middle strata, especially of the peasantry. Whereas the vulgar Marxists, washing their hands of the peasantry and leaving it entirely at the political disposal of capital, noisily bragged about their "firm principles," Marx, the most true to principle of all Marxists, persistently advised the Communist Party not to lose sight of the peasantry, to win it over to the side of the proletariat and to make sure of its support in the future proletarian revolution. We know that in the 'fifties, after the defeat of the February Revolution in France and in Germany, Marx wrote to Engels, and through him to the Communist Party of Germany:

"The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by

some second edition of the Peasant War.”\*

That was written about the Germany of the 'fifties, a peasant country, where the proletariat comprised a small minority, where the proletariat was less organized than the proletariat was in Russia in 1917, and where the peasantry, owing to its position, was less disposed to support a proletarian revolution than the peasantry in Russia in 1917.

The October Revolution undoubtedly represented that happy combination of a “peasant war” and a “proletarian revolution” of which Marx wrote, despite all the “highly principled” chatter-boxes. The October Revolution proved that such a combination is possible and can be brought about. The October Revolution proved that the proletariat can seize power and retain it, if it succeeds in wresting the middle strata, primarily the peasantry, from the capitalist class, if it succeeds in converting these strata from reserves of capital into reserves of the proletariat.

In brief : the October Revolution was the first of all the revolutions in the world to bring into the forefront the question of the middle strata, and primarily of the peasantry, and the first to solve it successfully, despite all the “theories” and lamentations of the heroes of the Second International.

That is the first merit of the October Revolution, if one may speak of merit in such a connection.

But the matter did not stop there. The October Revolution went further and tried to rally the oppressed nationalities around the proletariat. We have already said above that nine-tenths of the populations of these nationalities consist of peasants and of small urban working people. That, however, does not exhaust the concept “oppressed nationality.” Oppressed nationalities are usually

\* J. V. Stalin is here quoting K. Marx's letter to Engels of April 16, 1856. (See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, p. III.)—Ed.

oppressed not only as peasants and as urban working people, but also as nationalities, i.e., as the toilers of a definite nationality, language, culture, manner of life, habits and customs. The double oppression cannot help revolutionizing the labouring masses of the oppressed nationalities, cannot help impelling them to fight the principal force of oppression—capital. This circumstance formed the basis on which the proletariat succeeded in combining the “proletarian revolution” not only with a “peasant war,” but also with a “national war.” All this could not fail to extend the field of action of the proletarian revolution far beyond the borders of Russia ; it could not fail to jeopardize the deepest reserves of capital. Whereas the fight for the middle strata of a given dominant nationality is a fight for the immediate reserves of capital, the fight for the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities could not help becoming a fight to win particular reserves of capital, the deepest of them, a fight to liberate the colonial and unequal peoples from the yoke of capital. This latter fight is still far from ended. More than that, it has not yet achieved even the first decisive successes. But this fight for the deep reserves was started by the October Revolution, and it will undoubtedly expand, step by step, with the further development of imperialism, with the growth of the might of our Union of Republics, and with the development of the proletarian revolution in the West.

In our country the peasantry was won over under the fight of the proletariat for the deep reserves of capital in the shape of the masses of the people in the oppressed and unequal countries ; it was the first to raise the banner of the struggle to win these reserves. That is its second merit.

In our country the peasantry was won over under the banner of socialism. The peasantry received land at the hands of the proletariat, defeated the landlords with the aid of the proletariat and rose to power under the leadership of the proletariat ; consequently, it could not but feel,

could not but realize, that the process of its emancipation was proceeding, and would continue, under the banner of the proletariat, under its red banner. This could not but convert the banner of socialism, which was formerly a bogey to the peasantry, into a banner which won its attention and aided its emancipation from subjection, poverty and oppression.

The same is true, but to an even greater degree, of the oppressed nationalities. The battle-cry for the emancipation of the nationalities, backed by such facts as the liberation of Finland, the withdrawal of troops from Persia and China, the formation of the Union of Republics, the moral support openly given to the peoples of Turkey, China, Hindustan and Egypt—this battle-cry was first sounded by the people who were the victors in the October Revolution. The fact that Russia, which was formerly regarded by the oppressed nationalities as a symbol of oppression, has now, after it has become socialist, been transformed into a symbol of emancipation, cannot be called an accident. Nor is it an accident that the name of the leader of the October Revolution, Comrade Lenin, is now the most beloved name pronounced by the downtrodden, oppressed peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia of the colonial and unequal countries. In the past, the oppressed and downtrodden slaves of the vast Roman Empire regarded Christianity as a rock of salvation. We are now reaching the point where socialism may serve (and is already beginning to serve !) as the banner of liberation for the millions who inhabit the vast colonial states of imperialism. It can hardly be doubted that this circumstance has greatly facilitated the task of combating prejudices against socialism, and has cleared the way for the penetration of socialist ideas into the most remote corners of the oppressed countries. Formerly it was difficult for a Socialist to come out openly among the non-proletarian, middle strata of the oppressed or oppressor countries ; but today he can come forward

openly and advocate socialist ideas among these strata and expect to be listened to, and even heeded, for he is backed by so cogent an argument as the October Revolution. That, too, is a result of the October Revolution.

In brief : the October Revolution cleared the way for socialist ideas among the middle, non-proletarian, peasant strata of all nationalities and races ; it made the banner of socialism popular among them. That is the third merit of the October Revolution.

*Pravda*, No. 253,  
November 7, 1923  
Signed : *J. Stalin*

Translated from  
*J. V. Stalin's Works*,  
Vol. V, pp. 342-348

# THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE TACTICS OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNISTS

*Preface to the Book  
"On the Road to October"\**

## I

### THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SETTING FOR THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Three circumstances of an external nature determined the comparative ease with which the proletarian revolution in Russia succeeded in breaking the chains of imperialism and thus overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie.

Firstly, the circumstance that the October Revolution began in a period of desperate struggle between the two principal imperialist groups, the Anglo-French and the Austro-German ; at a time when, engaged in mortal struggle between themselves, these two groups had neither the time nor the means to devote serious attention to the struggle against the October Revolution. This circumstance was of tremendous importance for the October Revolution, for it enabled it to take advantage of the fierce conflicts within the imperialist world to strengthen and organize its own forces.

\* J. V. Stalin's book *On the Road to October* appeared in two editions, one in January and the other in May 1925. The articles and speeches published in that book are included in Vol. 3 of J. V. Stalin's *Works*. The author finished the preface in December 1924, but it was given in full only in the book *On the Road to October*. The greater part of the preface, under the general title "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists," has appeared in all the editions of J. V. Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*, as well as in various symposia and separate pamphlets. A part of the preface is given in Vol. 3 of J. V. Stalin's *Works* as an author's note to the article "Against Federalism."—Ed.

Secondly, the circumstance that the October Revolution began during the imperialist war, at a time when the labouring masses, exhausted by the war and thirsting for peace, were by the very logic of facts led up to the proletarian revolution as the only way out of the war. This circumstance was of extreme importance for the October Revolution, for it put into its hands the mighty weapon of peace, made it easier for it to link the Soviet revolution with the ending of the hated war, and thus created mass sympathy for it both in the West, among the workers, and in the East, among the oppressed peoples.

Thirdly, the existence of a powerful working-class movement in Europe and the fact that a revolutionary crisis was maturing in the West and in the East, brought on by the protracted imperialist war. This circumstance was of inestimable importance for the revolution in Russia, for it ensured the revolution faithful allies outside Russia in its struggle against world imperialism.

But in addition to circumstances of an external nature, there were also a number of favourable internal conditions which facilitated the victory of the October Revolution.

Of these conditions, the following must be regarded as the chief ones :

Firstly, the October Revolution enjoyed the most active support of the overwhelming majority of the working class in Russia.

Secondly, it enjoyed the undoubted support of the poor peasants and of the majority of the soldiers, who were thirsting for peace and land.

Thirdly, it had at its head, as its guiding force, such a tried and tested party as the Bolshevik Party, strong not only by reason of its experience and discipline acquired through the years, but also by reason of its vast connections with the labouring masses.

Fourthly, the October Revolution was confronted by enemies who were comparatively easy to overcome, such

as the rather weak Russian bourgeoisie, a landlord class which was utterly demoralized by peasant "revolts," and the compromising parties (the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries), which had become completely bankrupt during the war.

Fifthly, it had at its disposal the vast expanses of the young state, in which it was able to manoeuvre freely, retreat when circumstances so required, enjoy a respite, gather strength, etc.

Sixthly, in its struggle against counter-revolution the October Revolution could count upon sufficient resources of food, fuel and raw materials within the country.

The combination of these external and internal circumstances created that peculiar situation which determined the comparative ease with which the October Revolution won its victory.

This does not mean, of course, that there were no unfavourable features in the external and internal setting of the October Revolution. Think of such an unfavourable feature as, for example, the isolation, to some extent, of the October Revolution, the absence near it, or bordering on it, of a Soviet country on which it could rely for support. Undoubtedly, the future revolution, for example, in Germany, will be in a much more favourable situation in this respect, for it has in close proximity a powerful Soviet country like our Soviet Union. I need not mention so unfavourable a feature of the October Revolution as the absence of a proletarian majority within the country.

But these unfavourable features only emphasize the tremendous importance of the peculiar internal and external conditions of the October Revolution of which I have spoken above.

These peculiar conditions must not be lost sight of for a single moment. They must be borne in mind particularly in analyzing the events of the autumn of 1923 in Germany. Above all, they should be borne in mind by Trotsky, who

draws an unfounded analogy between the October Revolution and the revolution in Germany and lashes violently at the German Communist Party for its actual and alleged mistakes.

"It was easy for Russia," says Lenin, "in the specific, historically very special situation of 1917, to *start* the socialist revolution, but it will be more difficult for Russia than for the European countries to *continue* the revolution and carry it through to the end. I had occasion to point this out already at the beginning of 1918, and our experience of the past two years has entirely confirmed the correctness of this view. Such specific conditions, as 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 enduring 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 take the revolutionary demands of the peasant party (the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the majority of the members of which were definitely hostile to Bolshevism) and realize them at once, thanks to the conquest of political power by the proletariat—such specific conditions do not exist in Western Europe at present; and a repetition of such or similar conditions will not come so easily. That, by the way, apart from a number of other causes, is why it will be more difficult for Western Europe to *start* a socialist revolution than it was for



us." (See Vol. XXV, p. 205.)\*

These words of Lenin's should not be forgotten.

II  
TWO SPECIFIC FEATURES  
OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION—  
OR OCTOBER AND TROTSKY'S THEORY  
OF "PERMANENT" REVOLUTION

There are two specific features of the October Revolution which must be understood first of all if we are to comprehend the inner meaning and the historical significance of that revolution.

What are these features ?

Firstly, the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat was born in our country as a power which came into existence on the basis of an alliance between the proletariat and the labouring masses of the peasantry, the latter being led by the proletariat. Secondly, the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat became established in our country as a result of the victory of socialism in one country—a country in which capitalism was little developed—while capitalism was preserved in other countries where capitalism was more highly developed. This does not mean, of course, that the October Revolution has no other specific features. But it is precisely these two specific features that are important for us at the present moment, not only because they distinctly express the essence of the October Revolution, but also because they brilliantly reveal the opportunist nature of the theory of "permanent revolution."

Let us briefly examine these features.

\* V. I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 389.)—Ed.

The question of the labouring masses of the petty bourgeoisie, both urban and rural, the question of winning these masses to the side of the proletariat, is highly important for the proletarian revolution. Whom will the labouring people of town and country support in the struggle for power, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat ; whose reserve will they become, the reserve of the bourgeoisie or the reserve of the proletariat—on this depend the fate of the revolution and the stability of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolutions in France in 1848 and 1871 came to grief chiefly because the peasant reserves proved to be on the side of the bourgeoisie. The October Revolution was victorious because it was able to deprive the bourgeoisie of its peasant reserves, because it was able to win these reserves to the side of the proletariat, and because in this revolution the proletariat proved to be the only guiding force for the vast masses of the labouring people of town and country.

He who has not understood this will never understand either the character of the October Revolution, or the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the specific characteristics of the internal policy of our proletarian power.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is not simply a governmental top stratum "skilfully" "selected" by the careful hand of an "experienced strategist," and "judiciously relying" on the support of one section or another of the population. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the class alliance between the proletariat and the labouring masses of the peasantry for the purpose of overthrowing capital, for achieving the final victory of socialism, on the condition that the guiding force of this alliance is the proletariat.

Thus, it is not a question of "slightly" underestimating or "slightly" overestimating the revolutionary potentialities of the peasant movement, as certain diplomatic

advocates of "permanent revolution" are now fond of expressing it. It is a question of the nature of the new proletarian state which arose as a result of the October Revolution. It is a question of the character of the proletarian power, of the foundations of the dictatorship of the proletariat itself.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat," says Lenin, "is a special form of class alliance between the proletariat, the vanguard of the working people, and the numerous non-proletarian strata of working people (the petty bourgeoisie, the small proprietors, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, etc.), or the majority of these; it is an alliance against capital, an alliance aiming at the complete overthrow of capital, at the complete suppression of the resistance of the bourgeoisie and of any attempt on its part at restoration, an alliance aiming at the final establishment and consolidation of socialism." (See Vol. XXIV, p.311.)\*

And further on :

"The dictatorship of the proletariat, if we translate this Latin, scientific, historical-philosophical term into simpler language, means the following :

"Only a definite class, namely, the urban workers and the factory, industrial workers in general, is able to lead the whole mass of the toilers and exploited in the struggle for the overthrow of the yoke of capital, in the process of the overthrow itself, in the struggle to maintain and consolidate the victory, in the work of creating the new, socialist social system, in the whole struggle for the complete abolition of classes." (See Vol. XXIV, p. 336.)\*

\* V. I. Lenin, *Preface to the Speech: "On Slogans of Freedom and Equality that Mislead the People."*—Ed.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *A Great Beginning.* (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 223.)—Ed.

Such is the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat given by Lenin.

One of the specific features of the October Revolution is the fact that this revolution represents a classic application of Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Some comrades believe that this theory is a purely "Russian" theory, applicable only to Russian conditions. That is wrong. It is absolutely wrong. In speaking of the labouring masses of the non-proletarian classes which are led by the proletariat, Lenin has in mind not only the Russian peasants, but also the labouring elements of the border regions of the Soviet Union, which until recently were colonies of Russia. Lenin constantly reiterated that without an alliance with these masses of other nationalities the proletariat of Russia could not achieve victory. In his articles on the national question and in his speeches at the congresses of the Comintern, Lenin repeatedly said that the victory of the world revolution was impossible without a revolutionary alliance, a revolutionary bloc, between the proletariat of the advanced countries and the oppressed peoples of the enslaved colonies. But what are colonies if not the oppressed labouring masses, and, primarily, the labouring masses of the peasantry? Who does not know that the question of emancipating the colonies is *essentially* a question of emancipating the labouring masses of the non-proletarian classes from the oppression and exploitation of finance capital?

But from this it follows that Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a purely "Russian" theory, but a theory which necessarily applies to all countries. Bolshevism is not only a Russian phenomenon. "Bolshevism," says Lenin, is "*a model of tactics for all.*" (See Vol. XXIII, p. 386.)\*

\* V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky.* (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 106.)—Ed.

Such are the characteristics of the first specific feature of the October Revolution.

How do matters stand with regard to Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" in the light of this specific feature of the October Revolution?

We shall not dwell at length on Trotsky's position in 1905, when he "simply" forgot all about the peasantry as a revolutionary force and advanced the slogan of "no tsar, but a workers' government," that is, the slogan of revolution without the peasantry. Even Radek, that diplomatic defender of "permanent revolution," is now obliged to admit that "permanent revolution" in 1905 meant a "leap into the air" away from reality. Now, apparently everyone admits that it is not worth while bothering with this "leap into the air" any more.

Nor shall we dwell at length on Trotsky's position in the period of the war, say, in 1915, when, in his article "The Struggle for Power," proceeding from the fact that "we are living in the era of imperialism," that imperialism "sets up not the bourgeois nation in opposition to the old regime, but the proletariat in opposition to the bourgeois nation," he arrived at the conclusion that the revolutionary role of the peasantry was bound to subside, that the slogan of the confiscation of the land no longer had the same importance as formerly. It is well known that at that time, Lenin, examining this article of Trotsky's, accused him of "denying" "the role of the peasantry," and said that "Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal labour politicians in Russia who understand 'denial' of the role of the peasantry to mean *refusal* to rouse the peasants to revolution!" (See Vol. XVIII, p. 318.)\*

Let us rather pass on to the later works of Trotsky on this subject, to the works of the period when the proletarian dictatorship had already become established and

\* V. I. Lenin, *The Two Lines of the Revolution*.—Ed.

when Trotsky had had the opportunity to test his theory of "permanent revolution" in the light of actual events and to correct his errors. Let us take Trotsky's "Preface" to his book *The Year 1905*, written in 1922. Here is what Trotsky says in this "Preface" concerning "permanent revolution":

"It was precisely during the interval between January 9 and the October strike of 1905 that the views on the character of the revolutionary development of Russia which came to be known as the theory of 'permanent revolution' crystallized in the author's mind. This abstruse term represented the idea that the Russian revolution, whose immediate objectives were bourgeois in nature, could not, however, stop when these objectives had been achieved. The revolution would not be able to solve its immediate bourgeois problems except by placing the proletariat in power. And the latter, upon assuming power, would not be able to confine itself to the bourgeois limits of the revolution. On the contrary, precisely in order to ensure its victory, the proletarian vanguard would be forced in the very early stages of its rule to make deep inroads not only into feudal property but into bourgeois property as well. In this it would come into *hostile collision* not only with all the bourgeois groupings which supported the proletariat during the first stages of its revolutionary struggle, but also *with the broad masses of the peasantry* with whose assistance it came into power. The contradictions in the position of a workers' government in a backward country with an overwhelmingly peasant population could be solved *only* on an international scale, in the arena of the world proletarian revolution."\*

\* My italics.—J. St.

That is what Trotsky says about his "permanent revolution."

One need only compare this quotation with the above quotations from Lenin's works on the dictatorship of the proletariat to perceive the great chasm that separates Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat from Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution."

Lenin speaks of the *alliance* between the proletariat and the labouring strata of the peasantry as the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotsky sees a "*hostile collision*" between "the proletarian vanguard" and "the broad masses of the peasantry."

Lenin speaks of the *leadership* of the toiling and exploited masses by the proletariat. Trotsky sees "*contradictions*" in the position of a workers' government in a backward country with an overwhelmingly peasant population."

According to Lenin, the revolution draws its strength primarily from among the workers and peasants of Russia itself. According to Trotsky, the necessary strength can be found *only* "in the arena of the world proletarian revolution."

But what if the world revolution is fated to arrive with some delay? Is there any ray of hope for our revolution? Trotsky offers no ray of hope, for "the contradictions in the position of a workers' government ... could be solved *only* ... in the arena of the world proletarian revolution." According to this plan, there is but one prospect left for our revolution: to vegetate in its own contradictions and rot away while waiting for the world revolution.

What is the dictatorship of the proletariat according to Lenin?

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a power which rests on an alliance between the proletariat and the labouring masses of the peasantry for "the complete overthrow

of capital" and for "the final establishment and consolidation of socialism."

What is the dictatorship of the proletariat according to Trotsky?

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a power which comes "into hostile collision" with "the broad masses of the peasantry" and seeks the solution of its "contradictions" *only* "in the arena of the world proletarian revolution."

What difference is there between this "theory of permanent revolution" and the well-known theory of Menshevism which repudiates the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat?

Essentially, there is no difference.

There can be no doubt at all. "Permanent revolution" is not a mere underestimation of the revolutionary potentialities of the peasant movement. "Permanent revolution" is an underestimation of the peasant movement which leads to the *repudiation* of Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Trotsky's "permanent revolution" is a variety of Menshevism.

This is how matters stand with regard to the first specific feature of the October Revolution.

What are the characteristics of the second specific feature of the October Revolution?

In his study of imperialism, especially in the period of the war, Lenin arrived at the law of the uneven, spasmodic, economic and political development of the capitalist countries. According to this law, the development of enterprises, trusts, branches of industry and individual countries proceeds not evenly—not according to an established sequence, not in such a way that one trust, one branch of industry or one country is always in advance of the others, while other trusts or countries keep consistently

one behind the other—but spasmodically, with interruptions in the development of some countries and leaps ahead in the development of others. Under these circumstances the “quite legitimate” striving of the countries that have slowed down to hold their old positions, and the equally “legitimate” striving of the countries that have leapt ahead to seize new positions, lead to a situation in which armed clashes among the imperialist countries become an inescapable necessity. Such was the case, for example, with Germany, which half a century ago was a backward country in comparison with France and Britain. The same must be said of Japan as compared with Russia. It is well known, however, that by the beginning of the twentieth century Germany and Japan had leapt so far ahead that Germany had succeeded in overtaking France and had begun to press Britain hard on the world market, while Japan was pressing Russia. As is well known, it was from these contradictions that the recent imperialist war arose.

This law proceeds from the following :

1) “Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the vast majority of the population of the world by a handful of ‘advanced’ countries” (see Preface to French edition of Lenin’s *Imperialism*, Vol. XIX, p. 74) ;\*

2) “This ‘booty’ is shared between two or three powerful world robbers armed to the teeth (America, Britain, Japan), who involve the whole world in *their* war over the sharing of *their* booty” (*ibid.*) ;

3) The growth of contradictions within the world system of financial oppression and the inevitability of armed clashes lead to the world front of imperialism becoming easily vulnerable to revolution, and to a breach in

this front in individual countries becoming probable ;

4) This breach is most likely to occur at those points, and in those countries, where the chain of the imperialist front is weakest, that is to say, where imperialism is least consolidated, and where it is easiest for a revolution to expand ;

5) In view of this, the victory of socialism in one country, even if that country is less developed in the capitalist sense, while capitalism remains in other countries, even if those countries are more highly developed in the capitalist sense—is quite possible and probable.

Such, briefly, are the foundations of Lenin’s theory of the proletarian revolution.

What is the second specific feature of the October Revolution ?

The second specific feature of the October Revolution lies in the fact that this revolution represents a model of the practical application of Lenin’s theory of the proletarian revolution.

He who has not understood this specific feature of the October Revolution will never understand either the international nature of this revolution, or its colossal international might, or the specific features of its foreign policy.

“Uneven economic and political development,” says Lenin, “is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production, would stand up *against* the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, raising revolts in those countries against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states.” For “the free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or

\* V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow 1953, p. 13.—Ed.

less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states." (See Vol. XVIII, pp. 232-33.)\*

The opportunists of all countries assert that the proletarian revolution can begin—if it is to begin anywhere at all, according to their theory—only in industrially developed countries, and that the more highly developed these countries are industrially the more chances there are for the victory of socialism. Moreover, according to them, the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country, and one in which capitalism is little developed at that, is excluded as something absolutely improbable. As far back as the period of the war, Lenin, taking as his basis the law of the uneven development of the imperialist states, opposed to the opportunists his theory of the proletarian revolution about the victory of socialism in one country, even if that country is one in which capitalism is less developed.

It is well known that the October Revolution fully confirmed the correctness of Lenin's theory of the proletarian revolution.

How do matters stand with Trotsky's "permanent revolution" in the light of Lenin's theory of the victory of the proletarian revolution in one country?

Let us take Trotsky's pamphlet *Our Revolution* (1906). Trotsky writes :

"Without direct state support from the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to maintain itself in power and to transform its temporary rule into a lasting socialist dictatorship. This we cannot doubt for an instant."

What does this quotation mean? It means that the

victory of socialism in one country, in this case Russia, is impossible "without direct state support from the European proletariat," i.e., before the European proletariat has conquered power.

What is there in common between this "theory" and Lenin's thesis on the possibility of the victory of socialism "in one capitalist country taken separately"?

Clearly, there is nothing in common.

But let us assume that Trotsky's pamphlet, which was published in 1906, at a time when it was difficult to determine the character of our revolution, contains inadvertent errors and does not fully correspond to Trotsky's views at a later period. Let us examine another pamphlet written by Trotsky, his *Peace Programme*, which appeared before the October Revolution of 1917 and has now (1924) been republished in his book *The Year 1917*. In this pamphlet Trotsky criticizes Lenin's theory of the proletarian revolution about the victory of socialism in one country and opposes to it the slogan of a United States of Europe. He asserts that the victory of socialism in one country is impossible, that the victory of socialism is possible only as the victory of several of the principal countries of Europe (Britain, Russia, Germany), which combine into a United States of Europe; otherwise it is not possible at all. He says quite plainly that "a victorious revolution in Russia or in Britain is inconceivable without a revolution in Germany, and vice versa."

"The only more or less concrete historical argument," says Trotsky, "advanced against the slogan of a United States of Europe was formulated in the Swiss *Sotsial-Demokrat* (at that time the central organ of the Bolsheviks—*J. St.*) in the following sentence. 'Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism.' From this the *Sotsial-Demokrat* draws the conclusion that the victory of socialism is possible in one country, and that therefore there is no reason

\*V. I. Lenin, *The United States of Europe Slogan*. (See V. I. Lenin *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Part 2, Moscow 1952, pp. 416-417).—Ed.

to make the dictatorship of the proletariat in each separate country contingent upon the establishment of a United States of Europe. That capitalist development in different countries is uneven is an absolutely incontrovertible argument. But this unevenness is itself extremely uneven. The capitalist level of Britain, Austria, Germany or France is not identical. But in comparison with Africa and Asia all these countries represent capitalist 'Europe,' which has grown ripe for the social revolution. That no country in its struggle must 'wait' for others, is an elementary thought which it is useful and necessary to reiterate in order that the idea of concurrent international action may not be replaced by the idea of temporizing international inaction. Without waiting for the others, we begin and continue the struggle nationally, in the full confidence that our initiative will give an impetus to the struggle in other countries ; but if this should not occur, it would be hopeless to think—as historical experience and theoretical considerations testify—that, for example, a revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of a conservative Europe, or that a socialist Germany could exist in isolation in a capitalist world."

As you see, we have before us the same theory of the simultaneous victory of socialism in the principal countries of Europe which, as a rule, excludes Lenin's theory of revolution about the victory of socialism in one country.

It goes without saying that for the *complete* victory of socialism, for a *complete* guarantee against the restoration of the old order, the united efforts of the proletarians of several countries are necessary. It goes without saying that, without the support given to our revolution by the proletariat of Europe, the proletariat of Russia could not have held out against the general onslaught, just as without the support given by the revolution in Russia to

the revolutionary movement in the West the latter could not have developed at the pace at which it has begun to develop since the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. It goes without saying that we need support. But what does support of our revolution by the West-European proletariat imply ? Is not the sympathy of the European workers for our revolution, their readiness to thwart the imperialists' plans of intervention—is not all this support, real assistance ? Unquestionably it is. Without such support, without such assistance, not only from the European workers but also from the colonial and dependent countries, the proletarian dictatorship in Russia would have been hard pressed. Up to now, has this sympathy and this assistance, coupled with the might of our Red Army and the readiness of the workers and peasants of Russia to defend their socialist fatherland to the last—has all this been sufficient to beat off the attacks of the imperialists and to win us the necessary conditions for the serious work of construction ? Yes, it has been sufficient. Is this sympathy growing stronger, or is it waning ? Unquestionably, it is growing stronger. Hence, have we favourable conditions, not only for pushing on with the organizing of socialist economy, but also, in our turn, for giving support to the West-European workers and to the oppressed peoples of the East ? Yes, we have. This is eloquently proved by the seven years' history of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. Can it be denied that a mighty wave of labour enthusiasm has already risen in our country ? No, it cannot be denied.

After all this, what does Trotsky's assertion that a revolutionary Russia could not hold out in the face of a conservative Europe signify ?

It can signify only this : firstly, that Trotsky does not appreciate the inherent strength of our revolution ; secondly, that Trotsky does not understand the inestimable im-

portance of the moral support which is given to our revolution by the workers of the West and the peasants of the East; thirdly, that Trotsky does not perceive the internal infirmity which is consuming imperialism today.

Carried away by his criticism of Lenin's theory of the proletarian revolution, Trotsky unwittingly dealt himself a smashing blow in his pamphlet *Peace Programme* which appeared in 1917 and was republished in 1924.

But perhaps this pamphlet, too, has become out of date and has ceased for some reason or other to correspond to Trotsky's present views? Let us take his later works, written after the victory of the proletarian revolution in *one country*, in Russia. Let us take, for example, Trotsky's "Postscript," written in 1922, for the new edition of his pamphlet *Peace Programme*. Here is what he says in this "Postscript":

"The assertion reiterated several times in the *Peace Programme* that a proletarian revolution cannot culminate victoriously within national bounds may perhaps seem to some readers to have been refuted by the nearly five years' experience of our Soviet Republic. But such a conclusion would be unwarranted. The fact that the workers' state has held out against the whole world in one country, and a backward country at that, testifies to the colossal might of the proletariat, which in other, more advanced, more civilized countries will be truly capable of performing miracles. But while we have held our ground as a state politically and militarily, we have not arrived, or even begun to arrive, at the creation of a socialist society. . . . As long as the bourgeoisie remains in power in the other European countries we shall be compelled, in our struggle against economic isolation, to strive for agreement with the capitalist world; at the same time it may be said with certainty that these agreements may at best help us to mitigate some of our economic ills, to take one or

another step forward, but real progress of a socialist economy in Russia will become possible *only after the victory\** of the proletariat in the major European countries."

Thus speaks Trotsky, plainly sinning against reality and stubbornly trying to save his "permanent revolution" from final shipwreck.

It appears, then, that, twist and turn as you like, we not only have "not arrived," but we have "not even begun to arrive" at the creation of a socialist society. It appears that some people have been hoping for "agreements with the capitalist world," but it also appears that nothing will come of these agreements, for, twist and turn as you like, "real progress of a socialist economy" will not be possible until the proletariat has been victorious in the "major European countries."

Well, then, since there is still no victory in the West, the only "choice" that remains for the revolution in Russia is: either to rot away or to degenerate into a bourgeois state.

It is no accident that Trotsky has been talking for two years now about the "degeneration" of our Party.

It is no accident that last year Trotsky prophesied the "doom" of our country.

How can this strange "theory" be reconciled with Lenin's theory of the "victory of socialism in one country"?

How can this strange "prospect" be reconciled with Lenin's view that the New Economic Policy will enable us "to build the foundations of socialist economy"?

How can this "permanent" hopelessness be reconciled, for instance, with the following words of Lenin:

"Socialism is no longer a matter of the distant future, or an abstract picture, or an icon. We still retain our old bad opinion of icons. We have dragged

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\* My italics.—J. St.



socialism into everyday life, and here we must find our way. This is the task of our day, the task of our epoch. Permit me to conclude by expressing the conviction that, difficult as this task may be, new as it may be compared with our previous task, and no matter how many difficulties it may entail, we shall all—not in one day, but in the course of several years—all of us together fulfil it whatever happens so that NEP Russia will become socialist Russia.” (See Vol. XXVII, p. 366.)\*

How can this “permanent” gloominess of Trotsky’s be reconciled, for instance, with the following words of Lenin :

“As a matter of fact, state power over all large-scale means of production, state power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured leadership of the peasantry by the proletariat, etc.—is not this all that is necessary for building a complete socialist society from the co-operatives, from the co-operatives alone, which we formerly looked down upon as huckstering and which from a certain aspect we have the right to look down upon as such now, under NEP ? Is this not all that is necessary for building a complete socialist society ? This is not yet the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for this building.” (See Vol. XXVII, p. 392.)\*\*

It is plain that these two views are incompatible and cannot in any way be reconciled. Trotsky’s “permanent revolution” is the repudiation of Lenin’s theory of the

proletarian revolution ; and conversely, Lenin’s theory of the proletarian revolution is the repudiation of the theory of “permanent revolution.”

Lack of faith in the strength and capacities of our revolution, lack of faith in the strength and capacity of the Russian proletariat—that is what lies at the root of the theory of “permanent revolution.”

Hitherto only *one* aspect of the theory of “permanent revolution” has usually been noted—lack of faith in the revolutionary potentialities of the peasant movement. Now, in fairness, this must be supplemented by *another* aspect—lack of faith in the strength and capacity of the proletariat in Russia.

What difference is there between Trotsky’s theory and the ordinary Menshevik theory that the victory of socialism in one country, and in a backward country at that, is impossible without the preliminary victory of the proletarian revolution “in the principal countries of Western Europe” ?

Essentially, there is no difference.

There can be no doubt at all. Trotsky’s theory of “permanent revolution” is a variety of Menshevism.

Of late rotten diplomats have appeared in our press who try to palm off the theory of “permanent revolution” as something compatible with Leninism. Of course, they say, this theory proved to be worthless in 1905 ; but the mistake Trotsky made was that he ran too far ahead at that time, in an attempt to apply to the situation in 1905 what could not then be applied. But later, they say, in October 1917, for example, when the revolution had had time to mature completely, Trotsky’s theory proved to be quite appropriate. It is not difficult to guess that the chief of these diplomats is Radek. Here, if you please, is what he says :

“The war created a chasm between the peasantry,

\* V. I. Lenin, *Speech Delivered at the Plenum of the Moscow Soviet*.—Ed.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *On Co-operation*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 716).—Ed.

which was striving to win land and peace, and the petty-bourgeois parties ; the war placed the peasantry under the leadership of the working class and of its vanguard, the Bolshevik Party. This rendered possible, not the dictatorship of the working class and peasantry, but the dictatorship of the working class relying on the peasantry. What Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky advanced against Lenin in 1905 (i.e., "permanent revolution"—*J. St.*) proved, as a matter of fact, to be the second stage of the historic development."

Here every statement is a distortion.

It is not true that the war "rendered possible, not the dictatorship of the working class and peasantry, but the dictatorship of the working class relying on the peasantry." Actually, the February Revolution of 1917 was the materialization of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, interwoven in a peculiar way with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

It is not true that the theory of "permanent revolution," which Radek bashfully refrains from mentioning, was advanced in 1905 by Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky. Actually, this theory was advanced by Parvus and Trotsky. Now, ten months later, Radek corrects himself and deems it necessary to castigate Parvus for the theory of "permanent revolution." But in all fairness Radek should also castigate Parvus's partner, Trotsky.

It is not true that the theory of "permanent revolution," which was brushed aside by the 1905 revolution, proved to be correct in the "second stage of the historic development," that is, during the October Revolution. The whole course of the October Revolution, its whole development, demonstrated and proved the utter bankruptcy of the theory of "permanent revolution" and its absolute incompatibility with the foundations of Leninism.

Honeyed speeches and rotten diplomacy cannot hide

the yawning chasm which lies between the theory of "permanent revolution" and Leninism.

### III

#### CERTAIN SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE TACTICS OF THE BOLSHEVIKS DURING THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER

In order to understand the tactics pursued by the Bolsheviks during the period of preparation for October we must get a clear idea of at least some of the particularly important features of those tactics. This is all the more necessary since in numerous pamphlets on the tactics of the Bolsheviks precisely these features are frequently overlooked.

What are these features ?

*First specific feature.* If one were to listen to Trotsky, one would think that there were only two periods in the history of the preparation for October : the period of reconnaissance and the period of uprising, and that all else comes from the evil one. What was the April demonstration of 1917 ? "The April demonstration, which went more to the 'Left' than it should have, was a reconnoitring sortie for the purpose of probing the disposition of the masses and the relations between them and the majority in the Soviets." And what was the July demonstration of 1917 ? In Trotsky's opinion "this, too, was in fact another, more extensive, reconnaissance at a new and higher phase of the movement." Needless to say, the June demonstration of 1917, which was organized at the demand of our Party, should, according to Trotsky's idea, all the more be termed a "reconnaissance."

This would seem to imply that as early as March 1917, the Bolsheviks had ready a political army of workers and

peasants, and that if they did not bring this army into action for an uprising in April, or in June, or in July, but engaged merely in "reconnaissance," it was because, and only because, "the information obtained from the reconnaissance" at the time was unfavourable.

Needless to say, this oversimplified notion of the political tactics of our Party is nothing but a confusion of ordinary military tactics with the revolutionary tactics of the Bolsheviks.

Actually, all these demonstrations were primarily the result of the spontaneous pressure of the masses, the result of the fact that the indignation of the masses against the war had boiled over and sought an outlet in the streets.

Actually, the task of the Party at that time was to shape and to guide the spontaneously arising demonstrations of the masses along the line of the revolutionary slogans of the Bolsheviks.

Actually, the Bolsheviks had no political army ready in March 1917, nor could they have had one. The Bolsheviks built up such an army (and had finally built it up by October 1917) only in the course of the struggle and conflicts of the classes between April and October 1917, through the April demonstration, the June and July demonstrations, the elections to the district and city Dumas, the struggle against the Kornilov revolt, and the winning over of the Soviets. A political army is not like a military army. A military command begins a war with an army ready to hand, whereas the Party has to create its army in the course of the struggle itself, in the course of class conflicts, as the masses themselves become convinced through their own experience of the correctness of the Party's slogans and policy.

Of course, every such demonstration at the same time threw a certain amount of light on the hidden interrelations of the forces involved, provided certain reconnaissance information, but this reconnaissance was not the motive

for the demonstration, but its natural result.

In analyzing the events preceding the uprising in October and comparing them with the events that marked the period from April to July, Lenin says :

"The situation now is not at all what it was prior to April 20-21, June 9, July 3, for then there was *spontaneous excitement* which we, as a party, either failed to perceive (April 20) or tried to restrain and shape into a peaceful demonstration (June 9 and July 3). For at the time we were fully aware that the Soviets were *not yet* ours, that the peasants *still* trusted the Leiber-Dan-Chernov course and not the Bolshevik course (uprising), and that, consequently, we could not have the majority of the people behind us, and hence, an uprising was premature." (See Vol. XXI, p. 345).<sup>\*</sup> It is plain that "reconnaissance" alone does not get one very far.

Obviously, it was not a question of "reconnaissance," but of the following :

1) all through the period of preparation for October the Party invariably relied in its struggle upon the spontaneous upsurge of the mass revolutionary movement ;

2) while relying on the spontaneous upsurge, it maintained its own undivided leadership of the movement ;

3) this leadership of the movement helped it to form the mass political army for the October uprising ;

4) this policy was bound to result in the entire preparation for October proceeding under the leadership of one party, the Bolshevik Party ;

5) this preparation for October, in its turn, brought it about that as a result of the October uprising power was concentrated in the hands of one party, the Bolshevik Party.

<sup>\*</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Letter to the Comrades.*—Ed.

Thus, the undivided leadership of *one* party, the Communist Party, as the principal factor in the preparation for October—such is the characteristic feature of the October Revolution, such is the first specific feature of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the period of preparation for October.

It scarcely needs proof that without this feature of Bolshevik tactics the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the conditions of imperialism would have been impossible.

In this the October Revolution differs favourably from the revolution of 1871 in France, where the leadership was divided between two parties, neither of which could be called a Communist party.

*Second specific feature.* The preparation for October thus proceeded under the leadership of one party, the Bolshevik Party. But how did the Party carry out this leadership, along what line did the latter proceed? This leadership proceeded along the line of isolating the *compromising* parties, as the most dangerous groupings in the period of the outbreak of the revolution, the line of isolating the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

What is the fundamental strategic rule of Leninism?

It is the recognition of the following:

- 1) the *compromising* parties are the most dangerous social support of the enemies of the revolution in the period of the approaching revolutionary outbreak;

- 2) it is impossible to overthrow the enemy (tsarism or the bourgeoisie) unless these parties are isolated;

- 3) the main weapons in the period of preparation for the revolution must therefore be directed towards isolating these parties, towards winning the broad masses of the working people away from them.

In the period of the struggle against tsarism, in the period of preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution (1905-16), the most dangerous social support of

tsarism was the liberal-monarchist party, the Cadet Party. Why? Because it was the compromising party, the party of *compromise* between tsarism and the majority of the people, i.e., the peasantry as a whole. Naturally, the Party at that time directed its main blows at the Cadets, for unless the Cadets were isolated there could be no hope of a *rupture* between the peasantry and tsarism, and unless this rupture was ensured there could be no hope of the victory of the revolution. Many people at that time did not understand this specific feature of Bolshevik strategy and accused the Bolsheviks of excessive "Cadetophobia"; they asserted that with the Bolsheviks the struggle against the Cadets "overshadowed" the struggle against the principal enemy—tsarism. But these accusations, for which there was no justification, revealed an utter failure to understand the Bolshevik strategy, which called for the isolation of the compromising party *in order* to facilitate, to hasten the victory over the principal enemy.

It scarcely needs proof that without this strategy the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution would have been impossible.

In the period of preparation for October the centre of gravity of the conflicting forces shifted to another plane. The tsar was gone. The Cadet Party had been transformed from a compromising force into a governing force, into the ruling force of imperialism. Now the fight was no longer between tsarism and the people, but between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In this period the petty-bourgeois democratic parties, the parties of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, were the most dangerous social support of imperialism. Why? Because these parties were then the compromising parties, the parties of *compromise* between imperialism and the labouring masses. Naturally, the Bolsheviks at that time directed their main blows at these parties, for unless these parties were isolated there could be no hope of a *rupture* between the

labouring masses and imperialism, and unless this rupture was ensured there could be no hope of the victory of the Soviet revolution. Many people at that time did not understand this specific feature of the Bolshevik tactics and accused the Bolsheviks of displaying "excessive hatred" towards the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and of "forgetting" the principal goal. But the entire period of preparation for October eloquently testifies to the fact that only by pursuing these tactics could the Bolsheviks ensure the victory of the October Revolution.

The characteristic feature of this period was the further revolutionization of the labouring masses of the peasantry, their disillusionment with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, their defection from these parties, their turn towards rallying directly around the proletariat as the only consistently revolutionary force, capable of leading the country to peace. The history of this period is the history of the struggle between the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, on the one hand, and the Bolsheviks, on the other, for the labouring masses of the peasantry, for winning over these masses. The outcome of this struggle was decided by the coalition period, the Kerensky period, the refusal of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks to confiscate the landlord's land, the fight of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks to continue the war, the June offensive at the front, the introduction of capital punishment for soldiers, the Kornilov revolt. And they decided the issue of this struggle entirely in favour of the Bolshevik strategy; for had not the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks been isolated it would have been impossible to overthrow the government of the imperialists, and had this government not been overthrown it would have been impossible to break away from the war. The policy of isolating the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks proved to be the only correct policy.

Thus, isolation of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties as the main line in directing the preparations for October—such was the second specific feature of the tactics of the Bolsheviks.

It scarcely needs proof that without this feature of the tactics of the Bolsheviks, the alliance of the working class and the labouring masses of the peasantry would have been left hanging in the air.

It is characteristic that in his *Lessons of October* Trotsky says nothing, or next to nothing, about this specific feature of the Bolshevik tactics.

*Third specific feature.* Thus, the Party, in directing the preparations for October, pursued the line of isolating the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties, of winning the broad masses of the workers and peasants away from them. But how, concretely, was this isolation effected by the Party—in what form, under what slogan? It was effected in the form of the revolutionary mass movement for the power of the Soviets, under the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", by means of the struggle to convert the Soviets from organs for mobilizing the masses into organs of the uprising, into organs of power, into the apparatus of a new proletarian state power.

Why was it precisely the Soviets that the Bolsheviks seized upon as the principal organizational lever that could facilitate the task of isolating the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, that was capable of advancing the cause of the proletarian revolution, and that was destined to lead the millions of labouring masses to the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat?

What are the Soviets?

"The Soviets," said Lenin as early as September 1917, "are a new state apparatus, which, in the first place, provides an armed force of workers and peasants; and this force is not divorced from the people, as was the

old standing army, but is most closely bound up with the people. From the military standpoint, this force is incomparably more powerful than previous forces; from the revolutionary standpoint, it cannot be replaced by anything else. Secondly, this apparatus provides a bond with the masses, with the majority of the people, so intimate, so indissoluble, so readily controllable and renewable, that there was nothing even remotely like it in the previous state apparatus. Thirdly, this apparatus, by virtue of the fact that its personnel is elected and subject to recall at the will of the people without any bureaucratic formalities, is far more democratic than any previous apparatus. Fourthly, it provides a close contact with the most diverse professions, thus facilitating the adoption of the most varied and most profound reforms without bureaucracy. Fifthly, it provides a form of organization of the vanguard, i.e., of the most politically conscious, most energetic and most progressive section of the *oppressed* classes, the workers and peasants, and thus constitutes an apparatus by means of which the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, train, educate, and lead *the entire vast mass* of these classes, which has hitherto stood quite remote from political life, from history. Sixthly, it makes it possible to combine the advantages of parliamentarism with the advantages of immediate and direct democracy, i.e., to unite in the persons of the elected representatives of the people both legislative and executive functions. Compared with bourgeois parliamentarism, this represents an advance in the development of democracy which is of world-wide historic significance....

"Had not the creative spirit of the revolutionary classes of the people given rise to the Soviets, the proletarian revolution in Russia would be a hopeless affair, for the proletariat undoubtedly could not retain

power with the old state apparatus, and it is impossible to create a new apparatus immediately." (See Vol. XXI, pp. 258-59.)\*

That is why the Bolsheviks seized upon the Soviets as the principal organizational link that could facilitate the task of organizing the October Revolution and the creation of a new, powerful apparatus of the proletarian state power.

From the point of view of its internal development, the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" passed through two stages: the first (up to the July defeat of the Bolsheviks, during the period of dual power), and the second (after the defeat of the Kornilov revolt).

During the first stage this slogan meant breaking the bloc of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries with the Cadets, the formation of a Soviet government consisting of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (for at that time the Soviets were Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik), the right of free agitation for the opposition (i.e., for the Bolsheviks), and the free struggle of parties within the Soviets, in the expectation that by means of such a struggle the Bolsheviks would succeed in capturing the Soviets and changing the composition of the Soviet government in the course of a peaceful development of the revolution. This plan, of course, did not signify the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it undoubtedly facilitated the preparation of the conditions required for ensuring the dictatorship, for, by putting the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in power and compelling them to carry out in practice their anti-revolutionary platform, it hastened the exposure of the true nature of these parties, hastened their isolation, their divorce from the masses. The July defeat of the Bolsheviks, however, interrupted this development, for it gave preponderance to the generals' and Cadets'

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*, Moscow 1951, pp. 31-33.—Ed.

counter-revolution and threw the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks into the arms of that counter-revolution. This compelled the Party temporarily to withdraw the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", only to put it forward again in the conditions of a fresh revolutionary upsurge.

The defeat of the Kornilov revolt ushered in the second stage. The slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" became again the immediate slogan. But now this slogan had a different meaning from that in the first stage. Its content had radically changed. Now this slogan meant a complete rupture with imperialism and the passing of power to the Bolsheviks, for the majority of the Soviets were already Bolsheviks. Now this slogan meant the revolution's direct approach towards the dictatorship of the proletariat by means of an uprising. More than that, this slogan now meant the organization of the dictatorship of the proletariat and giving it a state form.

The inestimable significance of the tactics of transforming the Soviets into organs of state power lay in the fact that they caused millions of working people to break away from imperialism, exposed the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties as the tools of imperialism, and brought the masses by a direct route, as it were, to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus, the policy of transforming the Soviets into organs of state power, as the most important condition for isolating the compromising parties and for the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat—such is the third specific feature of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the period of preparation for October.

*Fourth specific feature.* The picture would not be complete if we did not deal with the question of how and why the Bolsheviks were able to transform their Party slogans into slogans for the vast masses, into slogans which pushed the revolution forward; how and why they succeeded in convincing not only the vanguard, and not only the

majority of the working class, but also the majority of the people, of the correctness of their policy.

The point is that for the victory of the revolution, if it is really a people's revolution embracing the masses in their millions, correct Party slogans alone are not enough. For the victory of the revolution one more necessary condition is required, namely, that the masses themselves become convinced through their own experience of the correctness of these slogans. Only then do the slogans of the Party become the slogans of the masses themselves. Only then does the revolution really become a people's revolution. One of the specific features of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the period of preparation for October was that they correctly determined the paths and turns which would naturally lead the masses to the Party's slogans—to the very threshold of the revolution, so to speak—thus helping them to feel, to test, to realize by their own experience the correctness of these slogans. In other words, one of the specific features of the tactics of the Bolsheviks is that they do not confuse leadership of the Party with leadership of the masses; that they clearly see the difference between the first sort of leadership and the second; that they, therefore, represent the science, not only of leadership of the Party, but of leadership of the vast masses of the working people.

A graphic example of the manifestation of this feature of Bolshevik tactics was provided by the experience of convening and dispersing the Constituent Assembly.

It is well known that the Bolsheviks advanced the slogan of a Republic of Soviets as early as April 1917. It is well known that the Constituent Assembly was a bourgeois parliament, fundamentally opposed to the principles of a Republic of Soviets. How could it happen that the Bolsheviks, who were advancing towards a Republic of Soviets, at the same time demanded that the Provisional Government should immediately convene the Constituent As-

embly? How could it happen that the Bolsheviks not only took part in the elections, but themselves convened the Constituent Assembly? How could it happen that a month before the uprising, in the transition from the old to the new, the Bolsheviks considered a temporary combination of a Republic of Soviets with the Constituent Assembly possible?

This "happened" because:

1) the idea of a Constituent Assembly was one of the most popular ideas among the broad masses of the population;

2) the slogan of the immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly helped to expose the counter-revolutionary nature of the Provisional Government;

3) in order to discredit the idea of a Constituent Assembly in the eyes of the masses, it was necessary to lead the masses to the walls of the Constituent Assembly with their demands for land, for peace, for the power of the Soviets, thus bringing them to face with the actual, live Constituent Assembly;

4) only this could help the masses to become convinced through their own experience of the counter-revolutionary nature of the Constituent Assembly and of the necessity of dispersing it;

5) all this naturally presupposed the possibility of a temporary combination of the Republic of Soviets with the Constituent Assembly, as one of the means for eliminating the Constituent Assembly;

6) such a combination, if brought about *under* the condition that all power was transferred to the Soviets, could only signify the subordination of the Constituent Assembly to the Soviets, its conversion into an appendage of the Soviets, its painless extinction.

It scarcely needs proof that had the Bolsheviks not adopted such a policy the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly would not have taken place so smoothly, and the

subsequent actions of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks under the slogan "All Power to the Constituent Assembly" would not have failed so signally.

"We took part," says Lenin, "in the elections to the Russian bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, in September-November 1917. Were our tactics correct or not?... Did not we, the Russian Bolsheviks, have more right in September-November 1917 than any Western Communists to consider that parliamentarism was politically obsolete in Russia? Of course we had, for the point is not whether bourgeois parliaments have existed for a long or a short time, but how far the broad masses of the working people 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 working class of the towns and the soldiers and peasants of Russia were in September-November 1917 exceptionally well prepared to accept the Soviet system and to disperse the most democratic of bourgeois parliaments, 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 the proletariat conquered political power and *after*." (See Vol. XXV, pp. 201-02.)\*

Why then did they not boycott the Constituent Assembly? because, says Lenin:

"Participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet Republic, and even *after* such a victory, not only does not

\* V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, pp. 383-385.)—Ed.



harm the revolutionary proletariat, but actually helps it to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be dispersed; it *helps* their successful dispersal, and *helps* to make bourgeois parliamentarism 'politically obsolete.'" (*Ibid.*)

It is characteristic that Trotsky does not understand this feature of Bolshevik tactics and snorts at the "theory" of combining the Constituent Assembly with the Soviets, qualifying it as Hilferdingism.

He does not understand that to permit such a combination, *accompanied* by the slogan of an uprising and the probable victory of the Soviets in connection with the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, was the only revolutionary tactics, which had nothing in common with the Hilferding tactics of converting the Soviets into an appendage of the Constituent Assembly; he does not understand that the mistake committed by some comrades in *this* question gives him no grounds for disparaging the absolutely correct position taken by Lenin and the Party on the "combined type of state power" *under* certain conditions. (Cf. Vol. XXI, p. 338.)\*

He does not understand that if the Bolsheviks had not adopted this special policy towards the Constituent Assembly they would not have succeeded in winning over to their side the vast masses of the people; and if they had not won over these masses they could not have transformed the October uprising into a profound people's revolution.

It is interesting to note that Trotsky even snorts at the words "people," "revolutionary democracy," etc., occurring in articles by Bolsheviks, and considers them improper for a Marxist to use.

Trotsky has evidently forgotten that even in September 1917, a month before the victory of the dictatorship of the

proletariat, Lenin, that unquestionable Marxist, wrote of "the necessity of the immediate transfer of the whole power to the revolutionary democracy headed by the revolutionary proletariat." (See Vol. XXI, p. 198.)\*

Trotsky has evidently forgotten that Lenin, that unquestionable Marxist, quoting the well-known letter of Marx to Kugelmann (April 1871) to the effect that the smashing of the bureaucratic-military state machine is the preliminary condition for every real *people's* revolution on the continent, writes in black and white the following lines :

"Particular attention should be paid to Marx's extremely profound remark that the destruction of the bureaucratic-military state machine is 'the preliminary condition for every real *people's* revolution.' This concept of a 'people's' revolution seems strange coming from Marx, and the Russian Plekhanovites and Mensheviks, those followers of Struve who wish to be regarded as Marxists, might possibly declare such an expression to be a 'slip of the pen' on Marx's part. They have reduced Marxism to such a state of wretchedly liberal distortion that nothing exists for them beyond the antithesis between bourgeois revolution and proletarian revolution—and even this antithesis they interpret in an extremely lifeless way....

"In Europe, in 1871, there was not a single country on the continent in which the proletariat constituted the majority of the people. A 'people's' revolution, one that actually brought the majority into movement, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasantry. These two classes then constituted the 'people.' These two classes are united

\* V. I. Lenin, *Letter to the Comrades*.—Ed.

\* V. I. Lenin, *Marxism and Insurrection*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part I, Moscow 1952, p. 172.)—Ed.

by the fact that the 'bureaucratic-military state machine' oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To *break up* this machine, to *smash* it—this is truly in the interest of the 'people,' of the majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, this is 'the preliminary condition' for a free alliance between the poor peasants and the proletarians, whereas without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible." (See Vol. XXI, pp. 395-96.)\*

These words of Lenin's should not be forgotten.

Thus, ability to convince the masses of the correctness of the Party slogans on the basis of their own experience, by bringing them to the revolutionary positions, as the most important condition for the winning over of the millions of working people to the side of the Party—such is the fourth specific feature of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the period of preparation for October.

I think that what I have said is quite sufficient to get a clear idea of the characteristic features of these tactics.

#### IV

#### THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AS THE BEGINNING OF AND THE PRE-CONDITION FOR THE WORLD REVOLUTION

There can be no doubt that the universal theory of a simultaneous victory of the revolution in the principal countries of Europe, the theory that the victory of socialism in one country is impossible, has proved to be an artificial and untenable theory. The seven years' history of the proletarian revolution in Russia speaks not for but

\* V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 238-239.)—Ed.

against this theory. This theory is unacceptable not only as a scheme of development of the world revolution, for it contradicts obvious facts. It is still less acceptable as a slogan, for it fetters, rather than releases, the initiative of individual countries which, by reason of certain historical conditions, obtain the opportunity to break through the front of capital independently; for it does not stimulate an active onslaught on capital in individual countries, but encourages passive waiting for the moment of the "universal denouement"; for it cultivates among the proletarians of the different countries not the spirit of revolutionary determination, but the mood of Hamlet-like doubt over the question as to "what if the others fail to back us up?" Lenin was absolutely right in saying that the victory of the proletariat in one country is the "typical case," that "a simultaneous revolution in a number of countries" can only be a "rare exception." (See Vol. XXIII, p. 354.)\*

But, as is well known, Lenin's theory of revolution is not limited only to this side of the question. It is also the theory of the development of the world revolution.\*\* The victory of socialism in one country is not a self-sufficient task. The revolution which has been victorious in one country must regard itself not as a self-sufficient entity, but as an aid, as a means for hastening the victory of the proletariat in all countries. For the victory of the revolution in one country, in the present case Russia, is not only the product of the uneven development and progressive decay of imperialism; it is at the same time the beginning of and the pre-condition for the world revolution.

\* V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 61.)—Ed.

\*\* See *The Foundations of Leninism*.—Ed. (J. V. Stalin's *The Foundations of Leninism* is published in Vol. 6 of J. V. Stalin's *Works* pp. 71-196.)—Ed.

Undoubtedly, the paths of development of the world revolution are not as plain as it may have seemed previously, before the victory of the revolution in one country, before the appearance of developed imperialism, which is "the eve of the socialist revolution." For a new factor has arisen—the law of the uneven development of the capitalist countries, which operates under the conditions of developed imperialism, and which implies the inevitability of armed collisions, the general weakening of the world front of capital, and the possibility of the victory of socialism in individual countries. For a new factor has arisen—the vast Soviet country, lying between the West and the East, between the centre of the financial exploitation of the world and the arena of colonial oppression, a country which by its very existence is revolutionizing the whole world.

All these are factors (not to mention other less important ones) which cannot be left out of account in studying the paths of development of the world revolution.

Formerly, it was commonly thought that the revolution would develop through the even "maturing" of the elements of socialism, primarily in the more developed, the "advanced," countries. Now this view must be considerably modified.

"The system of international relationships," says Lenin, "has now taken a form in which one of the states of Europe, viz., Germany, has been enslaved by the victor countries. Furthermore, a number of states, which are, moreover, the oldest states in the West, find themselves in a position, as the result of their victory, to utilize this victory to make a number of insignificant concessions to their oppressed classes—concessions which nevertheless retard the revolutionary movement in those countries and create some semblance of 'social peace.'"

"At the same time, precisely as a result of the last imperialist war, a number of countries—the East, India, China, etc.—have been completely dislodged from their groove. Their development has definitely shifted to the general European capitalist lines. The general European ferment has begun to affect them, and it is now clear to the whole world that they have been drawn into a process of development that cannot but lead to a crisis in the whole of world capitalism."

In view of this fact, and in connection with it, "the West-European capitalist countries will consummate their development towards socialism...not as we formerly expected. They are consummating it not by the even 'maturing' of socialism in them, but by the exploitation of some countries by others, by the exploitation of the first of the countries to be vanquished in the imperialist war combined with the exploitation of the whole of the East. On the other hand, precisely as a result of the first imperialist war, the East has definitely come into revolutionary movement, has been definitely drawn into the general maelstrom of the world revolutionary movement." (See Vol. XXVII, pp. 415-16.)\*

If we add to this the fact that not only the defeated countries and colonies are being exploited by the victorious countries, but that some of the victorious countries are falling into the orbit of financial exploitation at the hands of the most powerful of the victorious countries, America and Britain; that the contradictions among all these countries are an extremely important factor in the disintegration of world imperialism; that, in addition to these contradictions, very profound contradictions exist and are

\* V. I. Lenin, *Better Fewer, But Better*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, pp. 748-749.)—Ed.

developing within each of these countries ; that all these contradictions are becoming more profound and more acute because of the existence, alongside these countries, of the great Republic of Soviets—if all this is taken into consideration, then the picture of the special character of the international situation will become more or less complete.

Most probably, the world revolution will develop by the breaking away of a number of new countries from the system of the imperialist states as a result of revolution, while the proletarians of these countries will be supported by the proletariat of the imperialist states. We see that the first country to break away, the first victorious country, is already being supported by the workers and the labouring masses of other countries. Without this support it could not hold out. Undoubtedly, this support will increase and grow. But there can also be no doubt that the very development of the world revolution, the very process of the breaking away from imperialism of a number of new countries will be the more rapid and thorough, the more thoroughly socialism becomes consolidated in the first victorious country, the faster this country is transformed into a base for the further unfolding of the world revolution, into a lever for the further disintegration of imperialism.

While it is true that the *final* victory of socialism in the first country to emancipate itself is impossible without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several countries, it is equally true that the unfolding of the world revolution will be the more rapid and thorough, the more effective the assistance rendered by the first socialist country to the workers and labouring masses of all other countries.

In what should this assistance be expressed ?

It should be expressed, firstly, in the victorious country achieving "the utmost possible in one country for

the development, support and awakening of the revolution *in all countries*." (See Lenin, Vol. XXIII, p. 385.)\*

It should be expressed, secondly, in that the "victorious proletariat" of one country, "having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production, would stand up . . . *against* the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, raising revolts in those countries against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states." (See Lenin, Vol. XVIII, pp. 232-33.)\*\*

The characteristic feature of the assistance given by the victorious country is not only that it hastens the victory of the proletarians of other countries, but also that, by facilitating this victory, it ensures the *final* victory of socialism in the first victorious country.

Most probably, in the course of development of the world revolution, side by side with the centres of imperialism in individual capitalist countries and with the system of these countries throughout the world, centres of socialism will be created in individual Soviet countries and a system of these centres throughout the world, and the struggle between these two systems will fill the history of the unfolding of the world revolution.

For, says Lenin, "the free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states." (*Ibid.*)

The world significance of the October Revolution lies

\* V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 105.)—Ed.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *The United States of Europe Slogan*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Part 2, Moscow 1952, p. 417.)—Ed.

not only in the fact that it constitutes a great beginning made by one country in causing a breach in the system of imperialism and that it is the first centre of socialism in the ocean of imperialist countries, but also in that it constitutes the first stage of the world revolution and a mighty base for its further development.

Therefore, not only those are wrong who forget the international character of the October Revolution and declare the victory of socialism in one country to be a purely national, and only a national, phenomenon, but also those who, although they bear in mind the international character of the October Revolution, are inclined to regard this revolution as something passive, merely destined to accept help from without. Actually, not only does the October Revolution need support from the revolution in other countries, but the revolution in those countries needs the support of the October Revolution in order to accelerate and advance the cause of overthrowing world imperialism.

December 17, 1924

Translated from  
J. V. Stalin's *Works*,  
Vol. VI, pp. 358-401

## THE PARTY'S THREE FUNDAMENTAL SLOGANS ON THE PEASANT PROBLEM

*Reply to Yan—sky*

I duly received your letter, of course. I am replying after some delay, for which please forgive me.

1. Lenin says that "*the main question of every revolution is the question of state power.*" (See Vol. XXI, p. 142.)\* In the hands of which class, or which classes, is power concentrated; which class, or which classes, must be overthrown; which class, or which classes, must take power—such is "the main question of every revolution."

The Party's fundamental strategic slogans, which retain their validity during the whole period of any particular stage of the revolution, cannot be called fundamental slogans if they are not wholly and entirely based on this cardinal thesis of Lenin's.

Fundamental slogans are correct slogans only if they are based on a Marxian analysis of class forces, if they indicate the correct plan of disposition of the revolutionary forces on the front of the class struggle, if they help to bring the masses up to the front of the struggle for the victory of the revolution, to the front of the struggle for the seizure of power by the new class, if they help the Party to form a large and powerful political army from among the broad masses of the people, which is essential for the fulfilment of this task.

During any particular stage of the revolution there

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\* V. I. Lenin, *A Fundamental Question of the Revolution*—Ed.

may be defeats and retreats, failures and tactical errors, but that does not mean that the fundamental strategical slogan is wrong. Thus, for instance, the fundamental slogan during the *first* stage of our revolution—"together with the whole of the peasantry, against the tsar and the landlords, with the bourgeoisie neutralized, for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution"—was an absolutely correct slogan, in spite of the fact that the Revolution of 1905 suffered defeat.

Consequently, the question of the fundamental slogan of the Party must not be confused with the question of the gains or setbacks of the revolution at any particular stage of its development.

It may happen that in the course of the revolution the fundamental slogan of the Party has already led to the overthrow of the power of the old classes, or of the old class, while a number of vital demands of the revolution, arising out of that slogan, have not been achieved, or their achievement has been delayed for a long period of time, or a new revolution may be required for their achievements ; but this does not mean that the fundamental slogan was wrong. Thus, for instance, the February Revolution of 1917 overthrew tsardom and the landlords, but did not lead to the confiscation of the estates of the landlords, etc. ; but this does not mean that our fundamental slogan during the first stage of the revolution was wrong.

Or another example : the October Revolution overthrew the bourgeoisie and transferred the power to the proletariat, but did not immediately lead to a) the consummation of the bourgeois revolution in general and b) the isolation of the kulaks in the rural districts in particular—these were delayed for a certain period of time ; but this does not mean that our fundamental slogan during the *second* stage of the revolution—"together with the poor peasantry, against capitalism in town and country, with the middle peasantry neutralized, for the

power of the proletariat"—was wrong.

Consequently, the question of the fundamental slogan of the Party must not be confused with the question of the time and forms of achieving any particular demand arising out of that slogan.

That is why the strategic slogans of our Party cannot be appraised from the point of view of episodic successes or defeats of the revolutionary movement in any particular period ; still less can they be appraised from the point of view of the time or forms of achieving any particular demands that arise out of those slogans. The strategic slogans of the Party can be appraised only from the point of view of a Marxian analysis of the class forces and of the correct disposition of the revolutionary forces on the front of the struggle for the victory of the revolution, for the concentration of power in the hands of the new class.

Your error consists in overlooking this extremely important methodological question, or not understanding it.

2. You write in your letter:

"Is it correct to assert that we were in alliance with the whole of the peasantry *only* up to October ? No, it is not. The slogan 'alliance with the whole of the peasantry' was valid before October, *during October and in the first period after October*, inasmuch as the whole of the peasantry was interested in completing the bourgeois revolution."

From this quotation it follows that the strategic slogan of the Party during the *first* stage of the revolution (1905 to February 1917), when the task was to overthrow the power of the tsar and the landlords and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, *did not differ* from the strategic slogan during the *second* stage of the revolution (February 1917 to October 1917), when the task was to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Consequently, you deny the fundamental difference between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian-socialist revolution. You commit this error because, evidently, you refuse to understand so simple a matter as that the fundamental theme of a strategic slogan is the question of power during the particular stage of the revolution, the question as to *which* class is being overthrown and into the hands of *which* class power is being transferred. It need hardly be proved that on this point you are basically wrong.

You say that during October and in the first period after October we applied the slogan, "alliance with the *whole* of the peasantry," inasmuch as the whole peasantry was interested in completing the bourgeois revolution. But who told you that the October insurrection and the October Revolution were confined to, or that their main task was the completion of the bourgeois revolution? Where did you get that from? Do you think that the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat can be effected within the framework of the bourgeois revolution? Does not the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat mean going beyond the framework of the bourgeois revolution?

How can you assert that the kulaks (who, of course, are also peasants) could support the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the transfer of power to the proletariat?

How can you deny that the decree on the nationalization of the land, the abolition of private ownership of land, the prohibition of the purchase and sale of land, etc., in spite of the fact that it cannot be regarded as a socialist decree, was put into effect by us in the midst of a *struggle against* the kulaks, and not in alliance with them?

How can you assert that the kulaks (who are also peasants) could support the decrees of the Soviet government on the expropriation of mills, factories, railways,

banks, etc., or the slogan of the proletariat on transforming the imperialist war into a civil war?

How can you assert that the *fundamental* thing in October was not these and similar acts, not the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the completion of the bourgeois revolution?

No one denies that one of the main tasks of the October Revolution was to complete the bourgeois revolution, that without the October revolution it could not have been completed, just as the October Revolution itself could not have been consolidated unless the bourgeois revolution was completed; and inasmuch as the October Revolution did complete the bourgeois revolution it was bound to meet with the sympathy of all the peasants. All that is undeniable. But can it be asserted on these grounds that completion of the bourgeois revolution was not a *derivative phenomenon* in the course of the October Revolution but its *essence*, its *principal aim*? What then, according to you, has become of the principal aim of the October Revolution, namely, the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, the expropriation of the capitalists, etc.?

And if the main theme of a strategic slogan is the fundamental question of every revolution, i.e., the question of the transfer of power from one class to another class, does it not clearly follow from this that the question of the completion of the bourgeois revolution by the proletarian power must not be confused with the question of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and achieving this proletarian power, i.e., with the question that is the main theme of the strategic slogan during the second stage of the revolution?

One of the greatest achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat is that it completed the bourgeois revo-

lution and swept away all the filth of medievalism. For the rural districts this was of supreme and indeed decisive importance. Failing this the combination of peasant wars with the proletarian revolution, of which Marx spoke in the second half of the past century, could not have been brought about.\* Failing this the proletarian revolution itself could not have been consolidated.

Moreover, the following important circumstance must be borne in mind. The completion of the bourgeois revolution could not be accomplished at one stroke. Actually, it was spread over a whole period embracing not only a part of 1918, as you assert in your letter, but also a part of 1919 (the Volga provinces and the Urals) and of 1919-20 (the Ukraine). I am referring to the advance of Kolchak and Denikin, when the peasantry as a whole was faced with the danger of the restoration of the power of the landlords and when the peasantry, precisely as a *whole* was compelled to rally around the Soviet power in order to ensure the completion of the bourgeois revolution and to retain the fruits of that revolution. This complexity and variety of the processes of living reality, this "odd" interweaving of the direct socialist tasks of the proletarian dictatorship with the task of completing the bourgeois revolution, must always be kept in mind if we are correctly to understand the passages you cite from the works of Lenin and the mechanics of translating the Party's slogans into action.

Can it be said that this interweaving proves that the Party's slogan during the *second* stage of the revolution was wrong, and that this slogan did not differ from the slogan during the *first* stage of the revolution? No, it cannot. On the contrary, this interweaving merely confirms the correctness of the Party's slogan in the second stage of the revolution: together with the *poor* peasantry, against the capitalist bourgeoisie in town and country, for

\* Letter of K. Marx to F. Engels of April 16, 1856. (See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, p. 111.)—Ed.

the power of the proletariat, etc. Why? Because in order to complete the bourgeois revolution it was necessary in October *first* to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to set up the power of the proletariat, for only such a power is capable of completing the bourgeois revolution; and in order to set up the power of the proletariat in October it was essential to prepare and organize for October an *adequate* political army, an army capable of overthrowing the bourgeoisie and of setting up the power of the proletariat; and there is no need to prove that *such* a political army could be prepared and organized *only* under the slogan: Alliance of the proletariat with the poor peasantry against the bourgeoisie, for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is clear that without *such* a strategic slogan, which we carried through from April 1917 until October 1917, we could not have had *such* a political army, and that, therefore, we would not have triumphed in October, we would not have overthrown the power of the bourgeoisie and, consequently, we would not have been able to complete the bourgeois revolution.

That is why the completion of the bourgeois revolution must not be contrasted to the strategic slogan of the second stage of the revolution, the purpose of which was to secure the seizure of power by the proletariat.

There is only one way to avoid all these "contradictions," namely, to recognize that there is a fundamental difference between the strategic slogan of the first stage of the revolution (the bourgeois-democratic revolution) and the strategic slogan of the second stage of the revolution (the proletarian revolution), to recognize that during the first stage of the revolution we marched together with the *whole* of the peasantry for the bourgeois-democratic revolution and that during the second stage of the revolution we marched together with the *poor* peasantry against the power of capital and for the proletarian revolution.



And this must be recognized because an analysis of the class forces in the first and second stages of the revolution obliges us to do so. Otherwise it would be impossible to explain the fact that until February 1917 we carried on our work under the slogan of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the *peasantry*, while after February 1917 this slogan was superseded by the slogan of the *socialist* dictatorship of the proletariat and the *poor* peasantry.

You will agree that the substitution of one slogan for another in March and April 1917 could not be explained if your scheme were to be accepted.

This fundamental difference between the two strategic slogans of the Party was pointed out by Lenin as far back as in his pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*. He formulated the Party's slogan during the period of preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution as follows :

"The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution, by allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie." (See Vol. VIII, p. 96.)

In other word : together with the whole of the peasantry against the autocracy—while the bourgeoisie is being neutralized—for a democratic revolution.

As to the Party's slogan in the period of preparation for the socialist revolution, he formulated it as follows :

"The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, by allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyze the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie." (*Ibid.*)

In other words : together with the poor peasantry and the semi-proletarian sections of the population in general, against the bourgeoisie—while the petty bourgeoisie in town and country is being neutralized—for the socialist revolution.

That was in 1905.

In April 1917, Lenin, describing the political situation at that time as the interweaving of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry with the actual power of the bourgeoisie, said :

"The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that it represents a *transition* from the *first*\* stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed the power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to the *second* stage, which must place the power in the hands of the proletariat and the *poorest strata*\* of the peasantry." (See Lenin's *April Theses*—Vol. XX, p. 88).

At the end of August 1917, when the preparations for the October Revolution were in full swing, Lenin, in a special article entitled "Peasants and Workers," wrote as follows :

"Only the proletariat and the *peasantry*\* can overthrow the monarchy—that, in those days (i.e., 1905—*J. St.*), was the fundamental definition of our class policy. And that definition was a correct one. February and March 1917 have corroborated it once again. Only the proletariat, leading the *poor peasantry*\* (the semi-proletarians, as our programme calls them), can end the war by a democratic peace, heal the wounds it has caused, and begin to take steps towards socialism,

\* My italics—*J. St*

which have become absolutely essential and *urgent*—such is the definition of our class policy now.” (See Vol. XXI, p. 111.)\*

That must not be understood to mean that we *now* have a dictatorship of the proletariat *and* the poor peasantry. That, of course, is not so. We marched towards October under the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, and in October we put it into effect formally inasmuch as we had a bloc with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and shared the leadership with them, although actually the dictatorship of the proletariat already existed, since we Bolsheviks constituted the majority. The dictatorship of the proletariat *and* the poor peasantry ceased to exist formally, however, after the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries’ “putsch,”\*\* after the rupture of the bloc with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, when the leadership passed *wholly* and *entirely* into the hands of *one* party, into the hands of our Party, which does not share and cannot share the management of the state with any other party. This is what we call the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Finally, in November 1918, Lenin, casting a retrospective glance at the path the revolution had traversed, wrote :

“Yes, our revolution is a bourgeois revolution so *long* as we march *with* the peasantry *as a whole*. This has been as clear as clear can be to us ; we have said it hundreds and thousands of times since 1905, and we have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process or abolish it by decrees .... But beginning with April 1917, *long before the*

\* V. I. Lenin, *From a Publicist's Diary. Peasants and Workers*—Ed.

\*\* The reference is to the counter-revolutionary revolt of the “Left” Socialist-Revolutionaries in Moscow, July 6-7, 1918, which was put down within a few hours.—Ed.

*October Revolution*, that is, *long before we assumed\** power we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached unprecedented dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) will *demand* steps forward, *to socialism*; for there is *no other way* of advancing, of saving the country, which is exhausted by war, and of *alleviating* the sufferings of the toilers and exploited. Things have turned out just as we said they would. The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. *First*, with the ‘whole’ of the peasantry against the monarchy, against the landlords, against the medieval regime (and to that extent, the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). *Then*, with the poor peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, *against capitalism*, including *the rural rich, the kulaks, the profiteers,\** and to that extent the revolution becomes a *socialist* one.” (See Vol. XXIII, pp. 390-91.)\*\*

As you see, Lenin repeatedly emphasized the profound difference between the first strategic slogan, that of the period of preparation for the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the second strategic slogan, that of the period of preparation for the October Revolution. The first slogan was: together with *the whole of the peasantry* against the autocracy ; the second: together with *the poor peasants* against the bourgeoisie.

The fact that the completion of the bourgeois revolution dragged on for quite a period of time after October

\* My italics—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. (See V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow 1952, pp. 113—114.)—Ed.

and that inasmuch as we were carrying the bourgeois revolution to completion, the "whole" of the peasantry could not but sympathize with us—this fact, as I said above, does not in the least shake the fundamental thesis that we marched towards October and achieved victory in October together with the *poor peasantry*, that we overthrew the power of the bourgeoisie and set up the dictatorship of the proletariat (one of the tasks of which was to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion) together with the *poor peasantry*, against the resistance of the kulaks (also peasants) and with the middle peasantry vacillating.

That is clear, I think.

3. You write further in your letter :

"Is the assertion true that '*we arrived at October under the slogan of alliance with the rural poor and the neutralization of the middle peasant*'? No, it is not true. For the reasons mentioned above, and from the quotations from Lenin, it will be seen that this slogan could arise only when 'the class division among the peasantry had matured' (*Lenin*), i.e., 'in the summer and autumn of 1918.'"

From this excerpt it follows that the Party adopted the policy of neutralizing the middle peasant, not in the period of preparation for October and during October, but after October, and particularly after 1918, when the Committees of Poor Peasants were abolished. That is *entirely wrong*.

On the contrary, the policy of neutralizing the middle peasant did not begin, but *ended* when the Committees of Poor Peasants were abolished, after 1918. The policy of neutralizing the middle peasant was *abandoned* (and not introduced) after 1918. It was after 1918, in March 1919, that Lenin, opening the Eighth Congress of our Party, stated :

"The best representatives of socialism of the old days—when they still believed in revolution and served it theoretically and ideologically—spoke of *neutralizing the peasantry*, i.e., of turning the middle peasantry into a social stratum, which, if it did not actively aid the revolution of the proletariat, at least would not hinder it, would remain neutral and would not take the side of our enemies. This abstract, theoretical presentation of the problem is perfectly clear to us. *But it is not enough.*\* We have entered a *phase of socialist construction*\* in which we must draw up concrete and detailed basic rules and instructions which have been tested by the experience of our work in the rural districts, by which we must be guided in order to achieve a *stable alliance* with the middle peasantry." (See Vol. XXIV, p. 114.)\*\*

As you see, this amounts to the very opposite of what you say in your letter ; you turn our *actual* Party practice upside down by confusing the *beginning* of neutralization with its *end*.

The middle peasant snivelled and vacillated between revolution and counter-revolution as long as the bourgeoisie was being overthrown and as long as the Soviet power was not consolidated ; therefore it was necessary to neutralize him. The middle peasant began to turn towards us when he began to realize that the bourgeoisie had been overthrown "for good," that the Soviet power was being consolidated, that the kulak was being overcome and that the Red Army was beginning to achieve victory on the fronts of the civil war. And it was precisely after this turn of the tide that the third strategic slogan of the Party, announced by Lenin at the Eighth Party Congress, became possible,

\* My italics.—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Opening Speech at the 8th Congress of the R.C.P. (B.)*, March 18, 1919.—Ed.

namely: While *relying* on the poor peasants and establishing a *durable alliance* with the middle peasants, march forward towards socialist construction !

How could you have forgotten this well-known fact ?

From your letter it also follows that the policy of neutralizing the middle peasant *during the transition* to the proletarian revolution and in the *first days* after the victory of that revolution is wrong, unsuitable and therefore unacceptable. That is *entirely wrong*. The very opposite is the case. It is precisely while the power of the bourgeoisie is being overthrown and before the power of the proletariat has been consolidated that the middle peasant vacillates and resists most of all. It is precisely in this period that alliance with the poor peasant and neutralization of the middle peasant are necessary.

Persisting in your error, you assert that the question of the peasantry is very important, not only for our country, but also for other countries "which more or less resemble the economic system of pre-October Russia." The latter statement is, of course, true. But here is what Lenin said in his theses on the agrarian question at the Second Congress of the Comintern regarding the policy of proletarian parties towards the middle peasant in the period when the proletariat is taking power. After defining the poor peasantry, or more precisely, "the toiling and exploited masses in the rural districts," as a separate group consisting of agricultural labourers, semi-proletarians, or allotment holders and small peasants, and then proceeding with the question of the middle peasantry as a separate group in the rural districts, Lenin says :

"By 'middle peasants' in the economic sense, are meant small tillers who also hold, either as owners or tenants, small plots of land, but such, firstly, as, under capitalism, provide them as a general rule, not only with a meagre upkeep for their families

and households, but also with the possibility of securing a certain surplus, which, at least in good years, may be converted into capital ; and, secondly, fairly frequently (for example, one farm out of two or three) resort to the hire of outside labour....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 over this stratum, but must *confine itself to the task of neutralizing it*, i.e., making it neutral in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie."\* (See Vol. XXV, pp. 271-72.)

How, after this, can it be asserted that the policy of neutralizing the middle peasant "arose" in our country "only" "in the summer and autumn of 1918," i.e., *after* the decisive successes achieved in consolidating the power of the Soviets, the power of the proletariat ?

As you see, the question of the strategic slogan of proletarian parties at the moment of transition to the socialist revolution and the consolidation of the power of the proletariat, as well as the question of the neutralization of the middle peasant, is not as simple as you imagine.

4. From all that has been said above, it is evident that the passages from the works of Lenin you quote can in no way be contrasted to the fundamental slogan of our Party in the second stage of the revolution, since these quotations a) deal, not with the fundamental slogan of the Party *before* October, but with the completion of the bourgeois revolution *after* October and b) do not refute, but confirm the correctness of that slogan.

I have already said above, and I must repeat, that the strategic slogan of the Party during the second stage of the revolution, in the period *before* the seizure of power by

\* My italics—J. St.

the proletariat, the main theme of which is the question of power, cannot be contrasted to the task of carrying the bourgeois revolution to completion, which is effected in the period *after* the proletariat has taken power.

5. You speak of Comrade Molotov's well-known article in *Pravda* entitled "The Bourgeois Revolution in Our Country" (March 12, 1927), which, it appears, "induced" you to apply to me for an explanation. I do not know how you read articles. I, too, have read Comrade Molotov's article and I do not think that it in any way contradicts what I said in my report at the Fourteenth Congress of our Party on our Party's slogans regarding the peasantry.\*

In his article, Comrade Molotov does not deal with the Party's fundamental slogan in the period of October, but with the fact that, inasmuch as after October the Party carried the bourgeois revolution to completion, it enjoyed the sympathy of all the peasants. But I have already said above that the statement of this fact does not refute, but, on the contrary, confirms the correctness of the fundamental thesis that we overthrew the power of the bourgeoisie and established the dictatorship of the proletariat in conjunction with the poor peasantry—the middle peasantry being neutralized—against the bourgeoisie of town and country; that without this we would not have been able to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion.

*The Bolshevik*, No. 7-8,  
April 15, 1927

Translated from  
J. V. Stalin's *Works*,  
Vol. IX, pp. 205-220

\* J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 332-41.—Ed.

## THE SLOGAN OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE POOR PEASANTRY IN THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER

*Reply to S. Pokrovsky*

I think that your letter of May 2 provides neither occasion nor grounds for a reply in detail, point by point, so to speak.

It really offers nothing particularly new as compared with Yan—sky's letter.

I am replying to your letter only because it contains certain elements which savour of an open revival of Kamenev's ideas of the period of April and May 1917. It is only in order to expose these elements of a revival of Kamenev's ideas that I consider it necessary to reply briefly to your letter.

1. You say in your letter that "in fact, during the period from February to October we used the slogan of alliance with the *whole* of the peasantry," that "during the period from February to October the Party upheld and defended its *old* slogan in relation to the peasantry : alliance with the *whole* of the peasantry."

Thus, it appears, firstly, that during the period of preparation for October (April to October 1917) the Bolsheviks did not set themselves the task of drawing a demarcation line between the poor peasants and the well-to-do peasants, but treated the peasantry as an integral unit.

It appears, secondly, that during the period of preparation for October the Bolsheviks did not substitute for

the old slogan of "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" a new slogan, namely, "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry," but maintained the old position laid down in Lenin's pamphlet *Two Tactics* in 1905.

It appears, thirdly, that the Bolshevik policy of combating the vacillations and compromising tactics of the Soviets during the period of preparation for October (March to October 1917), the vacillations of the middle peasants in the Soviets and at the front, the vacillations between revolution and counter-revolution, the vacillations and compromising tactics which assumed a particularly acute character in the July days, when the Soviets, headed by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Menshevik compromisers, joined hands with the counter-revolutionary generals in the attempt to isolate the Bolsheviks—it appears that the Bolshevik fight against these vacillations and compromising tactics of certain strata of the peasantry was pointless and absolutely unnecessary.

And finally, it appears that Kamenev was right when, in April and May 1917, he defended the old slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, while Lenin, who regarded this slogan as already out of date and who proclaimed the new slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, was wrong.

One need only formulate these questions to realize the utter absurdity of your whole letter.

But since you are very fond of isolated quotations from Lenin's works, let us turn to quotations.

It does not require much effort to prove that what Lenin regarded as *new* in the agrarian relations in Russia after the February Revolution, from the point of view of the further development of the revolution, was not the community of interests of the proletariat and the peasantry as a whole, but the *cleavage* between the poor peasants and the well-to-do peasants, of whom the former, i.e., the poor peasants, gravitated toward the proletariat, whereas the

latter, i.e., the well-to-do peasants, followed the Provisional Government.

Here is what Lenin said on this subject in April 1917, in his polemic against Kamenev and his conceptions :

"It would be impermissible for the proletarian party *now*\* to place hopes in a community of interests with the peasantry." (See Lenin's speech at the April Conference, 1917, Vol. XX, p. 245.)\*\*

Further :

"Already, we can discern in the decisions of a number of peasant congresses the idea of postponing the solution of the agrarian question until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly ; this represents a victory for the *well-to-do peasantry*,\* which inclines towards the Cadets." (See Lenin's speech at the Petrograd City Party Conference, April 1917, Vol. XX, p. 176.)\*\*\*

Further :

"It is possible that the peasantry may seize all the land and the entire power. Far from forgetting this possibility, far from confining myself to the present moment only, I definitely and clearly formulate the agrarian programme, taking into account the *new* phenomenon, i.e., the deeper *cleavage*\* between the agricultural labourers and poor peasants on the one hand, and the well-to-do peasants, on the other." (See Lenin's article written in April, "Letters About Tactics," Vol. XX, p. 103.)

\* My italics.—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Report on the Current Situation, Delivered at the Seventh (April) All-Russian Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, April 24 (May 7), 1917.—Ed.

\*\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Report on the Current Situation and Attitude Towards the Provisional Government, Delivered at the Petrograd City Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, April 14 (27), 1917.—Ed.

This is what Lenin regarded as *new and important* in the new situation in the rural districts *after* the February Revolution.

This was Lenin's starting point in shaping the Party's policy after February 1917.

This was Lenin's starting point when, at the Petrograd City Party Conference in April 1917, he said:

"It was only here, on the spot, that we learned that the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had surrendered its power to the Provisional Government. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies represents the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the soldiers; among the latter, the majority are peasants. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But this 'dictatorship' has entered into an agreement with the bourgeois. And it is here that the '*old*' Bolshevism is in need of revision." (My italics.—J. St.) (See Vol. XX, p. 176)\*

This also was the position Lenin started from when, in April 1917, he wrote:

"Whoever speaks *now* of a 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' only is behind the times, has consequently in effect *gone over* to the side of the petty bourgeoisie and is against the proletarian class struggle. He deserves to be consigned to the archive of 'Bolshevik' pre-revolutionary antiques (which might be called the archive of "Old Bolsheviks")." (See Vol. XX, p. 101.)\*\*

It was on this ground that the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the *poor* peasantry was born to

\**Ibid.*

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Letters on Tactics*.—Ed.

replace the old slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

You might say, as you do in your letter, that this is the Trotsky way of skipping the uncompleted peasant revolution; but that would be just as convincing as a similar argument which Kamenev levelled against Lenin in April 1917.

Lenin took this argument fully into account when he said:

"Trotskyism—'No tsar, but a workers' government.' This is false. There is a petty bourgeoisie, and it cannot be ignored. But it is made up of two sections. The *poor*\* section is with the working class." (See Vol. XX, p. 182.)\*\*

Kamenev's error, and now yours, consists in the inability to discern and emphasize the difference between two sections of the petty bourgeoisie in this case the peasantry; in the inability to *single out* the poor section of the peasantry from the mass of the peasantry as a whole, and on that basis to *shape* the Party's policy in the conditions of the transition from the first stage of the revolution in 1917 to the second stage; in the inability to *deduce* from this the new slogan, the Party's second strategic slogan, concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry.

Let us trace in consecutive order the practical history of the slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry" from April to October 1917, as reflected in the works of Lenin.

*April 1917:*

\* My italics.—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Reply to the Debate on the Current Situation, Petrograd City Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, April 14 (27), 1917.—Ed.

"The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that it represents a *transition* from the *first*\* stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed the power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to the *second* stage, which must place the power in the hands of the proletariat and the *poorest strata of the peasantry*."\* (See Lenin, "April Theses," Vol. XX, p. 88.)

July 1917:

"Only the revolutionary workers, if they are supported by the *poor peasants*\*, are capable of smashing the resistance of the capitalists and leading the people to win the land without compensation, to complete freedom, to salvation from famine and from the war, and to a just and lasting peace." (See Vol. XXI, p. 77.)\*\*

August 1917:

"Only the proletariat, leading the *poor peasantry*\* (the semi-proletarians, as our programme calls them), can end the war by a democratic peace, heal the wounds it has caused, and begin to take steps towards socialism, which have become absolutely essential and *urgent*—such is the definition of our class policy now." (See Vol. XXI, p. 111.)\*\*\*

September 1917:

"Only a dictatorship of the proletarians and the *poor*

\* My italics.—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *Lessons of the Revolution*.—Ed.

\*\*\* V. I. Lenin, *From a Publicist's Diary. Peasants and Workers*.—Ed.

*peasants*\* would be capable of breaking the resistance of the capitalists, of displaying really supreme courage and determination in the exercise of power, and of securing the enthusiastic, total and truly heroic support of the masses in the army and among the peasantry." (See Vol. XXI, p. 147.)\*\*

September-October 1917, the pamphlet *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*, in which Lenin, in controversy with *Novaya Zhizn*\*\*\* says:

"*Either*\* all power to the bourgeoisie—which you have long ceased to advocate, and which the bourgeoisie itself dare not even hint at, for it knows that already on April 20-21 the people overthrew such a power with one hitch of the shoulder, and would overthrow it now with thrice that determination and ruthlessness; *or*\* power to the petty bourgeoisie, i.e., a coalition (alliance, agreement) between it and the bourgeoisie, for the petty bourgeoisie does not wish to and *cannot* take power alone and independently, as has been proved by the experience of all revolutions, and as is proved by economic science, which explains that in a capitalist country it is possible to stand for capital and it is possible to stand for labour, but it is impossible to stand in between. In Russia this coalition has for six months tried scores of ways but failed. *Or*,\* finally, all power to the proletarians and the *poor peasants*\* against the bourgeoisie in order to break its resistance. This has not yet been tried, and you, gentlemen of *Novaya Zhizn*, are *dissuading* the people from this, you are trying to frighten them with your

\* My italics.—J. St.

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *A Fundamental Question of the Revolution*.—Ed.

\*\*\* *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*)—a Menshevik newspaper published in Petrograd from April 1917 to July 1918.—Ed.



own fear of the bourgeoisie. No fourth way can be invented." (See Vol. XXI, p. 275.)

Such are the facts.

You, however, "contrive" to *evade* all these facts and events in the history of the preparation for the October Revolution ; you "contrive" to *strike off* from the history of Bolshevism the *struggle* the Bolsheviks waged during the period of preparation for October against the *vacillations* and the *compromising tactics* of the "peasant proprietors" who were in the Soviets at that time ; you "contrive" to *bury* Lenin's slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, and at the same time imagine that this is not a *profanation* of history and Leninism.

From these passages, which could be multiplied, you must see that the Bolsheviks took as their starting point after February 1917 not the peasantry as a whole, but the poor section of the peasantry ; that they marched towards October not under the *old* slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, but under the *new* slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry.

From this it is evident that the Bolsheviks carried out this slogan in a fight against the vacillations and compromising tactics of the Soviets, against the vacillations and compromising tactics of a certain section of the peasantry represented in the Soviets, against the vacillations and compromising tactics of certain parties representing petty-bourgeois democracy and known as Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.

From this it is evident that without the new slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry we would have been unable to assemble a sufficiently powerful political army, one capable of overcoming the compromising tactics of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, of neutralizing the vacillations of a certain section

of the peasantry, of overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie, and of thus making it possible to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion.

From this it is evident that "we marched towards October and achieved victory in October together with the poor peasantry... against the resistance of the kulaks (also peasants) and with the middle peasantry vacillating." (See my reply to Yan—sky.)

Thus, it follows that in April 1917, as well as during the whole period of preparation for October, it was Lenin who was right, and not Kamenev ; and you, now reviving Kamenev's conceptions, seem to be getting into not very good company.

2. As against all that has been said above you quote Lenin to the effect that in October 1917 we took power with the support of the peasantry *as a whole*. That we took power with a *certain amount* of support from the peasantry as a whole is quite true. But you forgot to add a "detail," namely, that the peasantry *as a whole* supported us in October, and after October, only *in so far* as we carried the bourgeois revolution to completion. That is a very important "detail," which in the present instance settles the issue. It does not befit a Bolshevik to "forget" so important a "detail" and thus confuse so important an issue.

From your letter it is evident that you *contrast* what Lenin said about the support of the peasantry *as a whole* with the Party's slogan of "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry," which was also advanced by Lenin. But in order to contrast what Lenin said on this subject with the passages we have quoted from the works of Lenin, in order to have grounds for refuting the passages from Lenin on the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry by the passages you quote from Lenin about the peasantry as a whole, two things, at least, must be proved.

*First* : It must be proved that the completion of the bourgeois revolution was the *main thing* in the October Revolution. Lenin considers that the completion of the bourgeois revolution was a "*byproduct*" of the October Revolution, which fulfilled this task "*in passing*." You must first refute this thesis of Lenin's and prove that the *main thing* in the October Revolution was not the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and the transfer of power to the proletariat, but the completion of the bourgeois revolution. Try to prove that, and if you do I shall be ready to admit that from April to October 1917 the Party's slogan was not dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, but dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

From your letter it is evident that you do not think it possible to assume this more than risky task ; you try, however, to prove "*in passing*" that on one of the most important questions of the October Revolution, the question of peace, we were supported by the peasantry *as a whole*. That, of course, is untrue. It is quite untrue. On the question of peace you have strayed to the viewpoint of the philistine. As a matter of fact the question of peace was for us at that time a question of power, for only with the transfer of power to the proletariat could we count on extricating ourselves from the imperialist war.

You must have forgotten what Lenin said about this —namely, that "the only way to stop the war is to transfer power to another class," and that "Down with the War" does not mean flinging away your bayonets. It means the transfer of power to another class." (See Lenin's speech at the Petrograd City Party Conference, April 1917, Vol. XX, pp. 181, 178.)

Thus, it is either the one or the other : either you must prove that the *main thing* in the October Revolution was the completion of the bourgeois revolution, or you cannot prove it ; in the latter case the obvious conclusion

is that the peasantry *as a whole* could support us in the October Revolution only *in so far* as we carried the bourgeois revolution to completion, doing away with the monarchy, and with the property and regime of the big landlords.

*Second* : You must prove that the Bolsheviks could have secured the support of the peasantry as a whole both during October and after October, in so far as they carried the bourgeois revolution to completion, *without* systematically using the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the *poor* peasantry during the whole period of preparation for October ; *without* a systematic struggle, as it follows from this slogan, against the compromising tactics of the petty-bourgeois parties ; *without* systematically exposing the vacillations of certain sections of the peasantry and of their representatives in the Soviets, as it also follows from this same slogan.

Try to prove that. Indeed, why did we succeed in securing the support of the peasantry as a whole in October and after October ? Because we were in a position to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion.

Why were we able to do this ? Because we succeeded in overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and replacing it by the power of the proletariat, which alone is able to carry the bourgeois revolution to completion.

Why did we succeed in overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat ? Because we prepared for October under the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the *poor* peasantry ; because, proceeding from this slogan, we waged a systematic struggle against the compromising tactics of the petty-bourgeois parties ; because, proceeding from this slogan, we waged a systematic struggle against the vacillations of the middle peasants in the Soviets ; because *only with such a slogan* could we overcome the vacillations of the middle peasant, defeat the compromising tactics of the petty-

bourgeois parties, and rally a political army capable of waging the struggle to transfer power to the proletariat.

It need hardly be proved that without these preliminary conditions, which determined the fate of the October Revolution, we would not have won the support of the peasantry *as a whole* for the task of completing the bourgeois revolution, either during or after October.

This is how the combination of peasant wars with the proletarian revolution is to be understood.

This is why to *contrast* the support of the peasantry as a whole for the task of completing the bourgeois revolution during October and after October with the preparations made for the October Revolution under the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the *poor* peasantry means to *understand nothing of Leninism*.

Your principal error is that you failed to understand either the interweaving during the October Revolution of *socialist* tasks with the task of carrying the *bourgeois* revolution to completion, or the mechanics of fulfilling the various demands of the October Revolution that followed from the Party's second strategic slogan, the slogan of dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry.

Reading your letter one might think that it was not we who used the peasantry in the service of the proletarian revolution, but, on the contrary, that it was "the peasantry as a whole," including the kulaks, who used the Bolsheviks in their service. The Bolsheviks' affairs would be in a bad way if they so easily "entered" the service of non-proletarian classes.

Kamenev's conceptions of April 1917—that is what is dragging at your feet.

3. You assert that Stalin does not see the difference between the situation in 1905 and the situation in February 1917. That, of course, is not to be taken seriously. I never said that, and could not have said it. All I said in my letter was that the Party's slogan on the dictatorship

of the proletariat and the peasantry, issued in 1905, was corroborated in the February Revolution of 1917. That, of course, is true. That is exactly how Lenin described the situation in his article "Peasants and Workers" in August 1917:

"Only the proletariat and the peasantry can overthrow the monarchy—that, in those days (i.e., 1905—*J. St.*), was the fundamental definition of our class policy. And that definition was a correct one. *February and March 1917 have corroborated it once again.*"\* (See Vol. XXI, p. 111.)\*\*

You are simply trying to find fault.

4. You try, furthermore, to show that Stalin contradicts himself; and you do this by contrasting his thesis on the compromising tactics of the middle peasants, *before October* with a quotation from his pamphlet *Problems of Leninism*, which speaks of the possibility of building socialism jointly with the middle peasantry *after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been consolidated*.

It does not require much effort to prove that it is utterly unscientific to identify in this way two different phenomena. The middle peasant before October, when the bourgeoisie was in power, and the middle peasant after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been consolidated, when the bourgeoisie has already been overthrown and expropriated, when the co-operative movement has developed and the principal means of production are in the hands of the proletariat, are two different things. To identify these two kinds of middle peasants and to put them on an equal footing means to examine phenomena divorced from their historical setting and to lose all sense of perspective. It is something like the Zinoviev manner of mixing up dates and periods when quoting.

\*[My italics.—*J. St.*]

\*\* V. I. Lenin, *From a Publicist's Diary. Peasants and Workers*.—Ed.

If this is what is called "revolutionary dialectics," it must be admitted that Pokrovsky has broken all records for "dialectical" pettifoggery.

5. I shall not deal with the remaining questions, for I think they have been exhaustively dealt with in the correspondence with Yan—sky.

May 20, 1927

Translated from  
J. V. Stalin's *Works*,  
Vol. IX, pp. 269-281

## THE INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

*On the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary  
of the October Revolution*

The October Revolution should not be regarded merely as a revolution "within national bounds." It is, primarily, a revolution of an international, world order; for it signifies a radical turn in the world history of mankind, a turn from the old, capitalist, world to the new, socialist, world.

Revolutions in the past usually ended with one group of exploiters replacing another group of exploiters at the helm of government. The exploiters changed, exploitation remained. Such was the case during the liberation movements of the slaves. Such was the case during the period of the uprisings of the serfs. Such was the case during the period of the well-known "great" revolutions in England, France and Germany. I am not speaking of the Paris Commune, which was the first glorious, heroic, yet unsuccessful attempt on the part of the proletariat to turn history against capitalism.

The October Revolution differs from these revolutions *in principle*. Its aim is not to substitute one form of exploitation for another form of exploitation, one group of exploiters for another group of exploiters, but to abolish all exploitation of man by man, to abolish all exploiter groups, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to establish the power of the most revolutionary class of all the oppressed classes that have ever existed, to organize a new, classless, socialist society.

It is precisely for this reason that the *victory* of the October Revolution signifies a radical change in the history of mankind, a radical change in the historical destiny of world capitalism, a radical change in the liberation movement of the world proletariat, a radical change in the methods of struggle and the forms of organization, in the way of life and traditions, in the culture and ideology of the exploited masses throughout the world.

This is the basic reason why the October Revolution is a revolution of an international, world order.

This also is the source of the profound sympathy manifested by the oppressed classes of all countries for the October Revolution, which they regard as a token of their own emancipation.

A number of fundamental issues could be noted on which the October Revolution influences the development of the revolutionary movement throughout the world.

1. The October Revolution is remarkable primarily for having caused a breach in the front of world imperialism, for having overthrown the imperialist bourgeoisie in one of the biggest capitalist countries and put the socialist proletariat in power.

The class of wage workers, the class of the persecuted, the class of the oppressed and exploited has *for the first time* in the history of mankind risen to the position of the *ruling* class, setting a contagious example to the proletarians of all countries.

This means that the October Revolution *has ushered in* a new era, the era of *proletarian* revolutions in the countries of *imperialism*.

It took the instruments and means of production from the landlords and capitalists and converted them into public property, thus opposing socialist property to bourgeois property. It thereby exposed the lie of the capitalists that bourgeois property is inviolable, sacred, eternal.

It wrested power from the bourgeoisie, deprived the

bourgeoisie of political rights, destroyed the bourgeois state apparatus and transferred power to the Soviets, thus opposing the socialist rule of the Soviets, as *proletarian* democracy, to bourgeois parliamentarism, as *capitalist* democracy. Lafargue was right when he said, as far back as 1887, that on the morrow of the revolution "all former capitalists will be disfranchised."\*

The October Revolution thereby exposed the lie of the Social-Democrats that it is possible at present to effect a peaceful transition to socialism through bourgeois parliamentarism.

But the October Revolution did not, and could not, stop there. Having destroyed the old, the bourgeois order, it began to build the new, the socialist order. The ten years of the October Revolution have been ten years of the building up of the Party, the trade unions, the Soviets, the co-operative societies, cultural organizations, transport, industry, the Red Army. The indisputable successes of socialism in the U.S.S.R. on the construction front have demonstrated that the proletariat *can* successfully govern the country *without* the bourgeoisie and *against* the bourgeoisie, that it *can* successfully build industry *without* the bourgeoisie and *against* the bourgeoisie, that it *can* successfully direct the whole of the national economy *without* the bourgeoisie and *against* the bourgeoisie, that it *can* successfully build socialism in spite of the capitalist encirclement.

Menenius Agrippa, the famous Roman senator of ancient times, is not the only one who can lay claim to the old "theory" that the exploited cannot do without the exploiters any more than the head and other parts of the body can do without a stomach. This "theory" is now the cornerstone of the political "philosophy" of Social-Democracy in general, and of the Social-Democratic policy

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\* Paul Lafargue, *On the Morrow of the Revolution*.—Ed.

of *coalition* with the imperialist bourgeoisie, in particular. This "theory," which has acquired the character of a prejudice, is now one of the most serious obstacles in the path of the revolutionization of the proletariat in the capitalist countries. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt this false "theory" a mortal blow.

Is there still any need to prove that such similar results of the October Revolution could not and cannot but have their serious effect on the revolutionary movement of the working class in capitalist countries?

Such generally known facts as the progressive growth of communism in the capitalist countries, the growing sympathy of the proletarians of all countries for the working class of the U.S.S.R. and, finally, the many workers' delegations that come to the Land of the Soviets, prove beyond a doubt that the seeds sown by the October Revolution are already beginning to bear fruit.

2. The October Revolution has shaken imperialism not only in the centres of its domination, not only in the "mother countries." It has also struck at the rear of imperialism, its periphery, having undermined the rule of imperialism in the colonial and dependent countries.

Having overthrown the landlords and the capitalists, the October Revolution has broken the chains of national and colonial oppression and freed from it, without exception, all the oppressed nations of a vast state. The proletariat cannot emancipate itself without emancipating the oppressed nations. It is a characteristic feature of the October Revolution that it accomplished these national-colonial revolutions in the U.S.S.R. not under the flag of national enmity and conflicts among nations, but under the flag of mutual confidence and fraternal rapprochement of the workers and peasants of the various nationalities in the U.S.S.R.; not in the name of *nationalism*, but in the name of *internationalism*.

It is precisely because the national-colonial revolutions took place in our country under the leadership of the proletariat and under the banner of internationalism that pariah nations, slave nations, have for the *first time* in the history of mankind risen to the position of nations which are *really* free and *really* equal, thereby setting a contagious example for the oppressed nations of the whole world.

This means that the October Revolution has *ushered* in a new era, the era of *colonial* revolutions which are being conducted *in the oppressed countries* of the world *in alliance* with the proletariat and *under the leadership* of the proletariat.

It was formerly the "accepted" idea that the world has been divided from time immemorial into inferior and superior races, into blacks and whites, of whom the former are unfit for civilization and are doomed to be objects of exploitation, while the latter are the only vehicles of civilization, whose mission it is to exploit the former.

This legend must now be regarded as shattered and discarded. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt this legend a mortal blow, having demonstrated in practice that liberated non-European nations, drawn into the channel of Soviet development, are not a bit less capable of promoting a *really* progressive culture and a *really* progressive civilization than are the European nations.

It was formerly the "accepted" idea that the only method of liberating the oppressed nations is the method of *bourgeois nationalism*, the method of nations drawing apart from one another, the method of disuniting nations, the method of intensifying national enmity among the labouring masses of the various nations.

This legend must now be regarded as disproved. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt this legend a mortal blow, by demonstrating

in practice the possibility and expediency of the *proletarian, internationalist* method of liberating the oppressed nations as being the only correct method ; having demonstrated in practice the possibility and expediency of a *fraternal union* of the workers and peasants of the most diverse nations based on principles of *voluntariness* and *internationalism*. The existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is the prototype of the future integration of the working people of all countries into a single world economic system, cannot but serve as direct proof of this.

It need hardly be said that these and similar results of the October Revolution could not and cannot but have their serious effect on the revolutionary movement in the colonial and dependent countries. Such facts as the growth of the revolutionary movement of the oppressed nations in China, Indonesia, India, etc., and the growing sympathy of these nations for the U.S.S.R., unquestionably bear this out.

The era of undisturbed exploitation and oppression of the colonies and dependent countries *has passed away*.

The era of revolutions for emancipation in the colonies and dependent countries, the era of the awakening of the *proletariat* in these countries, the era of its *hegemony* in the revolution, *has begun*.

3. Having sown the seeds of revolution in the centres of imperialism as well as in its rear, having weakened the might of imperialism in the "mother countries" and having shaken its domination in the colonies, the October Revolution has thereby jeopardized the very existence of world capitalism *as a whole*.

While the spontaneous development of capitalism in the conditions of imperialism has degenerated—owing to its unevenness, owing to the inevitability of conflicts and armed clashes, owing, finally, to the unprecedented imperialist slaughter—into the process of the decay and the

dying of capitalism, the October Revolution and the resultant secession of a vast country from the world system of capitalism could not but accelerate this process, washing away, bit by bit, the very foundations of world imperialism.

More than that. While shaking imperialism, the October Revolution has at the same time created—in the first proletarian dictatorship—a powerful and open *base* for the world revolutionary movement, a base such as the world revolutionary movement *never possessed* before and on which it now can rely for support. It has created a powerful and open *centre* of the world revolutionary movement, such as the world revolutionary movement *never possessed* before and around which it now can rally and organize a *united revolutionary front of the proletarians and of the oppressed peoples of all countries against imperialism*.

This means, firstly, that the October Revolution inflicted a mortal wound on world capitalism from which the latter will never recover. It is precisely for this reason that capitalism will never recover the "equilibrium" and "stability" that it possessed before October.

Capitalism may become partly stabilized, it may rationalize production, turn over the administration of the country to fascism, temporarily hold down the working class ; but it will never recover the "tranquility," the "assurance," the "equilibrium" and the "stability" that it flaunted before ; for the crisis of world capitalism has reached the stage of development where the flames of revolution must inevitably break out, now in the centres of imperialism, now in the periphery, reducing to naught the capitalist patchwork and daily bringing nearer the fall of capitalism. Exactly as in the popular story "When it pulled its tail out of the mud, its beak got stuck ; when it pulled its beak out, its tail got stuck."

This means, secondly, that the October Revolution has so much raised the strength, the relative weight, the cour-

age and the fighting preparedness of the oppressed classes of the whole world as to compel the ruling classes to reckon with them as a *new*, important factor. Now the labouring masses of the world can no longer be regarded as a "blind mob," groping, without prospects, in the dark ; for the October Revolution has created a beacon which illumines their path and opens up perspectives for them. Whereas formerly there was no *world-wide* open forum from which the aspirations and strivings of the oppressed classes could be expounded and formulated, now such a forum exists in the first proletarian dictatorship.

There is hardly room for doubt that the destruction of this forum would for a long time cast over the social and political life of the "advanced countries" the gloom of unbridled, black reaction. It cannot be denied that the very existence of a "Bolshevik state" puts a curb upon the dark forces of reaction, thus helping the oppressed classes in their struggle for liberation. This really explains the savage hatred which the exploiters of all countries entertain for the Bolsheviks.

History repeats itself, though on a new basis. Just as formerly, during the period of the downfall of *feudalism*, the world "Jacobin" evoked dread and abhorrence among the aristocrats of all countries, so now, in the period of the decline of *capitalism*, the word "Bolshevik" evokes dread and abhorrence among the bourgeois in all countries. And conversely, just as formerly Paris was the refuge and school for the revolutionary representatives of the rising *bourgeoisie*, so now Moscow is the refuge and school for the revolutionary representatives of the rising *proletariat*. Hatred for the Jacobins did not save feudalism from collapse. Can there be any doubt that hatred for the Bolsheviks will not save capitalism from its inevitable downfall ?

The era of the "stability" of capitalism *has passed*

*away*, carrying away with it the legend of the indestructibility of the bourgeois order.

The era of the collapse of capitalism *has begun*.

4. The October Revolution should not be regarded merely as a revolution in the domain of economic and social-political relations. It is at the same time a revolution in the minds, a revolution in the ideology, of the working class. The October Revolution was born and gained strength under the banner of Marxism, under the banner of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the banner of Leninism, which is Marxism of the era of imperialism and of proletarian revolutions. Hence it marks the victory of Marxism over reformism, the victory of Leninism over Social-Democratism, the victory of the Third International over the Second International.

The October Revolution has cut an impassable furrow between Marxism and Social-Democratism, between the policy of Leninism and the policy of Social-Democratism.

Formerly, *before the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat*, Social-Democracy, while refraining from openly repudiating the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but doing nothing, absolutely nothing, that would contribute to the realization of this idea, could flaunt the banner of Marxism, and it is perfectly obvious that this behaviour of Social-Democracy created no danger whatever for capitalism. Then, in that period, Social-Democracy was formally identified, or almost completely identified, with Marxism.

Now, *after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat*, when it became patent to all *whither* Marxism leads and *what* its victory may signify, Social-Democracy is no longer able to flaunt the banner of Marxism, can no longer flirt with the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat without creating a certain amount of danger for capitalism. Having long ago broken with the spirit of



Marxism, it has found itself compelled to discard also the banner of Marxism; it has openly and unambiguously taken a stand against the offspring of Marxism, against the October Revolution, against the first dictatorship of the proletariat in the world.

Now it must dissociate itself, and actually has dissociated itself, from Marxism; for under present conditions one cannot call oneself a Marxist unless one openly and devotedly supports the first proletarian dictatorship in the world, unless one wages a revolutionary struggle against one's own bourgeoisie, unless one creates the conditions for the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one's own country.

A chasm has opened between Social-Democracy and Marxism. Henceforth, the *only* vehicle and bulwark of Marxism is Leninism, communism.

But matters did not end there. The October Revolution went further than drawing a demarcation line between Social-Democracy and Marxism; it cast Social-Democracy into the camp of the downright defenders of capitalism *against* the first proletarian dictatorship in the world. When Messrs. Adler and Bauer, Wels and Levy, Longuet and Blum abuse the "Soviet regime" and extol parliamentary "democracy," these gentlemen mean that they are fighting and will continue to fight *for* the restoration of the capitalist order in the U.S.S.R., *for* the preservation of capitalist slavery in the "civilized" states.

Present-day Social-Democratism is an *ideological prop* of capitalism. Lenin was a thousand times right when he said that the present-day Social-Democratic politicians are "*real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class,*" that in the "civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie" they would inevitably range themselves "on the

side of the 'Versaillese' against the 'Communards.'\*\*

*It is impossible to put an end to capitalism without putting an end to Social-Democratism in the labour movement.* That is why the era of dying capitalism is also the era of dying Social-Democratism in the labour movement.

The great significance of the October Revolution lies also in the fact that it marks the inevitable victory of Leninism over Social-Democratism in the world labour movement.

The era of the domination of the Second International and of Social-Democratism in the labour movement *has come to an end.*

The era of the domination of Leninism and of the Third International *has begun.*

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Translated from  
J. V. Stalin's *Works*,  
Vol. X, pp. 239-250

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\* V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.—Ed.



